

**WAR, MEMORY AND SALVATION: THE BULHOEK MASSACRE  
AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF A CONTEXTUAL SOTERIOLOGY**

Volume I

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Unless specifically indicated to the contrary in the text, the whole thesis is my original work.

*Udo P. Maulden*

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## Abstract

South Africa is in many ways a traumatised society and the Bulhoek Massacre of 24 May 1921 in which about two hundred people were killed in a matter of minutes was one such traumatising experience. What makes this massacre special is that the victims were a clearly identifiable christian grouping who dared to question and resist the overpowering might of the state by cleverly establishing an utopian community which lived in a new and resistant time, with counter values and an alternative lifestyle. One of the key ideas which shaped the establishment of this utopian commune by Enoch Josiah Mgiijima on what was declared Crownland were this-worldly views of salvation and the destruction of the world. Mgiijima offered people a practical and pragmatic way in which they would be saved from this impending destruction.

A lot of water has gone under the bridge since that fateful morning in May 1921. This study investigates present views of salvation among the *Israelites*, the followers of Mgiijima, and the role of the memory of Bulhoek Massacre in the construction of these soteriological notions. The thesis argues that in spite of the extreme trauma and apparent disconfirmation of the original vision and hope of a counter society, present views of salvation must stand in continuity with the hope and vision of those who fell in 1921. Furthermore, the thesis argues and demonstrates that though they seek to transcend the limits and constraints of the present commodified structuring of social and material relations, present views of salvation necessarily have their basis in the material context of domination, thereby rendering the soteriology of the *Israelites* as a contextual soteriology.

Using the methodological framework of depth hermeneutics the thesis probes and interprets the various reading methods and hermeneutic strategies that the *Israelites* utilize in the construction of their soteriological notions. These methods and strategies are focused on all four ritual festivals of the *Israelites*, viz. *pesach*, the Fast of Esther, the commemoration service of the Bulhoek Massacre, and the commemoration of the life of Enoch Mgiijima.

These methods and strategies establish a dynamic and organic link between the two biblical festivals and the two *Israelitic* festivals across time and space, through a contextual appropriation of the two biblical festivals which have freedom as their

key motif. What becomes clear through this appropriation is that though the *Israelites* do not view themselves as a political movement *per se*, freedom from domination is key to their theological self-understanding and identity.

The thesis demonstrates the manner in which the memory of the Bulhoek Massacre serves to facilitate the insurrection of the soteric knowledges which the perpetrators of the massacre sought to subjugate. What the study also reveals with respect to the Fast of Esther is that the narrative and interpretive strategies of Esther's soteric agency is determined not only by her identity as a woman in a kyriarchal context in Persian exile, but also by the gender-biased interpretative interests and commitments of the present *Israelite* readers. For this reason male *Israelite* define her soteric agency along domesticating, patriarchal and macho lines whereas the *Israelite* women are silent in respect of this and choose instead to underscore the spiritual depth of her soteric agency.

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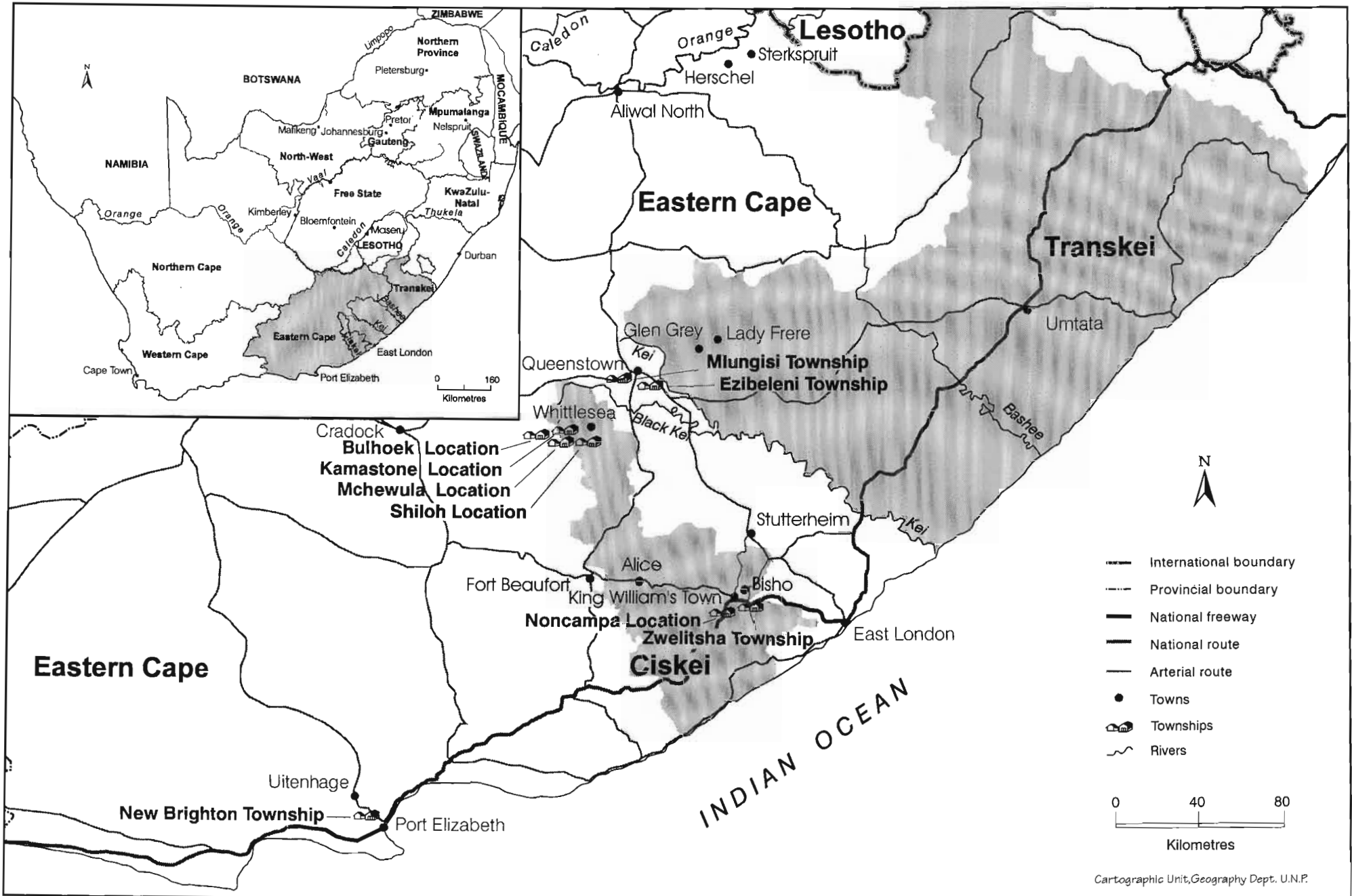
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## **Abbreviations**

- AICs - African Independent Churches
- AME - African Methodist Episcopal Church
- ANC - African National Congress
- ATR - African Traditional Religion
- CGSC - Church of God and Saints of Christ
- DEIC - Dutch East India Company
- OMI - Oblates of Mary Immaculate
- PAC - Pan Africanist Congress
- TRC - Truth and Reconciliation Commission

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Motivation

On Sunday evening of 25 July 1993 gunmen burst into the church service held at the St. James Church of the Church of England at Kenilworth in Cape Town and threw two hand grenades into the congregation, spraying the worshippers with a hail of bullets fired from South African made R-4 or R-5 rifles. Twelve people died and more than fifty were injured. This attack was described by the South African press variously as "the tragic massacre", "the merciless slaughter of worshippers", "the indiscriminate killing of innocent churchgoers", etc. The minister of Law and Order, Mr. Hernus Kriel, assigned fifty top local detectives supported by two foreign experts to the case. A reward of R250 000 was offered for information that would lead to the arrest and conviction of the perpetrators of this act. The victims and those directly affected by the killing were given debriefing sessions and offered psychiatric and financial assistance.

In its submission to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in 1996 the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) accepted responsibility and expressed regret for the attack, describing it as a deviation from its norm in its armed struggle against apartheid, and attributing the action to poor communication between its leadership and some of the cadres on the ground. This event which has come to be known as the St. James Massacre was not the first politically motivated massacre of a clearly identifiable christian congregation in South Africa in the struggle against domination.

On 24 May 1921, an official public holiday called Empire Day, at about 12.15pm, about two hundred members of the *Church of God and Saints of Christ* (CGSC) dressed in their religious attire, under the leadership of the prophet Enoch Josiah Mgiijima, were shot dead at Bulhoek (Ntabelanga) near Queenstown, ostensibly for defying laws relating to squatting. This was the biggest contingent of police and army ever assembled by the government of the Union of South Africa in peacetime. In a special feature on the incident which it entitled *The Bullhoek Tragedy*, the *Daily Dispatch*, a regional daily newspaper, reported the number of

the wounded as one hundred and twenty nine.

After the shooting the police destroyed the religious commune, burning the huts and the Tabernacle (or Tent of Gathering) and took as booty the Ark of the Covenant in which the Xhosa version of the Ten Commandments were kept. They dispersed the believers, arrested and convicted those who they identified as leaders and as being responsible for the illegal establishment of the commune and for violating the laws of the country. This event is known as the Bulhoek Massacre. Apart from these two events many other politically motivated massacres have occurred in South Africa and at the moment the country is attempting to deal with the fact, the memory and effect of these massacres, including the St. James Massacre, for purposes of establishing the truth and for the promotion of reconciliation through a statutory process called the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The final effectiveness of this political process remains to be seen.

Unlike the victims of the St. James Massacre who were able to make use of state-provided debriefing sessions, psychiatric treatment and financial assistance and who can also rely on the resources provided by the TRC, victims and survivors of the Bulhoek Massacre have had to rely on their own material and spiritual resources and on their own theological ingenuity in dealing with and coming to terms with the fact, the memory and effect of the massacre. It is this spiritual resourcefulness and theological ingenuity which this study seeks to probe and understand.

Founded in November 1912 by Enoch Josiah Mjijima<sup>1</sup> in the Whittlesea district, the *Church of God and Saints of Christ* is one of those religious groupings which tend to be neither socially privileged nor personally prestigious, neither institutionally strong on the large scale nor connected to any influential elites, whether these be of the church community or of civil society. For this reason they are often perceived as exotic and the tendency is to view them as theologically inconsequential and marginal.

However, because of the centrality of soteriology in christian theology it is important to take serious cognisance of such local manifestations and articulations

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<sup>1</sup> I shall deal with the socio-theological-historical origins of the CGSC and the role of Enoch Mjijima in greater detail in chapters five and six.

of the doctrine of salvation that have their basis in the real life experiences and struggles of believers against oppressive and dominating forces. The challenge to the church as a whole is to understand and accept as integral to its theological common sense, neither as condescension nor in a paternalistic fashion, such contextual soteriology as may emerge from christian groupings such as the *Church of God and Saints of Christ*.

The *Church of God and Saints of Christ* is popularly known as the *Israelites* and can be classified as an African Independent Church (AIC). Unlike the Zionist or Ethiopian churches about whom much has been written, very little is known of the theology of the CGSC apart from the historical study undertaken by Robert R. Edgar.<sup>2</sup> Probably this lack of theological knowledge can be attributed to the deliberate efforts of the state to suppress and destroy the church. Another reason is probably the size and distribution of church and its minimal or non-existent impact on the socio-ecclesial scenario in South Africa. As I have indicated already, the CGSC is an extremely small grouping, concentrated mainly in the Queestown and King William's Town areas of the Eastern Cape province, though there are branches in other parts of the country.

I tried very hard to estimate its size but this proved to be an extremely difficult exercise, especially because of the fact that no proper records of membership are kept and because the church is split into two factions, known as the Queestown group and the Shiloh group respectively. The Passover festival constitutes the highpoint in the liturgical calender of the CGSC. Pilgrims of the Shiloh group come to Shiloh from all over the country to celebrate the Passover, and I estimated the number of pilgrims who were present during the paschal meal (the *Service of the Lamb*) of the 1995 Passover festival to be between four hundred and five hundred. The Shiloh group has thirteen *tabernacles* (parish communities) with the biggest *tabernacles* having a maximum of about one hundred and fifty to two hundred regular church-goers while the smallest have a regular attendance of about sixty to eighty regular church-goers.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Submitted as a Ph.D. dissertation in 1977, Edgars' study is entitled *The Fifth Seal: Enoch Mgijima, the Israelites and the Bullhoek Massacre, 1921*. Los Angeles: University of California.

<sup>3</sup> The Shiloh group has *tabernacles* in the following places: Ntabelanga (#1), Mchewula (#1a), Shiloh (#2), Dyamala (#3), Botha's Hoek (unnumbered) (all in the Whittlesea district), Queenstown (#5), King William's Town (#7), Mbinzana (#8) (Transkei), Cape Town (#12), Hackney (#4), Port Elizabeth (#15), Cradock (#13), Johannesburg (#14). All the *tabernacles* are known by numbers which I have indicated in

The split occurred in 1947 apparently due to disagreements concerning whether the stone commemorating the Bulhoek Massacre should be unveiled on Wednesday of 9 April 1947, the fortieth anniversary of the day in 1907 on which Enoch Mgijima was seized by the Spirit of God or on another more convenient day. This day of the ninth of April would be symbolic to the Israelites wandering forty years in the desert. Another group, later to become the Queenstown faction, felt that the stone should be unveiled on a Sunday which would be a convenient day for all, especially for those who work during the week. And so this group had a second stone unveiled on Sunday of 13 April 1947. Apparently it is these two stones which eventually caused the split in the church.

That my research was concentrated largely on the Shiloh group representing the stone of the ninth was sheer chance because when I started my investigation I was not aware of the existence of the two factions. When I became aware of the split I tried to determine whether there were any significant differences between the two factions. After satisfying myself that there were no theologically substantive differences between the two I decided to continue with my focus on the Shiloh group, though I did interview two highly respected and influential leaders in the Queenstown faction, evangelist Gideon Ntloko and elder Moses M. Mzimkhulu.

## **1.2 Problem formulation**

Most scholars, including Robert R. Edgar who undertook a major historical study of the Bulhoek Massacre, refer to the *Church of God and Saints of Christ* (CGSC) as having been influenced by millennialist or apocalyptic views of salvation at the time of the massacre.<sup>4</sup> Assuming that there is evidence of millennialist notions of salvation at the time of the Bulhoek Massacre, the question that the study seeks to answer is the following: given the extreme and traumatic nature of this experience,

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brackets. *Tabernacles* #6, #9, #10 and #11 no longer exist.

<sup>4</sup> Cohn (1962) describes the following elements as being constitutive of the millennialist conception of salvation. In the first instance, millennialists usually conceive of salvation as *collective* or communal since it is to be enjoyed by the believers or adherents collectively. Secondly, salvation is viewed as *terrestrial* or material since it is to be realised as an earthly or this-worldly reality rather than an other-worldly or heavenly reality. Thirdly, salvation is viewed as *imminent* since there is a strong belief that it will come soon and suddenly. In the fourth instance, salvation is thought of as *total* in that it will usher in a new dispensation of perfection rather than merely improving the present. It will thus be a total transformation of life on earth. Lastly, salvation is viewed as being *miraculous* since it will be accomplished by or with the assistance of supernatural agencies.

what role does the memory of the Bulhoek Massacre play in the soteriological notions of the *Church of God and Saints of Christ*? My primary hypothesis is that notwithstanding its bitterness and trauma, the memory of this massacre and the soteriological knowledges it brings forth do provide a model and vehicle for transcending the experience of war, suffering, and death.

A further and related question is: given the terrestrial and this-worldly nature of millennialist notions of salvation, do present *Israelite* soteriological notions promise salvation as a heavenly reality or do they still conceive of salvation as a terrestrial or this-worldly reality? In other words, what is the nature, basis and thrust of present soteriological notions amongst the *Israelites*? My hypothesis in this regard is that because of the fundamentally material and physical nature of the Bulhoek Massacre, *Israelite* notions of salvation will of necessity have their basis in the material context, inspite of having a spiritual and transcendent thrust.

In the course of my investigation I discovered that the *Israelites* have four ritual festivals which play an important role not only in their liturgical calender but also in the construction of their symbolic universe. Preliminary investigations indicated that part of the answer to my questions could be located in all or some of these festivals. After further exploration it became clear to me that it is in these festivals that most of the *Israelites'* soteriological views are constructed and located. I then made the following three hypotheses relating to the purpose of all or some of the festivals: first, that they serve to keep the memory of the massacre alive as part of the identity of the *Israelites*. Second, that they need to stand in some form of continuity with the hopes of the victims of the massacre. Third, that they serve to transcend the disillusionment to which the memory of the massacre may lead.

### **1.3 Methodology**

The methodological framework within which this study is located is *depth hermeneutics* which is a method which seeks to analyse, interpret and understand symbolic forms using a variety of linked and mutually supportive analytical-interpretative instruments (Thompson 1990).<sup>5</sup> A critical feature within this study is

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<sup>5</sup> Another good use of the method of depth hermeneutics is by JB Thompson in which he studies culture, ideology and mass communication. In this study Thompson seeks to overcome the division between the theoretical discussion and practical analysis of these issues and also to explore the links between them.

the exploration of symbolic forms in relation to issues of meaning and power and questions of domination and resistance. The particular import of the depth hermeneutical approach with regard to this study is that it helps us understand and see why and how symbolic forms function with respect to issues of meaning, power, domination and resistance (Thompson 1990:279). Through an analysis of infra-political activity in Chapter Six we shall see for instance that though the establishment of the Ntabelanga commune may be construed as a religio-symbolic action, questions of power, domination and resistance were deeply and fundamentally embedded in it. The import of these questions of power, domination and resistance is equally critical to the understanding of the four festivals which form the core of the *Israelite* liturgical calendar, viz. the Passover festival (*pesach*) which is considered in Chapter Seven, the Fast of Esther which I look at in Chapter Eight, the commemoration of the Bulhoek Massacre and the commemoration of the life of Enoch Mgijima which I consider in Chapter Nine. How is the depth hermeneutical approach constituted?

Thompson distinguishes three principal phases or procedures in depth hermeneutics and cautions that these should not be construed as discrete or sequential stages but as "analytically distinct dimensions of a complex interpretative process" (1990:280). These dimensions are, (a) the *social-historical analysis*, (b) *formal or discursive analysis*, and (c) *interpretation/re-interpretation*. Let us look at the salient features of the first dimension.

The fundamental assumption underlying the social-historical analysis is that the production, transmission and reception of symbolic forms occurs in specific social and historical conditions. Thus what the socio-historical analysis aims at is the reconstruction of the social and historical conditions in which symbolic forms are produced, circulated and received. Basically there are four social contexts which in turn are definitive of the levels of analysis within the dimension of socio-historical analysis. These are: First, the identification and description of *spatio-temporal* settings wherein symbolic forms are produced and received. Second, an analysis of the *fields of interaction* within which symbolic forms are situated. A field of interaction is a space of positions and a set of trajectories which combined set out some of the relations between individuals and groupings and some of the

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He has entitled this project *Ideology and Modern Culture* (1990) Cambridge: Polity Press.

opportunities open to them and which they may seize.<sup>6</sup> Third, the analysis of *social institutions*. These "social institutions may be regarded as relatively stable clusters of rules and resources, together with the social relations which are established by them." Social institutions function to give fields of interaction a specific shape. Fourth, the analysis of social institutions is distinct from the analysis of *social structure*. The latter is concerned with the analysis of asymmetries, differentials and divisions which are characteristic of social institutions and fields of interaction. Analysis of social structure may include an investigation into the criteria, categories, principles interests and commitments which underlie these differences, asymmetries and divisions. As Thompson (1990:283) puts it:

The analysis of the formation and reproduction of social classes, or the analysis of the division between men and women and associated forms of asymmetry and inequality, are instances of what is involved in the analysis of social structure in this sense.

In terms of this study it is this analysis of social structure which constitutes the gender-sensitive approach I use in analysing the festival of the Fast of Esther and the interpretative contradictions and appropriative ambiguities embedded within it. In this regard I utilise Scott's theory of the *hidden versus the public transcript* and what he terms *infra-politics* which are notions I explicate in Chapter Six.

Fifth, the analysis of *technical media of inscription and transmission*. A technical medium can be described as "a material substratum in which, and by means of which, symbolic forms are produced and transmitted" and they give symbolic forms a certain measure of fixation, a specific type of reproducibility, "and a certain scope for participation among the subjects who employ the medium." Let us move now to formal or discursive analysis, the second dimension of depth hermeneutics.

Formal or discourse analysis forms the second major component and focus of this study. The analysis involved in this dimension is primarily concerned with "the internal organization of symbolic forms, with their structural features, patterns and relations. Here too there is a variety of analytical types or methods at play.

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<sup>6</sup> In his explanation of fields of interaction Thompson focuses on individuals. My contention is that this can be expanded to include groups, communities and collectivities.

The first is what can broadly be described as *semiotic analysis*. This method of analysis can be described as (Thompson 1990:285-86)

the study of the relations between the elements which compose a symbolic form or sign, and of the relations between these elements and those of a broader system of which this symbolic form or sign may be part.

Furthermore and equally important,

[I]t focuses on the symbolic forms themselves and seeks to analyse their internal structural features, their constitutive elements and interrelations, and to connect these to the system and codes of which they are part.

Another important aspect in this analysis is to focus not only on images or words and images but on the structural features. Thompson calls this 'discursive analysis' by which he means "the analysis of the structural features and relations of discourse", i.e. "actually occurring instances of communication."

The second level of discursive analysis is *conversation analysis* which in its turn studies the organization of instances of linguistic interactions in the actual settings in which they occur. *Syntactic analysis*, the third level of discursive analysis, has as its focus the study of "practical syntax or practical grammar - not with the grammarian's grammar, but with the grammar or syntax which is operative in everyday discourse" (Thompson 1990:287).

The fourth level focuses on the analysis of *narrative structure*. Basing myself on the theory of *emplotment* which Ricoeur develops in *Time and Narrative* I have used this feature of discursive analysis as a critical aspect of my study because of the centrality of the phenomenon of narrative in all four festivals of the *Israelites*.<sup>7</sup> I explore the foundations of the narrative theory of Ricoeur in detail in Chapter Three.

*Argumentative analysis*, the fifth and final type or level in Thompson's scheme of formal or discursive analysis, aims "to reconstruct and render explicit the patterns of inference which characterize the discourse" and the various methods used in this analysis make it possible for the analyst

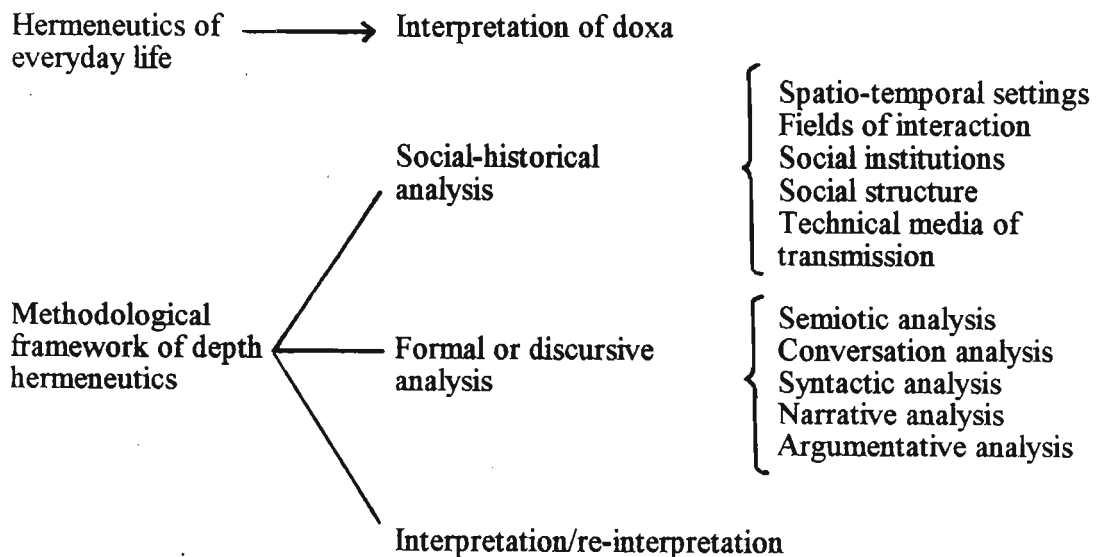
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<sup>7</sup> In his turn Thompson's narrative foundations cover the work of Propp, Barthes, Levi-Strauss, Bremond, Greimas, Todorov and Genette.

to break up the discursive corpus into sets of claims or assertions organized around certain topics or themes, and then to map out the relations between these claims and topics in terms of certain logical, or quasi-logical operators (implication, contradiction, presupposition, exclusion, etc.).

Unlike the preceding dimension which focuses on and proceeds by method of analysis, *interpretation/re-interpretation*, the third and final dimension in Thompson's scheme, "proceeds by *synthesis*, by the creative construction of possible meaning," building on social-historical analysis and discursive analysis (1990:289). In terms of the objectives of my study this process of synthesis and creative construction of possible meaning forms a critical aspect which is directed and shaped by the very questions to which the study seeks answers, viz. the role of memory, especially the memory of the Bulhoek Massacre and the material context in the theological processes and soteriological constructions of the the *Church of God and Saints of Christ*. What the process of interpretation seeks to do is to grasp the referential aspect of symbolic forms. In other words, interpretation attempts to 'understand' or make sense of those things that are said, represented and are referred to by symbolic forms. *Figure 1* below represents Thompson's scheme of hermeneutical inquiry.

*Figure 1. Thompsons Forms of Hermeneutical Inquiry*



Though situated within the framework of depth hermeneutics, this study does not use all the analyses, methods and approaches which have just been expounded. As I have indicated already, I focus on certain aspects of this framework, augmenting and supplementing it with theoretical approaches sourced from elsewhere.

Some of the key thinkers from which I have drawn are Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Kant, Heidegger, Ricoeur, R. Peterson, Connerton, T. Jennings, Marsha Hewitt, Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Musimbi Kanyoro and Mercy Oduyoye. The work of Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Kant, Ricoeur and R. Peterson provide the investigation with the critical framework for understanding the nature and function of the phenomena of imagination, being, time, narrative, possibility, ideology and utopia which feature as critical notions in the data I collected. The work of Connerton provides a useful framework for a critical understanding of the phenomena of collective memory and ritual which are key to the overall conceptualization and objectives of the study. In their turn Hewitt, Schüssler Fiorenza, Kanyoro and Oduyoye provide the investigation with the critical tools of feminism with which it is possible to understand not only the nature and function of memory and domination but also the complex relationship between them and the nature and role of patriarchy/kyriarchy in the constitution of power and the construction and deconstruction of meaning in relation to power.

The suitability of the depth hermeneutical approach for this study is that it provides a useful framework for using and linking the range of methods of analysis explicated above with the thinkers I have enumerated. Thompson (1990:274) makes the following incisive statement with regard to what some of these thinkers teach us about symbolic forms:

These thinkers remind us, in the first place, that *the study of symbolic forms is fundamentally and inescapably a matter of understanding and interpretation. Symbolic forms are meaningful constructions which call for interpretation; they are actions, utterances, texts which, quā meaningful constructions, can be understood.* (his emphasis)

It is for this reason that I have attempted to understand and interpret not only speech acts, utterances and texts but also performatives such as liturgical dances as well as the ambience and moods within which these occur. As I attempt to understand these performatives I draw largely though not exclusively on their

emotional effect on me and I endeavour to articulate and communicate this to the reader by way of poetic formulation. In doing this I am keenly aware of the acute nature of the subjectivity which this process entails but I am convinced that this constitutes a valid way in which spiritual experiences can be interpreted. The study proceeds in the four major steps.

The first step is Chapter Two which may be broadly described as literature survey. In this section I attempt to make of a survey of the soteriological models, theories and approaches, with a special focus on the soteriological assumptions underlying liberation and the soteriology of African Independent Churches (AIC's). Of particular interest is how some of the liberation theologians tend to present the soteriological thrust of liberation as being this-worldly in that they take into account the socio-political and economic context, opposing it to what they claim to be the other-worldly thrust of traditional models. I argue that this dichotomising approach is unwarranted given the fact that traditional soteriological thrusts did in fact take serious cognisance of the material context of theology.

The second step in the study consists of Chapter Three and Chapter Four which make up the bipartite theoretical framework of the investigation. Chapter Three principally outlines the theory of Ricoeur regarding time, narrative, metaphor and language. Also focusing on time as a site of struggle are the reflections of R. Peterson structured primarily around his rethinking of *kairos* theology in South Africa. Chapter Four, the second part of the theoretical underpinnings focuses on the work of Connerton and T. Jennings whose perspectives provide a theory of how memory and ritual are constructed and how memory is constituted as a collective phenomenon through ritual and through bodily practices. From this it is possible to see how the phenomena of memory and ritual bring about the construction of soteriological knowledge.

The third step of the investigation is Chapter Five and Chapter Six which deal with the *Church of God and Saints of Christ* proper and endeavour to analyse the theological identity of the CGSC, the *persona theologica* of Enoch Mgijima and a social-historical exploration of the Bulhoek Massacre. Some of the key learnings which this step presents is that though being a historical figure Mgijima is to a large extent the theological creation of his followers. I argue that this is neither anomalous nor a deviation from normal historical-theological processes and is

therefore valid. Another key learning is that the theological identity of the CGSC cannot be separated from how the *Israelites* understand Mgijima, his visions, prophecies and his message. A further learning in this step is with respect to the Bulhoek Massacre itself. My argument in this regard is that though there is validity in viewing it from the perspective of the millennialist paradigm with its presuppositions, using different tools borrowed from Ricoeur and Scott we can see how the events which precipitated the massacre constitute a sophisticated contestation of power and resistance to domination.

The fourth and final step of the study consists of chapters seven, eight and nine which consider the four festivals in the liturgical calendar of the CGSC. Chapter Seven looks at the Passover festival (*pesach*) which is the highpoint in their liturgical calendar. The festival of *pesach* provides the hermeneutic key for understanding the soteriological notions of the CGSC. The destruction and destructive forces to which the land of Egypt was subjected is analogical to the impending destruction of the world which Mgijima preached and the views of salvation which he presented as deliverance from the impending destruction. In this festival we can therefore see the material context within which Mgijima's message, images, metaphors and language of salvation are located. In this celebration we see also how the CGSC ritually sediment the experience of slavery and freedom from Egypt in their bodies across space and time.

Chapter Eight considers the Fast of Esther which also has freedom as a principal motif. Because of the reality of patriarchy/kyriarchy not only in the text of Esther but within contemporary structuring of social relations and because of the fact that the key character in this festival is a woman, my approach in this chapter is to take cognisance of these factors of power and domination. One of the key learnings of this chapter is that though freedom is a key motif there is an inherent contradiction in how this is appropriated by male members of the CGSC and women members of the church respectively. Though appearing to endorse a male-defined agency of Esther the reading and hermeneutic strategies of the womenfolk make important omissions and are silent about some of the macho-definitions of Esther's soteric agency. The women's strategies tend instead to focus on much deeper spiritual qualities in their articulation of Esther's soteric agency.

Chapter Nine focuses on how memory functions in the festivals commemorating

1997  
1992  
— 5

the Bulhoek Massacre and the life of Enoch Mgijima respectively. What we see in this instance is that the soteriological knowledges produced by these festivals are shaped and informed by interests which display a fundamental commitment to the memory of those who died at Bulhoek in 1921. A major learning in this regard is that the memory is redemptive to the extent that it is true, faithful and in continuity with the soteriological hopes and visions of Mgijima and those who died in 1921. I move now to outline the process of field investigation and data collection.

I began collecting the data for this study in my first direct interaction and communication with members of the *Church of God and Saints of Christ* in July 1992 when I was trying to determine its feasibility. This preliminary stage included a visit to the site of the two mass graves of the victims of the 1921 massacre as well as loose and relatively unstructured interviews. The second stage of the collection of the data which was much more focused and purposeful took on the ethnographic approach and had two components.

The first component is the lengthy structured interviews which I conducted with leading members of the CGSC and which I recorded on tape. All in all I conducted nine interviews of which I have used eight. These interviews form the first part of the appendices in the second volume of this study and are one hundred pages long. The interviews are very rich in terms of the data which they provide and it is my hope that this data will prove useful and helpful for the research purposes of others.

A major challenge in terms of these interviews was how to translate them in a manner which captures not only what was said but the manner in which it was said. Rather than use the services of others who may not understand all the nuances of my research objectives I decided to do the laborious work of translation myself. The study has attempted to analyse and interpret these interviews in an organic and dynamic manner, situating them and relating them to the ritual-liturgical aspect of the data.

The second aspect can be described as a limited participatory-observation method in which I attended and recorded on tape and on paper all four festivals of the CGSC. In recording these festivals I concentrated on the following: (i) the structure and order of the liturgy and its rituals, (ii) the prophetic testimonies,

(iii) the homilies, (iv) scriptural and petitionary prefaces, and (v) the petitions of the *saints*. During these festivals I recorded altogether twenty two (22) scriptural prefaces; fifteen (15) petitionary prefaces; twenty five homilies (25); two hundred and twelve (212) petitions of the *saints*, one hundred and thirty nine (139) during the festival of *pesach*, and seventy three (73) during the festival of the Fast of Esther. It is, *inter alia*, these liturgical prefaces, homilies and petitions of the saints which the study attempts to analyse and interpret. This data is also included in the second volume of the dissertation. All the data included in this second volume was collected over a period of three years.

In addition I obtained all the newspaper reports relating to the build up to the Bulhoek Massacre and its aftermath dating from 8 December 1920 until 13 June 1921, from reports in the Queenstown daily newspaper called the *Daily Representative and Free Press*. I also made use of special editions of the *Daily Dispatch*, the regional daily newspaper, such as the thirty page three column article entitled "The Bullhoek Tragedy" which was published in 1921 as well as the judge's comments about the trial of the Bulhoek Massacre entitled "Israelite Trial. Judges's Strong Comments. Officials' Weakness and Vacillation Criticised" which the *Daily Dispatch* published on 6 December 1921 which was distributed free of charge.

In terms of the nomenclature I would like to point out that I use the italicised form of *Israelites* to refer to the followers of Enoch Mgijima while the non-italicised form refers to biblical Israelites to whom I alternately refer as Hebrews or *hapiru*. Apart from this, other terms which I have constructed such as *persona theologica*, which roughly means the theological identity of a person, and other Xhosa terms derived from the *Israelites* are explained in the appropriate sections of the dissertation. Let me move now to the next chapter of the thesis which is a survey of soteriological theories and models.

## CHAPTER 2

### SOTERIOLOGICAL THEORIES AND COGNATE CONCEPTS

Being black.....

It is to see desolation all around you, but not to give up hope.

It is to experience total unbelief in the face of army rifles and caspirs, but not to be silenced by fear, and to keep on believing....

It is to be faced by a board stating whites only to a beautiful park, and not to feel your humanness diminished....

It is to be restricted in your movements, your speech, but still to have the freedom to sing the Lord's song.

It is to be uprooted from your dwelling place and to be placed in temporary tents, have your family wiped out by the cold of the night and the fumes from heat generating appliances, but still have the will to live.

It is Being....Black....Living

*Roxanne Jordaan*

#### 2.0 Introduction

Why is it that so many people and communities in the world in the various moments and epochs of history and through a variety of cultures, situations and worldviews have found christianity so appealing that they were prepared to have themselves called by its name?<sup>1</sup> Indeed, why is it that some of these communities were apparently prepared to 'abandon' some very important tenets and key elements of their cultures in favour of something as foreign as christianity must have been for those who encountered it for the very first time?<sup>2</sup> It is my contention that whatever answers one gives to this question, the issue of salvation must surely

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, the religious community that is the object of this study calls itself the *Church of God and Saints of Christ*, clearly establishing a link between themselves and the world of the New Testament and what they understand to be its agenda. They are also known as the *Israelites*, again clearly establishing a link between themselves and the 'programme' of the Old Testament.

<sup>2</sup> Of course, it would be a gross oversimplification to believe that christianity was accepted with open arms and without resistance by those to whom it was proclaimed. As the Comaroff's have demonstrated in their seminal work *Of Revelation and Revolution* (1991), the encounter between the missionaries and the Tswana, belonging to the Sotho group, was a struggle and "To each, the other was indispensable in making real his own fantasy - although the European was to prove more capable of imposing his imperial designs on the reality they would come to share. For the conditions of struggle between the colonizer and colonized were as unequal as their visions of history were distinct" (1991:198). The Nguni were also resolute in their defiance and opposition to conversion (Kiernan 1990:18).

be situated in a very key position in the scheme of one's answers.<sup>3</sup> But what do I mean by the notion of salvation? The answer to this question is both simple and complex. Let me attempt a provisional answer. In a simple way, by salvation I mean that God, through various processes, personalities, events and systems delivers humanity from all those processes, personalities, events and systems that prevent humans from reaching what is considered to be God's desired state for them.

In another sense the answer is complex in that the 'simple' answer I have suggested raises a host of very difficult questions: Who/what is God? Who and what are these processes, personalities and events through which God acts? How does God act? What does it mean that God *delivers* humanity? What and who are these processes, personalities, events and systems that are preventive to humanity? Whence do these processes, personalities, events and systems emanate? Who/what is humanity's *desired state of being*? Of course, these questions are not entirely new. Throughout the history of christianity believers have attempted to reflect on these questions and to formulate adequate, appropriate, and definitive answers, but this has been neither facile nor painless. This chapter attempts to highlight some of the crucial moments, key thought formulations, and methodological constructs in the history of these attempts.

In this chapter I attempt to make a survey of some soteriological models, theories and approaches in traditional soteriology, in Third-World christianity in general and in South Africa in particular in order to paint a larger picture within which to locate the soteriology of the *Church of God and Saints of Christ*. As far as the South African approaches are concerned, I shall focus on those notions of soteriology that fall within what we can call the liberation trajectory. These are Black Theology, liberation theology, and the theology of the African Independent Churches. I shall also attempt to see whether in the case of African traditional religion there are thought-patterns, categories and concepts which are cognate with the christian notion of salvation. But before I embark on contemporary soteriological perspectives it is necessary that I give a brief overview of traditional views and theories of the doctrine of salvation. Here I shall draw mainly from the work of South African theologians who have attempted to address these traditional

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<sup>3</sup> Nürnberg (1992a:10-1) expresses this sentiment as follows: "...soteriology, the reflection on redemption, is the *heart of all Christian theology*".

approaches from the perspective of the challenges that christianity faces in South Africa. Nicolson addresses the question of the meaning and challenge of soteriology in apartheid South Africa, albeit from the perspective of a non-black South African, and S.S. Maimela<sup>4</sup> addresses the question from the perspective of a black South African<sup>5</sup>.

We shall see that the reflections of the theologians that I sample in this chapter focus mainly on the relationship between salvation and liberation. There are those claims which put the soteriology of liberation theology in an oppositional stance to the soteriology of traditional theology. These views unjustifiably equate traditional theology with spiritual salvation and liberation theology with socio-material salvation. As we shall see, such a view is simplistic and does liberation theology a disservice by falsely pitting it against traditional theology. We shall see that in fact there is continuity between the concerns of liberation theology with the concerns of traditional theology.

We shall see further that the African re-interpretation and reappropriation of the christian message of salvation is centred on four key symbolic constructs, viz. *Ethiopia*, *Zion*, *Blackness*, and *Kairos*. It will be evident that though symbolic, each of these soteriological innovations has its origins and basis in the African people's experience of material, spiritual, cultural and political domination. The notions of salvation that are constructed around each of these constructs represent certain moments and approaches in the cultural-political-theological struggle of the dominated against religio-political domination. Let me commence with a consideration of Nicolson's and Maimela's soteriological reflections.

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<sup>4</sup> Published in the *Journal of Black Theology* (1990) the article is entitled "Salvation as a Socio-Historical Reality" and was originally read as an Inaugural Lecture at the University of South Africa.

<sup>5</sup> Nicolson pursues the matter in a subsequent article aptly entitled 'Does Jesus save in South Africa?' In: J. Mouton & B. Lategan (eds): *The Relevance of Theology for the 1900's*. Pretoria: HSRC, 1994. Here too Nicolson's approach to soteriology is preceded by the christological question.

## 2.1 Traditional models of soteriology

Nicolson (1990:105-159)<sup>6</sup> deals with the traditional models of salvation under four headings,<sup>7</sup> viz. (a) The idea of substitutionary atonement,<sup>8</sup> (b) the classic victory theory, (c) the subjective or moral influence theory, and, (d) the idea of sacrifice. Let us briefly consider each of these models.

### (a) Substitutionary atonement.

This first model is at times referred to as the 'satisfaction' theory. It essentially holds that humans sinned and this angered God who in justice must punish humans. However, Jesus, being blameless and innocent, has taken upon himself the punishment that was to be meted out to humans.<sup>9</sup> And so the result of this is that humans 'escape' punishment, and forgiveness and reconciliation with God is achieved (1990:106). Though the rudiments of this theory can be found in the

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<sup>6</sup> Nicolson attempts to bring the soteriology of liberation theology in general and the soteriology of South African Black Theology in particular into dialogue with First-World theology. His view is that it is imperative for the First-World to take cognisance of the theological questions that face the Third-World. At the same time he advocates the view that especially Black Theology in South Africa cannot ignore "the intellectual underpinning that First-World theology can provide if its answers are to be credible" (1990:xi). Though Nicolson's fundamental point of departure is that the question of soteriology must be preceded by the christological question, he attempts to take it further. In other words the question is not only 'Who is Jesus?' but 'How does Jesus save in the South African (and Third-World) context of exploitation, poverty and oppression?' Karl Rahner is also of the view that soteriology and christology are closely linked. As he puts it, "Soteriology and Christology form a closer unity than normally appears in the handbooks of theology" (1975:1528).

<sup>7</sup> Nicolson does make the point that there are various ways in which traditional soteriological models can be categorised and he cites the contemporary examples of F.W. Dillstone, O.C. Quick and Albrecht Ritschl (1990:151). Following Gustav Aulen's "Christus Victor" classification, Maimela (1990:43-45) also utilises the three types, viz. the classic dramatic view, the Anselmian view, and the moral influence theory.

<sup>8</sup> For a brief summary of the Greek or patristic model of atonement see M. Grey, *Redeeming the Dream* (1989). The key ideas in this notion of salvation are that Christ gives example, teaches, and gives a new direction which opens the way to imitation of him; that "the atonement means the repetition for us of the life and death of Jesus"; that the atonement is effected "by victory through a genuine struggle" and that "the atonement is about the divinization of humanity, about community with God, the forgiveness of sins and true life" (1989:111).

In Protestant theology, Karl Barth described as an innovative and creative theologian tried to conserve and recapture classical atonement doctrine but he also tried to push it beyond its horizons and in this he anticipated the concerns of liberation theology through "acknowledging that divine justification is integrally related to the cause of human justice [and through asserting] that the gospel has far-reaching social and political implications" (Bloesch 1981:134).

<sup>9</sup> A criticism against this theory is that it is substitutionary and leaves no space for human response (Nicolson 1990:151).

New Testament, it is under Anselm in the eleventh century that this doctrine received careful systematization until it became the dominant view in soteriology (Nicolson 1990:107). Maimela (1990:45), another South African theologian, makes the following summation of the Anselmian view

According to this Anselmian theory of salvation there is a barrier between humanity and God which has been created by sin. Sin is understood as the transgression of God's law; it is a refusal to render to God what belongs to God, namely obedience. Therefore God must punish sinners who transgress the law in order to preserve the divine honour. Therefore, unless the honour of God is satisfied through human obedience to God's law, there can be no atonement between God and humans. However, because humans on their own fail to pay ransom for their sins, Christ came to die on the cross not only to pay for the penalty which God's justice required for the human transgression of divine law, but also Christ as a sinless and obedient person unto death fulfilled the requirements of the law to the uttermost.

As Rahner (1975:1523-4)<sup>10</sup> puts it, according to the Anselmian view

Redemption primarily concerns guilt, which involves an infinite offence against God, because it is measured by the dignity of the person offended. If it is to be made good (and not just forgiven by a free act of God's grace, the possibility of which in principle on God's part is not contested), then this fully adequate (*condigna*) reparation (*satisfactio = iniuriae alteri illatae compensatio: Catechismus Romanus, II, 5,59*) can only be effected by a divine person. For the worth of the *satisfactio* is measured by the dignity of the offerer, not by that of the person to whom it is addressed .

This theory tells us a number of things concerning the other questions I posed in the introduction. It says a number of important things about 'Who/what is God?' On the one hand it tells us that God is just in that God will not allow wrongdoing to go unpunished. On the other hand it tells us that God is love in that God sent Jesus 'his' Son in order that humans might be saved from the damnation they rightly deserve. It suggests that God takes offence to sin. Furthermore, it tells us that God acts and delivers humanity primarily by giving up that which is very dear and close to 'him'. It tells us that it is through Christ's death that God acts to

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<sup>10</sup> Rahner's own view is that though salvation is by grace only, humans are urged on by this grace to cooperate in realizing their final sanctification or divinization (Bloesch 1981:141). Here we can see how Rahner's theology incorporates the Greek or Eastern notion of salvation as divinization of humanity. Furthermore, Rahner makes place for purgatory and even reincarnation because "he sees the salvific process continuing beyond death" (ibid).

deliver humans. It tells us that God's desired state for humans is forgiveness, justification and eternal harmony with 'him' (Nicolson 1990:107). It tells us that the processes, personalities, events and systems that are preventive to humanity can be coalesced under the idea of sin. Still in this regard it tells us that these preventive factors do not necessarily emanate from without but can be located within humans.

From a contemporary liberationist view Maimela (1990:47) criticises the Anselmian view of salvation for its individualism, its separation of spiritual life from concrete life, and its anti-flesh over-emphasis. Here it is only the individual souls that are saved and the material conditions are unaffected. We shall see that for the *Israelites* salvation necessarily affects material conditions.

#### (b) The victory theory

The victory model essentially holds the view "that Jesus is the victor over the enemies that beset us: sin, death and the devil" (Nicolson 1990:116). This theory has its rudiments in both the Old Testament<sup>11</sup> and the New Testament<sup>12</sup> and was, according to Gustav Aulen, dominant in the early church in the East until Anselm in the Middle Ages. In this theory Jesus substitutes for us but not through paying for our wrongdoing but he overcomes, on our behalf, all that limits and imprisons us. Though it has many elements in common with the preceding one, the idea of punishment and retributive justice plays a less significant role in the victory model. What is of significance is that the idea of victory also encompasses the transformation of human nature and the human situation. Thus the victory model tells us that God delivers humans in a final and definitive way; that God's desired state for humans is transformation; that what God desires is not limited to the transformation of humans but is extended to include the transformation of the human *situation*, including death and human tyranny (Nicolson 1990:115-17).

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<sup>11</sup> An example is the view that God intervenes in human history and rescues 'his' people from their enemies and oppressors as well as the experience of the Exodus. But God also saves people from their own self-destructive tendencies (Nicolson 1990:116).

<sup>12</sup> In the gospels Jesus is presented as 'having authority over demons' and in Pauline theology as having 'broken the tyranny of sin, law, flesh and powers' (ibid.)

(c) The moral influence theory

Nicolson (1990:135), taking his cue from Rashdall, refers to the subjective or moral influence theory also as the exemplarist theory. In simple terms this theory espouses the view that Jesus' death is an example of God's love for us. This is because "God is essentially a loving God whose forgiveness to those who respond to the work of Christ on the cross is based entirely on God's mercy and limitless love" (Maimela 1990:45). The result of this love is that it "excites our own response of penitence, conversion and commitment to God in return" (1990:135). The salvific intent in this theory is realised when we are "touched by the limitless depth of God's love" (Maimela 1990:45) and in thankfulness for what Jesus has done "amend our ways and are thus loosed from our sins" (Nicolson 1990:136).<sup>13</sup> According to H. Rashdall this theory is found only in Paul and not in other parts of the bible. It can also be traced in the work of Origen and other patristic writings, in Abelard, and in a number of modern theologians such as Schleiermacher, Ritschl and Colenso (Rashdall in Nicolson 1990:135). In the view of these modern theologians "the saving work of Jesus takes place inside individuals who are changed from hatred and rebellion against God to love and obedience" (Maimela 1990:45)

Unlike the two preceding theories, the exemplarist model adds an important dimension to the questions posed in the introduction, namely that it does not tell us only certain things about God and God's action but also about humans and how they act in response to God's action. God acts by effecting an internal movement within humans who in gratitude and of their own volition then take the initiative to lead their lives in a changed manner that is commensurate with the love that they have been shown.

A major criticism against the exemplarist or moral influence theory of salvation from the perspective of a liberationist thrust (Maimela 1990:46) is that

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<sup>13</sup> Another criticism that has been levelled against the exemplarist theory is its over-confidence in positive human response. Though they do not deny that the theory contains truth, the critics feel that this theory "needs to be complemented with the belief that in Jesus, God has somehow intervened to save the situation, not only by providing encouragement and example but by healing our guilt and breaking evil's power" (Nicolson 1990:138). The exemplarist theory is considered insufficient also because it omits a lot of the testimony of the New Testament and also because it does not take sufficient cognisance of the pervasiveness of sin in that the sinner can and does harden his or her heart (Nicolson 1990:151).

such a theory fails to focus attention on what is objectively and concretely wrong with our world [and] cannot be relevant to the victims of evil social structures who do not yearn primarily for a private, individualistic mystical communion with God but rather look with tears and hope to God to do something in order to change their earthly spiritual and physical bondages to social sin, manifested through human oppression of their fellow humans.

(d) The idea of sacrifice

In the idea of sacrifice, the fourth of Nicolson's models which he draws from the work of Vincent Taylor<sup>14</sup>, the notion of sacrifice denotes self-offering. What it tries to say is that in his death Jesus represents sinners before the Father in such a manner as not "to exclude the necessity for [them] also to offer [their] own penitence and obedience (the ethical) and love (the religious) to God" (Nicolson 1990:151). Put in a slightly different manner (Nicolson 1990:153),

In his death on the cross Jesus as a human makes an offering of penitence and of ultimate obedience; and the offering is not made in our stead, but as a first-fruits, so that by our participation in his life we can receive grace to be penitent and obedient ourselves.

This theory places equal importance on human response and goes on to spell out three ways in which this is manifested. The believers are one with Jesus in *faith*, one with him in the *eucharist*, and one with him in *service*. Oneness with him in faith manifests itself through the believers' "own prayerful commitment to him"; oneness with Jesus in the eucharist expresses itself through the believers recalling and participating in his offering and making their "own 'sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving' with him"; oneness with Jesus in service becomes a reality when believers "feed the hungry, clothe the naked, tend the lost, and in so doing minister to Jesus himself" (Nicolson 1990:153-4).<sup>15</sup>

This fourth and last theory tells us that God's desired state for humans is one

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<sup>14</sup> *The Atonement in the New Testament Teaching*. Epworth Press, 1940.

<sup>15</sup> Apart from this theory it is important to note a contemporary view of salvation which has recently enjoyed a lot of attention from theologians, namely the existentialist view of salvation as epitomised in the work of Rudolf Bultmann who redefines salvation as "the realization of authentic existence" (Bloesch 1981:135). In his view "Salvation is not an objective event in the past which changed the attitude of God toward man but instead an existential event in which we realize personal freedom. The cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ are symbols rather than causes of salvation" (ibid).

where the salvation that they receive bears the fruit for others primarily through the self-offering of believers. It tells us that God delivers humans through the self-offering of Jesus who effects a similar self-offering in believers. I now move to consider the notion of salvation from a number of other South African perspectives. This will go in tandem with an examination of liberationist perspectives, including feminist soteriology perspectives.

## **2.2 Salvation as comprehensive wellbeing.**

Another South African who has embarked on an extensive project on soteriology is K. Nürnbergger.<sup>16</sup> The central thesis in the work of Nürnbergger (1992a:10-1) is that God's aim is the comprehensive wellbeing of all God's creatures and as a result of this aim the specific redemptive action of God is geared against any deficiency in this wellbeing. Nürnbergger (1992b:10) defines wellbeing as

the free unfolding of the life of a creature as it is meant to be. This presupposes both a certain environment and an internal disposition of the creature which are conducive to this unfolding. Wellbeing is not a descriptive but a normative concept in that it indicates reality not as it is but as it is meant to be.

How does Nürnbergger come to the conclusion of salvation as comprehensive wellbeing? Let me briefly attempt to recapture the core elements of his argument. Nürnbergger (1992b:51) comes to this conclusion on the basis of his identification and analysis of six soteriological paradigms in the history of the biblical faith<sup>17</sup> and on the basis of this he concludes:

It is evident, then that any concept of salvation that restricts God's redemptive concern to particular dimensions of need, be it spiritual, intellectual, physical, political, economic, ecological or whatever, is inappropriate in terms of the biblical faith. Any need is a deficiency in comprehensive wellbeing and as such part of God's concern.

The starting point for Nürnbergger is that in order to understand and appreciate the

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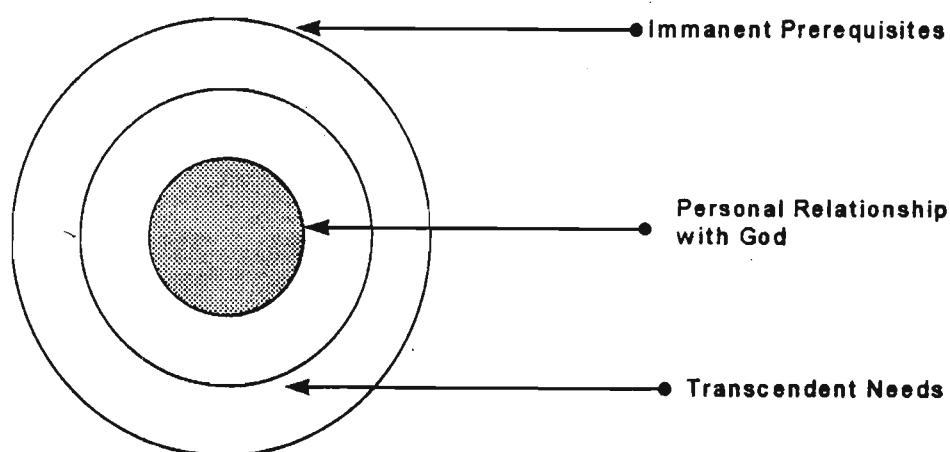
<sup>16</sup> At the moment of writing this dissertation the project was not yet published. Dated 1992, the provisional title of the project is *Faith in Christ*.

<sup>17</sup> Nürnbergger lists them as follows: the patriarchal paradigm, the exodus-conquest paradigm, the kingship (or imperial) paradigm, the paradigm of covenant, law and justification, the sanctuary-priesthood-sacrifice paradigm, and the paradigm of creation and re-creation (1992b:18-50).

full extent of redemption it is imperative that the full extent and complexity of the human predicament be understood. In line with this view he paints the human predicament in terms of a hierarchy of needs which he depicts in three concentric circles representing immanent needs, transcendent needs, and the personal relationship with God<sup>18</sup>. Asserts Nürnbergger (1992a:10-2)

The outer circle contains the immanent prerequisites of human survival and wellbeing in its natural and social contexts. Here the problem is how the inadequacies of experienced reality can be overcome by creative change. The inner circle contains the transcendent needs of human beings. Here the problem is how the need for meaning, right of existence and authority is being met by our faith. The core, finally, is constituted by our personal relationship with God. Here the problem is how the alienation between God and human beings can be overcome.

Figure 2. Nürnbergger's scheme of comprehensive wellbeing



<sup>18</sup> In contrast, Maslow's hierarchy of needs is depicted in a pyramid of five levels. At the top of the pyramid are what he calls the need for self-actualization. In his view the need for self-actualization cannot be met unless the other four 'lower' needs are met. At the bottom of the pyramid he places physiological needs. These are followed by safety needs, belonging and love needs, and the penultimate needs he terms esteem needs (1954:80-92). The immediately obvious differences between Nürnbergger's categorization and that of Maslow is that the former's fundamental point of departure is theological while the latter's is from the perspective of psychology and motivation theory. Also, Nürnbergger's approach tends to focus on the community though it does not exclude the individual and Maslow tends to focus on the individual though he does not exclude the community. On his turn Moltmann (1974) identifies what he calls 'five vicious circles of death' for which liberations are necessary. The circles of death which also influence each are: (i) the vicious circle of poverty in the economic dimension, (ii) the vicious circle of poverty in the political dimension, (iii) the vicious circle of racial and cultural alienation, (iv) the vicious circle of the industrial pollution of nature, and (v) the vicious circle of senselessness and godforsakenness.

But what are human *needs*? Defining need as "the lack of any requisite for the free unfolding of the life of a creature as it is meant to be according to the intentions of its creator", Nürnbergger's (1992a:10-6) discourse on what constitutes needs is also amplified through his utilization of the following expressions: 'concrete experiences of depravity, injustice, meaninglessness, powerlessness, suffering and death', 'inadequacies of experienced reality', 'deficiencies in comprehensive wellbeing', 'in most human situations there is one overriding concern (or set of concerns) which demands to be given priority', 'a discrepancy between what is and what ought to be in objective terms'. The strength of Nürnbergger's definition of human need is that it makes clear that the "intentions of the creator" are holistic. In other words, the intentions of the creator are not merely the salvation of souls but are the transformation of socio-political and economic structures?

Immanent needs "are concerned with the prerequisites for survival and prosperity" and can be divided into two categories, viz. the personal and the contextual. The former encompasses biological, psychological, relational and spiritual needs while the latter covers economic, social, political, and ecological needs. Nürnbergger (1992a:10-7) calls them immanent because "they are directly accessible to our experience" . The inner circle of transcendent or religious needs "form the 'depth dimension' of all immanent needs" and "include(s) meaning, right of existence and authority (or empowerment)." He refers to them as transcendent "because they go beyond the sphere which is directly accessible to our experience and influence and point to transcendent foundations of reality." At the core of these concentric circles of human needs is the relation of humans with God.

But where does Nürnbergger's concept of salvation fit within this scheme of things? His view is that "A 'salvation' which is unrelated to human need, is an empty concept, and therefore irrelevant" (1992a:10-8). The source of salvation is the God of the bible who as Creator is without doubt in charge of reality and 'his' attitude towards this reality is unquestionable love and benevolence (1992a:10-18). In terms of the scheme of needs painted above this means that "...God's particular actions are directed to particular deficiencies in overall wellbeing suffered by particular people or other creatures" (1992a:10-18).

God's salvific action materialises through a variety of ways, viz. *intervention*,

*solidarity*, and *anticipation*. Intervention can take the form of (Nürnberg 1992a:10-22)

the *gift of stability* of a salutary situation against the threat of potential chaos, darkness and evil, or as the *gift of change* towards wellbeing in a prevailing situation of chaos, darkness and evil.

The biblical depiction of the gift of stability is 'creation' and that of the gift of change is renewal or recreation of reality. The notion of God's salvific action as solidarity addresses question of God's apparent inactivity or inability to intervene effectively. The response of prophetic theology and deuteronomical theology to this dilemma, which Job found unsatisfactory, was that in such instances "God punishes Israel for its sins. But a more palatable 'solution' to this dilemma is found in the Servant Songs of Deutero-Isaiah (Nürnberg 1992a:10-23):

Through much agony and suffering the biblical faith has reached the conclusion that, where God does not visibly intervene, he moves into solidarity with the guilty, the suffering and the dying and involves his faithful servants in this solidarity. This trend finds its culmination in the New Testament. In Christ God enters our reality and shares our predicament. He does so not to legitimate an unacceptable situation but to overcome it from within. He goes with us through evil to life, justice and peace, through misery to glory, through death to life.

Nürnberg's assertion raises a number of critical questions. The first of these relates to the fact that Nürnberg does not really explicate the notion of solidarity. What effect does God's solidarity with the guilty, the suffering, and the dying have on God? Does it mean that God suffers with them? If it does, then how does this suffering of God bring acquittal, respite and salvation to the suffering, the guilty, and the dying? Does this solidarity or 'sharing our predicament' merely mean that God identifies with the lot of the guilty, the suffering, and the dying. If so, in which ways does identification constitute a salvific action?

What then is the role of the human person within this scheme of things? Does it mean that the actions of humans are superfluous? No, answers Nürnberg, God's redemptive activity does not make human activity superfluous. On the contrary it calls for it. It arouses human responsibility (1990:215). God's redemptive activity invites human activity (1992a:10-26). Human action is participation in God's

action (Nürnberg 1990:216).

In summary then, Nürnberg views salvation as overcoming the inadequacies of experienced reality because "experienced need defines expected salvation", that is immanent salvation. Salvation is faith meeting the need for meaning, right of existence and authority, that is transcendent salvation. And finally, salvation is overcoming the alienation between God and human beings.<sup>19</sup> What then does this tell us with regard to the questions posed in the introduction about who/what God is? As Nürnberg states it, it tells us that God is very real, very this-worldly. God is "the power of redemptive action in relation to experienced need" and therefore "God is the Source of the power of reality." It tells us that "God is the Source of the meaning of reality", it tells us that "God is the Source of the criterion of reality" (1990:212). Furthermore, it tells us that God delivers humanity by responding to experienced need, by intervening directly on behalf of 'his' creatures, by entering and transforming the predicament that humanity finds itself in, it tells us that humanity's desired state of being is comprehensive wellbeing (1990:213).

Though it does not profess to be liberation theology, it would be incorrect to say that Nürnberg's soteriology lacks the liberationist thrust. In fact, the concerns of liberation theology are central to his soteriology, especially his emphasis on salvation as a response to experienced need. In my view his model falls short in one respect: it puts the needs of the oppressed and oppressor on the same level of legitimacy. It does not adequately address the contradiction where the oppressor's experienced need is to be protected from the legitimate demands of justice towards the poor. In other words what does salvation mean in the situation where two experienced needs are in direct conflict and competition? It is this critical question that Nürnberg's soteriology fails to address.

I now move to consider how the notion of salvation has been viewed in liberation theologies. I use the term liberation theology in a broad sense, not limiting it to Latin American liberation theology, but to encompass all those theologies that explicitly address themselves to the question of political oppression, economic exploitation, racial domination and gender oppression.

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<sup>19</sup> According to what Gustav Aulen classifies as the classic dramatic atonement theory it is "Jesus' death which overcomes the state of alienation between God and human beings" (Maimela 1990:44).

### 2.3 Salvation in liberation theologies

The 1960s, 1970s and 1980s saw the emergence and rise to prominence of liberation theologies as forms of theology which engage in a serious, systematic, and purposeful way questions about the meaning and 'role' of God to the millions of Christians who found themselves pushed to the margins of the economic, political and socio-cultural mainstream. Because the concerns raised by these theologies are not limited to the Third World but include also what has come to be known as 'minorities', these theologies have at times been dubbed 'the theologies of the oppressed'. It is the intellectual persistence, the analytic sophistication and the critical rigour and depth of the questions raised especially by Latin American theologians which grabbed the attention of the world. In South Africa similar questions and concerns have been raised mainly from two streams, each with its own assumptions, methodology, agenda and objectives. The one stream is known as Black Theology while the second stream has come to be known as 'kairos' theology. A rather late arrival to the South African scene has been feminist theology. My interest in the range of questions raised by these theologies pertains to how they probe and define soteriological issues. Before I deal with these I shall briefly consider how they relate to traditional approaches to soteriology.

Theologies of liberation have a spectrum of interesting stances with regard to how they view tradition. There are those who emphasise what they perceive as the inadequacy of some traditional approaches while others base their soteriology on certain traditional models. For instance, Maimela (1986:107;1990:52) criticises traditional views of soteriology on the grounds that they over-spiritualise the gospel with the result that the gift of salvation is seen as a non-material, ahistorical reality that does not address the material conditions of poverty, economic exploitation, political, racial and gender oppression. He (1986:103) contends that traditional theology

has presented the gospel as something addressed exclusively to individuals, and dealing with their personal salvation, thereby reducing the Christian message to the private property of the few converted individuals.

The difficulty with Maimela's criticism is that though he recognises that "traditional theology was not altogether [un]aware of the social implications of the

gospel" because, as he puts it, "the church as an institution located in society does exert cultural and political influence", he nevertheless paints all traditional models with the same brush. Maimela does not reckon with the fact that in tradition there are "bodily" and "worldly" examples of soteriology which attack "spiritualised" soteriologies not merely coincidentally because of the location of the church, but intentionally and fundamentally. These examples go back into the New Testament and can be seen in the fight against gnosticism and later docetism.

Another South African theologian who highlights liberation theology's critique of some of the older soteriological models along similar lines is Langefeld (1993:26). However, he too does not indicate which of these older models are considered by liberation theology to be inadequate and which are viewed to be adequate. Because they are rather superficial and not sufficiently nuanced, the above criticisms of traditional theology do liberation theology a disservice by clarifying its position against what is clearly a caricature of the tradition, thereby suggesting a total disjuncture and discontinuity between tradition and liberation theology.<sup>20</sup> As we shall see below, there are those liberation theologians whose soteriology draws both implicitly and explicitly from tradition.

Cochrane (1996:78) points out that in the christological project of Takatso Mofokeng (1983) on the other hand, we can discern an implicit though unusual mix of the substitutionary and victory models of salvation. Mofokeng, for whom salvation consists in the re-creation of black subjectivity which has been broken, sees this salvation as being effected in the suffering of Jesus on the cross and in his victory of the cross which also redeems the suffering of the black person. I shall deal with Mofokeng's views in more detail below. Apart from Mofokeng's utilization of traditional models, an example of a liberation theologian who draws explicitly from tradition is Leonardo Boff (1984). He utilises the Chalcedonian christological model to illustrate the interrelation between salvation and liberation by showing that Jesus is liberator. These two examples are a demonstration that the thrust of liberation theology rather than claiming to bring novel soteriological ideas, seeks to show that the ideas of liberation theology concerning salvation are

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<sup>20</sup>Also, it would be wrong to suppose that it is only 'traditional' models of theology which focus on salvation from an individual, personal, non-material and ahistorical perspective. Within the South African context there have been proponents of this view on both sides of the Protestant and Catholic, and the so-called English and Afrikaans divide which insist on a politics-free understanding of salvation.

in fact continuous with and true to tradition. This continuity with tradition can be seen in a much clearer way in the period prior to the pietist movement, the Enlightenment, and industrial capitalism. What the emergence of these movements did was to stress and promote human subjective independence, the autonomy and power of human reason and the break between the religious and public sphere at the expense of tradition, thereby 'setting up' tradition as being solely other-worldly. Let us now consider the theological underpinnings of liberation theology and the views of salvation which they bring forth.

### 2.3.1 Salvation in Black Theology

In considering the theological presuppositions that underpin liberation soteriology I shall commence by focusing on Black Theology in South Africa<sup>21</sup>. The motivating factor for Black Theology is Black Consciousness<sup>22</sup> which Steve Biko (1972:21) describes as follows

In essence this is an attitude of mind and way of life. It is the most positive call to emanate from the black world for a long time. Its unadulterated quintessence is the realisation by the black man of the need to rally together with his brothers around the cause of their oppression - the blackness of their skin - and to operate as a group in order to rid themselves of the shackles that bind them to perpetual servitude. It is based on a self examination which has ultimately led them to believe that by seeking to run away from themselves and to emulate the white man, they are insulting the intelligence of whoever created them black. The philosophy of Black Consciousness, therefore expresses group pride and the determination by black to rise and attain the envisaged self. Freedom is the ability to define one's self with one's possibilities held back not by the power of other people over you but one's relationship to God and to natural surroundings.

Formed towards the end of the 1960s, the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa sought to free the psycho-social oppression of black people from an

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<sup>21</sup> For a discussion of the links between South African Black Theology and Black Theology in the USA see M. Motlhabi's article entitled "The Historical Origins of Black Theology" in I. Mosala & B. Tlhaagale (eds): *The Unquestionable Right to be Free*. Johannesburg: Skotaville, 1986.

<sup>22</sup> Several factors and influences were present when the Black Consciousness movement in South Africa, a movement of University students, came into being in the 1960's. These are: the failure of multiracialism in student organizations at tertiary level (Mofokeng 1983:8), "the separation of Black and White Universities, the influence of the civil rights movement in the United States and the consequential pride in being Black, the reflection on Black culture and identity, and Black opposition to apartheid and its injustice" (Crawford 1990:329).

internalised inferiority complex emanating from the racist system of oppression. It defined and articulated blackness as a positive factor of being in opposition to the dominant negative definition of black as non-being. In line with this it promoted pride in black history, black religion, and black culture. In its programme Black Consciousness aimed at raising the consciousness of black people to these factors relating to their oppression by white racism. It sought to demonstrate the link between colonialism, the missionary enterprise and capitalist expansionism. The assumption of Black Consciousness was that without solidarity, self-reliance and self-criticism, the full liberation of black people from all forms of oppression would not be realised (Boesak 1977:9; Mofokeng 1983:11; Jordaan 1991:124; M. Ramphela in *Natal Witness* 14.09.1995).

In regard to christianity the effect of white supremacist ideas was evident in the field of the missionary endeavour where the black person "had to become white and accept white values and the capitalist system as the frame-work of his (sic) salvation if [the black person] desired to be saved" (Mofokeng 1983:15). Within this scheme of things Black Theology appeared as a programme of conscientization, self definition and self identification, seeking to answer the question of what believing in Jesus means for black when the racists also profess this same Jesus (Boesak 1977:9; Mofokeng 1983:18).

Black Theology projected salvation in the symbol of Blackness as a positive value whose opposite was despair, denial, exclusion, and inferiority, thus rendering salvation as a social fact because the human existence is total, that is bodily and spiritual. In this way Black Theology rejected the view of salvation "as an escape from this miserable world." Instead, according to Maimela (1986:108), it presented salvation

as a divine power and possibility of transforming social structures, of restoring creation and of seeking to overcome suffering. It is only as salvation is understood to be bound up with the institutions and structures that bind men and women of flesh and blood that it could become good news for the oppressed, the hungry, the alienated, the sorrowful and the outcasts.

How then are we to understand the notion of salvation as a social fact as Maimela asserts? What does it mean for Black Theology to assert that salvation is a social fact? Who is saved? Why are they saved? From what are they saved? How are

they saved? By whom are they saved?

The assertion that salvation is total, that is bodily and spiritual, is critical in understanding the agenda of Black Theology because the crushing and denial of black subjectivity by whites (Europeans) commences at the physical level of the body that is black, at the level of black physical existence. It then continues to crush the black spirit, denying black existence at the spiritual level. It is this denial which is the object of Black soteriology. It refuses to dichotomize salvation in terms of soul and body, leaving the latter 'to perish'. It refuses to accept (Ndiokwere 1981:33) "the enormous artificial gap created by 'white' theology between the 'here and now' and the beyond..."

Consistent with traditional theology, soteriology in Black Theology is preceded by the christological question. One could even go as far as to say that Black soteriology is essentially an extension of the christological question asking not only: Who is Jesus? but, How does Jesus (the Black Messiah) save Black people? To answer these questions I shall look at Takatso Mofokeng's Black christology project.<sup>23</sup>

With regard to the question of who is to be saved the answer is that it is black people who are to be saved from a situation where suffering and death have been domesticated, where the suffering and death of Jesus serves to give religious sanction to suffering, where people suffer simply because they are black. The suffering and death of Jesus epitomised in the Good Friday services becomes a prototype of their own suffering. The resurrection of Jesus does not receive the same attention as his suffering and death (Mofokeng 1983:27-29).

In terms of the doctrine of salvation from the perspective of the experience of the suffering of black people how should the suffering and cross of Jesus be understood? As indicated earlier, for Mofokeng (1983:34) the cross represents a moment of transformation, divine love and the restoration to new life rather than merely violence and suffering. The cross-event "is the depth of moment, the moment of culmination of God's saving condescension" through solidarity with humanity in its suffering. It is in this moment of depth that salvation materializes

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<sup>23</sup> *The Crucified Among the Crossbearers* (1983)

and is constituted (Mofokeng 1983:261). However, it would be wrong to conceive of the redemptive work of Jesus as being effected only at the 'end' of his life. It is not only the suffering and cross of Jesus which is salvific in terms of the black experience. On the contrary, the salvific content in the life of Jesus can be traced back to incarnation (Mofokeng 1983:34-35). The incarnation is salvific in that through it the creature that has fallen hopelessly into sin is freed through the act God's condescension that the incarnation is (1983:243).

Earlier on I criticised Nürmberger's soteriology for its lack of definition of the notion of solidarity. As we can see above, in this theology of the cross Mofokeng also uses the notion of solidarity which he couples with the idea of God's condescension by which he means the incarnation of Jesus in conditions of poverty and suffering. Though Mofokeng notes that the salvific content is not contained only at the 'end' of Jesus' life he still does not explain how the poverty and suffering of Jesus at the 'beginning', that is, in the incarnation, constitutes a salvific action. In other words, how does the birth of Jesus in the stable constitute a moment of salvation for the black people? How does it give hope to black people? How does it help them overcome their alienation to the black self? How does being born in poverty occasion reconciliation with and the affirmation of the black self?

As indicated earlier on, elements of the substitutionary and victory models can be seen in Mofokeng's (1983:362) assertion that in the cross-event the power of death is broken and in this

**God substitutes the anxious, inactive and despairing poor. He substitutes for man with his persevering and suffering love for suffering man. That which he does is sufficient for the salvation of man. In this way the Father was present to the suffering Son and suffered in his suffering.**

Thus salvation in terms of the existence of black people can be said to span the whole of existence, from incarnation, to the cross and through to resurrection (1983:41-42). Salvation thus encompasses the struggle of black people for their humanity and this struggle verifies and authenticates the resurrection of Jesus. This salvation has a pneumatological dimension in that black people being a community created by the Spirit of God are enthused by that Spirit. In short, Black Theology

affirms black human agency, the struggle for black humanity, as a constituent element in the formulation and articulation of a Black soteriology. In this sense "the struggle of the poor for true humanity is taken up in God's event of salvation of man and the creation of the new world and the new heaven." This is motivated by Jesus as "he breaks into the oppressive situation of black people to bring to birth the new black humanity." Jesus empowers and raises (Mofokeng 1983:228-246) "them up to be human subjects by acting as the human subject among them."

I should like to highlight two criticisms that have been levelled against Black Theology. The first critique, coming from Itumeleng Mosala (1985:109) holds that

black theology has never really made an ideological break with bourgeois theological and biblical hermeneutics, and has not become a *liberation* theology.

What does this mean? Essentially this criticism tries to confront the idealist ideological and cultural assumption which Mosala perceives as underpinning Black Theology and thus not only stunting it but rendering it impotent. This is the assumption that ideas, beliefs, and ideologies can be separated from the concrete historical society. According to Mosala (1985:105), the fundamental flaw in this assumption is its failure to recognise "causal connections between consciousness and material reality." As a result of this failure

Ideas about God, humanity, salvation and history are posited as independent from society, impinging on society and capable of producing a particular kind of society.

Therefore, a starting point for Black Theology needs to be a recognition that there is a close relationship between religion and society and that a non-ideological Christianity and theology does not exist. In the view of Mosala, it is critical that Black Theology recognises that there is such a thing as a ruling-class culture and a working-class culture and this should shape the theological and hermeneutical tools of Black Theology.

The second, and what in my view is the most consequential criticism against Black Theology comes from the Black feminist theologian Roxanne Jordaan (1991:124) when she asserts

There are times when the women would fight side by side with their men in street wars against the army, but would have no say in the decision making body of the liberatory struggle.

She continues (1991:125)

Any form of liberation which does not address itself to the emancipation of the whole person should be seriously challenged for misrepresenting the concept of liberation. For no person can be free when part of that which gives you your humanity is in chains. A part of the wholeness of black womanness is also caught up in Black Theology, and more specifically, Black Feminist Theology.... Therefore Black Feminist Theology has to be an integral part of Black Theology.

What then are the intentions of Black Feminist soteriology? Black Feminist Theology seeks from black men a commitment to view the struggle for liberation holistically because "all of the oppressed has to be set free" rather than just a section of them. It is only a holistic struggle that can be accepted as a just struggle (1991:127).

In summary, the following can be said to constitute the key components of the soteriology of Black Theology: First, that Black Consciousness as the struggle for true humanity, black humanity within the negative existential and ontological experience of blackness forms the central tenet in the articulation of salvation; that blackness is therefore a cause to be fought for, an existence to be embraced, and a way of life to be celebrated. Second, that black people are not passive onlookers as the salvific process of reconstructing their subjectivity unfolds but that inherent in this process is their enthusement as human agents. Third, that this process of reconstructing black subjectivity is primarily a christological project in that Jesus' incarnation, suffering, cross, death and resurrection become paradigmatic in this struggle. Fourth, that the key elements of this paradigm are condescending love, solidarity, substitution, affirmation, transformation, and liberation. Fifth, that the soteriological intent of Black Theology becomes devoid of substance when its quest for black humanity excludes the humanity of black women as black women. I move now to consider the next set of presuppositions of liberation theology.

### 2.3.2 Salvation versus liberation?

The next presupposition which underpins the soteriology of liberation theology is a specific understanding of sin which holds that sin is not only a private personal matter but has a strong social and community dimension through human refusal of fellowship with God and other humans and through oppressive political structures and exploitative systems (Nolan 1988:43-44; Maimela 1990:54; Villa-Vicencio 1994:191). Another presupposition is a specific understanding of history which rejects the dichotomy between secular history and sacred history and stresses instead the idea that there is only one history which is the history of salvation/perdition or the history leading to total liberation (Bloesch 1981:138).

Therefore, the classical frame which distinguishes between salvation history on one hand, and history of the struggle for liberation on the other is found to be inadequate by liberation theology. For liberation theologians (Mofokeng 1983:53)

the Exodus event forms an important structuring pole for this unitary view of history. This event which is concrete and involves the historical effort of Moses and the children of Israel (a political effort) is simultaneously a saving act of God without its concreteness being diminished.

Does this mean that salvation is synonymous with liberation? Or as Nolan (1988:184) asks: "Are we saying that the good news of salvation in South Africa is simply the struggle for political liberation under another name?" In other words, how is the the relation between salvation and liberation to be understood? Mofokeng (1983:52) articulates this relationship thus:

Salvation is a historical reality and happening which embraces all the dimensions of human existence and all people irrespective of their subjective disposition. It is dynamic and therefore transforms and orientates human reality towards its future fullness. What is in the future is already here and happening in view of the intensity of the presence of the Lord of history. The liberation struggle for the realization of a better world and a better society acquires a great significance in view of this conception of salvation. It is authenticated by the real and present salvation.

This view of salvation does not imply a total identification of salvation here and now with the absolute salvation. Neither is salvation here and now absolutized. Life and the struggle for life is still under the eschatological

horizon and this makes a certain reserve that does not alienate from, nor relativize the here and now, but rather emphasizes the importance of the temporal-historical sphere.

The foregoing explanation by Mofokeng still does not quite explain the relationship between penultimate and ultimate salvation. The assertion that the liberation struggle acquires a great significance in the light of salvation explicates neither the reason, nor the form, nor the role of that significance. In other words, all that Mofokeng does is to claim that there is a relationship between penultimate and ultimate salvation without describing the nature of that relationship. Let us look at how Leonardo Boff attempts to explicate this relationship.

Boff also makes a distinction between salvation and liberation and he starts by noting that within the context of christianity "salvation" is a technical term that expresses "the eschatological condition of the human being, risen and divinized, in the plenitude of the kingdom of God in eternity." He presents the relationship in paradoxical terms as follows (1984:56):

On the one hand this salvation totally surpasses the historical process and is thereby "transhistorical." On the other hand it is within the historical process that this salvation is situated. And because it is situated within the historical process, we may speak of a theological element present in economic, political, and social material.

Liberation on the other hand (Boff 1984:57)

is the act of gradually delivering reality from the various captivities to which it is historically subject and which run counter to God's historical project - which is the upbuilding of the kingdom, a kingdom in which everything is orientated to God, penetrated by God's presence, and glorified, on the cosmic level as on the personal level (the level of divinization).

And so the relationship between salvation and liberation is as follows (Boff 1984:57):

Liberation shows forth the activity of eschatological salvation by anticipation, as the leaven of today in the dough of a reality fully to be transfigured in the eschaton.

Boff then continues to give four models which articulate the relationship between salvation and liberation. In the first of these models, the *Chalcedonian* one, Boff could not be more traditional, a further disclaimer to those liberation theologians who put liberation theology in opposition to traditional theology. In this model the person of Jesus Christ is the "supreme example of how salvation and liberation are interrelated" because Jesus Christ is the revelation of "both God's salvation and human liberation." Jesus is the revelation of "the unity between God's design and its historical mediations." According to this Chalcedonian model "salvation intrinsically includes historical liberations. Jesus, our salvation, is also our liberator: he conjoins salvation to liberation." Because of sin liberation is incomplete and never full whereas salvation is complete, full, total, and final and "never again to be threatened" (Boff 1984:58-60).

In the *sacramental model* the grace of God which includes love and justice is rendered present in the socio-historical dimension of humanity. However, there are other socio-historical realities that mediate love and justice and therefore open humanity to God but they are within spacio-temporal limits and cannot claim to be the whole of justice or the whole of love because they are subject to the regime of sin (Boff 1984:60-62):

Only in the definitive eschatological kingdom will the world, and the human beings who have been saved, be the transparent sacrament of God and of God's love. Until then we live in mutually compenetrating symbolical (unificative) and diabolical (divisive) dimensions. Accordingly, there will be liberations in process that will not be totally identified with definitive salvation.

It is hard to agree with Boff's summation that symbols are essentially unifying? In our experience as christians in South Africa the grace of God in sacraments such as the eucharist and even the church, can hardly be claimed to have been a point of unity. On the contrary, the canonical and theologically legitimated exclusion of black people from breaking bread with their white christian sisters and brothers, and their exclusion from participation in the life of certain sectors of the white church shows the divisive nature of some of the key christian symbols.

The New Testament based *agapic model*, the third of Boff's models, though it does distinguish between salvation and liberation sees a close relationship between the

two. In this view there is a very close and intimate relationship between love of God and love of neighbour which assists us in understanding (Boff 1984:63)

the intimate relationship between salvation and liberation. Neither is purely synonymous with the other. But each is present in the other, in such a way that they are always together, and can no more be separated than confused.

According to the *anthropological model* the human being is constituted of two concrete principles, body and soul, of two dimensions, viz. the immanent and the transcendent. There is a oneness in distinction in the human being and this helps us to understand (Boff 1984:64)<sup>24</sup>

the oneness and the distinction subsisting between eschatological salvation and historical liberation. In historical liberation (corresponding to the body in our model) is the whole of salvation (corresponding to spirit); but this salvation is no more shaped by the confines of a historical liberation than spirit is shaped by body. Salvation always transcends liberation, just as spirit transcends body.

Unlike the preceding three models which merely juxtapose terms rather than explain them, the anthropological model goes a bit further through its useful notion of "oneness in distinction", constituted in the body-spirit and immanent-transcendent relationship. There is a close and dynamic relationship between historical liberation and eschatological salvation because of the fundamental nature of human being who in the body is constituted in history whilst being called beyond history. This is not a dichotomization which opposes body and spirit, history and the eschaton, or which denigrates the body but glorifies the spirit nor which rejects history and embraces the eschatological dimension. What this model does is to establish a positive correlation between the body and spirit and between history and beyond, recognising the inherent value in each and recognising the confines of historical liberation and the transcendence of salvation. Let us now move to see how Nolan sees the relationship between liberation and salvation.

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<sup>24</sup> Another interesting Latin American view of the relation between salvation and liberation is that of G. Gutierrez where liberation is seen as integral to salvation. Villa-Vicencio summarises this view in the following succinct manner: "[Gutierrez] defines [salvation], firstly, in relation to the concrete and immediate desires and aspirations of oppressed people for freedom from all forms of domination and oppression. At a second and deeper level, he sees salvation as operative at the level of empowering (or saving) people to take responsibility for themselves in history, in pursuit of the creation of a new humanity and a new kind of society. At its deepest level, liberation is liberation from sin, which is at the root of all oppression, injustice and domination" (1994:190).

In the view of Nolan (1988:185ff) the difference between salvation and liberation is not that salvation is total and liberation partial. But salvation does say something more than liberation. But in what is this 'more' constituted? Liberation is not turned into salvation merely by adding the element of personal guilt onto it. This is because in practice both salvation and liberation can be partial, as when salvation is reduced to the salvation of souls or when liberation does not take into account the liberation of women. The difference also does not lie in temporal differentiation with salvation being conceived of as encompassing all times and liberation being limited to a particular time. No, says Nolan, the difference is constituted through 'the introduction of God into the picture'. What does this mean?

The key in understanding this lies in the notion of transcendence which in this instance means "going beyond something, going beyond some boundary or limitation" or "going beyond oneself" or "going beyond the status quo, the given situation." Transcendence is not a thing, it is not an object, nor is it the world of the supernatural. It is an experience of going beyond the limitations that the system of oppression imposes. It is an experience of God (Nolan 1988:187-88),

because God is transcendent. God's voice is the call of transcendence that challenges us to go further, to do more, to try harder, to change our lives, to venture out into new areas and into the unknown. It is a liberating experience. God is out there calling us to move beyond the system, beyond sin, beyond suffering, beyond our narrow and limited ideas of what is possible.

What does this 'moving beyond' mean in terms of the relation between salvation and liberation in the context of South Africa? It means that we need to recognise that (Nolan 1988:188-89)

we cannot go beyond everything at the same time. We cannot transcend boundaries that we have not even reached yet. At this moment of time we are called to transcend the particular sinfulness and evil that dominate life in South Africa today, and we are called to do this personally and collectively. When we reach that goal we shall have other boundaries and limitations to break through. But *at this moment* our horizon, our *eschaton*, our salvation is the liberation of South Africa from this particular system of slavery and sin.

In sum then, the key to understanding the relation between salvation and liberation

lies in the eschatological principle which, though it is anticipated in history and concrete situations through liberatory actions, does burst these socio-historical and spatio-temporal confines. It lies in understanding that when God is introduced into the picture an attitude and disposition of openness is effected within our minds and hearts, in our faith. An openness that pushes beyond the limitations of struggle, the limitations of death. An openness in faith "that will enable us to cross those other bridges when we come to them" (Nolan 1988:189).

How is God's salvific actions manifested in the oppressive South African situation? What then does salvation mean according to liberation theology in South Africa? After suggesting that God's attitude towards this oppression is one of anger, Nolan (1988:180-81), puts it as follows:

Consequently, in South Africa today, God is exceptionally busy laying the foundations for a new future. As of old, we are now witnessing the wonderful works of God as we see good coming out of evil and life out of death. The powers of evil are being outwitted by God and used for purposes they would never have dreamt of. With an extraordinary sense of urgency and a life-and-death seriousness, God is preparing the conditions for salvation and bringing people together in solidarity and commitment, fearlessness and hopefulness, excitement, celebration and power. At the same time God is shaking up the white establishment in order to give new sight to the blind. Something miraculously new is happening in South African today and God is behind it working for the good of all.

A key symbol in the articulation and understanding of God's redemptive activity and intention is the notion of *kairos* which in the Kairos Document is defined as "the moment of truth...the moment of grace and opportunity", the favourable time of challenge, an opportunity offered by God.<sup>25</sup> And so the *kairos* calls forth action from those who believe in God's intentions for the poor and oppressed. But more than anything, the salvific intent in the *kairos* is constituted in the fact that the "moment of truth has come *because the day of liberation is near*" (Nolan 1988:183). I now move to consider the soteriology of African Independent Churches (AIC's).<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> The Kairos Document, 1985. In: C. Villa-Vicencio, 1986. *Between Christ and Caesar*. Cape Town: David Philip. In Chapter Three we shall consider how R. Peterson's (1995) interrogation of the notion of *kairos* demonstrates the relationship which exists between temporality, domination, resistance and liberation.

<sup>26</sup> These churches are also referred to as *African Independent Churches* to indicate their structural and

## 2.4 Notions of soteriology in African Independent Churches

### **Black Zionist Meeting**

All the unsung poets  
of this religion  
all those who swear undying  
loyalty with jehovah  
are present tonight

'What will we say  
on the cross?'  
thunders the bearded preacher  
as he leads his flock  
like Moses out  
of the house of bondage  
to meet jehovah  
in prayer and song

For a few hours  
they  
are  
free.

*Zuluboy Molefe*<sup>27</sup>

Before I consider notions of soteriology in the African Independent Churches (AIC's) it is important that I briefly sketch the ecclesio-historical background out of which they emerged and the prevalent views of salvation during these times. Though the AIC's are a phenomenon that spans most of Africa, especially sub-Saharan Africa, for the purposes of this investigation I need to limit my focus to Southern Africa. Though there is evidence that the indigenous peoples were exposed to Christianity as early as the time of Jan van Riebeeck in the second half of the seventeenth century, with the establishment of slave schools in the Cape by the Dutch East India Company (DEIC) where the slaves were "induced to learn

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theological independence from so-called 'mainline churches' or Settler Originated Churches (SOC's) as Cochrane (forthcoming) rightly calls them. Alternately they are called *African Indigenous Churches* to indicate their embrace of the African traditional worldview and culture.

<sup>27</sup> Published in: R. Royston (ed): *To Whom It May Concern*. Johannesburg: Ad. Donker (1973).

christian prayers" by rewarding each with a glass of brandy and two inches of tobacco (Chidester 1992:35-36), it was the Moravians who were the earliest of Protestant churches to send missionaries to South Africa (at the Cape) during the period of 1732-1862 (Sindima 1994:59). Because of the disapproval of the DEIC, the Dutch Reformed Church, and the Classis of Amsterdam this mission, under George Schmidt, proved unsuccessful and he returned to Germany after seven years (Chidester 1992:36).

The Moravians were followed by the London Missionary Society founded in 1795, at first ecumenical but later to become mainly Congregationalist. They were followed by the Glasgow Missionary Society, a project of Scottish Presbyterians, which was formed in 1796. They founded the famous Lovedale Institute at Alice<sup>28</sup> in the Eastern Cape (Sindima 1994:59-60), and they were followed by the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (Chidester 1992:50).

Though there were a couple of false starts, Methodist missionary activity only really took off with the arrival of the 1820 settlers (De Gruchy 1979:14). It was with the arrival of Bishop Robert Gray in 1848 that the Anglican Church took root among all races in South Africa, not least of all with the help of Bishop Colenso<sup>29</sup> of Natal who was later charged to be a heretic by Gray and was eventually deposed and excommunicated (De Gruchy 1979:16-17; Chidester 1992:86). Because of opposition from the Protestant churches, especially the Dutch Reformed churches, the Roman Catholics were not allowed to worship in public until 1804 and it was only in 1837 that they were allowed their first bishop (De Gruchy 1979:97) and so Bishop Patrick Raymond Griffith, an Irish Dominican, accompanied by two priests, arrived in Table Bay in 1838 (Chidester 1992:152). Because "many obstacles were placed in the way of Catholic missions to the indigenous people of the land" (De Gruchy 1979:97) Catholic missionary activity

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<sup>28</sup> All four Mjijima brothers, Charles, Josiah, Timothy, and Enoch went to Lovedale Institute but Enoch, who was to become the founder of the *Israelites*, had to abandon his studies due to illness (Dokoda 05.03.1994; Edgar 1977:24)

<sup>29</sup> Colenso is now widely regarded as one of the few outstanding champions of the lot of Africans during the missionary era and is still known amongst Africans as 'Sobantu', meaning 'the one who loves the people' or 'a man of the people'. Apparently it was his liberal scholarly views, especially with regard to biblical criticism that Colenso got into deep trouble with the Anglican Church, though as De Gruchy puts it "With regard to his missionary policies, Colenso was convinced that the way forward was not to reject African religious traditions and customs out of hand, as other missionaries tended to do, but to leaven African culture and its social system with the gospel. What was required was the transformation of African society, not the detribalization of individuals by turning them into black Europeans (1979:18).

started in earnest after 1860 when Bishop Jean Francois Allard, a French-speaking Oblate of Mary Immaculate (OMI) who had arrived in Natal in 1852 built a mission station in a remote part of Zululand. He had to abandon the mission after a year because the local people showed no interest because of 'their prosperity' (Chidester 1992:154-5). The OMI's left Natal for the land of the Sotho where they were more successful "largely because they provided support for the chief in territorial conflicts" (Chidester 1992:155). Catholic missionary activity in what is now KwaZulu-Natal only really took off in 1885 with the arrival of the Trappist monks under the leadership of Father Franz Pfanner who founded the famous Marianhill Mission.

The European missionaries were to be followed by Americans. By the end of the nineteenth century the National Baptist Convention under Charles S. Morris had established seventeen Baptist congregations in KwaZulu-Natal. Another American church which showed an interest in undertaking missionary work in South Africa in 1897 and which came to be very influential was the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion which was founded in 1896 by John Alexander Dowie around Chicago, Illinois (Sundkler 1976:30; Chidester 1992:122-3). This mission to South Africa finally took off in 1904 and had a great impact on the formation and proliferation of the Zionist type of AIC's whose soteriology I shall consider below.

#### **2.4.1 Salvation as deculturization**

With regard to the notion of salvation the European protestant missionaries of the nineteenth century placed great emphasis on the written word contained in the Bible which they (Chidester 1992:37)

read under the influence of the evangelical revivals as if it contained a single, unified message of sin and salvation. Signs of saving grace were found in faith, devotion, and personal conversion. Influenced by the Industrial Revolution as well as the evangelical revival, however, the missionaries promoted a blend of 'Christian civilization' that identified signs of salvation in certain types of moral discipline and productive labour.

Methodist support for the extension of christian missions in Southern Africa and elsewhere during the nineteenth century was motivated by evangelical notions of

personal salvation, the saving of individual souls, and they also paid some attention to social welfare (Chidester 1992:84). These views came from the influence of John Wesley's movement which began in the 1740's and which emphasized "a personal religious experience of guilt for sin, acceptance of Christ, assurance of forgiveness, and individual sanctification" (Chidester 1992:84).

How did these notions of salvation translate into missionary enterprise? These views of salvation translated themselves into an array of missionary practices primarily aimed at the conversion<sup>30</sup>, i.e. religious change of the indigenous peoples from 'superstitious' and 'heathen' ways. For the Methodist missionaries who worked amongst the Tswana conversion meant "sincere personal belief and committed membership of a community in Christ" (Comaroff 1991:249). They hoped to turn the Tswana "into healthy Protestant individuals, self-determining agents of planned activity and moral accounting, and ultimately to transform them into a free and self-reliant peasantry" (Kiernan 1990:14). In line with this bishop Gray established the Zonnebloem College<sup>31</sup> in Cape Town for the sons of African chiefs in order "to take them out of their traditional culture and turn them into good Anglicans fitted for English society" (De Gruchy 1979:18).

For other missionaries this deculturization of the Africans meant the rejection of polygamy as well as "an overt assault on lobola or brideprice, one of the lynchpins of customary relations" (Kiernan 1990:15-18), and for others it meant the introduction of new agricultural and irrigation methods like the plough and drawing water from the ground which was meant to challenge the powers of the traditional rainmakers (Comaroff 1991:211). Because of opposition from the African people some missionaries resorted to "buying children with cattle" (Kiernan 1990:19). In sum, this assault of the missionaries (Comaroff 1990:310)

**was driven by a universalizing ethos whose prime object was to engage the Africans in a web of symbolic and material transactions that would bind them**

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<sup>30</sup> The Comaroffs argue that the modern Protestant notion of conversion is an ideologically saturated construct that is framed in rational imagery and the reflective self and that its use in the African mission context has tended "to conflate changes in individual spiritual identity with cultural transformation, thereby muddying the historical relationship between subjective experience and collective existence" and that its use as a noun turns it into a thing that is divorced from the totality of symbols and meanings that make up the 'taken-for-granted' world of people. Couched in rational imagery and the reflective self conversion is another name for a moral economy which is a spiritual reflection of the material economies of the marketplace (1991:250-251).

<sup>31</sup> Enoch Mgiijima's three brothers attended Zonnebloem College (Edgar 1977:24).

ever more securely to the colonizing culture. Only that way would the savage finally be drawn into the purview of a global, rationalized civilization.

How did the indigenous peoples perceive the missionaries? How did they respond to these efforts of the missionary enterprise aimed at their salvation and how did it affect them? The Comaroffs explain the interaction between Africans and missionaries in terms of the dialectic of "contestation and compliance, fascination and repulsion" (1990:309). As can be expected, initially the African peoples opposed and resisted the efforts of the missionaries to turn them into christians. This opposition and resistance motivated by a number of factors manifested itself in a variety of ways. Many Africans perceived the missionary enterprise as being aimed at destroying the African way of life and so some groupings such as the Zulus found ways of making sure that only children were exposed to missionary education and even at that this exposure was minimal (Kiernan 1990:18).

The general policy adopted by the Nguni was to neutralise the influence of the mission by isolation and quarantine, allowing only the secular assets of the missionary to filter through.

In a similar way the Tswana chiefs had an ambivalent attitude towards the missionaries. On the one hand they resented the inroads that the missionaries were making into the socio-religious way of life of the Tswana and on the other hand they welcomed the material and skills resources that accrued from their interaction with the missionaries (Kiernan 1990:16). Moshweshwe of the Sotho used the missionaries "to procure training for his people and plac[ed] them on exposed frontiers to act as agents for the expansion of his authority" (Saayman 1990:33).

Even subsequent affiliation to christianity meant different things to different groups and individual Africans and as a result the act of conversion, understood by the missionaries to be "sincere personal belief and committed membership of a community in Christ" was unreliable as a measure of the extent to which Africans had committed themselves to the values of christianity (Comaroff 1991:249). If there was a commitment, the best that can be said about it is that it was a commitment defined by the understanding, needs and priorities of the Africans rather than those of the missionaries. As the Comaroffs (1991:250) put it

Most Tlhaping and Rolong, in the nineteenth century, took part in Christian

ritual as selectively as they took on other mission innovations. They were not constrained by a sense of systematic theology or universal truth, by any meaningful idea of personalized professions of faith or by the notion that adherence to one religion excluded involvement in all others.

In the eastern Cape frontier the interaction and confrontation between christianity, the missionaries and colonists on one hand and Africans and African culture on the other had disastrous consequences in what came to be known as the 'cattle killing movement' of April 1856 to May 1857. The Xhosa had attempted to resist the colonialists for a period of about one hundred years in what came to be known as the 'frontier wars' and conditions became desperate because the frontier had been turned "into a region of death, as colonial troops systematically killed people, raided cattle, and destroyed crops in a campaign of extermination" and also because of an epidemic that killed scores of cattle (Chidester 1992:51-52).

Closely tied to the cattle killing was a specific notion of salvation emanating from need experienced at both the material and spiritual spheres of existence. A councillor of chief Sarhili, Mhlakaza, had been a christian convert and had served the Anglican Archdeacon Nathaniel J. Merriman of Grahamstown but became disillusioned with the Anglican church and left it when Merriman rejected his aspirations to ministry in the Anglican church (Chidester 1992:52). Mhlakaza then turned to the gospel as preached by Ntsikana<sup>32</sup> which promised the imminent coming of the messiah *Sifubasibanzi*<sup>33</sup> (the Broad-chested One). Apparently Mhlakaza then (Brownlee in Chidester 1992:51)

reported that his teenaged niece, Nongqawuse, had seen a vision of strange people - some Russians [who at that time were fighting the British in the Crimean War], some Xhosa ancestors - who appeared with many cattle and promised to return to drive away the white invaders and restore the land, cattle, and prosperity to the people. Before the ancestors could return, however, the living had to put away witchcraft, those evil practices that divided the unity and disrupted the harmony of the social order. As evidence that they had renounced witchcraft and trusted in the promise of redemption, Mhlakaza drew on the authority of his young niece's vision to instruct people that they had to sacrifice all their cattle in anticipation of the resurrection of their ancestors and the overthrow of white domination

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<sup>32</sup> In Chapter 9 in the section dealing with the 'three wise men' we shall see the important role that the *Israelites* accord Ntsikana of Gabha in the call of Mgijima.

<sup>33</sup> We shall see below how the *Israelites* have adopted the name *Sifubasibanzi* in referring to God.

About 400,000 cattle were destroyed, 40,000 people died and another 40,000 became displaced and had to avail themselves as labourers for the colonists when the prophecy was not fulfilled (Chidester 1992:51). Apparently many of those who believed in the prophecies of Nongqawuse (Chidester 1992:52)

were convinced that the appearance of [Sifubasibanzi] and the return of the dead were consistent with biblical accounts of resurrection. Arguing that the return of the ancestors and cattle was no more unlikely than many stories in the Bible, believers adopted the prophetic promise as an even greater spiritual knowledge and power than the Bible because it was a new revelation that specifically addressed the historical situation of the Xhosa on the eastern Cape frontier.

In spite of the resistance and opposition put up by many African groupings such as the struggle "to retain control over space and place, words and water" (Comaroff 1990: 310) christianity and the European culture and the worldview of modernity or *sekgoa* as the Sotho groupings called it did gain a firm foothold into South Africa. This ascendancy of christianity and *sekgoa* can, *inter alia*, be ascribed to the subtle transformation of the Africans through their participation in the discourse of christianity and *sekgoa* and a new hegemony eventually did take root (Comaroff 1990:310-311).

This hegemony expressed itself in categories such as time and place and in values such as individualism and egalitarianism (Kiernan 1990:13). Also, this hegemony gained ground with the gradual decline of chiefly control, the disintegration of other traditional institutions (Kiernan 1990:19) and "the destruction of relatively independent African polities at the end of the nineteenth century" (Chidester 1992:112). And so the stage was set for christianity to take root amongst the African peoples though opposition and resistance did not entirely cease. The Xhosa called those that adopted christianity *amagqobhoka*, 'people with a hole', indicating that they had opened themselves to the new ways or alternately they were referred to as *abantu bases'kolweni*, 'people of the school' to distinguish them from *abantu ababomvu*, 'the red people', indicating those who were opposed to the new ways and were holding on to the old ways through their continued use of red ochre.

By 1857 the first African, Tiyo Soga, was ordained as a minister and he had been

trained in Scotland under the auspices of the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland and the Glasgow African Missionary Society (Chidester 1992:52-53). Soga represented a class of an educated elite "who aspired to westernized values, lifestyles, and citizenship" but whose efforts were frustrated and so some of them explored the formation of independent Christian churches as an alternative avenue for advancing their religious and political interests"(Chidester 1992:53-54). Nehemiah Tile a Wesleyan Methodist who had been trained Healdtown in the eastern Cape was ordained as a minister on probation in 1879. He resigned from the Methodist church when his white superior Theophilus Chubb objected to his "involvement in Thembu political protest against the colonial government rule in the eastern Cape." In 1884 he founded the Thembu National Church where he was able to continue his opposition to the colonial government in the Cape (Chidester 1992:114-115). With this we come to consider the soteriological assumptions of the African Independent Churches (AIC's).

#### 2.4.2 Independentism

African Independent Churches or independent churches have traditionally been classified into two main types, the Ethiopian type and the Zionist type<sup>34</sup>. In the view of Makhubu (1988:19)

The independent churches are in a sense an expression of the desire to worship in freedom. They are an expression of protest against oppression. It is 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 mainline mission churches.

And yet when discussing the question of the involvement of AIC's in politics Makhubu (1988:68) asserts that

nothing or very little is said about politics in their pulpits. This is because most

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<sup>34</sup> This typology was first developed by B. Sundkler in *Bantu Prophets in South Africa* first published in 1948. But as Sundkler explains, this typification is not at all unproblematic because of the variety of independentism amongst African Christians and also because of the problematic nature of terms such as 'Zionist' (1976:305-310). For instance, churches such as the Nazarites of Shembe strictly would not fall in any of these two types. Paul Makhubu in his *Who Are the Independent Churches?* adds *Apostolic-type*, *Evangelical-Pentecostal-type*, and *Zionist-Cum-Ethiopian* type churches to Sundkler's typology (1988:12-16). Sundkler suggests therefore that terms such as Ethiopian and Zionist should be understood as "comprehensive terms" rather than strict and rigorous categories.

AICs take the Bible very literally. Whatever the Bible says about obedience to authority they accept, and take it seriously to the letter. Romans Chapter 13 is always quoted. Their social ethic seems to be that, every man and woman can hold or have his political views, and can do whatever he wants, like associating with political organizations and parties of his or her choice. This is the matter for the individual alone and does not involve the church.

The Ethiopian type is at times traced back to the end of the nineteenth century. It represents the movement that saw the oppression of Africans "as the starting point for their questions about the meaning of the gospel" and "was a direct religious response to oppression and conquest" and its function in respect of industrial conditions was "the raising up of black identity and the creation of an inter-tribal church-based communications system" (Kamphausen cited in Cochrane 1987:89-90). The Africans who formed Ethiopian type churches in the 1880's and 1890's broke away from the mission churches such as Joseph Napo Kanyane who broke from the Anglican church and formed the African Church in 1889, and Mangena M. Mokone formerly a Methodist who founded the Ethiopian Church in 1892. James Mata Dwane had been a minister in the Methodist mission church which he left to join Mokone's Ethiopian Church when after returning from a fundraising tour in England he was sidelined in the decisionmaking structures that distributed these funds (Chidester 1992:116-117). Dwane then superseded Mokone in the leadership of the Ethiopian Church (Hinchliff 1963:202). And so the notion of Ethiopia became symbolic for the aspirations of Africans for liberation from white oppression and referred to independent African Christianity (Chidester 1992:117).

'Ethiopia' became a symbol not only for Africans but also for African-Americans for whom it held a promise of black redemption and liberation. It was especially the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) founded in Philadelphia by Richard Allen in 1787 which came to embrace this view under the leadership of Bishop Henry M. Turner. Turner aspired for the unity of "black Christians in America and Africa in human dignity, freedom, and advancement" and so the connection was made with the Ethiopian Church in South Africa in 1896 when James Dwane went to America to have the Ethiopian Church affiliated to the AME church. It was Turner's turn to visit South Africa in 1898 and during this visit he consecrated Dwane as assistant bishop, ordained 65 ministers, and bought a site for a school in Queenstown" (Sundkler cited in Chidester 1992:118). Ties with the AME in America were severed in 1899 when Dwane failed to gain recognition as

a full bishop in the AME and he formed the Order of Ethiopia as a semi-autonomous order within the Church of the Province of Southern Africa (Chidester 1992:118). And so the formal acceptance of the Order of Ethiopia into the Church of the Province of Southern Africa happened in August 1900 (Chirenje 1987:80).

However, not all 'Ethiopian' type churches had an overt political agenda. For instance, Pambani J. Mzimba who founded the Presbyterian Church of Africa in 1898 urged that black christians should not concern themselves with politics but rather concentrate on education and economic advancement. This notwithstanding, the government perceived the Ethiopian movement as a threat simply by virtue of its independence from white control" (Chidester 1992:118-119) and in 1903-1905 a government initiated commission of inquiry into Ethiopianism whose findings indicated "that independent African Christian churches were perceived in many different ways in South Africa" (Chidester 1992:120) and the South African Native Affairs Commission's recommendation was that the movement should not be banned (Chidester 1992:121). But all in all Ethiopian type churches did get involved in opposition politics, especially in the South African Native National Congress which was formed in 1912 and later became the African National Congress (Chidester 1992:122).

The response of the settler churches to the independent movement displayed (Cochrane 1987:92)

those same ambiguous, contradictory characteristics and ideologically limited tolerances which we have observed in other respects. Their worries subsided only once the Ethiopian movement itself crumbled in the face of their political failure, that is, their inability to successfully confront white dominance in all spheres of black life.

### **2.4.3 Salvation in Zion**

Because the Zionist AIC's creatively utilise African traditional cosmology in their theology (Kiernan 1990:23,24) it is important that I briefly sketch notions cognate to salvation in African Traditional Religion (ATR). Strictly speaking, the concept of salvation with all its specific connotations and meanings related to the Judeo-Christian worldview is a christian construct which is foreign to the African traditional worldview. However, if one accepts that the concerns and object of the

christian doctrine of salvation are encapsulated in what Nürnbergger has referred to as comprehensive wellbeing then it is legitimate to speak of cognate categories in ATR. But what are these categories and how does ATR attempt to respond to what Nürnbergger has referred to as experienced need? In order to understand what constitutes cognate categories to the notion of salvation in ATR it is important to understand African traditional cosmology and spirituality. Let me attempt to paint a few bold strokes of the elements which constitute this cosmology and spirituality.

Traditionally, the cosmos is conceived of in bipartite terms as consisting of the realm of the living and the realm of *abaphansi* (literally 'those underground'), the shades<sup>35</sup> or ancestors and God. According to Berglund the realm of *abaphansi*, those under (the earth), is the *nightworld* and can be understood as a mirror image of the realm of the living which is the *dayworld*. The realm of *abaphansi* is associated with notions of "repose, tranquility, and peace [and] appears as the quintessence of perfection" (Zahan 1979:49).

When night befalls the realm of the living the realm of *abaphansi* becomes dayworld. And so *abaphansi* 'wake' from their sleep and go about their 'daily' business, communicating with and visiting the living in their sleep. "Dreams are a channel of communication between survivors and the shades. In dreams the shades become very real, intimate and concrete" (Berglund 1976:98). Through these nocturnal visitations and communications the relationship between the living and *abaphansi* is kept alive in a dynamic and at times dramatic fashion. But who are *abaphansi* and what is their business?

It is not everyone who has gone before who can become an ancestor (Bockie 1993:134; Zahan 1979:49). It is those, usually male, who have reached a great age and have acquired along with longevity a profound experience of people and things (Zahan 1979:49). Thus a young person does not usually become an ancestor. Also, those who die as a result of dishonourable disease do not usually become ancestors. The deformed and the mentally ill are also excluded from becoming ancestors (Zahan 1979:50).

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<sup>35</sup> For a discussion of other Zulu names and ideas for ancestors see A-I. Berglund's *Zulu Thought-Patterns and Symbolism*.

The characteristics of *abaphansi* are "wisdom, physical and moral integrity, passage through life without deviating from its normal course, and communal identification with the society to which [they] belong. But not all those who have qualified in accordance with the above description are invoked as ancestors by their descendants." Described as God's intermediaries (Zahan 1979:50; Bockie 1993:134) the ancestors are also hierarchically organised like the society of the living and their function is make sure that social relationships are well ordered and also to ensure the fertility of all living organism (Setiloane 1976:64)

At the centre of this cosmology and this dynamic relationship is *impilo*, in the Nguni languages, or *bophelo* in the Sotho languages. It can roughly be translated as well-being. It is the prerogative of the ancestors to ensure *impilo*. It is around the notion of *impilo* that traditional African spirituality crystallizes. The well-being of the community, the fertility of the soil, and the individual successes or failures depend on ancestral blessings (Bockie 1993:18). According to Zahan (Zahan 1979:4-5)

the essence of African spirituality lies in the feeling man has of being at once an image, model, and integral part of the world in whose cyclical life he senses himself deeply and necessarily engaged.

The human being always in community is an integral part of the cyclical life of the world of nature, *indalo*. The human being is located within *indalo* and the life of the human being in community can neither be distinguished nor be separated from the life of *indalo*. Not only does the human being generate life but the human being is generated as life by *indalo*.

The human being's journey through life is by means of rites of passage. As the human being progresses through life through this relationship the humanness in him or her is increased and tends towards fullness and completion. This can also be called the cycle of becoming. This inclination towards completeness and full humanness is a gift of the transcendent. Without this relationship with the transcendent there is stagnation and with this stagnation the cycle of life regresses towards a cycle of un-becoming. Un-becoming is the negation of *impilo* which is manifested through illness, misfortune, barrenness and infertility, drought, floods, witchcraft, sorcery, through bad relationships among the living and through bad

relationships between the living and *abaphansi* which results in their "withdrawal of life's blessings and support" (Maimela 1985:69). *Impilo* is restored or ensured through protective rites, appeasing rites, and purificatory rites (Maimela 1985:69-70). *Abaphansi* bestow *impilo* through the medium of *inyanga* or *isangoma* (singular for diviners), their servants, media who have a special calling from *abaphansi* and have gone through training (Berglund 1976). Having sketched traditional African cosmology I now we move to consider the Zionist type of African Independent Churches, or *AmaZiyoni* as they call themselves.

As I indicated already, it was the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion of John Alexander Dowie (1847-1907), an apocalyptic faith-healer, which was instrumental in the formation of Zionist type churches in South Africa. Sundkler describes *AmaZiyoni* as " "charismatic" groups, emphasizing Divine Healing and 'Prophecy' " (1976:16). Despite these links to Dowie (Ngubane 1986:78)

the actual African Zionist groups of churches were founded by Africans themselves. They are founded and led by charismatic prophet-healers who receive a call through revelation in 'voices', visions and dreams to proclaim messages of prayer and miraculous healing."

In terms of membership *AmaZiyoni* are drawn from the poorest in the rural areas townships and the working class (Mosala 1985:110). In the view of Paul Makhubu *AmaZiyoni* represent "unique and sometimes extreme variations of the AIC's in terms of orthodox Christian theology" (Makhubu 1988:10).

What then can be said to be the key elements that shape Zionist soteriological perspectives? Again, if we take our cue from Nürnberg's view of salvation as a response to experienced need and as comprehensive wellbeing, the following tentative suggestions can be made. In order to understand the nature and extent of the need experienced by Africans during the end of the last century and the turn of this century one has to take into account a number of factors. The industrialization and urbanization of South Africa as a result of the discovery of diamonds and gold resulted in Africans being (Sundkler 1976:310-11)

uprooted... [and being] torn from [their] traditional tribal milieu and being placed in the turmoil of the city. While this is a valid consideration, one should not forget the other dimension of the alienation crisis among the African

masses: the experience of being deprived of their land, suddenly finding themselves landless and forced to serve as squatters on Boer farms. In the case of the Zulu, this was one principal consequence of the Zulu war of 1879 and the partition of Zululand. Twenty years later, there followed the Boer war....

In 1903, after the Boer War there was a severe drought (Sundkler 1976:43). But it was especially the Natives Land Act of 1913 which had a traumatic impact on many Africans in that with the loss of land Africans also lost their identity (Sundkler 1976:311). "The Land Act was a sweeping measure designed to demarcate the 'Native Reserves', and to reduce rent-paying squatters and share-croppers 'to the level of labour tenants'" (Cochrane 1987:102). Mofokeng explains the effects of these measures on the Africans thus: "an assault on their land is tantamount to an assault on their very humanity and vice versa" because land (Mofokeng 1983:231)

is the vital and essential part of the being of black people. Black people understand and experience themselves as being in a vital connection not only with their land but also with the departed, the living-dead. It is a connection without which they cannot contemplate their being and their future.

And as they joined the Zionist churches it was a fundamental struggle, a struggle for identity, wellbeing, health, integration and meaning (Sundkler 1976:311-12). And so it was that generally in the 1920s and 1930s these independent churches (Chidester 1992:113)

advanced a religious protest to black dispossession by emphasizing land and sacred sites that became alternative centers of symbolic order in a disordered world.

In my view it is for this reason that the notion of 'Zion' constitutes one of the key symbols that shape the soteriological notions of *AmaZiyoni*<sup>36</sup>. The symbol of Zion encapsulates the answers to the questions I posed in the introduction while at the same time adding a new dimension to these questions. As a reminder the questions I posed in my attempt to come to terms with the meaning of the notion of salvation were: Who/what is God? Who and what are the processes, personalities and events

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<sup>36</sup> It is important to note that as early as 1866 Tiyo Soga referred to the thriving Mgwali mission which he had built as Mount Zion (Chidester 1992:53).

through which God acts? How does God act? What does it mean that God delivers humanity? What and who are these processes, personalities, events and systems that are preventive to humanity? Who/what is humanity's desired state of being? The new dimension that this symbol adds is spatio-spiritual in that one is forced to ask the question: *Where* does God deliver humanity? The answer is 'In Zion'.

As in the Old Testament, 'Zion' is a sacred place. In the context of *AmaZiyoni* it stands for what they long for, for what they no longer have a right to possess, land (Sundkler 1976:315). Making a point on the notion of Zion during a Zionist worship service Sundkler (1976:319) makes the following important comment

To the distant onlooker, the loud and lively Zion worship seemed like an escape into Utopia. Yet, at least in some of these men and women something had happened - and happened through Zion - which made them more prepared for the next phase and stage in the struggle for the liberation of man. There was a new realization of selfhood and worthy identity in these men and women because of their discovery, in and with Zion, of the richness and relevance of their own religious and cultural expressions. This led some of them to readiness for cultural creativity and social involvement which in any society must be given high priority.

Zion is a reality or 'place' to be entered as one of the first African Zionists put it, "The whole world must be converted and enter Zion" (Sundkler 1976:47). "What Zionism holds out to the poor and despised is self-respect, economic and social support, a healing service and a general sense of security" (Kiernan 1990:23). It is in Zion where *uMoya*, the Holy Spirit, dwells, where prophecy occurs, where healing happens and health and wellbeing are restored. When a person is ill it is the spirit which through revelatory prophecy effects healing, health and wellbeing (Makhubu 1988:63). *UMoya* "is the supreme and distinctive source of Zionist power to do good, to overcome sorcery and to restore health, and communal prayer is the means of tapping and deploying that power" (Kiernan 1990:23). Furthermore, Zion is an experience of safety and protection, of deliverance from the hostile and dangerous world. It is an experience in liminality because (Bate 1995:96)

The world is seen as a dangerous place and entry into the Zionist meeting room is a liminal experience of leaving that world and entering into another. So people leave their shoes at the entrance, the doors and windows are closed

and the curtains are drawn during the healing ritual.

As Sundkler puts it: "To those in the movement, Zion meant newness of life, health and wholeness, a new identity" (1976:305). But Zion also represents a way and rule of life, an attitude as the prohibitions against eating pork, smoking, and drinking alcohol show. More than anything, what Zion succeeds in doing is to project "a creative blend of African and Christian traditions" (Kiernan 1990:24). The Bible is at the center of this blend with Jesus playing a key role in healing and he (Makhubu 1988:64)

is accepted as the model healer. It is believed that what he did as a healer according to the Gospel records He can still do today. Jesus of Nazareth is called upon when praying for the sick or when any other elements are used. Demons are also cast out in His name. It is preached that without Jesus there is no healing.

And so "...God's Salvation in Jesus Christ is mediated to heal the whole person" (Becken cited in Bate 1995:157).

## **2.5 Conclusion.**

What can we conclude from the above in the light of the questions that I posed in the introduction? What notions of salvation within the liberation trajectory in South Africa have come to the fore in the light of these questions? Our brief historical overview showed us that from the perspective of the indigenous peoples, the encounter with colonialism and missionary Christianity has been an extended experience of political oppression and religious domination, deculturization, dehumanization, and economic exploitation. It is these factors which constitute what I referred to in the beginning as processes, personalities, events and systems that are preventive in achieving God's desired state for human beings.

But in spite of the suffering that this encounter brought about the indigenous peoples did in the end accept the christian message of salvation. But the most critical observation to make and conclusion to draw in this regard is that the acceptance of the christian message of salvation by the indigenous peoples has not necessarily been in accordance with the prescriptions, descriptions and expectations of the carriers and heralds of this message. What has happened is that

the poor and oppressed have reappropriated and reinterpreted this message of salvation according to their own experienced need, the need for liberation - liberation from political oppression, liberation from cultural and religious domination, liberation from economic exploitation, liberation from racist policies and politics. In terms of the questions I posed initially it is this liberation which constitutes their desired state of being. But how has this re-interpretation and reappropriation of the message of salvation manifested itself?

The re-interpretation and reappropriation of the christian message of salvation has been theologically articulated by means of four key symbolic constructs. These are: *Ethiopia*, *Zion*, *Blackness*, and *Kairos*. Each of these soteriological constructs historically represents specific moments and emphases in the cultural-political-theological struggle of the poor and oppressed against the hegemony of the ruling and dominant class. In other words, these soteriological symbols represent a counter-hermeneutics and a counter-epistemology around which resistance and protest have been theologically organised. Though these symbolic constructs are not originally African in the sense that their origins lie outside South Africa they are South African in the sense that they have been reappropriated for the South African context in a creative and innovative manner and have developed a specific South African identity and character. Let me offer some concluding reflections on these symbolic soteriological innovations.

The notion of *Ethiopia* which came into existence at the end of the nineteenth century and the turn of this century represents the symbol around which a discursive praxis for breaking ties with the mission churches emerged. The objective of this praxis was to counter missionary ideas that Africans were to be perpetual minors in terms of decision making, authority structures and the organization and administration of the church. This can be seen in Joseph Napo Kanyane's break with the Anglican church and his formation of an alternative ecclesial centre in the African Church in 1889. It is not theologically and politically insignificant that he called his church *African*. An element of this significance must include a reclamation and affirmation of the African identity and subjectivity vis-a-vis the official and dominant view of African administrative incapability and christian immaturity. This discursive praxis sought to give effect to the assertion that one can be African, and christian, and in control of the church.

The formation of alternative ecclesial centres can also be seen in Mangena M. Mokone's break with the Methodist church and his formation of the Ethiopian Church in 1892. Again, there is a rhetorical significance in the choice of *Ethiopia* as the name for his church. This alternative ecclesial centre was further strengthened when James Mata Dwane left the Methodist Church to join Mokone's Ethiopian Church who he later superseded in leadership. And so Ethiopia represents not only an alternative ecclesial centre for African affirmation but also an alternative medium and symbol of salvation under the control of Africans. And so Africans were empowered to control not only the discourse of salvation but also the temporal structures through which such salvation was to be attained.

The symbol of *Zion* whose adherents are drawn mainly from the working class (Kiernan 1990:23) represents a different emphasis in the history of the re-interpretation and reappropriation of the message of salvation. The special character of the discursive praxis constructed around the notion of Zion lies in the utilization of some key concepts and categories drawn from traditional African culture and thought-patterns relating to health, wholeness, wellbeing and prosperity and their creative fusion with Jesus' key redemptive activity epitomised in his healing ministry. It is not insignificant that this theological innovation occurred as the proletarianization of Africans increased and became entrenched. In my view both Mosala and the liberal anthropologists who he criticises are correct in their understanding and interpretation of the phenomenon of Zion. Mosala is correct when he insists that a historical-materialist interpretation of Zion will yield new insights. Liberal anthropologists like West and Sundkler are also correct when they interpret Zion from the perspective of social psychology. Zion as a spatio-spiritual reality represents the struggle for the land that has been lost and the negation of the resultant loss of identity and a redefinition of selfhood, hence the emphasis on *impilo*, health and wellbeing, through a variety of creative healing rites and ceremonies. Zion is an alternative ecclesial centre and medium of salvation based on a system of meaning and symbolic universe constructed by Africans and under their control. This symbolic universe takes cognisance of African cultural milieu, the redemptive message of the Bible, and socio-political realities of landlessness, deprivation and oppression.

The third key soteriological innovation, *Blackness*, whose theological and ideological roots can be traced to the struggle of African-Americans in the USA

constitutes a discursive praxis whose objective has been to counter the debilitating and demoralising psycho-social effects of white racist denigration of the blackness of black people. A denigration whose effects were the internalization of an inferiority complex, the acceptance that black equals non-being, non-person, the negation of black subjectivity. The discourse of Black Theology sought to place blackness in the centre of the recovery of personhood and the subjectivity of black people. More than anything, this discourse asserted that the programme to regenerate black identity was indeed God's project epitomised in the salvific mission of the Black Messiah. The fundamental point of departure in this discourse was to assert theologically the blackness of the Messiah and the Messiah's commitment to the cause of Black people. Unlike the discursive praxis of *Ethiopia* and *Zion* Black Theology did not attempt to create physical or structural alternative ecclesial centres but rather to transform the theological constructions of existing ecclesial structures and in that way subverting theologically the hegemony that 'white-is-right-is-might-is-divine'. This discursive praxis manifested itself therefore in a hermeneutics and epistemology of blackness. And so the Bible was read from the perspective of the commitment to the regeneration of blackness as a positive constitution of the identity of black people and there was a commitment to the construction and production of a theology commensurate with and congruent to such a reading of the Bible and an understanding of God. Socially this was expressed through the *Black Community Programmes* and culturally through Black performed and visual art.

The fourth symbolic soteriological construct that I have identified within the liberation trajectory in South Africa is *Kairos*. This theological construct which came into existence in the mid-1980s represents a critical moment in the resistance and struggle against what it identified as 'state theology' and 'church theology' which gave legitimacy to apartheid. *Kairos* represents a redemptive moment epitomised in the construction of a counter theology which it termed *prophetic theology* whose objective was to take an unequivocal stand against the repression of the apartheid state. The starting point in the discourse of *kairos* was to identify the crisis brought about by repression as a *moment of grace*, an *opportunity for decisive action*. *Kairos* is a moment of action not only against the apartheid state but also against a specific reading of Romans 13,1-7, against a theology of law and order, and against an anti-communist theology. And so the discourse of *kairos* theology was constructed around the methodological assumptions of social

analysis, around the redemptive actions of Jesus for the poor and oppressed, around anti-tyrannic theology in the christian tradition and around hope for a better future for the poor and oppressed. In short, *kairos* announces a moment and opportunity for salvation.

## CHAPTER 3

# METHODOLOGICAL CONSTRUCTS AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: RICOEUR TO THE RESCUE

"It is not difficult to feel like Hansel and Gretel in the woods, who discover that the bread crumbs they have dropped behind them to mark their way have been eaten up by birds; we have no way to go but forward without complete certainty as to where we've been, despite the frequent summaries and resting places along the way. With so many trees, how can we be sure what the forest actually looks like?"

(Hans Kellner describing what he rightly calls "the sheer monumentality of Paul Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative*")

### 3.0 Introduction

This chapter constitutes the first leg of the theoretical framework for this investigation. Its overarching thrust is methodological. It seeks to propose and present a theoretical framework through which the empirical data obtained in the course of this investigation can be organised, analysed, and interpreted and by which this data be held together and presented in a coherent fashion. In constructing the theoretical framework I shall draw largely though not exclusively from the hermeneutic philosophy of Paul Ricoeur, especially his reflections on *Imagination, Temporality and Narrativity, Possibility, Metaphor and Language*. These ideas are not just closely related but constitute a 'single' thinking<sup>1</sup>. In taking this step I give credit to Kevin J. Vanhoozer's mediatory project, *Biblical narrative in the philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*, which after many agonizing hours attempting a direct assault on Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative*, helped clarify the way in which Ricoeur's theory might help me organise, process and make sense of my empirical data in a framework that hopefully is both intelligible and exciting. In this

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<sup>1</sup> As Ricoeur puts it, *The Rule of Metaphor* and *Time and Narrative* form a pair that was conceived together and "the meaning-effects produced by each of them belong to the same basic phenomenon of semantic innovation" (1984:ix). Therefore, my treatment of each of these notions as individual or discrete is artificial as will be evident below.

mediatory project Vanhoozer describes his work on Ricoeur as intending "to bridge the gap between those treatments on Ricoeur that focus on his philosophy and hermeneutics to the exclusion of his theology on one hand, and those that focus on the theological significance of his hermeneutics without attending to his larger philosophical project on the other" (1990:3). Vanhoozer's project does not only succeed in achieving his stated intentions but more importantly, in terms of my much more modest research interests and concerns, he succeeds in presenting and making Ricoeur accessible and exciting.

In constructing my theoretical framework in this chapter I shall focus on the following key concepts in the thought of Ricoeur: (a) the function and constitution of imagination, with a special focus on the complex and mutual relationship between ideology and utopia, (b) the dynamic operation of time: the present, past and future, (c) the nature and function of narrative, the story, real and fictive, in constructing an identity, and (d) the use of metaphor and language in extending beyond present limits to invent new possibilities.

In deepening the foundations for understanding how time relates to the *Israelites'* transformed living I shall also draw on R. Peterson's theory of time<sup>2</sup>. Drawing on a variety of thinkers, especially Postone's reconceptualization of Marx, Peterson argues that time is not neutral but is fundamentally laden with universalising and domination interests. He then goes on to demonstrate how the AIC's reconstitute time as ritual kairotic time which is resistance against the domination of abstract chronotic time. In Chapter Five we shall see how the symbolic universe of the *Israelites* is constituted as resistant ritual kairotic time.

I have chosen these key concepts in order to lay a foundation for an appropriate understanding of the new and transformed life that the followers of Mjijima, the

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<sup>2</sup> In this very important Ph.D. project entitled *Time, Resistance and Reconstruction: Rethinking Kairos Theology in South Africa today*, Chicago University, 1995, Peterson undertakes to reconstruct and rethink the notion of *kairos* which is a key symbol in South African prophetic theology epitomised in the Kairos Document. With this reconstruction he intends to resolve the conflict within the Prophetic theology paradigm which leads to the methodological marginalization of the AIC's. In his view this conflict is constituted in the two norms that this theology, also known as *kairos theology*, uses for evaluating and including theological data, viz. a socio-cultural norm and an ethico-political norm. The former relates to "which site of experience, or which class position, or which 'authentic' tradition is to be given primacy" as a source of theology and the latter "which evaluates all religious practices and discourses in terms of their ethical and political horizon" (1995:8).

*Israelites*, attempt to live. My hypothesis is that this attempt to live a transformed life needs to be understood in relation to the material, cultural, and religious context of domination from which the *Israelites* seek to be saved. We shall see below the various ways in which this quest for salvation is articulated and expressed. In living this new and transformed life the *Israelites* make use of a variety of imaginative devices which are at first not easily understandable and could be easily dismissed as illogical and fanatic. It is here that Ricoeur's theory of imagination becomes useful. It helps to clarify the complex processes that lie at the root of the practices of the imagination.

Ricoeur's theory of the relationship between ideology and utopia sheds light on the dynamic and contending conceptualizations of power that led to the Bulhoek Massacre. He posits the view that ideology and utopia are two forms of the cultural imagination which are in an ambiguous relationship of mutual complementarity and opposition. This ambiguity is further constituted in the pathological and constitutive role of one to the other and it is this which keeps relations in society in a state of equilibrium and we can speak of a 'normal' society. However, in situations of extreme domination this relationship gets distorted and diseased. I shall deal with how this distortion occurs below. My basic contention is that it is in the light of this distortion that we need to understand the Bulhoek Massacre and I shall demonstrate the nature and effect of this distortion in Chapter Six.

A crucial element of living this new and transformed life is with respect to time, viz. how the *Israelites* understand their present location and how relative to this they give account of their past and how in relation to both the present and the past they formulate and articulate their hopes for the future. Ricoeur's theory of time provides a useful mechanism for understanding this dynamic relationship between past, present and future. In its turn, Peterson's reflections on time illustrate how abstract time functions to dominate the social sphere in a manner which is "unmarked, nonagentive, and nonconscious." His reconstruction of the notion of *kairos* helps to illuminate the process through which the mystical and prophetic forms of resistance provide a theological response to these invisible forms of domination. In Chapter Five we shall see how the *Israelites'* notions of salvation are related to their own redefinition and reconstruction of time.

In his reflections on narrative Ricoeur makes the fundamental point that human experience is mediated by a whole range of symbolic systems and stories which are familiar to us. He concludes that the human being is fundamentally entangled in stories. In considering the *Israelites'* celebration of their religious festivals, viz, *pesach* (the passover) in Chapter Seven, the Fast of Esther in Chapter Eight, the Bulhoek Massacre and the death of Mgiijima in Chapter Nine, we shall see the complex manner in which this entangledness-in-stories occurs and the soteriological notions which this brings forth. This entangledness-in-stories is further evidenced in how the *Israelites* preface their liturgical testimonies, petitions and homilies with a 'prophetical testimony' (*ukungqina umoya wesiprofitesho*) which is a way of emplotting themselves in the story of salvation that is believed to have started with William Saunders Crowdy in the USA and was continued in Enoch Mgiijima.

What is further striking in the soteriological notions of the *Israelites* is the richness of the language and the metaphors that they employ. Some of the language and metaphors that they use have been inherited from Mgiijima and are quite strange and at times not even they are able to explicate them. In order to have a deep understanding of the processes that are at play in the employment of this language and in the use of these metaphors, both explained and unexplained, I will again turn to Ricoeur. One of the key arguments in the theory of Ricoeur is that to live a new and transformed life is through the use of language as a vehicle for emancipation. Let us now take a close look at the thinking of Ricoeur, starting with his ideas on imagination.

### **3.1 Imagination: Kantian resources**

Though he builds, *inter alia*, on thinkers ranging from Aristotle and Augustine, through Wittgenstein and Sartre to Virginia Woolf, Ricoeur derives his theory of imagination largely from Immanuel Kant, though he pushes it much further and breaks the 'limits' of Kant's thought. It is important therefore to take a brief look at Kant's philosophy of imagination so that we can begin to understand and better appreciate Ricoeur's groundbreaking contribution to thinking about imagination.

According to Makkreel's study of Kant<sup>3</sup> there are three distinct views of imagination in his work. The first view is the precritical anthropological-psychological rendition in which imagination is seen as one of the lower, sensory powers of the mind. The second view is an epistemological presentation of imagination in Kant's first *Critique* according to which the role of imagination is to schematize concepts. The third view is presented in the third *Critique* where a teleologically oriented account links imagination to reflective judgement (Zoeller 1992:267).

In the view of Kant imagination has two basic functions and these render objective knowledge possible. The first task is to *reproduce images* of objects which are not physically present and it is called the 'reproductive' imagination (Vanhoozer 1990:44;1991:36). What 'reproduction' does is to re-present in intuition that something which is absent (Arendt 1982:79). According to Makkreel this is the precritical Kant (Zoeller 1992:267).

The second function of imagination is to '*schematize*'. Unlike the reproductive function which deals with images, the '*schematizing*' function deals with *concepts*. What does it mean that imagination '*schematizes*'? The schematizing function of imagination addresses the question: how can categories, i.e. concepts not derived from experience, be applied or related to experience? In the view of Kant there is a '*third thing*' needed for this application to be possible and this third thing must be homogenous with category on one hand, and with experience on the other. Kant labels this '*third thing*' the '*schema*' and "a schema is always a product of imagination" (Broad 1978:96; Vanhoozer 1991:36). Imagination provides schemata for understanding, it "provides examples for judgment." Through '*schematism*' imagination "mediates our concepts and our experience." Without a '*schema*' it is not possible to recognize anything, and without '*schema*' it would be impossible to communicate (Arendt 1982:81-83). Schema is the ability of imagination to provide an image for a concept, it "is a method for giving an image to a concept....a rule of producing images" (Ricoeur 1991a:173).

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<sup>3</sup> In the view of G. Zoeller the most recent, illuminative and appreciative work on Kant's theory of imagination is a study conducted by Rudolph Makkreel in a 1990 project entitled *Imagination and Interpretation in Kant: The Hermeneutical Import of the Critique of Judgment*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press (1992:267).

The schema makes it possible for a concept to be applied to experience by placing the concept "under a particular 'determination' or 'figure' of time", thereby 'temporalizing' it and rendering it applicable to the phenomenal world. This is possible because "the only feature which is common to every object of experience is its being in time." Without this being in time there is no possibility of it being experienced. In other words, all objects of experience occur in time. There is no object of experience which occurs outside time and if it did it could not be experience(d). Put differently, this capacity to schematize imagination functions by creating figures of temporality through which it becomes possible to apply categories to the world. In this way imagination does not just reproduce images of objects in the world (Vanhoozer 1990:37,45).

And so "the schematizing operation of imagination [is] the common root which unites sensibility and understanding" and in the view of Kant this operation is an 'art hidden in the depths of the human soul'. In the view of Vanhoozer (1991:37) time too is 'hidden in the depths of the human soul.'

Kant's further thinking on imagination goes beyond the limits of reason and presents *symbolism* and *reflective judgement* as other key functions of creative imagination. Let us deal with reflective judgement. But first, what does Kant mean with the notion of judgement? How and what does imagination 'judge'? "All judgment consists in subsuming a particular case under a general principle, or a narrower principle under a wider one" (Broad 1978:301). Judgement is thus the creative way in which imagination deals with the relation of the universal or 'general principle' to the particular or 'narrower principle' and *vice versa*. Kant distinguishes between 'determinant' judgement and 'reflective' judgement. The former "subsume(s) the particular under a general rule" while reflective judgement, on the contrary, "derive(s)" the rule from the particular" (Arendt 1982:83). In other words, judgement is reflective in the instance when there is a particular given for which the universal must be *found* (Vanhoozer 1991:38). And so reflective judgement is a 'synoptic power' which plays a unitive role where there is diversity (Vanhoozer 1990:46).

An example of reflective imagination is what Kant calls *genius*. With this notion Kant refers to the mental faculty or "the talent which gives the rule to art." Genius is not reproductive or imitative, i.e. it does not reproduce pre-existing rules or

patterns but is productive or creative in that it "*contributes* the rule to a work of art in the very process of creating it" (Vanhoozer 1990:47;1991:38).

As far as the notion of *symbolism* is concerned Kant's intention is to make it possible to think beyond the bounds or 'limits' of theoretical knowledge or concepts. In this thinking imagination serves "as the means of mediating the opposed realms of Freedom and Nature" and "[h]ere imagination produces symbols rather than schemas" (Vanhoozer 1991:38-39).

The ideas of reason are presented not directly, as are concepts by schematism, but rather *symbolically*. Symbolism supplies what Kant calls a 'schematism of analogy'. In symbolism we think about an idea (to which no sensible intuition corresponds) *as* we think of something else to which an intuition does correspond.

What this means is that symbolism is a different way of presenting ideas, an analogical way in contradistinction to the direct way in which schematism presents concepts. So for Kant symbols are "a means of thinking the supersensible." "Symbolism thus provides a rule for thought - think *as if* - but does not extend our objective knowledge." The symbol is the product of creative imagination as distinct from reflective judgement which is the power of creative imagination (Vanhoozer 1990:47-48; 1991:39). How does Ricoeur utilize and push these Kantian views as well as other thinkers' thoughts on imagination?

Ricoeur points out that there are traditionally, in philosophy at least, four major uses of the term imagination. The first usage denotes "the arbitrary mention of things absent but existing somewhere else, without this mention implying any confusion between the absent thing and things [which are] present here and now." In the second instance the term "denotes portraits, paintings, drawings, diagrams, and so on, endowed with their own physical existence, but whose function is to 'take the place of' the things they represent." This usage is akin to the preceding one. In the third usage of imagination according to Ricoeur, "we term 'images' fictions that evoke not absent things but nonexistent things. Fictions, in their turn, range between terms as distant as dreams, the products of sleep, and inventions possessing a purely literary existence, such as dramas and novels." And lastly (Ricoeur 1991a:169-70),

the term *image* is applied to the domain of illusions, that is to say, representations that, to an external observer or to subsequent reflection, are directed to absent or nonexistent things but that, to the subject and in the instant in which they appear to the latter, are believable as to the reality of their object.

Furthermore, traditional philosophical theories of imagination are split along two axes of opposition, viz. the axis of presence and absence on the side of the object of imagination, and the axis of fascinated consciousness and critical consciousness on the side of the subject of imagination. In the instance of the presence-absence axis on the one end, the image is understood as a weak impression and it is toward this that all the theories of reproductive imagination incline. On the other end of this axis the image is conceived as absence and it is to this that figures of productive imagination refer.

In terms of the second axis there is at one end no critical consciousness and here the image is confused with the real. The other end of this axis has critical consciousness and here imagination "is the very instrument of the critique of the real." Along both axes there is to be found a variety of meanings of image and imagination.

As a way out of this quagmire Ricoeur proposes that the problem relating to the philosophy of imagination be approached via a different route. Accordingly, he posits the theory of metaphor<sup>4</sup> as a new approach in which he abandons the traditional procedure in philosophy which starts from perception and then moves to image. Through this alternative route Ricoeur effects an innovation in which he constructs a *semantic theory of imagination*. Ricoeur's submission is that we do not derive the image from perception but from language. In his view (1991a:171)

the theory of metaphor invites us to relate imagination to a certain use of language, more precisely, to see in it an aspect of *semantic innovation*, characteristic of the metaphorical use of language.

Elsewhere (in Valdes 1991:123) he articulates this proposition slightly differently and a bit more elaborately as follows:

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<sup>4</sup> I shall deal with Ricoeur's theory of metaphor in greater detail below.

the theory of metaphor offers us the occasion to shift the problem of the image from the sphere of perception to that of language. The theory of metaphor does this in the aspect of *semantic innovation* characteristic of the metaphorical usage of language. Semantic innovation creates the display of images, or rather, that which ordinary language and literary criticism identify as 'images,' but which actually comprise the metaphors of an author.

In which way then is image derived from language? In beginning to answer this question Ricoeur uses poetry or poetic image as a paradigmatic illustration of the derivation of image from language. Let us try to follow the rather intricate and seemingly roundabout trend of his thought and illustration. Key in the process of image formation in poetry is the procedure of *reverberation* which Ricoeur alternately refers to as echoing, resounding, or resonance and this "reverberation comes, not from things seen, but from things said." To see how this happens Ricoeur insists that we need to understand how metaphor functions. In his (1991a:172) view it is a mistake to see metaphor merely as

a deviant use of nouns, as a shift in denomination. Metaphor is instead a deviant usage of predicates in the framework of the sentence as a whole. One must therefore speak of metaphorical utterance rather than of words used metaphorically.

What happens then when unusual predicates are used in discourse? Ricoeur's response is to emphasize what he calls "predicative non-pertinence" which he holds to be a way of effecting "a sort of shock between [different] semantic fields" and this shock produces a challenge. The metaphor comes into being as a response to the challenge emanating from this shock through the production of a "new predicative pertinence." *It is this new predicative pertinence then that constitutes the metaphor.* As a result, a new appropriateness at the level of the sentence as a whole is produced and in turn it "provokes, at the level of the isolated [or individual] word...the extension of meaning by which classical rhetoric identifies metaphor" (Ricoeur 1991a:172).

It is at the point when a new meaning emerges out of the confusion of literal predication that imagination features or intervenes in a mediatory fashion (Ricoeur 1991a:173).

Imagination is the apperception, the sudden glimpse, of a new predicative pertinence, namely, *a way of constructing pertinence in impertinence* [my emphasis]. We could speak in this connection of *predicative assimilation*, to

stress that resemblance is itself a process, comparable to the predicative process itself....Imagining is above all restructuring semantic fields. It is....seeing as....

To demonstrate this Ricoeur draws on Kant's theory of schematism which he understands in a twofold manner as, (a) "a method for giving an image to a concept" and (b), "a rule for producing images." In terms of schematism as a method rather than content Ricoeur (1991a:173) asserts that

it is the very operation of grasping the similar, by performing that predicative assimilation answering to the initial semantic shock. Suddenly, we are seeing as...; we see old age as the dusk of day, time as a beggar, nature as a temple with living pillars....

What this does is to effectively introduce

Kantian productive imagination into the field of language. In brief, the work of imagination is to schematize metaphorical attribution. Like the Kantian schema, it gives an image to an emerging meaning. Before being a fading perception, the image is an emerging meaning.

How does reverberation fit within this 'scheme' of things? Ricoeur (1994:122-3) says

It is in the experience of reading that we surprise the phenomenon of reverberation, of echoing or resounding, by which the schema produces images in its turn. In schematizing the metaphorical attribution, the imagination radiates out in all direction, reanimating earlier experiences, awakening dormant memories, spreading to adjacent fields.

In poetry we have the creative imagination at work through the poet who is an artisan whose raw material is language which he/she forms and fashions into images. The metaphorical process demonstrates how the richness and potency of imagination is linked to the richness and fertility of language. How does imagination function in praxis, that is, outside the sphere of discourse?

Ricoeur turns to fiction to demonstrate the power of imagination because, as he puts it, fiction has the power to *redescribe* reality. He calls this redescriptive power the *heuristic* force of fiction in that it has the "capacity to open up and unfold new dimensions of reality, suspending our belief in an earlier description."

In fact, continues Ricoeur, it is precisely human action itself that is redescribed by certain fictions. Drawing on Aristotle, Ricoeur also refers to this redescriptive function of fiction as its *mimetic* function. The narrative structure of fiction makes possible abbreviation, articulation, and condensation by effecting what Ricoeur terms *iconic increase* (1994:124-25), or *iconic augmentation* (a term he borrows from Dagonier) as it is referred to in a translation of another of his projects (in Valdes 1991:133;470). In a discussion which shows the operation of imagination in painting and the transformative power of fiction Ricoeur (in Valdes 1991:133) posits the paradox of *iconic augmentation* which he describes as follows:

The more imagination deviates from that which is called reality in ordinary language and vision, the more it approaches the heart of the reality which is no longer the world of manipulable objects, but the world in which we have been thrown by birth and within which we try to orient ourselves by projecting our innermost possibilities upon it, in order that we dwell there, in the strongest sense of that word.

The iconic increase shatters the view that it is only science whose descriptions of reality are true. In the view of Ricoeur poetry and painting do not lack truth-claims as popular scientific discourse would make us believe. On the contrary, claims Ricoeur, "Painting enables us to see the world in another way; it augments our vision of the world", or as intimated already, "fiction redescribes reality." This, according to Ricoeur, demonstrates "that only imagination at work - in a work - [can] produce a world out of itself" (in Valdes 1991:133-34).

But the notion of redescription still does not quite cross the boundary into the field of praxis because, according to Ricoeur, redescription "is still just a form of description" - something more and beyond this is needed (1994:124). Therefore, Ricoeur's further submission is that "imagination also has a projective function which is part of the dynamics of action itself." Essentially what this means is that imagination precedes action. This occurs in a threefold movement or progression encompassing projects, motivation and "the very capacity to act." In terms of the first movement the material or what Ricoeur terms the noematic content of the project still entails a specific "schematization of the network of ends and means" where different possible courses of action or practical possibilities are first anticipated in an imaginary fashion. It is here that the pragmatic dimension intersects with the narrative dimension (1994:126):

the function of the project, turned towards the future, and the function of the narrative, turned towards the past, exchange schemata and frameworks, the project borrowing the story's structuring capacity and the story receiving the project's capacity for looking ahead.

In the second movement pertaining to the motivational process, imagination provides the enlightened space or "luminous clearing" wherein to compare and contrast the variety of motives ranging from desires and ethical demands, through professional rules and social customs to strictly personal values. As Ricoeur (1994:126) puts it:

The imagination provides the mediating space of a common 'fantasy' for things as diverse as the force which pushes as if from behind, the attraction which seduces as if from in front, reasons which justify and establish as if from underneath.

In terms of the third movement, imagination provides the space in which one tries one's capacity to do something (1994:126-27).

I ascribe my own capacity to myself - as the agent of my own action - only by picturing it to myself in terms of imaginative variations on the theme of 'I could', or 'I could have done otherwise had I wanted'.

This threefold movement indicates that the function of imagination is not merely mimetic but that imagination is a general function of *what is possible in practice*. "[I]n imagining his possibilities, man acts as a prophet of his own existence." "Ricoeur even speaks of a 'redemption through imagination' thereby according a soteric function to the imagination as well" (Vanhoozer 1990:24). With this the threshold into the field of praxis has been partly but not completely crossed. My contention is that Mgijima's establishment of the commune at Ntabelanga came about as a result of the functioning of the imagination which attempted to put into practice what was first possible in the imagination, viz. resistance against domination. We shall see how through semantic innovation Mgijima provided his followers with schemas, both conceptual and symbolic, through which they could fathom a reality which they had as yet not experienced. In other words, as we shall see in chapters five to eight, the establishment of both the Ntabelanga commune and the *Church of God and Saints of Christ* represents the culmination of complex processes of imagination providing believers with real but-as-yet-unexperienced

possibilities. Let us now consider how Ricoeur crosses the threshold into the field of praxis.

### 3.2 Ideology and utopia

In crossing this threshold Ricoeur reflects on the social imaginary by positing a theory of cultural imagination. The key function that imagination plays in this regard pertains to the two forms of *imaginative practices*, viz. *ideology* and *utopia*. This theory of the relation between ideology and utopia will provide us with a new understanding of the confrontation between the *Israelites* and the government of the Union of South Africa and the massacre which ensued. In his view there is a complementarity between ideology and utopia. Both ideology and utopia have positive meanings which are complementary while at the same time both having meanings that are opposed. Ricoeur thus deviates from the usual view which posits these imaginative practices as mutually antagonistic and as representing two different pathologies. Ricoeur asserts that ideology and utopia have a common ambiguity in that each covers positive as well as pathological expressions and each plays a distorting as well as a constitutive role. In his view "a healthy society needs both ideology and utopia in order to have an identity and a destiny" (Ricoeur 1985:220; 1994:129; Vanhoozer 1990:106). Ricoeur contends that "the polarity between ideology and utopia and the polarity within each of them may be ascribed to some structural traits of cultural imagination."<sup>5</sup> This polarity notwithstanding, these two imaginative practices do have an overarching complementarity in a system of social action. His conclusion in this regard is that the complementarity between the two is constituted in "*ideology* as a symbolic confirmation of the past and *utopia* as a symbolic opening towards the future" (Ricoeur 1991a:308-9; Vanhoozer 1990:106). There is a mutual but also paradoxical and subtle relationship between these two forms of social imagination. But first, let us consider each separately and begin with Ricoeur's submission regarding the phenomenon of ideology.

Ricoeur (1994:129-30) proceeds from Karl Mannheim's *Ideologie und Utopie*

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<sup>5</sup> Ricoeur takes his cue for a joint treatment of ideology and utopia from Karl Mannheim's 1929 project of the same title. Ricoeur's view is that no one since has dealt with these two notions jointly. As he puts it: "Today we have, on the one hand, a critique of ideology stemming from the Marxist and post-Marxist tradition and expanded by the Frankfurt school and, on the other hand, a history of utopias, sometimes a sociology of utopia, but with little connection to the so-called *Ideologiekritik*" (1991a:308).

which showed the difference between ideology and utopia as based on "a common criterion of *non-congruence* with respect to historical and social reality." In other words, Mannheim dealt with ideology and utopia as "two deviant attitudes towards social reality." Departing from Mannheim's theory of strict non-congruence between ideology and utopia what Ricoeur attempts to do is "to overcome the dichotomy between the real and the imaginary on the communal level of the imagination" (Vanhoozer 1990:105).

As already intimated above, Ricoeur's (1994:131) thesis is "that the ideological phenomenon [cannot] be limited to the role of distortion and dissimulation." In a highly complex and extremely sophisticated interrogation of ideology in which he asserts that his attempt is to go beyond the surface level layer to the depth structure of the phenomenon of ideology, Ricoeur (1991a:309) draws on Marx's *German Ideology*, on Max Weber's *Economy and Society* and on Clifford Geertz's article entitled *Ideology as a Cultural System*. In the view of Marx who was suspicious of ideologies, "to control the 'social imaginary' is to control what people believe to be possible in practice" (Vanhoozer 1990:105). Ricoeur finds the Marxist view relating to the structure of domination that "the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas because the ruling ideas are held to be the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships" to be unwieldy when the notion of 'ideal expression' is subjected to rigorous scrutiny. This is because the causal relationship between the mode of production and the superstructure that Marxism proposes "only gives two ends of the chain without explaining what happens between them." Ricoeur volunteers that the relation between the mode of production and the superstructure be seen in terms of motivation rather than causation. Another difficulty that Ricoeur sees is the presupposition "that domination cannot succeed without the acceptance of the arguments offered to legitimize the claims of the ruling class." These difficulties notwithstanding there is merit in Marx because, as Ricoeur (1991a:313-14) puts it

[Marx] has delineated a fundamental source of ideology by connecting it to the central structure of domination embodied in the class structure of society. But it is not certain that the class structure and its corollary notion of a ruling class exhaust the phenomenon of domination. It is quite possible that both the notions of class and ruling class display only one side or one aspect of the problem of domination.

This is where Weber's idea concerning the continued constitution of the state as

depending on the ability of its administrative staff to successfully uphold "a claim to the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force in the enforcement of its order" comes in. The Weberian view further holds that every system of authority "attempts to establish and cultivate the belief in its 'legitimacy' " (in Ricoeur 1991a:315). Ricoeur picks this up and for him this raises the question of the relation between the *claim to legitimacy* raised by authority on one hand, and, on the other, a *belief in legitimacy* conceded by individuals. It becomes pertinent what role ideology plays in this relation. He (1991a:315) articulates it in the following manner:

Is it not the case that any authority always claims more than what we can offer in terms of belief? If this is the case, could we not say that the main function of a system of ideology is to reinforce the belief in the legitimacy of the given systems of authority in such a way that it meets the claim to legitimacy? Ideology would be the system of justification capable of filling up the gap of political overvalue.

Later (1994:131) he writes:

Every authority, in fact, seeks to make itself legitimate. Now it seems that if every claim to legitimacy is linked with people's belief in this legitimacy, the relation between the authority's claim and the belief which answers to this is basically unsymmetrical. The claim coming from the authority always contains more than the belief which is accorded this authority. It is here that ideology mobilizes its forces to fill the gap between the demand from above and the belief from below.

This is where the function of ideology as distortion and dissimulation can be understood. When the dominant power makes use of ideas and narrative to give credence to an authority which goes beyond what the society is willing to grant it, it is then that ideologies go wrong (Vanhoozer 1990:106). In other words, distortion and dissimulation occur when ideology has to fill the gap caused by overvalue on the side of authority's claim to legitimacy. At this point the trend of thought inspired by Weber falls short because in the view of Ricoeur "it moves within the sphere of ideas. Ideology gives ideas the form of universality" and does not answer the following question posed by Ricoeur (1991a:316): "But what about the assumed relationship between interest and idea? Are we not too easily satisfied with the assumption that interests "express" themselves through ideas?"

To overcome this impasse Ricoeur takes recourse to Geertz<sup>6</sup> who "relates all the distorting functions of ideology to a more basic function, that of mediating and integrating human action at its public level." The merit of Geertz is that he demonstrates the inability of existing theories to illustrate "how ideologies transform sentiment into significance and make it socially available" because these theories are inadequate in two respects: first, they overlook "the autonomous process of symbolic formulation", and second, they do not understand "that action in its most elementary forms is already mediated and articulated by symbolic systems." The implication of this is that in order for this action to be intelligible it has to be explained through an interpretation of its ruling symbols. Geertz proposes that ideology be treated in terms of figurative language and thus he connects tropology and ideology. In this sense the rhetoric of ideology is akin to that of metaphor. This means that the relationship between the ideology and its basis is comparable "to the relation of reference that a metaphorical utterance entertains with the situation it redescribes." If this is the case then the following conclusion can be reached (Ricoeur 1991a:316-7):

Under the layer of distorting representation we find the layer of the systems of legitimation meeting the claim to legitimacy of the given system of authority. But under these systems of legitimation we discover the symbolic systems constitutive of action itself.

He then comes to the conclusion that there are three levels or layers of meaning which form the phenomenon of ideology, viz. distortion, legitimation, and symbolization. His view (1991a:318) is that in this regard

ideology has one fundamental function: to pattern, to consolidate, to provide order to the course of action. Whether it preserves the power of a class, or ensures the duration of a system of authority, or patterns the stable functioning of a community, ideology has a function of conservation in both a good and a bad sense of the word. It preserves, it conserves, in the sense of making firm the human order that could be shattered by natural or historical forces, by external or internal disturbances.

It is from the positive function of ideology to conserve that its pathological traits of distorting reality and dissimulating its own process emanate (Ricoeur 1991a:318,321). These "pathological figures constitute the foremost dysfunction

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<sup>6</sup> A more extensive discussion on Geertz's notion of symbol and its relation to ideology can be found in Ricoeur's writings, debates and interviews edited in 1991 by Mario J. Valdes and entitled *A Ricoeur Reader: Reflection and Imagination*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, pp182-94.

grafted onto the integrative function of the [social] imagination" (1994:134). To summarise Ricoeur's view on the ambiguity of ideology let me quote from an interview he gave while he was working on *Time and Narrative* (1985:220):

The function of an ideology is to repeat and confirm a society's identity with what I would call its *founding-symbols*. An ideology's function is to identify a society and to preserve that identity. An ideology is pathological when it is twisted, held captive and monopolized by dominating groups in a society. And so an ideology that began as a preserving and justifying function becomes a means of conservation. We have here the marxist's idea of ideology as illusion, a false vision of the world.

Let us now move to consider Ricoeur's interrogation of the phenomenon of utopia. His reflection on utopia commences with the following incisive statement (Ricoeur 1991a:318):

The shadow of the forces capable of shattering a given order is already the shadow of an alternative order that could be opposed to the given order. It is the function of utopia to give the force of discourse to this possibility.

Ricoeur points out that unlike ideology utopia is a distinct literary genre with an identifiable set of authors, with the term utopia having first been coined by Thomas More in 1516 to mean "the island that is nowhere." In his reflection Ricoeur proposes to deal with utopia as a 'mode' rather than as merely a literary genre and to interpreting this mode in terms of a theory of imagination rather than dealing with its content. But what is this utopian mode and how does imagination feature in this regard? In the view of Ricoeur (1991a:319)

The utopian mode is to the existence of society what invention is to scientific knowledge. The utopian mode may be defined as the imaginary project of another kind of society, of another reality, another world. Imagination is here constitutive in an inventive rather than an integrative manner....

Beyond this there is "the spirit of utopia" to which belong the basic ambiguities referred to earlier on. These ambiguities affect the social function of utopia. Ricoeur proposes that the positive aspects of utopia not be overlooked in favour of its pathologies. But what are these positive functions of utopia? In the core idea of utopia as "nowhere", or extraterritoriality, what needs to be stressed is the benefit of 'nowhereness' for how utopia functions socially. It is as if we have stepped outside our reality and are looking in from without and find the world we were in

to be strange and unsatisfactory. New possibilities beyond the actual then present themselves and offer alternative ways of living. Utopia is a radical reconceptualization of what constitutes family, consumption, government, religion, etc (1991a:320). The dream of an alternative society

and its topographical figuration "nowhere" works as the most formidable contestation of what is. What some, for example, call cultural revolution proceeds from the possible to the real, from fantasy to reality.

In this way the function of utopia is social subversion. Furthermore, utopia serves to expose the undeclared (and sometimes declared) ideological overvalue that authority seeks to attach to its legitimacy and in this way it exposes "the pretense proper to every system of legitimacy." Put differently, implied in utopia is an alternative use of power, be it in the family, in politics, in the economy, in religion, etc. Through this established systems of power are called into question. The centrality of the problematic of power in utopia is attested to in a number of efforts to realize and implement utopian dispensations. Continues Ricoeur (1991a:321):

There are (partially) realized utopia. These are, it is true, mainly microsocieties, some more permanent than others, ranging from the monastery to the kibbutz or commune. But they are utopian in the sense that they constitute kinds of laboratories or miniature experiments for broader projects involving the whole of society.

Utopia thus has the capacity to institute new modes of life. It is "the thrust of the possible." Modern attempts at implementing utopia (Ricoeur 1985:221; 1991:321; 1994:132)

are all in one way or another directed against the abstraction, the anonymity, and the reification of the bureaucratic state. Such atoms of self-management are all challenges to the bureaucratic state. Their claim for radical equality and the complete redistribution of the ways in which decisions are made implies an alternative to the present uses of power in our society.

What then constitutes the negative pole in the ambiguity inherent in the function of utopia? As with ideology, the pathological traits of utopia also emanate from its positive function. This pathology is constituted in utopia's "unsettling features" and an inclination "to hold reality in the throes of a dream, a fixation on perfectionist designs." This pathology has been described as "escapism" and likened to

schizophrenia (Ricoeur 1991a:322). Ricoeur (1994:132-33) describes this as

the logic of all or nothing, standing outside the workings of time; a preference for schematizing space; a disdain for intermediary degrees and a total lack of interest in the first step to be taken to move towards the ideal; blindness to the contradictions inherent in action - either that these make certain evils inescapable in the pursuit of certain desired goals or that they point up the incompatibility of equally desirable goals. To this clinical tableau of flight into dreams and into literature, we can also add regressive features of the nostalgia for a lost paradise hidden under the guise of futurism.

In other words, explains Ricoeur (1985:221) elsewhere,

utopia becomes unhealthy as soon as it becomes a static picture of a society made up of just anything, including violence. That is why utopian-types are often very dangerous people. They have a fixed idea, unevaluated, of their own dreams. They are unable to indicate the first step that would lead to their utopia.

At this stage utopia becomes as dissimulating as ideology. When this happens "both pathologies cumulate their symptoms in spite of the initial opposition between the integrative and the subversive function" (Ricoeur 1991a:322).

How then is the twofold dichotomy of the poles between ideology and utopia and the ambiguities within each to be made sense of? The following parallelism presents itself: whereas the positive function of ideology is social integration, utopia is in contrast a function of social subversion; whereas ideology functions in the provision of overvalue to authority's claim to legitimacy, utopia functions to expose this overvalue and reveals "the pretense proper to every system of legitimacy" (1991a:320-1).

The criss-crossing or interplay between ideology and utopia appears as the criss-crossing of the two basic directions of the social imagination. The one goes toward integration, repetition and reflects the given order while the other, because it is eccentric, goes toward disintegration (Ricoeur 1991a:323; 1994:133). And so, argues Ricoeur (1985:221),

The play between utopia and ideology is an unending one, a circular one, in view of the fact that ideology and utopia are both complementaries and produce inverse pathologies.

Neither can do without the other. As a result of this criss-crossing it is often difficult to determine whether a specific mode of thought is ideological or utopian. Apparently, this distinction can only be made after the fact based on the criterion of whether it was a success or not. But, as Ricoeur rightly asks, is it success which determines whether an enterprise is just or not? As he (1994:133) puts it,

But, what of aborted attempts? Will they not return one day, and will they not then obtain the success that history has refused them in the past?

Ricoeur (1991a:324) concludes his reflection on social imagination with the assertion that utopia is corrective to ideology and *vice versa*.

[We] attain it only across and through the figures of false consciousness. We only take possession of the creative power of imagination through a relation to such figures of false consciousness as ideology and utopia. It is as though we have to call upon the "healthy" function of ideology to cure the madness of utopia and as though the critique of ideologies can only be carried out by a conscience capable of regarding itself from the point of view of "nowhere."

Vanhoozer (1990:107) raises for the theologian a critical question pertaining to Ricoeur's notion of utopian imagination: "...how do we know that we are (or will be) genuinely capable of appropriating a possible world, that is, of realizing a given utopia? Stated more generally, how can we discern illusory possibilities from ones that are capable of being actualized?" This question is pertinent in terms of what ultimately turned out to be Mgijima's futile attempt to actualise this possibility. In chapters five and six we shall see how the theological and symbolic basis on which Mgijima made this utopian attempt was constituted. In Chapter Six we shall see how the conflict between Mgijima and his *Israelites* on one hand and the government of the Union of South Africa under general Jan Smuts portray this complex relationship between ideology and utopia. We shall see how the *Israelites* refused to grant legitimacy to the Union government's claims. I shall argue that the actions of the *Israelites* which eventually led to what is now known as the Bulhoek Massacre did not emanate from mere religious escapism or fanaticism but was indeed one of the most innovative resistances to domination, despite the price that the *Israelites* were forced to pay. Let us now move to temporality and narrativity, other key notions in the thinking of Ricoeur.

### 3.3 Temporality and narrativity

The fundamental theological question that this investigation seeks to examine pertains to soteriology and can be articulated philosophically as a question of time: First, how does the *Church of God and Saints of Christ*, the *Israelites*<sup>7</sup>, relate to its *past*, especially as epitomised in the experience of domination that led to the Bulhoek Massacre? In other words, what does the past mean in relation to the present which is also fundamentally experienced as domination? Second, in relation to the past and the future how is the *present* conceived of? In other words, what does it mean to live now in an authentic manner in the face of domination? Thirdly, what does the *future* hold in relation to the domination of the present and the past? Or, in Kantian terms, *what may they hope for?* It is especially with this last part of the question that the relation of time to the soteriological intent of this investigation begins to be intelligible.

A corollary to this threefold question of time is: how do the *Israelites* see the relation between the past, the present and the future? Put differently, how do the *Israelites* experience temporality and how is time related to their experience of domination and their understanding of salvation? Before we can attempt to answer these questions we need to engage a prior double-sided question: What is time and how is it constituted? and, How are humans constituted in relation to time? Or, in terms of my research interests: How are the *Israelites* constituted in relation to time? In attempting to address this question I shall draw on Paul Ricoeur's thinking on time and on R. Peterson's theory of ritual kairotic time as resistance against the domination of abstract chronotic time. Let me commence with Ricoeur.

The central intention of Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative* is to rehabilitate narrative by locating it squarely within lived experience rather than confining it to the shelves of fiction. As with imagination, Ricoeur constructs his philosophy of time and his narrative theory on the work done by a host of other scholars and thinkers, notably Aristotle, Augustine of Hippo, Martin Heidegger, and Hannah Arendt. As is consistent with his style, Ricoeur not only pushes these philosophers' ideas and reflections well beyond their original intent, but he also provides correctives to some of their ideas (Vanhoozer 1991:41-2). Before I deal with Ricoeur's

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<sup>7</sup> As I have indicated in the introductory chapter, I use *Israelites* in the italicised form to refer to the followers of Mgijima while the non-italicised form refers to ancient biblical Israelites.

reflections proper, I need briefly to sample their antecedents. Let me begin with Greek notions of time where time is distinguished from eternity as a result of metaphysical thought processes (McGaughey 1995:378).

### 3.3.1 Plato

In the *Timaeus* Plato presents time as sequence which can be measured and he speaks figuratively of it as 'a moving image of eternity', an imitation of the eternal (McGaughey 1995:378). In the view of Plato then, past, present and future are forms of time which "seek to imitate the simultaneity of eternity" (Chadwick 1986:71). Time "involves the change of becoming." Eternity on the other hand is a unity, that unity "which always 'is' and remains the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow that cannot be other than the way it appears to be and is the condition of possibility for everything in time." It is God who created time and all that is in time reflects the original. The metaphysical presupposition on which Plato builds is that "the world of the sensation is a copy of the eternal, or the dimension of change is a copy of the unchanging" (McGaughey 1995:378-80).

For most Platonists time was conceived of not in linear terms but cyclically and in astronomical terms of the movement of celestial bodies (Chadwick 1986:32),

in other words, at immense intervals of time the configuration of the stars would come round to the same position, and then all things would start again on the same treadmill.

Let us move now to briefly consider the Aristotelian conceptualization of time on which Ricoeur also builds.

### 3.3.2 Aristotle

For Aristotle time is fundamentally concerned with movement or motion and so Aristotle treats time as sequential. He defines time as "the number of movement" and not movement itself, though it is not independent of movement because all movement is *in* time. But his understanding of time is circular rather than linear. A key concept in Aristotle's explication of time is the "now" or the moment that is the present. The "now" is "the link of time" and it renders "before" and "after" possible. It connects past and future time (McGaughey 1995:381-5). The paradox

in Aristotle's *Physics* that "the past exists no longer, the future not yet, while the present is an instant without that extension which our notions of time appear to require" showed that time is unreal (Chadwick 1986:70-1). "To the extent that time does not participate in Being it is not-Being" and "to the extent that time is the link between a 'before' and an 'after' it does not exist." And so for Aristotle the "now" is not a part of time but a "limit" or an end or termination of time (McGaughey 1995:383). The above analysis of time by Plato and Aristotle can be referred to as cosmological in that "it applies to all that is and/or to all events and not with respect to the individual person's having a privileged status for the emergence of time" (McGaughey 1995:388). Let us now move to the Augustinian notion of time, another of Ricoeur's sources.

### 3.3.3 Augustine

Augustine's meditations on the nature of time showed an awareness of the enormity of the problem which he aptly summarises in the *Confessions* in the following expression that Ricoeur also quotes: "What then is time? Provided that no one asks me, I know." In these reflections Augustine did not pursue the line of defining time in astronomical terms nor in terms of the movement of physical objects.<sup>8</sup> Instead, he sought to approach the problem from the perspective of mysticism "as a timeless awareness of the eternal" (Chadwick 1986:71). In this way for Augustine the relationship of time to the self is central. Chadwick (1986:71-2) summarises the Augustinian view of time as follows:

Successiveness and multiplicity are simply the experience of the soul in the flux of history. Because multiplicity is a mark of inferiority in a Platonic structure, the transience and mortality of our condition must be in one sense painful. Time presupposes change... and 'change is a kind of death' (Jo 38.10). *But in its nature time is a dimension of the mind, a psychological condition attaching to being creaturely.* Indeed even the angels, themselves also created, are somehow halfway between time and eternity. [my emphasis]

In his human or anthropological explication of time Augustine concludes that (McGaughey 1995:389)

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<sup>8</sup> Picking up on the Platonist reflections on time and eternity, Augustine's meditation on the beginning of Genesis concurs with the Platonists' view that indeed eternity is a "permanent present" (McGaughey 1995:388).

the three modalities of time (past, present, future) "are in fact three kinds of 'present' or a 'three-fold present'": the past-present, present-present, and future-present, because the past and the future can only be perceived/experienced by individuals in terms of the present. This locates time squarely in the individual, for the present is always the present for a particular individual, although this means that time is aporetic in that it is both accessible in its everydayness and concealed.

Augustine presents a fuller articulation of the relation of time to the individual in his notion of time as *distentio animi* or 'the extension of the soul' (a view expressed in the italicised section of the above quote from Chadwick) as a threefold present. It is this Augustinian notion, *inter alia*, that Ricoeur picks up and interrogates in *Time and Narrative*. Essentially what *distentio animi* suggests is that time is present in the soul as *memoria*, *attentio*, and *expectatio*. What this means will become clearer below when I discuss Ricoeur's reflections. For now suffice it to make the following very critical summation, viz. that it is in the individual that time acquires its present and its internalization and that memory plays a crucial role in this regard (McGaughey 1995:389).

Memory preserves the continuum of the past with the present. The continuum of the past, preserved in memory, combines with the attention of the present to permit an anticipation of the future.

But what then about God? How does God feature 'in' time? According to Augustine God is unchanging and therefore timeless. God's knowledge of past and future is different from those of humans who come to know it through a psychological experience of successiveness (Chadwick's 1986:72). What then is the relation between time and creation? What was God doing in the 'time' before creation? The Augustinian view is that "before creation there can be no time; time and creation are made simultaneously." Let us now sample a few ideas from Heidegger.

### 3.3.4 Heidegger

In his philosophy Heidegger retrieves the Aristotelian notion of potency "as the key to human experience and understanding in the world" (McGaughey 1995:398). Heidegger deconstructs in a purposive fashion the traditional view of "human being as substance or stable essence." He gives predominance to "the notion of temporality and the related notion of possibility" and in this way his hermeneutical

phenomenology can be described as "a strategy for describing the possible", while at the same time delineating its limits (Vanhoozer 1990:25;44). He thus analyses the self, world, and temporality in terms of possibility. Heidegger places possibility above actuality while at the same time limiting talk of Dasein<sup>9</sup> to concern with the things of the world. Human being cannot be separated from the possibilities of the world because human being "is" its world. It is therefore not possible to think of humans without this world with its scope of possibility (McGaughey 1995:398). For Heidegger then, there exists in human being an awareness of its possibilities and human being can choose between these possibilities. Heidegger refers to this consciousness of possibilities by human being as *Verstehen*, 'understanding'. *Verstehen* is human being's response to the condition of being "thrown into the world by projecting onto [it] his ownmost possibilities" (In Vanhoozer 1990:26).

Another significant claim of Heidegger relating to possibilities pertains to his notion of authenticity vis-a-vis inauthenticity. His view in this regard is that there is a difference in possibilities with some being more "authentic" than others. To live authentically therefore, implies that one must look at the world in terms of the possibilities that one has to choose and that one must recognise your responsibility to go for those possibilities which are "most proper to human being", which he calls "one's 'ownmost' possibilities." In its turn inauthentic existence occurs when one looks at the self as an object in a world of actualities and accepts as givens the things in the world. When one lives inauthentically one is so preoccupied with what one accepts as given that one is paralysed and is unable to make new plans, new projects or opt for new possibilities. To live inauthentically means to renounce one's responsibility to "make" your world because the world is not a given. In other words, the world is not a *fait accompli*, it is a project to be shaped (Vanhoozer 1990:26).

But how does temporality fit in this picture? Temporality should be seen in terms of what Heidegger refers to as *Sorge*, "care", which is a concept he employs to underscore the uniqueness of human over other kinds of being. His fundamental

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<sup>9</sup> *Dasein* is the term Heidegger uses for human existence, meaning simply "being there". *Dasein* indicates simultaneously "the mystery and arbitrariness in one's being where and as (s)he is" (W.L. Reese *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*). "Human being finds itself thrown into the world - "there" - flotsam in a sea of actuality. This is the "facticity" of human existence" (Vanhoozer 1990:25).

thesis is that the best way to understand human being is to see human being "in light of its possibilities rather than its present possessions" (Vanhoozer 1990:19). A human being *cares* about existence and its meaning. According to Heidegger it is because of time that human being has possibility to go beyond the given. *To be is to be in time*. Naturally, being-in-time is not limited to humans, but it is humans alone who are able to project themselves forward in time, grasping its connectedness and seeking its coherence. It is humans alone who are able to confront their past and their future, who are able to deal with the relation between past, present, and future. The implications are that *Verstehen* is "a function of the future: the future is meaningful because it is the way Dasein exists" (Vanhoozer 1990:26-7).

These possibilities for human being notwithstanding, Heidegger concedes that time does place limits to human possibilities. It is mortality, the finitude of one's lifetime that imposes these limits. Mortality places an internal limit to both human willing as well as "the most 'proper' possibility of human being" (Vanhoozer 1990:19). As Kellner (1991:231) puts it, for Heidegger "death is what makes possible the understanding of the whole of *Dasein's* being in time." And so for Heidegger in order to live an authentic existence one must take serious cognisance of this limit and confront it with determination. As we shall see below, it is this notion of "temporality of human being, future-oriented to not-yet possibilities" that Ricoeur borrows from Heidegger (Vanhoozer 1990:19).

### **3.3.5 Ricoeur makes more time**

And so, how does Ricoeur build on and develop these insights as well as other thinkers' ideas? The fundamental hypothesis of Ricoeur with respect to time and narrative is that for time to be human it needs to be articulated through the mode of narrative. Conversely, narrative acquires meaning "when it becomes a condition of temporal existence" (1984a:52).

Ricoeur draws largely on Augustine's reflections on time in the *Confessions*, on Aristotle's theory of plot in *Poetics*, and on Heidegger's *Being and Time* to demonstrate the reciprocity between narrativity and temporality as articulated in the hypothesis above. In his theory of narrative he develops Heidegger's exposition of Dasein, positing human action as fundamentally 'being in time', thereby

meaning that human being is not just within time but that human being has to come to terms with past, present and future (Vanhoozer 1991:50). I shall demonstrate below how the *Israelites* reconstitute and reconstruct time as they attempt to come to terms with their past, their present and the future.

Let me first briefly outline the conclusions that Ricoeur arrives at in his interrogation of the Augustinian notion of time which, he is quick to note, does not present a pure phenomenology of time. In beginning his reflections on the meaning and constitution of time Ricoeur refers to Augustine's famous remark in the *Confessions*: "as long as no one asks me, I know what time is but as soon as someone asks me, I no longer know" (1984a:6-7; 1985:214).

The question or problem that Ricoeur interrogates in this interlocution with Augustine pertains to the aporia and paradox of the being and nonbeing of time: the past, the present, and the future. On one hand "time has no being since the future is not yet, the past is no longer, and the present does not remain." On the other hand time does have being because: "We say that things to come *will be*, that things past *were*, and that things present *are passing away*" (1984a:7). He confronts this aporia through the notion of a threefold present, viz. that "The present of past things is the memory; the present of present things is the direct perception; and the present of future things is expectation" (1984a:11). As Ricoeur puts it in a later writing (1991b:31), time for Augustine is

born out of the incessant dissociation between the three aspects of the present - expectation which [Augustine] calls the present of the future, memory which he calls the present of the past, and attention which is the present of the present. From this comes the instability of time; and, even more so, its continual dissociation.

Augustine therefore posits the notion of time as *distentio animi*, the distension or extension of the soul. What this means is that time is not limited to the sphere of the movement of physical things or the measurement thereof but is inherent in the human soul. But how does this relate to the problem of the threefold present? The retort is that "What remains, then, is to conceive of the threefold present *as distension and distension as the distension of the threefold present*" (Ricoeur 1984a:16).

It is through the impression (*affectio*) left on the mind that time is measured rather than in the movement of external bodies. *Distentio animi* occurs when this passivity of the impression is "contrasted with the activity of a mind stretched in opposite directions, between expectation, memory, and attention. *Only a mind stretched in such different directions can be distended*" (1984a:18). And so, contends Ricoeur (1991b:31), time

consists in the permanent contrast between the unstable nature of the human present and the stability of the divine present which includes past, present and future in the unity of a gaze and a creative action.

In terms of Augustine's notion of time discordance triumphs over concordance and this explains the "the misery of the human condition."

### 3.3.6 It's story time

The main concepts that Ricoeur extracts and develops from Aristotle's *Poetics* are *muthos* (emplotment) and *mimesis* (mimetic activity)<sup>10</sup>. As we shall see, Ricoeur distinguishes three references in the meaning of the term *mimesis*. He refers to these as *mimesis1*, *mimesis2*, and *mimesis3*. *Mimesis1* refers to "the first side of poetic composition", *mimesis2* refers to the *mimesis* of creation, and *mimesis3* denotes the second side of poetic composition by means of which the mimetic activity requires a spectator or reader in order to reach its intended term (Ricoeur 1984a:46). The three mimetic modes are akin to Heidegger's rendition of interpretation as "the working out of possibilities projected in understanding", with *Mimesis1* corresponding "to Heidegger's pre-understanding, *Mimesis2* to the projection of possibilities, and *Mimesis3* to the appropriation of these possibilities 'understandingly' " (Vanhoozer 1991:50). In Ricoeur's construction these three mimetic modes make up the mediation between time and narrative (1984a:53).

Let us continue our consideration with respect to *mimesis1*. As a way of stepping into the zone in which narrative and life become reconciled Ricoeur makes the assertion that "reading is itself already a way of living in the fictive universe of the work" and that yes, "stories are recounted but they are also *lived in the mode of the imaginary*." In terms of addressing the life component of the paradox that 'life is

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<sup>10</sup> In the view of Ricoeur the *one* all-encompassing concept in Aristotle's *Poetics* is *mimesis* (1984a:33).

lived and stories are told' Ricoeur challenges the view that life is lived not told. In deconstructing this view he questions the equation made between life and experience. According to him, unless it is interpreted, a life is no more than a mere biological phenomenon. But how does this interpretation happen? In his view it occurs via fiction (1991b:27-8). In enfleshing this claim Ricoeur again draws on Aristotle whose definition of the narrative is 'the imitation of an action' (*mimesis praxeos*). This praxis, argues Ricoeur, belongs to both the domain of the real which is covered by ethics, as well as the imaginary domain which is covered by poetics. And so the mimesis acts as a connection establishing "precisely the status of the 'metaphorical' transposition of the practical field by the muthos." Narrative then attempts, in a creative way, to imitate "the mixture of acting and suffering which constitutes the very fabric of a life" (Ricoeur 1984a:46;1991b:28). The narrative has at least three points of support in the lived and real life of acting and suffering.

The first point of support for narrative understanding of real life is located within what Ricoeur refers to as the *conceptual network of the semantics of action* (1984a:54-7; 1991b:28). This notion refers to the human capacity or competence to engage the entire network of expressions and concepts coming from natural language in order to: (a) understand action and passion, (b) distinguish between *action* and mere physical *movement*, and (c) understand the signification of project, aim, means, circumstances, etc. This means that as we are familiar with the conceptual network of human action so are we familiar with the plots of stories that we know. Ricoeur calls this familiarity phronetic understanding and it governs our understanding of action (and of passion) and our understanding of narrative (Ricoeur 1991b:28).

Ricoeur uses the notion of action in a deep or thick sense in that for him it implies goals, it refers to motives, and has agents who can be held accountable for specific consequences of their actions. Action is also *interaction*, acting with others, in the form of co-operation or competition or struggle. The "outcome of the action may be a change in fortune toward happiness or misfortune" (1984a:55).

The next point of support for narrative understanding of real life is located in the *symbolic resources of the practical field*. This refers to the fact that the basis for the intelligibility of action is its articulation and mediation symbolically through

signs, rules and norms (1984a:57; 1991b:28).<sup>11</sup> Ricoeur's specific reference in this instance is to what he terms *implicit* or *immanent* symbolism in contradistinction to explicit or autonomous symbolism. His understanding of 'symbol' is along the lines of Geertz who emphasizes the public character of symbols. In other words, symbolism is not something innate, it is not a psychological process "destined to guide action, but a meaning incorporated into action and decipherable from it by other actors in the social interplay." The symbols implicit in action make up the *context of description* for specific actions (1984a:57-8;1991b:28-9). We know that a specific gesture means this or that on the basis of a given symbolic convention. This is how Ricoeur (1991b:29) explicates this notion:

Before they are submitted to interpretation, symbols are the internal interpreters of action. In this way symbolism gives an initial *readability* to action. It makes action a quasi-text for which symbols provide the rules of signification in terms of which a given conduct can be interpreted.

In addition, the term 'symbol' brings into play the notion of a rule, a norm in a sense which indicates that the meaningfulness of the action stems from social regulation which includes manners and customs. And so the notion of 'symbolic mediation' indicates (a) "the idea of an immanent meaning", (b) "a rule for description", and (c) a norm "equivalent to the idea of a rule taken in the prescriptive sense" (1984a:58).

The third instance of support for the narrative understanding of life is located in what Ricoeur calls the *pre-narrative quality of human experience*. "To imitate or represent action is first to preunderstand what human acting is, in its semantics, its symbolic system, its temporality" and it is upon this preunderstanding that plotment is built. In simple terms what this means is that life is a story at its beginning stage(s), an *activity and a passion in search of a narrative*. In action we are able to understand and recognise features of time which call for narration. In summary, human experience is mediated by a whole range of symbolic systems as well as by a range of stories familiar to us. Ricoeur gives two practical examples, one taken from the field of psychoanalysis and the other from the judicial process, to illustrate the above points. At the end he reaches two closely related conclusions: first, that the human being is fundamentally entangled in stories, and

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<sup>11</sup> In explicating the meaning of symbol Ricoeur draws, *inter alia*, on Clifford Geertz's *The Interpretation of Cultures* and on Cassirer's *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* (1984a:57ff).

second that "narrating is a secondary process grafted on our 'being-entangled in stories' " (1984a:64:1991b:30). In considering the four festivals of the *Israelites* in chapters seven, eight and nine we shall see that their soteriological thrust is fundamentally constructed around this notion of 'entangledness-in-stories', with memory playing a key role in the construction of their soteriology. These stories in which the *Israelites* are entangled are stories of struggle and resistance against domination: (a) the story of the Passover and the liberation from Egypt, (b) the story of freedom in the Fast of Esther, (3) the story of the Bulhoek Massacre, and (4) the story of the extra-ordinary life and death of Enoch Mgiijima, the founder of the *Israelites*. My thesis is that though located in different times and conditions, there is continuity and a link between these stories, a link which the *Israelites* establish through their reconstitution and reconstruction of time. We shall also see the redemptive and transcendent role that memory plays in this regard as well its basis in material conditions.

The implication of the above theory of Ricoeur is that narrative fiction is an essential aspect of *self-understanding*. And so, in terms of Aristotle's notion of plot concordance triumphs over discordance. Therefore, narrative is crucial for putting into order our experience of temporality. In terms of our self-understanding "we learn to become the *narrator* and the hero of *our own story*, without actually becoming the *author of our own life*" by applying to ourselves narrative voices. In this lies the difference between life and fiction. The chasm gets bridged when we appropriate to ourselves the plots that our culture has bequeathed us and by attempting to take on the various roles that our favourite characters and heroes in the stories to which we attach much value (Ricoeur 1991b:31-33). For the *Israelites* the favourite characters to which they attach value are not only the biblical characters such as Moses and Aaron in the story which recounts *pesach*, Esther and Modercai in the festival commemorating their salvific role, but also William Saunders Crowdy who founded the CGSC in the USA, and Enoch Mgiijima who represents continuity with Crowdy.

A further insight in Ricoeur's theory of emplotment relates to *identity* and develops out of his concern that what he is looking for in *the plot* is to see whether there is a unity in the duality of the 'true' history of the historians on one hand, and fiction e.g. novel, on the other . To show the centrality of narrating in human experience Ricoeur (1985:214) asserts:

It is in telling our own stories that we give ourselves an identity. We recognize ourselves in the stories we tell about ourselves. It makes little difference whether these stories are true or false, fiction as well as verifiable history provides us with an identity.

Ricoeur then draws on Hannah Arendt's analysis of story and history in *The Human Condition* in which the agent, the author of actions receives a narrative identity in narrating. When this is applied to the field of religion it can be said, for instance, that Israel's identity was established in the telling of its own story. Ricoeur (1985:214-15) continues on Arendt's insight,

And in this sense you can say that a religious tradition is characterized first of all by the stories that it tells quite evidently by the symbolic interpretations (or any other kind) that it grafts onto these stories. But the first center is the narrative center.

When we look at the *Israelites'* homilies, prefaces, and petitions we shall see that they are preceded by the telling of the story of Enoch Mgiijima and William Saunders Crowdy, the original founder of the 'Church of God and Saints of Christ' in the USA. The *Israelites* refer to this story-telling as prophetic testimony (*ukungqina umoya wesiprofitesho*). As we shall see, this storytelling plays a very crucial role in the *Israelites'* identity formation, in spite of the obvious fictional elements contained in this story-telling.

Ricoeur's point is that it is not only the novel or play that has a plot. Even the historian has to choose his/her plot by taking "from past events whatever appears to him important for the plot that he is going to lay out" (Ricoeur 1985:215; in Valdes 1991:464).

Let us now consider *mimesis*<sup>2</sup>, Ricoeur's further summation of emplotment which in its turn plays a mediating role in the mimetic process (1984a:53-4). As I have indicated already, this Aristotelian notion is derived from the Greek concept *muthos* signifying fable (along the lines of an imaginary story) as well as plot (along the lines of a well constructed story). For Aristotle *muthos* meant the organization of the events (Ricoeur 1984a:36). It is from the second sense of *muthos* that Ricoeur develops his theory, showing the relation between life and narrative. His reading of the *Poetics* is that Aristotle's notion of plot is a dynamic

process and not a static structure. This process functions in an integrative manner and it reaches its completion only in the reader or in the spectator, in other words, it is only completed in the living receiver of the story that is narrated. The story that is recounted or narrated becomes complete in itself through the integrating process (Ricoeur 1991b:21).

*Mimesis* has a mediating function deriving from the dynamic character of the configuring operation of emplotment (and ordering). Ricoeur (1984a:65) "calls narrative "exactly" what Aristotle called *muthos*, the force which emplots events into a humanly comprehensible order" and he presents narrativity as the conversion of discordance into concordance (Kellner 1990:232). It is through the plot of a narrative that the link or relation between narrative and Ricoeur's use of Kant's schema happens. As Ricoeur (1984a:x) puts it, the plot

"grasps together" and integrates into one whole and complete story multiple and scattered events, thereby schematizing the intelligible signification attached to the narrative taken as a whole.

But how does this integrating and mediating function happen? The plot plays an integrating and mediating function in three ways. In the first instance it mediates between the individual events or incidents and a story taken as a whole. In other words, the plot constitutes a story out of diverse events or incidents, transforming them into a story. The plot mediates between events, more than just a singular occurrence and a narrated story. The story in its turn needs to be more than a mere serial enumeration of events. It has to organize these events into an intelligible whole. It is because of the plot that "a variety of actions and events may be grasped together and so 'thought'." "In short, emplotment is the operation that draws a configuration out of a simple succession." (Ricoeur 1984a:65:1991b:21; Vanhoozer 1990:93)

In the second instance the plot arranges and gathers together a range of diverse, heterogeneous and independent components such as chance circumstances, doers of actions, those who suffer these actions, encounters between actors which may or may not be planned, unplanned and unforeseen outcomes, into a single story. This activity makes the plot a totality which is simultaneously concordant and discordant (Ricoeur 1991b:21).

It can be extended to include "pitiable and fearful incidents, sudden reversals, recognitions, and violent effects within the complex plot" (Ricoeur 1984a:65-6). The third mediating function of emplotment is with respect to time, synthesizing a number of heterogenous elements and components. Being the central element of narrative the plot is basically a creative synthesis of time, making into a whole, a totality, a range of experiences which would otherwise be chaotic and unrelated. In other words the plot plays a synthetic role with respect to time (Vanhoozer 1991:41).

There are two 'kinds' of *time* involved in the telling of every story. The first kind of time relates to "a discrete succession that is open and theoretically indefinite, a series of incidents", which we can refer to as 'successionary time', and the second notion of temporality relates to "the integration, culmination and closure owing to which the story receives a particular configuration" and we can refer to it as 'configurative time'. The way that these two notions are related to each other is that composing a story is "drawing a configuration out of a succession." In summary, this analysis of telling a story presents the following three features: that the plot plays a mediatory function between the multiple incidents and unified story; that concordance has primacy over discordance; that there is "competition between succession and configuration" (Ricoeur 1991b:22).

The act of configuration is to be understood phronetically rather than theoretically. The Aristotelian notion of *phronesis* (translated in Latin as *prudentia*) means "the intelligent use of action" (Ricoeur 1984a:40). To explain what this means Ricoeur notes that Aristotle made two important claims, viz. that every well-told story *teaches* something as well as being revelatory of universal aspects of the human condition. Thus the understanding that emerges from the telling of a story can be referred to as narrative understanding and has affinity to practical wisdom in that the construction of the plot teaches us the outcomes of specific conduct or actions which we then universalize. In sum, it can be said that "emplotment constitutes the creative centre of the narrative" (Ricoeur 1991b:22-4;1985:215).

The next point to consider is *mimesis*<sup>3</sup> which according to Ricoeur (1984a:71) shows the intersection between the world of the text, the world configured by the poem on one hand, and the world of the reader, that is, the world in which real action happens.

As he puts it in a later writing (1991b:26)

the process of composition, of configuration, is not completed in the text but in the reader and, under this condition, makes possible the reconfiguration of life by narrative. I should say, more precisely: the sense or the significance of a narrative stems from the *intersection of the world of the text and the world of the reader*. The act of reading thus becomes the critical moment of the entire analysis. On it rests the narrative's capacity to transfigure the experience of the reader.

In this he is addressing the paradox pertaining to the relation between life and narrative which he formulates as follows: "stories are recounted, life is lived" (1991b:25). Ricoeur then continues and unpacks the notions of the 'world of the reader' and the 'world of the text', drawing on Gadamer's notion of *fusion of horizons*. Continuing the paragraph quoted above Ricoeur says that the 'world of the text' refers to the literary work's capacity to open

before it a horizon of possible experience, a world in which it would be possible to live. A text is not something closed in upon itself, it is the projection of a new universe distinct from that in which we live. To appropriate a work through reading is to unfold the world horizon implicit in it which includes the actions, the characters and the events of the story told. As a result the reader belongs at once to the work's horizon of experience in imagination and to that of his or her own real action. The horizon of expectation and the horizon of experience continually confront one another and fuse together.

Drawing from the ideas of Heidegger Ricoeur asserts that the world of the text shows forth possibilities of being-in-the-world, it presents to the reader possibilities of understanding which the reader can appropriate. In other words, as Vanhoozer (1991:51) puts it, the world of the text

is a way of being-in-the-world which fictionally works out various possibilities projected in a fictional situation. Stories, then, far from being unreal and illusory, are actually the means of an ontological exploration of our relationship to beings and to Being.

The interpretation of a literary experience or the meaning of a text resides in a threefold mediation, viz. (a) *referentiality*, which is a mediation between the human being and the world, (b) *communicability*, which is mediation between human and human, and (c) *self-understanding*, which is mediation between the human person and him/herself. And so, for Ricoeur, "hermeneutics is placed at the

point of intersection of the (internal) configuration of the work and the (external) refiguration of life." The challenge or problem that arises for hermeneutics is to discover new and non-descriptive features of referentiality, new and non-utilitarian features of communicability, and new and non-narcissistic features of reflexivity. In this instance emplotment occurs not only in the text but is the common work of the text *and* the reader (Ricoeur 1991b:27).

But how is the reader actively involved in emplotment? The configuration of a work is not contained only within the work itself but is reactualized by the reader by following and accompanying this configuration. In other words, in following a narrative the reader reactualizes the configuring act which shapes it. Therefore the plot can be said to be an integrating process which is only finished by the *living* reader, spectator or receiver of the story that is narrated. The last insight with which Ricoeur completes this trend of thought pertaining to the narrative component of the paradox is that

it is the *act of reading* which completes the work, transforming it into a *guide* for reading, with its zones of indeterminacy, its latent wealth of interpretation, its power of being reinterpreted in new ways in new historical contexts (1991b:27).

We shall see in the variety of the homilies delivered during the *Israelite* festivals the extent to which the preachers integrate the existential situation of the *Israelites* with the narratives of salvation constituted in the festivals of *pesach* event and the Fast of Esther. I move now from Ricoeur's theory of how time and narrative are related to consider another important reflection and perspective on time, viz. Peterson's exposition of how time functions both as a form of domination and as a form of resistance.

### **3.4 Time as a site of struggle**

The importance of Peterson's conceptualization of time for my research interests is his reconstruction of the notion of *kairos* in which he presents a way of viewing the various forms of symbolic and religious struggle as forms of spiritual struggle against hidden forms of domination. He demonstrates the relationship that exists between temporality, domination, resistance and liberation. In Chapter Five we shall see the extent to which the *Israelites* have attempted to redefine and

reconstruct time in opposition and contradistinction to the time of 'the world'. This reconstitution of time is manifested in their adoption of the Jewish monthly and hourly calendar. This reconstitution of time can also be seen in their liturgical calendar and is further manifest in their religious festivals and the ritual practices which undergird these festivals. Peterson's theory makes it possible for us to understand the salvific content and intent of *Israelitic* time as resistant time. Let me outline the main thrust of his argument.

Peterson (1995) bases his temporal considerations and theory largely on Postone's rereading of Marx. One of the key points that emerge from this reworking of Marx is "the manner in which time itself becomes one of the central forms of social domination under capitalism" (1995:206). Peterson traces Postone's view on how the two forms of time, namely *abstract* time and *concrete*<sup>12</sup> time, have emerged historically and how both forms have come to dominate the social sphere. This form of temporal domination is described as being "unmarked, nonagentive, and nonconscious" and it comes to dominate everyday life.

The domination of abstract time occurs in a threefold manner. The first form of domination is related to the social need to measure and quantify value in production and it structures *labour time*. This is possible because under capitalism production is for exchange value and not for use and so the value of a product is based not so much on its specificity as it is on what that product has in common with other products, viz. labour time. It is the clock which makes it possible for us to 'see' abstract time and clock time ends up controlling not only labour time but all of social existence. As Peterson (1995:209) puts it, "Abstract time, clock time, becomes a totalizing force at the level of everyday life and its structuring." At this point the rule of the workplace is extended into social life (1995:212).

The second mode of domination of abstract time is based on the notion of *commodification* which refers not only to 'object' but a whole range of social relations that come into being under the capitalist mode of production. In terms of this mode of production it is the commodity which mediates social relations

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<sup>12</sup> Postone describes this second form of dominating totalized time as "the treadmill of capitalist production" (Peterson 1995:213). What makes it totalizing is that in spite of its content (commodities) which changes its form (exchange value or value) does not change but gets reproduced. A consequence of this is that history gets closed or comes to an end in the sense that history becomes the recurrence of the same form in contents which change.

because people are compelled to produce and exchange commodities not to consume them but for the acquisition of other commodities. This becomes a way of social existence and cannot be attributed to any specific person or class or institution but is quasi-independent. In other words, human existence is defined and constructed in terms of the circulation of commodities. As a result of this culture is reified.

The third mode of the domination of abstract time occurs as a result of the combination of the first two modes of domination and it pertains to the production of the individual as a *compulsive consumer*. At this stage domination is no longer external, but has become interiorized domination, i.e. domination-from-within. Or, according to Peterson's (1995:212) formulation, "It is not so much what you do but what you earn, and hence what you are able to consume, that ultimately counts." How does Peterson's reconstruction of the notions of *kairos* and *chronos* feature within this scheme of things?

Peterson makes the following key points with respect to the distinction between *kairos* and *chronos*. First, despite certain nuances between the terms, their distinction cannot be derived from the Bible. Second, it is anachronistic to equate *chronos* with abstract or clock time. Peterson then goes on to reconstitute what remains of the distinction between the two terms. He equates *chronos* with Postone's abstract time and concrete time, in that both of them conform to the chronotic view of time as independent and beyond the control of humans.

In its turn *kairotic* time, though being a form of concrete time, is opposed to *chronotic* time. *Kairos* (Peterson 1995:222f) is ritual time,

**time which is tied to an event, dependent on a context and given as a gift. It is a form of qualitative time; of time as grace, as opportunity. In a context in which time is out of control - in which time is dominating and totalizing - it takes the form of resistant time; resistant in the sense that it inserts a discourse which contests, subverts, undermines and challenges the totalization of time.**

But not only does *kairos* subvert and challenge totalization, it also regenerates

**for it points beyond the time of resistance to the time of liberation, when time will no longer dominate but be subordinated to the human good. It is thus a**

resistance that is *salvific, redemptive*, pointing to the new time of God's reign, to the time of the Sabbath rest "which remains for all God's people" (Heb 4:9).  
[my emphasis]

The resistance of *kairos* corresponds to the three forms of the domination of *chronos* as abstract time, viz. "the universalizing and the domination of work-time, the universalizing and the domination of commodification, and the domination by desire in compulsive consumption." In terms of this, religious ritual (Peterson 1995:224)

can be seen as a creative and salvific response to these forms of abstract domination by means of the counterposing of alternative forms of time and practice and can be construed theologically as *kairotic*.

Peterson argues that it is in this resistance that religious practices are constituted as efficacious. In Chapter Five I shall illustrate how this resistance happens and the points at which it occurs in the *Israelitic* religious rituals and practices. Let us now consider the three modes in which *kairotic* ritual time is constituted as resistance against the domination of *chronos* as abstract time.

In respect of work-time the domination of abstract time under capitalism happens through an enforced separation of time from its other rhythms such as the "the cosmic rhythms of nature and of the universe; the rhythms of social life; the rhythms of festival; and the rhythms of ritual." The displacement of temporal rhythms is not totally overpowering but gets challenged religiously through the convoking of ritual time. Ritual time, according to Peterson (1995:226)

convokes the time of the past as a present presence, as a present manifestation, and by so doing seeks to regenerate all of time. In a society not dominated by abstract time, this regeneration of time is a form of resistance to the transitoriness of the regular time of everyday life.

Continues Peterson

In a society which is dominated by the profane time of the work-place, this resistance takes on a new urgency. It is no so much a resistance to the passing of time as it is resistance to the compulsions of abstract time, the resistance to the domination of the work-week.

The effect of religious and ritual time in this instance is the disruption and

subversion of the time of the work-week which is dominating. Peterson then goes on and draws from Rebecca Chopp to demonstrate how the AIC's are analogous to the Jewish Sabbath, including its bodily practices which include a specific dress code, as a form of resistance to time of wage-labour. The link between ritual and time is that ritual (Peterson 1995:229)

evokes a *kairos* of manifestation, a *kairos* which arises out of a different form of temporality, a different rhythm and a different sensibility. It is not, however, simply conservative resistance - a kind of obduracy to change - it is a resistance which is a remaking, a reshaping, a reforming. It is a resistance which provides the space for regeneration: of the body, of the community, and of the body politic.

With regard to resisting the commodification of life by abstract time what the AIC's forms of ritual do is to *remystify* things for the purposes of controlling them. This remystification is set over against "the profanation of things in the subject-object split" in commodification. Because this commodification includes the commodization of the body, the bodily rituals and practices of the AIC's can be construed as a form of resistance against the domination that comes about through this commodization of the body. What ritual does in this instance is to create *communitas* which is expressed, *inter alia*, through bodily practices.

The domination of abstract time by desire in compulsive consumption affects one's conception of self. The devaluation of work results in the consumption of commodities being the sign of the power that accrues to one socially. Resistance in this instance is facilitated by and expressed through patterns of consumption. This is expressed through the manner in which specific "commodities are proscribed and [in] how all commodities for consumption are ritually reworked" before they are used. In other words, instead of compulsive consumption there is *proscribed and controlled consumption*. We shall see in Chapter Five how the *Israelite's* temporal practices constitute time as resistance against these three forms of domination of abstract time.

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I now move, consider insights which relate to a rethinking of what constitutes history. This consideration of history is important for this investigation into the soteriology of Mijima's *Church of God and Saints of Christ* because of the importance that the *Israelites* attach to their history through their ever recurring prophetic testimonies. Each of these prophetic testimonies constitutes a short

lesson in history. But it is also more than that - it is akin to a creed, a confession of faith. In this sense it can be said to have a canonical status. But, as I indicated already, it is not a conventional or scholarly lesson in history, but it is history all the same. In considering the relationship between history and fiction I turn again to the work and reflections of Ricoeur.

### 3.5 A 'new' history

What has been considered thus far relates primarily to narrativity and temporality as it pertains to fiction. But what about *history*? What about *real* stories, *actual* happenings? In an anticipatory manner we can ask, What about the Bulhoek Massacre? How is this story to be understood? How is it to be interpreted? What is its relation to narrativity, to emplotment? In other words, how do the *Israelites* understand themselves presently in relation to the Bulhoek event? How is the relation between history and time to be fathomed? This section seeks to give a framework through which we can understand how and why the *Israelites* relate their story and why the Bulhoek Massacre is an important element of their identity and self-understanding.

What is the relation between history and fiction, if one does exist? Let me begin with the last question. Kellner's (1990:229) view is that "From the point of view of historical reflection, the central assertion of *Time and Narrative* is the union of history and fiction in a "grand narratology," which is severed or divided only at great cost." In other words, there is a total interdependence between history and fiction as narrative modes. Though they both tell stories the historian, unlike the writer of fiction, "is under the constraint of the past" (Vanhoozer 1990:94). Also, the relationship with fiction shows itself forth through the fact that "past reality is, in the strict sense of the word unverifiable" in the sense that it no longer exists and can only be grasped *indirectly* (In Vanhoozer 1990:95).

I shall extrapolate four key ideas in the thinking of Ricoeur concerning history, viz. history of the people, configuration, teleological objective, and metaphoric function. With regard to the question 'How is history to be understood?' my interest is not so much in what trained or professional historians or historiographers do in terms of the discipline nature of history and historiography. Nor is my interest in the consuming debate on the double meaning of the word

history as past events or as written report. Ricoeur's view with respect to the scientific model of history that takes its cue from the natural sciences where "you want your history to be verifiable by a neutral observer, in the same way as a physicist is not, as a scientist, part of the phenomena observed in the laboratory", is that it is misleading in the instance "where whoever writes history is part of the history that he/she is telling." His view (Ricoeur 1985:215) is that

The historian is him/herself a constitutive element in the events being told. Consequently, the historian can never experience the distance that the scientist does in relation to the phenomena of nature.

My interest and focus is thus in what Ricoeur refers to as "the history of the people", or alternately "the history of the victims." This perspective of history - the history of the people - has also been referred to as 'history from below'<sup>13</sup>. As he continues in the same paragraph:

What you get here with the history of the people is the history of anti-heroes, just the opposite of the history of important people. Actually, the history of those who have been "beaten down," the history of victims. And so you get a history of suffering as opposed to a history of glory.

In the view of Walter Benjamin (in Hewitt 1994:79), an aesthetic philosopher and literary critic who reads history from the perspective of historical materialism

history from the perspective of the oppressors and the privileged is subverted by the authentic history of the victims, whose suffering and labor are the unseen condition of the very possibility of culture ....

This view stands in stark contrast to the traditional and classical view where history has been viewed from the perspective of the powerful. As Ricoeur (1985:215) puts it:

In the past we heard, above all, stories of important people, about the founders of empires. At that time, history was mostly the histories of battles and of treatises and, in this sense, a political history. It's only since the 19th century that the history of the people has been told...

This view is echoed by Sharpe (1991:25):

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<sup>13</sup> This sense of history received serious scholarly attention with Edward Thompson's 1966 article entitled 'History from Below' and published in *The Times Literary Supplement* and in 1985 in a volume of essays with the same title *History from Below* (Sharpe 1991:25).

Traditionally, history has been regarded, from Classical times onwards, as an account of the doings of the great. Interest in broader social and economic history developed in the nineteenth century, but the main subject-matter of history remained the unfolding of elite politics.

The history of the people represents a kind of reversal of history from a history of power to a history of victims, a changing of the plot which "brings forth quite different memories on behalf of quite other projects" (Ricoeur 1985:216). My concern in this investigation is not only with how history is explained, understood, and appropriated by those to whom Ricoeur refers as the ones who have been "beaten down", but also in the consequences and outcomes of this appropriation, especially as these manifest themselves theologically. Therefore, the answer to the question 'How is history to be understood?' is: history is to be understood as the history of the victims. Even in those instances where I shall draw on the records compiled by the victors and biased in their favour I shall endeavour to hear the crushed, and silent voices of the victims.

I take my cue in this regard from the principle established by Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie's *Montaillou* that official records of the powerful can be used to explore the views of past generations. In other words, "Such evidence can be employed, as appropriate, to explore explicit actions and ideas or implicit assumptions and to provide a quantitative background to past experiences" (Sharpe 1991:29). Of course, in terms of the nature and thrust of this investigation, the challenge that presents itself is to home in on the qualitative background to past experience. A variation of this principle can be seen in the work done by feminist theologians such as Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza whose feminist critical hermeneutics endeavours to recover the voice and struggle of women in the male-biased and kyriarchal text that constitutes the Bible. Schussler Fiorenza's (Hewitt 1994:84-5) work

initiates an "imaginative reconstruction of historical reality," searching historical records for redeemed traces and fragments of women's past that counter the prevailing androcentric interpretations of Christian origins.

I indicated earlier that what Ricoeur is looking for in the plot is to see whether there is a unity in the duality of the 'true' history of the historians on one hand and fiction on the other, and that for him it is not only the novel or play that has a plot but that historians too have to choose a plot for themselves by taking from events

in the past those things that appear to be important for the plot.<sup>14</sup> As will be evident below, especially in the analysis and interpretation of the interviews, sermons, testimonies and petitions of the faithful, *every* member of the *Church of God and Saints of Christ* is a historian in the sense of Ricoeur's 'history of the victims', the history of suffering. For this reason I shall refer to them as *ordinary historians* in order to distinguish them from that brand who have received scholarly and formal training in the discipline of history and historiography. I base my sense of *ordinariness* on that used by Edward Thompson (in Sharpe 1991:25) in his reference to the victims and casualties of the Industrial Revolution and those who tried to resist it:

the poor stockinger, the luddite cropper, the 'obsolete' hand-loom weaver, the 'utopian' artisan, and even the deluded followers of Joanna Southcott...[whose] communitarian ideals may have been fantasies...[and whose] insurrectionary conspiracies may have been foolhardy."<sup>15</sup>

This sense of 'ordinariness' has affinity to West's sense of *ordinary reader* as defined and articulated in his work on contextual Bible studies and liberation hermeneutics. This is West's (1993:9) sense of the 'ordinary reader':

it includes the many who are illiterate but who listen to, discuss and retell the Bible. The term "ordinary" is used in a general and specific sense. The general usage includes all readers who read the Bible in an untrained or pre-critical way. But I also use the term "ordinary" to indicate a particular sector of pre-critical readers, those readers who are poor and oppressed (including, of course, women). In the latter sense the term "ordinary" is similar to the terms "the people" or "the masses" as they are popularly used.

Taking my cue from Thompson and West, my reference to the *Israelites* as ordinary historians is that though they are untrained or pre-critical in the academic or 'scientific' sense, their commitment to the *Church of God and Saints of Christ* and to the memory and vision of Enoch Mgijima is manifested in their listening to, discussing, and retelling their history, their story, especially as it is constructed around Enoch Mgijima and the Bulhoek Massacre. Also, my sense of 'ordinary' indicates the link of the *Israelites* to that sector often referred to as 'the oppressed'

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<sup>14</sup> Ricoeur asserts that Marxism proposes that the fundamental plot in history is the class struggle and that history must be read as the history of the class struggle (1985:215). But, as Sharpe points out, "the application of even such a basic Marxist concept as class to the pre-industrial world is problematic" (1991:31).

<sup>15</sup> Sharpe cites from E.P. Thompson's project entitled *The Making of the English Working Class* published in 1965.

or 'the people', or 'the masses'. But this linkage to the oppressed does not mean that their identity is dissolved into abstract categories. On the contrary, reference to them as the *Israelites*, rather than merely as 'the poor and oppressed' acknowledges and recognises their socio-religious agency and subjectivity (Hewitt 1994:86).

But, as Sharpe indicates, this sense of history as 'history of the people' or 'history from below' is not unproblematic, especially as it pertains to British labour history. The problems that Sharpe identifies pertain to evidence and what he terms 'problems of conceptualization'. He identifies the problem of evidence as that of the sparsity of material from which to work, especially the fact that "the further back historians seeking to reconstruct the experience of the lower orders go, the more restricted the range of sources at their disposal becomes" (Sharpe 1991:26). The problems of conceptualization are: "Where, exactly, is 'below' to be located, and what should be done with history from below once it has been written?" (1991:27).

With regard to the question of going back further in time my interests do not go back beyond the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. As will be clear below, I shall draw on a range of sources, including the records of the dominant forces. But more importantly, as I indicated in the introductory chapter dealing with methodology, I shall also draw on the sources provided by the *Israelites* themselves. Some of these sources are written while others are oral-liturgical. In terms of the question of where 'below' lies my view is that the whole body of the *Church of God and Saints of Christ* constitute the 'below' socio-religious stratum. This is because, as I indicated in the introductory chapter, religious communities such as the *Church of God and Saints of Christ* tend to be neither socially privileged nor personally prestigious, and also because they are neither institutionally strong on the large scale nor connected to any influential elites, whether these be of the church or of civil society.

With respect to the last question Sharpe poses - what is to be done with history once it has been written? - he himself gives a very appropriate reply. His view is that history from below "should be brought out of the ghetto.....and used to criticize, redefine and strengthen the historical mainstream" (1991:38).

In terms of the concerns of this investigation, it will be critical to identify the fundamental plot(s) that underpin this history of the victims, the "quite different memories that it brings forth", and the "quite other projects" on whose behalf these memories are brought forth, the possibilities it engenders, as well as the theological intent and import of these plots, memories, and projects. Let us now consider further Ricoeur's summation of the relation between history, narrative, plot, and time.

His view is that "history relies on a narrative understanding". History is more than mere chronology. Its significance lies in the logic of the organizing activity of the plot which constitutes the soul of narrative. The plot, as indicated earlier, "invents an ordered and intelligible whole out of a diversity of incidents and actions." Through emplotment, "poetic imagination", or the configurative dimension of the plot wholeness is achieved<sup>16</sup> (Vanhoozer 1990:92-3).

The beginning, middle and end of a history refer not only to their chronological place, but to their place in the logic of the plot. The "end" is not simply the last thing to happen in a sequence, but the conclusion of a story. This conclusion "follows" neither chronologically nor logically from what has gone before, but rather teleologically.

In this way "An historical event ...[becomes] not only an occurrence, something that happens, but a narrative component that contributes to a plot" (Vanhoozer 1990:93). Because of the imagination and the process of emplotment it is possible to see "diverse things and events grouped together in time in meaningful patterns" and we are thus able to 'follow' a story or history. Through this intelligibility we are able to see how each happening, each event and each action shows forth a specific orientation determined by the conclusion, thus rendering it teleological, that is, governed by the end, the conclusion.

According to Ricoeur it is this which grants history its narrative "competence." It is the configurative dimension of plots that give stories a cognitive significance, thus making 'following' and 'understanding' possible. What the historian does is not to describe but to redescribe. In this sense, according to Vanhoozer's reading (1990:96)

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<sup>16</sup> It is this that Kant refers to this process as the 'reflective' judgement (Vanhoozer 1990:93).

History for Ricoeur, like metaphor, is also a matter of "seeing as." Histories are imaginative configurations: the historian invents figures that represent the past. Like the master of metaphor, the historian does not make copies but invents in order to discover.

Moreover, a historical narrative is not a carbon copy of the past but a *creative* imitation because the original no longer really exists. In this sense, through its metaphoric function historical redescription has an irreducibly fictive aspect (Vanhooser 1990:96). As ordinary historians Mgijima's *Israelites* are very much part of the history they are telling. In fact, their identity is constituted by their history - telling their story - in the sense intimated above by Ricoeur and Hannah Arendt. This will become clear below when I consider the festival commemorating the death of Mgijima and the festival commemorating the Bulhoek Massacre. Though the objectives of my investigation are primarily theological, this theology must take serious cognisance of the history of the *Israelites* as they themselves articulate it imaginatively using the vehicle of liturgy. My hope is that what we can learn from this close link and relationship between the history and the theology of the *Church of God and Saints of Christ*, specifically its soteriology, is brought out of the theological ghetto and used to criticize, challenge and hopefully begin to transform the theological mainstream. I now move to consider the next set of notions in the philosophical reflections of Ricoeur, viz. the power of metaphor and language.

### **3.6 Metaphor and language**

Commenting on *The Rule of Metaphor* Ricoeur says that in this project he "tried to show how language could extend itself to its very limits forever discovering new resonances within itself" (in Valdes 1991:463). His view is that "human language is *inventive* despite the objective limits and codes which govern it" (in Valdes 1991:465). It is this creativity of language that I will now explore. Ricoeur's thoughts on language and metaphor are a further extension of his reflections on imagination, its constitution, its operation, its manifestation, and the sheer extent of its capabilities and capacities. As he puts it (in Valdes 1991:463):

there is not just an epistemological and political imagination, but also, and perhaps more fundamentally, a *linguistic* imagination which generates and regenerates meaning through the living power of metaphoricity.

Language generates and regenerates meaning through mutations and transformations. It often salvages that which is lost in experience (in Valdes 1991:474). But how is language able to achieve such imaginative feats? What is it in language which gives it such creative power? According to Ricoeur one of the crucial ways through which language is able to go beyond the codes which are meant to control it is through *metaphor*. Ricoeur asserts that metaphor is not a mere 'ornament of language' nor is it a 'stylistic decoration' that offers no new information, as traditional rhetoric would claim. No, metaphor is "a semantic innovation, an emergence of meaning." For him it is an alternative strategy of discourse, a strategy very different and distinct from others (in Reagan and Stewart 1978:120).

In the view of Ricoeur the creative power of language resides in one of its basic features, namely *polysemy*. In simple words the notion of polysemy refers to the potential meanings of words, the ability of ordinary words to have more than one meaning (in Reagan and Stewart 1978:120).

Language relies on *semiotic* and *semantic* entities. The former refers to signs which are distinctive and oppositive units within the same system. In other words, they are intralinguistic, rather than referring to things without; "they are defined by their difference with regard to other units of the same system" (Reagan and Stewart 1978:121-23). Semiotic units are therefore systems of inner dependencies, of relations within, and they constitute sets and systems which are closed and finite. Being closed or finite means that they do not go beyond that specific system or that particular unit. This is an immanent feature of all the relations between signs and within them.

Semantic entities are the bearers of meaning and they are infinite, open. It is the sentence that constitutes the first semantic unit and it refers or relates to realities outside of the language and can be referred to as being extralinguistic. In what is the infiniteness of the sentence constituted? It is, asserts Ricoeur, in that "sentences are events, because they have a speaker and a hearer, because they have meaning, and because they have reference." Ricoeur (in Reagan and Stewart 1978:123) amplifies this infiniteness in each trait as follows:

With the event comes the openness of temporality; with the speaker and hearer, the depth of individual fields of experience; with meaning, the limitlessness of the thinkable; and with reference, the inexhaustibility of the world itself.

From the above it is clear that words have meaning only to the extent that sentences have meaning. In other words, it is only within sentences that words can have intended content, that they can refer to something outside language. But where does the polysemy of words fit within this scheme of things?

Polysemy is a universal feature of words in natural languages and it has two functional traits, that is, it satisfies two requirements of a natural language, viz. economy and sensibility to context. The notion of economy in this instance refers to the ability to circumscribe lexical plurality without which dictionaries would be limitless in their range of meanings of words. In its turn contextual sensibility refers not only to attunement to the linguistic environment but also to the behaviour of both the speaker and the hearer, "the situation common to both, and finally [to] the horizon of reality surrounding the speech situation" (1978:125). In this instance polysemy should not be confused with ambiguity. Ambiguity (or equivocity) is a feature of discourse whereas polysemy is a feature of words. Whereas ambiguity may be pathological, polysemy is a natural feature (1978:126). But what is the relation between polysemy and metaphor?

Metaphor is the creative use of polysemy and in this sense it may be construed as a specific strategy of language (1978:129-30). Rather than limiting or minimising polysemy, metaphor utilizes polysemy in order to preserve polysemy so that it can function most effectively. Metaphor confuses the established logical boundaries in order to detect new similarities which we were not able to recognise in previous categorization. Put differently, the strength of metaphor is "to break through previous categorization and to establish new logical boundaries on the ruins of the preceding ones." The metaphoric process grasps the relationship in any semantic field (in Reagan and Stewart 1978:131).

In the metaphor the old and the new are present together in what Ricoeur calls the 'metaphorical twist'. How does this happen? Ricoeur (in Reagan and Stewart 1978:132) asserts:

When we receive a metaphorical statement as meaningful, we perceive both the literal meaning, which is bound by the semantic incongruity, and the new meaning, which makes sense in the present context. Metaphor is a clear case where polysemy is preserved instead of being screened. Two lines of interpretation are opened at the same time and several readings are allowed together and put into tension ..... Several layers of meaning are noticed and recognized in the thickness of the text.

How else is the relation between metaphor and polysemy constituted? From a diachronic perspective the metaphor moves from a condition of novelty and fades to become what is called a dead metaphor. As a novelty the metaphor exists only discursively and not lexically. But once it is seized by the speech community the inclination is that it becomes used in the same literal manner already classified by our lexicons. What happens at the final stage is that the tension between literal and metaphorical sense is not perceived anymore and "we may say that the metaphorical sense has become a part of the literal sense" which gets added on to the previous polysemy of the word. In this sense we can speak of the metaphor as a process by which polysemy is extended (1978:132).

And so, asks Ricoeur, 'What is the function of metaphor?' His summation is that a discourse which employs metaphor "has the extraordinary power of redescribing reality" and this constitutes "the referential function of a metaphorical statement." Also, "metaphor not only shatters the previous structures of our language, but also the previous structure of what we call reality." By accepting this function of redescribing reality it makes sense to concede that this redescribed reality "is itself novel reality." Ricoeur (in Reagan and Stewart 1978:132-33) then draws the following incisive conclusion:

the strategy of discourse implied in metaphorical language is neither to improve communication nor to insure univocity in argumentation, but to shatter and to increase our sense of reality by shattering and increasing our language. The strategy of metaphor is heuristic fiction for the sake of redescribing reality. With metaphor we experience the metamorphosis of both language and reality.

It is this power of metaphor which punctuates and characterises the soteriological thrust of the CGSC, a power originally employed by Mgijima when he first proclaimed his message. It is this power of metaphor which the *Israelite* preachers have seized in their very rich homilies and testimonies.

### 3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter we saw how Ricoeur, building on the insights of other philosophers, has argued for a dynamic conceptualization of imagination. From this we can conclude that for humans to exist in a way which not only gives meaning to life but which makes it possible to live beyond the confines of life, to live in a new time, to live in a transformed and new way is to exist and live imaginatively. We saw that this new world, this transformed existence is grasped narratively, metaphorically, symbolically, and through a reconstruction and reconstitution of time as a form of resistance. When humans grasp this possibility they come to live in a new time, salvific time. Humans come to speak a new language, they get to live a new language, not the language of the dominant or the language of power and ideology but the language of emancipation, the language of utopia. Ricoeur pointed out the question of responsibility in projecting one's ownmost possibilities to the world, cautioning against negative and disastrous outcomes in this projection of possibilities.

In Chapter Five we shall see how Enoch Mgiijima, the founder of the *Israelites*, generated a new time, a time of salvation in opposition to the time of domination and destructive time of the world. Coupled with this reconstruction of time is a the generation of a new language, a language of metaphor and symbol with which to grasp a new reality. In Chapter Six we shall see the extent to which Mgiijima, imaginatively but disastrously attempted to live this new existence, projecting his ownmost possibilities onto it, and calling into question established forms of exercising power. In Chapter Seven we shall see how the story of the *hapiru*, the history Israel, becomes the *Israelites'* story through a reconstitution of time. But before we come to these we need to consider the theory of memory and ritual and how they are linked to the notion of history.

## CHAPTER 4

# METHODOLOGICAL CONSTRUCTS AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: MEMORY AND RITUAL

A forgetful humanity incapable of recollection and remembrance is without hope for the future because it abandons the dead, and thus forecloses on the possibility of its own redemption. After all, it is only for their sake that hope is given to us.

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The present generation redeems the past in an act of anamnestic solidarity with all who suffered at the slaughter-bench of history. There is no possibility of redemption, neither for them nor for us if we allow the annihilation of their very memory

*Marsha Hewitt*

### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter forms the second leg of the theoretical framework. In the preceding chapter I looked at the complex operations of imagination, thereby preparing the ground for an appropriate understanding of Enoch Mgijima, the legacy he left his followers, and how they in turn have continued to reappropriate this. I also touched on the question of memory. Let me quickly review the salient points that were made in this regard. The main ideas concerning memory emanated from the Augustinian notion of *distentio animi* where the fundamental claim made was that time is present in the soul as *memoria*, *attentio*, and *expectatio*. It is through the special function of memory that time is internalized in the individual and becomes present. The continuity between past and present is maintained and preserved through memory and it makes an anticipation of the future possible. But apart from these Augustinian notions, in what other ways is the faculty and facility of memory constituted? How does this constitution manifest itself? How does it operate in group situations? Does it have a social character? Does it serve any other purposes? In attempting to respond to these as well as related questions I

shall draw mainly on the work of P. Connerton, of Theodore W. Jennings, and on Marsha Hewitt's reflections on the seminal work of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza.

The memory of the life of Mgijima and the memory of the Bulhoek Massacre are kept alive by the *Israelites* not only through a casual and non-formal narration of these stories. The primary mode through which this memory is kept alive is ritual. This ritual remembering is located in two distinct though mutually related festivals of the *Israelites*. I shall deal with these two festivals in Chapter Nine. But how is memory constituted and how does ritual function in regard to memory?

The purpose of this chapter is to interrogate the notions of memory and ritual in order to understand better the role that they play in the *Israelites'* construction of their soteriology. Because both memory and ritual are complex notions it is important to undertake this task of uncovering not only the constitution and operation of each but also how the one relates to the other. The first part of this chapter will look at how memory is constituted as a collective phenomenon. In other words, we shall see that memory is not only an individual phenomenon but that we can speak of the memory of a social grouping and that this shared memory is constructed, sustained and retained mainly through commemorative and ritual practices and performances. We shall see that it is because of the common interest that it is possible for groups to have a shared memory. Secondly, this chapter will attempt to lay bare some of the key processes and mechanisms, such as bodily practices, through which the collective memory is shaped and sustained. We shall see the processes by means of which memory and the past get sedimented in the body. This will lay a proper foundation for understanding the role that the bodily practices of the *Israelites* play in shaping their shared memory and how this in turn shapes their soteriological notions. A further aim of this chapter is to demonstrate how, through ritual practices, the collective memory is able to generate knowledge. In the last part of this chapter I shall consider how memory functions redemptively as a vehicle for solidarity and emancipation in the face of domination.

#### **4.1 Memory and ritual**

Whereas Ricoeur deals with memory chiefly as an individual phenomenon, Connerton preoccupies himself mainly with two questions regarding the phenomenon of memory: (a) to what extent is it accurate to speak of group or

collective or social memory, and (b) how is this memory of groups conveyed and sustained?

When speaking of groups Connerton refers both to micro face-to-face societies, such as Mijima's *Church of God and Saints of Christ* is, and to macro faceless societies. Connerton's contention is that such a thing as collective or social memory does indeed exist. With respect to the second question his claim is that the memory of groups is conveyed and sustained by (more or less ritual) performances. Connerton's work is crucial for my investigation in that it is an attempt to expand concretely and practically the horizon of what may be subjected to interpretive activity. As he puts it (1989:4):

Legal and theological texts, works of art, ritual acts, bodily expressions - all are possible objects of interpretative activity. Yet, although bodily practices are in principle included as possible objects of hermeneutic enquiry, in practice hermeneutics has taken inscription as its privileged object.

Connerton's endeavour is to illustrate how non-inscribed practices are transmitted in tradition and as a tradition. A further and very important contention of Connerton is that if such a thing as a social memory does exist it will be found in commemorative ceremonies. But, continues Connerton, these ceremonies have to be performative in order to be commemorative, and performativity is inconceivable without habit which in its turn is inconceivable without the notion of bodily automatisms.

Let us see how these claims and contentions are substantiated and corroborated. How is it possible to speak of *social* memory as a form of cognition? Connerton (1989:3) notes that with regard to social memory past images usually give legitimacy to an existing social order and those who participate in a social order usually have a shared memory. Therefore, "To the extent that their memories of a society's past diverge, to that extent its members can share neither experiences nor assumptions." In interrogating further the notion of social memory Connerton draws on the work of Maurice Halbwachs<sup>1</sup>. In terms of the social construction of memory, Halbwachs contends that the individuals' capabilities to acquire, to localise and to recall their memories is due to their membership of a social group,

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<sup>1</sup> The two important works of Halbwachs are *Les cadres sociaux de la memoire* and *La memoire collective* (Connerton 1989:36).

especially those of kinship, religion and class. Furthermore, observes Halbwachs (in Connerton 1989:36),

every recollection, however personal it may be ....exists in relationship with a whole ensemble of notions which many others possess: with persons, places, dates, words, forms of language, that is to say with the whole material and moral life of the societies of which we are part or of which we have been part.

But what is it that makes possible retention in the memory? For Halbwachs it is "a community of interests and thoughts" that makes this possible. It is not of their similarity that we are able to evoke thoughts, rather it is because of the common interest in such memories that they are collected in our minds. What the group does is to provide the individuals with frameworks wherein their memories are localised and this localization occurs through some form of mental mapping. What we recollect gets situated within the mental spaces that the group has provided. These mental spaces are supported by the material spaces that the specific group occupies and these mental spaces refer back to these material spaces.

Halbwachs thus argues that an individual memory cannot be completely separated from social memory and that each social group with a different past has memories specific to it and these are linked to specific *mental landmarks* peculiar to that specific group. According to Connerton, what is lacking in Halbwachs' theory of collective memory is that it is oblivious of how past images and recollected knowledge are conveyed and sustained. As indicated above, Connerton's view is that this occurs via more or less ritual performances. Secondly, Halbwachs's theory does not explicitly address the issue of how social groups are constituted of a system or systems of communication and transfer which are specific to those groups. Connerton (1989:37-8) advances the view that there are two important acts that make this communication, this transfer possible. These are: (a) commemorative ceremonies, and (b) bodily practices. Let us consider first the act of commemorative ceremonies.

#### **4.2 Commemorative ceremonies**

Commemorative ceremonies as acts of transfer can be placed under the general rubric of ritual action. Connerton commences by giving an example of how the political leaders of the Third Reich advanced its ideology by means of festivals

which commemorated important events in the history of the National Socialist Party and which, though they were new, soon gained a canonical form. These public ceremonies were related to Christian calendrical festivities through rites that were fused with potent cultic force and which had a mnemonic function. These rites then became fixed, and repeated and were performed in a pseudo-religious fashion which included a mythic narrative whose constant themes were struggle, sacrifice, victory. For instance, posits Connerton (1989:43):

The political fiasco of 1923 is ...reinterpreted and re-presented as neither a defeat nor meaningless nor futile. The mortal fate of those who fell in it is to be interpreted not as a senseless death. It is to be understood as a sacred event, and one which points forward to another sacred event, that of 30 January 1933 ...the seizure of power.

In the view of Connerton, these ceremonies and others like them, though of clear political origins and motivation, can justifiably be referred to as ritual action. But what are we to understand by the notion of rites or ritual action? Connerton (1989:44) advances Lukes's definition of ritual<sup>2</sup> as

rule-governed activity of a symbolic character which draws the attention of its participants to objects of thought and feeling which they hold to be of special significance.

The key features of this notion of ritual action are expressive acts - regularly enacted, formalised, stylised, stereotyped - and the discharge of expressive feelings. Some rituals mark beginnings and endings as in rites of passage as well as in recurring calendrical ceremonies. They are able to grant value and meaning to the life of those who perform them. Also, because of the repetitive nature of all rites there is automatically an implied continuity with the past.

According to Connerton (1989:45) there is that special category of rites, festivals, which have an overt and intentional retrospective and calendrical character. What

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<sup>2</sup> It is not my intention to get involved in the debate on what constitutes or does not constitute ritual. A very important study in this regard has been done by Catherine Bell in her seminal project *Ritual Theory Ritual Practice*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992. In her broad survey of ritual theories she distinguishes between older views of ritual as "a distinct category of behaviour" and more recent views of ritual "as an aspect of all activity." As a way out of this quagmire she suggests "that we refer to the particular circumstances and cultural strategies that generate and differentiate activities from each other" rather than a forced categorization of what constitutes or does not constitute ritual. She then adopts the term 'ritualization' to refer to the manner in which specific social actions "strategically distinguish themselves in relation to other actions" (1992:74).

makes these rites distinctive is their explicit claim to continuity with the past, achieved

by ritually re-enacting a narrative of events held to have taken place at some past time, in a manner sufficiently elaborate to contain the performance of more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances.

Examples of these overtly retrospective rituals are the Jewish *Passover*, which is an annual reminder of the Exodus from Egypt, and *Purim* which commemorates the events that are narrated in the Book of Esther. I would like to draw the reader's attention to these two examples because they constitute two of the four festivals in the calendar of the *Church of God and Saints of Christ* which is the object of this study. In the case of the Christian liturgical calendar examples of overt retrospective ceremonies are the *Good Friday* and *Easter* festivals as well as the *Eucharist*. In terms of Islam, the Fasting in Ramadan is a reminder that it was in this fifth month of the Muslim calendar "that the Koran was sent down as guidance for the people." Connerton (1989:45-48) then makes the inference that "such commemorative ceremonies play a significant role in the shaping of communal memory," despite what he identifies as a three-pronged skepticism that usually arises as a result of this inference. Let us look at this skepticism.

Firstly, the *psychoanalytic position* advances the view that ritual should be understood as a form of *symbolic representation*. Essentially what this means is that the rite is an indirect and an encoded way of disguising and denying conflict located within the life-history of the individual. The ritual text is thus said to be pregnant with conflict which the ritual in turn decodes and ultimately denies via representation<sup>3</sup>. The second skepticism against the above inference he identifies as being the *sociological position* which holds that ritual behaviour should be viewed as a form of *quasi-textual representation*. In this view the role of ritual is the communication of shared values and the reduction of tension within a group. Rituals therefore are an outward illustration of a culture's ethos and its sensibilities, "articulated in the symbolism of something like a single collective text" (Connerton 1989:48-50). The third view, the *historical position*, asserts that it is not enough to see rites solely in terms of their internal structure or as self-

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<sup>3</sup> This understanding of ritual is exhibited in the work of Freud, especially with regard to his notion of the oedipal struggle between sons and fathers, where it is claimed that after patricide there is remorse on the side of the sons (Connerton 1989:48-9).

contained symbolic texts but essentially by situating them in their historical context. In the view of Connerton (1989:52-53) these perspectives on the notion of ritual share a common assumption that explains ritual as a form of symbolic presentation, and furthermore,

all proceed by seeking to get behind the ostensible purpose and meaning of rites in order to get at the 'real' purpose and meaning which is said to lie behind their surface.

For Connerton this raises the question as to whether there is validity in the claim made by their participants that explicitly commemorative rituals do have significance as a means of transmitting social memory. In his view, though commemorative ceremonies may and do have features in common with other forms of ritual, there is something distinctive in commemorative ceremonies. He emphasizes that in trying to understand commemorative ceremonies and their affinity to other forms of ritual we should not focus solely on the content of ritual but we should give special attention to the *form* of ritual. Connerton further contends that the symbolism-driven assumption in the explanation of ritual may be illuminating but of necessity is unable to tell us anything about the identifying features of ritual. Connerton's (1989:54) fundamental claim in this regard is that "*ritual is not only an alternative way of expressing certain beliefs, but that certain things can be expressed only in ritual.*" How does this occur?

The performance of a ritual indicates the relationship that exists between those who perform the ritual "and what it is that they are performing." There thus obtains a measure of *invariance* grafted onto the structure of ritual, though a ritual may change and develop over time. In this regard Jennings (1982:119) prefers to speak of ritual consistency or ritual "fittingness." What Jennings seeks to highlight in this instance is that specific ritual actions and gestures are not just invariant in and by themselves but they must also "fit with other acts of gestures." This inherent feature of invariance has to do with the specificity of the way in which liturgical language operates. According to Connerton (1989:57)

liturgical language is a certain form of action and puts something into practice. It is not a verbal commentary on an action external to itself; in and of itself liturgical language is an action.

This action can be understood in two ways: (a) ritual is *performative* language,

and, (b) ritual is *formalised* language. Let me quote Connerton (1989:58) with regard to the first point.

A performative utterance does not provide a description of a certain action. The utterance of the performative itself constitutes an action of some kind, beyond the obviously necessary action of producing meaningful sounds; and the action, for instance a promise or a vow, is one that is performed only by the utterance of certain prescribed words. A liturgy is an ordering of speech acts which occur when, and only when, these utterances are performed; if there is no performance there is no ritual.

The aspect of performativeness underscores a number of important points. These pertain to the performative utterance such as the usage of certain repeated and recurring verbs and personal pronouns, verbal utterances. A crucial point to be noted in this regard is the efficaciousness of such utterances. For instance, such verbs are not considered to be descriptive nor just indicative of certain attitudes. Rather, "they effectively bring those attitudes into existence by virtue of the illocutionary act" (Connerton 1989:58-9). In a like manner, repeated personal pronouns such as 'we' (which become pronouns of solidarity) achieve a similar effect.

Through the utterance of the 'we' a basic disposition is given definitive form, is constituted, among the members of the liturgical community. The community is initiated when pronouns of solidarity are repeatedly pronounced. In pronouncing the 'we' the participants meet not only in an externally definable space but in a kind of ideal space determined by their speech acts. Their speech does not describe what such a community might look like, nor does it express a community constituted before and apart from it; performative utterances are as it were the place in which the community is constituted and recalls to itself the fact of its constitution.

Performatives are not limited to verbal utterances only but are "encoded also in set postures, gestures and movements." These are encoded through sparse, elementary and limited resources such as kneeling, bowing one's head, etc. Such performatives are unlike those of ordinary language with its semantic range. This sparseness notwithstanding, argues Connerton (1989:59) these performatives are powerful,

unequivocal and materially substantial ways of 'saying'; and the elementariness of the repertoire from which such 'sayings' are drawn makes possible at once their performative power and their effectiveness as mnemonic systems.

In terms of the claim pertaining to formalism Connerton seeks to highlight the stylistic, stereotypical, canonical, and invariant elements of the utterances or speech acts obtaining in ritual as well as the mnemonic effect of this aspect of ritual language. In this context, formalism refers to those instances when the linguistic composition is systematically restricted in terms of choice of words, syntax and style, as opposed to ordinary language<sup>4</sup>. This formalism in ritual at times employs devices such as canonical parallelism which "is combined with other types of formalisation in which speech, singing, gesture and dance are bound together in a compositional whole", features which mark the distinctiveness of ritual. Other distinctive features of ritual speech are: a restricted vocabulary, the exclusion of some forms of syntax, a fixed sequence of speech acts, a fixed pattern in the range of utterances, a restricted flexibility in terms of intonation and of rhythm of delivery, and predetermined linkages between the speech acts of the various participants (1989:50). It is thus the elements of performance and formalism that commemorative ceremonies share with all other rituals. But what is it that makes commemorative ceremonies distinct from other rituals? Connerton's (1989:61) contention is that it is

the fact that they explicitly refer to prototypical persons and events, whether these are understood to have a historical or a mythological existence; and by virtue of the fact that rites of this sort possess a further characteristic and one that is distinctively their own. We may describe this feature as that of ritual *re-enactment*, and it is a quality of cardinal importance in the shaping of communal memory<sup>5</sup>.

In line with this Jennings (1982:121) asserts that

the most important rituals "repeat" the act which founds the world ... The original and originative act which the ritual enacts may be comprehensive in scope (the origin of the world) or more restricted (the origin of the community, the origin of some crucially important feature of the life of the community).

The distinctiveness of commemorative ceremonies can be fathomed through what Connerton (1989:65) refers to as *a rhetoric of re-enactment* which uses at least

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<sup>4</sup> It is worth noting that the *Israelites* use only the Appleyard version of the bible which is the first translation of the bible in Xhosa and was done by Appleyard and Tiyo Soga.

<sup>5</sup> According to Connerton (1989:61) modernity, because of its inclination towards a specific type of forgetting, a forgetting motivated by the desire to wipe out what came earlier in order to reach a point that may be called a true present, makes the appreciation of ritual re-enactment rather difficult.

three modes of articulation, viz. *calendrical*, *verbal* and *gestural* re-enactment. Let us consider calendrical re-enactment.

In Chapter Three we saw how in opposition to the threefold domination of abstract *chronotic* time it is possible to reconstitute and reconstruct ritual *kairotic* time as resistance against this domination. Connerton's views of time in respect to ritual and memory can be seen as further expansion and enrichment of the notion of time. Connerton's view is that through repetition which is calendrically observed it is possible to place next to the structure of profane time another distinct structure in which the significant events of sacred time are brought together and co-ordinated. This new structure has a distinct quality and cannot be reduced to the structure of profane time. In this new structure, the outstanding events of sacred time are brought together and are co-ordinated. Therefore each day can be located in two very different orders of time (Connerton 1989:65):

there is the day on which one celebrates the memory of this or that moment of a sacred or mythic history. While the co-existence of these two temporal orders runs through the course of the entire calendrical cycle, that cycle will normally contain special points at which the activity of recapitulation becomes the special focus of communal attention.

Connerton then goes on to interrogate the notion of time vis-a-vis the role of calendars, the notion of commemorative ceremonies and ritual re-enactments. His discussion of time echoes some of the points already covered in the discussion of time and temporality. He makes the point that calendars make it possible for us to distinguish "between a time built up of units that are quantitatively equivalent and a time composed of units that are qualitatively identical." He (1989:66) continues:

The notion of time in commemorative rites is not that of a pure quantity; the parts of time are not conceived as being indefinitely divisible into successive units in an irreversible linear sequence. Rather, the intervals which are framed by certain critical dates, and which annually occupy the same relative position in the calendar, are believed to be qualitatively similar; the homogeneity of such phases is demonstrated by the fact that chronological similarity entails or permits the repetition of the same actions.

We then find the same festivals being celebrated on the same day. In chapters seven, eight and nine we shall see how the *Israelite* festivals are repeated on the same dates. It is this which renders ritual time indefinitely repeatable.

With respect to the second mode of articulation, Connerton asserts that *verbal repetition* constitutes the encodement of the rhetoric of re-enactment. In this regard it is not uncommon to find a disjunction between profane language and religious language. At times a distinctive feature of religious language will be an archaic component, that is, the use of a language that is hardly spoken in every day conversation, as well as the use of idiomatic expressions which are at times hardly intelligible. The efficacy of such language does not necessarily lie in its intelligibility but in its uttered repetition. Verbal re-enactment effects a special kind of actualization as can be seen in the sacramental aspect of liturgical language. Here we can distinguish between *primary performativity* and *secondary* (or sacramental) *performativity*. In relation to the Christian language use by the *Israelites*, the former refers to the power by means of which Christ enabled certain words to effect what they meant. The latter refers to the celebrant's ability through repetition, in the context of prayer, to restore to their primary performativity those words originally uttered by Christ (Connerton 1989:67-68).

The third encodement of the rhetoric of re-enactment occurs via *gestural repetition*. A key feature in this mode of articulation is the element of *representivity*. The idea of representing in this instance is to be understood in the literal etymological sense of re-presenting, making that which has disappeared to reappear. This can be seen in the rites of various cultures and religions where those significant-dead-others are made to live again through media who are alive. In these rites, writes Connerton (1989:69),

**gestural repetition enacts the idea of bi-presence; the inhabitants of the other world can reappear in this one without leaving their own, provided one knows how to recall them.**

The actions performed in such rituals "convey conviction by incorporating it." Many of the gestures performed in the liturgies of commemorative ceremonies are figurative repetitions. The ritual movements play a preservative role: "while physical existence is quintessentially transient, ritual gestures remain identical" (Connerton 1989:70).

In summary, the following points are made by Connerton: ritual is not only a type of symbolic presentation but is also a species of performative; in terms of the

distinctiveness of commemorative ceremonies the key feature is the "cultural pervasiveness of performances which explicitly re-enact other actions that are represented as prototypical", via calendrical, verbal and gestural repetition which constitute what Connerton refers to as the rhetoric of re-enactment.

Connerton then goes on to ask a very critical question: "What, then, is being remembered in commemorative ceremonies?" In his view, whatever answer one gives, it must include the fact that "a community is reminded of its identity as represented by and told in a master narrative." But this should not be confused with the currently popular view that humanity "explain[s] the world to itself by telling stories." The fundamental point that Connerton (1989:70) makes in this regard is that

A ritual is not a journal or memoir. Its master narrative is more than a story told and reflected on; it is a cult enacted. An image of the past, even in the form of a master narrative, is conveyed and sustained by ritual performances.

Moreover, what is remembered in commemorative ceremonies adds to personal and cognitive memory because the efficacy and persuasiveness of such ceremonies depends not only on the participants' competence to perform these rituals but also on the *habituation* of the participants to these ritual performances. In this vein Jennings (1982:117) stresses the point that as "an action, a doing, a praxis, and above all a bodily doing, acting performing, the doing of the ritual teaches us to do the ritual." But where is this habituation to be found and how does it occur? In the view of Connerton this habituation can be found, as already intimated by Jennings, in the bodily substrate of the performance, and with this we move to the next section in our interrogation of the phenomenon of memory, namely performative memory: its constitution, its function and its manifestation.

### **4.3 Corporeal practices**

Connerton (1989:71-72) makes the point that performative memory is bodily and that it constitutes an important aspect of social memory - *bodily social memory* . Through commemorative ceremonies we keep aspects of the past in our minds by means of a depictive representation of these past events.

Our bodies, which in commemorations stylistically re-enact an image of the past, keep the past also in an entirely effective form in their continuing ability to perform certain skilled actions.

It is not always possible to remember how we learnt to perform a particular skilled action but because of habituation we are able to perform these actions, skillfully. Connerton makes the following crucial statement: "In habitual memory the past is, as it were, sedimented in the body." There are two types of social practice obtaining in the sedimentation of memory in the body, namely *incorporating* practice and *inscribing* practice.

An incorporating practice essentially refers to actions such as a smile or a handshake or a verbal utterance directed at others by means of current bodily activity, whether this is intentional or unintentional, or whether it is done by an individual or by a group. Another example of an incorporating practice is when culturally specific postures are memorized. In these instances we may find a differentiation between postures considered to be appropriate for ceremonial occasions and those of everyday life. Again, we may find a differentiation between what is considered to be an appropriate posture for men and what is considered to be appropriate for females. Another important factor pertaining to posture relates to *power* and *rank* (Connerton 1989:73):

Power and rank are commonly expressed through certain postures relative to others; from the way in which people group themselves and from the disposition of their bodies relative to the bodies of others, we can deduce the degree of authority which each is thought to enjoy or to which they lay claim.

Thus, it can be said that "in all cultures, much of the choreography of authority is expressed through the body" and these "culturally specific postural performances provide us with a mnemonics of the body."

An inscribing practice in its turn refers to that action carried out by means of modern and not-so-modern devices through which information is stored or retrieved. This happens through mechanisms such as photographs, audio-visual apparatus, books, artistic paintings, sculptures, etc. In these instances we find that the information is held long after the human factor has gone. The movement from a culture that is oral to one that is literate represents a transition from incorporating practices to inscribing practices. But Connerton (1989:74-76) cautions that "many

practices of inscription contain an element of incorporation, and it may indeed be that no type of inscription is at all conceivable without such an irreducible incorporating aspect." What other features obtain in the process of habituation?

Drawing on the work of Proust and Sudnow, Connerton suggests the following general propositions regarding the nature of habit as it affects incorporated practice. In the first instance, habits are more than mere technical competencies. They are affective dispositions in that we become predisposed to them by repeating particular acts which then become intimate, fundamental and powerful parts of ourselves. Having said this we need to note that the word disposition does not completely capture the basic process that obtains in such practices. This is because the notion of disposition suggests something latent or potential, something which demands a positive stimulus from without so that it can be actively engaged. And so, a habit is more than a disposition. "The term habit conveys the sense of operativeness, of a continuously practised activity. It conveys the fact of exercise, the reinforcing effect of repeated acts." And so it is that "Postures and movements which are habit memories become sedimented into bodily conformation" (1989:94). Habit is also more than a mere sign, and should not be interpreted as a mere linguistic model of meaning. Basing his contention on Merleau-Ponty, Connerton (1989:95) asserts that

a meaningful practice does not coincide with a sign; meaning cannot be reduced to a sign which exists on a separate 'level' outside the immediate sphere of the body's acts. Habit is a knowledge and a remembering in the hands and in the body; and in the cultivation of habit it is our body which 'understands'.

The final points that Connerton makes in this project pertain to *interpretive activity* as it relates to both incorporating practices and inscribing practices. He points out that there has been a tendency to direct interpretive activity mainly to inscribing practices, at the expense of incorporating practices though the latter may in principle be included as potential objects of hermeneutic investigation. As he (Connerton 1989:100-1) puts it: "Inscribing practices have always formed the privileged story, incorporating practices the neglected story, in the history of hermeneutics." But why is it that incorporating practices have not received much attention? Connerton (1989:101) asserts that this

is due not so much to a peculiarity of hermeneutics as rather to a defining

feature of incorporating practices themselves. For these practices ..... cannot be well accomplished without a diminution of the conscious attention that is paid to them.

He continues, "Incorporating practices .... provide a particularly effective system of mnemonics" which should not be underestimated. Unlike inscribing practices which by virtue of their nature demand to be remembered, incorporating practices are on the whole traceless and do not provide a means by which any will to be remembered can be 'left behind'. The mnemonic importance of incorporating practices is dependent on two factors, namely on the way in which they exist, and on the way in which they have been acquired. Incorporating practices do not have an 'objective' existence, that is, they do not exist independently of their being performed and their acquisition does not demand an overt reflection on their performance (Connerton 1989:102).

In terms of commemorative practices we find that they too are preserved only through their performance and because of the elements of performativity and formalism obtaining in them they do not easily lend themselves to critical scrutiny and examination by those habituated to their performance. Continues Connerton (1989:102):

Both commemorative ceremonies and bodily practices therefore contain a measure of insurance against the process of cumulative questioning entailed in all discursive practices. This is the source of their importance and persistence as mnemonic systems. Every group, then, will entrust to bodily automatisms the values and categories which they are most anxious to conserve. They will know how well the past can be kept in mind by a habitual memory sedimented in the body.

To sum up, Connerton's basic proposition is that memory or tradition is passed on in non-textual and non-cognitive ways, through the body. In his view (1989:104) it is not sufficient to merely assert that the body is socially constituted, an assertion that usually refers to the body as a constructed object of knowledge or discourse. In his view there is another important element in the notion of the social constitution of the body, viz. that "the body is ..... socially constituted in the sense that is culturally shaped in its actual practices and behaviour."<sup>6</sup> Therefore, it is critical to note the importance of performances, especially habitual performances,

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<sup>6</sup> See C. Bell (1992:94ff) for a survey of the various theories and traditions on the social construction of the body.

in conveying and sustaining memory. I move now to consider the relation between ritual and knowledge.

#### **4.4 Ritual and knowledge**

At this point I turn to Jennings' contribution to thinking about ritual. I am particularly interested in two areas of his thinking, viz. ritual and its relation to knowledge, and the object of ritual performativity, the third of the three "moments" in the functioning of ritual. Jennings' interest in ritual is motivated by a concern to gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of the action component of ritual so as to further illumine the nature of, as well as sharpen the method of theological reflection. Let me recapture the point I started earlier. Jennings' fundamental argument in terms of his interest is that ritual is a process which plays a *noetic* function in a way that is specific to ritual. Jennings identifies what he calls three "moments" in this noetic function, viz. ritual action as a means of acquiring knowledge, ritual as functioning to transmit knowledge, and lastly, ritual performance as a display of the ritual and of the participants in the ritual to an invited observer who is expected to make a response to the performance. Let us consider the first moment.

In the view of Jennings, ritual action is a means by which its *participants get to know who they are in the world and 'how it is' with the world*. In this sense it is a way of coming to an understanding of the world, an exploration. It is in what Victor Turner has identified as its liminal state that ritual generates knowledge. Jennings (1982:115) maintains that

it is the openness to novelty inscribed in ritual liminality and the exploratory quest for the appropriate action which constitute the possibility of a history of ritual action even within a relatively stable ritual tradition.

We saw in the preceding section that bodily practices play an important role in the constitution of social memory. In the view of Jennings, it is through the bodily action that ritual knowledge is gained. This bodily action "alters the world or the place of the ritual participant in the world." In other words, the way that knowledge is gained in ritual action involves three elements: it is corporeal, it is active, and it is transformative. It is also in the very process of doing the action that ritual knowledge is gained. In addition, the knowledge of ritual is acquired

through the transformation of that which is to be known. Ritual knowledge is acquired through engagement which transforms things rather than leaving them as they are (1982:115-16).

In terms of the second moment, the pedagogical mode of ritual action, Jennings asserts that "[r]itual action does not primarily teach us to see differently but to act differently. It does not provide a point of view so much as a pattern of doing." As indicated already, the bodily doing of the ritual is constitutive of the ritual action and it is exactly this doing that is transmitted by ritual action. As Jennings puts it, "the doing of the ritual teaches us to do the ritual." But ritual teaches more than ritual. It teaches a way of life or "serves as a paradigm for all significant action" (1982:117-18). Says Jennings (1982:119):

The performance of ritual, then, teaches one not only how to conduct the ritual itself, but how to conduct oneself outside the ritual space - in the world epitomized by or founded or renewed in and through the ritual itself.

The knowledge that is acquired by participants in ritual action is the knowledge of "how the world acts, how it `comes to be'" (1982:121).

My criticism of Connerton is that in spite of his sophisticated, and absolutely brilliant exposition of the performative dimension of ritual action he seems to neglect an important question: if ritual is performance, who is the object of this performance? In simple terms, every performance must have an audience, an observer, or else it is not performance. A question that follows from this is that as performance then, what effect does ritual have on the audience? Is the observer expected to respond to this performance? If so, what kinds of responses does the ritual expect, solicit from or prescribe to the observer? In my view it is Jennings who probes this question in the most useful, though not always easily comprehensible way.

Jennings' (1982:122-25) view is that "It is characteristic of any ritual that it entails an "audience," a "spectator" and that therefore the intention of ritual is to be "seen" in a particular way. Ritual action is display which is directed outward. "Ritual action not only permits but also invites, and even directs, attention to itself." But first, who is it that needs to "see" ritual? Whose attention does ritual action seek to attract? Ritual action seeks to attract the attention of "the god." The efficacy of

the ritual action is dependent on the approval and the satisfaction of "the god." This is very important especially in religious rituals. It is for this reason that the performing community goes to great lengths to ensure that the performance of the ritual fulfills all the requirements and prescriptions.

Apart from seeking the attention of "the god" "ritual performance is a display of the ritual and of the participants in the ritual to an observer who is invited to see, approve, understand, or recognize the ritual action" (1982:113). In this sense, ritual action presupposes, nay, demands an observer. Jennings (1982:123) continues:

The ideal observer of ritual action is not the removed or detached observer. Instead, this observer is one who is not only one who sees, but one who does - whose action will in some way extend or continue the ritual action itself and thereby "validate" it.

Here we have answers to the questions that I posed: first, ritual action seeks the attention of an "engaged" observer, not one who is removed, or detached or indifferent. In other words, the performance of ritual is not meant to leave the observer cold - it is intended to be effective. Second, ritual demands "validation" by the observer. The observer must "do something" as a result of the ritual performance. This something to be done may be approval, or understanding, or recognition or "may be variously construed as imitation, participation, approbation, and so on" (Jennings 1982:125). More than anything, the ritual action needs extension beyond itself. In other words, though the ritual action is its performance, the ritual is more than its performance. Put differently, the performance of the ritual is complete within itself - it lacks nothing. Yet the ritual goes beyond its performance - it seeks life beyond itself. The audience is critical in both instances. To be performed, to be complete the ritual needs the observer, the audience. To live beyond its performance the ritual needs the observer. Taking a cue from Jennings it is not inappropriate to refer to this second element as extrarituality. I now turn to consider Marsha Hewitt's critical insights and reflections regarding memory and its relation to domination.

#### 4.5 Memory and domination

Apart from the views put forth by Connerton regarding memory and ritual, in what other ways is the notion of memory, its function, its processes, and its manifestations to be understood? In answering this question I shall draw on the work done by feminist theologians, especially their exploration of how memory functions in the dialectic of domination and freedom.

In exploring the role of memory in the dialectic of domination and freedom the feminist theologian Marsha Hewitt (1994:73) emphasises

the intrinsic connection between memory and emancipation on the one hand, and forgetting and enslavement on the other ...[and] ... that human beings bereft of the capacity for remembrance are helpless in the face of domination in any of its forms.

In this exploration she draws on the work of Walter Benjamin and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza who both view memory as pregnant with redemptive and political capacities geared towards greater freedom and justice in the world. The concept of memory that Benjamin and Schüssler Fiorenza have in common is one in which, according to Hewitt (1994:75),

memory [is] laden with redemptive and emancipatory potential, [which is] released when history is brushed "against the grain" of the false and falsifying perspective of the rulers' and oppressors' accounts of the world. The sparks generated by this brushing against the grain of hegemonic historical discourses in turn reveals as "authentic" history, the history of the oppressed victims, without whose labors and struggles civilization would not be possible, yet who remain oppressed and unredeemed after death by being forgotten and erased from the "historical" record.

Their further thinking on memory underscores the view discussed earlier that the victims of history are also the makers of history. Furthermore, argues Hewitt

the past is not finished and done with, but remains open to the present in ways that redeem both, creating possibilities for political action that may lead to liberating social transformation.

For Benjamin the past must be redeemed from the enemy and this task rests on the present generation. But how does this redemptive activity happen? For him this occurs via what he calls *anamnestic solidarity* (Hewitt 1994:77):

The present generation redeems the past in an act of anamnestic solidarity with all who suffered at the slaughter-bench of history. There is no possibility of redemption, neither for them nor for us if we allow the annihilation of their very memory...

The Benjaminian understanding of solidarity with the dead, inspired by a materialist reading of history, is not a mere empathising or identifying with past generations. Instead, his rendition of solidarity with the dead is the making visible of the exploitation, horrors and brutality of the past. This in turn results in the 're-awakening' of the past through a "cognitive shock." It is therefore not a mere integration of the past "into the flow of historical continuity." No. It is what he calls a "Messianic cessation", a revolutionary act emanating from "the avenging nature of the working class" which blasts history into smithereens. It is the refusal to allow the rulers to obliterate the history of the oppressed (Hewitt 1994:78). Hewitt (1994:80) criticises the Benjaminian view of "Messianic cessation" as well as the notion of a revolutionary, avenging subject identified as a particular class because in her view,

it is by now inescapably apparent that there is no revolutionary subject, and that not vengeance, but transformation on the level of society and individuals, can be the only legitimate goal of emancipatory action.

Furthermore, Benjamin's writing falls short in its treatment of women because to him they appear "as somewhat less than full human beings, because they are without agency or subjectivity." Benjamin fails to see women as "concrete, specific, particular human beings" (Hewitt 1994:84)<sup>7</sup>.

This criticism notwithstanding, Hewitt appreciates Benjamin's view of history as unfinished since it opens "the possibility of redemption through anamnestic solidarity, so that the victims did not suffer for nothing." Anamnestic solidarity, "forged in acts of remembrance and sustained recollection of the sufferings and injustices inflicted on past victims", stands in stark contrast to and seeks to counteract historical amnesia which engenders "a false consciousness that extends injustice and domination into the future, leaving human beings powerless" in the face of oppression and domination due to the fact that their memories of the past

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<sup>7</sup> In a similar vein Ricoeur criticises the German Social Democrats and Stalin whose Marxism rendered the proletariat an impersonal, abstract concept rather than "a living human community of subjects" (In Valdes 1991:464-5)

have been taken away. It is because of this memory of the past that there exists the hope of a redeemed present or future. Let us now home in on Hewitt's reflections on the work of Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza whose views of memory she regards as constituting a paradigm shift and as holding "more promise for actual emancipation."

Unlike Benjamin, continues Hewitt (1994:84)

Schussler Fiorenza reclaims women's concrete suffering in stories that emphasize their agency as historical actors who fought and struggled, and continue to do so, against the injustices that marginalize and exploit them, as well as rendering them historically invisible and silent.

What Schüssler Fiorenza endeavours to do is to reconstruct history in an imaginative way by means of re-examining historical records in order to expose those "redeemed traces and fragments of women's past" which negate the dominant male-centred interpretations of Christian origins. In re-examining these records she poses questions which seek to recover not only the suffering of past women but also their resistance and struggle to transform the structures of a kyriarchal religious society (Hewitt 1994-5). Schüssler Fiorenza's

effort to construct "new conceptual frameworks" that provide contemporary women with a "usable past" does not seek "empathy and identification with the dead," but rather in anamnestic "solidarity with them," translates into the political motivation necessary for the liberation of women in the present. Acts of solidarity in remembrance not only help to redeem the past, they also provide the political and moral empowerment that is necessary to sustain women's energy and courage in the process of transforming oppressive social relations and unjust political institutions.

Schüssler Fiorenza shares the concern of Benjamin "to preserve and restore those utopian moments of tradition that remain as liberatory traces and promises of redemption." In this sense, memory contains within it the element of being "dangerous" in that it possesses a potential to subvert the dominant view of oppressors aimed at perpetuating their own power and interests. Memory, the "remembered past", is dangerous in that it refuses to accept the view that history stands "on the shoulders of giants." This act of memory seeks to re-echo the faint, silent, mute, 'invisibilised', frozen, and marginalized voices of women in history. In her re-reading and re-interpretation of biblical accounts from the perspective of the women present in these stories Schüssler Fiorenza restores the women's

subjective agency and makes them visible again as foremothers of christianity. Women then are not abstract oppressed masses. No. They are concrete and particular agents of history and religion (Hewitt 1994:85-86).

For her, therefore, it is crucial that the history of women be interpreted and reconstructed as "a history of liberation and of religious agency" and not be read only from the perspective and key of oppression. What makes this point particularly pertinent, argues Hewitt (1994:87) is that

it confronts us with the historical and religious reality that women were (and remain) largely responsible for sustaining and preserving the "egalitarian currents" within early Christianity that were never entirely eliminated, and which may be restored to the Christian present through their efforts.

Moreover, this type of memory exposes not only the agency of women in the history of the church but it also serves to bring to the surface the fact that christianity started off as a movement inspired by egalitarian values, a movement of coequal discipleship, with the process of patriarchalization developing only over time. In this way Schüssler Fiorenza "subverts those prevailing interpretations that excessively spiritualize and privatize the meaning of Jesus' ministry by severing it from its political and social implications."

Towards the end of her reflection on the thoughts of Schüssler Fiorenza and Walter Benjamin pertaining to memory Hewitt (1994:88) makes the following concluding remarks:

A forgetful humanity incapable of recollection and remembrance is without hope for the future because it abandons the dead, and thus forecloses on the possibility of its own redemption. After all, it is only for their sake that hope is given to us.

With specific reference to the work of Schüssler Fiorenza, Hewitt (1994:88-89) asserts

In reclaiming and restoring these and other dangerous memories to Christian women's history, Schüssler Fiorenza shatters not only the false memories that expel women to the margins and silences of history, but also the ideological interests that distort our theological traditions and rob them of their political power by directing them toward an accommodation with the status quo of sexist society and patriarchal culture.

Furthermore, argues Hewitt (1989:89), christianity cannot be restored to its own emancipatory and inclusive intent if women are not liberated from patriarchal oppression and androcentric mind-sets within christianity. It is only through this historical project of the liberation of women that the gospel can be restored to be "a power for the salvation of women as well as men." It is to a large extent on this that the preservation of christianity itself depends. Christianity is faced with two choices, either to purposefully, consciously and deliberately embrace and adopt the historical project of women's liberation, or to accept the inevitable, its withering because of its own historical irrelevance.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

In this chapter I have attempted to complete the task I started in Chapter Three which was to lay some foundations for an effective and appropriate analysis, interpretation, and understanding of the *Israelites'* theology of salvation. In this chapter we saw how memory is socially and ritually constructed and the key role that the body and bodily actions play in this regard. We saw that it is particularly through the performance of commemorative ceremonies that group memory is constituted. From this we are able to conclude that indeed there is such a thing as a collective memory. From the work done by feminist theologians we saw the extent to which memory and the act of remembering is laden with redemptive and emancipatory potential. From this we can further conclude that commemorative ceremonies performed by groups can have a redemptive and emancipatory function.

We also saw that the performance of ritual also plays a noetic and epistemological function. We saw that the act of performing a ritual generates knowledge, that through the act of performing a ritual knowledge is acquired, that through the act of performing a ritual knowledge is transmitted, and that through the performance of ritual a response is demanded. At this point I think we are ready to deal with the *Israelites* proper and so in the next chapter I shall attempt to come to an understanding of the theological identity of Enoch Mgijima as well as the theological self-understanding of the *Israelites* and the notions of salvation that these bring forth.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE NATIVES WHO CAUSED ALL THE TROUBLE

#### I love thy Church o God

I love thy church O God  
Her walls before Thee stand  
Dear as the apple of thine eye  
Engraven on Thy hand.

For her my tears shall fall  
For her my prayers ascend  
To her my toils and cares be given  
Till toils and cares shall end.

Beyond my highest joys  
I prize her heavenly ways  
Her sweet communion solemn vows  
Her hymn of love and praise.

(Hymn 1 in the prayer book of the *Church of God and Saints of Christ* in the English original)

#### 5.0 Introduction

"Whether the definition propagated by elites prevails among a wider audience is another matter, but there is little doubt that it often serves elites to label revolutionaries as bandits, dissidents as mentally deranged, opponents as traitors, and so on."

James C. Scott *Domination and the arts of resistance*.

By his detractors Enoch Josiah Mgiijima has been referred to as a 'false prophet', a 'conscienceless coward', a 'charismatic yet misguided visionary', a 'so-called Prophet Enoch', 'the stubborn prophet', a 'self-styled prophet' and many other not-so-generous names. His *Church of God and Saints of Christ* has been referred to as 'fanatical trespassers', 'religious fanatics', 'crazy natives', 'a menace', 'Negro Bolshevism', the 'rabble from Bulhoek', 'the deluded inhabitants of Bulhoek', 'ignorant mob of followers', 'the law-breakers at Bulhoek', 'misguided people', 'hapless lunatics', a 'gentle brand of native', 'semi-demented men', 'Enoch and his dupes', etc. (The Daily Representative and Free Press). For instance, the Rev.

Allen Lea who wrote a book in 1926 which he entitled *The Native Separatist Church Movement in South Africa* said the following about Mgiijima's *Church of God and Saints of Christ*: they were a "fanatical politico-religious movement", a pathetic example of "the blending of a poor understanding of the Christian religion with a foolish desire to get rid of the white man's control" (in Edgar 1977:2).

In his turn Enoch Mgiijima referred to himself as the 'Watchman of Israel', 'a sinner and a drunkard'. His followers refer to him as 'the Prophet' (*UmProfite*), 'father watchman' (*ubaw' umlindi*), 'the ambassador of the last days' (*unozakuzaku wokugqibela*), 'the righteous one of the east' (*ilunga lasempuma*), 'the watchman of Israel' (*umlindi woSirayeli*), 'a wise man' (*inkintsela*). But who was Enoch Josiah Mgiijima? Who is Enoch Josiah Mgiijima? Who are the *Israelites*? What does his church represent theologically? This chapter, primarily a theological reflection rather than a historical expose, is an attempt to find answers to these questions. In other words, the fundamental question that this chapter attempts to address is the following: what does the emergence of Enoch Josiah Mgiijima and the *Church of God and Saints of Christ*, the *Israelites*, theologically represent to christian belief in South Africa?

My first hypothesis is that theologically Mgiijima and the *Church of God and Saints of Christ* (CGSC) represent an alternative to inherited ecclesio-theological categories - categories of God-speak, salvation-speak, church-speak, and being-church. My contention is that the inherited ecclesio-theological categories, representing a dominating and domesticating religious symbolic universe, were inadequate in addressing, responding to and in interpreting the socio-religious experience and needs of many Africans as represented in the inner two circles of Nurnberger's scheme of comprehensive wellbeing, viz. transcendent needs and personal relationship with God.

My further hypothesis is that the emergence of Mgiijima and the CGSC does not only represent a religio-spiritual reality but represents fundamentally also an alternative being-in-the-world and this corresponds to the immanent prerequisites for human survival, the outer circle of Nurnberger's scheme of comprehensive wellbeing. In other words, my contention is that Mgiijima's original commune at Ntabelanga and the CGSC as presently constituted can be understood as a response to the material context and conditions obtaining in the world. My view is

that the soteriological notions of the *Israelites* is not a pure spiritual reality which is divorced from or unrelated to material wellbeing. This is why Mgijima went about and in a creative and imaginative way constructed a counter christian symbolic universe and established a micro-society whose categories, spiritual-material programme, and view of salvation caught the imagination of many an African in the Union of South Africa, though eventually it was only a few who gave up everything they had to follow him. In Chapter Two we saw how other African christian leaders broke away from the so-called mainline churches and formed their own churches, organised theologically around the soteriological constructs of Ethiopia and Zion. It is my view that Enoch Mgijima's *Church of God and Saints of Christ* is another manifestation of African ecclesio-theological autonomy and theological self-affirmation, though of a radically different variety.

This chapter is intended to illustrate the creative nature and extent of the *Israelites'* construction of an alternative symbolic universe. The important elements of this theological creativity are contained in the *Israelites'* construction of Mgijima's *persona theologica* and in his message, visions and prophecies as understood and interpreted by them. Another important element of this alternative symbolic universe is the *Israelites'* reconstruction and reconstitution of time as ritual *kairotic* time. We shall see how this reconstruction of time as resistance against the universalizing and domination of 'the world' through work-time, commodification and compulsive consumption is practically created. Let us take a look at Mgijima and the *Israelites*.

### **5.1 Who was Enoch Josiah Mgijima?**

Enoch J. Mgijima was not a visionary but a real prophet because all what he said is happening today. He emerge (sic) in 1908 after the death of Prophet W.S. Crowdy in the United States of America. He preached in the district of Whittlesea, and rapidly gained a big following. After the visit by Bishop I. Msikinya, Mgijima, who was called "Inkintsela" by his followers, was called a prophet. In 1910 he was baptized to the full membership of the Church of God and Saints of Christ. This work was done by Bishop I. Msikinya who was aware that there would be a prophet in Africa after the death of Prophet Crowdy (Dokoda 1981).

The above quote was written by Cameron Mavuso Dokoda, presently an elder (pastor) of a congregation of the *Church of God and Saints of Christ* in Cradock in

the Eastern Cape and it was a response to an article entitled *Mgijima - a charismatic, yet misguided, visionary*<sup>1</sup> that was published in a newspaper. The response article of the Elder Dokoda was in its turn entitled *Mgijima - a Prophet, Priest and King*. The above excerpt has some chronological detail and is loaded with theological information which gives us a glimpse and some clues into the enigma that is Enoch J. Mgijima. Let me quickly deal with the chronological information before I attempt to take a deeper look at what I would like to call his *persona theologica*, the theological identity of Enoch J. Mgijima<sup>2</sup>.

Enoch Josiah Mgijima was born in Bulhoek in 1858 of Mfengu peasants who had converted to the Wesleyan Methodist Church under the Rev. John Ayliff. He was the last of nine children, five girls and four boys. Not much is known about his sisters, due no doubt, to the patrilineality and patriarchal nature of Mfengu society. Enoch's brothers were Josiah, Timothy, and Charles<sup>3</sup>. It is Charles who was to play a prominent role in the affairs of the *Israelites*. Like many male children of the area they all received primary education locally and his brothers went on to the Lovedale Institution in Alice after which they proceeded to Zonnebloem College in Cape Town. Enoch too was sent to Lovedale but he had to abandon his studies due to constant severe headaches and he remained at home as a small landowner and a small-game hunter. He served as a lay preacher and then as a regional evangelist in the Wesleyan Methodist Church.

Enoch Mgijima had his first vision and encounter with the divine in 1907 while he was hunting game. I shall deal with this vision in more detail below. At this point suffice it to indicate that this vision was about the impending war and the destruction that would come in its wake and he was charged to announce what had been revealed to him. After initial reluctance he succumbed and started preaching in the area and holding revival meetings which were welcomed by the local missionaries, the Moravians and Wesleyans.

Another of his encounters with the divine occurred in 1910 with the appearance of Hailey's comet. The message he proclaimed after this encounter was that God was

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<sup>1</sup> The original article was written by Clyde Daniel and it appeared in *The Representative*, 14 August 1981.

<sup>2</sup> This chronological information is taken from Robert R. Edgar's dissertation, from newspaper archival material, and also from interviews I conducted.

<sup>3</sup> Timothy and Josiah went to Rhodesia where they worked as interpreters (Edgar 1977:24).

so angry that unless people worshipped God on the model of ancient Israel the earth would come to a tragic end. In 1912 due to his effective preaching he was invited by the Moravian missionaries at Shiloh to hold revival services there. At this stage he urged people to remain in their churches and to be more faithful. Apparently the missionaries soon became unsettled not only by his charismatic preaching but "they sensed that since he offered an alternative to their own leadership, his presence could pose problems. But he was still allowed to visit Shiloh periodically" (Edgar 1977:28). According to Edgar (1977:30)

In November, 1912, Mgiijima began baptizing followers in the Black Kei river at Ntabelanga. By letter, he informed Shiloh inhabitants that he had broken from the Wesleyans and joined another church. The Shiloh missionaries warned parishioners to sever their connections but many disregarded their instructions and went to Ntabelanga for baptism.

In October 1912 the missionaries forbade Mgiijima to preach and hold services at the mission church. It transpired that this new church was the 'Church of God and Saints of Christ' which had been founded by William Saunders Crowdy<sup>4</sup>, an African-American, in Kansas in 1896. Edgar (1977:37) describes as follows the coming of this 'Church of God and Saints of Christ' (CGSC) to South Africa:

Crowdy's first proselyte in South Africa was Albert Christian, an Afro-American sailor and a former Negro Baptist missionary in Port Elizabeth. Christian had had a dream in which he was instructed to go to Crowdy in America. When he returned to South Africa in October, 1903, as a minister for Crowdy, he founded churches first at New Brighton, Port Elizabeth, and Uitenhage and then throughout the Eastern Cape and as far north as the Transvaal. But as far as is known he had no contact with Mgiijima around Queenstown. The intermediaries between Crowdy and Mgiijima appear to have been African evangelists like Samuel Matshaka and his bishop, John Msikinya.

A local teacher, Joseph Tusso was instrumental in inviting Samuel Matshaka of Crowdy's CGSC to Kamastone for a discussion on the CGSC and its teachings. It was as a result of these discussions that Mgiijima, Tusso, Victor Ndlangisa, and John Ntlangweni were baptized by Matshaka. Hereafter many Africans in the area broke away from the mainline churches, the Wesleyans and the Moravians, and

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<sup>4</sup> W.S. Crowdy, initially a cook on the Santa Fe railroad, was born in Maryland in 1847 and had revelations in his later life through which he discovered the "stone of truth" (1 Cor 1:1-2). Apparently this stone of truth had information about the origins of the "Negro race". Crowdy's contention was that blacks "were descended from the lost tribes of Israel and were Jews. The original Jews were blacks, who became light-skinned through mixing with whites". Crowdy passed away in 1908 leaving a church with fifty branches in the United States of America and twelve in South Africa (Edgar 1977:35-6).

joined Crowdy's CGSC.

The first Passover festival was held in April 1913 by which time Mgijima had been appointed the chief evangelist by Msikinya. When Msikinya passed away in 1914 Mgijima had played such a leading role in the church that he "assumed the title of Bishop" (Edgar 1977:39). Mgijima's visions and encounters with the divine continued and became more cataclysmic and "appeared to be directed against whites" to the extent of unsettling the American leaders of the CGSC. After refusing to abandon his prophecies Mgijima was reportedly excommunicated from the church in March 1919. A split occurred in the church with others under the leadership of Matshaka remaining loyal to Crowdy's CGSC while others followed Mgijima and they kept the original name (Edgar 1977:40-43).

Early in 1920 Mgijima uttered what has come to be considered as the decisive call to Ntabelanga through the words *Juda, Frayime, Josef, nezizalwana. Beville.* - "Judah, Ephraim, Joseph and brethren. They have heard." There was a good response to this call and people started to come to Ntabelanga from different parts of the Union of South Africa. Mgijima continued with the life of the church, celebrating the Passover festivals at different areas in the locality during April, after having applied for permission to the local Inspector of Locations. Some of the people who had come for the Passover began to stay on and built more permanent structures and did not return to their places of origin.

This state of affairs was a cause of concern not only to the local white farmers but also amongst the local Africans there was a lot of unhappiness about the pilgrims whose stock grazed on the local pasturage. More and more permanent structures were erected on what was called a commonage as more people came to Ntabelanga in response to Mgijima's message that God was going to destroy the world. The authorities attempted to have the situation reversed but all the negotiations between the *Israelites* and the government authorities proved to be futile. Even the intervention of respected and prominent African leaders of the time such as Mr. Ngojo, Mr. C.M. Dantu, the Rev. Solilo, and Mr Matshikiza bore no fruit until it culminated in the Massacre of 24 May 1921 when about two hundred *Israelites* were killed. I shall consider this incident and the events which led to it in greater detail in Chapter Six. Mgijima was arrested and charged with sedition and sentenced to six years imprisonment of which he served three in Kimberley prison.

He passed away in 1929. Let me now attempt to unravel what I have referred to as the theological identity of Enoch Josiah Mgijima.

## 5.2 Who is Enoch Josiah Mgijima

In this section my concern is to start the process of coming to grips with the *persona theologica* of Enoch Mgijima. The fundamental argument of this section is that leaders of the stature and charisma of Mgijima do not only create themselves theologically, but are to a large extent the theological creation of their own followers, during their life, but especially after death. This phenomenon is neither new, nor surprising, nor anomalous. A prime example of this is the notion of *the Christ of faith*<sup>5</sup>. Put simply, my contention is that Enoch Mgijima created the *Church of God and Saints of Christ* 'in his image and likeness' and the *Church of God and Saints of Christ* have since returned the compliment. How does this happen?

I shall commence by considering a number of critical questions relating to the notion of a *persona theologica*, loosely translated as a theological identity or a theological profile. What constitutes a *persona theologica*? How is it constructed? What factors are at work in its construction? How does one go about identifying and describing the *persona theologica* of an outstanding and charismatic christian personality, especially a founder-leader?

As I have intimated already, I use the notion of *persona theologica* in this instance to refer to the theological identity of Mgijima, what may roughly be termed his theological personality, as articulated and projected by himself and as perceived, understood, and articulated by his followers. How is the *persona theologica* of Mgijima constituted and where is it 'located'? I believe that the answer to this is fairly straightforward. It is in his theological pronouncements, his views about the nature of God and God's involvement in the universe and in the affairs of humankind. It is in his beliefs and convictions concerning the destiny of humanity. It is in his understanding and interpretation of Scripture; in his beliefs and convictions concerning the role and place of humanity in the order of created things. It is in his creative genius, in his liturgical, ritual, and theological

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<sup>5</sup> This is in contradistinction to what theologians have termed *the Jesus of history*.

innovations. Moreover, I believe that his *persona theologica* is constituted also in how he understood his own role generally within the theological scheme of things and specifically how he articulated his vision within the soteriological scheme of things.

More than anything however, the *persona theologica* of Enoch Mgijima is constituted and lives on primarily in how his own followers have understood and continue to understand and perceive him. It is constructed in how his followers have kept his memory alive. It is constituted in the narratives that are told about him. It is constituted in how he is invoked in prayer. It obtains in how his followers preach about him and in a special way in the commemoration festivals that they celebrate in honour of his memory. The *persona theologica* of Mgijima is furthermore constituted in how he is emplotted in the narrative of salvation.

It is clear from the above that the construction of a *persona theologica* is not something that comes to completion or finality. It is something that is being continuously constructed and remoulded, fashioned and reconstituted over time for as long as the personality features in a significant, meaningful and powerful way in the life of the community-of-followers. It is inevitable that the *persona theologica* will change as the context within which the community finds itself changes. As the community meets new challenges and gets confronted by novel situations that raise new questions and demand a different theological response, so will the *persona theologica* be subjected to new interpretations and new permutations will come to the fore. Let me now consider those aspects of his *persona theologica* that may be gleaned from those records regarded as his *ipsissima verba*.

### **5.2.1 Aspects of Mgijima's theology of God**

In this section I seek to explore Mgijima's theology in order to better understand how he saw his own role in relation to his understanding of who God is and how he (Mgijima) fits within the overall scheme of salvation. On 16 May 1921 a deputation of four African leaders, Mr J. Ngojo, Mr. C.M Dantile, the Rev. Solilo, and Mr. Matshikiza, went to see Enoch Mgijima with the aim of persuading him and his followers to hand over the reluctant *Israelite* witnesses who had been subpoenaed to appear in court in connection with the killing of an *Israelite* by a white farmer called Mattushek. Also, these African leaders were hoping to

persuade Mgijima to leave Ntabelanga. They were not successful in their attempts and Mgijima is reported to have made the following statement to them:

Dear Brethren - I thank you for the message delivered by James Ngojo, from the Congress of the Transvaal. It is true Mr. Ngojo is my cousin, we have grown up together since boyhood. I thank Mr. C.M. Dantu for his kind advice. I made his acquaintance a couple of years back, and I know his kind feelings towards our people, and also Rev. Solilo whom I have never met before, but have been informed of his kind interest in us, also Mr. Matshikiza, a fellow countryman of mine.

Before replying to you to the purpose for which you came, and informing us of the consequences that will follow unless law is obeyed, and to prevent unnecessary trouble and perhaps bloodshed, I would like to ask you, is this the first time you have learned of this trouble? - If so, what steps have you taken, why did you not come before, to give us your friendly advice, why on the last minute when we are all aware of the presence of the military, fully armed against us, waiting behind you at Queenstown?

I would just like to give you a bit of history of myself, from the commencement. I was a sinner and a drunkard, and I do not say to-day I am a perfect man, but I am continually praying to God to forgive me all my sins and to keep me pure and holy. God revealed Himself unto me in a vision, asking me if I hear a thundering sound. I heard the sound, but I did not see. God informed me that the thundering sound was a big war on earth which will cause the destruction of all sinners, and he will only save those who obey his Commandments. The past Great War was only the commencement of the realisation of the vision.

The coming war will not be between Kings and Kings, or Rulers on Earth, but it will affect every human being on Earth. There will be no neutrality, every human being will have to join. Those who will try to escape will be brought back to take their part.

That is why I, a sinner, am continually praying with those who are my followers. I am not here to fight anybody or to cause any bloodshed. But if the finger of God has pointed that THIS must be the place, no earthly forces can prevent it. I did not call this gathering here. Every follower of mine came of his own free will. It may be the fulfilment of the Scriptures that say "All my people will gather together for that journey to the promised land," and if this is the place, Bulhoek, no earthly power can interfere. As regards to the two witnesses who are to be arrested for contempt of Court in the case of Rex v. Mattushek, the police went to the spot where the murder took place, and took all particulars. The wounded man was taken to the Hospital, and his evidence taken as well as all other witnesses. Why could the Crown not use that evidence, or release the accused, and leave him to the judgment of God? We cannot hand over these men, nor do we want you to deliver them, as you request. If they are wanted by the law, the law must fetch them, no one of us will interfere. (*The Daily Representative and Free Press*, 16 May 1921)

It is particularly with the third, fourth and fifth paragraphs that we get some

glimpses into the *persona theologica* of Mgijima. Let us consider how he speaks about God. First, God is the God of *forgiveness*. In other words, it is God who forgives sins, who forgives the sinner. Second, God does not just forgive the sinner and thereafter get out of the sinner's life. God continues God's involvement in the life of the sinner after forgiving them. There is a follow-up after forgiveness, that is, *God keeps the sinner pure and holy*. There is a continuing engagement with the sinner on the part of God. In other words it is not enough just to be forgiven one's sins. One has to be kept in a state of purity and holiness.

Third, God reveals Godself, in other words, God is *self-revelatory* and this self-revelation is God's own initiative. Fourth, God reveals Godself to *certain people*. Fifth, God reveals Godself *mysteriously*, that is, through special media, through visions and through the elements of nature, through the sound of thunder. Sixth, in spite of its mysteriousness God's self-revelation is not *unintelligible*, it does not remain 'hidden' for too long. Humans do not have to keep on guessing what it is that God is communicating with them. Godself takes the initiative to make humans understand.

Seventh, God's self-revelation is *purposeful*, it has an objective, namely the salvation of those who obey God's Commandments. Eighth, God's salvation means God's *intervention* in matters temporal, in wars that rage on earth. Ninth, God places a high premium on God's *Commandments*, i.e. God's Commandments must be adhered to, they must be obeyed. So far there is nothing extraordinary or novel in this view of God. It is straightforward orthodoxy - no frills, no fuss and no surprises.

Tenth, and this we find in the third paragraph, God makes a *definitive and uncompromising choice* in terms of the *locus* of salvation, the place where salvation will take place. The locus of salvation is not spiritual, it is physico-geographic, it is absolutely territorial. God has marked out the physical spot where salvation will take place. As it were, Godself has chosen the stage for the great drama of salvation. It is THIS specific place, *Bulhoek*, and not an inch outside it. This, in my view, is where Mgijima's view of God and also of salvation makes a fundamental break with those orthodox views which present salvation as a spiritual

reality<sup>6</sup>. This is theological innovation on the part of Mgijima. God has marked the physical space where God's salvific action will be experienced. It is this piece of land that the Crown, the colonial government, has claimed for itself that God has chosen - "...no earthly force can prevent it.....no earthly power can interfere....." This is the crux of the matter, this is the bone of contention. It is here that Mgijima's theology of God and his soteriology rub defiantly against the grain of dominant theology which tends to spiritualise the locus of salvation.

But if the finger of God has pointed that THIS must be the place, no earthly force can prevent it.....It may be the fulfilment of the Scriptures that say "All my people will gather together for that journey to the promised land," and if this is the place, Bulhoek, no earthly power can interfere.

If we look closely at the above excerpt we find that the words are very carefully chosen and the sentence formulation is carefully structured: "*But if* the finger of God has pointed that *THIS* must.....It *may be* the fulfilment of the Scriptures....*if this* is the place....." It is as though there is prevarication on the part of Mgijima, as if he is not absolutely certain that God has indeed made a definite choice for Bulhoek. It is as though he is making some allowance in case some place other than Bulhoek may have been chosen by God. It is as though Mgijima concedes that he may be mistaken in his interpretation of God's intentions. But one thing is certain, God does indeed make a definitive choice in terms of the physico-geographic locality of salvation. That this is indeed the case is attested to in the Scriptures "All my people will gather together for that journey to the promised land." In Chapter Six I hope to demonstrate the innovation inherent in this stance and to show how Mgijima's commune at Ntabelanga presented a sophisticated art of resistance to the domination of the Union government.

Eleventh, and this we find towards the end of Mgijima's statement, God *judges* in the affairs of humans. Those who commit crimes may escape the human court but they cannot escape the judgement of God. Again, this does not differ from mainstream christian casuistry. We can refer to these views as representing Mgijima's pre-massacre theology of God. I shall now consider Mgijima's legacy to the CGSC, the prayer that he left them as a parting gift before he passed away after

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<sup>6</sup> Of course, this form of innovation is not by any means new in millenarian Christian movements in many centuries.

he returned from prison<sup>7</sup>:

I stand in front of your face God,  
I, and your servants, and the whole flock of Israel,  
You who remembered our fathers,  
through the sprinkling of blood,  
do not forget to remember your people God,  
on the day of 24 Ziv 1921,  
For a long time we've been the scorn and laughing stock of our onlookers.  
Arise! Arise, O God in your majesty.  
Amen.

In this excerpt Mgijima addresses God in the first person, he speaks not about God but *to* God. There is a familiarity and an understanding between God and Mgijima presupposed in this prayer. Mgijima speaks about *God as having a face*. What this implies is that Mgijima is standing in the *presence of God*. A further implication of this is that God's nature is such that God does make Godself present to humans, as if in a physical manner. Second, *God has servants*. In other words, God does not 'operate' or act alone like the 'lone ranger'. There are humans who are at the service of God, who are at God's beck and call. Clearly, Mgijima sees himself as one of these servants.

Third, God is a God who remembers, *God has an active memory*. But what is it that God remembers and how does God remember? This leads to the fourth point, namely that God remembers the fathers of those who believe in God. More accurately, God *remembered* the (fore)fathers (*oobawo bethu*) of those who believe in God through the sprinkling of blood (*Ngokutshizwa kwegazi*). This appears to be a link to Exodus 12:21-23. As God remembered in the days of old so Mgijima asks God 'not to forget to remember' those who fell on 21 May 1921. The way Mgijima has constructed his plea is as if there is a possibility that God might forget. But why should God remember those who fell on 21 May 1921? Mgijima's reason is that they are the laughing stock of onlookers. People look at them and laugh at them. Fifth, Mgijima's injunction to God is for God to 'get up' and show forth God's might, to prove the onlookers wrong. In other words, *God can demonstrate God's power*. This theology of God as contained in this prayer reflects orthodox views about the nature of God. I move now to consider some of those aspects of Mgijima's *persona theologica* as constituted and constructed by

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<sup>7</sup> I shall deal with this prayer further in Chapter Nine.

his followers. Let me start off with how his name is invoked in prayer.

### 5.2.2 Mgijima in the testimonies and the petitions of the saints

The most common mention of Mgijima in the *petitions of the saints* is usually at the formulaic introduction to the petitions and testimonies referred to as the *testimony to the spirit of prophecy*, what I shall call the prophetic testimony, linking Mgijima's call to that of W. S. Crowdy. These are examples of typical prophetic testimonies, beginning with the most simple and moving to more elaborate and complex ones:

.....I thank God for the two prophets, one overseas the other one in South Africa, who brought us the Ten Commandments and the Seven Keys.....  
(Petition 2: 3 January 1995)

Another example:

.....I testify to the spirit of prophecy, and not to the spirit of eldership (*Ndiyawungqina umoya wesiprofitesho, ingenguwo umoya wabadala*). God raised a prophet in America. God raised Mgijima. Crowdy taught people to prepare themselves for a big war (*imfazwe enkulu*). Mgijima started the Church of God here in South Africa.... (Petition 4: 3 January 1995)

In the following more extensive example the prophetic testimony is preceded by the introductory greeting and followed by asking for forgiveness for sins, and after asserting that the testimony is under the spirit of prophecy and not under the spirit of eldership the testimony continues as follows:

Preaching on the other side of the great waters (*phesheya kwamanzi amaninzi*) Crowdy said that the heathens should prepare arms for war but that the black nation should get ready to meet God. Crowdy wanted to come to Africa but was refused permission. But he vowed that though he would lay down (die) in America, he would wake up in Africa, speaking a different language and they would not be able to recognise him. Crowdy saw many tables with tablecloths with the names of all churches and also one on which it was written 'the Church of God is the only plan'.

Mgijima was raised in Africa and he preached: "Yes, you do worship God but you worship God with tricks. Abandon your tricks" (*Ewe, niyamkhonza uThixo kodwa nimkhonza ngeqhinga. Phumani eqhingeni*). He armed us with the Seven Keys and Ten Commandments which is the corridor (*irhangi*) leading towards God. We are building this ark with the Seven Keys because God is destroying the world and will leave no survivors.... (Testimony 7: 9 January 1995)

In another testimony the 'leader of testimonies' begins by thanking God for raising the two prophets and the continues in the following manner:

...on the other side of the great waters Crowdy told the black people to prepare themselves. He was to lie down on the cold earth (die) and arise in Africa. So Mgijima arose in Africa and he preached and gathered his sheep into the cave (*ngaphantsi komqolomba*). He preached that 'Yes, you do worship God but you worship him with tricks. Abandon your tricks'..... (Petitionary preface: 5 January 1995).

In another instance the testimony is expressed as follows:

...God revealed his 'trick' (plan) (*iqhinga lakhe*) through Crowdy. Crowdy preached about the preparation of arms for war. God chose the black people and gave them a law and a tradition (*umthetho nesiko*). Crowdy wished to come to Africa. He said he would die in America but will arise in Africa. Mgijima was raised in Africa. Ntsikana of Gabha revealed this.....Mgijima said that he (Mgijima) was the last ambassador and after him (would come) Michael and the sword (Testimony 4: 6 January 1995).

Another prophetic testimony states:

I testify to the spirit of prophecy and not that of eldership. Across the seas in Philadelphia God pointed out a prophet who was meant to cross the sea and come to Africa but the authorities refused him permission. He swore that he would sleep on the cold earth but wake up in Africa speaking a different language. And so Mgijima was raised. Mgijima preached that he had been sent to gather God's sheep into a cave because there was a big hailstorm coming. So we were taught about the Sabbath, the Passover, and Holy communion so that we could be in the palm of God's hand, so that we can make requests with our own mouths. We are called Saints. May we be truly holy. I have been taught about the Seven Keys and the Ten Commandments..... (Petitionary preface 14 April 1995).

Apart from the above Mgijima is remembered in various petitions, testimonies and prefaces as follows: ".....Enoch said that we should ask for freedom (*inkululo*) from God", "A star fell in Africa and Mgijima was raised." "Enoch, the seventh after Adam, was raised in Africa and gave us the Seven Keys and Ten Commandments", "This thing of Mgijima is a problem (*Lento kaMgijima yingxaki*)", "(Crowdy) wanted to come to Africa but was refused permission. And so the-one-with-the-broad-breast (*usifubasibanzi*) was raised in Africa as was foretold by Ntsikana of Gabha", The words preached by Mgijima reached the ears of our forefathers and so they came to Ntabelanga and they entered into the cave."

In his sermon (Homily 18.04.1995) one preacher asserted:

In the Kimberley jail where Mgijima was incarcerated, one morning he said to his brother (Charles) that there was poison in his breakfast. His brother's response was to pray to God to spare Enoch so that he could go back home to bind the broken. He prayed that God should take him instead and spare Enoch. And so it came to be.

In other instances: ". . . . . Yes, at Geneva after the war they thought they were building peace but the prophet said there will never be peace. . . . God showed Mgijima the vultures that were hovering over *Nxuba* (Cradock), showing him that there were people who needed God. And so my parents came to this church. . . ." How are we to understand these references to Mgijima, especially those that link him with Crowdy?

### 5.2.3 Mgijima and Crowdy

Let me reflect first on the most common mention of and reference to Mgijima in the prefaces, testimonies, and petitions of the saints. In these instances Mgijima is always mentioned in connection with Crowdy "whose wish was to come to Africa but was refused permission by the authorities." It is clear here that though Mgijima's identity is quite distinct from Crowdy's, there is a direct and inextricable link between the two prophets as well as a definite continuity in terms of the message of the salvation of the black nation that Crowdy was prevented from spreading in Africa. In terms of the Ricoeurian notion of emplotment the story of Crowdy and the story of Mgijima are turned into one story.

There is also temporal continuity, what Ricoeur has referred to as integrative or configurative time. Put differently, the time of salvation for the black nation as pronounced by Mgijima is the time of salvation of the black nation that Crowdy announced. Through 'sleeping on the cold earth and waking up in Africa' Crowdy, in the form of Mgijima, continues the time of salvation and transcends the time of the world, human time. When the 'authorities refused him permission to come to Africa' they were imprisoning him in human time which is dominating time. But through Mgijima human time which is restrictive, constraining and dominating has been overcome. The time of salvation has ruptured the bounds of what Heidegger has referred to as the "temporality of human being", mortality. Mgijima can thus be said to be the imaginative embodiment of salvific time. I have deliberately coupled 'imaginative' with 'embodiment' in order to stress what Ricoeur has

referred to as the link between imagination and praxis. That Mgijima is Crowdy 're-incarnated' is indeed a 'figment' of the imagination, but not in a dismissive or skeptical sense but substantively in terms of the content of the message he preached and consequentially in terms of the implications of its acceptance or rejection.

This continuity between Mgijima and Crowdy is also established mimetically. The story of Mgijima is a representation, a *mimesis* of Crowdy. In this sense the link is established narratively in the Ricoeurian and Aristotelian sense of narrative as 'the imitation of action', *mimesis praxeos* - action understood in the deep sense of referring to goals and motives. Mgijima is fundamentally entangled in the story of Crowdy and *vice versa*, though to a lesser degree. This temporal and narrative continuity between himself and Crowdy constitutes an integral and vital component of the *persona theologica* of Mgijima. How else is this *persona theologica* constituted?

It is clear that 'the testimony to the spirit of prophecy' is not only about Crowdy and Mgijima. What it does is more than establishing a temporal and narrative continuity between these two prophets. There is something equally profound that is occurring in this instance. Through the formulaic liturgical narration of the story of Crowdy and Mgijima the believers establish their own identity, a narrative identity. The story of Crowdy and Mgijima is the story of their origin, it constitutes their roots. And so, the *persona theologica* of Mgijima is shaped not only by a specific understanding of who Crowdy was but also in terms of who and what the *Church of God and Saints of Christ* is. In other words, this *persona theologica*, with all the dimensions of temporality and narrativity that accrue to it, plays a very pertinent role in the self-understanding of the CGSC.

Furthermore, this *persona theologica* is constructed in terms of the content of the message originally preached by Crowdy and as continued by Mgijima. Crowdy's message was that there was a big war coming and that the salvation of the black nation lay not in the arms and weapons that the heathens were preparing but in the black nation preparing to meet its Lord. As we shall see below, it is this big war, signalling the destruction of the world, that formed the core of Mgijima's message. His message of salvation was in terms of the delivery of the black nation from this big war, it was salvation from this impending destruction. We shall see that it was

in preparation for and in anticipation of this war that he instituted his utopian micro-society at Ntabelanga.

Apart from the more formal titles which I will briefly discuss below, the *persona theologica* of Mgijima is articulated metaphorically in salvific terms of 'a star which fell in Africa', as 'the seventh after Adam', as 'the one who gathers sheep into a cave in the face of a hailstorm', as 'the broad-chested one' (*usifubasibanzi*), as the one who 'binds the broken'. These metaphoric descriptions indicate the critical role that Mgijima plays in the enterprise of salvation. It is in terms of this soteric role that Mgijima's *persona theologica* is constituted. But more than anything, this soteric role is manifested and expressed in his identity as a prophet and a visionary and it is within this context that these metaphoric references make sense and it is as such that Mgijima's *persona theologica* is further constituted.

#### **5.2.4 The prophecies and visions of Mgijima**

That Mgijima prophesied is central to the self-understanding, identity, and life of the CGSC. These prophecies and visions of Mgijima are not only what identifies him as a charismatic founder-leader. They constitute a key component in terms of the identity of the CGSC. The CGSC was founded on the prophecies and visions of Enoch Mgijima. It would not be an overstatement to venture that without the prophecies of Mgijima there would be no *Church of God and Saints of Christ*. But, as Evangelist Ntloko (12.07.1994) noted, "the Prophet's prophecies were not directed at our church only but they were meant for the whole world, for everyone." It is to these key prophecies and visions of Mgijima that I now turn.

##### **5.2.4.1 God is destroying the world: the maize is stamped**

That the world is to be destroyed was a central theme in the message of Mgijima. It is this impending destruction, described in a variety of metaphoric utterances, that formed the essence of Mgijima's encounter with the divine. But what Mgijima preached was not only doom and gloom. It is against the background of this destruction of the world that his message of salvation was accepted and continues to be understood by his present followers. The picture of destruction, painted in terms of total devastation, is often expressed in the following words:

God is destroying the world. 'He' is destroying it with blood and will leave no survivors. Not the bird in the air, nor the fish in the water, nor the meercat in its hole will have peace. (*U-Yehova uyalichitha ilizwe, ulichitha ngegazi, uzakulishiya lingenabemi. Akuzukonwaba intaka esibhakabhakeni, intlanzi emanzini, negala emngxunyeni.*)

I attempted to pursue the meaning of this prophecy in a conversation with Evangelist Mbayi (4.3.1994), a respected leader and a very sharp and brilliant exponent of the theology of the CGSC. Let me quote:

**Researcher:** Another thing that I read in one of your pamphlets is that God is destroying the world and is destroying it with blood and will leave no survivors. Not the bird in the air, nor the fish in the water, nor the meercat in its hole will know rest. What does this prophecy mean?

**Mbayi:** That indeed is his central message but you have decontextualised it. You need to understand it in its proper context. You see, in the vision when he was flying with this man after the vision of war, he looked towards the east and saw what looked like a swarm of young locusts (*umqikela*) which though they cannot yet fly are able to cause a lot of damage. He saw this swarm of wingless young locusts coming from the east and covering the whole world and when they came to a tree they would devour everything, till the last leaf on the topmost part of the tree. And when they went into a hole they would devour everything as far deep as the hole went. And in interpreting this he (Mgijima) said 'Because of what is impending, not the meercat in the hole will know rest, nor the bird in the air, nor the fish in the water'. That is the war that is forthcoming. No one will know rest. It will find us wherever we are. Even though we may think we have nothing to do with it, still it will affect us. Even as we are sitting here now. No one will know rest.

According to Elder Dokoda (5.03.1994), in his vision Mgijima met a man who threw him to the ground and then commanded him to speak after which Mgijima felt himself having wings and he flew and followed the man.

Then he heard the sound of war. This man said to him, 'That is the war that is coming to the world and God will destroy all the people who do not believe and who do not keep his commandments'. Then they flew to the east and he (Mgijima) said, 'What I saw was like a great swarm of young locusts (*yayingathi ngumqikela*). Whenever the swarm of locusts descended on a tree on the ground they would destroy everything.....' Then the man said to him, 'That is what is going to happen to the world. Not a single place will be safe (*akukho nendawo kandilele*)'. After this vision Mgijima became a very lonely person and he used to go and hunt (wild animals).

When I asked Bishop Mzileni (7.03.1994) to explain the meaning of this prophecy and vision his response was yet another powerful metaphor:

It means that when that day arrives nothing in the world will be at rest (...*akukho nto iyakomwaba elizweni*) Everything will be destroyed. Let me make an example. You see, when there is thunder there is nothing that is at rest because the thunder shakes everything, the earth quakes below the ground.

In his turn Elder Moses Mzimkhulu (26.05.1994) explains the meaning of the prophecy as follows:

When we interpret these words we take them to mean that people must be committed to praying because he also said that those who were saved were in the palm of God's hand, having been stamped like samp - grains of maize that have been stamped. People are stamped through the word of God because the Prophet says that the Seven Keys and the Ten Commandments are the only way to worship God in the last days. That is how God is to be worshipped. God's destruction of the world is the reason why he says that he saw a great war. He even says, 'This will not be like children's stickfight. God is destroying the world'. But those who were to be saved are those in the palm of God's hand, in other words it is people who are keeping the word of God (...*ngabantu abaligcinileyo ilizwi likaThixo*).

This prophecy tells us that though the destruction of the world will be as a result of human war, it will in fact be God's way of dealing with those who do not believe in God and who do not keep God's commandments. Though people may think that the war may be far from them and that they have nothing to do with it, yet it will affect them in the most profound and unimaginable ways. They will be absolutely shaken, deep down to the core. And yet, in spite of the war, the locusts, and the thunder there is still hope for humanity - the palm of God's hand. This is what Mjijima preached - hope for humankind. It is the palm of God's hand that constitutes the principal metaphor or dominant symbol of salvation.

But the palm of God's hand cannot be taken for granted, it does have a price and that is to be stamped like samp, grains of maize whose rough outer layer has been removed and thrown away. It is mainly through such powerful metaphoric utterances that Mjijima's soteriology is articulated. Consider the following conversation I had with Elder Majezi (26.05.1994) where I tried to probe the metaphor of the palm of God's hand:

**Researcher:** (You say that) 'Only those in the palm of God's hand will be saved'. What does it mean to be in the palm of God's hand?

**Majezi:** It is to be like grains of samp that have been thoroughly stamped. You see, the grains of samp have this outer layer, the husks (*amakhathshu*) but once it is thoroughly stamped these are removed. They will be like these

grains in the palm of God's hand. They will be fully stamped, they will be complete, lacking nothing (...*begcwele*).

**Researcher:** What will stamp them?

**Majezi:** He says, 'The one who has heard my word and does it, that person has passed through death and entered life (...*udlule ekufeni, ungene ebomini*). They will be stamped through being obedient to and through listening to the word of God (*Bazakungqushwa kukuthobela nokumamela umthetho kaThixo*). Remember people are being preached to day in and day out. So these sermons constitute stamping (*Ezontshumayelo ke ngoku zizingqusho*). They stamp you and I (...*zingqusha mna nawe*).

**Researcher:** The reason why I ask this is this: Suppose you and I are samp, it is painful to be stamped is it not?

**Majezi:** Exactly! (*Ngqo!*) To the extent that Evangelist Lerula of Zwelitsha is very fond of preaching about that. He says that when one is stamping samp the grains jump out (*ziyataka*) and the one who is stamping them has to keep gathering them together (...*umngqushi amane ukuzihlanganisa*). In the olden days the stone for stamping samp used to be covered with a sack so that the grains that jump out can be recovered and put back in to be stamped again. The one who is stamping just keeps on repeating the process. You stamp them. They jump out. You recover them and put them back in and you stamp again, and again. You see now, the grains of samp do not talk even if it is painful. They rely on you to keep putting them back in until they are all thoroughly stamped. But the difference between you, a human being, and the grains of samp is that when you feel the pain of being stamped you run away. The laws of this church are difficult. It is difficult for me not to go to town on the Sabbath. I cannot resist the nice taste of grapes. And so one runs away from the law because it is tough. In doing so you are running away from the process of being stamped. But those who do stay and remain to be thoroughly stamped are those who will be in the palm of God's hand. Immediately one is in the palm that means you are in the proper place (...*usendaweni*)

But all the samp which still has the outer layer is put aside because it has not been thoroughly stamped. All the maize was put into the same stamping stone at the same time but...He (the Watchman) also said, 'I saw myself shepherding a flock of sheep. And as I was walking there was a thick darkness. I shepherded the sheep in the darkness and a voice said, 'Throw a stone so that those that are proceeding should proceed'. And he said, 'They proceeded and after some time it became light and when I looked back there was a string of them that were lying on the side of the road having been overcome by the darkness.

This suggest that the elements which constitute the process of salvation as being stamped are: (a) to be complete and lacking nothing, (b) to hear the word of God, to do it, and to be obedient to it, (c) not to complain or run away but to rely on God's stamping process, (d) to pass through death and to enter into life, (e) to be in the proper place. It is safe to conclude therefore that the prophecy and vision of the destruction of the world is essentially a message about salvation. Let me consider another important vision.

### 5.2.3.2 A wick burning dimly in the midst of a thick darkness

Another vision of Mgijima that is frequently recounted is that in his flight with the man who appeared in his vision Mgijima was shown thick darkness in the midst of which was a small wick burning dimly. When he inquired from the man as to its meaning he was told that that is the extent to which God's will has diminished in people's hearts. It was to these people that God was sending Mgijima. According to Evangelist Ntloko, Mgijima was sent to preach the Good News so that people may have light. In terms of his *persona theologica* we can speak of Mgijima soteric role as 'the bringer of light'.

### 5.2.3.3 Viva the he-baboon

An interesting vision in terms of its interpretation and application is one which involves a he-baboon (*inkunzi yemfene*). According to Elder Majezi (26.05.1994) Mgijima is reported to have said:

'I saw two bulls, one a ram and the other a he-goat, in a fierce fight. They fought twice and when they clashed for the third time there appeared a he-baboon which saw this fight as it was going past. It moved closer and then it grabbed them by the scruffs of their necks and smashed them against each other and left them lying there, dead, and went on its way'. My mother who related this to me said that when father Watchman was asked what these two bulls meant he replied, 'No, these are the heathens'. And when they enquired about the he-baboon he replied, 'That is the black person'. He said, 'There is a time coming when the whites will fight against each other. The he-baboon will then make its appearance'. She says that that is why Mandela is now in power, he has overcome the two bulls. My mother says that even if she should die now she is satisfied that she can testify that she has seen this prophecy being fulfilled because now it is a black person who is in power.

Elder Mzimkhulu (26.05.1994) relates and interprets this vision as follows:

He (Mgijima) says, 'I saw two rams walking along the road and then engaging in a fight. There appeared a he-baboon and it watched them. They fought the first time and then stopped. They fought again for the second time'. He says they fought a fierce fight and then stopped again. When they fought again for the third time this he-baboon became angry (...*yavuka umnye*), came closer and grabbed them by their necks and broke both their necks and continued on its way. This means that there will be a world war (*imfazwe yelizwe*) where the heathens will be fighting against each other. The heathens are the white people. They fight again the second time but in the end the black person will intervene and bring an end to this and then come into power (...*ibe nguyephetheyo*). And when we connect this to the situation of the country we are

not at all surprised about the latest developments, according to the teachings of our parents and according to the prophecies of the Watchman of Israel.

Though not alluded to in this vision, the parallel to Crowdy's message of the heathens preparing for war is quite obvious. This vision is interpreted in clear and unambiguous political terms as the victory of black people over white domination. According to this vision it is a black person, (retrospectively identified as Nelson Mandela), who will bring an end to the fighting of the heathens and then gain political power. The political developments of the 1990's, with the release of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners and the victory of the African National Congress in the first democratic elections in South Africa in 1994 are not at all surprising but are seen as the fulfillment of this prophecy. There is absolute satisfaction in the older generation with how things have worked out politically. But the satisfaction is not so much with the political developments *per se* as it is with what these developments signify theologically and spiritually. The he-baboon has indeed overcome the two bulls. God has spoken through Mgijima. And so, in terms of his *persona theologica* we can speak of Mgijima's soteric role as 'the one through whom God speaks'. I now move to consider a vision which unlike the previous ones is quite puzzling in terms of its meaning and its interpretation.

#### 5.2.4.4 Encirclement

Apparently, in one of his prophecies Mgijima had said 'I see *umngqingo* (encirclement)', and he did not elaborate on what this meant. *Umngqingo* is also referred to as an 'O' or something round. I was interested to see what sense the people have made of this vision. According to Evangelist Mbayi (4.03.1994)

The Prophet spoke of encirclement (*umngqingo*). You know how people are, they sometimes pretend to know things when in fact they do not. And so people would pray saying 'Man of God pray for me, I am encircled' (*Ndoda kaThixa ndithandazele, ndingqingiwe*), when they are troubled by the problems of their families. And so when the plague (*isibetho*) came people thought 'Oh! This must be what the Prophet meant'. In my mind I think *umngqingo* is something round, a circle. The Prophet had said 'I see *umngqingo*'. And so people were encircled (*bangqingeka ke abantu*).

When I probed His Lordship, Bishop Mzileni (7.03.1994) on the meaning of *umngqingo* his response was, "This *umngqingo* refers to the whole message which says that God is going to destroy the whole world. That is the 'O' that is being

referred to." In my conversation with Evangelist Ntloko (12.07.1994) his response was to interpret the vision as referring to the plague of 1918. What is striking about this vision is that there is an inclination to interpret it in terms which suggest destruction, even though no one is quite sure as to what it meant.

#### 5.2.4.5 Sisyphus with a new mission

The vision of *Mpondombini*, 'the two-horned one', is in line with the overall message of impending destruction. What is striking with it is its imagery, reminiscent of Sisyphus, but this time with a reversed mission, to push the boulder down instead of up the mountain. What is further striking with this vision is its interpretation and application. Let me quote how Evangelist Mbayi (4.03.1994) relates and interprets the vision.

**Researcher:** If you were to preach to me being a young person who lives today after the two world wars what would you say in explaining the words of the prophecies?

**Mbayi:** First he (the Prophet) said: 'I see a man, an elderly man, standing on top of the mountain'. He says the man shouted: 'Move away from the foot of the mountain for a boulder is about to be pushed down' (*Sherxani phantsi kwentaba kuba kuzakuqengqwa ilitye*). He says the people moved away but went back again. For the second time he said 'Move away from the foot of the mountain for a boulder is about to be pushed down'. Again they moved away but then went back again. The third time he said 'Move away from the foot of the mountain for a boulder is about to be pushed down', but this time they did not move away. He then pushed down the boulder with his foot and it rolled down and crushed them. He then said, 'Behold, there appears *Mpondombini*, 'the two-horned one' [translated in English by the Evangelist Mbayi as 'an object with two horns'] (*Heha, wavel' umpondombini*).

We have the belief that the first war has passed and the second war has passed. During the time of the League of Nations it was agreed that any country that will attack another country will face opposition from the other countries of the world. Mgijima was here at Ntabelanga and he said: 'They say there will be peace but I stand alone and say there will not be peace. If peace comes then it means that God has not spoken through me'. That is, there is still another war coming. We are expecting another war, a third war which according to us will be the last war and will not be like anything that has been seen or experienced before in terms of its ugliness. In fact, we say that it has already started. As people try to make peace in one place fighting breaks out in another place, and this pattern is repeated. There will not be peace. I believe that those who are trying to forge peace are wasting their time. Nothing will be achieved. That is what we preach. We preach the destruction of the world. Our message is that God is destroying the world and that people should return to God's law (*abantu mababuyele emthethweni wakhe*).

The vision of *Mpondombini* is also interestingly related and interpreted by Evangelist Gideon Ntloko (12.07.1994) as follows:

**Ntloko:** He (Mgijima) also said that he saw a man seated on top of the mountain, saying 'Move away from the foot of the mountain because a boulder is about to be pushed down' (*sukani phantsi kwentaba kuzakuqengqwa ilitye*). It would appear as if people are indeed moving away but they would go back to where they were. For the second time he said 'Move away from the foot of the mountain for a boulder is about to be pushed down'. For the third time he said 'Move away from the foot of the mountain for a boulder is about to be pushed down'. Even on this third occasion it would be as if people are moving away but then they would go back to the same place. This time this man did not sit down again but kicked down the boulder with both feet and it rolled down. As you know, when war breaks out people pray and when the war stops people stop praying. And so this man exclaimed 'Behold, there appears *the two-horned one* (*Heha, waphuma umpondombini*) and the boulder came rolling down and crushed the people and he said 'Behold people die in spite of being forewarned' (*waf' umntu exeletwe*). There is a lot that is being said in the world about the Third World War though some people dismiss it and some writers claim that it cannot happen and others want nuclear warheads to be destroyed because once they are used no one can survive because of their devastating power.

**Researcher:** What does 'Behold, there appears *umpondombini*' mean?

**Ntloko:** Let us not go into this one. We take that in this sense that black people are fond of praise-poetry (...*bayathanda ukubonga*) and so this was the way he praised that man.

What other aspects in the *persona theologica* of Mgijima does this vision of *Mpondombini* accentuate? Again, there is a strong element of forewarning about the impending destruction, this time portrayed in the boulder that is about to be pushed down from the top of the mountain. There are three warnings before disaster actually strikes. What is striking is that initially people do seem to heed the call, they do seem to respond positively to the warning but then they cannot resist the attraction of (living at) the foot of the mountain.

The three warnings are interpreted in terms of world wars, with the Third World War being seen as the one that will be most devastating. The Third World War is inevitable, no matter what steps humans take to try to prevent it they will not be successful. This war is not only inevitable but it will also be the most devastating because of the nuclear weapons that the heathens have produced. Though the identity of the man who warns people about the impending destruction is not absolutely clear, it is not unreasonable to assume that that is how Mgijima's soteric role is understood, and so in terms of his *persona theologica* he can be referred to

as 'the one who came to warn people'.

What do we make of these very powerful prophecies and visions, creatively communicated through cataclysmic imagery and a language that conjures up the spectre of Armageddon? What do these images and prophecies tell us about the soteriology of the CGSC? It is tempting to dismiss Mgijima's prophecies and visions as sheer illusions or as the manifestation of a disturbed mind, especially because of the language in which they are couched. But that would mean that apocalyptic as a genre would have to be dismissed, including the author of the book of Revelation. My view is that the way Mgijima communicated the message of salvation is quite consistent with biblical tradition and certain literary genres, especially apocalyptic. In line with this consistency Mgijima's language of salvation addresses the context of the supremacy of the bulls, the heathens that is, who bring war and suffering through their weapons of death and destruction but who are eventually overcome by the he-baboon. Here we can further see the material basis of Mgijima's soteriology. It is partly this which constitutes the soteriology of Mgijima as a contextual soteriology.

Ricoeur has been at pains to demonstrate that through its creativity and inventiveness human language, being the manifestation of the sheer power of imagination, is able to generate and regenerate meaning through the power of metaphoricity. This means that the language through which Mgijima's visions are communicated does not play a mere decorative function in terms of the message he preached but represents an alternative strategy of discourse. What is striking and powerful in this discursive strategy is Mgijima's use of metaphors drawn from the context of African culture. The impending destruction will not be like children's stickfight whose pain lasts but a moment and is soon forgotten. In order to be saved one needs to be stamped like samp which is derived from maize, traditionally a staple diet amongst the Xhosa, and which is produced through a laborious but effective process. The rough outer layer must be removed and thrown away for the samp to be edible. The two bulls fought because each wanted to be the only bull in the kraal - a fight for domination and supremacy. This is linguistic imagination *par excellence*. These metaphors derived from the context of African culture also constitute Mgijima's soteriology as a contextual soteriology. The soteric role of Mgijima is further elucidated in the titles and names by which he is known in the CGSC. Let me a look at some of them.

### 5.2.5 The titles of Mgijima

"the relational character of charisma means that one 'has charisma' only to the extent that others confer it upon one"

JC Scott *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*

I have already alluded to the various metaphors that are used to identify Mgijima as well as those that are descriptive in terms of his role in the soteriological scheme of things. This role is further highlighted by what I would like to call the titles of Mgijima. The titles of Mgijima are indicative of both his stature and the special role he plays in the life of the CGSC. Titles play an important role in African culture and usually constitute the material on which *iimbongi* (praise-poets) construct their praises. But unlike the titles used by *iimbongi* which usually describe the heroic deeds and achievements of their subjects, usually royalty, the titles of Mgijima are less valourous and more spiritual, i.e. they indicate that he is divinely inspired.

Principal amongst these is the title of *prophet*.<sup>8</sup> Charismatic founder-leaders in the African Independent Churches are invariably referred to as prophets by their followers. It is not my intention to discuss the etymology of the term nor its various uses in religions generally or in christianity in particular<sup>9</sup>. What is pertinent for my interests is how members of the CGSC themselves understand the notion of prophet as it relates to Mgijima. The use of the term prophet in the CGSC usually denotes 'the one through whom God speaks'. That which God speaks through the prophet is the truth and therefore the prophet is not a liar. In the words of the Evangelist Mbayi (13.07.1993):

The Prophet had said that: 'Should these things not happen then know that I am a liar and that God has not spoken through me'. We say God raised a prophet, a prophet of truth.

According to evangelist Mbayi (4.03.1994) Mgijima was a prophet in the deep sense of the word. As he put it:

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<sup>8</sup> Cohn (1962:41) uses the Latin plural form *prophetae* to describe charismatic leaders of millenarian or chiliast movements in Europe who were "men who though not equipped with any official authorisation had the prestige which always surrounded the miracle-working ascetic."

<sup>9</sup> For a more extensive discussion on the phenomenon of African prophetism see N.I. Ndiokwere's *Prophecy and Revolution*. London: SPCK. 1981.

I wish it were possible to tell you the depth and breadth of who the prophet was. Jeremiah 1,5 says: 'Before I created you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I made you holy, I appointed you as a prophet to the nations'. This means that a prophet is born, not made. I cannot teach my son to be a prophet. No, that is not possible. A prophet is born.

Another interesting title of Mgijima is that of *the ambassador of the last days* (*Unozakuzaku wemihla yeziphelo*). Apparently Mgijima had said that he was the last ambassador and after him it would be Michael and the sword, i.e. destruction (Testimony 4:6.01.1995; Interview 26.05.1994). The tenor of this title is meant to indicate the urgency of the message Mgijima was entrusted with, as well as the finality of the hour within which this message was enunciated.

Mgijima is also referred to as *the righteous one of the east* (*Ilunga laseMpumalanga*). The first part of this title indicates that he not only possessed the rare quality of righteousness but that he was sent by God and that he was different from other people (Mbayi 4.03.1994). The second part of the title, 'the east' is best understood in relation to two things. First, his followers are also referred to as 'the community of believers of the east' (*rhamente yasempuma*). By transferring this title to his followers they are identified with him in a special way. The second way in which this title can best be understood is in relation to its opposite, the west, which is identified with the impending destruction. In one of his visions Mgijima and 'the man' who had pinned him to the ground flew to the west where they heard a sound which 'the man' identified as "the sound of the great war that is coming which will affect the whole world" (Interview 13.07.1993). However, this does not mean that it is only the west which is identified with destruction and anti-salvation. The swarm of young locusts which devoured everything they came across was identified as coming from the east, and the thick darkness which covered the world and in the midst of which was a wick burning dimly, also had its location in the east. What we can make of this is that these two directions, the east and the west, are used interchangeably or as mixed metaphors, at one instance depicting salvation, at another instance depicting destruction and anti-salvation. However, in terms of its association with the *persona theologica* of Mgijima as well as the identity of his followers the east is associated with soteric reality.

In addition to the quality of righteousness Mgijima also possessed wisdom as his

title of *the wise one* (*Inkintsela*) indicates. *Inkintsela* is a person who is resourceful and does unusual things (Mbayi 4.03.1994). Apparently the title *inkintsela* was used in the beginning before the people discovered that he was a prophet. The title that is most commonly used in reference to Mgijima is that of the *watchman of Israel* (*Umlindi woSirayeli*). This title is meant to accentuate the quality of vigilance as well as that of protector. Mgijima watches over the people (Mzileni 7.03.1994).

What is interesting in terms of these titles is that they indicate not only Mgijima's role when he was alive, but also how he is still present in the church and in the world. As bishop Mzileni puts it: Mgijima watches over the people. The message that he brought as 'the ambassador of the last days' is considered to be relevant still. Having considered the titles of Mgijima I now shift my focus to the *Seven Keys* which constitute a crucial aspect in the soteriological thrust of the CGSC.

### **5.3 The Seven Keys to salvation: the plan of God**

The *Seven Keys* constitute a key component in the life of the CGSC and function as a canonical rule of life. The *Seven Keys* are referred to as 'the passage/corridor that leads to God', as "the foundation of the church" and as "the plan of God." They not only define the identity of the CGSC but they also dictate how members will relate to each other as well as how they shall sustain their relationship with God. The *Seven Keys* have their motivation in a variety of both Old and New Testament texts and they can be construed as regulations or a code of life with a salvific intent in the sense that they are keys which open the door to salvation.

These *Seven Keys* were revealed to Crowdy when he founded his CGSC in the USA and were inherited by Mgijima and his CGSC. Crowdy had a vision of a table with a white cloth on which was written 'Church of God and Saints of Christ. The Seven Keys is the only plan' (*Izitshixo ezisixhenxe kukuphela kocebano*) (Ntloko 12.07.1994). According to Trustee Mbayi (13.07.1993), after agreeing to what God was sending him to do Mgijima "established among us the *Seven Keys* and the *Ten Commandments*. We are building this ark with the *Seven Keys* because God is destroying the world and will leave no survivors" (Testimony 7: 9.01.1995). The *Seven Keys* are also referred to as weapons or tools (*izixhobo*). In a petitionary preface an *Israelite* commits himself in the words, "I bind myself

unto the Seven Keys and the Ten Commandments because they are my way to eternal life" (18.05.1995). According to Evangelist Ntloko (12.07.1994) "if you do not keep the *Seven Keys* you are not saved" (*awusindanga*). Each key has its basis in a number of biblical passages.

### **5.3.1 The first key: the Church of God and Saints of Christ**

The first key constitutes the official name of the church and indicates its spiritual origins and rootedness in God and Christ. Says Trustee Mbayi (13.07.1993): "The first key is based on 1 Corinthians and it reveals this church and its nature. This first key reveals the name of our church which is the *Church of God and Saints of Christ*." It is not just anyone who can be a member of the CGSC, to be one you have to be called. In the words of Elder Majezi (26.05.1994):

A person who is the *Church of God and Saints of Christ* is called (*uyabizwa*). This means it is difficult to be a member of the Church of God. There just has to be something within you which tells you that now you should come to the church and be the *Church of God and Saints of Christ*. And so we believe that immediately you join the church you have been called by the Spirit of God to be in the Church. That is the first key.

But the church is not only rooted in God and Christ. It is through the inspiration of the Spirit of God that people are drawn to it. In this sense we can speak of the pneumatological operations embedded within it. What is particularly striking in Elder Majezi's explanation is the language formulation. One does not just become a member of the church, one *becomes* the *Church of God and Saints of Christ*. A new theological pertinence is struck. The member does not just reflect what the church stands for but embodies the church within him or her.

### **5.3.2 The second key: Do not drink wine**

According to Trustee Mbayi (13.07.1993)

The second key tells us that 'Wine and alcohol are not to be taken by you and your son as you enter the tent of assembly so that you and your posterity may not be destroyed' (Lev 10,9). We are being instructed on what not to do if we call ourselves the Church of God and Saints of Christ.

But the second key is interpreted as doing more than institutionalising

temperance<sup>10</sup>. It is taken to mean a complete prohibition on all products derived from grapes, including unprocessed natural grapes. But this is not all. Believers are not allowed even to plant grapevines in their gardens. How are we to understand this key? This key constitutes what Peterson referred to as proscribed and controlled consumption and is an example of the third form of resistance against the domination by desire in compulsive consumption under the domination of abstract time under capitalism.

### **5.3.3 The third key: Take unleavened bread and water as body and blood of Christ**

This third key constitutes the Eucharist and in the view of Évangelist Ntloko (12.07.1994)

The third key is to believe and accept that when Christ spoke of his body and his blood, the Scriptures also talk of his body and his blood, it is to believe that the bread he gave to be eaten, we find this in Matthew 26,26-28, is Holy Communion which is something that is true (*ungonyanisekileyo*), something of value that we hold on to in our faith in the flesh and in the spirit. It is a way of showing how we receive Christ in all forms (*ngendlela zonke*), that we may follow his example and do what he did.

Because of the second key water instead of wine is used during Holy Communion. Says Elder Majezi (26.05.1994):

And so even during Holy Communion at the Passover or other times we use water, water that flowed from the wound. There flowed water and blood from the wound, and not water and blood and wine from the body of Jesus, that is when he was killed. That is the water that we drink in memory of him (*ukukhumbula yena*). Not wine.

The service of Holy Communion features only twice in the liturgical calendar, viz. during the Fast of Esther and during the Passover. During the Fast of Esther the eucharist is celebrated on the day preceding the day of fasting as a means of preparation and spiritual fortification. However, during the Passover festival the eucharist is celebrated on all seven days. I shall explain the details of the eucharistic celebration in Chapter Seven.

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<sup>10</sup> Examples of other biblical verses that are used as a basis or motivation for this key such as Gen 9,21; 19,32 highlight the shame that results from the consumption of wine.

### **5.3.4 The fourth key: The washing of the feet**

This key is a sign of relationship and is a command from Jesus in John 13,1-16. In the words of trustee Mbayi (13.07.1993):

The fourth key is the washing of the feet which is a command from Jesus as he had done before he left his disciples, he washed their feet. That is when he pointed out the one who was to betray him, Judas Iscariot...He said, 'I leave you an example, as I have done so should you'.

When an *Israelite* enters the home of a fellow-*Israelite* whom they have not seen for some time, the first thing to be done is the washing of the feet, even before they inquire about each others' health and before they exchange any other pleasantries. In doing this the spiritual nature of the relationship between and among the *Israelites* is expressed and receives further emphasis.

### **5.3.5 The fifth key: The Disciples' Prayer**

This key is based on Matthew 6,9-13 and entrenches the importance of prayer. All prayers and requests are concluded with this prayer. In other words no prayer is complete without the Disciples' Prayer. The Disciples' Prayer is taken to be the basis of all prayer and serves to make all prayer efficacious. A close look at the Disciples' Prayer reveals its soteric function. What is of special significance in this is the extent to which it takes cognisance of the human predicament. God is identified as the provider of daily bread, in this way God has a clear role in terms immanent prerequisites for human survival. provides.

What is of further interest is that the bodily practices and postures that are assumed and employed in the recital of this prayer are indicative of the gender-structuring of *Israelite* society. The womenfolk appear to adopt a more passive disposition in relation to the active stance of the menfolk. The Disciples' Prayer is said standing, with the menfolk looking up to heaven with their uplifted hands joined at the small fingers. The womenfolk also form a human chain but their hands hang down and their eyes are cast down towards the ground. It is not clear whether this is an indication that the womenfolk are taken as disciples or not.

### **5.3.6 The sixth key: You must be breathed upon to be accepted in the Church of God with a Holy Kiss**

This key is based on John 20,22 and signifies the reception of the Holy Spirit. When one joins the CGSC you are baptised in the river through immersion. This is followed by the washing of the feet, Holy Communion and then the reception into the church and to be breathed upon to receive the Holy Spirit. According to Evangelist Ntloko (12.07.1994):

We believe that as children of God, God who is holy, we have to get closer to God by having the Holy Spirit. As he breathed on them so do the disciples breath upon those they receive, upon their foreheads. It is a sign (*luphawu*) of the Church of God and Saints of Christ, a spiritual sign (*elibumoya*).

When one has been breathed upon they are kissed with a holy kiss by the officiating minister after which the whole congregation kisses them with a holy kiss. An implication of this is that the Holy Spirit is seen to be dwelling within the believers and not just something that has to be invoked from an outside source.

### **5.3.7 The seventh key: The Ten Commandments**

Though the Ten Commandments constitute the seventh key they are often mentioned independently with the Seven Keys, e.g. 'Our church is based on the *Seven Keys* and the Ten Commandments'. The Ten Commandments as given to Moses on Mt. Sinai (Exodus 20,1-17) are deemed to be the foundation of the CGSC. Though all ten of the commandments are deemed to be of equal importance, it is the commandment pertaining to keeping the Sabbath holy that is particularly stressed. In sum, the *Seven Keys* are the keys that unlock the door to salvation. As Evangelist Ntloko (12.07.1994) put it: "And so, if you ask us how we see salvation and where it is we point to the Seven Keys." Apart from the *Seven Keys* another key aspect in the life of the CGSC relates to a salvific conception of time.

#### 5.4 The time of salvation: a time of resistance

In founding his CGSC Mgijima redefined and reconstituted time in his adoption and appropriation of the Hebrew calendar and the Hebrew measurement of time. This constitutes an important and fascinating feature in the symbolic universe of the CGSC. It manifests a theology through which time is reconstituted and redefined as salvific time. This is in opposition to 'heathen time' which is not only ungodly but anti-salvation, and thus anti-God. Those who are not members of the CGSC stand outside salvific time and thus outside the salvific process.

In Chapter Three I dealt briefly with the Platonic and Aristotelian notions of time as cosmological. Augustine's key insight into the question of time was his positing of time as *distentio animi*, viz. that time is closely related to the self, that it can be conceived of as the extension of the soul. Heidegger emphasized the view that humans have the capacity to project themselves forward in time, to possibilities that are not-yet, an understanding of the connectedness and coherence between past, present and future. I then considered more extensively Ricoeur's attempts to interrogate and explicate the complexities, nuances, and ambiguities that render time inexplicable and non-existent while at the same time (forgive the pun) demonstrating the all-encompassing power with which time makes its presence not only felt, but also through which the human condition is fundamentally and continuously reconstituted. Ricoeur presented time as inextricably linked to narrative, the telling of a story. In this he distinguished between two forms of time, viz. successory time - discrete succession of incidents - and configurative time.

Configurative time essentially refers to how the different elements of the story receive a specific configuration, and how they are integrated. The symbolic universe of the CGSC is shaped by configurative time. In other words, the different elements of the story of Crowdy and Mgijima are configured in such a way as to continue the message of salvation that each announced, into the present. Crowdy, but especially Mgijima instituted a new time, the time of salvation for the black nation in direct opposition to the time of the heathens, a time of war and destruction.

Apart from Ricoeur's temporal views in Chapter Three we also saw how time is terrain of struggle against domination. Peterson's reflections indicated that what

happens in this instance of struggle is that time gets reconstituted as ritual *kairotic* time against the universalizing and the domination of abstract *chronotic* time.

The Israelites have instituted the time of salvation through their adoption of the Jewish calendar, in terms of the hours of the day, the days of the week - punctuated by the Sabbath- and the months of the year, the Passover festival (*pesach*) and the Fast of Esther (*Purim*). In reply to the question: "How important and how many are the religious festivals that your church has?" Evangelist Mbayi replied:

On the 14th of April every year we commence with the Passover, which is different from Good Friday (celebrations). It lasts for seven days. On the 24th of May every year we have a service of fasting (*inkonzo yenzila*) which is a commemoration of the eventful day of 24 May 1921 at Ntabelanga. This is a day of prayer and we do not eat or drink. We teach children about that day and remember it in a special way recalling the main things that happened on that day (*kuhlaziywa la-history, lambali*). We are now preparing for the synod. Our year starts in April, not in January.

Continues Trustee Mbayi in the same conversation:

In May, which we call *Ziv* because we take our months from the Bible, we remember the events of 24 May 1921. In October which we call *Etanim*, we have a fast in order to remember what happened during the time of Queen Esther, you can read about this in the book of Esther in the Bible. On the 5th of March, *Adar*, we remember the death of the Prophet (*sikhumbula ukulala koMprofite*). Those are the main events of our calendar. March is the last month of our year.

We believe that the months of the year and the days of the week as you find them in the world are not the way they should be. Because during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar things were changed, during the exile of the Israelites. Even the time was changed. We have our own time which is different from that of the world. Our days of the week are different from those of the world. Our last day of the week is Saturday. Also, our first month is April because the Israelites were freed from Egypt during the time of Moses. That was our first event and it was said that would be the first month. As things were happening to the nation of Israel so were the months given names until the last month which is March. That is how things are with us (Conversation 13.07.1993).

What is interesting in the above statement is that the beginning of the new year for the *Israelites* is fundamentally linked with freedom, the liberation of the Israelites from Egypt. In other words, freedom is a key idea in understanding the reconstitution and reconstruction of time by the *Israelites*. We can therefore say

that time is meant to be time for freedom, not domination and oppression. This reconstitution of ritual *kairotic* time as resistant manifests itself in the hours of the day and the week in following manner.

#### 5.4.1 The hours of the day and the week

The clock which hangs on the wall inside the church building is set to calculate the first hour from sunrise. What is particularly interesting in this instance is that rather than rejecting the clock which symbolizes the domination of the heathens, the *Israelites* have tamed it, bringing it under human control. The clock is used not to be in step with the world but to be out of step with the world; to be in step with the time of salvation. The clock marks the time of salvation rather than the time of domination.

For this reason during services time is referred to in accordance with this calculation, e.g. midday is referred to as the sixth hour. The conclusion that can be drawn from this is that all services take place within salvific time. Everything outside this is heathen domination which is anti-salvation. The most important day of the week is the seventh, the Sabbath, and believers are expected to observe it as a day of rest.

#### 5.4.2 The year of salvation

The table below illustrates not only the Jewish months but salvific time in contrast to dominating time, the time of the heathens.

<i>Salvific time</i>	=	<i>Dominating time</i>
1. <i>Abib</i>	=	4. April
2. <i>Ziv</i>	=	5. May
3. <i>Sivan</i>	=	6. June
4. <i>Tamuz</i>	=	7. July
5. <i>Ab</i>	=	8. August
6. <i>Elul</i>	=	9. September
7. <i>Etanim</i>	=	10. October
8. <i>Bul</i>	=	11. November
9. <i>Kislev</i>	=	12. December
10. <i>Tibet</i>	=	1. January
11. <i>Shebat</i>	=	2. February
12. <i>Adar</i>	=	3. March

The first month in the year of salvation is Abib, the month of the liberation from Egypt, the Passover. Significantly, the last month in the year of salvation is Adar, the month on which Mgijima died. What we have above is what Connerton (1989) referred to as a new structure of time being juxtaposed with the structure of profane time. This new structure is qualitatively distinct and that is why each day is located in two very different orders of time, heathen time and salvific time.

## 5.5 Conclusion

In this section I attempted to analyse the theological identity of Mgijima and the theology of his *Church of God and Saints of Christ*. My analysis has shown the extent to which Mgijima's *persona theologica* is the result not only of the things which he himself said concerning who he was and how he saw his own role in God's plan of salvation, but also the extent to which this *persona theologica* is a construction of his followers. I have argued that is neither wrong nor unusual but something that happens all the time when the followers of a charismatic founder-leader try to appropriate the identity of the founder in a new situation. Furthermore, we saw that it is around this *persona theologica* that the *Israelites* continue to construct their own theology of salvation. We also saw that the alternative religious symbolic universe generated by Mgijima, including his redefinition and reconstitution of time, is constructed in very graphic terms around his visions and prophecies. I also noted that *inter alia*, Mgijima presented an alternative view in terms of the locus of salvation, viz. that salvation is geophysical, that God had pointed out Ntabelanga as the place where this was to happen. We also saw that the symbolic universe of the *Israelites* is constructed not only in terms of the locus of salvation but also on the basis of reconstructed time. Time as resistance against the domination of the heathens. In the next chapter I will attempt to take a new look at Mgijima's refusal to leave Ntabelanga and the discursive strategies he employed in defence of his conviction.

## CHAPTER 6

### "WE ARE NOT A POLITICAL MOVEMENT, WE ARE A PROPHETIC MOVEMENT"

"The Day of the Lord has come. We aborigines are that Stone which was visioned by Daniel, Chapter 2, verses 34 and 35. This determined and obstinate British race, with other European powers, is like the iron. We are living on their territory. We will be as is stated in Daniel, Chapter 2, verse 44."

*(Enoch Mgijima in a letter to a Mfengu chief, Nkosi E. Mhlambiso of the Amatole Basin, as the confrontation with the government of the Union of South Africa was coming to a head).*

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Whereas the positive function of ideology is social integration, utopia is in contrast a function of social subversion, whereas ideology functions in the provision of overvalue to authority's claim to legitimacy, utopia functions to expose this overvalue and reveals "the pretense proper to every system of legitimacy."

*(Paraphrased from Ricoeur 1991a:320-1)*

#### 6.0 Introduction

In Chapter Five I attempted to delineate the salient features of Mgijima's *persona theologica*. I indicated that his theology of God rubs against mainstream theology and is innovative in his claim that God makes a definitive and uncompromising choice in terms of the locus of salvation, that salvation is not (only) spiritual but territorial - absolutely physico-geographic. God has marked out Ntabelanga as the physical space where the great drama of salvation begins to unfold. That is why Mgijima and his followers refused to leave Ntabelanga. This brushing against mainstream theology expressed itself in a millennialist mode. Rather than stick to those millennialist explanations which do not probe or analyse questions of hegemony, domination, power and resistance, what I seek to do in this chapter is to offer another set of tools for understanding what was happening when the

*Israelites* were refusing to leave Ntabelanga. For instance, in his study of the Bulhoek Massacre Robert R. Edgar (1977)<sup>1</sup> draws largely on Michael Barkun's<sup>2</sup> theory which explains such phenomena along traditional millennial lines.

According to this analysis, what was happening at Ntabelanga should be understood within the context of multiple 'natural', 'social', 'internal', or 'external' disasters which have a destabilising effect and which cause a stress on the society, leading to the destruction of the legitimacy of the society's leadership. As a consequence of this, claims this theory, the society's basic institutions are subverted and are therefore unable to respond to its crises. This then becomes a fertile ground for those who preach millennial ideas. Edgar (1977:55) then attempts to substantiate this theory by citing what he calls the "prolonged wave of natural disasters and diseases which periodically hit the region," such as the East Coast Fever of 1912, the inflationary impact of the First World War, the flu pandemic of 1918, the severe drought which began in 1919. Even though he does refer to the 1913 Land Act, which effectively rendered Africans landless, and even though he does mention the African nationalists' futile attempt to get redress from England and Versailles in 1919, Edgar ultimately explains the attraction of Mgijima's message as being based on his ability to provide an alternative and "an explanation for these disasters along with a radical solution" (1977:57).

In exploring this radical solution Edgar explains the establishment of the *Israelite* commune at Ntabelanga as awaiting the millennium and as a withdrawal "from the temptation and immorality of a corrupt world," as the "severing of ties with the past and being free from external pressures," as "finding solace and comfort insulated from a hostile, outside world." But Edgar (1977:73) himself notes that some of those who came to Ntabelanga had not sold everything they had and left their homes but they moved in and out of the camp, returning to their homes from time to time to harvest crops and to tend their flocks. Another problem with this type of millennial explanation and disaster rationalization is that it does not explain why the vast majority of Africans, despite the proselytising and active recruitment efforts by *Israelite* preachers and evangelists, did not join Mgijima's movement.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Fifth Seal: Enoch Mgijima, the Israelites and the Bullhoek Massacre, 1921*. Ph.D. Dissertation. Los Angeles: University of California. 1977.

<sup>2</sup> *Disaster and the Millennium*. New Haven: Yale University Press. 1974.

My intention in this chapter is not to prove Edgar's study 'wrong' because it is not. My objective is to offer a different set of tools for understanding, interpreting, and drawing conclusions on the stand-off, the confrontation, and the eventual massacre. In other words, these tools make it possible for us to view these incidents from a different perspective. My thesis is that the micro-society established by Mgijima at Ntabelanga can also be understood as a very sophisticated though not necessarily self-conscious nor widely appealing form of resistance against domination, resistance which happens through a fundamental redefinition, reconstitution, and re-employment of power. That this was possible is due to the inherent instability and vulnerability of hegemony (Comaroff & Comaroff 1991:25-27).

Though the Mgijima movement may seem to have been a withdrawal from the world, it proved to be the most direct engagement of and confrontation with an oppressive and illegitimate government. My contention is that though Mgijima may have created Ntabelanga in order to provide an alternative, this did not necessarily entail an escape from the hostile world, but rather an engagement with that world. But this engagement was on his terms, terms which were fundamentally prophetic, symbolic, and theological. This provides a useful way for understanding evangelist Dokoda's assertion that "We are not a political movement. We are a prophetic movement," which I have adopted as the title of this chapter. Also, this assertion by Dokoda is indicative of what Ricoeur refers to as the complex relationship between ideology and utopia which I discussed in Chapter Three. In arguing for my submission I shall draw from Ricoeur's theory of the relationship between ideology and utopia, and from James Scott's theory of the *public transcript* versus the *hidden transcript*. Both these theorists provide us with effective tools for understanding other forms of resistance to domination, those forms of resistance which at times are not obvious as such, not even to those who may employ them.

### **6.1 You can't get a good person down**

In Chapter Three I dealt in more detail with Ricoeur's theory of ideology and utopia as expressions of the social or cultural imagination in which he accords a soteric function to imagination because of its capacity to imagine beyond what is possible in practice. Let me recapture some of the important points he made in this

regard. For Ricoeur, ideology and utopia represent two forms of imaginative practices which have an inherent ambiguity in that they have complementary functions while both have positive as well as pathological traits. Positively, ideology can be understood as a symbolic confirmation of the past. Accordingly, the positive function of ideology is to pattern the stable functioning of a community, making firm the human order, and preserving the identity of a society. Ricoeur further holds that because authority always claims more than what society can offer in terms of belief, ideology mainly functions to bolster people's belief in the legitimacy of the prevailing system of authority so that the claims to legitimacy are met. The pathological traits of ideology emanate from its positive function. Ideology becomes pathological when it is twisted, held captive and monopolised by society's dominating group. When this happens ideology becomes an illusion, a false consciousness and begins to play a distorting and dissimulating role.

In its turn utopia, as a form of imaginative practice, can be understood as a symbolic opening towards to the future. This positive function of utopia is to present new possibilities beyond those presently experienced, thereby offering alternative ways of living. It is a radical rethinking of what we have come to know, a formidable contestation of what is and it thus acts as social subversion, bringing into the light the ideological overvalue that authority seeks to attach to its legitimacy. The question of power features as a key factor in utopia. Therefore, utopia always proposes alternative ways of using power, thereby calling into question established systems of power. It has the capacity to institute new modes of life. The pathological traits of utopia also emanate from its positive function and come to the fore when it becomes fixated on perfectionist designs, holding reality in the grip of a fantasy; when it holds a logic of all or nothing and is blind to the contradictions inherent in action. To summarise, ideology and utopia are complementary in that ideology is a symbolic confirmation of the past while utopia is a symbolic opening towards the future. Both cannot do without each other. Utopia is corrective to ideology and *vice versa*, and yet they produce inverse pathologies.

In the light of these Ricoeurian insights I intend to demonstrate that the skillful and cleverly executed establishment of the commune at Ntabelanga, right under the nose of the government, and at certain moments with its tacit approval, illustrates the definite though initially hidden but sophisticated, gradual, and

eventually fully public denial of belief to the Union government's claim to legitimacy. But what Mgijima did was not only an imaginative denial of and resistance to the ideological overvalue that the Union authority claimed. He instituted a utopian dispensation, a micro-society which constituted a fundamental challenge to the Union authority's use of power, offering alternative ways of using power and in this way subverting the social order, though in a small and localised manner. But before I embark on my demonstration I need to consider a second set of theoretical and analytical tools developed by Scott (1990) in his groundbreaking contribution to thinking about resistance to domination.

In his rethinking of the forms, or more appropriately, the arts of resistance to domination, what he refers to as the *weapons of the weak*, Scott challenges the traditional assumptions pertaining to notions of hegemony and ideology as false consciousness and contends that the notions of the hidden versus the public transcript and what he terms 'infrapolitics'<sup>3</sup> - a wide range of low-profile forms of resistance that do not announce themselves as such - make it possible for us to understand power relations in a much more penetrating manner. Scott thus posits the theory of the public versus the hidden transcript as a way of understanding power relations between subordinates and dominant groups.

The notion of the public transcript can be understood as a code which describes what transpires publicly in the encounter between subordinates and those in positions of power, those who dominate (1990:2). In other words, the public transcript is meant for all and sundry, for public consumption. The transcript component of this code is not limited to what is articulated verbally but includes non-verbal speech acts. An important element of the public transcript is deference on the part of the subordinates and the encounter and discourse is usually skewed to favour the dominant. Scott (1990:18) describes the public transcript as a

self-portrait of the dominant elites as they would have themselves seen. ... a decidedly lopsided discussion. .... a highly partisan and partial narrative. It is designed to be impressive, to affirm and naturalize the power of dominant elites, and to conceal or euphemize the dirty linen of their rule.

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<sup>3</sup> Scott (1990:200-1) later refers to infrapolitics as real politics in comparison to the politics of liberal democracies, because of the high stakes that are involved. As he puts it, "Under the conditions of tyranny and persecution in which most historical subjects live, it *is* political life".

The hidden transcript in its turn refers to "discourse that takes place 'offstage', beyond direct observation by powerholders" (1990:4). The hidden transcript has the following important characteristics: First, it "is specific to a given social site and to a particular set of actors." Second, a hidden transcript encompasses a wide range of practices and is not limited to speech acts. As Scott (1990:188) points out

The hidden transcript is not just behind-the-scenes griping and grumbling; it is enacted in a host of down-to-earth, low-profile stratagems designed to minimize appropriation.

Third, what constitutes the boundary between the public and hidden transcript shifts constantly because it is being continuously contested by the dominated and the powerholders (1990:14). It is important to note, however, that the hidden transcript is "a condition of practical resistance rather than a substitute for it" (1990:190). The hidden transcript reveals the truth of things.

It is possible to discern a variety of four political discourses amongst subordinates due to this distinction between the hidden and public transcript. The first form of political discourse functions as a security wall and provides space by utilising "the flattering self-image of elites." The subordinates use this space to get more concessions from those who hold power. The second form of discourse occurs at the level of the hidden transcript itself where the dominated are able to express political and other ineffables because this transpires offstage where the great master has no eyes and walls have no ears. The third form of discourse "is a politics of disguise and anonymity that takes place in public view but is designed to have a double meaning or to shield the identity of the actors." The fourth form of discourse is that in which the political *cordon sanitaire* which separated the public and the hidden transcript is ruptured, resulting in what Scott describes as "the most explosive realm of politics" (1990:18-19). What follows is an analysis, using the above tools, of the events that precipitated the Bulhoek Massacre.

## **6.2 Power contested**

In this section I shall attempt to revisit in chronological order some of the significant actions and public encounters between Mgijima (and his followers) and representatives of the Union authorities in the build-up to the 1921 Bulhoek

Massacre<sup>4</sup>. In this I rely on three sources, viz. Edgar's study which does an excellent job in piecing together and setting out the build-up of these events; on interviews I conducted with the *Israelites*; and on archival material consisting mainly of newspaper articles. In revisiting these events and encounters I hope to corroborate, using the tools I have borrowed from Ricoeur and Scott, my contention that the establishment of the *Israelite* commune at Ntabelanga, despite its disastrous and tragic outcome, cannot be discounted as a sheer expression of millennial fanaticism but represents, fundamentally, a highly complex and sophisticated contestation of power and resistance to domination. Let us have a close look at these actions and encounters and the underlying discursive moments.

### 6.2.1 Discursive moment one: creating space for utopia

I use the notion of discursive moment to identify and describe the period within which Mgijima and the *Israelites* employed a specific religious discourse and infra-political activity in dealing with the representatives of the Union government, the precipitative events and actions as well as those practical steps they took which show a support or justification of this discourse. We can put the first discursive moment roughly between 1909 and 3 October 1920. The discursive strategy and infrapolitical "arts" employed at this moment are characterised by a public transcript in which Mgijima tries to be on the 'right' side of the law while winning some concessions. We shall see a clear incremental process on the side of the *Israelites* in which they take more than is allowed or permitted.

\* 1909 - Mgijima and other Africans (at least a dozen) at Bulhoek 'encroach' on the commonage (Crown land) by building houses because the land they were originally granted is swampy.

\* October 1912 - The Moravians refuse Mgijima permission to preach and hold services at the mission church at Shiloh.

\* November 1912 - Mgijima begins baptising followers in the Black Kei river at Ntabelanga.

\* April 1913 - The first Passover is held (Dokoda interview 5.03.1994).

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<sup>4</sup> I have deliberately omitted *Israelite* encounters with non-hostile Africans, such as the 14 May deputation.

\* March 1919 - Mgijima is excommunicated from the Crowdy-Matshaka *Church of God and Saints of Christ* and a split happens with one group remaining loyal to Matshaka and another group following Mgijima.

\* 1916 - The Moravians refuse Mgijima permission to hold the Passover festival at Shiloh. Subsequently Mgijima has to seek permission from the Inspector of Locations to hold the Passover at various places (Mchewula, Kamastone, Ntabelanga). Normally, the temporary dwellings constructed for the duration of the festival were dismantled after each Passover.

\* 1917 - Mgijima erects more (five or six) houses on the commonage. Clement Gladwin, the Superintendent of Natives at Kamastone, orders Mgijima to demolish these buildings.

[Public transcript:]

Mgijima consults his attorney L.H. Brinkman and decides not to demolish the houses "until the issue is resolved satisfactorily." Gladwin reluctantly gives in. (Edgar 1977:64)

With this the first concession is won. Gladwin's reluctant giving in is a clear sign that the system of the powerful is not without its weaknesses and limits and it is this which the *Israelites* will continually exploit.

\* January 1920 - During the Fast of Esther at Mchewula location Mgijima utters the famous words: "Judah, Ephraim, Joseph and relations. They have heard." (*Juda, Frayime, Josef nezizalwane. Beville.*) (Edgar 1977:54; Mbayi 4.03.1994).

According to Mbayi (4.03.1994), Mgijima repeated these words during the Passover which was held at Ntabelanga. "But after these words had been uttered people no longer went back to their homes." These words therefore signalled the *Israelites'* changed attitude towards the *status quo* because they were very much aware that the authorities were against their prolonged or permanent settlement at the commonage. But this changed attitude did not mean outright or overt defiance on the part of the *Israelites*; they would publicly still display some semblance of being 'law-abiding'.

\* February 1920 - Mgijima applies for permission to hold the Passover at Ntabelanga. Initially, Geoffrey Nightingale, the Inspector of Locations since 1918, refuses to grant permission due to reports that outsiders had apparently begun to settle on Crownland. Eventually Nightingale grants permission after Mgijima has given him assurances in which he stated that:

[Public transcript:]

it was presumptuous to think he would allow `strangers' to settle permanently. "I Enoch had no land here - no private farm here - the only land I have is that registered in my name. I have no right to put people on land which does not belong to me." (Edgar 1977:60)

With this public declaration of powerlessness and subservience Mgijima appears to grant Nightingale the authority he claims and he thus manages to win the second concession.

\* May 1920 - The Passover is delayed due to drought and the scarcity of firewood.

\* June 1920 - Alfred Dondolo, the local headman, convenes a meeting warning the *Israelites* not to build anymore structures on the commonage but the *Israelites* went ahead, arguing that it was a local matter and that the government should not interfere. Here we can see that the *Israelites* are less reticent and much more vocal in their contempt for the government.

\* 18 June 1920 - Nightingale finds that `outsiders' have still not left and that more permanent structures have been constructed. Mgijima responds that:

[Public transcript:]

the new structures were for his "newly married sons and for many of the non-residents who had been forced to stay on because of the intense, winter cold, sickness, lack of railway fares or transportation to reach home, or husbands not fetching wives. He assured the inspector that after a special service was held in several weeks, the non-residents were going to leave." Nightingale is more amenable to the new dwellings for the family of Mgijima but not for the non-residents. He also grants an extension of time. (Edgar 1977:61)

Here we can see that there is a change in the demeanour of Mgijima when he is dealing directly with white representatives of the government. His contempt for them is clearly hidden. In this Mgijima continues to test the limits and weaknesses of the system by providing fairly understandable and acceptable reasons why new structures had been constructed. Because of this a further concession is won, though only partly. The new structures for Mgijima's sons are allowed and the non-residents are allowed to stay on but for a limited period. Though he did not get everything he had hoped for Mgijima had successfully pushed the limits of the system further, gaining ground literally and symbolically.

\* 23 July 1920 - Nightingale revisits Bulhoek only to find that eighteen new buildings had been erected and eleven more were under construction. Nightingale issues summonses for eighteen *Israelites* to be tried for squatting.

[Hint of a hidden transcript:]

Only three *Israelites* respond. (Edgar 1977:64)

Such a low turnout suggests that something is amiss. In response to the authorities Mgijima again attempts to give a reasonable explanation that:

[Public transcript:]

it was impossible for the *Israelites* to respond immediately "since they were scattered around the countryside." (Edgar 1977:64-5)

We see that Mgijima gives what may be considered to be a perfectly understandable and non-defiant explanation for what appeared for all intents and purposes to be a deliberate and planned boycott of the legal proceedings. It is clear that there had been discussions amongst the *Israelites* concerning the summonses and a decision taken to partly boycott the legal proceedings, otherwise how does one explain such a low turnout. It is also not inconceivable that the *Israelites* were really scattered around the countryside, but not unintentionally or inadvertently.

\* 4 September 1920 - Eight headmen from Kamastone petition Nightingale to expedite the matter of the illegal *Israelite* squatters who they claimed were destabilising the area.

\* 6 September 1920 - Charles Mgijima, the Prophet's brother, and A. Ntloko write to the Queenstown magistrate, E.C. Welsh, and blame Nightingale for reneging on the promise allowing them to build houses. They claim,

[Public transcript:]

"We are not in the attitude of making war against you; *we are your servants* living in this place for the purpose of praying and fearing God's wrath which is coming upon the whole world. The presence of these people who are gathered together here from various places has been called by nobody. The Lord God has called them together in this place. Therefore anyone attempting to drive them away from this place must be fully aware that he is warring against the God of Israel" (In Edgar 1977:67) [my emphasis].

The response of the *Israelites* is clearly ambiguous. In the first part of this response we see a measure of deference and hints of submissiveness in the phrase I have italicised. At this point the discursive strategy suggests a flattering of the self-image of the powerholders. However, the second part of the response indicates that the *Israelites* have no intention to leave Ntabelanga. In this the *Israelites* continue probing the limits of the system.

\* 13 September 1920 - Nightingale, Welsh and P. Whitaker, the District Commandant, go to Ntabelanga to impress upon the *Israelites* that they need to leave. In response:

[Public transcript:]

The *Israelites* assure them that they will be gone by the end of September. (Edgar 1977:71)

By giving the authorities a specific date by which they would be gone the *Israelites* managed to win a further though provisional concession.

\* 3 October 1920 - Nightingale revisits Ntabelanga again only to find that between thirty and forty new structures had been constructed since his last visit and that more *Israelites* were arriving. To this the *Israelites* respond that,

[Public transcript:]

fifty *Israelites* had gone away and they sought a further extension. (Edgar 1977:74-5)

By playing this game of numbers the *Israelites* clearly sought to cover up their breaking of the promise they had made earlier that they would be gone by the end of September. At this point it must have been clear to the authorities that they were being led down the garden path. Significantly therefore the concession sought is not granted and from this moment on there is a radical change in the discourse and infra-political activity on the part of the *Israelites* and this ushers in the second discursive moment.

### **6.2.2 Discursive moment two: enter God and Christ, the king and prince of utopia**

A feature that characterises the second discursive moment is self-assertiveness on the part of the *Israelites*. They no longer present themselves as law-abiding and they no longer seek piecemeal concessions. And so, instead of a public transcript of deference on the part of the *Israelites* the response is one of self-assertiveness. Another important feature from this moment on is that two new and very important characters enter the stage as things begin to heat up and as the plot thickens. God and Christ begin to play a more prominent, direct and directive role. They become real characters in the drama that is unfolding. With the entry of God and Christ into the fray the legitimacy of the government is further eroded.

\* two weeks after the encounter of 3 October 1920 Nightingale, under instruction from Welsh, unsuccessfully attempts to conduct a census and compile a register of the inhabitants of Ntabelanga. The *Israelites* refuse to co-operate stating,

[Self-assertiveness:]

"we are solely here for the purpose of prayer, God has not yet answered our prayers or revealed Himself unto us, nor has he told us to disperse. Should we forsake God or do as the Government says? 'No,' we put our trust in God.....our names are written in God's Book, and as God was greater than man, we would not be justified in allowing this." (In Edgar 1977:75)

At this moment no further extension is sought by the *Israelites*. The *Israelites* no longer employ the infrapolitical arts of unobtrusive strategems through which they were able to gain important concessions and extensions in the first discursive moment. It is understandable therefore that the government decided to change its approach and attempt to demonstrate its power and enforce its will.

\* 7 December 1920 - A force of ninety three police is gathered and moves to Ntabelanga to enforce the registration.

\* 8 December 1920 - In negotiations with the police two *Israelites*, Edward Mpateni and Charlton Mzimkhulu, assert that,

[*Self-assertiveness:*]

"..the matter had been put before Christ, who was the only one that could remove us." They reiterated that the *Israelites* did not desire to leave and had no intention of "disturbing the law or interfering with officials," but if the government wanted to provoke a fight, "they must remember they were fighting God .... We are the children of God and under Him. We only do that for fear of God and not against the Government." (In Edgar 1977:77-8)

A couple of *Israelites* then pitch their own tents between their commune and where the police had encamped. Through this physical act the *Israelites* erect a symbolic barrier between themselves and the police. After observing what the police perceived to be a hostile approach by about six hundred *Israelites* but which was in fact the *Israelites'* usual liturgical march, the police withdrew and pitched their camp three and a half miles from where they had initially camped.

\* 14 December 1920 - Mattushek, a white farmer, kills one *Israelite* and wounds another on his farm after they had allegedly threatened him. The *Israelites* hold that they had gone to Mattushek's farm to buy animal feed.

\* 17 December 1920 - The *Israelites* meet with the full compliment of a government appointed commission, headed by E. Barrett, the Secretary for Native Affairs, and including police and army officers. In response to the question of the summonses that had been issued and to the demand that they move from Ntabelanga the *Israelites* respond,

[Self-assertiveness:]

Yes, they are aware of the gravity of the situation and they have been law-abiding up until then but "since no charges had as yet been proved against them, their position had not" changed. "God has sent us to this place ....We shall let you know when it is necessary that we go.....We wanted to live peacefully with all. We only want to pray, *but we cannot introduce you to the secrets of our prayers.* You can try to interfere with God's work if you like, that is not our affair" (In Edgar 1977:99-100, my italics)

The section I have italicised gives a clue to the existence of a hidden transcript which the *Israelites* intend to maintain. The *Israelites* will not give the government agents access to the royal court of utopia, they will not allow them communication with God, hence their refusal: "we cannot introduce you to the secrets of our prayers."

The *Israelites* feel that the whole matter has been prejudged against them and demand to see General J. Smuts, the prime minister of the Union of South Africa, a demand which was never granted.

\* 13 January 1921 - The district surgeon, John Cranke, and his son are refused entry into the Ntabelanga commune when he attempts to investigate reports of typhus. According to him the *Israelites*,

[Self-assertiveness:]

"advised me to send him (his son) to Europe at once as the day of the Lord was coming and when it came it would not be like Port Elizabeth [where a number of Africans on strike were shot by the police]" (Edgar 1977:106).

Apparently by this time the *Israelites* also refused to pay taxes and an *Israelite* preaching to potential converts in the Glen Grey district is alleged to have said,

[Self-assertiveness:]

"Do you people still pay taxes, because we no longer pay taxes where we are? We have a prophet there and it has been given out that the time of the native people has come when we should rule ourselves." (In Edgar 1977:107-8)

From the above it would appear that unlike other polities there are no taxes paid in utopia. This apparent refusal to pay taxes is indicative of further erosion in the legitimacy of the government. It constitutes a clear act of political resistance.

\* late March - Charles Mgijima and others are subpoenaed to give testimony in the Mattushek trial. They refuse to comply with this requirement and Enoch Mgijima writes the following note to the magistrate:

[Self-assertiveness:]

"I don't see why Charles Mgijima should be called to give evidence of the second firing because the evidence of the firing which killed Charles Dondolo and wounded John Kelenjane is quite clear, and also the evidence of Philip Mhlabane taken by you in the court at Queenstown, who was the only man who had escaped was satisfactory. Above all this, the statement of other witnesses was taken by the Police while the body of Saint Dondolo was still lying on the ground. Charles Mgijima was not there neither does he know Mattushek and two others. Now therefore, I want to know, what do you say about the murdered man Charles Dondolo and the murderers. This is the topmost matter which boils our blood and which I think should work in your minds more than the evidence of the previous firing." (In Edgar 1977:114-15)

Because of this overt political act a warrant for their arrest was then issued.

\* 6 and 8 April 1921 - The Native Affairs Commission is sent by the government to negotiate with the *Israelites*. The commission makes the following offers to the *Israelites*: free rail passages and rations for those *Israelites* not originally from Bulhoek, a place in Crown locations for those who had nothing, and are willing to "consider an application for a permanent site at Ntabelanga for the *Israelites* as long as it was for religious purposes only" (Edgar 1977:112). The *Israelites* respond that,

[Self-assertiveness:]

The commission represents a temporal authority and their allegiance is to a higher power, Jehovah, who has spoken to them through the one and only prophet, Enoch Mgijima.

Here we can see that the citizens of utopia have only one king, Jehovah, and they do not recognise Smuts. Moreover, the king of utopia has only one spokesperson, prophet Mgijima. It is Mgijima alone who addresses the king and it is he alone who passes on the instructions of the king, interpreting them when necessary.

To the question demanding how much land they would need and how long they intend to stay the *Israelites* respond that,

[Self-assertiveness:]

it is the Lord alone who has the power to determine the size of the land and the duration of their stay. "We cannot discuss these things because God does not deal with numbers. It is wrong to try to limit Him. If we limited Him that would make him angry. We were called to this place, and until He said we should leave, we will not.

We could not lay down any boundaries or any number of people because thousands might join up, and we would need more land." (In Edgar 1977:111-13)

Here we can see the extent of God's power and the way in which 'he' rules in utopia.

- \* 16 April 1921 - Four *Israelites*, including Charles Mgijima, the Prophet's brother, are subpoenaed to testify in the Mattushek trial.
- \* 28 April 1921 - The charges against Mattushek are dismissed due to the non-appearance of the four key *Israelite* witnesses.
- \* 11 May 1921 - The Native Affairs Commission is sent again to Bulhoek to negotiate with the *Israelites*. Again the Commission makes offers, not substantially different from the previous ones, and again the *Israelites* reject the offers, asserting their allegiance to God their king. The *Israelites* reiterate the view that:

[Self-assertiveness:]

they chose to obey God rather than the demands of the government. (Edgar 1977:116-17)

\* 21 May 1921 - After the assembling of the largest force of policemen in peacetime in South Africa up until that moment, Col. Truter, Commissioner of the South African Police, sends the following ultimatum to the *Israelites*:

To Enoch Mgijima and all associated with him and styling themselves "Israelites," at Ntabelanga.

You are hereby notified that upon instructions of the Government, I have come to Queenstown and will arrive at Ntabelanga on Monday, the 23rd instant, with an adequate force to carry out certain orders which are detailed hereunder, namely: (1) To arrest certain men against whom warrants have been issued in order that they should be dealt with according to the law. (2) To see that all unauthorised residents leave Ntabelanga and go back to where they came from. (3) To destroy all houses erected without authority. (4) On completion of these operations a force will be left on Ntabelanga to prevent any unauthorised resident squatting there. Everyone's person and property will be respected. You are warned, however, that any resistance to lawful authority will be dealt drastically with. (*The Daily Representative and Free Press* 21May 1921)

\* 22 May 1921 - Mgijima responds to the ultimatum in a letter addressed and delivered to Truter by two *Israelites*, Silwana Nkopo and Samuel Matshoba:

[Self-assertiveness:]

Yours of the 21st inst. [...illegible] hand. I feel glad that today I am able to express myself to you, how God has sent me to His People. On the 19th of April, 1907, the Lord God had appeared to me by a vision. I was only a hunter of game and a sinner before God, but the God of heaven and earth appeared to me and sent me to His people and whosoever (sic) shall hear His word, saying do you hear the sound from the west? I said, I do hear my Lord; that is the war which shall be in the world said He; the great sound was roaring from the west. The Lord informed me that the war will begin in 1914: and from thence there shall be no peace on earth. The Lord God also informed me from what side it shall appear when it comes in Africa. You are just on its track, as you now stand. This war is not for the kings nor the rulers of this world, but it

is the war of The Lord God of Israel. I, the servant of the Lord, inform you, therefore, that this war is not caused by me nor by an earthly king.

I understood that you, sir, intent (sic) to come out to Ntabelanga with an adequate force. May it therefore, be known by you and all the armies and forces shall be ruled by God. As for myself, I am a messenger before the blood. The whole world is going to sink in the blood. I am not the causer of it, but God is going to cause it. I am a man of blood, said my God. The Lord of Hosts is his name. The time of Jehovah has now arrived, all nations are invited to the marriage of the Lord God of heaven and earth, and also to the sacrifice of the God of Heaven and earth: Rev. 19:17-18, Ezek 39:17-20. God has now taken kindness away from the human being.

(1) In reference to your letter, as to arrest certain men, this has already been replied to the Magistrate and to Native Superintendent of Locations, Kamastone. (2) As to unauthorised residents leaving Ntabelanga, this point has been often replied to, even at the meeting in which you were present in December last, at last with the commission of three men. (3) As to destroy houses erected. All houses were erected with the permission of the authorities. This point has also often been replied to. I understood that you, sir, were coming out with an adequate force, and if resisted will drastically deal with. We are here praying to the God of our fathers, therefore we do not believe that Jehovah shall allow it. I have been praying the Government about this matter for a very, very long time, until now, and am still praying the Government to allow the Israelites to pray their God. You are informing me that you are coming out with an adequate force. Do you mean that you are coming out to war against the God of Israel? If you then, sir, Mr. Truter, are coming out to make war, please inform me. I shall then write or say my last word before you destroy me. - Yours faithfully, E.J. MGIJIMA. (*The Daily Representative and Free Press* 23 May 1921)

Mgijima explains that God has long had designs for 'his' people and that he (Mgijima) was specially chosen by and appointed to play an important role in this regard. As far as he is concerned the sovereignty of God is total and absolute. As far as the threats are concerned the agents of the government need know that they challenging the king. He is prepared to be destroyed but he will not betray his king.

\* 22 May 1921 - Truter sends the following reply to Mgijima:

To Enoch Mgijima, Ntabelanga. I have received your letter dated 22nd instant, from your messenger, Samuel Matshoba. I beg to inform you that I have nothing further to add to my letter which you acknowledged receiving. -

(Sgd.) T.G. Truter, Commissioner, South African Police. (*The Daily Representative and Free Press* 23 May 1921)

With this a critical moment is ushered in and the discourse changes radically and this leads to the third discursive moment, the discourse of power on the side of the *Israelites*.

### 6.3.3 Discursive moment three: the power

At this point the encounter has reached breaking point. What characterises the *Israelites'* discourse is the power they have claimed for themselves. They no longer rely only on the characters of God and Christ. At this moment they show forth their power - they are absolutely defiant. It is they who take the initiative, demanding some answers from the police. What we observe at this moment is a power transcript, i.e. a transcript in which the *Israelites* demonstrate their power.

\* 24 May 1921

pre-dawn - 8.40am - the *Israelites* hold their usual morning service, which is concluded with the usual liturgical march.

9.00am - 10.30 - Armed police take combatant positions on the slopes overlooking the commune, and at seeing this about five hundred *Israelite* men are "split up into five regiments," singing the liturgical marching songs, "Rejoice, Rejoice for our King" and "Great and Marvellous are Thy Works, O God Israel," a very moving and gripping song.

11.30am - Police make a last ditch attempt at negotiations<sup>5</sup>.

In the question below the *Israelites* publicly claim and announce their power and control over the explosive situation, rendering the police totally without power and denying them any measure of legitimacy. The *Israelites* ask:

[*Power transcript:*]

"What are you here for?"

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<sup>5</sup> The report of the dialogue and last interaction between the *Israelites* and police before the shooting is taken from evidence led by three members of the police, Col. Ernest Woon and Inspector W.H. Quirk. (Edgar 1977:126ff, 147)

Col. E. Woon of the police tries desperately to re-establish his control over the situation:

"Go back to your people and tell them to lay down their arms and come out and surrender and if they fail to do so and oppose my advance force will be used."

With the threat of force the police desperately attempt to re-establish and reassert their power and control over the situation. One of the two *Israelite* messengers, Edward Mpateni, inquires whether this is a final ultimatum, to which the policeman answers:

"Yes, you must lay down your arms and surrender."

To this Mpateni responds:

*[Power transcript:]*

"If it is to be a fight, I warn you that Jehovah will fight with us and for us."

Here we see a counter-threat from the *Israelites*, with God being subject.

Woon responds:

"There is nothing more to say, it is finished."

According to evidence led by Sergeant Detective John Tyobeka, an African, as both parties parted and went back to their respective groups, one of the two *Israelites* is reported to have shouted in the direction of where Mgijima was, "the Heathen want to enter the village," at which Enoch Mgijima is alleged to have responded: "Jehovah is not willing."

There is contradictory evidence as to what ensued when the parties reached their respective formations. Both sides blame each other as to who initiated the offensive. But what is clear is that "the only firearms found among the *Israelites* after the battle were in Enoch's house: a Lee Medford carbine in serviceable condition and an old rifle" (Edgar 1977:128). Apparently the arms carried by the

*Israelites* during the battle were African traditional weapons, knobkieries and assegais, with their ceremonial swords remaining sheathed (Edgar 1977:130).

12.15pm - The first shot is fired, the *Israelites* charge as the police fire from rifles and maxims. When the shooting stops, twenty minutes later, one hundred and eighty three *Israelites* lay dead and about one hundred are injured. The police suffer no significant casualties and no deaths. From this moment onwards the contest for power and the accompanying discourse on the part of the subordinated has to take on a new form, ushering in the fourth and final discursive moment.

#### **6.3.4 Discursive moment four: and the glory**

This discursive moment represents the defeat of the *Israelites* and the glory of the Union government. The *Israelites* are shot into submission.

According to Edgar's investigation (1977:132):

When the shooting stopped, several *Israelites* came forward bearing a white flag to ask if they could attend to their wounded. Permission was granted. The police regrouped and made a general advance on Ntabelanga without meeting resistance.

It is clear from this quote that the build up and confrontation had gone full circle discursively. The *Israelites* have to come forward bearing a white flag, they have to ask for permission to attend their wounded, they are unable to resist the police advance on the commune. The *cordon sanitaire* that originally separated the hidden and the public transcript is re-established, the government has successfully claimed back its legitimacy and its authority, the subordinate group grants its belief to the overvalue that the authority has reclaimed, and the pathological traits of ideology have succeeded in overcoming those of utopia.

To put its final stamp on its reclaimed authority and to publicly display its victory in the power contest, the government arrest Mgijima, his righthand men, and other *Israelite* men. A census of the women and children is conducted after which they are dispersed. All the houses are demolished, including the tabernacle, and the ark of the covenant which housed the Ten Commandments written in Xhosa and

which symbolised God's presence in Ntabelanga, is taken away by the government, no doubt as spiritual booty, signalling the total ideological defeat over the *Israelites'* symbolic, spiritual, and theological resources of power.

The whole episode is ritually concluded with a public collective trial of the *Israelites*, a further public demonstration of the power that accrued to the Union government. The trial commences in October 1921 in Queenstown and all the accused are convicted. The Prophet, his brother Charles, and Gilbert Matshoba are sentenced to six years of which they serve three in De Beers Convict Station in Kimberley, with Charles dying in jail before their release. Other *Israelite* men are given sentences ranging from three years to eighteen months hard labour, depending on their rank in the church hierarchy, while old men and boys are given a twelve months suspended sentence. With this the victory is ritually sealed. But before I move on to briefly consider another important dynamic of power, viz. its redefinition and reconstitution, I need to give a brief reflection on and an outline of the main elements of what I have identified as the four discursive moments in the above contestation of power.

First, I need to point out that this division into four discourses is not cast in iron. In other words, these discourses do not exist as totally discrete but overlap and invade each other in terms of the strategies of the imagination, linguistic strategies, infra-political activity and ideological motivation. This mutual invasion notwithstanding, it is possible to discern distinct moments in terms of the development and change in linguistic strategies and non-verbal speech acts. Another key feature that distinguishes these four discursive practices is what I would like to call the material and symbolic change in the urgency of the situation, moving ineluctably towards an explosion.

The first discursive moment is characterised by what can crudely be described as deference on the part of the *Israelites*, being the subordinate group. In terms of the Ricoeurian ideology-utopia distinctions and categories, what obtains at this stage is a situation in which it would seem that to a great extent, ideology, imaginatively continues to play its stabilizing and preserving role. Mgijima keeps on requesting permission for the various elements of the Ntabelanga project, and, despite initial opposition and conditional permission from the authorities, Mgijima wins important concessions which make it possible for him to continue with the project.

The onstage encounters between Mgiijima and the authorities are punctuated by a public grant of belief to the authorities' claim to legitimacy. The discursive strategy that Mgiijima employs is one in which he presents his case as being in line with the requirements of the authorities, giving ambiguous replies to what are blatant breaches of the conditional permission he was granted. He publicly and categorically disclaims any pretensions to having any power or authority and declares that he has no right to build the houses he has just built and those he is in the process of building on that specific land because the land belongs to the Crown and not to him. When the authorities return a little while later to find that even more houses have been built and decide to prosecute the illegal squatters, Mgiijima explains their non-appearance at the legal proceedings as being due to the fact that they were scattered round the countryside, which may have been true, but which suggests the existence of a hidden transcript, a collusion to disappear into the countryside, with the disappearance constituting an effective weapon of the weak. At this stage the mental line of demarcation between the public and hidden transcripts still obtains - the masters are masters-in-charge and the servants are servants-in-submission.

The second discursive moment is ushered in with the *Israelites'* failure to win a further concession with respect to a further extension of time. It is from this moment that the *Israelites* openly refuse to co-operate with the authorities in the census and typhus incidents, giving spiritual and religious reasons for their new attitude. They go further than a mere denial of co-operation and adopt what is tantamount to a physical challenge by pitching their tent between the commune and the police camp, thereby creating a psycho-physical barrier. A further discursive practice is one which announces their autonomy through a boycott of taxes, an assertion of self-rule, and a contemptuous disregard for the legal institutions and processes of the dominant. As a result of this the discourse they employ in their interaction with the government-appointed commission can be described as *self-assertiveness*, thereby indicating the rupture of the *cordon sanitaire* that separated the public from the hidden transcript. With this rupture a situation of equality between the antagonists is inaugurated - the masters in charge no more, the servants submissive no more.

The third and critical discursive moment is underscored by an imaginative quantum leap in terms of the previous relationship of equality, with the *Israelites*

claiming power and control over their situation. What obtains is not just a situation of equality. The *Israelites* are in charge. The largest force of police ever assembled in peacetime has to break the peace and to use military force in order to enforce submission. What Pablo Richard<sup>6</sup> has referred to as 'the idols of death and the God of life' are locked in mortal combat. The *Israelites* call on the power of Jehovah, the police call on the power of the state. The idols prevail, Jehovah is defeated, at least until the emergence of the he-baboon (Nelson Mandela). The fourth discursive moment, as I have already pointed out, re-institutes the *cordon sanitaire*. The new mode of life instituted by utopia is crushed, utopia is nowhere, ideology everywhere - the masters in charge once again, the servants' place restored in pain. I now move to consider another critical dynamic of power.

#### **6.4 Power redefined**

The discursive moments I have just considered do more than reveal a contestation of power. They point to its redefinition and re-employment, albeit with dire consequences. The crucial question in this regard centres around the definition and location of power and can be formulated as follows: does power obtain only in those who control the political, economic and military resources of the state? What about the oppressed groups? Are they completely without power? Foucault's answer to this question is that "Power is not simply what the dominant class has and the oppressed lack" but rather "...the dominated are as much a part of the network of power relations and the particular social matrix as the dominating" (Hoy 1986:134). Apart from contesting power how else were the *Israelites* part of the network of power relations?

It is obvious that in a context of power contestation between a dominated group, in this instance religious, and the state, the dominated are unable to muster power from the same sources and resources as their opponents. This means that the dominated have to draw their power from elsewhere. The empowerment of subordinates necessarily has to happen through a different source and via an alternative route. And so the dominated have no choice but to muster it from a source with which they are familiar, one that is not only friendly and trustworthy but one which has a proven track record for supporting those in similar

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<sup>6</sup> From a book that he edited with the same title, Maryknoll: Orbis. 1983.

predicaments. In this instance the Mgijima movement drew their power from spiritual, symbolic and theological resources, thereby redefining power as constituted and obtaining not only in the coercive and military might of the state. If Smuts has power so does Jehovah. Had Jehovah not demonstrated 'his' power to the Israelites of old<sup>7</sup>. Had Jehovah not drowned Pharaoh and his chariots and horsemen in the sea? Others may construe this as fundamentalism, fanaticism, or naive faith but it is the spirituality of the oppressed, of those who rely absolutely on nothing else but God. It may seem dangerous and suicidal.

The alternative is to revert to the secure offstage discourse of flattering the self-image of the dominant group, gaining piecemeal concessions and thereby capitulating to the idols of death. If oppressed groups have no access to material resources for empowerment, especially those motivated by and organised and mobilised around religious ideals, they have to resort to spiritual resources which are essentially symbolic but no less real. After all, had Crowdy not warned that the black nation should prepare to meet their Lord and to leave the heathens to prepare weapons for war? It is what Ricoeur has referred to as the power of the creative and symbolic imagination. It is not less real than the power of the technical imagination, the imagination that produces weapons of war, repression, and destruction. It is when the *Israelites* had thus redefined power, re-employing it in a discursive strategy of self-assertiveness, autonomy and control that the conflict came to a head. In this sense the explosion was inevitable. We shall see how the defeat of Jehovah and the crushing of utopia is understood and made sense of in Chapter Nine when I consider the festivals commemorating the Bulhoek Massacre and the death of Enoch Mijima.

## 6.5 Conclusion

In Chapter Five I indicated that in terms of Mijima's theology (and in terms of his *persona theologica*) God had marked out Ntabelanga as the physical space where the great drama of salvation begins to take place. In the light of the preceding discussion outlining the contestation of power and redefining its nature and source, this assertion can be rephrased as follows: God had marked out Ntabelanga as the physical space where empowerment begins to take place. In other words, the

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<sup>7</sup> I shall discuss the meaning of the Passover for the *Israelites* in greater detail in Chapter 7.

physical space of Ntabelanga provided the spiritual, symbolic, and theological space for the creation of an empowered, alternative, and salvific christian symbolic universe. It is in this sense that we can say that the Ntabelanga commune played a soteric function, with Ntabelanga becoming a socio-religious metaphor for empowerment.

In Chapter Five I also indicated that in terms of Mgijima's theology salvation is not only spiritual but also territorial, physical. In terms of the above discussion and in terms of Nürnberg's definition of salvation as comprehensive wellbeing, we can also conclude that salvation is also a question of power. In other words, there is a close relationship between salvation and power and empowerment, especially in a context of domination, oppression and exploitation. This does not mean that power equals salvation or that those who are empowered are saved. As we can see from the preceding analysis and discussion this relationship is much more complex.

From the above we can also conclude that ideology and utopia are indeed imaginative practices and forms of cultural imagination as Ricoeur claimed. But the above discussion also demonstrates that ideology and utopia should not be thought of as confined to the purely 'cultural' imagination but that this inherently includes what we can call the politico-religious imagination. What the interaction and confrontation between the *Israelites* and the government agents also amplify is that when locked in struggle, ideology and utopia are extremely potent sources and resources for power and empowerment. In this instance ideology had to draw its power from the political and military resources of the state, whereas utopia had to draw its power from the symbolic and spiritual resources of the imagination. The above discussion also showed that in a context of intense contestation for power it is inevitable that the interaction between pathological elements of both ideology and utopia will lead to disastrous consequences.

## CHAPTER 7

### "WE HAVE NOW ENTERED THE PASSOVER; WE ARE ON THE WAY"

#### Pass-over hymn

When the death angel of the Lord  
Shall pass over the land.  
I will command him pass over you  
And he will pass over you.

#### Chorus:

When I the Lord shall see the blood  
I will pass over you.  
When I the Lord shall see the blood  
I will pass over you.

This chapter is divided into two parts which attempt to achieve a number of closely related objectives. The first part is descriptive and endeavours to outline mainly the structural and performative aspects of *pesach*, from which the Xhosa equivalent *ipasika* is derived. In other words it pays more attention to what is done, how it is done, and when it is done. The second part is interpretive, focusing first on the proclaimed content, i.e. what is said in homilies, prefaces, testimonies, and petitions, and secondly, on the performatives. It attempts to understand the significance of both the utterances and the performatives. It seeks to explore the nature of and the extent to which the proclaimed and the performed message of the Passover shapes and influences the soteriology of the CGSC and the ways in which this constitutes it as a contextual soteriology.

We shall see that because of its centrality in the life of the CGSC the message of the Passover provides the hermeneutic key to understanding the soteriology of the CGSC. Furthermore, it will be clear that as it is celebrated, proclaimed, performed and interpreted by the *Israelites*, the Passover helps us to understand better both the message of salvation that Mgijima preached and the discourse he employed in announcing this message. There is thus a positive correlation between the soteriological intent of Mgijima and the central message of the Passover as it is variously interpreted by the *Israelites*, both lay and ordained. Lastly, we shall see that the extent to which the message of the Passover articulates with present circumstances and the prevailing social situation constitutes its contextuality.

## PART I

### 7.1 Some background

The Passover festival which is held over seven days, beginning with the ritual of the Service of the Lamb (*Inkonzo yexhwane*) on the evening of 13 Abib (April) and ending on 20 Abib, plays a central role in the life of the *Church of God and Saints of Christ* and constitutes the climax of its liturgical calendar. Apart from the special Service of the Lamb as well as other factors, what makes the Passover festival quite distinctive from other CGSC festivals is that it is the only occasion when there is a daily celebration of the Eucharist. The only other time when the Eucharist is celebrated is on the day preceding the day of fasting during the festival of the Fast of Esther. Second, it is during the Passover that many members of the CGSC come on pilgrimage from all parts of the country and gather together at Shiloh<sup>1</sup> to celebrate this very important event. Third, it is during the Passover festival that the elders are appointed and ordained to their office.

For the Shiloh group the Passover is held on 13-20 Abib (April) every year at Shiloh, Whittlesea. In 1922 and 1923 the Passover festival was not held because the leaders were in prison. But with the return of Mgijima from prison in Kimberley in 1924 the celebration of the festival resumed but had to be held in Queenstown under the eyes of the authorities. The reason for this was to prevent a repetition of the events that led to the massacre.

The Passover was celebrated in Queenstown until the CGSC split in 1947, with the one faction continuing to hold the festival in Queenstown and the second group began to hold their Passover festivals at Shiloh, Whittlesea, about 35km south-west of Queenstown. In 1968 the Shiloh group held the Passover in Cradock, approximately 120km west of Queenstown. From 1969 the festival continued to be held in Shiloh.

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<sup>1</sup> The Queenstown group celebrates the Passover festival in Mlungisi township, in Queenstown. I shall discuss the metamorphosis that Shiloh undergoes for the duration of the Passover festival in Part II.

Beginning at sunset of the first day of the Passover and for the entire duration of the festival believers are not allowed to keep yeast, leavened bread, sour milk, and even fizzy cool drinks and sodas in their houses. Only unleavened bread is eaten. (Exodus 12,15)

## **7.2 The night of freedom**

The paschal meal which is referred to as 'the service of the lamb' (*Inkonzo yexhwane*) starts at 17h30 and ritually inaugurates the Passover festival.

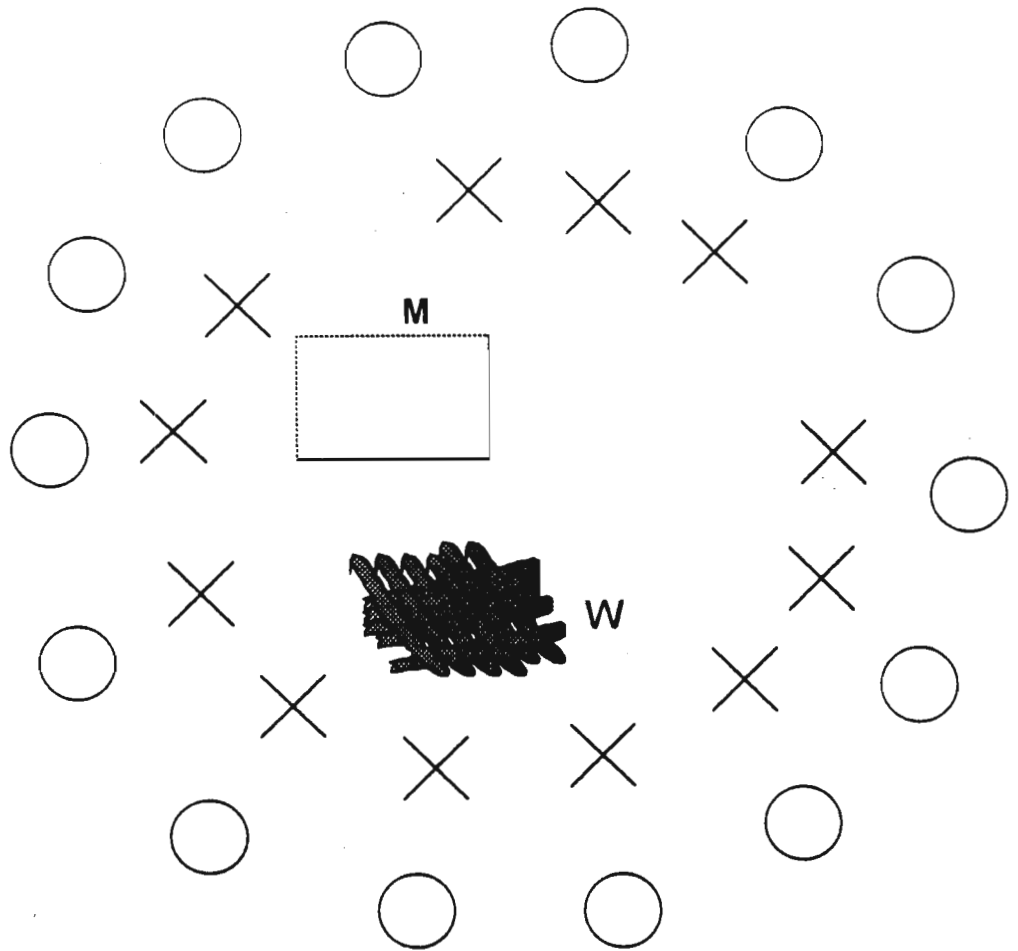
*Dress code:* The bishop, evangelists, and elders are dressed in long black trousers, white clerical-type shirts, a black necktie, black waistcoats, long black preacher-type overcoats, a black hat, with each one holding a ceremonial wooden staff, and a bugle slung with a cord over the right shoulder and hanging under the left arm.

*Interior decorations:* The chandeliers have willow branches hanging from them. The five window-like openings between the rostrum and the enclosure behind it are each covered from left to right with five drapes of the following colours: white, red, blue, yellow, green.

### **7.2.1 The ritual preparation of the lamb**

The bishop, evangelists, and elders gather outside the church and then enter the church building. I am not allowed inside for what I am told is a prayer session. Shortly thereafter the bishop, evangelists, and elders emerge and go towards the corrugated iron enclosure where the lambs for the Passover have been kept. The bishop and some elders enter the enclosure and emerge shortly thereafter. A prayer based on Revelation 7,12 called *Isityhilo*, (literally meaning 'the revelation') is recited with hands thrust forward and turned upwards. Thereafter each evangelist and elder goes to the corrugated iron enclosure and each one emerges with a lamb which he brings into a circle called *isibingelo* (altar/sanctuary) and marked out by whitewashed stones. At the centre of *isibingelo* is some wood. Figure 3 below illustrates the layout of *isibingelo*.

Figure 3. 'Isibingelo'



- = Whitewashed stones, demarcating the boundary of "isibingelo"
- × = Pascal lambs
- W = Firewood
- M = Metal grid

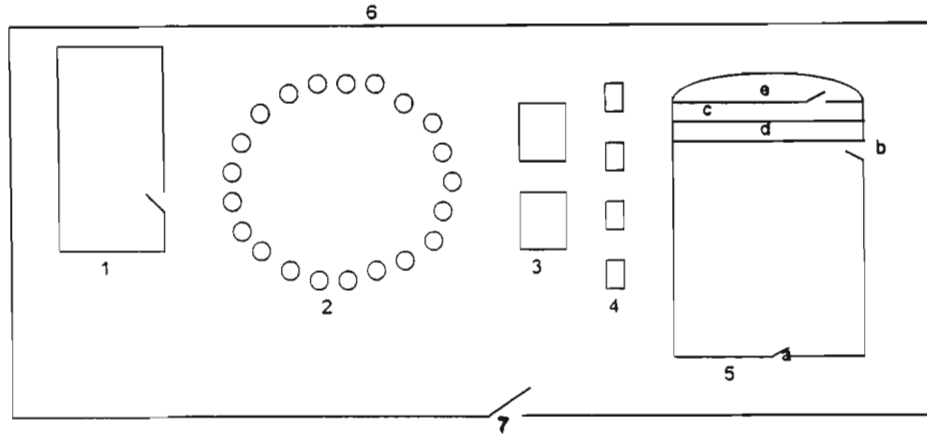
Each evangelist and elder, with a hat on his head and a ceremonial staff under an arm then slaughters his lamb. The legs of the lambs are facing the wood in the centre of *isibingelo* with their heads facing in an anti-clockwise direction. The slaughtering commences with the slitting of the throat and the blood is allowed to run into the ground after which the lamb is skinned. Thereafter the entrails are removed. All this is done in the most efficient manner and in silence and without assistance from anyone. In about fifty five minutes thirteen lambs have been slaughtered. I am informed that the number of lambs is not fixed but varies from year to year, depending on the number of expected pilgrims. The wood in the centre of *isibingelo* is lit and more wood is brought and the fire gets very big and the heat it generates is quite intense.

I notice that during the slaughtering the ceremonial staff is held in whichever way is convenient but is not left to lie on the ground. The hats are also kept on the head and the bugles are slung over the shoulder and hanging under the arm. All these ritual accessories and religious accoutrements make the task look quite cumbersome, but the efficiency and dexterity with which it executed is quite astonishing. By now quite a number of pilgrims, especially the 'daughters of Jerusalem' (womenfolk) have arrived. As the slaughtering progresses large dishes are brought from inside the church and the entrails are placed in these dishes. There is silence and reverence during the slaughtering by all those within *isibingelo*. The lambs are slaughtered in such a manner that not a single bone is broken.

The carcasses are then placed crossed on top of each other on two tables outside the *isibingelo* circle. Before the carcasses are placed on the table the tongues are removed and the heads are severed and are thrown into the fire. Figure 4 below illustrates the complete layout.

Some 'daughters of Jerusalem' start cleaning the entrails by removing the dung in the manner of milking and the dung is then thrown into the fire. A metal grill on which the meat is to be roasted is placed next to the fire within *isibingelo*. The skins are stacked on top of each other under the tables where the carcasses are.

Figure 4. Complete layout



1. Corrugated ironsheet enclosure
2. Isibingelo
3. Tables
4. Benches
5. Church building
6. Fence
7. Entrance gate

- a. Main entrance
- b. Side entrance
- c. Restrum
- d. Platform
- e. Enclosure

An evangelist, some deacons and trustees start cutting off the meat from the carcasses on the table in such a manner that only the skeleton remains. Again, great care is taken that not a single bone of the skeleton is broken. The skeletons are later thrown into the fire and burned completely. I am informed that in past years the skeletons were not burnt immediately but were roasted and then ritually consumed with the rest of the meat. This practice was discontinued because people tended to break the bones during the ritual consumption of the meat.

More wood is added onto the fire intermittently as the ritual progresses. A metal rake is used to spread the glowing coal. Thereafter the salted meat and entrails are put on the grill and roasted over the fire. The time is 20h00.

The meat that has been roasted is put into a metal trunk which is then placed in front of some evangelists and elders seated within the circle of *isibingelo* who then meticulously inspect the meat, making sure that it is well-done, putting the underdone meat back on the grill to be redone.

### 7.2.2 The ritual consumption of the lamb

By now many pilgrims have arrived and some assist with the ritual proceedings while others merely watch. When all the meat is done it is taken into the church and is placed in the enclosure behind the rostrum. Everybody enters the church and gets seated. The church is lit with candles which are placed in chandeliers hanging from the ceiling. The service inside the church follows the following order:

#### (1) Gathering and solemn entrance

An *umbongo* (hymn) is sung when all are seated. A bugle then sounds and the singing stops abruptly and the bishop, evangelists, elders, and deacons enter through the side entrance. As the bishop, evangelists, and elders reach their places on the rostrum they are greeted by Grandfather Abraham with the words *Bhotani* (We greet you). Thereafter all sit and the gathering hymn resumes.

After the gathering hymn all stand and the opening hymn which is sung is entitled *They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mt. Zion*. The church is filled to capacity. I estimate that there are between four hundred and five hundred pilgrims.

#### (2) Opening prayer

The pilgrims form a human chain by joining each other's little fingers. The opening prayer is said by the bishop. His words are based on Mk 11,25-26 and he stresses that: "God wants people who are at peace. If you are not at peace then you will not reap anything from this Passover". Thereafter he recites Timothy 2,8-10 at which all males with their little fingers still joined lift up their hands and look up towards heaven and recite after the bishop the Lord's Prayer based on Matthew 6,9-13, including the doxology, "for thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen". After the Lord's Prayer all sit except the choir which then leads the congregation in another *umbongo*.

#### (3) Preface to reading

The bishop greets the congregation using the following formulaic hierarchical

introductory salutation:

To the *Church of God and Saints of Christ*, to the evangelists, to the elders, to the deacons, to the trustees, to Grandfather Abraham, to Grandmother Sarah, to the Mothers Sarah, to the sons of the Prophet, to the daughters of Jerusalem, to our friends, and to the whole assembly, I greet you all (*ndithi kuni nonke bhotani*).

After the greeting the bishop then gives his prophetic testimony (testimony according to the spirit of prophecy) in the following manner:

I testify under the spirit of prophecy and not under the spirit of eldership. I give thanks to God who in the last days raised for us two prophets, one the other side of the many waters, and the other in the country of my birth. Crowdy preached that the heathens (*abahedeni*) should make arms and prepare themselves for war and that the black nation should prepare to meet (*ukuhlangabezana*) its God. He wanted to come to Africa but those in authority refused him permission. He said he would lie down on the cold earth but would wake up in Africa, in a different form and speaking a different language. And so Mgijima was raised under the mountains of Ntabelanga. He preached that God had sent him to collect his sheep and to hide them under a cave for there was a great hailstorm coming. The prophets left us the Seven Keys and the Ten Commandments which are our weapons and the foundation of this church.

The bishop then continues to the effect that he is grateful to be here on this night of freedom, of the freeing of the Israelites<sup>2</sup> from all their troubles and suffering (*ukuxakeka*). He is happy to be here in spite of his enemy's wishes for the contrary.

#### (4) Reading: Exodus 12

An elder is asked to come forward to hold some candles so that the bishop can read. The bishop then reads Exodus 12 while everybody else is seated. After the reading the choir stands up and leads the congregation in another *umbongo*. The bishop, holding his ceremonial staff in his right hand and pointed upwards, continues standing, facing the side entrance.

#### (5) Homily

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<sup>2</sup> It is not clear whether the bishop refers to the Israelites of the Bible or whether he means those of the CGSC, or whether he means both.

After the hymn the bishop paces up and down the front lower platform and delivers a brief homily. He commences with the usual formulaic salutation and then continues:

We read how the family (*usapho*) of Israel was freed from Egypt. What is this service (*inkonzo*) to you? Here among us *Israelites* we paint our houses white. Pharaoh released the Israelites. He then said that they should think of him. God showed mercy (*ufefe*) to the Israelites. May God show mercy to us as well. The night is gone (*ubusuku bumkile*). These are my words.

#### (6) Paschal meal

After the sermon hymn 18 *Le nyanga u-Abibe* (This is the month of Abib when we went out of Egypt) is sung. While this *umbongo* is sung deacons go to the enclosure behind the rostrum and fetch two tables and the dishes with the roasted meat. The dishes are then put on the tables which have been placed in the centre aisle.

The bishop, evangelists, and elders then leave their places on the rostrum and stand around the tables on which the dishes with the ritual meat have been placed. Each one has a bugle, a ceremonial staff, and wears a black hat. Everybody else is seated. The bishop then recites *Isityhilo*. All the clergy standing around the paschal table remove their hats during the prayer. Thereafter the meat is prepared by being cut into smaller pieces. While the preparation continues there is a running commentary from Grandfather Abraham who is seated on the side seat on the rostrum facing the side entrance. Though I am unable to make out the words of the running commentary its tone which resembles that of an *imbongi* (a traditional praise-singer/poet) suggests that he is reciting praises. Everybody is then requested to stand. Evangelist Mbayi then proclaims, in the manner of an *imbongi*:

We have now entered the Passover of 1995. We are on the way (*siyahamba*). We slept in one place and we wake up in another. God said long ago to Abraham that his offspring would spend forty years in a certain place. This is a mystery (*imfihlelo*) of old. This is the sacrifice of the Passover, it is not a sacrifice of sin.

While this is said the meat is being distributed. Deacons go with the dishes of meat through the pews and each person takes some meat from the dish and ritually

consumes it, standing. Grandfather Abraham commentating from the side of the rostrum reprimands people making a noise and tells them, "God will not fight for you". Evangelist Mbayi continues his commentary:

This service is to be done through all generations for ever and ever. Pharaoh hardened his heart. This is not a service of the world. It is a service of Israel. Everything must be eaten. Whatever is left over will be burned in the fire.

Grandfather Abraham: "You are being prepared for the land into which we shall cross. Please be quiet". Evangelist Mbayi then proclaims: "For seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. Tomorrow is Holy Communion".

When all have eaten, the leaders come back to the rostrum and all sit, including the congregation. The leaders have removed their hats as they are seated on the rostrum. The tables and chairs are removed from the centre aisle and put back in the enclosure behind the rostrum. I shall look at the deeper meaning and religious signification of the paschal meal in *Part II* below.

#### (7) Closing prayer and benediction

Then all stand and sing the hymn *Bekani 'ndlebe* (also called *Ingoma yoloyiso* - the victory song). The meat that is left over is taken out through the side entrance to be burnt in the fire. The closing prayer is said by the bishop who also pronounces the benediction. As usual, all males lift up their hands joined at the little fingers and look up towards heaven as the Lord's Prayer is recited.

Thereafter Elder Majezi announces that the dress code for the following day is *voile*<sup>3</sup>; that the first service starts at 5.30am; that the first bugle will sound at 4.30am and the second one at 5.30am.

#### (8) Recessional march

All march out of the church in single file, doing the paschal dance to the rhythm of the 'Pass-over hymn', led by the shepherd flag. Elders, evangelists, and bishop

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<sup>3</sup> I shall describe the details of this dress code in Part II.

follow at the back of the march. The paschal dance, though appearing to be rather on the vigorous side and including some *toyi-toyi*-like movements at the 'I will pass over you' part, and being quite gentle on the 'When I the Lord shall see the blood' part, is absolutely beautiful, quite breathtaking and unlike anything I have seen before. What a beautiful spectacle. The march formation outside consists of a circle, holy kiss, zig zag, circle and is concluded with a short prayer after which all depart. The time is 2.30am and though I am feeling very tired and very drowsy I am feeling quite uplifted. What a night!

To summarise, we can say that the basic theme according to the homily of the Service of the Lamb is the mercy (*ufefe*) God showed to the Israelites. Pharaoh was forced to release the family of Israel, and so they were freed. The preacher's request is that God might show mercy to them as well and in this salvation has to do with God showing mercy.

What the commentators stress in terms of the ritual of the Passover and the paschal meal is that it is about being on the way, having 'slept in one place and waking up in another'. The Passover is about movement. It inaugurates change in a people's way of existence. It is about the beginnings of a fundamental transformation of their lot. The commentator is also at pains to point out that the paschal meal should not be confused with worldly sinful sacrifices. The paschal meal is strictly *Israelitic*. I shall reflect deeper on the ritual significance of the paschal meal later. For now these few preliminary remarks will suffice. I move now to consider the main elements of the seven days of the festival.

### **7.3 The order and main elements of the liturgies**

There are four services a day, including the night prayer. The early morning service starts at 5.30am and lasts for about one and a half hours. The main service which is the service of Holy Communion, starts at 10.00am and lasts between four to five and a half hours. The evening service starts at 19h00 and takes about an hour to an hour and a half. The night prayer starts immediately after the evening service and takes about forty five minutes to an hour.

### **7.3.1 Early morning service**

The dress code for the early morning services is 'free' and the order of the liturgy is as follows:

- (1) *Gathering*: The bugle sounds and the congregations sings the gathering hymn seated.
- (2) *Entrance*: A short bugle sound interrupts the gathering hymn, announcing the entrance of the clergy who enter through the side entrance. All stand as the clergy enter and take their places on the rostrum. Thereafter all sit and the gathering hymn resumes.
- (3) *Opening*: The gathering hymn ends and the opening hymn is sung with all standing. It is followed by the opening prayer which is excerpted from Mark 11,25-26, Matthew 6,9-13, and Timothy 2,8-10.
- (4) *Scripture reading*: A short introduction, consisting of an introductory greeting, asking for pardon for transgressions by the reader, precedes the reading. Thereafter the reader (an elder) reads the text from Scripture.
- (5) *Homily*: The usual formulaic prophetic testimony, said by the preacher and including a prayer request precedes the homily.
- (6) *Conclusion*: The services is concluded with a closing prayer and the pronouncement of the benediction. This is followed by announcements.
- (7) *Recessional march*: The recessional march in various formations is to the rhythmic sound of the Passover hymn.

### **7.3.2 The order of the main service**

The order of the liturgy of the main service over the seven days includes the celebration of the eucharist. What follows is a general description of the main service, with some parts being done only on certain days, e.g. the *bowing marching* is done only on the Sabbath:

- (1) Gathering hymn and solemn entrance.
- (2) Opening prayer
- (3) Preface to Scripture reading
- (4) Scripture reading
- (5) Homily

It is important to note that it is the prerogative of the bishop or the next senior person to appoint the preacher of the day and he is always appointed at the very last minute, that is shortly before the time for the Scripture reading. It is then up to the preacher to choose the reading. In a conversation with the elder Dokoda I remarked that the style of the CGSC preachers is quite different from that of my tradition. His response was that the CGSC preachers are very poetic in their sermons.

#### (6) Holy Communion

*Preparation:* After the homily the preacher goes back to his place on the rostrum. A hymn is sung and a group of deacons go to the enclosure behind the rostrum and bring a table, two chairs, about eight chalices, matzos in sealed boxes, two twenty five litre plastic buckets filled with water, plates. The table is placed along its length in the centre aisle close to the rostrum and the two chairs are placed facing each other on the sides of the table. The table is covered with a white cloth and the chalices, plates and matzos are put on the table. The two buckets with water are put on the floor one on each side of the table next to the chairs.

The deacons then stand around the table, forming a circle. The main officiant rises from his seat on the rostrum and moves towards the table. As he moves he signals to any one elder or evangelist he fancies to come forward to assist him. They both sit on the chairs at the end of the table near the rostrum. The deacons are all holding their ceremonial staves upright with their right hands.

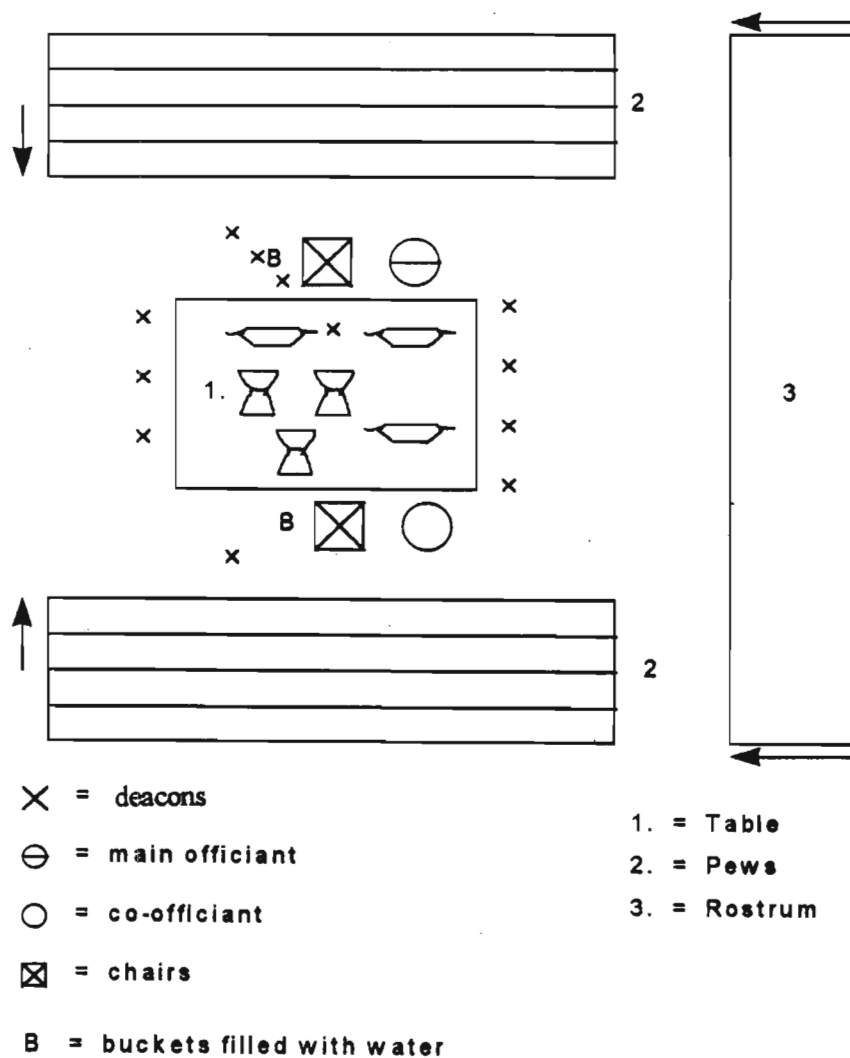
*Blessing of the bread:* Towards the end of the hymn the main officiant and the assistant stand up. The main officiant then says the words of institution based on Matthew 26,26. As he pronounces the words of institution he opens the box of matzos. Thereafter he recites *Isityhilo* at which all close their eyes with their hands thrust forward and turned upwards in the manner of receiving.

*Consumption of the bread:* Thereafter the elders who are all seated on the rostrum get up and distribute tissue serviettes among the congregation. Before the deacons distribute the consecrated matzos which have been put in the plates the main officiant breaks them by crushing them on the plate. One of the elders who has remained on the rostrum while others are distributing the serviettes stands up and

reads 1 Cor 10,1. After distributing the serviettes the elders go back to sit at their places on the rostrum.

The consecrated bread is not consumed immediately after distribution. When all have bread in their hands the main officiant and the assistant minister sit on the chairs next to the table. The main officiant then says, "*Masizilungiselele*" (Let us prepare ourselves) at which all crush the bread in their hands. Thereafter the main officiant says, "*Masitye*" (Let us eat) at which all consume the consecrated bread.

Figure 5. Eucharistic layout



*Blessing of the cup:* Thereafter the assistant minister reads the words of institution

based on Matthew 26,27-29. He then recites *Isityhilo* after which the elders collect the serviettes. The main officiant and assistant minister take a jug and takes some consecrated water from the bucket and pour it into the chalices which the deacons distribute among the congregation. The cup is drunk immediately, in three sips, with two or three people sharing the same cup.

*A deacon distributes the cup during Holy Communion, with the elder reading eucharistic scriptural excerpts standing in the left hand corner.*



As people drink the cup the same elder who read 1 Cor 10,1 after the blessing of the bread gets up and reads 1 Cor 10,1-7, after which he says the usual formulaic salutation, starting with the bishop. After the salutation he asserts, "Today's bread is not ordinary everyday bread. This is not an insignificant thing. Let us listen well during this services". He then sits down. The assistant minister then proclaims:

This is water flowing from Horeb, when our fathers were freed. Jesus was stabbed in the side and water and blood flowed from it. With this water we receive our strength which God does not give to us otherwise. This is the

blood of the new covenant (*Ligazi locebano olutsha*).

The elder who read from 1 Corinthians stands up and says the usual formulaic salutation and then proceeds to read 1 Cor 10,21-22. Thereafter he reads John 5,6 and then sits down. The assistant minister again proclaims, "This is the blood of the new covenant." After this the elder who read from John 5,6 gets up again and reads Matthew 10,42. All this happens while the deacons are distributing the cup.

It is only after everybody else has drunk from the cup that the main officiant, the assistant minister and assisting deacons drink the cup. Each one is holding a cup and they all drink at the same time in three sips. Thereafter the table, table cloth, chairs, chalices, and buckets are removed and taken to the enclosure behind the rostrum.

#### (7) Midday prayer

At around midday the proceedings are suspended and a hymn is sung with all standing. After the hymn the Lord's Prayer, intoned by a trustee, is recited by all while standing, with hands joined at the little fingers and the hands of all males lifted up and with eyes looking up towards heaven. After the prayer all sit.

#### (8) Petitionary preface

The petitions of the saints (*Izithandazo zabangcwele*) which follow the rite of Holy Communion are preceded by a preface which is done by *ummeli bungqina* (the leader of petitions). *Ummeli bungqina* is a trustee who gets chosen by the preacher as he goes back to sit on the rostrum after preaching. *Ummeli bungqina* then comes to the front and stands next to the side door with his back to it. He sways rhythmically and is holding his ceremonial staff in his right hand. He starts off with the usual formulaic greeting, followed by a prophetic testimony, a request and thereafter he reminds the congregation about the theme of the homily. The petitionary preface serves as a useful liturgical device to keep the petitioners focussed on the message of the day. *Ummeli bungqina* also helps to direct the petitionary traffic, making sure that the petition formation is according to the set pattern, that the elderly people get first preference, and that the petitions are within limits, both in terms of time and appropriateness.

#### (9) Petitions of the saints

After the petitionary preface by *ummeli bungqina*, a number of the saints, mainly 'daughters of Jerusalem' but also including some 'sons of the Prophet' (menfolk), come to the front and form an L-shape with the bottom part (horizontal) of the L being constituted by three petitioners standing on the upper part of the platform near the side entrance with the backs against it, and facing *ummeli bungqina* who is standing on the opposite side facing them. One petitioner stands directly behind the middle one of the three petitioners, making the number of petitioners on the platform into four. The rest of the petitioners form the vertical part of the L, facing the clergy who are seated on the rostrum. As the petitioner on the extreme right moves from their place to offer their petition, pacing up and down the upper platform, the fourth petitioner joins the two at the extreme left, making the number into three, while another one moves up from the lower platform to the upper platform to take the place of the fourth petitioner. After offering their petition the petitioner goes back to take their place in the pews. Some of the saints do not make an explicit petition but request a specific *umbongo* instead.

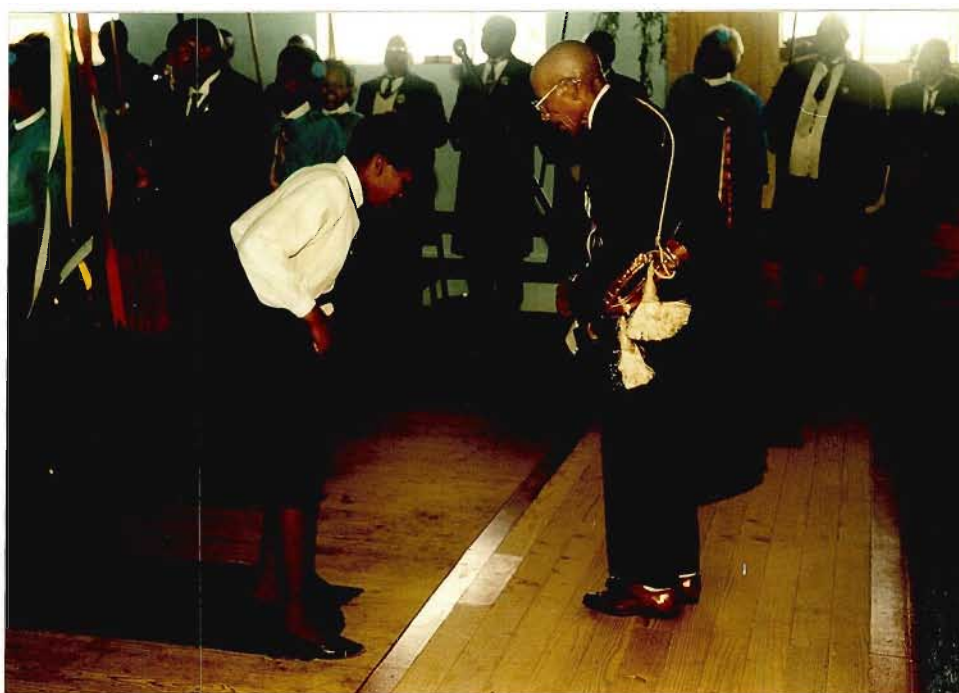
The petitioners start off with the usual hierarchical introductory salutation, followed by the usual prophetic testimony, after which the petitioners offer their petition, pouring out their heart and soul to God and to the congregation. Some address themselves directly to the bishop. Sometimes the petitioners draw directly from the reading and the homily while others make no reference, directly or implicitly, to the reading and sermon. Some of the petitioners are totally overcome by emotion, especially those who are deeply troubled and overburdened by the troubles of life, family, unemployment, illness, etc. The mood is very conducive to this kind of openness, forthrightness, and trust. I cannot help wondering what the atmosphere and mood was like during the time of the Prophet.

#### (10) The *bowing-marching*

The *bowing-marching* is done only on the Sabbath and not on other days. Five elders and one evangelist come to stand in front on the low platform as the choir marches out in single file to the tune of the Passover hymn, being led by the shepherd flag. The elders march out with the congregation but are right at the back. The choir spends some time outside marching in various formations. The

choir then keeps quiet and the bugle is blown by an elder who is inside the church on the rostrum. At the sound of the bugle the shepherd stands at the main entrance and lifts up the flag and waves it and then goes out again.

*A young 'daughter of Jerusalem' and an evangelist bow to each other during the bowing-marching.*



Thereafter the hymn *Let your light shine* is sung. All stand as the choir enters and bows individually to the evangelist who is standing on the low platform of the rostrum. He bows simultaneously with the individual person. After a bow the person turns to the person behind him/her and they both bow to each other. After this the person goes back to his/her place in the pews. After all have bowed individually to the evangelist and to each other the whole congregation marches in their places, facing north and then turning to face west, and then south and then east several times while humming the hymn *Let your light shine*. Thereafter all sit and sing a slow song.

The first time I saw the *bowing-marching* was during the festival of the Fast of Esther and I was totally overwhelmed by its effect on me. After watching the engaging, assertive and yet non-aggressive and graceful nature of the dance I was captivated by it. I felt an almost uncontrollable urge to join in the dance. I resisted the urge because something within told me that I could not join in because I did not belong. I felt a cold shiver run down my spine and the hair and the skin at the back of my head felt as if it was being lifted up. My intestines felt as though they were sinking and being torn out, that feeling one gets when riding a roller coaster. This feeling, though quite intense, lasted a single moment. I became aware that I was breathing quite heavily and I decided to get control of myself. But still, I wished I could join in the dance. That this was the most beautiful liturgical dance I have ever seen. On inquiring about the meaning and significance of the *bowing-marching* I was referred to Revelation 7,11-12,

And all the angels who were standing in a circle round the throne, surrounding the elders and the four animals, prostrated themselves before the throne, and touched the ground with their foreheads, worshipping God with these words, 'Amen. Praise and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honour and power and strength to our God for ever and ever. Amen.' (*The Jerusalem Bible*)

I was informed that the dance is the sign of peace which the believers pass on to each other. My subsequent observation of the *bowing-marching* has been quite 'sober' and has not had the same emotional and mesmeric effect as my first experience. This notwithstanding, it is still one of the most beautiful liturgical dances I have seen.

#### (11) Blessing of children

The blessing of the children was done only on the second day of the festival. Two elders with three children come to the front where Evangelist Mbayi is standing facing the congregation. One elder takes a child and gives him to the evangelist who takes the child in his arms and puts his right hand on the child's head and he pronounces the following words, "They brought the children to Jesus that he might bless them and Jesus said: Leave the children to come to me for to them belongs the kingdom of God. Thereafter the evangelist says, "We accept ..... [mentions the child's name]. May you grow up in this church and stand for the truth". Then the evangelist and the whole congregation recite *Isityhilo*. Thereafter the evangelist

takes the child to the clergy seated on the rostrum who each take the child in his arms and kisses them with a holy kiss. Thereafter the hymn *Kumnandi ukulandela uYesu* (It is good to follow Jesus) is sung.

(12) Thanksgiving for the petitions of the saints

(13) Ordination

The ordination of elders happened on days 5 and 7, and it was done in quite a dramatic fashion, especially with the second candidate on Day Seven.

*Act of appointment:* As the thanksgiving for the petitions of the saints comes to an end two elders go to stand each at one of the two entrances of the church building. After giving thanks for the petitions of the saints the bishop almost whispers a name and signals to the evangelists and elders who get up from their places on the rostrum immediately and go to the pew to fetch the deacon whose name was mentioned by the bishop. Judging by the expression on his face it is clear that the deacon is totally bewildered and taken by surprise. He tries to resist, physically, as if fighting for dear life, while he is literally ejected from his seat and forcibly dragged, almost kicking and screaming, to the front. There is excitement, bewilderment, interest, and animated but quiet discussion in the congregation. The atmosphere is charged with expectation and apparent pleasure at the events that are unfolding. I am totally flabbergasted.

*Rite of ordination:* The reluctant candidate is brought to the front and made to sit on a chair in front of the bishop, on the lower platform of the rostrum. The bishop *imposes his hands* on the deacon's head while the elders and evangelists who are all standing around the ordinand stretch out their hands on him. The bishop pronounces the following words, three times, in a deliberate, slow, distinct and yet prayerful manner, '*Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me? Feed my sheep*'. By this time the ordinand, though still breathing heavily and shaking, seems to have completely succumbed to his lot. After the bishop's threefold pronouncement *Isityhilo* is recited by the whole congregation, with their hands thrust forward and the palms facing upward.

Thereafter the newly ordained person is helped up by the bishop and he goes to sit on the rostrum with the rest of the clergy, but he sits right at the end of the line,

indicating his rank of being the most junior. As he goes to his place the bishop addresses himself to the congregation in a proclamatory manner, "This is an elder of Israel" (*Ngumdala woSirayeli lo*). Thereafter the bishop goes back to his place. The whole congregation then stands up to sing the hymn *If God be for us who can be against us*.

The other two candidates, one of whom was appointed and ordained on Day Five and the other one on Day Seven, did not resist their appointment, but went along rather meekly with the proceedings<sup>4</sup>.

(14) Concluding prayer

(15) Announcements

(16) Offering

The *Pass-over hymn* which is accompanied by the paschal dance is sung during the offering. The bishop, followed by the evangelists and elders leads the single file march to the main entrance and then comes again to the front where a table has been placed in the centre aisle in front of the rostrum. Money is placed on the table to the rhythm and the emphasis points of the Passover hymn. The Passover hymn continues for quite a long time as people put their offerings on the table. The dancing continues unabatedly and the people are perspiring heavily as they dance, being absolutely involved in the dance, as though nothing else exists. The outside world is totally shut out.

(17) Recessional march

I am informed that the march signifies the Israelites being freed from Egypt. It is also spoken of as resembling the horses of Pharaoh (*baxelisa amahashe kaFaro*) getting stuck in the mud.

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<sup>4</sup> This rite of appointment and ordination will no doubt raise a number of interesting questions with respect to the understanding and meaning of vocation, ministry and leadership in the *Church of God and Saints of Christ*. But since this investigation has soteriology as its focus I shall resist the temptation to indulge in these questions.

(18) Arranging of ribbons

The *arranging of ribbons* (*Ukuhlelwa kwamaqhuzu*), consisting of number of formations in various stages, was done only on Day Three and Day Four, to the singing of the Passover hymn and the performance of the paschal dance. On inquiring what the ordering of the ribbons is about I was informed that it is based on the order of march in Numbers 10,11-28. The ribbons being referred to consist of different colours, with each age group wearing a ribbon of a specific colour on top of the left shoulder. The colour coding of the ribbons marks out the difference in the socio-religious status as follows:

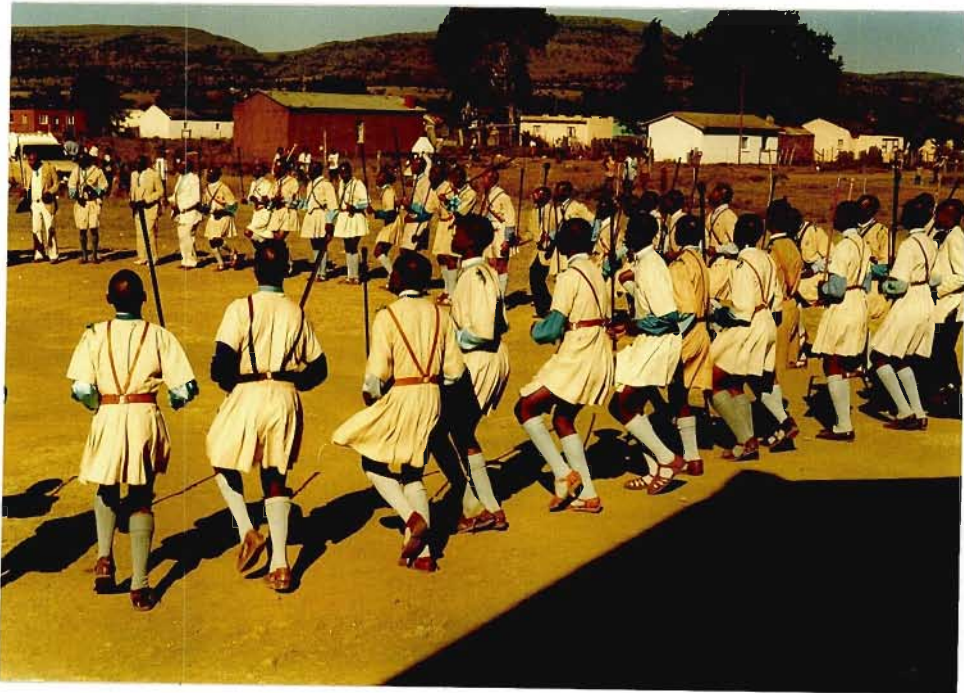
Green - unmarried

Yellow - married

Purple - old men and old women (over sixties)

White - children not yet baptised

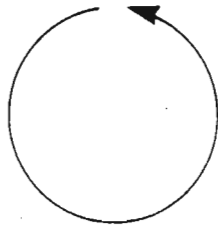
*Young 'sons of the Prophet' dressed in the 'attire of blood' getting into formation for the arranging of ribbons.*



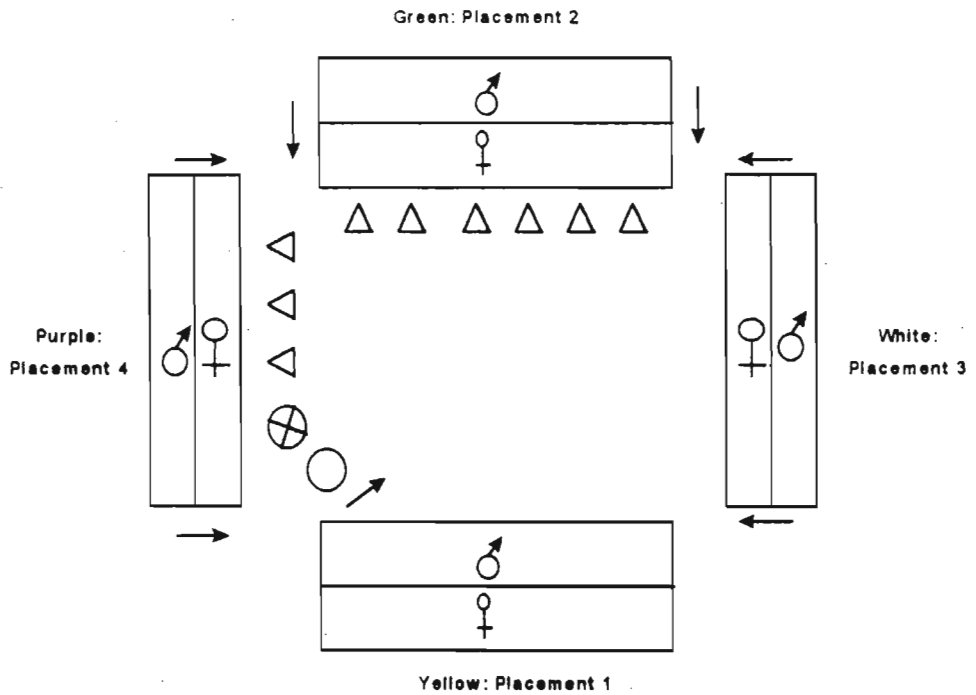
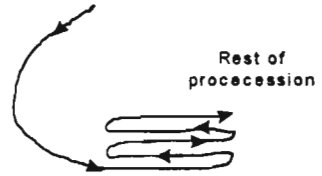
The *arranging of ribbons* according to rank, age, gender, and marital status happens in four stages of placement, with each placement corresponding to a specific colour code. *Figure 6* below illustrates the order and the four stages in which the ribbons are placed as well as the final formation.

Figure 6. The arrangement and placement of ribbons

Movement 1. Marching around in a circle  
three times



Movement 2. Beginning of placements



- ♀ = Female
  - ♂ = Males
  - = Direction faced
  - △ = Clergy
  - ⊗ = Bishop
  - = Grandmother Sarah: Placement 6
- ← Placement 5

### 7.3.3 Evening service and night prayer

The dress code for the evening service and night prayer is 'free' and the liturgy has the following order, quite similar to the early morning service:

- (1) Gathering
- (2) Entrance
- (3) Opening
- (4) Preface before reading
- (5) Scripture reading
- (6) Homily
- (7) Conclusion
- (8) Announcements
- (9) Recessional march
- (10) Night prayer

The night prayer is the last prayer of the day and the people do not pray at home before they sleep. After marching outside the people come into the church where all the benches have been pushed to the sides against the wall and are stacked on top of each other. The people form an oval shape consisting of two rows. The elders, deacons, trustees and other leaders form the inner row while the women and children form the outer row.

The hymn *Thixo akunangqaleko* (God you have no beginning) is sung while the people get into formation. When the formation is completed the Lord's Prayer is recited in the usual fashion. Thereafter the benediction, based on Jude 1,24-25, is pronounced. Then another *umbongo* is sung as the people go around the formation and shake hands with each other. As the shaking of hands proceeds it eventually 'pushes' the men to the outer row. The shaking of hands continues and the women and children are again 'pushed' into the outer row. Thereafter all depart. I shall attempt to consider the signification of the key performative aspects of the Passover towards the end of this chapter. Now I move to *Part II* to consider how the homiletic message and petitionary responses over the different moments in the festival shape and constitute the soteriology of the *Church of God and Saints of Christ*.

## PART II

The Passover is spoken of as a horsedrawn cart which is being loaded with the requests and prayers of the saints (the *Israelite* pilgrims). In this part I intend to focus on two things, viz. on the load that the cart is carrying, and on the manner in which the cart is being loaded. In other words I shall deal with what is said i.e. the homiletic and petitionary content, and on what is done, viz. the performatives. The first part of this content, the homily, is proclaimed by an ordained person, either the bishop, or an elder or an evangelist. It is the prerogative of the preacher, appointed by the bishop a few moments before the time of the reading, to choose any Old Testament reading which directly recounts the narrative of *pesach*, the dramatic liberation from Egypt, and the hazardous and eventful journey to the land of promise.

The second part of this content consists of what are called 'the petitions of the saints' (*izithandazo zabangcwele*) which are offered by the laity, mainly women. As will be clear from the rudimentary typology I have developed below, the petitions are an opportunity for the pilgrims to lay bare their souls, sometimes linking themselves directly to the homiletic message, while at other times this link is implicit, and in other instances there is no evident link between the petitions and the theme which is called 'the word of the day'. Another important component of the content is the preface to the petitions which is led by *ummeli bungqina* (the leader of testimonies), a trustee. This petitionary preface forms the bridge between the reading and the homily on one hand, and the petitions of the pilgrims on the other. In the preface *ummeli bungqina* briefly amplifies and echoes 'the word of the day', setting the tone for the petitions. Lastly, I shall look at two major ritual performatives, viz. the paschal meal which ritually inaugurates the Passover festival, and the paschal dance which constitutes the bodily articulation of the Passover experience, expressing an inner conviction.

#### **7.4 Days 1 -2: the straw mat is unrolled**

I have decided to divide the seven days of the Passover festival into three liturgico-ritual moments. This division is based on the dramatic change in the dress code, called *isinxibo*, during the main service, the service of Holy Communion, because apart from this, as we saw in *Part I*, the main services are *mutatis mutandis* quite similar. One of the very striking features of African christianity is the great emphasis and value that is placed on the dress code during religious rituals and liturgical rites. This is equally true for the so-called mainline churches and for the African Independent Churches, both the Ethiopian and Zionist varieties. But why is the dress code so important?

It is because dressing is like reading or composing a literary text. There is a grammar of dress and it enables groups to convert clothing items into clothing structures and meanings. A specific feature of clothing has meaning because it is seen as part of a whole cluster of meanings (Connerton 1989:11-12). Larlham (1985:32) notes that the dress code amongst the Zionists serves the function of identification and unification. It excludes the outside world; separates members from non-members; binds together a community of individuals; allies the individual church with the larger Zionist community; is an attestation to the faith and goodwill between members; is a means of security distinguishing insiders from outsiders; mirrors the pride and mutual respect of participants. Amongst *AmaNazaretha* of I. Shembe the "attention to dress becomes a public expression of the individual's commitment and strength of belief, and en masse the dancers express a corporate power. Accuracy of detail in dress code is a reaffirmation of belief expressed publicly at annual festivals." *AmaNazaretha* perform their dances during festivals in the open space. Their dress code serves to transform this open space "into a special or sacred place, the church" (1985:41).

##### **7.4.1 Dress code**

The dress code for the service of Holy Communion for days 1 and 2 is called *voile* and consists of the following:

*Womenfolk*: Blue blouses with white stiff round collars; brown ties; brown skirts; blue head ribbons; black shoes; brown stockings.

*Menfolk:* Black or brown shoes; socks mostly black but some are differently coloured; brown trousers; brown *imithika* (knee-length overcoats); white wing-collar shirts; black ties. The bishop, evangelists, and elders have black velvet stoles slung across over the right shoulder and pinned together under the lower part of the left arm.

*Pilgrims dressed in 'voile' and dancing the paschal dance to the singing of the Passover hymn.*



In addition, the bishop, evangelists, and elders have differently coloured rosettes with hanging ribbon tassels of different lengths pinned to the left lapels of their *imithika*. The bishop's rosette has seven colours and the seven hanging ribbon tassels in the same colours reach the ankles. The seven colours are red, blue, purple, brown, green, cream/white, yellow. The evangelists' rosettes are in six colours with their hanging ribbon tassels going only as far as the knee. In comparison to the bishop the colour that is left out is red. The elders' rosettes are in four colours with the hanging ribbon tassels going only as far as the waist. The four colours are yellow, green, brown and white (red, purple, and blue have been left out). It is quite striking how the rosettes' colours and their tassel lengths mark out the difference in rank, hierarchy, and power amongst the clergy. I turn now to consider the tone the bishop set for the Passover.

#### 7.4.2 "May God hide us"

The first of the homilies of the main services is based on Exodus 19 and is delivered by the bishop who describes his task as that of unrolling the straw mat (*ukondlala ikhuko*) so that the people can come and walk on it, i.e. speak with God. During the time of Mgijima an observer noted that "[C]lose to the platform a straw mat was placed and on this the preacher walked back and forth during the sermon" (In Edgar 1977:104). But presently there is no physical straw mat, the bishop's reference is clearly figurative. The bishop's homily continues:

The people (Israelites) were forced to cut grass and mix it with clay to make bricks. They had to work hard. God spoke with Moses and sent him to Pharaoh to release God's people so that they could worship God. 'You saw how I carried you as an eagle'. The people said to Moses, 'We have heard what God says. We shall do as God says'. God promised to hide them (*uzakubafihla*). May God hide us.

Let us go up the mountain. There is a mountain where God meets with men. Let us not sit at home. Keep this Passover holy. Wash your clothes. Do not walk with dirty things within (you). These dirty things will cause you harm. Shake off (*vuthululani*) all those dirty things within you.

The primary motif in terms of the soteriological intent of the homily is based on the metaphoric utterance in verse 4, '*being carried on eagle's wings*'. Interestingly, the preacher quotes this metaphor after he has graphically described the hard work that the Israelites were subjected to. The metaphoric utterance follows immediately after Moses had been tasked to approach Pharaoh and to demand the release of the Israelites. The preacher stresses that the objective of the liberatory act was so that Israelites could worship God. In other words, the liberatory act is God-initiated and God-oriented - the Israelites are freed by God and for God. The clue that we get for the meaning of the metaphoric utterance is that God promised to hide them. In this instance the Xhosa word for 'hiding' also connotes protection. This is exactly what the preacher requests, though what it is that they are to be hidden and protected from is not explicitated. This notwithstanding, being hidden and being protected forms both the content and vehicle of God's salvific action.

The second part of the homily consists of an injunction, also articulated metaphorically in terms of verse 10 as a demand to '*wash your clothes*'. This is linked to keeping the Passover holy and shaking off the dirty things within. What

is striking here is that though the verse clearly refers to outward objects, the preacher stresses an inward reality. There is thus a parallelism obtaining in the second part of the sermon. The first part of the parallelism is divinely authored and externally directed, 'wash your clothes', and the second part is human originated and internally directed, 'shake off all those dirty things within (you)'.

It is important to underscore that the sermon was indeed a dynamic and interactive speech act, not only in terms of what the preacher said and did but also in terms of the response from the congregation. When the preacher (the bishop) reached the injunctory part of the homily he was no longer merely pacing up and down the platform but was literally running up and down, speaking animatedly. The hymn *Mandisinde ngawe Nkosi, undisikelele. Mandiphumle ngawe Nkosi, undithamsangelise* ("Let me be saved through you Lord, and bless me. Let me rest through you Lord, and fill me with good fortune") was intoned and the congregation joined in enthusiastically. The preacher then calmed down and stood swaying rhythmically, facing the side entrance. As the *umbongo* was sung there was an animated commentary in the manner resembling an *imbongi* coming from Grandfather Abraham seated on the side in the corner of the rostrum facing the side entrance. I was unable to make out the words of his commentary.

Two women came to kneel on the lower platform. They were both sobbing intensely and were very emotional. The congregation joined hands at the little fingers and the bishop then prayed that the Lord will deliver them, free them from all their troubles. The prayer was concluded with the Lord's Prayer in the usual manner. Thereafter the bishop said a few concluding words and went to sit at his place on the rostrum.

As an interactive speech act the homily highlights a number of significant factors in terms of the dramatic effects of liturgical creativity. First, there is a creative use of cultural resources, such as the *imbongi*-like interjections emanating from Grandfather Abraham. What was striking about these interjections was that they did not seem to disrupt nor disturb the preacher, but fitted quite naturally with the oratorical processes at play. As a result the atmosphere was quite charged. One simply had to sit up and listen. Second, it seemed that at a certain point the congregation could no longer contain itself and the atmosphere ignited, with the congregation spontaneously breaking out into a song about salvation. Third, as if

responding to an altar call two 'daughters of Jerusalem' bring themselves forward, evidently to seek deliverance from their troubles. Apart from the response of the two women let us look at the petitions of the saints to see what soteriological views can be gleaned from them. But before I consider the petitions proper let me present a scheme which will assist us in processing these petitions.

### 7.4.3 A typology of petitions

In general the petitions of the saints can be divided into four types, viz. petitions linking themselves directly and overtly to the scripture reading and the word of the day. I shall refer to these as *direct petitions*. Then there are those petitions that do not make a direct reference to the reading and the message of the day and for the sake of convenience I shall refer to these as *general petitions*. The third type is what I would like to call *petitions of thanksgiving* because they do not so much make requests as they give thanks to God or fellow human beings for things done. The fourth group I would like to call *hymnal petitions* because in these instances the petitioners do not vocalise their request, need or intention but instead request a specific hymn. That hymns are considered to be efficacious by the *Israelites* is illustrated in the following petition:

My son bought a kombi and it was involved in an accident and one person died, not because of the accident but due to a heart failure. I thank God that not many lives were lost. Satan came to visit me three times last year as I lay ill and I managed to repel him through a hymn (*umbongo*). I heard today's word and may I not be responsible for spoiling the good things of God.  
(Petition 5 Day Four)

In this last type it is the hymns that give a hint as to the need, intention and internal disposition of the petitioner.

I do need to point out that this typology is a mere heuristic device and does not suggest that a specific petition belongs exclusively to one category and not another. As will be clear below, some of the petitions will have elements of more than one type. This weakness notwithstanding, the typology is useful in that it helps us to identify especially those petitions that directly respond to the message of the day, giving us a glimpse into how the believers interpret the reading and the message and apply it to their existential contexts. This in turn gives us a clue as to the extent of the redemptiveness and contextuality of the message.

#### 7.4.4 "This thing of Mgijima is a problem"

In setting the tone for the petitions in the petitionary preface *ummeli bungqina* asserted:

May my standing here in front not be worthless. I put the black nation, my nation, in God's trust. *Ubuntu* (humanness) has disappeared. May the young generation know how to prepare themselves (*ukuzilungiselela*). God looks on the one who is holy. We heard the reading. May God wash me and purify me. I once heard a song which says 'Remove from me this worthless heart'. God said to Moses he should come down and tell the people to wash their clothes. When the trumpet sounds may they be able to go up the mountain. God invites you to come up to the mountain so that you may be made holy. Amen.

The petitionary preface describes the situation for which salvation is warranted, viz. people have lost their humanness (*ubuntu buphelile*). *Ummeli bungqina* echoes the injunction for being washed and he links this to holiness and interprets it as purification and the removal of a worthless heart. He repeats the preacher's invitation to 'come up to the mountain' and interprets this as being made holy.

There were fourteen petitioners who offered their requests on Day one. The first petitioner, after his prophetic testimony, makes the following general petition:

I am thankful for Mgijima. God has been good to me. Though I am not well I am grateful for all the children God has given me. May I not be trouble (*mandingabi yingxaki*) to my children. May I not resist God when God comes to me. I called on you bishop. MaDlamini told me what Mgijima said and all his prophecies. I am a man of many problems (*ndiyindoda exakekileyo*). This thing of Mgijima is a problem (*Lento kaMgijima yingxaki*). I request prayers from all of you evangelist Mbayi.

The petitioner then continues and prays for his children, mentioning each one by name. He then requests that God protect these children who take care of him and further requests that he may be a man who is respectful.

What is striking about this petition and others as well, is not only its content but also the manner in which it is made. Though the petition is to God the petitioner addresses him/herself directly to the bishop and then to a specific evangelist on a one-to-one basis. It is as though God is a third party in what I would like to term a conversatory petition. The petition is like a report about the petitioner's

wellbeing, and yet it is more than a mere report. It is a cry to God from the depths of the heart that the petitioner may be ready to meet death: 'May I not resist God when God comes to me'.

The injunction to 'wash their clothes' is interpreted variously in the direct petitions. In a direct petition but which also strongly combines elements of thanksgiving one petitioner, drawing from a symbolic ritual practice, prays as follows:

I am thankful for the power of God. I thank God for keeping me, and also for the bad things. I have heard the words of the reading that we should be washed and cleansed. I went to hospital and fortunately I was not admitted. On these days of discarding the yeast may the yeast within me also be thrown out. Amen.

In this petition the petitioner displays a stoic attitude in accepting the 'bad things', the suffering, that she had to endure. Another petitioner prays: "May the husks (*amakhakakhaka*) be removed". Another direct petition is much more elaborate and links with one of Mgijima's prophecies:

When I cry aloud the Lord hears me. Genesis 6 were helpful words. May I be made holy. May my inner clothes be washed clean. I request prayer. May my ailments be taken away. I am ill. Remember me God and show mercy unto me. I am glad that I have a God who listens. All those who are saved are like maize which has been stamped. May I too be like that.

In their general petitions petitioners make requests regarding everyday needs, trials and tribulations such as the need for physical strength and general wellbeing, for deliverance from disease and illness, from violence and crime, and from the temptations of satan. What is significant about these requests is that some of the petitioners also link them directly to the message of Mgijima.

Two petitioners pray, also drawing from one of Mgijima's key metaphors of salvation. Prays the first one:

May God keep me in the cave. May I be protected from the things that almost prevented me from coming to the Passover. We are living in difficult times. May God protect me. Leave me alone Satan. I do not belong to you, I belong to God.

The second one prays, "Things are bad where we are. There is shooting and burning of houses. The other day a grenade was discovered not far from where we live. May God keep us in the cave". In this petition the petitioner asks to be delivered from the scourge of violence to which some parts of the country are still subjected. Another petition is quite striking in terms of the enthusiasm and positive response it generates from the pilgrims.

I am in the midst of happiness. I am happy today, yesterday I was also happy. I have come here to fetch a leaf (*igqabi*) so that I can show them at home. I do not have to say much. Just being here is sufficient. The world is upside down. Each one should hold on to God and not lean on others because they might fall. Amen!

The hymnal petition makes a request for *Bulelani kuYehova* ("Give thanks to God"), suggesting that the petitioner's intention is to give thanks. I move now to Day Two.

#### **7.4.5 "We are now in the desert. We left Egypt in the middle of the night"**

The scripture reading for Day Two was Numbers 16,1-34. The message of the homily was expressed as follows:

We are in the second day of the Holy Communion of the Passover. I need to say that the people of Cradock wish you leaders a happy 1995. We are now in the desert. We left Egypt in the middle of the night and God destroyed the firstborns and so Pharaoh released the Israelites. After crossing the borders of Rameses they looked back and saw the Egyptians in pursuit. Moses was instructed to lift his staff and the waters parted. At Horeb the Lord turned bitter water into sweet water. At Sinai they were given the Law. I cannot narrate the whole story of the liberation of Israel because of time.

We are in the desert. Korah and Dathan were amongst the leaders. After Moses had chosen these men he was instructed to take them up to the mountain where they met the Lord and were instructed on how to take care of the people. But now these men say to the people in a bad spirit, "What about us? Is it Moses alone who is to lead? Are we not from the house of Levi as well?" The people looked back and asked, "Were there no graves in Egypt where we might be buried?" So these men challenged Moses. And so Moses challenged them to go up the mountain with their pans of incense.

God has given us everything that is beautiful except rest (*uThixo akasinikanga ukuphumla*). God cannot give us everything that is beautiful because we might wander away from God. We have not been given rest. Go up to the tents of these cruel men. Let me tell you a story about hell. There is delicious food in hell but the forks are one metre long and so we cannot eat the nice food.

Another man said that in heaven the forks are two metres long but we can eat because we feed each other. That is heaven. There is love in heaven. That is why we are so beautiful. There is truth in heaven, there is faith. Go up to the tents of these cruel men.

It is striking how the preacher taunts the believers. As Moses challenged Dathan and his ilk so the preacher challenges them as well to 'Go up to the tents of these cruel men' and then they will see what will happen to them. This challenge can also be read as saying, "I dare you to challenge the leadership that God has put in place". It can thus be seen as a further entrenchment of established power structures and leadership and patterns.

In taking up the message of the homily *ummeli bungqina* stresses the negative consequences of rebellion against legitimate leadership. In his view those who rebel against their leaders get thin and lose weight, as opposed to those who because they do not rebel get fat and healthy. He sets himself as an example,

I have not rebelled against the Elder Sybok. I also have not rebelled against the Elder Dokoda.....Everybody look at me. I am beautiful because I am being fed on God's word. Look at me, I am beautiful indeed. It is because I am well looked after. I am not critical towards my leaders.

It is difficult to make out whether *ummeli bungqina's* assertion is figurative or literal or both. Judging from the expressions of pleasure and approval on people's faces and judging also from the appearance of *ummeli bungqina* who does indeed cut a fine and healthy figure, it would seem that his claim is both literal and figurative. This would in any event be consistent with the overall thrust of the theology of the CGSC where the line separating the literal from the figurative, the spiritual from the socio-material is very fine indeed.

On Day Two nineteen petitions were offered. In the direct petitions some of the petitioners take up the theme of rebellion. Prays one petitioner: "May I be a proud person because of the good things that I do. May I not be rebellious. May I ascend the mountain as a worthy person". Another one: "I have heard today's word. People rebel against the government of God. David asked Jonathan: 'What wrong have I done that Saul is after me?'.....I remember the rebellion of Naman and his jealousy against Modercai". Another prays in a similar vein:

I heard today's word that we must go up to the tents of the cruel men. May I

not be rebellious. I saw the fruits of jealousy in Cain and Abel. Bind us Lord with your cord of faith. May I bear the fruits of love.

Another links the petition directly to the central prophecy of Mgijima:

Our forefathers preached that this world is being destroyed. May I not be like the men mentioned in today's reading. Rebellion against leadership is not good. May I move away from a rebellious spirit and from rebellious intentions. This is my wish and my prayer.

And another one prays: "Satan is waiting like a prowling lion looking for someone to devour. May I run this race and win, and not merely finish. May I look after my heart and not be rebellious towards my leaders".

Besides these direct petitions which are directed against a rebellious attitude, the general petitions again request respite from the burdens and labours of life and what one petitioner called 'the fighting sticks of this world' (*iintonga ezibethwayo*).

Through God's mercy I am here at this Passover. Bishop, your people are taking care of me. In spite of the (painful) sticks of this world God has been good to me. The people felt the hardship and asked whether they were now to die in the desert. Noah told the people to build an ark but no one listened.

The other general requests are: prayers for children who work far from home; for the sick; for their elder who though he is as poor as they are is willing to sacrifice such a lot for them. Another petition includes a request for money.

Bishop, it was dark (*bekumnyama*). My child failed Std 10 several times but God heard me. The deacon could not be here today. I request money. May my children not take a bad example from me but follow only my good example. I pray for my child and the elder who pastors us. May there be peace wherever I am. May I have peace. Lord protect my deacon wherever he is. Protect my home. Protect Elder Rasmeni. That is my wish and my prayer.

A striking petition is one which does not fit easily in my typology of four is one which registers a complaint against a grandparent. After praying for the sick the petitioner prays:

Bishop, I am anxious (*ndixakekile*). I am afraid of the place where I am standing. My child is sick. I am anxious. When my grandfather distributed his estate my name was not mentioned. All I received were leftovers

(*imvuthuluka*). That is my prayer.

Again one is struck by the sheer down-to-earthness and the conversational yet pleading and profound nature of the petitions. The petitions of thanksgiving are: for having achieved success at school; for having survived a car accident. Another petitioner draws her inspiration from the previous day's message. She prays:

I heard the other day that we must wash our clothes. Yes, you want us to wash the clothes within us which are full of *amakhakakhaka* (husks or the useless outer layers of grains of mielies before it is stamped to be *umngqusho* [samp])....

Here we see the direct link between the homily of the previous day, the message of Mgijima that those who were saved were like grains of samp in the palm of God's hand, having been thoroughly stamped, and the existential situation of the petitioner. What is also striking in this petition are the mixed and antithetical metaphors employed by the petitioner in the same breath. The petitioner speaks of washing 'the clothes within', yet clothes are an outer reality. In the same breath she speaks of these inner clothes as having *amakhakakhaka*, an outer reality, which need to be removed. A new pertinence obtains as a result of the mixed metaphor. By implication washing and (implicitly) stamping become semantically synonymous. Though the 'clothes within' clearly refers to an internal disposition, a reality that is hidden, the fact that clothes are in actual fact really an outer reality which is observable from the outside suggests that the internal disposition being referred to is discernible from the outside. What we have here is the schematizing function of the poetic imagination *par excellence*. This extends the conclusion arrived at in Chapter Five that salvation is like being stamped. What we have as a result is a compound soteriological metaphor, viz. that salvation is like being stamped clean, within and without. I move now to consider the next liturgico-ritual moment.

### **7.5 Days 3 - 6: blood and heroes**

What makes Days 3-6 quite distinctive is the unusual attire that is worn by the menfolk in that it deviates from what is usually regarded as the norm, viz. the wearing of pants. The dress code, extraordinarily spectacular, is referred to as the *Attire of blood* (*Isinxibo segazi*), referring to the blood that was spilled during the

Bulhoek Massacre. The attire was used for the first time in the Passover held at Mchewula in 1917. Alternately it is called the *Attire of the heroes* (Isinxibo samagorha) because it was worn on the day of the Bulhoek Massacre, 24 May 1921. What is striking with *Isinxibo segazi* is that it is worn only on these four days of the festival and at no other time, not even on the festival of 24 May which commemorates the events of 1921.

*'Sons of the Prophet' dressed in the 'attire of blood'.*



*Menfolk:* Brown sandals (or shoes for those who do not have sandals); blue socks reaching just below the knees; the bishop, evangelists, and elders have blue sashes/stoles slung over the right shoulder and tied together under the left arm and have bugles slung over their left shoulders, with the same rosettes pinned on the

left side of the breast; blue neckties; blue arm sleeves; khaki-cream one piece tunic with the bottom part not having legs but resembling a pleated skirt cut above the knees; threepiece brown leather belts with one piece around the waist and tied with a buckle and two pieces slung over the shoulders and forming a V-shape at the back an X-shape in front; icons with Mgiijima's picture are pinned on the left side of the breast; ribbons of different colours are pinned on the left shoulder. It is striking that most of the ritual paraphernalia is placed the left side of the body where the heart is believed to be located.

*'Daughters of Jerusalem' dressed in their 'attire of blood'.*



*Womenfolk:* Blue rosette-like ribbons on the left side of the head (womenfolk do not cover their heads during religious services); Grandmother Sarah has a blue sash slung over the right shoulder and tied together under the left arm; khaki-cream short sleeved tops with stiff rounded white collars; blue ties with an icon with Mgiijima's image pinned in the middle; blue arm sleeves; blue belts around the waist; blue skirts stretching way beyond the knees but cut above the ankle; brown nylon stockings; white shoes (though there were others who wore differently coloured shoes); differently coloured ribbons pinned on the left shoulder.

### 7.5.1 "Be truthful that you too may enter the land of promise"

The scripture reading for Day Three was Numbers 14. In the first part of his sermon the preacher condemns the Queenstown faction of the CGSC in the following manner:

When bishop Simon Mgiijima left the temple in Queenstown that was the first time we saw something disdainful (*into ezondekayo*) within the temple. Whatever has remained in that temple are false gods.

My observation of the interaction between an elder of the Queenstown faction and another one of the Shiloh faction, both provincial civil servants but working for different departments and both holding the positions of secretary general in their respective factions, was that not only were they civil, respectful and courteous towards each other but they were indeed warm towards each other, even to the point of teasing one another. I was therefore quite surprised at the sharp and rather acrimonious tone of the preacher of the day. It was the first time that I saw these tensions being vocalised so strongly and it suggested to me that the divisions run quite deep. From my perspective it is difficult to see the connection between the condemnation, the reading, and the rest of the homiletic message. My guess is that the preacher likens the Queenstown group with those 'who have turned against God', though I fail to see the logic of this connection. The preacher then continues:

God fought on the side of the Israelites as he freed them from Egypt and now they have turned against God. These people started doubting Moses.

He immediately follows this with an admonition:

Watch out *Israel*, be careful of your mouth. Do not speak (everything) but leave some words to God lest your speaking lead others astray. The complaints of these cruel people reached God's ear and God swore vengeance: 'Their corpses will litter the desert. Those who doubt will not enter the land of promise because they rebelled against me their God. Caleb and Joshua will enter the land of promise'.

The preacher points out the things that get in the way of the salvific process. These are: mouths that run amok through complaining and doubt, which the preacher puts under the umbrella of rebellion. Put differently therefore, the salvific process

presupposes trust on the part of its subjects. God reacts quite drastically against those who question God's trustworthiness.

The preacher follows this with another admonition, formulated as a rhetorical question:

Be truthful that you too may enter the land of promise. The two men were chosen. Their children would enter the land of promise but they (those men who complained) would not. *Israel*, do you want to enter Jerusalem? Then do not doubt, do not be rebellious. Yesterday you heard what happened to the rebellious. I stop here, I want to give the petitioners enough time.

Another precondition for the completion of the salvific process is truthfulness on the part of its subjects, though the preacher does not spell out exactly what this being truthful entails. The salvific action is cut off abruptly and punitively for those who do not live up to their side of the bargain - their corpses will litter the desert. And so the preacher puts the question to the *Israelites*, and they cannot say they did not know or were never told what happens to those who are rebellious. From this it is clear that the salvific process, though it is God's initiative, is not an imposition. Those who want to be saved must fulfill certain conditions. It is on this that their salvation depends. It is interesting to note that in posing his rhetorical question the preacher uses 'Jerusalem' in reference to the *Israelites* of the CGSC whereas he had used 'the land of promise' in reference to the biblical *Israelites*.

As many as twenty one petitioners came to the front to offer their prayers on Day Three. The cue that *ummeli bungqina* gives in terms of his interpretation of the word of the day is: 'How much longer are these wicked people going to complain against me?' In taking the cue from *ummeli bungqina*, those offering direct petitions pray variously, with one petitioner uttering the following words:

I have heard today's word and I request prayers. May I be satisfied with what I am and not be like those who doubt (*abakrokri*). What will God see in my heart? Will God see cruelty? May I be saved through God's angel.

What is new in the above petition in terms of salvation is the introduction of a new agent, an angel, through which salvation is brought about. This indicates that God uses all sorts of devices and mediums to effect salvation. Another petitioner also prays that she has heard the day's words and requests that she may be satisfied and

content and not doubt. In a similar breath another petitioner requests perseverance (*ukunyamezela*). Prays another one:

We were told at this service to speak but not to forget to leave some space for God. May I give God a chance. May I remove the husks (*amakhakakhaka*) from my heart.

What is striking is that this petitioner prays not that the husks (*amakhakakhaka*)<sup>5</sup> be removed by God or someone else but that she herself should remove them. Again, this confirms the view mentioned earlier that the salvific process depends to a large extent on what the individual is willing and prepared to do. It comes about through the individual's initiative as much as it is the initiative of God. In other words, she asks that she should take the initiative to stamp her own heart. Two petitioners link the message of the day directly to their own predicament as well as to Mgijima's prophecy of the destruction of the world. Prays the first petitioner:

May God help me in my trouble (*kwingxaki endikuyo*). I heard the word which invited us to go up the mountain and leave the cruel men behind. Today's word said that we must remove doubt (*ukukrokra*) our hearts. I am troubled (*ndixakekile*). May God give me knees to pray. I have been a member of this church for a long time. I can see that the world is being destroyed. Nothing will escape this destruction, not the fish in the sea, nor the bird in the air, nor the meercat in its hole.

The second petitioner also links her prayer to the soteriological intent of Mgijima's message:

It has been said that this world is being destroyed and not the fish in the water nor the meercat in the hole will escape. Only those in the palm of God's hand will be saved. I heard today's word. May I remove myself from the tents of the wicked. May I not complain (*mandingakrokri*). I pray for daily bread, I am unemployed. This is my prayer and my wish.

When we look closely at the second petition which is more explicit than the preceding one in terms of the petitioner's existential situation, we see that the petitioner's request is that his poverty, the lack of daily bread caused by unemployment, should not cause him to complain.

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<sup>5</sup> It is to be remembered it is through the removal of *amakhakakhaka* (husks) through the stamping process that *umngqusho* (samp) is made. It is also to be remembered that according to one of Mgijima's visions those who were saved were in the palm of God's hand like grains of maize that had been thoroughly stamped having had their husks removed.

Another petitioner also affirms that she has heard the day's word and prays:

I bring my request to this altar of Shiloh where requests are brought and answers are found.....May I not complain and doubt along the way (*mandingakhalazi endleleni, mandingakrokri*). God says we shall enter heaven by working for it. May I not have doubt.

The petitioner then quotes from Psalm 122,1-2:

'I was happy when they said let us go to God's house and now our feet are standing within your gates'. This is my wish and my prayer.

The petition above identifies Shiloh, the place of the Passover pilgrimage, as a place where requests are brought and answers are found. In another petition it is identified as a holy place which "ejects everything that is not holy, like the sea that ejects everything that does not belong within it". Another petitioner formulates her petition in the form of the message of the homily as thematised in *ummeli bungqina's* question: "How much longer are those who are complaining to be tolerated?" She then concludes her request: "May I not complain".

In terms of the second category, the general petitions, a variety of requests are offered. These are: for forgiveness for being late at church services; for forgiveness for transgressions; for strength; for employment; for docility; for a safe journey back home; to grow and be firm in faith; for sick family members; for those in prison; for children; for a son who has a monster (*irhorho* = virus) in his blood; for the youth; for wisdom; for food provisions (*umphako*) in order to be able to go up the mountain. They also ask for deliverance for themselves and family members from a host of woes, viz. from troubles (*ukuxakeka*); from unemployment; from physical ailments; and from ethnic faction fights.

In the petitions of thanksgiving pilgrims express gratitude to God and to fellow humans. One petitioner gives thanks to all the people who came to visit him and also gives thanks for the rain. Another one gives thanks that her prayer which she offered the previous year has been answered; another one gives thanks that God has kept her over the twelve months; another petition gives thanks for parents who brought her up through all the difficulties of life; another petitions offers thanks for the hospitality of their hosts. In the hymnal petitions the petitioners request *Hosanna enyangweni ndivuma ngezwi lam* (Hosanna in the highest), *Thixo*

*ndisindise* (God save me), *Endikhokela ndiyakumlandela* (I shall follow the one who leads me). I now move to Day Four.

### 7.5.2 "I shall speak that which God has planted in my mouth"

The scripture reading for Day Four was Numbers 24. In his homily the preacher commences by recapturing the messages of the previous days.

We are in the fourth day of Holy Communion. On the first day we heard the bishop say let us make ourselves holy (*masizingcwalise*) during these seven days. The word then said 'Let us go up the mountain and part company with the cruel men'. We are now approaching the turn (*sijonge edrayini*). Let each one take their horse and be ready. This is the fourth day. How many days are we left with here? Let us all make sure that we leave this place with all our troubles having been taken care of. We have come here to bathe (*siz'oqubha*). Do not be afraid to bring your requests before the Lord.

He then turns to the reading, pointing out that Balaam refused to be seduced by the things that Balak promised him and he urges the *Israelites* to do likewise, stressing that not even blood relations should be allowed to seduce one.

Balaam says, 'Watch out that you are not used by others to do harm'. Balak said that these people should be cursed. He knew that Balaam could curse like he was reading from a book. He was promised a lot of things. Do you curse, Oh house of *Israel*? How many have promised you things and offered you things so that you might stay away from the word of God? Your relations might tempt you. Is blood thicker than water? No, not when it comes to God - blood relations mean nothing. God does not want people who are constantly changing their minds (*oomalalephethuka*).

Balak found Balaam blessing the house of Israel instead of cursing them. Why do you speak like this? Why do you allow yourself to be seduced through a cup of tea?

According to the preacher it does not take only things as precious and valuable as gold to seduce one. One can be seduced through a cup of tea, something usually taken to be an expression of hospitality and therefore harmless. The preacher then points out why Balaam was able to resist Balak, pointing out in practical terms what this implies for the *Israelites*, e.g. that they should greet the enemies of their relations even if their relations expect them not to.

God turned the tongue of Balaam around. (You should say) 'Forgive me my cousin, I had to greet this person even though *you* are not on speaking terms

with them. It was God within me who said I should greet this person'. God will do great things for Israel. A star will shine and good things will come to the house of Israel. When you are a christian you must speak one thing. Do you gossip? It is God who should determine what you should say.

The preacher then concludes his homily through a story that serves to illustrate his message.

My grandmother once told me a story of two sons who tried to prevent their mother from going to church because they were ashamed and embarrassed that she was always too eager to be the first person to offer her petition in church. So they decided that they would not buy her shoes, hoping that she would not dare go to church barefoot. But she did go to church, barefoot, and as usual she was the first person to offer her petition. She prayed as usual because there was something deep within her. She spoke what God had planted in her mouth. 'I shall speak that which God has planted in my mouth'. These are the words for today.

The old lady's determination demonstrates how one is to resist the tricks and obstructive and hidden ill-intentions of blood relations. In setting the pace for the petitions, *ummeli bungqina* reiterates the word of the day as follows:

Today's word speaks to me. 'What God has planted in my mouth, that I should speak and nothing else'. Even if Balak promises silver and gold may I never go beyond God's word. Watch out for jealousy, O house of *Israel*. Come saints that we may testify under these words".

On this day no fewer than thirty six saints came forward to offer their prayers. Again, the division into four types comes in handy. The direct petitions are quite interesting in how they apply the word of the day. The first direct petition is linked to Mgijima and is expressed in the following manner:

May I too speak what God has planted in my mouth in spite of whatever gold and silver are offered to me. The Watchman preached that in these days there are many Judases. May I not be distracted on the way. Father, shake off all (unworthiness) from me (*Ndivuthulule Bawo*).

The following petition commences with thanksgiving, and proceeds to make a request related to the petitioner's illness. The petitioner then concludes her prayer: "I heard today's word and may I not be responsible for spoiling the good things of God". The next two direct petitions follow each and are quite revealing in respect of some of the things that attract people to the CGSC. The first one is offered by a middle aged neophyte:

This is my fourth day here at the Passover. The word of the sermon reached me. I come from the Methodist church. I had never heard the song of *Israel* but I was brought here through this lady. The word reached me. I feel strong, that is why I have had the courage to put my foot down on this platform, like Armstrong stepping on the moon. 'I will speak the word that God has planted in my mouth'. Ahab died because he did not listen to God. Do not be afraid to bring your troubles to be resolved at this place. If you have gossiped the walls of Jerusalem will fall on you.

The second one reveals how long the petitioner had been attracted to the CGSC and the relief she experienced when she did eventually join the church.

I request prayer for sister Mary and for my children. I am not well. My child was shot dead four years ago. I will not say it is *abathakathi* (sorcerers). It is God working in God's own way. As a child I always longed to belong to this church and I swore to myself that when I am grown up I will be a member of this church. When the ministers (*oonyawontle* = the one's with beautiful feet) entered my home the burden was lifted from my shoulder.

The petition also reveals the petitioner's struggle to come to terms with the tragic and violent death of her child. She resists the temptation to blame this on sorcery, the occult ill-intentions of people. She opts for a more traditional christian response, resigning her lot to God. But the last part of her resignation: "...in God's own way", suggests that despite this resignation she still does not understand the logic of God's workings.

The next direct petition focuses on a different aspect of the homily. The petitioner requests prayer for a person she mentions by name. This specific person is in a bigger problem (*ingxakeko*) than the petitioner. The petitioner then continues:

May I not direct the words preached here to others but may I direct them to myself. May I never curse the children of God. May I rather die than curse the children of God. Please take care of me (*Ndigcineni*).

In this the petitioner responds to the question the preacher raised in his sermon: "Do you curse, Oh house of *Israel*?" In the following direct one the petitioner uses a metaphor to express the wish for externally evident self-renewal during the Passover, directing herself to the bishop.

I too request prayer, bishop. I will be going back home and so my wish is for a safe trip. I have come here to leave my troubles. I wish I could be like a snake and shed my old skin so that others may see that I am indeed a new person. May I not be used in any conspiracy to destroy the things of God. Balak

trusted Balaam to curse. Balaam said he would speak what God has planted in his mouth. Like a deer that yearns for a running stream so I long for the Lord.

She prays that like Balaam she should not be instrumental or co-operate with those whose intentions are to destroy the things of God, and after repeating the theme for the day she concludes with Psalm 42,1. This petition is followed by one which makes the following direct reference: "The word struck me: 'Curse these people.' May God make me right(eous) (*Makandilungise uThixo*). It is not my wish to gossip about the *Church of God and Saints of Christ*." For the petitioner it is only by being made right(eous) that she will be able to resist the temptation to curse and to gossip.

The next four direct petitions are also short in terms of their reference to the word of the day. Both start off with making general requests. The one prays for the sick and the second one for strength and for a specific congregation, the third petition requests patience in dealing with her mother because "No one looks for a shade under a tree of prickly pears because it has thorns and so why should I? I feel light because I have shed all my burdens". The fourth petitioner prays for herself being the only breadwinner, for her family, especially the children. She quotes from Mgiijima's prophecy of destruction that 'not the meercat in the hole, nor the fish in the water, nor the bird in the air will escape'.

The first one concludes: "Like Balaam may I not be a tool that is used for evil and bad intentions". The other petition concludes by requesting that the congregation for which the petitioner prayed may make the words 'I shall speak the word that God has planted in my mouth' theirs as well. The third of this group of direct petitions concludes with the words of the theme 'What God has planted in my mouth, that may I speak', and the fourth one concludes: "Elder Matshoba, I heard the word. May I not lead others astray."

The indirect petitions again have a broad range of intentions and requests. These are for: children, strength, patience, forgiveness for transgressions, elders, that the petitioner may not be a bulldozer that destroys what God's church is building, for the sick, for faith, for those in trouble, for protection, for money, for truthfulness to God, for being made the object of a plot, to be exemplary. The petitions of thanksgiving are for: being kept by God, being brought here by God, the

hospitality of the people of Shiloh, having found a long lost sister. The hymnal petitions request the following hymns: *Xa umhlaba uphithizela* (When the world is in turmoil and confusion), *Yehova ndithembela kuwe mazendingaze ndidaniswe* (God, I trust in you, may I not be disappointed). I move now to consider Day Five of the festival.

### 7.5.3 "Calm down Lord from the heat of your anger"

The preacher for Day Five chose Numbers 14,1-25 as the reading for the day. After the usual introductory greeting the preacher continues:

Let us enter this fifth day of the Holy Communion of the Passover. To believers God's word is to be respected (*yimbeko*). Moses catches God out on God's own promise in that the nations would say that God did not fulfill God's promise. It would appear that God is unfaithful, God will be said to be a liar. Even as an elder myself it is not good that people find me inaccessible (*ndingafikeleki*). When Paul was asked to bring witnesses and evidence in his defence his reply was that his words were sufficient evidence and testimony.

In this first part of his homily the preacher is obviously pleased with Moses' astuteness in catching out God on God's own word, pointing out the negative results should God go back on God's promise. The preacher underscores the importance and power of the word, citing himself and Paul as examples. In what appears as a digressionary turn in the second part of the homily, the preacher refers to Mgijima's incarceration.

In the Kimberley gaol where Mgijima was incarcerated, on one morning he said to his brother (Charles) that there was poison in his breakfast. His brother's response was to pray to God to spare Enoch so that he could go back home to bind the broken. He prayed that God should take him instead and spare Enoch. And so it came to be.

This section's link to the preceding and following parts of the sermon is not immediately clear. It would appear that the preacher's intention is to demonstrate the enduring nature of God's word in that the prayer of Charles that God should spare Enoch was heard. In the third part of his homily the preacher explains the reason that prompted God to go back on God's word, causing anger on the part of God.

God changed God's mind on the way because of the complaints of the Israelites. Moses pleaded with God. Moses reminded God of God's own

promise lest the nations say, 'You freed them but you were not able to let them take possession of the land of promise'. Calm down Lord from the heat of your anger (*Yihla Yehova esihlatweni sobushushu bakho*).

The last sentence of this section, imploring God to calm down from the heat of anger, constituted the theme and refrain throughout the homily. In the next part of the sermon the preacher stresses the importance of 'speaking once', keeping to one's promise, as opposed to 'speaking twice', going back on one's word. He uses the example of Herod who had committed a sin and was forced against his inner feelings to behead John because his dignity and reputation were at stake. And so Moses managed to 'persuade' God not to 'speak twice'. And so, God's reputation remained intact. Still, God had the last last word, viz. that these people would not enter the land of promise.

Herod was forced to have John beheaded because people would say that he spoke twice (*uthethe kabini*), that he reneged on his promise. God changed God's mind because of the pleas of Moses. Calm down Lord from the heat of your anger because of your promise. And so God relented, but these people were not to take possession of the land of promise. Do not be one who starts trouble and leave it unresolved (*umaphembeshiya*). Herod's heart was sore for John the Baptist but he had to put him in gaol. John had reprimanded Herod because what he did was sinful in God's house. Calm down Lord from the heat of your anger.

The preacher then addresses himself directly to the 'daughters of Jerusalem', reiterating the fact of God's steadfastness, and inviting them to take up the theme and to add their voices to the plea to God to calm down. The preacher encourages them not to despair because of the difficulties of life because God does not change God's mind.

Dear mothers, God does not change God's mind. Even if you have had a difficult life God does not change God's mind. Come forward and say, 'Calm down Lord from the heat of your anger'.

The striking thing with the preacher's words of encouragement, which he bases on the fact that God does not change 'his' mind, is that the passage he had chosen for the day demonstrates the exact opposite, viz. that God does indeed change 'his' mind. It seems to me that this apparent contradiction is resolved through the very invitation that the preacher extends to the daughters of Jerusalem. The fact of God not changing 'his' mind depends on the pleas of those who have displeased God through their complaints - those who have fanned the heat of God's anger.

The petitionary preface also picks up the theme. Announces *ummeli bungqina*:

Moses pleaded with God in case the nations say God has reneged on God's promise. 'These are the people of the promise and so calm down Lord from the heat of your anger'. Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh distanced themselves from those who complained.

On this fifth day fifteen petitioners took up the invitation to come forward, though it was only three who explicitly added their pleas to calm the heat of God's anger. In the first of these direct petitions the petitioner pleads with God not to be angry with her family. She first requests prayers for her illness, for her troubles, and for her children and then continues: "Today's word: 'Calm down Lord from the heat of your anger' I direct towards my family. May God not be angry with my family". The second direct petition, which includes general elements as well as elements of praise and thanksgiving, is expressed in the most beautiful and edifying poetic formulation as follows:

I stand before the face of God and am thankful. God you are great. You are the King of kings. You are alpha and omega. You are my father. I stand here so that I may shake off (*ndivuthulule*) all things at this place. I no longer know my home because I now work for the flesh (*ndisebenzela inyama*). May I not forget that this flesh will decay in the earth. I request a safe journey. I am a trustee but am I really to be trusted? I was first called a saint, which I still am, but am I holy? May salvation come to me as it came to Zaccheus. May I come down from the tree. Even God came down from the heat of 'his' anger. Who am I not to come down from the tree? This is my wish and my prayer.

Apart from praise and thanksgiving, the petition is also a moment for self-examination and spiritual introspection. The petitioner examines himself against the standards inherent in his religious titles and sacred designations: as a trustee does he really live up to the standards of trustworthiness? As a saint does he really live up to the standards of saintliness and holiness? The poetic beauty and impact of the Xhosa juxtaposition of 'saint' and 'holy', "...*ndiyingcwele.....ingaba ndingcwele?*" gets lost in the English equivalents. In an analogous way the petitioner likens his predicament to that of Zaccheus. The answer to his predicament is modelled on the one which resolved the predicament of Zaccheus: he must come down from the tree. This is the precondition and assurance for salvation. But more than anything, the efficacy of the act of coming down from the tree is premised not so much on the example of Zaccheus but on the analogous example of God who came down from the heat of 'his' anger. Again, the Xhosa

poetic impact where the same word *yihla* is used as a play between 'calm down' and 'come down' loses some of its power and beauty in the English rendition. The petitioner makes a play of the metaphor of 'coming down' - the sinner coming down from the tree to be saved and God calming down from the heat of 'his' anger to save. In both instances the outcome of 'coming down' is the salvation of sinners.

The next direct petition, also including thanksgiving and general elements, is expressed in the following manner:

I thank God for protecting me from all troubles in Johannesburg. I pray for Tabernacle #14 (Johannesburg congregation), a weak tabernacle. May God strengthen us in this troubled part of the country (...*kwilizwe elixakekileyo*). I too heard the word which said 'Calm down Lord from the heat of your anger and do not destroy this place'. May you calm the heat of your anger towards my family. Forgive them their wrongdoings. I request prayer for my family, especially my parents. May God never abandon them even when they are poor and in tatters (...*nokuba badlakadlaka*).

This direct petition is quite interesting in terms of its soteriological thrust. The section of the petition which draws from the theme is linked in the same sentence to the prophecy of Mgijima that God is destroying the world. In her plea to God to calm down the petitioner places her family in the line of salvation. Forgiveness of wrongdoings constitutes the first salvific mechanism. The second salvific mechanism is constituted in God not abandoning her parents despite their extremely precarious socio-material condition - a condition of abject poverty (*badlakadlaka*).

As usual, the indirect petitions are quite broad-ranging. The petitioners make requests for the sick; for those who are unemployed; for the church elders; for children; for sepcific congregations; for forgiveness of sins; for money; against the temptation of satan; for strength in the midst of trouble. The petitions of thanksgiving are: for an unspecified reason; for being able to participate in at least five out of the seven days of the Passover; for being able to take part in the Passover festival this year. The hymnal petitions request the following hymns: 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven'; *Ndiyakuthemba ngobomi bam* (I trust you with my life); and *Bulelani kuYehova kuba elungile* (Give thanks to God for 'he' is good). Let me now consider the last day in this second liturgico-ritual moment.

#### 7.5.4 "Get rid of your bag quietly"

The scripture reading for Day Six was taken from Numbers 31,1-12. In his testimony before the reading the preacher declares that his intention is to console the pilgrims since they have already been sufficiently beaten. Unlike the practice of the preceding days the preacher on this day did not announce a clear message or word of the day. In the first part of the homily the preacher recounts the events of the destruction of the Midianites as follows:

We read these words spoken by God to 'his' servant, Moses. The instruction is to revenge against the Midianites and then Moses is to die. The Midianites are the people where Moses got his wife. Moses gathered twelve thousand men and sent them to kill the Midianites. The family of Israel went to war and killed all the men, kings, and including Balaam. Remember Balaam was sent to curse the Israelites and he did not curse them because they are a people of good fortune (*bangabantu bethamsanqa*). Get rid of your bag quietly (*nyengeza i-habersak yakho*) as Balaam did and he did not curse but blessed instead. You do not have to tell anyone that you are quietly getting rid of you baggage.

When the Midianites were preparing for war so did Balaam. He prepared to go to war against the Israelites who were astounded because the other day gracious words fell from his lips. Now he has turned round.

Amongst the things that stand out in this part of the homily is the unflinching resolution exacting vengeance. First, the fact that the Midianites are the very people from whom Moses got his wife will not serve as a mitigating factor. They are to be killed. Second, even Balaam, the very one who refused to curse the Israelites at the behest of Balak, suffers the same fate as the enemies of Israel. The fact that he blessed them instead of cursing them does also not serve as a mitigating factor. The Israelites kill him because the good work he did in their favour is overridden and undone by his turning round.

The preacher urges the pilgrims to follow the example of the first act of Balaam by quietly getting rid of their bags. The metaphor of quietly getting rid of one's bag seems to indicate the rejection of a collective of evil intentions which one carries with them in their hearts, likened in this instance to Balaam's refusal to curse the Israelites. The second part of the homily is devoted to the end of the life of Moses, events which strictly do not feature prominently in the day's reading.

Moses fell on his face and pleaded with God that God raise another man to

take over from him. God told him not to be anxious because Joshua was the one who was to cross with the Israelites. He was to stretch out his hand over him. Moses saw the land of promise but did not enter it. He died, this obedient servant of God. Moses was buried by angels and so no one saw his grave.

The preacher then addresses words of exhortation to the pilgrims, ending with reference to Moses who seeks salvation through God.

Humble yourself Israel (*lulama Sirayeli*) that God may show mercy to you. Be loving because without love you cannot have the spirit of perseverance (*umoya wokunyamezela*). Moses was heard saying 'Let me be saved through you Lord (*mandisinde ngawe Nkosi*)'.

The preacher then requests the hymn *Bulelani kuYehova kuba elungile* (Give thanks to God for 'he' is good). The congregation complies and when the hymn is finished the preacher continues, directing himself to the bishop in what appears to be a report on the performance of the elder who pastors them.

Bishop, I am here standing for the elders of *Israel* who are here with their flock. Some of the flock are widows, others are orphans and the elders look after all of them. I offer prayer for them. We have this elder in Cradock, elder Dokoda. He takes care of everyone. He works hard. You have given us a gift. I am not jealous. If a person does good then they do good. I have not noticed anything wrong in what he does. If others complain I on my part find no fault in him. With these words I bind also the other elders who are here.

*Ummeli bungqina's* petitionary preface picks up on the about turn of Balaam and proceeds to announce the coming of the Son of God and the nature of the rule that he brings.

I heard today's word. Balaam is there, he has joined the enemies of the people of God, forgetting what he had done and said. May I not say this today and tomorrow say something else. The Son of God is coming. He does not rule as the sons of men do. He has not brought democracy. He has not brought socialism. He has not brought apartheid. No, he brings theocracy, God's full reign (*ulawulo lukaThixo olupheleleyo*).

*Ummeli bungqina* actually uses the English word 'theocracy' to describe what he sees as the radically different nature of the rule brought by the Son of God. It is clear that as far as he is concerned the other forms of government devised by 'the sons of men' are inappropriate and all fall short. What it is that they fall short of is not specified. Also, *ummeli bungqina* does not specify the timing of the arrival of

the Son of God nor does he explicate the notion of theocracy, God's full reign. What is clear though is that this reign will achieve what even democracy and socialism are unable to achieve. Apart from referring to the undesirability of Balaam's about-turn, *ummeli bungqina* gives no clear indication as to the word under which the petitioners are to offer their prayers. Maybe it is not surprising therefore that out of the twelve petitioners who came forward to offer their requests only one made a direct reference to the homily:

I thank God for keeping me well during these six days of the Passover because I was not well in Cape Town. I request prayer and a safe trip back to Cape Town. May God protect my family.

The word today spoke about God's revenge against the Midianites. I pray for my elder and trustees. I pray for the daughters of Jerusalem over who I have been placed. May they encourage me when I get weak and tired. God hear my prayer as I cry. I pray for a sign bishop. I pray for the people that I look after and for the white people for whom I work. This is my prayer and my wish.

The reference to the homily, appearing in the middle of this petition, seems quite coincidental in that it is apparently unrelated to both what precedes and follows it. There appears to be no effort at interpreting or applying the words of the homily to the petitioner's existential situation. Only one petitioner requested a hymn (the title of which I was unable to identify). The only two petitions of thanksgiving are to God for having kept the petitioner well during these six days of the Passover and the second one is similar but includes the petitioner's parents and sisters. The rest of the petitions are general, making a variety of requests, not substantively different from the general requests of the preceding days. I proceed now to consider Day Seven, the last day of the Passover festival.

### **7.6 Day Seven: the straw mat is rolled up**

The dress code for this day when the straw mat is rolled up is called the *white suit* and is absolutely exquisite, giving the impression of members of an exclusive upmarket social or country club in some exotic tropical island, with rolling white beaches and a dazzling white surf.

*Menfolk:* Cream/white three-piece suit (long pants, waistcoat, jacket), white wing collar shirt or clerical-type stiff round collar shirts for the clerics, blue neckties, blue socks, differently coloured shoes (black, brown or white).

*The clergy dressed in the 'white suit', standing on the upper platform of the rostrum, in the order of seniority. The bishop, the most senior person, stands in the left hand corner.*



*Womenfolk: White satin stiff roundneck blouses, blue belts, white satin skirts (cut halfway between the knee and the ankle), blue neckties, blue head ribbons, nylon stockings, white shoes.*

*'Sons of the Prophet' and 'daughters of Jerusalem' dressed in the 'white suit' perform the paschal dance.*



The preacher of this last day deviates from the reading pattern of the preceding days and chooses instead to read Joshua 24,14-28. His homily is short and to the point because, as he puts it, his task is only to mark the road since the preaching has already been done. The preacher's task of marking the road is akin to that of Joshua and Celeb and the prophets who pointed the way, showing the Israelites the right direction. As he puts it:

Mine is only to put markings on the road, bishop. The preaching has already been done. There are doctors here, point out your ailment that they might cure you. Do not point to the shin if the ailment is somewhere else. Be exact. Joshua and Celeb pointed the way. Today Joshua asks the people to choose who they will serve, the gods of their ancestors or the One who brought them out of Egypt. They on their part chose to serve God who brought them out of Egypt. And so Joshua took a stone and wrote that it might be a witness to their promise. God was gracious and gave us the prophets to show the way. Choose then today who you will serve.

It is clear from the challenge presented to the pilgrims at the end of the homily that the preacher's intention is to tie all loose ends, bringing the week's proceedings to a well-rounded conclusion. In the first part of the sermon there is a sense of urgency in the preacher's emphasis on the need to be precise when pointing out one's ailment. This is the last chance for those who still feel unwell. The preacher affirms the therapeutic effects of the Passover pilgrimage.

In the second part of the homily the preacher recaptures the main events narrated in the reading, highlighting Joshua's fundamental option. It is this option that is put in front of the Israelites. In making their choice they are helped along through a reminder of God's saving act, viz. that it is to God that they owe their liberation from Egypt. They opt to serve God, a promise which is recorded and witnessed to by a stone, a dead and inanimate object which will come to life to speak out against them, defying all the laws of nature, should they go back on their promise. The preacher puts in front of the *Israelites* today the same challenge that Joshua presented to the Israelites then: choose then today who you will serve. As they leave the pilgrims are urged to make their own fundamental option.

In the petitionary preface *ummeli bungqina* picks up the preacher's challenge. In the first part of the preface he relates the profound effect of the festival on him, linking it to the message of Crowdy and Mgijima:

The words that God is destroying the world announced by the two prophets were spoken to our forefathers. I was intending to leave and go back to work on Monday but when the fighting sticks clashed (*xa iintonga bezibethwa*) on this platform I felt healed and I told myself I shall see the white people at my place of employment whenever I get back there. Let them wait.

*Ummeli bungqina* then proceeds to set the pace in terms of the challenge of the homily:

So Joshua told the Israelites to choose which god they were going to serve. Let us get up and choose for ourselves the god we wish to serve. Let us come forward onto the platform and request strength for ourselves that we might not complain and murmur against God on our way, that God may strengthen us.

On this day twenty two pilgrims came forward to 'step on the straw mat' for the last time before it is finally rolled up. The petitioners enthusiastically take up the preacher's first challenge and invitation to point out their ailments. In the first direct petition the petitioner makes a request for a woman leader, sister Mary, who is quite ill and then concludes: "Joshua tells us to choose which god to serve, to choose the God of life. That is my wish and my prayer". The next direct petition is connected to requests for family, neighbours, daughters of Jerusalem at a specific tabernacle; for the evangelist and elder who take care of them; that God might make the petitioner holy and cleanse her heart. Midway through the petition she asserts that she has heard the day's word, may she choose to serve God. She concludes with the declaration: "Jesus is my cave (*uliliwa lam*), my fortress (*inqaba yam*)". The reference to Jesus as the cave is a clear link to Mgijima who had preached that he had been sent to herd God's sheep into a cave for there was a great hailstorm coming<sup>6</sup>.

In the third direct petition the petitioner makes her fundamental option as follows: "I too heard today's word. Joshua and his household chose to serve God. I too choose to serve God". The next direct petition is a response both to the preacher's invitation to come forward on this last day to be cured as well as to the injunction to make a fundamental option:

I had not intended to come forward today but since it is the last day I thought

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<sup>6</sup> The reference to Jesus as fortress can be linked to another Xhosa prophet, Ntsikana of Gabha, who lived during the time of the frontier wars between the Xhosa and the colonists, and who preached that God was the only true protection and place of refuge.

I should. I request prayer that I may make myself holy (*mandizingcwalise*) wherever I am. I also pray for the heathens, the foreigners for whom I work. They are just and fair to me.

How can I make a false god for myself? Joshua says we are to choose God. I want you God, I search for you (*ndiyakuphuthaphutha*).

The petitioner then requests that God might remove this thing (she does not specify it) from her. She then makes a request for her son who had to abandon his university studies, as well as for her daughter. In the next direct petition the petitioner does not explicitly make her fundamental option. Instead, she refers to the admonition of the preceding days: "I heard today's word where Joshua son of Nun put a choice before the Israelites. We were told to wash our clothes".

As usual, the indirect petitions are quite varied in their intentions and requests. These are: for a sick child; for truth, strength, faith and love; for protection on the way home; for a group of children who are mentally retarded; for the petitioner's child who has been killed; for an elder; "for strength to work for God because faith without works is dead"; that a child may find employment; for mercy from God; for a parent.

The petitions of thanksgiving are offered for: being able to participate in the last day of the Passover; rain; health and wellbeing. One petitioner formulates her petition of thanksgiving as follows:

I wish to give thanks to God for the things that God has done for me, for bringing me here, for the place where I was accommodated, for my hosts who are mere children but they were like my own children. I am happy. May God bless them. I give thanks for the words that have been preached at this Passover. The rest is now up to me. I pray for a safe trip.

The last two petitions of thanksgiving are for the beautiful Passover and for the beautiful words. Three hymnal petitions are offered, requesting *Yehova ndithi ndithembele kuwe, mandingaze ndidaniswe* (God, I trust in you, may I not be disappointed), and two others which I was unable to identify.

At the end of the petitions the bishop rolls up the straw mat with the following words giving thanks for the petitions of the saints, beginning with the usual introductory greeting and prophetic testimony:

I testify under the spirit of prophecy and not that of eldership. There are people who testify under the name of their cousin. But I wish to testify under the spirit of prophecy. We heard the other day how the elder said we try to please people. I did not sleep well last night. I am troubled. I do not know whether there is something I left undone. I shall release you all. We had a beautiful Passover. Draw! Draw! (*Yikha! Yikha!*). These people do not belong to anyone but God.

I give thanks for the petitions as I roll up this mat. The son of man wrote and took a stone so that it can bear testimony to their promise to choose God so that if tomorrow they do something different the stone should speak out.

He then bids them farewell:

Go well. Let me know that you have travelled well. Let your words be '*Yehova ndithembela kuwe* (God I trust in you)'.

An *umbongo* of the same title is sung and the whole congregation stands up. As it is sung the bishop paces up and down on the platform. A number of women have come to the front and are kneeling on the lower platform with their heads bowed down. They are all weeping and sobbing, some silently and others quite loudly. The singing becomes more and more animated but still dignified.

The singing then stops and the people form a human chain by joining hands at the little fingers. The bishop then prays for the sobbing women who are still kneeling in front. He then begs God to listen to their cries. He asserts that God knows what their needs are and implores God to hear their cry. The bishop then says "Get up, daughters of *Israel*. God has heard your prayers." The bishop then starts the Lord's Prayer which all recite in the usual manner. Thereafter the women go back to their places in the pews. On this high note the proclaimed word of the Passover is brought to a final and well-rounded conclusion. I move now to pull together the various soteriological strands emanating from the paschal discourse and the accompanying bodily practices and ritual performances.

### **7.7 A contextual *pesach***

In the introduction to this chapter I intimated that because of its centrality in the life of the CGSC the Passover shapes and influences the soteriology of the CGSC and in this way it provides the hermeneutic key to understanding its soteriology. But what shape has this soteriology taken and how does it find expression? A

number of very powerful images present themselves as a result of the paschal discourse employed by both the clergy and laity, thereby painting a very vivid and striking picture on this very broad canvass of salvation. The first of these very potent images pertains to the identity of Shiloh, the place of the paschal pilgrimage. The question that arises in this regard is: what *is* this place that pilgrims leave their various places of domicile and employment for on these seven days of Abib, the first month of the *Israelite* year?

### 7.7.1 The paschal identity of Shiloh

Through the course of the year Shiloh is a very ordinary rural village, not very much unlike the surrounding villages with their monotonous routine of a people struggling to eke out a living under difficult conditions. But for the week of 13-20 in the month of Abib, a fundamental transformation takes place. The village becomes a hive of religious activity with the colourful and friendly pilgrims adding to its natural beauty of a sprinkling of traditional round huts, looking a little lost and intimidated in the midst of over-assertive modern brick houses, of shy cattle, stray sheep and curious goats grazing in the fields nearby, of the beautiful rocky mountains in the background where *Mpondombini*, the African Sisyphus, has momentarily retired, waiting patiently for a new call to crush whoever dares to close their ears to the resounding echoes of the prophet's voice, of diminutive bushes with their long sharp thorns ready to mete out punishment on all strangers and the uninitiated, of the wonder of the windswept dongas whistling a lonely tune of overgrazing in this land that is bursting at the seams, of the pain of the panting red earth, the patched cracked soil crying for the blood of the silent paschal lambs, as hungrily as it received the crimson souls of those hundred-and-something saints on that winter day of 1921. Some very profound spiritual metamorphosis happens to Shiloh on these seven holy days.

This change, this transformation is captured most appropriately in the paschal discourse of the *Israelites*. It is captured in the language of metaphor, in the poetry of pain, suffering and deliverance employed by the pilgrims. It is expressed in the simple yet hypnotic bodily movements and dizzying formations of the paschal dance. It is captured in the red dust that rises like the smoke of sacred incense to heaven as the hundreds of feet explode the earth, punctuating their victory as they march through the dry Red Sea. It speaks in the enchanting and captivating rhythm

of the Pass-over hymn, the victory song. It is captured in the resolute and convicted faces of the sons of the prophet and the dignified frames and graceful movements of the daughters of Jerusalem. This is sacred ground, Shiloh, holy place. Here God has come to save 'his' people.

The paschal identity of Shiloh is imbued with the idea of salvation. The first image of Shiloh as the *locus* of salvation is encapsulated in various metaphors which can be grouped together thematically as *salvific waters*. The first of these is expressed by an elder who asserts in his scriptural preface: "I thank God for all that 'he' has done, for this opportunity to have my sins drowned in the pool of forgetting (*kwisiziba sokulibala*)". The second of these is expressed in the following petition: "This place, oh congregation of the east (*rhamente yasempuma*), is holy. It ejects everything that is not holy, like the sea that ejects everything that does not belong within it. Amen". Unlike the first metaphor whose outcome is the submersion of the sins, burying them deep in the bowels of the pool, this second metaphor relates a different though equally powerful outcome of the salvific action - all impurities are ejected, as in the action of the live waters of the sea, all that is unholy is spewed out, discarded into oblivion.

In the third of these aquatic images Shiloh is presented as a fountain of purification. The petitioner prays: "I have come to this fountain to be washed and purified". The potency of this metaphor lies not only in the outcome of the action but also in the depth of the source of the waters - from deep within the bowels of the earth. The last of these images is expressed in a homily where the preacher asserts: "Let us all make sure that we leave this place with all our troubles having been taken care of. We have come here to bathe (*sizo'qubha*). Do not be afraid to bring your requests before the Lord". Shiloh is a place where all who have troubles and requests can bathe them away.

There are various other images that portray the salvific identity of Shiloh on these seven days. Shiloh is spoken of as healing ground, a place where doctors abound and cures for all sorts of ailments are found. As one evangelist put it: "There are doctors here, point out your ailment that they might cure you". It is further spoken of as an altar where requests are brought and answers are found, and also as a platform where healing is effected through the clashing of fighting sticks. Lastly, Shiloh is referred to as a place where all unworthiness is shaken off, where one

leaves your troubles and sheds your burdens. Let me move now to pull together the next set of soteriological strands during these seven days of *pesach*, viz. the various images of God.

### 7.7.2 The God of salvation

Earlier on I intimated that during the Passover God comes to Shiloh in a special way to save 'his' people. But who is this God? What does this God 'look' like? In other words, how do the pilgrims see this God? What I intend to highlight in this section are the metaphorical images that are used to describe the identity of God in terms of 'his' salvific action. I am thus not interested in the traditional attributes of God as merciful, omnipotent, omniscient, etc. nor will I deal with the bland descriptions of God's salvific action. I would like to highlight the metaphoric and more colourful and graphic images of God's saving action. The first of these is a set of images I will term *corporal* in that they are derived from the body and attempt to describe God's salvific action based on specific parts of God's 'body'. The first of these corporal images is expressed by an elder in the following prayer: "We are thankful that we could be here today, we are glad that God gave us the financial strength to be here. Indeed, our God is a God with a great ear. It is a God who listens." (Opening prayer, Day 2). In this image God is presented as One with a great ear. Apart from underscoring the magnanimity of God's listening capacity this metaphor simultaneously affirms the efficacy of prayer. This can be formulated as follows: prayer is efficacious because God has a big ear. The second corporal image has its roots in the prophecies of Mgiijima and constitutes one of the dominant soteriological metaphors. In this image which I have already dealt with more extensively in Chapter Five, God saves by means of his hand - to be saved is to be in the palm of God's hand. In the last of these there is a deviation in that the 'body' of God and God's salvific action is derived from the animal world. The petitioner prays: "God protect my mother under your wing (*ngaphantsi kwephiko lakho*)" (Petition 16, Day Four). The image of God is that of a hen protecting its young, thereby attributing feminine qualities to God's salvific action.

The next set of images I will refer to as images of *artisansh* in that they are derived from the construction trade in the world of the working class and identifies God metaphorically as a builder. The preacher proclaims: "God is here to build" (Early morning service, Day Five). An opening prayer asserts: "When God

gathered the bricks and corrugated ironsheets to build this house peace and forgiveness was to be the foundation" (Evening service, Day Four). In the second of these 'artisan' images God's saving action is described as that of building a fence. The preacher proclaims: "May God fence (*asibiyele*) us with 'his' peace, we and our children, God the creator of heaven and earth and everything, and protect us the black nation, the house of *Israel*" (Early morning service, Day Seven).

In the next image the salvific identity of God is *therapeutic*, being derived from the sphere of healing and wellbeing. The speaker asserts: "God is medicine to those who are ill" (Scriptural preface, Day Four). What comes forth in this metaphor is that God comes from without and enters the body and being of the ailing believer, making them well from within. As one petitioner prayed: "I am not well but since I have arrived here I have not taken a single tablet" (Day Four, Petition 31). We can say that those who feel unwell have to drink or consume God in order to be restored to a state of health wellbeing again. I move now to consider the next group of soteriological strands as they are embedded in the various motivations for attending the Passover festival.

### **7.7.3 A people that seek salvation**

This section attempts to answer the following question: *what* is it that the pilgrims seek from this pilgrimage? Again, the answer to this question is to be found in the metaphorical language and images that believers use in their prayers, sermons, prefaces and petitions during the course of the festival. As before, some of these metaphors easily lend themselves to grouping. The first group I shall refer to as *nature* images in that they are derived from the sphere of nature. The pilgrims have come to Shiloh so that they can 'go up the mountain to meet God'. In this sense the pilgrimage can be seen as a process of ascending or as mountain-climbing. The second nature image is that people have come to the Passover so that 'God can keep them in the cave'. This image has its roots in the call of Mgijima who was tasked to drive God's sheep into a cave for there was a great hailstorm coming. Drawing from Ricoeur we can say that the new meaning or pertinence that arises out of this is that the Passover festival is a cave providing protection.

The second group I shall refer to as images of *renewal*. These images capture the

need for the renewal of the internal and external disposition of the believers. Accordingly, believers pray that they have come to the Passover 'to wash their clothes', 'to put on a new blanket', 'to discard the yeast within', 'to shake off all husks', 'to be stamped like maize', and 'to sell everything they have - all their riches'. In terms of these last two images we can say that this renewal occurs through an act of spiritual divestment and investiture on the part of the pilgrims.

The third group can be called images of *hunger and thirst* in that they depict a state of want. In the first of these a pilgrim asserts that they have come here 'to fetch food provisions (*umphako*) to carry with them on the road they are meant to travel'. In the second of this type a petitioner proclaims that she has eaten the words (of the Passover) and is filled with them. As she puts it: "I ate the words. Now I am full". In the third image it is asserted that in the eucharist the pilgrims receive 'the water of freedom which flowed from Horeb'. We can therefore say that the Passover is the satisfaction of hunger and the quenching of thirst.

The last four images are those that do not fit easily in the above groupings. The first of these emanates from the ritual of the paschal meal where pilgrims are told that in the ritual they are being prepared for 'the land into which they shall cross'. In the second one a pilgrim asserts that they have come to the Passover to bring themselves closer to God so that 'God may hear their groans'. In the third of these a petitioner prays: "Bishop, I request a key, a key that I might lock this container (*uvimba*) in which I have placed the things that I have received at this Passover" (Petition 12 Day Six). Lastly, the pilgrims have come to the festival in order 'to have their names written in the book of the saints'. All the above metaphoric utterances and images depict the state of a people in need of salvation and the spiritual dynamics, the semantic innovations, and the imaginative schemata through which the salvation sought is being realised. Having considered the language strategies and the paschal discourse of the *Israelites* I now move to make a broad outline of the strategies that the pilgrims employ in reading and interpreting the various renditions and elements of the narrative of *pesach* and the liberation from Egypt and the soteriological implications of these reading and interpretive strategies.

## 7.8 A contextual hermeneutics

To begin this section let me recount the biblical texts that were used in the course of the festival. These were: Exodus 12;19; 24; Numbers 16,1-34; 14; 24; Exodus 19,8; Joshua 14,9; Numbers 14,1-25; Exodus 34,9; Numbers 31,1-12; Numbers 14,9; 2 Chronicles 20,20; Joshua 24,14-28. Again, I need to remind the reader that the choice of these readings was 'free' in the sense that they were not prescribed according to some detailed 'mechanistic' liturgical almanac. Rather, it was left up to the preacher of the day to choose any reading which homed in on the individual events or incidents in the plot of the narrative of the Passover. It is this criterion then which determined the choice of readings and in this sense we can speak of the Passover almanac as 'free' as opposed to 'mechanistic'. How then do the *Israelite* pilgrims read and interpret the narrative on which the festival is based and around which it structured?

In attempting to answer the foregoing question I shall not deal with each text individually. Rather, I will try to identify and explicate the common interpretive threads which run through the homiletic responses to the scripture readings. The first of the *Israelites'* strategies of reading and interpreting the events surrounding *pesach* amount to what I shall call the *hermeneutics of identification*. What this means is that the primary interest which informs and forms the interpretation of the Passover texts is that of identification with Israel of old. This is hardly surprising given that Mgijima patterned his *Church of God and Saints of Christ* on the model and theological programme of Israel of old. It is for this reason that they are known as *Israelites*. This identification is manifest in a number of instances. Let us consider a few.

During the evening service of Day one the preacher poses a pertinent question to the congregation: "God heard the groans of the Israelites and 'he' remembered his covenant with Abraham. *Does God hear your groans?* God wants to hear your groans. *Are you out of Egypt?*" Here the *Israelites* are identified with Israel of old in terms of the groans which signify their suffering. God will relieve their suffering as 'he' relieved the suffering of Israel of old.

In the second question which I have italicised the preacher is trying to determine whether the *Israelites* are still in a state of suffering. In concluding his sermon the

preacher declares: "Let us go, fellow-Hebrew. You have been freed by a mighty hand. Do not shuffle (*musani ukutshitshiliza*) in one place as if you do not want to leave Egypt". In this instance the preacher transfers the freedom of Israel of old to the *Israelites*. They too are freed. This is indicative of the confidence the *Israelites* should have in God's liberative power. Freedom is not something which happened and was experienced only in the past. No. God's saving act is liberation which is available even now, in the present. In another homily the preacher declares: "God has led us, taken us out of the house of slavery" (Early morning service, Day Seven). This is also evident in the following example. Declares another preacher:

"We heard what was said on the first night when this ship started off (*xa yayisuka lenqanawe*). Moses had brought them a message from God after he had ascended Mt. Sinai. God freed them from Egypt. *God freed us from Egypt*. God said: 'You know how I freed you from Egypt on the wings of an eagle'. The people promised that all that God had commanded they would do. *We have made this promise*. Let us not change and start speaking other words." (Evening service, Day Four)

In another example of identification the preacher declares: "We are now in the desert. We left Egypt in the middle of the night and God had destroyed the first-borns and so Pharaoh released the *Israelites*" (Main service, Day 2). Here identification consists in the *Israelites* accompanying Israel as they travel through the desert. As they read the narrative the *Israelites* locate themselves within it, thereby extending their souls according to the Augustinian notion of time as *distentio animi*.

As Ricoeur pointed out "reading is itself already a way of living in the fictive universe of the work". But in this case reading amounts to more than a mere 'living in the world of the text'. It is an existential commitment to locate, implicate and emplot themselves fundamentally in the plot that is unfolding. In other words the *Israelites* do not step out of the world of the text once the reading is done. Their whole life, their identity and their spirituality is conceptualised and structured around the theological programme that emanates from their reading of the narrative of the Passover. At this point of the Passover festival we can say that the *Israelites* are narratively in the desert. The story of the *Israelites* is their story.

Interpreting the homily of the first day another preacher asserts: "I heard the words bishop when on the first day you took *us* to the foot of Mt. Sinai" (Evening

service, Day Six). In terms of this reading on Day One the *Israelites* were narratively at the foot of Mt. Sinai. Furthermore, according to this statement the bishop's role is Mosaic. In other words, not only are the *Israelites* identified with Israel of old but the bishop is identified with Moses through whom God's saving act is effected. I move now to consider the next set of soteriological strands as they are embedded not only in the proclaimed word but also in what Connerton (1989) has referred to as the performatives of ritual.

## **7.9 The ritual performances of salvation**

In this section I shall attempt to consider the deeper meaning and soteriological signification of certain key ritual performances which I outlined in *Part I*. In other words, I shall try to grapple with the following question: why do the *Israelites* do what they do the way they do it during the Passover festival, and what does what they do and the way they do it tell us about their soteriology? I shall focus on two ritual activities which are specific to the Passover festival. These are: (a) the paschal meal, and (b) the paschal dance.

### **7.9.1 The ritual of freedom**

Before I attempt to deal with what Connerton has termed the incorporating practices and the inscribing practices of ritual, and in this instance it is the ritual of the paschal meal, it is important to recapture the point made by Jennings (1982) which I dealt with in Chapter Three concerning the epistemological features or "moments" of ritual. Jennings has also referred to these as ritual's *noetic* functions. These are that ritual plays a generative, a pedagogical, and a displaying function with regard to knowledge. In other words ritual is a way of coming to know, a way of searching for and discovering knowledge. Secondly, ritual is a way of transmitting knowledge. Thirdly, the ritual displays itself and those who participate in it to an observer from whom a response to the performance is expected. With regard to the *Israelites'* ritual of the paschal meal the pertinent issue becomes: how do the *Israelites* come to know through this ritual and what is it that they come to know? As the bishop put the question to the pilgrims in his homily: "What is this service to you?"

The paschal meal which is referred to as the 'service of the lamb' (*Inkonzo*

*yexhwane*) is based on Exodus 12 which constitutes the main reading of the ritual. The way in which the ritual of the lamb is performed constitutes a particular reading and interpretation of Exodus 12 - it is a particular hermeneutics which generates a particular knowledge. Even a superficial or cursory reading of Exodus 12 will reveal that the ritual of the paschal meal as performed by the *Israelites* is largely a creative adaptation. The *Israelites* have dispensed with many of the prescriptions and directives as are found in the text. It is not my intention to make a comparative analysis of these two rituals. Rather, as I have indicated, I am interested in how the *Israelites'* performance of the ritual constitutes a particular interpretation of the text and the particular knowledge that this interpretation produces.

In this instance as well, the primary interest which shapes the *Israelites'* particular performance of the ritual of the paschal meal as well as its reading of Exodus 12 is that of *identification* with Israel of old. But in this instance this primary interest of identification is dynamically linked to another equally important interest, namely that of *continuity* with Israel of old. Following Connerton we can therefore classify the ritual of the paschal meal as performed by the *Israelites* as an overtly retrospective ritual in that it claims continuity with Israel of old, commemorating the events that constitute the narrative of the Passover.

In *Part I* I noted that the paschal meal ritually inaugurates the Passover festival. But besides this, what is it that the *Israelites* are doing in performing the ritual of the paschal meal? The performance of this ritual constitutes a *rhetoric of re-enactment*, repeating the very central act of what Grandfather Abraham articulated as follows: "You are being prepared for the land into which we shall cross". As the paschal meal prepared Israel of old for the crossing, the moment of liberation, so too are the *Israelites* being prepared. It is for this reason that the ritual preparation and the ritual consumption of the paschal lamb is different from the normal slaughtering, roasting and eating of meat. It is not a *braaivleis* or a barbecue. This ritual preparation and ritual consumption of the paschal lamb is also fundamentally different from the African traditional religious ritual preparation and ritual consumption of meat from a 'sacrificial' animal. An important element of the African traditional religion is the invocation of the ancestors.

Furthermore, the ritual preparation and ritual consumption of a 'sacrificial' meal in

African traditional religion has a strong social element. Even strangers and foreigners can partake of the ritual meal. This is not the case with the *Israelitic* paschal meal. As evangelist Mbayi was at pains to point out in his commentary: "This is the sacrifice of the Passover, it is not a sacrifice of sin", and further that "This is not a service of the world. It is a service of Israel". Whereas normally a lamb would not be slaughtered within a specially designated area<sup>7</sup> and no special care would be taken not to break any bones of the skeleton of the lamb, the ritual slaughtering of the paschal lamb occurs within a specially designated and sanctified area called *isibingelo*, and great care is taken that not a single bone of the skeleton is broken. Whereas meat or any meal, even an African traditional religious meal, is usually eaten in a seated or comfortable position, the paschal lamb is consumed standing. These corporeal practices and postures as well as the accompanying verbal commentaries as expressed above constitute the rhetoric which re-enacts the action of Israel of old - preparation for freedom, preparation for the crossing. This rhetoric of re-enactment achieves another objective, and that is it effects continuity with Israel of old. This is what the *Israelites* come to know, viz. that they are specially, dynamically and fundamentally related to Israel of old and the specific way in which they perform the ritual constitutes *how* they come to know it and how they transmit this knowledge.

What else do the *Israelites* come to know through this ritual performance? In relation to the above there is another set of things that the *Israelites* come to know. As Jennings put it, they come to know who they are in the world, i.e. their identity as *Israelites* is ritually confirmed. Moreover, this identity is not confirmed in isolation or in a vacuum. It is confirmed in relation to what evangelist Mbayi has called 'the world', it is confirmed in contradistinction to what Mgijima called 'the heathens', and it is confirmed in relation to what Exodus calls Egypt and Pharaoh. Through this they come to know 'how it is' with the world. They come to know that in the world 'Pharaoh hardens his heart'. That is 'how it is' with the world - in the world there is what the bishop referred to as 'troubles and suffering' (*ukuxakeka*) caused by Pharaoh. But this is not the end.

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<sup>7</sup> In African traditional religion *ubuhlanti* (the cattle pen) constitutes the specially designated area where a ritual animal is slaughtered. It is here that the ancestors are addressed during religious rites and ceremonies. P. Larlham in his project entitled *Black theatre, dance and ritual in South Africa* notes that for the Zionists the circle constitutes the basic arrangement of space for performance. The center of the space is the Holy Place, "the center of spiritual activity" where healing takes place. (1985:29)

There is a further set of knowledges that the ritual performance of the paschal meal produces and these are soteriological. The *Israelites* come to know that God has a specific design, a specific plan for them. They come to know that the God of Israel is a God of freedom, a God of salvation. As the bishop put it, it is the God who frees the family of Israel from Egypt. It is the God who showed mercy to the Israelites. It is the God who freed them from all their troubles and suffering. It is because God is a God of mercy that they are saved. It is this God who will free them as well as they sing "This is the month of Abib when we went out of Egypt". I move now to reflect on the next performative, the paschal dance.

### **7.9.2 The dance of freedom**

Let me begin by attempting a broken down description of the paschal dance. The paschal dance is performed to the singing of the Pass-over hymn which is sung in the typical African style of call-and-response. It can be danced standing in one place or in a forward movement of marching. Two distinct moments and movements are discernible in its performance. When describing the paschal dance in *Part I* I noted that at a certain point it resembles the *toyi-toyi*, the South African dance of struggle, resistance and protest. It is the *toyi-toyi*-like movement which forms the first moment and it is rather vigorous and physically demanding but, unlike the *toyi-toyi*, the performers of the paschal dance appear to be less militant and less confrontational. In this part the performers jump as high as they can, swiftly bringing the one bent leg up towards the chest and as it goes down the other leg goes up in a similar fashion. This part of the dance coincides with the 'I will pass over you' part of the refrain of the Pass-over hymn. The second part of the dance which coincides with the 'When I the Lord shall see the blood' part of the refrain is less vigorous and quite gentle, with the feet being placed more gently on the ground, starting with the right foot being placed in a diagonal direction to the left and followed by the left one being placed diagonally to the right in front of the right foot. The dance is quite beautiful on its own, but with the added colour of the different paschal attires and the determined and dignified performance by the pilgrims makes it quite a uniquely spectacular sight. It is one of the most breathtaking christian liturgical dances I have seen. The question now is: what does this aesthetic depth express?

Highwater (1978:23) has noted that bodily movement represents "humanity's most

fundamental and expressive act"<sup>8</sup>. Like other religious dances, the paschal dance of the *Israelites* is a profoundly spiritual activity communicating a deep spiritual conviction (Highwater 1978:26; Myerhoff 1990:247)<sup>9</sup>. Being an integral element of the paschal experience it contributes towards the efficaciousness of the total paschal ritual (Larham 1985:43). The Pass-over hymn which is the verbal component of the dance, with the bodily movements constituting the non-verbal parts, vocalises the salvific action of 'the Lord passing over the *Israelites*'. The bodily movements are expressive of the spiritual conviction of crossing - of moving from a state of troubles and suffering to freedom, of 'sleeping in one place and waking up in another', of moving out of the Pharaoh's state of Egypt to God's state of mercy. In other words, the paschal dance is a depictive representation of the event of the Passover and the liberation from Egypt. The paschal dance is an incorporating practice through which the Passover gets sedimented in the body (Connerton 1989). In other words, God's saving action which is the key message of the festival is not merely an idea, it is an experience - a profoundly bodily experience. In terms of the question posed by Jennings (1982) we can say that through the ritual performance of the paschal dance what the *Israelites* come to know is God's saving action. They come to know that God is deeply involved in their context of trouble and suffering. They come to know that God acts in a way that fundamentally transforms this context. This is what the paschal dance expresses. The *Israelites* come to know that they are being transformed from a people enslaved to a people freed - this is their identity, this is who they are in the world.

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<sup>8</sup> Highwater (1978:24) describes dance as "a non-verbal, unreasoned assertion of sentience in universal forms of pure physical assertion". The notion of sentience refers to a person's emotional state, not rampant emotions but fundamental feelings. The notion also refers to the mergence of thought and feeling.

<sup>9</sup> For instance, the liturgical dances of *AmaNazaretha* were created and choreographed by the founder Isaiah Shembe who based them on his visions. These liturgical dances are a form of corporate worship. Shembe created the dances with the desire to allow believers to worship in an African traditional manner. These liturgical dances are "a form of worship and were shaped to suit the character and mood of Christian worship". Through them the group expresses a common aim and they are meant to satisfy a common need. Though not aimed to entertain spectators, if there are any they are acknowledged, but they are always inwardly focussed. (Larham 1985:42-3; Jennings 1982)

## 7.10 Conclusion

In looking at the order and structure of the various rituals and liturgies in the first part of this chapter we saw how these different elements of the Passover festival make it a uniquely *Israelitic* celebration, beginning with the ritual of the paschal meal and including also the celebration of the eucharist, the blessing of children, and the appointment and ordination of the elders. In the second part I tried to analyse the verbal and performative articulation and interpretation of the message of the Passover festival and the extent to which this shapes the soteriology of the CGSC. We saw that the message of salvation is expressed through a number of very vivid and potent images and metaphors which describe the paschal identity of Shiloh as a place where God comes to save 'his' people, which describe God as a God of salvation within the present context of suffering, and which describe pilgrims as a people who are in dire need of salvation.

Further, we saw that all this theology of salvation emanates from a specific reading and interpretation of the Passover narrative, what I have called the hermeneutics of identification. We saw that through this hermeneutics the *Israelites* have succeeded in establishing a positive relationship between their materially based existential situation and the situation of the Israelites which was based on the material conditions of oppression in Egypt, beginning with the suffering under Pharaoh, through the crossing, to those moments and incidents in the plot when the Israelites not only doubted God's intention but also when they turned their backs on God. We also saw that through the ritual performatives, especially the incorporating practices and bodily practices, the *Israelites* transform the salvific event of *pesach* from something that happened in biblical times to a present reality, one which makes salvation from suffering attainable even now. Continuity with Israel is established through a bodily sedimentation of the paschal experience. In the next chapter I shall consider another festival which has salvation as the key theme, but in this instance the agent of salvation is a woman.

## CHAPTER 8

### THE FAST FOR FREEDOM

#### 8.0 Introduction

In the preceding chapter we saw the nature of and extent to which the festival of the Passover, the highpoint in the liturgical calendar of the CGSC, shapes and informs its soteriology. We also saw the pivotal role played by Moses in the narrative on which the festival is built and around which it is celebrated, as well as the importance of ritual in these celebrations. In this chapter I shall attempt to analyse the soteriological notions that are embedded in another important festival in the calendar of the CGSC, the Fast of Esther (*Inzila kaEsteri*). Unlike the preceding chapter, the main character in the narrative around which this festival is structured is a young woman, Esther. Esther is the heroine of the story, she is the agent of salvation, the medium through whom God saves the Israelites from extermination, the pogrom designed by Haman, the prime minister in the government of King Ahasuerus. But how was Esther able to achieve such a magnificent feat? This chapter attempts to see how the *Israelites'* understanding of this festival informs their soteriology. In other words, it endeavours to address the following set of questions: who and what is the figure of Esther to the *Israelites* in this narrative of salvation, and what does the celebration of the festival mean to them?

As the title of this chapter indicates, freedom is a key motif in the festival of the Fast of Esther. This chapter therefore also seeks to uncover the *Israelites'* understanding of freedom and how it is related to their soteriological notions. There is a variety of perspectives with regard to the notion of freedom. We shall see that freedom is a transcendent reality in the sense that it is God's initiative alone. However, this does not mean that political or worldly freedom is unimportant. As they put it, freedom is about transformation, the overthrow of "the kingdom of cruelty, exile and racialism" so that they can worship God. It is for this reason that some recognise the importance of participating in party political activities which seek to realise worldly freedom. In other words there is a recognition that despite its limits political freedom is very important. However, the *Israelites* also believe that it is not sufficient to use only worldly ways to attain

freedom but that there is a need to employ spiritual means. We shall see furthermore that the *Israelites* are highly critical of the political freedom which has been attained in South Africa because this freedom has not fundamentally transformed the commodified structuring of society through the domination of abstract chronotic time. What they seek is to be free from being controlled by commodified time.

In his brief reading and examination of the book of Esther, and its implications for African women's struggle for freedom in South Africa, Mosala (1988:7) criticises the book of Esther for what he terms its "gender structuring of politics." Mosala notes that the survival of the *Israelites* as an oppressed people under the colonial rule of the Persians was "achieved first and foremost by the alienation of Esther's gender-power and its integration into the patriarchal structures of feudalism." He objects to the text on three counts. In the first instance the text chooses and uses a female character to achieve what are essentially patriarchal ends. His second objection is that the *Israelites'* national struggle as presented in the book subsumes and "disprivileges the question of gender oppression and exploitation." The third objection is that class issues are suppressed (1988:9). For this reason this chapter also seeks to probe the following question: Is the *Israelites'* reading and interpretation of the book of Esther and their celebration of this festival also guilty of a gender structuring of politics?

This question becomes even more pertinent given the fact that the central figure in the book and in the *Israelites'* celebration of the festival is a woman. Moreover, as with other churches in South Africa, women constitute the majority of the CGSC and yet they wield little power, especially in terms of the structures of the church. Given that freedom is a key theme of the festival this chapter also seeks to examine the influence of sexism in the views of salvation that emerge from the celebration of this festival. In other words, I shall attempt to interrogate the following critical issues: how do the *Israelites* view the fact of Esther's womanhood and femininity in the role she played in the salvation of the *Israelites*? Does Esther's gender play a significant role in the *Israelites'* interpretation of the narrative? How are the other women who feature in the text seen by the *Israelites*? How do the men feature in the narrative of Esther in the *Israelites'* reading of the text? Do the *Israelite* men and *Israelite* women have the same reading of the text? In other words, do the *Israelite* men and women employ the same interpretive

strategies? If so, why, and if not, how are their readings different? In other words, can we discern the interests and the commitments that are represented by specific readings? Are the views of salvation that emerge shaped by the gender of the readers or do both *Israelite* men and women share the same soteriological views? How does African culture feature with respect to the question of gender in the *Israelites'* reading of the text and their understanding of Esther's identity?<sup>1</sup> What role does patriarchy and kyriarchy play in the *Israelites'* reading and interpretation of the narrative of Esther and how does this shape their soteriological notions?

We shall see that the *Israelite* men's reading of the text is fundamentally kyriarchal, condemning the disobedience not only of queen Vashti but of other women like her, both biblical and extra-biblical. The *Israelite* menfolk have high regard for queen Esther but this is defined primarily along masculinist lines. In other words, it was because she conducted herself like a man that Esther became the agent of salvation. The homilies and petitionary prefaces delivered by the menfolk demonstrate how they control the public transcript and the extent of this control.

When we look at the public transcript of the *Israelite* womenfolk we shall see that they appear to be in agreement with the male-defined view of Esther. However, when we take a closer look we see that the "infrapolitical" hermeneutical clues that they leave expose many silences and what are for all intents and purposes deliberate oversights and omissions. For instance, they do not condemn Vashti's behaviour which was a challenge to the power and domination of the king and his men as setting a bad precedent for women. Also, the womenfolk are silent with respect to the 'bad' extra-textual and extra-biblical woman characters who obviously play an important role in male reading strategies. We shall see further that unlike their male counterparts the *Israelite* womenfolk are reticent in according Esther masculinist or macho attributes. What the women prefer to concentrate on are other values and spiritual qualities such as being truthful. Also, the womenfolk focus on seeking deliverance from the struggles and hardships of everyday life. Before I attempt to deal with these issues and questions I shall

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, Mosala (1989) observed that in the readings and interpretive strategies of a Zionist AIC on which he did research the question of gender, race, and class was missing in their appropriation of the Bible and yet 'Africanness' was present.

commence with a brief description of the background, the structural elements, and the performative aspects of the festival.

### 8.1 Background and structure

The Fast of Esther is held on 3-9 January every year and is reported to have been instituted by Mgiijima after he held his first baptisms in 1912<sup>2</sup>. It has its theological roots in the Jewish Feast of *Purim*<sup>3</sup>. I attended the celebration of the festival at Shiloh, Whittlesea, on 3-9 January 1995. Unlike the Passover festival, the Fast of Esther does not attract pilgrims to Shiloh. People celebrate it wherever they are. Also, unlike the Passover which is very rich with respect to ritual and symbolic performatives, the Fast of Esther is much more 'plain'. The festival commemorates the events narrated in the book of Esther, and highlights the fast that was instituted by Queen Esther during the time of King Ahasuerus<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> According to other reports the Fast of Esther was instituted by Msikinya in 1911.

<sup>3</sup> The Feast of *Purim* is classified as a post-exilic feast together with the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*) and the Feast of Hanukkah. As far as the text of Esther is concerned, Gottwald (1985:561) holds that "the actual setting of the narrator [of the story] is in the Maccabean-Hasmonean era". The popular etymology of *purim* is derived from *pur*, meaning 'lot' (Esther 3,7;9,24). The name *pur* is neither Hebrew nor Persian but Akkadian (Assyro-Babylonian). The feast fell on the 14-15 Adar and, according to the book of Esther, it was meant to commemorate the deliverance of the Jews in exile from the genocidal intentions of Haman. Apart from being attested to by Josephus (*Ant.* II.6,13 \*295), the feast, especially the name *purim*, is not mentioned elsewhere in the Bible. The closest equivalent to *purim* is the allusion to "the day of Modercai" which is found in 2 Maccabees 15,36. There is a general agreement amongst Old Testament scholars that the feast was not originally a Jewish feast. The hypothesis is that it was an adaptation by Jews of some other non-Jewish, probably a Babylonian spring festival. Other scholars are of the view that the feast has multi-cultural origins. The Jews kept it in the month of Adar in a secular rather than a religious fashion. It was the most worldly of the Jewish festivals and resembled a carnival, including the wearing of masks and other such paraphernalia. There is the view held by scholars that Esther is not a historical book but the events recounted in it are a justification of what scholars think is a rather peculiar feast. This view is supported by the fact that in the Hebrew form of the book the name of the God of Israel is not even mentioned. Commenting on the absence of the name of God in the book elder S.Z. Majezi of the *Israelites* notes: "Though the word 'God' does not appear anywhere in the book, God's spirit is present everywhere" (Homily 5, 7.01.1995). According to rabbinical writings the 13th of Adar was a fast day. In the evening lamps were lit in all the houses and people went to the synagogue. This was followed by two days of festivities. The people attended the synagogue for the reading of the book of Esther which would be interrupted by curses against Haman. The synagogue meeting then closed with a solemn blessing of Modercai, of Esther, and of Israel in general. The feast was also an occasion for the exchange of gifts and the distribution of alms. Apparently, the rabbis laid down the rule that one had to stop drinking when they could no longer distinguish between 'Cursed be Haman!' and 'Blessed be Modercai!'

<sup>4</sup> The Hebrew form is *hashwerosh*, and in Greek it is *Xerxes*. The Xhosa rendition taken from the Appleyard translation which the *Israelites* use is *Hasheveroshe*. Ahasuerus was king of Persia from 485-465 BC.

### 8.1.1 Dress code

The official dress code is the *white suit*.

*Men:* cream/white three piece suits, wing collar shirts, blue neckties

*Womenfolk:* White blouses, white skirts with blue belts, blue neckties, blue head ribbons. However, other women are dressed in black skirts, white blouses, black neckties, and white head ribbons.

### 8.1.2 Order of the liturgy

The order of the liturgy is the same for all the days, with the exception of the service of Holy Communion on day six, the day preceding the day of fasting. The liturgy on the Sabbath includes the bowing-marching. The order of the liturgy is as follows:

(1) *Gathering.* After the bugle has been blown the gathering hymn is sung and the worshippers assemble outside the church building and stand in two rows facing the main entrance. The young man carrying the shepherd flag is on the extreme right of the front row, with a very young boy next to him on his left. The rest of the front row consists of women. The men make the second row, with evangelist J.J. Mbayi being the most senior cleric present standing on the extreme right hand corner of the second row.

(2) *Marching around the church.* Another hymn is sung while the congregants get into formation. The young man with shepherd flag is in front with two other young men next to him. The women are in two's and are flanked by the men so that the procession is actually made of four rows. When all are in formation the congregants march around the church building, and each time the circle is completed the bugle is blown. At the third encirclement the worshippers enter the church building in a zig-zag formation.

(3) *Opening.* Inside the church the choir takes the seats on the left and other congregants face them by taking the seats on the right, while the evangelist and four other men go to the front and stand on the rostrum, facing the congregation. All remain standing while another hymn is intoned by the choir conductor, after which the opening prayer is said by one of the men on the rostrum. A human chain is formed by all joining hands at the little fingers. The opening prayer is concluded

with the Lord's Prayer, with men's hands uplifted and eyes looking up towards heaven.

(4) *Preface to scripture reading*. As usual, the preface to the reading is said by the preacher of the day who is appointed by the most senior clergy person; in this instance it was evangelist Mbayi. The preface is preceded by the usual introductory greeting, according to hierarchical seniority, and it is followed by the prophetic testimony.

(5) *Scripture reading*. On each day of the festival one chapter is read, with the remaining chapters being read on the last day.

(6) *Homily*

(7) *Holy Communion*. Apart from the Passover this is the only other time that there is a celebration of the Eucharist. As I have already mentioned, the eucharist is celebrated on the sixth day of the festival, the day that precedes the day of fasting.

(8) *Petitionary preface*

(9) *Petitions of the saints*. There were altogether 73 petitions offered during the festival of the Fast of Esther.

(10) *Bowing-marching*. It is only performed on the Sabbath and not on other days.

(11) *Thanksgiving for the petitions*

(12) *Concluding prayer*

(13) *Announcements*

(14) *Recessional marching*

Having described the structural elements of the festival I move now to consider its deeper meaning and the notions of salvation to which it gives rise.

## 8.2 "We must ask for freedom"

Apparently, when asked by his followers what the Fast of Esther had to do with them Mgiijima is said to have replied: "The cloud that was hanging over the Israelites during the time of Ahasuerus is still there over you *Israelites* today" (Dokoda 5.03.1994; Homily 4, 06.01.1995; Homily 8, 9.01.1995). Evangelist Mbayi (24.05.1994) reiterating the same views, highlights the idea of freedom:

...the objective of this fast is that the Watchman said that through this fast we (should) make a request for freedom (*masesicele inkululo*) because what was

happening to the Jews then, the cloud that was over them, is happening to us today. That is what he said and that is what we preach.

But what is this cloud that is hanging over presentday *Israelites*? According to Mbayi (Homily 1) Mgijima had said that the festival of the Fast of Esther was not only for the Jews but for them as well. As God had saved the Jews in the ancient days so would 'he' save them as well. In his view the book of Esther teaches about how God saved the Israelites. From the narrative related in the book of Esther it is clear that the cloud that was hanging over the Israelites in exile during the time of King Ahasuerus was their impending annihilation engineered by prime minister Haman. It is around this impending destruction that the plot is constructed.

But what does the freedom that Mbayi refers to mean? How will this freedom be achieved? From what are the *Israelites* to be freed? In the view of Mbayi people of the world are free but the *Israelites* are not yet free, they live under slavery. Mbayi (24.05.1994) explicates what this request for freedom means in the following manner:

Now, what we are expecting is that this kingdom will be transformed (*ubukumkani obu buyakuguquka*) as is said in Daniel 2,44. The kingdom will be transformed without struggle (*kungakhange kubekho migudu*) and God's kingdom will come about on its own as we can see how Modercai's reign came about. The kingdom of cruelty, exile and racialism is overthrown. God made a plan (*uThixo wenze icebo*).

What we can see from the above explanation is that freedom is about the transformation of the present dispensation, what Mbayi refers to as "this kingdom." The important thing that he stresses is that this transformation will be at God's initiative alone - transformation will occur without human struggle. In other words, it is out of God's benevolence that this freedom will come about and so there should be total reliance on God<sup>5</sup>. He is at pains to demonstrate that there are biblical precedents for why and how this will come about. From what then are they to be freed? They will be freed by God from a dispensation whose hallmarks

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<sup>5</sup> Elsewhere Mbayi (04.03.1994) explains his idea of freedom in a christocentric perspective: "No one besides Christ has the authority (*onegunya*) to free people. Being a slave of sin you cannot say you will free another person. How can De Klerk himself being a slave of sin say that he is going to free people? He cannot. Even Botha and others were not able to. You cannot yourself being a prisoner because of your sins say that you are going to free others. How can you do that? It is Christ himself who has the authority to free others. He frees them from the body of sin".

are cruelty, exile, and racialism. This will constitute God's saving intervention - the removal of cruelty, of exile, and of racialism. This is God's plan for their freedom. Mbayi continues to explain how it is that this saving act, this transformative action, will be God's initiative alone.

Media and Persia fell without a sound. Vashti fell first and then Esther was raised, now Haman falls and Modercai is raised, without a sound. That is the aim of this fast. It is to teach that it is not necessary for us to join these *toyitoyis* as people of the world do, trying to overthrow this kingdom. This kingdom will collapse of its own. What is needed is prayer. That is what we preach.

God's transformation of the situation will not be a mere overthrow of this kingdom. God will replace the rulers of this kingdom with God's own regime, God's own appointees. The *Israelites* do not have to participate in human-initiated and human-driven transformation efforts. All that they need to do is to pray. The above statement raises a very important question, viz. does it mean that the *Israelites* abstain from all political activities and political struggles? For an answer to this question I shall turn to evangelist Ntloko's (12.06.1994) sophisticated summation of the matter in response to the following question that I put to him:

**Researcher:** There are scholars who say that the *Church of God and Saints of Christ* came about because of the oppressive political situation of the time. What are your views on this?

**Ntloko:** Well, even some of us, especially the present generation of young people in our church who are politically minded, would hold this view. I was also very much involved in politics but I have stuck to the prophecy (...*kodwa isiprofitesho ndisigcinile*). Politics change according to the times. There are many political organizations and they too change. One may join a political organization and then find out after some time that its policy has changed. That is how it is in politics. And so people within and outside the church may say so, but that is not how it was. It is like when Jesus came, the Jews in Palestine thought that Jesus would liberate them from the hands of the kings who were ruling then but that is not how it was (...*kanti akunjalo*). Jesus was aware of the oppression under which the Jews lived then. In the same manner Mjijima was aware that we were people who were oppressed but the church was not a political movement. Its aims were not to liberate people from oppression. Even though he did show that with time black people would be liberated in various ways. I do not say that he revealed that they would be liberated from the hand of De Klerk.

Ntloko distinguishes between the party political struggle on one hand and the prophecy on the other. The fundamental characteristic that distinguishes them is that politics is inherently transient, ever-changing whereas the prophecy has an inherent durability and stability and its message has an enduring and unchanging validity. In other words, one may participate in political struggles as long as one does not equate or confuse that struggle with prophecy and the prophetic message of Mgijima. One may engage in party politics as long as one understands that dabbling in politics is an exercise fraught with shortcomings and contradictions. From the above it is clear that there is a range of opinions and views amongst the *Israelites* with respect to participation in political struggle and the relation of the political struggle to the message and prophecy of Mgijima. As Ntloko concedes, there are those (also among the *Israelites*) who would hold that indeed there is a point of intersection and a positive relation between the two. Let me return to the issue of freedom.

Evangelist Mbayi (24.05.1994) continues that the people of the world want freedom but they seek it through a programme of the flesh, a struggle which is futile, whereas the *Israelites'* struggle is 'according to the spirit' and it will reap fruits. As he puts it:

So what we do is different from what the people (of the world) do. They push according to the flesh and we push according to the spirit (*thina sityhala ngokomoya*). Our belief is that what they (the people of the world) were doing through the vote (on 27 April 1994 which brought Nelson Mandela into power) will happen in accordance with what is in Esther, if it does happen at all. It will happen without fighting and the spilling of blood, without voting.

According to evangelist Mbayi (09.01.1995) Mgijima, after donating a cow to the African National Congress, said to them: "We are pushing the same mountain but we push in different ways. We push with the spirit (*ngomoya*) and you with the flesh (*ngenyama*)." Dokoda (05.03.1994) relates this incident as follows: "In January 1920 the African National Congress had a conference here in Queenstown and Mgijima addressed them. His message to them was 'We are pushing the same stone of freedom. You push according to the flesh and I push according to the spirit.'" There appears to be some agreement between Ntloko, Mbayi and Dokoda, at least in terms of the view that there is a distinction between the struggle of the world which is according to the flesh, and the *Israelite* struggle which is according

to the spirit and which is based on the prophetic message of Mgidjima. There is also a strong link between them in terms of the stone/mountain of freedom which they are pushing. Both recognise that it is important to struggle for freedom.

And so, in which other way do the *Israelites* understand the notion of freedom, especially as it pertains to the Fast of Esther?<sup>6</sup> According to Mbayi (Homily 1) the "people of this world are free because they do whatever they will", but the *Israelites* are not free, they live under slavery. Later evangelist Mbayi (Homily 8) puts it as follows:

The ANC has won but we have not yet won. How many of us could not be here today because they had to go to work? *We* have not yet been freed. We know that sometimes the teachers at school do not grant permission for our children to come to church. This is because we have not yet been freed. Those among us who do not go to work on days such as the Fast (of Esther) stand to lose a lot of money from their salaries. People in the world now do as they like. They build shacks wherever they like because they have been freed. But we are not yet free. I am merely attempting to enlighten your minds.

What the *Israelites* seek above all is freedom to worship without the hindrances emanating from employment and work commitments and school demands. Until they can worship as they wish, they are not yet free, unlike people of the world who are free to do as they wish. We see therefore that Mbayi makes a clear distinction between the freedom that the *Israelites* seek and political or worldly freedom. He is highly critical of the domination of work-time. As he puts it: "How many of us could not be here today because they had to go to work?" His point is that freedom will only be meaningful if it removes those constraints which prevent them to live fully as *Israelites*, i.e. going to work when it suits *them* rather than having their lives structured around the needs of capitalism. This is why, as we saw in Chapter Five, they have reconstituted and redefined time as ritual kairotic time in opposition to the domination of abstract chronotic time. The victory of the

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<sup>6</sup> In his explanation of the notion of freedom bishop Mzileni (07.03.1994) also distinguishes between real freedom and the freedom according to the world. He links real freedom directly with the idea of salvation as follows: "There are people who will be saved, and I do not mean the *Israelites* only. There are others besides the *Israelites* who will be saved, those who will be keeping the commandment of God even though they might not have heard the Watchman's words, 'Judah, Ephraim, Joseph'. Those people will be in eternal life, a beautiful life. We will have received freedom (*inkululeko*). The freedom that people nowadays are referring to I do not quite believe will be real freedom. It is because nowadays people refuse to be controlled, they do not want to be reprimanded, everyone wants to do their own thing."

African National Congress does not necessarily spell full victory and complete freedom for the *Israelites* because it has not transformed the universalizing domination of work-time. Later in the same homily Mbayi asserts:

Yesterday power was in the hands of Vashti and Haman. Today power is in the hands of Esther and Modercai. God will establish 'his' own kingdom. 'His' people will be free so that they can worship in the way that God wants them to.

Freedom for the *Israelites* means God's establishment of God's own kingdom. When this kingdom is established then will they be free to worship according to God's designs, according to God's time. The question that presents itself at this juncture is whether the laity pick up the idea of freedom. How do they make sense of this notion of freedom?

Out of the ten petitions on the day on which the message of requesting freedom was preached, it was only two petitioners who overtly picked up the concept of freedom. In the first petition the petitioner asserts that Enoch said they should ask for freedom (*inkululo*) from God (Petition 1). The second petitioner prays: "We heard that people in the olden days asked for freedom (*inkululo*)." He too then makes a request for freedom (Petition 4).

The first petitioner's assertion and reference to freedom does not give us much in terms of her own deeper understanding or appropriation of this notion. She merely reiterates what was said in the homily. The second petitioner, a man, also does not go much further. Apart from these two direct petitions the only other petition which explicitly mentions the idea of freedom or being freed was on the second day of the festival. The petitioner asserted: "Let us not fool around with God (*masingadlali ngoYehova*) because 'he' frees us (*uyasikhulula*) from all our trouble" (Petition 14, my emphasis). What this petitioner does is to go further and define freedom in a holistic and deeper manner - freedom means being freed from all trouble. We shall see especially the material nature and extent of this trouble in the rest of those petitions which focus on the prerequisites of human survival.

How else is the festival of the Fast of Esther understood by the *Israelites*? A clue to this will be found in the *Israelites'* understanding of the identity of Esther which

is fundamentally theological. But before I deal with the identity of Esther I shall discuss two closely related ideologies which have an effect on the shape of this identity.

### 8.3 Patriarchy and kyriarchy

In the introduction I indicated that my second aim in this chapter is to examine the role gender plays in the emerging views of salvation. In doing this I commence with a brief discussion of the notions of *patriarchy* and *kyriarchy* which feminist and gender studies have identified as being central to the question of gender and sexism, both within our own age as well as during biblical times. Let me begin with patriarchy.

An African feminist theologian, Musimbi Kanyoro (1992:95), makes the following pertinent criticism: "The study of Old Testament women in Hebrew polygamous society is tainted with patriarchal bias." In another strongly worded statement affirming the struggle of African feminists Mercy Oduyoye (1989:443), another African feminist theologian, asserts: "...I am convinced that there is a number of African women who refuse to bow the knee to the Baal lord called patriarchy and that there shall always be." But what is this monster called patriarchy? What does patriarchy have to do with how the *Israelites* read and interpret the book of Esther and how they understand and articulate her identity? The notion of patriarchy has been variously defined by scholars, especially those of the feminist mould<sup>7</sup>. Kanyoro (1994:25) describes a patriarchal society as one in which

social and cosmic reality is defined according to the way in which male members of this society perceive reality. Essentially the perception is an androcentric one. Everything and everybody is defined by his/her or its relationship to the definer. In such a society the male members define their own role, their own values as well as those of the female members of the society. *The male way of understanding reality is then internalized by society as a whole* and [has] far-reaching consequences for everybody involved.[my emphasis]

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<sup>7</sup> For a brief but useful overview of how feminists understand the notion of patriarchy see Charlotte Caron's *To make and make again: feminist ritual theology*. Crossroad: New York. 1993.

Kanyoro points out that this process gets repeated when it comes to religious experience where, even though this experience belongs to the totality of the people, the way it is articulated and the way it is recorded is according to the understanding of the men within the society. Does this mean then that women do not make a contribution theologically? Kanyoro's answer is that indeed they do but "they essentially contribute to patriarchal theology." When it comes to the Bible Kanyoro further points out that it is through the Jewish patriarchal tradition that the Bible has come to us.

What becomes clear then from this in terms of my concerns is that patriarchy plays a role not only in how the Bible is read and understood but that the Bible itself comes out of and represents to a large degree a patriarchal culture. In this regard Oduyoye (1995:183) has noted that African men are very much at home with the androcentric and patriarchal order of the bible and "have felt their views confirmed by Christianity."<sup>8</sup> In a sophisticated analysis of domination Fiorenza (1992:8) has developed the notion kyriarchy as a much more penetrating concept than patriarchy<sup>9</sup>. In her view, kyriarchy conceptualises patriarchy "in terms of interlocking structures of domination" through elite, male relations of ruling where men rule as masters/lords, fathers, and husbands. What is critical in terms of this

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<sup>8</sup> As Mosala (1988:7f) notes, not only is the feudal society or tributary system implied in the book of Esther inherently patriarchal, but the book of Esther is fundamentally a patriarchal text.

<sup>9</sup> With regard to the notion of patriarchy Fiorenza (1985), challenging the invisibility of women in theology and the institution of the Catholic church, submits that patriarchy be understood not "in the general sense as a societal system in which *all* men have power over *all* women". She proposes that it be understood in the classical Aristotelian political sense according to which patriarchy is "a graded male status system of domination and subordination, authority and obedience, rulers and subjects in household and State. Wives, children, slaves and property were owned and at the disposal of the freeborn Greek male head of the household. He was the full citizen and determined public life". Within this Aristotelian scheme of ownership, subordination, and domination the differential relationships between slaves, women, and children on one hand and freeborn citizens on the other was based and rationalized not on social construction but on 'nature' and this 'nature' was defined according to their socio-economic functions. Though much has changed since the days of Aristotle, modern Western democratic society is still undergirded by Aristotelian patriarchal philosophy. Even industrialization and capitalism have not changed patriarchy, they have merely modified and reinforced it, argues Fiorenza. It is out of this analysis and critique of patriarchy that Fiorenza (1992) later develops the notion of *kyriarchy*. Even though Fiorenza develops the notion of kyriarchy from Greek political philosophy, the notion is applicable and relevant even within the African socio-cultural and political setting. For instance, Oduyoye (1995:4) writes: "In Africa, the very idea of a "free woman" conjures up negative images. We have been brought up to believe that a woman should always have a suzerain, that she should be "owned" by a man, be he a father, uncle, or husband. A "free woman" spells disaster. An adult woman, if unmarried, is immediately reckoned to be available for the pleasure of all males and is treated as such. The single woman who manages her affairs successfully without a man is an affront to patriarchy and a direct challenge to the so-called masculinity of men who want to "possess" her."

investigation is to see the extent to which the soteriological views emanating from the *Israelites'* celebration of the festival of the Fast of Esther can be said to be patriarchal/kyriarchal. Do the *Israelite* women regurgitate a patriarchal/kyriarchal soteriology or do their soteriological notions pose some form of a challenge to the hegemonic views? If they do pose some sort of challenge what form does it take? Is the challenge overt and conscious, or is it half-conscious and subtle, or is it non-conscious? If the soteriological views of the women *Israelites* do not in any way raise questions regarding the dominant male views how are we to understand this? Let me commence by considering how the male *Israelites* view the identity of Esther.

#### **8.4 "Esther is made of tough stuff, she is martyr material"**

Who and what is Esther to the male *Israelites*? For heuristic purposes we can discern two dimensions in the theological identity of Esther as articulated by the male *Israelites*. The first dimension of this identity I will refer to as her *spirituality*, and the second one I will refer to as the *socio-political* dimension.

Let us look at the first dimension. The discourse articulating her spirituality is expressed through terms extolling what appears to be traditional christian virtues and piety. Esther was a woman filled with grace (*ufefe*) (Homily 2). Esther had been cleansed by God within and without (Homily3). She was dependent on God (Homily 6) and obedient to God's teaching (Homily 8). But the most crucial part of her spirituality was the depth of her prayer. As one preacher (Homily 5) put it, Esther had faith in her prayer. She plays an exemplary role through her prayer that came from the heart. One preacher proclaimed that Esther prayed in earnest (Homily 5). In sum, we can say that the marks of the spirituality of Esther are grace, humility, dependency on God, obedience to God, and depth of prayer. Let me move now to the other side of Esther's identity, the second dimension.

The *Israelite* menfolk express Esther's socio-political identity in a number of ways. With respect to her citizenship, or more correctly, her non-citizenship, Esther was a Jew in exile (Homily 7). In terms of her background, upbringing, and socialization she was well brought up and well trained, unlike today's girls who are lazy (Homily 3). She was obedient to the teaching of her parents (Homily 8). Clearly, this perspective of Esther is also shaped and informed by traditional

African values, norms and ideals of what constitutes a well-reared girl. In terms of these ideals a girl should be diligent and industrious<sup>10</sup>, well-mannered, respectful, and obedient to her seniors, especially the male ones. It is deemed unbecoming for a woman, especially a young one, to challenge instructions or answer back in a self-assertive manner when she is being chastised or disciplined.

Not only was Esther unlike today's girls but she was also unlike the politicians who make promises to people in order to get their vote but forget them when they get into power. Esther knew where she came from (Homily 5). In other words, she was loyal to the Jewish nation. This interpretation of Esther's identity is informed by the experience of politics and politicians who fail to live up to their promises<sup>11</sup>. Esther is further described as steadfast and brave, as a heroine who was prepared to risk her life for the Jews by going into the presence of the king even though he had not indicated that she could do so (Homilies 4 & 5). According to another preacher (Homily 5) the bravery of Esther is so extra-ordinary that she had the book named after her. As he put it, "The book of Esther and the book of Ruth are the only books in the Bible named after women. This is because of their bravery." In this instance, bravery is a very important hallmark of her socio-political identity. Lastly, it is because of her diplomacy that the Jews were saved.

With regard to the question I posed earlier it is clear that in terms of her spirituality the *Israelite* men accord Esther what I shall call *soft qualities* such as being filled with grace, humility, dependency on God, obedience to God and being a person of deep prayer. In terms of the socio-political dimension of her identity the *Israelite* men accord Esther two types of qualities.

In terms of her upbringing and socialization she is accorded what I shall conveniently call *domesticating qualities*. She was well brought-up and well-trained, obedient to her parents. However, in terms of her mature status and extraordinary salvific role the *Israelite* menfolk accord her *masculinist qualities*. I

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<sup>10</sup> Girls who are deemed to be lazy are often told that marriage will elude them if they persist with their laziness.

<sup>11</sup> It will be remembered that though politically Africans were disenfranchised in terms of what was designated to be 'white' South Africa, the apartheid ideology of *separate development* had created nominally independent homelands and community councils in the urban areas of 'white' South Africa where Africans were expected to exercise the right to vote. Many Africans were thus exposed to politics and were enfranchised in this very restricted and narrow sense.

refer to these as masculinist because of the gender stereotype which usually makes such qualities the exclusive reserve of men. Esther was loyal, brave and diplomatic and it is because of this that she (like Ruth) is rewarded with the most extraordinary gift of having a biblical book named after her. The overriding reading of male *Israelites* in terms of her salvific role is that Esther is made of manly stuff, of tough stuff - she is martyr material. But how does Esther feature in the interpretation of the *Israelite* womenfolk?

### 8.5 "May I change from my ways and be like Esther"

From the perspective of the female *Israelites* we can also discern two dimensions in the theological identity of Esther, viz. the *spiritual* and the *socio-cultural* aspects. With regard to the spiritual dimension of her identity Esther is a woman who had received grace (*ufefe*). An important hallmark of her spirituality is the element of truth. Esther worshipped God and prayed in truth and was a truthful girl (Petitions 14,38,40). God heard the prayer of Esther (Petition 55).

In terms of the socio-cultural dimension Esther had been raised properly (Petition 13). Esther had good manners and was respectful (Petition 63). She did not have parents but grew up under Modercai. "She did not give her guardian trouble. She did not grow up with pride." She was neither disobedient nor dissatisfied (Petition 15). Esther was steadfast and brave, a heroine who was prepared to meet death (Petitions 27, 28, 35). Because of her humility (*wayelulamile*) Esther was able to save her people (Petition 37). In their appropriation of her identity the *Israelite* womenfolk pray that they may emulate her good-mannered and respectful disposition, her lack of pride, her obedience and contentment, her steadfastness and bravery, her grace-filled disposition, and her truthful prayerfulness which were the qualities which enabled Esther to save her people.

What we see in the reading of the *Israelite* womenfolk is that with respect to her spirituality Esther is again accorded *soft qualities* of having received grace, of worshipping and praying in truth. As far as the socio-cultural aspect of her identity is concerned the womenfolk appear to conform to the public transcript of according Esther *domesticating* and *masculinist* qualities. Her domesticating qualities are: being properly raised, being good-mannered and respectful, not being troublesome and lacking in pride, being neither disobedient nor dissatisfied.

However, it is interesting that in describing her masculinist qualities the *Israelite* womenfolk do not go to the same length as their male counterparts. She is described in heroic terms of being a steadfast and brave heroine who was prepared to meet death. But at the same time she was humble and saved her people. In other words, her bravery goes hand in hand with her humility. Her machismo is dampened by her humility. Again, we can see that she is martyr material through her preparedness to meet death. Significantly however, the *Israelite* women are silent about the extraordinariness and extent of her feat, viz. that she even had a book named after her. With respect to her "spiritual" qualities the womenfolk put an emphasis on truth whereas the menfolk make do not make a reference to the quality of truth. I move now to consider the *Israelites'* view of the other important woman in the story, the counterpart of Queen Esther.

### **8.6 Down with Queen Vashti, down!**

In order to understand even deeper who and what Esther theologically represents to the *Israelites*, it is necessary that we consider how they understand the identity of her counterpart, Queen Vashti, who fell from grace. The dominant mark of Vashti's identity in the *Israelites'* reading of the narrative is that of *pride*.

Queen Vashti was proud. In terms of the reading strategies of the male *Israelites* this pride led her to disobedience which in turn posed a challenge and presented a threat to the superiority and lordship of men. As the preacher on Day One put it, "The queen's behaviour would set a bad example and precedent for other women." Preaching on the first chapter of the book where the character of Queen Vashti features prominently, the preacher of the day underscores the importance of humility as opposed to pride. Drawing from the New Testament he asserts that Jesus said: "Blessed are those who are humble (*Banoyolo abo balulamileyo*)." He then continues to make his point by giving examples of pride as well as anti-pride examples from the Old Testament: "Even in the days of Noah people showed pride and did not believe that God would destroy them. But God did. Even the king of Niniveh humbled himself and repented when Jonah preached. What is to be done with the law enacted by King Ahasuerus?"

Clearly then, in the preacher's view the results of pride are destruction as can be seen in the example of Vashti and the people during Noah's time. But for those

who are humble there is blessedness and salvation as can be seen in the example of the Sermon on the Mount and in the positive response of the king of Niniveh. In short, pride leads to destruction and humility to salvation.

Homily eight describes Queen Vashti as a vineyard that does not bear fruit in spite of having received attention from the king. The preacher proclaims: "Vashti had forgotten her position and how she had been honoured by the king who was now calling for her." The preacher then continues and gives an example from Isaiah about how God destroys the vineyard that does not bear fruit: "Remember Isaiah said: 'I have tended this vineyard and given it everything it needs but where is the fruit?' God will destroy the fence 'he' has built around the vineyard. God will withhold the rain." In this instance, destruction consists in the removal of protection, the destruction of the fence that God has built around the vineyard, and in the withholding of rain. In his prayer a male petitioner (Petition 4) points out another outcome of Vashti's actions: "A law was enacted because of Vashti." There seems to be a slight hint of an implicit regret that things had to come to this, that a law had to be enacted. The next male petitioner (Petition 5) articulates his view in terms of a rhetorical question: "What is to be done because of Queen Vashti's pride? She was dethroned."

But it is not everyone amongst the *Israelite* men whose condemnation of Queen Vashti is total and unequivocal. After requesting freedom, a male petitioner (Petition 4) voices his deep concern and worry about the events recounted in the reading of the day: "When on the seventh day the king was merry with wine he remembered an important thing he had forgotten. He remembered because of the wine. The second Key worries me: 'You shall not drink wine'. A law was enacted because of Vashti." The petitioner concludes by requesting God to grant him the ability to distinguish between good and evil. Clearly, the petitioner is very careful not to raise controversy by condoning Vashti's action. He does not come out overtly in her defence. He gives her the benefit of the doubt in the most subtle manner. He is most disconcerted that it is because of the wine that King Ahasuerus "remembered an important thing he had forgotten", implying that had the king been of sober habits as the second Key demands, things could have turned out differently.

Also, in a conversation I had with elder Majezi after the service of Day One he indicated that the wine section in that day's reading is a controversial one in that the king was drunk. He suggested that Queen Vashti may just have been shy to go and parade herself in front of all those drunk men, and not really intent on disobedience. He pointed out how demeaning the behaviour of a group of drunk men can be, especially to a very beautiful woman. It is significant that both men who gave Queen Vashti some benefit of the doubt did not come out fully and openly in this. In the final analysis, it appears that they succumb to the dominant view.

To sum up, Queen Vashti stands for destruction which was caused by her pride and by her being unable to bear fruit, and as such she represents the opposite of Queen Esther. In her turn Esther stands for blessedness and salvation which was brought about by her humility, respect, obedience, her awareness of where she came from, her bravery, and her earnest prayer. As the preacher (Homily 7) put it, in contradistinction to Vashti, Esther was "a more worthy woman." How do the *Israelite* womenfolk view the character of Vashti?

The view that Vashti was proud is common among both male and among those very few female *Israelites* (three out of about seventy petitions) who do refer to Vashti at all. However, what is worth noting is that in spite of their condemnation of her, the *Israelite* womenfolk are silent regarding the view that Queen Vashti's behaviour "would set a bad example and precedent for other women." The first woman (Petition 1) laments over Vashti's pride: "Oh, the pride of Vashti in front of all those men who came to fetch her." The next woman (Petition 2) goes further and prays that she should never have pride such as Vashti had. The next female petitioner points out the results of Vashti's pride: "Yesterday we heard how Vashti lost all she had because of her pride" (Petition 15). Vashti had lost her status as the first lady, she lost her material possessions. What this seems to imply is that had Vashti been humble she would have retained her material possessions and her prestigious position. Let us move now to see how the *Israelites'* view of the other women characters in the story further illumine the identity of Esther.

## 8.7 What about the other women?

Apart from Queen Vashti there are three types of character sets of women who feature in the *Israelites'* reading of the narrative, viz. *intra-textual*, *extra-textual* and *extra-biblical* characters. These are Zeresh, Ruth, Jezebel, the virgins of Hegai, and the roadworker's wife. Zeresh and the virgins of Hegai are intra-textual, i.e. they are characters which appear within the text of Esther. Ruth and Jezebel, are extra-textual characters, i.e. they are extraneous to the text and appear in the *Israelites'* reading as characters imported from other parts of the Bible and they are used to support specific interests and viewpoints. The roadworker's wife is an extra-biblical character that is brought in from without the Bible, from present times, also to support a specific viewpoint regarding what is considered as normative in terms of the behaviour and public disposition of women.

In respect of Zeresh, the wife of Haman, it is well worth noting that the *Israelite* womenfolk are silent regarding her identity and reticent regarding the detail of her malevolent intent. None of them refer directly to her by name. What they do is to repeat her words which form the theme of Homily six, 'You are beginning to lose power to him. Surely he will defeat you' (Petitions 51, 53). The *Israelite* menfolk who refer to her do so in accordance with how she is presented in the plot, viz. as an ambitious, scheming, bloodthirsty, and power-hungry woman<sup>12</sup>. The extra-textual character of Jezebel is brought in at this point by a male *Israelite* (Homily 5) to illustrate how another woman who was also located near the centre of power incited her husband. As the preacher put it:

So Zeresh, his wife, said that he should get rid of Modercai by building gallows and hanging him on them. Remember Jezebel and Naboth? How she incited her husband (Ahab) to get rid of his enemy (Naboth)? His wife led him astray. Zeresh did not see anything wrong with murder. She expected Haman to be happy after killing Modercai.

The next preacher (Homily 6) explains how Zeresh must have felt when events turned out differently and Haman her husband ended up publicly honouring his enemy Modercai in front of the whole city: "Zeresh must have been deeply disturbed to see such a sight. Zeresh knew that the Jews were strong and said that

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<sup>12</sup> Like Lady Macbeth in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* she is bent on power and incites her husband to take extreme and decisive measures in removing all obstacles to power.

Modercai would eventually have power over Haman." Zeresh is furthermore presented as an enemy not only of Modercai but implicitly of the Jews as well and she knew that Modercai would cause the downfall of her husband.

The next extra-textual character, Ruth, is brought in by a preacher to illustrate the point that it is because of her bravery that like Esther she has a biblical book named after her (Homily 5). The implication here is that women need to perform deeds of extra-ordinary bravery in order to have biblical books named after them. A further inference to be made from this is that apart from Esther and Ruth none of the other women who feature positively in the bible warrant to have books named after them.

The roadworker's wife (Homily 3) is an extra-biblical character that the preacher brings in as an example to make the point that wives need to conform to and cooperate with the wishes and whims of their husbands in front of strangers because something important might be at stake. In this instance the roadworker wanted to prove to his white colleague (and the black fellow-workers) that blacks and whites are not different from one another. So when he tried to kiss his wife publicly in front of strangers as white people do she refused and because of this he lost a bet to his white colleague who had insisted that whites and blacks are different. The preacher imported this example to show up Queen Vashti's pride and that women should comply with the wishes of their husbands.

The virgins of Hegai, the minor intra-textual characters in the reading of the *Israelites*, are referred to approvingly by a preacher (Homily 2) in accordance with their role as objects of beautification in preparation for the pleasure and indulgence of the king. From the perspective of a woman *Israelite* the virgins of Hegai are objects of envy. The petitioner (Petition 11) prays that God may make her well and prepare her as God did the virgins of Hegai. She requests to be as thoroughly stamped as the virgins were so that there is not a single husk left. However, the petitioner is silent with regard to the view espoused in the homily that the virgins were beautified as objects for the delight of the king. The preparation of the virgins of Hegai through beauty treatment is used here as a metaphor for purification and it is analogous to Mgijima's vision that those who were saved from the impending destruction had been purified like well-stamped grains of maize in the palm of God's hand.

In summing up, it is well worth noting that in terms of the reading strategies it is only the *Israelite* menfolk who utilise extra-textual and extra-biblical women characters. They do so in order to support their patriarchal reading and interpretation of the narrative of Esther and in order to support the kyriarchal views that the text holds concerning the intra-textual female characters. The character of Jezebel shows up the badness and destructive intent of Zeresh whereas the brave character of Ruth shows up the bravery and redemptive intent of Esther as really being a masculine trait. The extra-biblical character of the roadworker's wife is brought in to show up the badness of Queen Vashti and to support the patriarchal view that wives should be submissive and do as their husbands wish, especially in public. An implication of this is that the hidden or public agendas of husbands are more important than the dignity or shyness of their wives. Significantly, the *Israelite* womenfolk are silent with respect to the extra-textual and extra-biblical women characters. I move now to consider how the male characters in the narrative feature in the *Israelites'* reading of the text.

### **8.8 It's a man's world**

The identity of Queen Esther is theologically further defined by how the *Israelites* relate her to male characters, both intra-textual and extra-textual. The principal intra-textual characters in the *Israelites* menfolk's reading of the narrative are King Ahasuerus, Modercai her father, and Haman the prime minister. The minor intra-textual characters are the eunuchs Hegai and Hathach, Memucan an administrator, and the anti-imperial plotters Bigthana and Teresh. In terms of the minor intra-textual characters there is no expansion in terms of the interpretation and appropriation of their roles apart from repeating what is already stated in the text. Let us look at the main male characters.

The character of King Ahasuerus is presented as a mixed bag. What the *Israelite* menfolk underscore in the character of Ahasuerus is the fact that he was a man who revelled in his wealth and prestige as an extremely powerful emperor and he went to great lengths to demonstrate this. The king is one who when he was merry with wine remembers his very beautiful wife. He acts on the counsel of his advisors to get rid of his wife and enacts a law which makes the supremacy of men a statutory provision. But the king also showed mercy to Esther when she appeared in front of him in violation of the law which stipulates that it is his prerogative to

decide who can enter his presence (Homily 5). Ahasuerus is one who repays the debt he owed to Modercai who revealed the plot to assassinate him (Homilies 6, 7). However, the king is later criticised for having "forgotten that it was his seal that had made the planned execution of the Jews official" in the first place (Homily 7).

In his turn Haman the prime minister is presented as a "hard-hearted," "cruel," and "evil" man who "abused his power and plotted to have the Jews killed." He boasted about his power and prestige but was unhappy and angry about Modercai the Jew and foreigner at the entrance to the king's palace and was also unhappy about the Jews in general (Homilies 3, 5, 6). But Haman was happy to get an exclusive invitation from Queen Esther to the banquet she had prepared. Haman also allowed his wife Zeresh to influence him to build gallows on which to hang Modercai (Homily 5). He also did not know that the advice he gave regarding how the king should honour the man in who he is pleased was not meant for him but for Modercai. Haman is also made an object of ridicule in that the effectiveness of Esther's plan must have caused him embarrassment and shock "that he must have fallen off his chair and hid under the table" (Homilies 6, 7).

On his part Modercai is described as the father of Esther. He saw it fit to inform on the evil intentions of the anti-imperial plotters (Homily 2). Modercai is further seen as a conscientious Jew in that he remembered the law of Sinai and said 'You shall have no other gods before me'. When the plan to exterminate the Jews was announced Modercai went into mourning, wore sackcloth and went to sit at the entrance to the palace (Homily 4). It is Modercai who informs Esther about the decree to exterminate the Jews. It is he who, using theological arguments, urges Esther to use her position of power and her office as queen responsibly by intervening on behalf of the Jews (Homily 7, 8). It is clear therefore that in spite of being the first lady Esther was not privy to the affairs of state and it took someone from outside these circles to make her aware of what was happening. It is only after this action of Modercai that Esther's role as an agent of salvation begins in earnest. Furthermore, Modercai was a farsighted person, as the preacher of Homily eight put it: "Modercai never insisted on his right to be rewarded for the good deed he had done. He kept quiet. His silence was like an investment in a bank that is used for a rainy day."

There is a range of extra-textual characters from both the Old and New Testaments that are utilized in the interpretation of the narrative. Jesus in his words of the Sermon on the Mount 'Blessed are the meek' is used to emphasize the humility which Queen Vashti lacked and Esther had. This humility is further illustrated in the use of the king of Niniveh who humbled himself and repented in response to Jonah's preaching (Homily 1). The troika Shadrack, Meshack and Abednego are used in a supportive role to Modercai's stance of refusing to bow down before Haman (Homilies 3,7). The character of Moses who defeated Pharaoh is used in support of the victory of Modercai and also to illustrate that Haman lost power to Modercai in a manner analogous to Pharaoh losing power over the Israelites. This invincibility of Modercai is also demonstrated in the character of Jacob who despite his hurt hip was not defeated 'because he walked with God'. The New Testament character of Paul is used to further support the idea of invincibility because, according to the preacher, Paul said: 'We are those whose spirit has been strengthened' (Homily 6). The character of Solomon highlights the importance of Esther's obedience as a teaching to be written down and committed to the memory of the heart (Homily 8).

It is of consequence that all the extra-textual male characters are used by the male *Israelites* in a positive and exemplary fashion. These good extra-textual male characters show up the goodness of the good intra-textual men characters who exhibited humility, steadfastness in refusing to bow down before the false gods of men. These extra-textual male characters are examples of a victorious, an invincible and a strengthened spirit in the face of oppressive powers. This is the stuff that men are made of. These extra-textual male characters do not end here in their roles but also show up the humility and obedience of Queen Esther in contradistinction to the badness of Queen Vashti. Esther is like a man in her humility and obedience. Let us now consider how the male characters feature in the reading of the *Israelite* womenfolk.

It is interesting that in their petitions the *Israelite* womenfolk make less use of and reference to the male characters (5 references) in comparison to their use of Esther (at least 11 direct references). The *Israelite* womenfolk also utilise intra-textual and extra-textual male characters. The intra-textual characters who feature are Modercai, the king, and Haman. Modercai is positively recognised as the guardian under who Esther grew (Petition 15). Haman and Ahasuerus are presented in a

negative light as merry-makers and drunkards in the busy city of Susa (Petition 20). Haman is further presented as the one who dug a pit for Modercai (Petition 57) and he was punished for his bad deeds (Petition 60). The extra-textual male characters which the *Israelite* womenfolk utilise are Shadrack, Meshack and Abednego. In line with the interpretation of the *Israelite* malefolk this troika is used positively to highlight their steadfastness and preparedness to accept death (Petition 53). I move now to deal with the rest of the petitionary preoccupations of the *Israelite* womenfolk.

### 8.9 The prerequisites of human survival

The petitions of the womenfolk demonstrate that their soteriological notions are to a large extent shaped by worldly and not just spiritual needs. It is significant that out of the seventy one petitions which the *Israelite* women offered during the course of the festival, only about sixteen can be strictly classified as direct responses to the homilies in terms of their appropriation. This is especially true with respect to the appropriation of gender stereotypes as found in the narrative and as espoused by the preachers. In other words, the *Israelite* womenfolk made less use of those homilies and those messages which can be said to perpetuate gender stereotypes. There were those petitions (e.g. Petitions 24 and 41) which alluded to what the petitioners call the 'word of the day'. In these instances the petitioners affirm that they have heard the words and request that these words 'may find a place in their hearts'. However, these petitions do not give us much of a clue as to how this message is understood or existentially appropriated. Also, these petitions are silent in terms of affirming or denying gender stereotypes.

A good example of such a silent petition is Petition 42 where the petitioner prays: "Today's word is 'What is your request from God?' God knows what I need. There is an animal that lives in water (crocodile) and yet it is full of *intsente* (the very rough and hard scales on the soles of a person's feet which also tends to crack due to lack of washing). May I not be like this animal." The petitioner is clearly not keen on publicly vocalising her need or deficiency. She is content with the knowledge that God is familiar with her condition. What she requests is that she may be a malleable object which responds positively to agents of change. In short, she prays for the transformation of her life.

What is of further significance in terms of our interest in the notions of soteriology is that the rest of the women's petitions (including some of the direct petitions) were preoccupied with what Nürnberger referred to as the *immanent* prerequisites of human survival and wellbeing<sup>13</sup>. These were wideranging and down-to-earth and encompassed both *personal* and *contextual* needs. On the personal side the petitions addressed mainly *biological* needs, e.g. they were requests for strength (Petitions 1,50), for the restoration of personal health as well as the health of family members (Petition 55), for a family member who abuses alcohol (Petition 10), for parents (Petitions 31, 32, 33, 34, 39). Besides the biological needs some of the personal petitions were aimed at *spiritual* deficiencies such as the need to be made righteous (Petition 25), for conversion (Petitions 29,72), for faith (Petition 26), for resilience and fortitude, for steadfastness (Petition 59), for forgiveness (Petition 18), for being truthful (Petition 61). One petitioner (Petition 34) prayed that she may be a child again and be taught all things anew. Some of these spiritual petitions prayed for protection and were formulated according to the prophecies and message of Mgijima, e.g. one petitioner prayed that she may hide under the cave with her children as the world is being destroyed (Petition 13) while another (Petition 61) prayed that she may be well-stamped (like the grains of maize). As far as the relational needs are concerned, the petitioners prayed for patience and tolerance (Petition 67), and for the right attitude and disposition to colleagues at work (Petition 66). Some of the petitions were unspecified in terms of need or deficiency, e.g. one petitioner simply prayed that her burdened be made light (Petition 64).

On the contextual side of the immanent needs the petitions covered the *economic*, *educational* and *pacific* deficiencies. These were requests for food, for money for unspecified needs (Petitions 57, 61) as well as for specified needs such as financial strength to finish the house that the petitioner had started building (Petition 30), for success with studies (Petition 70), for employment for her mother (Petition 8) and for those who are plotting violence (Petition 25).

Some of these are *petitions of thanksgiving* to God for a variety of specified immanent needs that had been met, e.g. that God had looked after the petitioner and her mother (Petitions 7, 8), for children who passed examinations (Petition

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<sup>13</sup> See chapter 2 for a discussion of Nürnberger's theory.

10), for the restoration of health (Petition 19). Another petitioner (Petition 9) gave thanks that the evangelist had taught them as children how to pray and to honour their parents. Another gave thanks for that God had answered their prayers (Petition 2).

Apart from the thanksgiving petitions I was able to identify the titles of ten *hymnal petitions*. According to Nürnberg's scheme these hymnal petitions can be classified under the inner circle of the *personal relationship with God* in terms of their thematic content. The thematic content of these hymns was quite wideranging and encompassed thanksgiving (*Bulelani kuYehova*), praise of God's majesty (*Hosanna enyangweni; Thixo akunangqaleko*), hope and trust in God (*Ndiyakuthemba; Yehova ndithembela kuwe; Xa umhlaba uphithizela*) and resignation to the will of God (*Lizalis' idinga lakho; Ndiyawubona lomsinga umhle; 'Behold I come'*). I shall now attempt to pull together the various interpretive strands amongst the *Israelites*.

#### **8.10 A variegated hermeneutic**

In trying to uncover the soteriological notions embedded in the Fast of Esther I concentrated on unravelling the complex identity of Esther through a gender-sensitive analysis of the *Israelites'* reading and interpretive strategies. This analysis has brought me to the conclusion that the *Israelites'* hermeneutic strategy can best be described as *variegated*. What I mean with the notion of a variegated hermeneutic is that there is a diversity of interpretations amongst the *Israelites* and this diversity, characterised by internal contradictions, can be attributed to what I would like to characterise as gender-biased and gender-specific interests and concerns. We can identify three hermeneutic streams amongst the *Israelites* with respect to these interests and concerns.

The first stream I would like to call a *patriarchal/kyriarchal hermeneutics*. This stream is motivated by the male-biased interests of the *Israelite* menfolk which the *Israelite* womenfolk appear to endorse. I use the word 'appear' advisedly and deliberately because, as we shall see below in the third interpretive stream, there is much more than immediately meets the eye in this apparent endorsement. What we see in the patriarchal/kyriarchal interpretive strategy is that though the *Israelite* menfolk recognise the femininity of Esther, which they define largely through soft

and domesticating qualities, her salvific identity is contingent on two principal factors. First, she has to assume an attitude and a lifestyle of submission and deference to the superiority and lordship of men, thereby reversing and counteracting the damage caused by Vashti's pride. In other words, Esther undoes and renders null and void the precedent that Queen Vashti's self-affirming and 'unwomanly' actions set for the women in the empire. Second, Esther has to outdo not only Queen Vashti but women in general through assuming what is considered to be the quintessential masculine quality of bravery.

The second stream which I shall refer to as a *hermeneutics of temperance*, though much more subtle and hidden, seeks to affirm the canonical demand for temperance contained in the second of the Seven Keys: Do not drink wine. We can refer to this strategy as a *canonical* reading of the text. The subtlety of this interpretive strategy can be ascribed to the concern not to undermine the anti-pride and male-biased interests of the first hermeneutic stream. In other words, the two men who criticise king Ahasuerus and his male council do not come out strongly and publicly in their criticism. There is a subdued support for queen Vashti.

The third interpretive stream which I have decided to call a *hermeneutics of silence and reticence* is reflected in the interpretive strategies of the *Israelite* womenfolk. In this hermeneutics the women appear to have adopted a strategic silence in respect of a number of very critical instances. It is worth recapturing these. The first of these is their reticence in going to the same lengths as the menfolk in describing the masculinist qualities of Esther. They describe Esther as not only being steadfast and brave but also as being humble. In other words, though being brave Esther still retains her soft quality. The second instance is their silence with regard to the fact that she and Ruth are the only women who have biblical books named after them. The women make no reference to this.

The third instance of silence is with regard to the condemnation of Queen Vashti's actions. The *Israelite* womenfolk say nothing about the fact that Vashti's behaviour would set a bad precedent for women. The next strategic silence on the part of the womenfolk pertains to the identity of Zeresh, the wife of Haman. Not only do they appear to be reticent in exposing her malevolent intent, but they do not even mention her name, even though they do use her words. The fifth instance of silence is with regard to the virgins of Hegai. There is silence about the fact that

the virgins were being prepared and beautified for the delight and pleasure of king Ahasuerus. The sixth silence is in terms of the extra-textual and extra-biblical women characters. The *Israelite* womenfolk make absolutely no reference to these characters which obviously play such an important role in the male-biased reading and patriarchal/kyriarchal interpretive strategy of the menfolk. I move now to pull together the various soteriological strands to which the above reading and interpretive strategies give rise.

### 8.11 Views of salvation

The first soteriological strand is linked to the notion of freedom. The festival of the Fast of Esther represents an opportunity for the *Israelites* to request freedom, a freedom which is much more profound and which transcends the bounds of political freedom in the face of what is considered to be a dispensation of cruelty, exile, and racialism. It is important to note here that the *Israelites* do not deny the existence of socio-political imperatives and exigencies. On the contrary, there is a recognition of these exigencies though there is a divergence of views with regard to the participation or non-participation of the *Israelites* in the programmes that these exigencies dictate. Their vision for freedom is much deeper. For them freedom means overcoming the domination of commodification and work-time. In this sense we can say that one element in the salvific intent that the festival represents to the *Israelites* is *transcendent freedom* which will be brought about solely through God's initiative and benevolence.

The next strand is embedded in the gender-biased interpretive strategies of the *Israelites*. With respect to the reading and interpretive strategy of the *Israelite* menfolk there is a clear *patriarchal/kyriarchal soteriology*. In other words, the menfolk's views of salvation are shaped by male-biased and male-centred interests. Esther is an agent of salvation through a male-defined identity. This identity already has its very firm foundations in the kyriarchal programme of the biblical text of Esther. The *Israelite* men pick this up and continue to construct a soteriology which prescribes a masculine role for Esther. According to this soteriology Esther is indeed an agent of salvation but she is one only in terms defined by a kyriarchal order.

The third strand can be found in the *woman-typical* interpretive strategy of the *Israelite* womenfolk. Here the notions of salvation which emerge can best be described as *ambivalent*. On the one hand the womenfolk seem to regurgitate the hegemonic views through which the agency of Esther in the salvation of the Jews is perceived and constructed along patriarchal/kyriarchal lines. On the other hand these soteriological views are tampered with and dampened through a conscious or unconscious downplaying of masculinist qualities and male-centred viewpoints.

The last soteriological strand is discernible in the rest of the petitionary preoccupations of the *Israelite* womenfolk. This strand which is concentrated around the immanent prerequisites of human survival and wellbeing is by far the most pronounced to the *Israelite* womenfolk. From this we can conclude that for women salvation must to a large extent include the satisfaction of immanent needs not because of but in spite of what the menfolk preach. Here again we see a soteriology constructed along what women consider to be the priorities.

## 8.12 Conclusion

In considering the notion of freedom which is a key theme of the festival of Esther we saw that when I put the question of political versus spiritual freedom the clergy did make a distinction between the two but it was quite nuanced. There was a recognition of the importance of freedom but there was disagreement on how this should be achieved. In the view of Mgijima and the *Israelites* to push the stone/mountain of freedom according to the flesh is inadequate because it does not question the fundamental organization of society on the basis of abstract chronotic time. In other words, for the *Israelites* to be really free means to work when they want to; to go to school when they wish; to worship God at the right time rather than at the time defined by commodification. Their qualified acceptance of the political struggle is based on this vision of a society which is not structured on abstract chronotic time. For the *Israelites* salvation is more than worldly freedom or political freedom. It is the transformation of a dispensation which conforms with and acquiesces to oppressive commodified time. It is the transformation of the kingdom in which time controls humans to a dispensation in which they as believers have control over time.

In exploring further the festival's theme of freedom I took a deliberate decision to use a gender-centred approach. I constructed my analysis around the character and identity of Esther who is the heroine in the narrative. To my satisfaction, this approach has paid theological dividends. We saw that the soteriological notions which emerge in the celebration of the festival are shaped by reading and interpretive strategies which serve patriarchal/kyriarchal interests. We also saw that this notwithstanding, there are silent impulses emanating from the reading and interpretive strategies of the *Israelite* womenfolk which, to say the least, raise serious doubts as to the totalising effects of the hegemonic views. In other words, on the one hand the *Israelite* womenfolk do appear to accept a patriarchal/kyriarchal soteriology, but on the other hand they do address their own soteriological priorities and needs which I have classified under the woman-specific rubric. In the next chapter I shall look at the last two of the *Israelite* festivals, both structured around the notion of memory.

## CHAPTER 9

### REMEMBERING MGIJIMA AND BULHOEK 1921

You are worthy to take the scroll  
and break the seals of it,  
because you were sacrificed, and with your blood  
you bought people for God  
of every race, language, people and nation  
and made them a line of kings and priests,  
to serve our God and to rule the world.

*Revelation 5,9-10*

#### 9.0 Introduction

In Chapter Eight I looked at the festival celebrating the events narrated in the book of Esther. We saw the extent to which the *Israelites'* celebration of this festival, in spite of woman-specific interpretive strategies, is largely constructed around patriarchal/kyriarchal interests and soteriological notions. In this chapter I shall consider the *Israelites'* celebration of two one-day festivals, viz. the commemoration of the death of Enoch Mgijima which was held on 6 March 1994, and the commemoration of the 1921 Bulhoek Massacre on 24 May 1994. My aim in considering these two annual festivals is to uncover the notions of salvation that these services as mnemonic ceremonies bring forth. I am thus not interested in the historical factuality and accuracy of the *Israelites'* rendition of the events that these services commemorate but I shall focus on the deeper theological meaning that the *Israelites'* act of remembering accord these events. In other words, my interest is on how in the celebration of these festivals, the collective memory of the *Israelites* makes theological sense of, interprets and appropriates the legacy that is Mgijima, as well as their interpretation of the major event through which this legacy is further constituted, namely the Bulhoek Massacre.

In Chapter Five I began the process of uncovering the meaning and appropriation of this legacy by the *Israelites* through their construction of what I termed the *persona theologica* of Enoch Mgijima. We saw the complex manner in which this *persona theologica* is constituted. This chapter can be seen as a continuation of this exploration but it does so through an attempt to uncover and analyse the soteriological notions embedded in the two services commemorating these events. In other words, I shall focus on how the *Israelites'* collective memory theologically justifies the celebration of these festivals as well as the ritual performances through which this collective memory is conveyed and sustained.

In order to better understand the meaning and theological significance of the services commemorating the death of Mgijima on 5 March 1928 and the 1921 Bulhoek Massacre we need to recapture some of the main points made in Chapter Four regarding collective memory and ritual. First, continuity between past and present is maintained and preserved through memory and this makes it possible to anticipate the future. Second, it is in commemorative ceremonies that social memory is to be found and this memory is in turn conveyed and sustained through ritual performances. Third, it is a community of interests and thoughts that makes possible retention in memory. Fourth, that which is recollected in collective memory gets situated within the mental spaces that the group has provided and in turn these mental spaces are supported by the material spaces that this specific group occupies. Let me begin with the festival of 6 March 1994 which commemorated the death of the prophet Mgijima, the founder of the *Church of God and Saints of Christ*.

### **9.1 Commemorating the death of Enoch Mgijima**

I attended the service commemorating the death of Enoch Mgijima on 6 March 1994, at Ntabelanga, Bulhoek, the site of the 1921 massacre, also the site of the grave of Enoch Mgijima. Enoch Mgijima died on 5 March 1928. This commemoration service is a fairly recent practice which began with the Queenstown faction of the CGSC in the 1970's and was adopted by the Shiloh faction in the 1980's. But what is interesting is that for the Shiloh group, the main focus of my investigation, the commemoration service was initially celebrated only by the womenfolk on this day which was set aside for their conference. It is only later that it became a joint affair with the menfolk also joining in and taking over.

### 9.1.1 Structure of the liturgy

The commemoration service was held outside the tabernacle building at Ntabelanga and started at 10.30am. The dress code is called *black and white*.

*Womenfolk*: white head ribbon, white blouses, black neckties, black skirts, brown nylon stockings, black shoes (a few have brown shoes).

*Menfolk*: white/cream jackets, clergy have black clerical shirt with stiff white round collar, non-clergy have white wing collar shirt and black neckties, white/cream waistcoat, black pants, black shoes. The structure of the liturgy is as follows:

(1) *Gathering and solemn entrance*. The seats are arranged in a U-shape. The gathering hymn is sung and the congregation gets seated in three rows facing each other which form the two vertical sides of the U-shape. The hymn is interrupted by a short bugle call at which the congregation stops singing and stands up as the clergy enter from the right hand side and take their seats on the horizontal side of the U-shape facing the congregation. The congregation sits after them and the gathering hymn is resumed. The clergy are seated in a hierarchical order from left to right as follows: the bishop, the evangelists, and then the elders.

(2) *Opening and welcome*. The gathering hymn stops and all stand for the opening hymn after which the opening prayer is said and is concluded in the usual manner with hands joined at the little fingers and with the men lifting up their joined hands at the recital of the Lord's Prayer. After the prayer all sit while another hymn is sung. Elder Sizwe Mbayi, the Master of Ceremonies, comes to the front and welcomes all, including the researcher. He notes that this is the 65th year since the death of the Watchman of Israel. He then introduces elder Majezi as the narrator who will narrate the lifestory (*imbali*) of prophet Enoch Mgiijima.

(3) *Lifestory of Enoch Mgiijima*. All are seated while the story of the life of Mgiijima is narrated. Though the narrator uses notes the narration is not a verbatim reading of a prepared speech but a free and animated account of the main points and events in the Prophet's life.

(4) *Scripture reading: Nehemiah 2,1-10*. After the narration of the lifestory a hymn is sung after which the Master of Ceremonies introduces the preacher of the day, elder Philemon Adams.

(5) *Homily*. The preacher uses the standard practice of pacing up and down in front of the congregation along the horizontal side where the clergy are seated. The rest congregation is also seated during the sermon.

(6) *Prayer*. After the homily all kneel while a hymn is sung. The hymn is then hummed and slowly fades until the humming is hardly audible. The singing picks up and gradually becomes louder until it reaches normal loudness, then it stops.

(7) *Thanksgiving*. Evangelist Mbayi makes a speech to thank the congregation for all their efforts and material contributions (meat, vegetables, etc) towards the festive meal to be held after the liturgical proceedings. He also gives thanks to God for the beautiful weather.

(8) *Procession to the site of the grave*. After the concluding hymn the congregation proceeds to the site of the grave of Enoch Mgijima. The procession is in a five row formation, led by the shepherd flag. The womenfolk make up the inner three rows while the men constitute the outer two rows. Right at the end of the procession is the bishop, the evangelists and the elders. All the menfolk are holding their ceremonial staves aloft in their right hands. About sixty metres before the cemetery the procession stops. The bishop, evangelists and elders move towards the front. The procession gets into single file formation with the bishop right in front, followed by evangelist Mbayi, other evangelists, and elders, the shepherd flag. The grave of the Prophet is enclosed with a steel fence which has a gate.

(9) *Proceedings at the grave*. One of the elders opens the gate and the bishop is the first one to enter, followed by the evangelists and elders, and they stand at the foot of the tombstone, facing the head with the inscription stone. The rest of the congregation is standing outside the grave in rows, surrounding it.

The men put down their ceremonial staves against the steel fence and join their hands at the little fingers. The processional hymn stops and the bishop greets the congregation after which another *umbongo* is sung with rhythmic swaying backwards and forwards and bowing their heads at appropriate intervals. After the hymn the Lord's Prayer is recited, with the men's hands joined at the little fingers and uplifted. Another *umbongo* is sung after which the bishop greets the congregation and then he speaks with the Prophet.

*The Last Prayer of Mgijima*. After speaking with the Prophet the bishop then prepares to read the Prayer which Mgijima left them. He tells the congregation: "This is a great prayer. We have to keep this prayer in our hearts." He then

proceeds to read the prayer. An *umbongo* is sung after which the men join hands at the little fingers as the bishop says the concluding prayer at the end of which the Disciples' Prayer is recited in the usual manner. At the end of the Disciples' Prayer the bishop pronounces the benediction. The Master of Ceremonies takes over and after greeting the congregation invites them back to the tabernacle building for the festive meal. The congregation disperses and walks back to the church building in no particular order, chatting as they walk along. Let us now consider the deeper theological meaning and spiritual significance of this service commemorating the death of Enoch Mgijima.

### 9.1.2 Theological motivation

The service commemorating the death of Enoch Mgijima is based on a number of theological motivations. The commemoration service is an opportunity for a focused and intensive *remembering* of the death of the Prophet as well as an opportunity for requesting and receiving *impilo* (life, health and wellbeing). In the words of bishop Mzileni (07.03.1994), "The importance of the service is to remind ourselves of the day when he (Mgijima) slept because he slept on the 5 March (1928). Our belief is that when we go there (to the site of his grave) we receive life, we speak with him in heaven. But he is not dead, he is sleeping. That is why we have that service." The bishop then continues to explain that at the grave they speak with the Prophet, presenting the people to him and requesting *impilo* for them for they are ill. At the grave of the Prophet on the actual day of commemoration the bishop spoke the following words:

At last we have arrived at these bones. What is your disposition as you stand at these bones? Did you look at yourself in the mirror before you left home? I thank God for granting me this opportunity to be here. Enoch, here are your people. Enoch, here are your people. I have to say these words. This is another day, this is another year, saints of God. This is where the Prophet lies. Those who have never seen him, this is where he lies. This is the man about whom the story has been told. We are standing in front of his bones. What do you want? Tell me now. We are going towards the Passover. The Prophet is lying in peace. The people are troubled in their souls, they are troubled in the flesh, Oh God of holiness. Breathe on them (*baphefumlele*), shape them and make them one. People have lost their faith (*Inkolo ilahlekile ebantwini*). People no longer have love (*Kulahleke uthando ebantwini*) Without faith there cannot be love. We have finished (*Kugqityiwe*). We are thankful. The men of *Israel* thank you. Breathe on them. Here are your daughters. Breathe

on them as we go towards the Passover. May those who are ill be raised up. I beg you my Lord of all goodness. You know my spiritual state. I beg your forgiveness. Please forgive me Lord of all goodness.

The bishop commences by addressing himself to the congregation, challenging and questioning their spiritual disposition, as if to make sure that they are fit to stand face to face with their founder. Thereafter he addresses himself directly to the Prophet, presenting to him the congregation of the saints who are gathered at the grave. He then presents the Prophet to the congregation. After this he presents the *status congregationis* to the Prophet, emphasising that they are in need of unity, of faith, and of love, that they are ill, that they are troubled in their souls and in their flesh. He then requests that the Prophet breathe on them and heal those who are ill. He requests forgiveness for his own spiritual state so that all of them may go towards the Passover in a fitting state.

Second, the commemoration service is a way of trying to *rededicate* the church to God and to what Mgijima said through retelling what he did, how he went about preaching and how he established the CGSC (Dokoda 05.03.1994). Along these lines Mbayi (04.03.1994) explains that the commemoration service is *to explain the prophethood of Mgijima*. In explicating the prophethood of Mgijima evangelist Mbayi asserts:

I wish it were possible to tell you the depth and breadth of who the Prophet was. Jeremiah 1,5 says, 'Before I created you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I made you holy, I appointed you as prophet to the nations'. This means that a prophet is born, not made. I cannot teach my son to be a prophet. No, that is not possible. A prophet is born.

Here Mbayi is at pains to underscore the fact that prophethood is a gift from God. He then relates incidents related about the childhood of Mgijima to show that as a child already he was gifted in a very special way.

### 9.1.3 The three wise men

The main elements of the service are the narration of the lifestory of Enoch Mgijima and the Prayer which he left his followers before he died. In narrating the life story of Mgijima the narrator touches briefly on the following points: his roots, i.e. the origin of his clan, his birth, and his upbringing (*imvelaphi*), his calling (*ukuphakama kwakhe*), the first baptisms in 1912 and the first Passover in 1913 at Kamastone. The narrator also stresses the role of the eminent figures who pointed to and prepared for his coming (*nangamadoda atshayeleda esalatha ukuza, ukuvuka kobawo uMlindi woSirayeli*). The narrator touches also on some of his prophecies and visions, on his arrest, his life in prison, his return from prison and his death. He notes that he will not speak about the events of 24 May 1921 because these events have their own special day of remembrance. It is not my intention to repeat the points, incidents, prophecies and visions that are narrated on this day because these are not substantively different from those already dealt with in Chapter Five. I shall touch only on new points of special additional theological importance.

Of particular theological significance in the narration of the lifestory is the narrator's view that the coming of Mgijima had been foretold and prepared for (*ukhe watshayelelwa ngabantu ngabantu*) by various people, what I referred to as 'eminent figures' in the preceding paragraph. These eminent personalities are Ntsikana of Gabha, a prophet whom the Xhosas hold in great esteem; William Crowdy in the USA; and a seer (*imboni*) from Lesotho. The first two of these 'three wise men' have already been referred to in Chapter 5. The third 'wise' man, the seer from Lesotho, had told people that there was a great war coming to the world but this war would not be fought with the traditional medicines. He told people that there was a man who would teach them new ways to fight in this war. The seer said to the BaSotho people: 'When you see a star with a tail you should follow it and it will lead you to this man'. The narrator then points out that this star appeared in Africa in 1910. The theological parallels to 'the three wise men' and the star indicating the place where Jesus was born in Matthew 2 are quite obvious and striking. In a sense we can say that the coming of Mgijima was an extraordinary event ordained by God and this divine ordination is attested to through the prophets Ntsikana, Crowdy and the seer from Lesotho.

#### 9.1.4 "We have come here to request blessings"

In the homily the preacher makes the point that as in the reading (Nehemiah 2,1-10) they too have come here to repair the graves of their fathers (*sizokulungisa amangcwaba oobawo bethu*). He asserts that the bishop has come here to request blessings for the *Israelites*, "we are here daughters of Jerusalem and sons of the Prophet at the invitation of the bishop so that we should request blessings. Do not go back home empty-handed (*uzungabuyi ulambatha xa ugoduka*)." As Nehemiah had told people to arm themselves he too exhorts the *Israelites* to arm themselves and prepare themselves for the Passover. They should request a letter (*celani incwadi*) from the King so that they too can go safely past their enemies and that they can overcome their difficulties and build the walls of Jerusalem at Shiloh. He points out that the followers of Mgiijima went to preach as far as Cradock and people received and accepted the word because there is not a single person who is without sin. All that a person needs to do is to stand before God and examine their nothingness and ask for forgiveness for their sins. "It is through grace that we shall enter the kingdom of God because the word of God says 'I shall show mercy unto the one on whom I shall have mercy'. That is why young and old should pray because they do not whether or not God will have mercy on them."

In his interpretation of Nehemiah 2,1-10 the point that the preacher stresses is that the commemoration service constitutes the act of repairing the graves of their forefathers. But the service is not only an act of performing a spiritual task, it is also a moment for their spiritual enrichment and divine fortification.

In his prayer after the homily the bishop prays for forgiveness for his faults and sins, he asks God to remain with them and to heal 'his' people because they are very ill. He refers to 27 April (forthcoming first democratic elections in South Africa) and wonders what it will bring.

#### 9.1.5 The Prayer for deliverance

The second most important part in the service commemorating the death of Mgiijima is the Last Prayer that Mgiijima left his followers before he slept. I have made the following free translation of the Prayer:

I stand in front of your face God  
I and your servants and the whole flock of *Israel*  
You who remembered our fathers  
Through the sprinkling of blood  
Do not forget to remember your people God  
On the day of 24 Ziv 1921  
For a long time we have been the scorn and a laughing stock to our onlookers  
Arise! Arise, O God in your majesty.  
Amen.

This prayer is of special importance and is read by the bishop over the grave of Mgiijima only once a year during this service commemorating his death. In the view of Dokoda (05.03.1994) the Prophet wrote this prayer on his return from gaol when he saw how very destitute his people were in the aftermath of the Massacre. Many had lost everything they had, they did not even have decent clothes to wear. Not only were his followers destitute but they were also socially isolated and ostracised in the most extreme ways. This prayer is therefore a response to and a way of dealing with this destitution, isolation and ostracism. As Dokoda put it: "Basically this prayer is dealing with that pain of being isolated."

The prayer is said so that God may be touched and it is linked with the memory of the salvation of the Israelites in Egypt when God identified the Israelites through the blood that was sprinkled on their doorposts and the angel of death passed over them (Mbayi 04.03.1994). When we look closely at the Prayer we can see that the idea of remembering is quite a dominant theme. The Prayer attributes the salvation of the Israelites in Egypt from the angel of death to God remembering them through the blood that was sprinkled on their doorposts. It is this salvific act of remembering that the Prayer seeks for the blood of the *Israelites* that was 'sprinkled' at Ntabelanga on the day of 24 Ziv 1921. The Prayer is a reminder to God not to forget but to remember this very special day. In other words, through the Prayer it is not only the *Israelites* who remember 24 Ziv 1921 and its aftermath but also God's salvific memory gets jolted. In his composition of this Prayer Mgiijima committed the first act of remembering this day and through this act he set an example for his followers to remember the blood of the saints which flowed. We can see therefore the soteric function that memory plays. I move now to consider the commemoration of the Bulhoek Massacre.

## **9.2 Remembering 24 May 1921**

The service commemorating the Bulhoek Massacre was instituted by Mr. Silwana Nkopo, who was the most senior person and had not been sent to gaol because of his age. He instituted it while the others were in gaol, and when Mgiijima returned from prison he also stressed the importance of the service. By the time Mgiijima died in 1928 this service of remembrance was already an established practice (Mzimkhulu 26.05.1994).

### **9.2.1 Liturgical structure**

The commemoration of the Bulhoek Massacre is a day of fasting and prayer, beginning at sunset on 23 May till sunset on 24 May. The dress code is the *white suit*. The order of the liturgy is as follows:

- (1) Gathering.
- (2) Opening
- (3) Preface to Scripture reading
- (4) Scripture reading 1: Revelation 5,1-10; Hebrews 11,13
- (5) Homily 1.
- (6) Petitionary preface
- (7) Petitions of the saints
- (8) Scripture reading 2: Revelation 6,9-11; Psalm 44,1-26
- (9) Homily 2.
- (10) Recess
- (11) Prayer
- (12) Scripture reading 3: 1 Peter 5,6-8
- (13) Testimony
- (14) Concluding prayer and benediction

### **9.2.2 A hermeneutics of meaningful memory**

The day of fasting of 24 Ziv is for the *Israelites* a day of remembering the blood of the saints which flowed at the hands of the armed forces of the Union of South Africa at Bulhoek on 24 Ziv 1921. According to Mzimkhulu (26.05.1994) they

were killed for the gospel because they had not committed any criminal offence, or as he put it,

because they had not eaten anyone's sheep and had not committed any wrong acts against anyone. The only thing they said is: 'God has pointed out this place' (*uThixo uyolathile lendawo*), that is Ntabelanga. It is for this that they died, because the *boers* wanted to remove them because of the influence of the farmers and the local residents, an influence which was passed on to General Jan Smuts. We gather that Smuts did not take it that serious and his feeling was that this thing would just come to an end. But as prime minister he was forced by parliament to take action because these people were defying the government. So we keep it so that it can be a reminder (*ibe yinkumbuzelo*) to generations of generations (*nakwisizukulwana sesizukulwana*).

Mzimkhulu displays a keen awareness of the political dimension and ramifications of the *Israelites'* defiant refusal to leave Ntabelanga. He is, surprisingly, also quite sensitive to and understanding of the predicament and position of Smuts. But his point is that from the perspective of the *Israelites* Ntabelanga was holy ground. His apparent understanding of the position of Smuts should probably be seen from his assertion that the *Israelites* do not bear a grudge against the government "because the word of God was being fulfilled" (*kwakuzaliseka ilizwi likaThixo*).

The word of God that he refers to is Revelation 6,9-11 which is also inscribed on the tombstone of the mass grave at Ntabelanga. The *Israelites'* interpretation of this text is that the victims of the 1921 Massacre were a response to the question posed in verse 10 to God by the souls that had been killed because of their witness to God's word. These souls wanted to know how long it would be before God would avenge their blood on the inhabitants of the earth. God's reply in verse ten was that they should wait a while longer until others like them had killed so that their number would be complete. According to Mzimkhulu's interpretation the 1921 victims completed this outstanding number of souls. This is the common interpretation amongst the *Israelites*. Mzimkhulu continues:

When we hold this commemoration of Ntabelanga we do not keep it because we remember what General Smuts did. No, what we remember is the fulfillment of the word of God. For that matter, it does not make a difference whichever government it was. Even if it was a black government these words would have been fulfilled when the time came, because this was the word of God. We cannot hold a grudge only because it was a white government.

It is clear that the primary interest which shapes this interpretive strategy is to make the death of the *Israelite* victims theologically meaningful. This is why Mzimkhulu insists on a *deocentric* rather *homocentric* approach. The reading strategy is meant not only to make the death theologically meaningful but also to derive meaning from the death. In other words, while their death is given theological meaning, their death also gives meaning theologically. This is hardly surprising given the fact that the attraction of Ntabelanga was fundamentally theological and spiritual and not political, as the *Israelites* have been at pains to argue. The second interest which shapes and informs this interpretive strategy is the *Israelites'* commitment to the memory of those of who died. This commitment to memory is evident in the following statement by Majezi (26.05.1994):

That service is important because if we did not have that commemoration it would just fade from our minds and from the minds of our children. Now this service revives the importance of that event, it remembers that day at Ntabelanga. We show respect (*imbeko*) by remembering that day because we care (*siyikhathalele*) for that day. So it is imperative that we have that service. It is also the opportunity where the old people can relate to the children what happened, in detail. We find that it is good for us to have this service, this commemoration of how our forefathers slept at Ntabelanga, so that it should not be erased from our minds. We have to keep the importance of that day.

In a similar manner this commitment to the memory of the dead, of what she calls those "who suffered at the slaughter-bench of history", is expressed by Marsha Hewitt (1994:88) in the following terms:

A forgetful humanity incapable of recollection and remembrance is without hope for the future because it abandons the dead, and thus forecloses on the possibility of its own redemption. After all, it is only for their sake that hope is given to us.

After using a secular example to stress the importance of retaining in memory Majezi continues:

The important thing is that history should be retained by our children (*igcineke ebantwaneni bethu*). Sometimes a thing is related from time to time until it eventually fades, but when we remind each other through these commemoration services (*xa simana sihlhaziyana ngokwezizikhumbuzo*) we are retaining it in our memory.

It is this point of Halbwachs which Connerton has highlighted, viz. that it is a community of interests and thoughts which makes possible retention in the memory. That the events of 1921 should be seen in a theological perspective and that the *Israelites* do not hold a grudge against the government of Smuts is a point that Majezi (26.05.1994) is at pains to make. Apparently, during the shooting Mgijima was on the mountain where he made the following prayer: "Lord, is this number not enough? Are you not going to leave even a remnant?" The number referred to in this prayer is the number of the outstanding souls that is required in Revelation 6,9-11. Majezi continues that after the prayer the women were told to go and assist the injured,

and as they came across the fallen, a woman would recognise her husband and then recite *Isityhilo* (Rev 7,12), 'Amen. Praise and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honour and power and strength to our God forever and ever. Amen'. They did not cry, not a single one was seen shedding a tear. They all joined in the chorus of *Isityhilo*. The women were happy, they were rejoicing as if it was a wedding, though this was death. So that is why we do not hold a grudge against the government in spite of the havoc it wreaked. This is because we believe that this was as God had planned it. In this evildoing the heathens were just instruments to carry this out.

There is deep theological meaning in the *Israelites'* commitment to the memory of those who fell. In the light of this commitment to the memory of the 1921 victims we can describe the *Israelites'* interpretation of Revelation 6,9-11 as a *hermeneutics of meaningful memory*.

### **9.2.3 Prayers for the living and the dead**

The most evident element of the commemoration service are the prayers offered in memory of the victims of the 1921 Massacre. There were fourteen petitions offered on this day. Believers offered requests and prayers specifically for family members and relations as well as other members of the church who were killed on this day in 1921. Apart from these prayers the *Israelites'* other petitionary concerns focus on the immanent prerequisites for human survival and wellbeing. These were requests for the sick, a request that God may grant a cure for incurable diseases, requests for employment, for success in studies, for freedom from unspecified

troubles and difficulties, requests for 'those who refuse to listen', and unspecified requests for family and friends.

In the two petitions of thanksgiving offered on this day one gave thanks that God had looked after the petitioner and her family, while the second one was a hymnal petition with a theme of thanksgiving. In terms of the relationship with God, the inner core of the three concentric circles in the soteriological schema of Nürnbergger, the petitions requested that the Lord may purify them, that the petitioner may be thoroughly stamped through the words of God, and that God may strengthen them and show mercy unto them. In terms of transcendent needs one petitioner confessed her sin of discontentment while another one prayed that she may be loyal to the church.

#### **9.2.4 The memory of commitment**

In Chapter Three I noted that the fundamental theological question that I am investigating pertains to soteriology and can be expressed in philosophical terms as a question of time. I posed this question as follows: First, how does the *Church of God and Saints of Christ* relate to its *past*, especially as epitomised in the Bulhoek Massacre? In other words, what does the past mean? Second, how is the *present* conceived of? In other words, what does it mean to live now, to live in the present? Thirdly, what does the *future* hold? Or in Kantian terms, *what may they hope for*? My analysis of the service commemorating the 1921 Bulhoek Massacre brings me to the conclusion that we can best describe this celebration in Augustinian terms as *the distension of the soul in time*. But in this instance my conceptualization of the idea of the soul is different from the Augustinian one which views the soul in terms of the individual. I use the notion of the soul in an expanded sense as the collective soul of the *Israelites*. In other words, the commemoration service of 24 May is the extension of the *Israelite* soul in time, i.e. to the past, in the present, and towards the future. But how has this extension occurred? We can clearly discern the three dimensions of temporality in the *Israelites'* commemoration of the 1921 Bulhoek Massacre. The first dimension is *retrospective*, the second one is *introspective*, and the third dimension is *prospective*. Let us consider the first dimension.

The retrospective dimension in the commemoration service looks back to and accounts for the past by theologically engaging a very critical question, viz. why did the people come to Ntabelanga, and why did they refuse to leave Ntabelanga? According to the first preacher of the day (Homily 1):

Enoch, the seventh after Adam, is one of the prophets who are a line of connection to God (*umbhobho oya kuThixo*) and were sent to remove the seven seals, to bring light into the thick darkness that covered the earth. This is what attracted people to Ntabelanga - God had raised a prophet at Ntabelanga, God had raised a prophet in Africa. This was a warm message in people's hearts.

With these words the preacher looks back and accounts for the prophethood and the special calling of Mgijima. It is because people recognised Mgijima as a prophet in continuity with other prophets who had a special relationship to God and had been specially commissioned by God. Mgijima was recognised as having been specially commissioned for Africa, for them, as a bringer of light in darkness. Not only did he bring light into the darkness people were in, but his message warmed their hearts which were cold. In other words, in accounting for the past the preacher's fundamental claim is that Mgijima made a difference to people's spiritual life and condition. Further on the preacher continues accounting for the attraction of Ntabelanga in the following manner: "And so people came because they sought salvation, and they came here to worship the name of the God of heaven." In this the preacher underscores the soteric attraction of Ntabelanga and its identity as a place of worship, a holy place.

In accounting for their refusal to leave Ntabelanga the preacher asserts:

This is why they were reluctant to leave Ntabelanga, they wanted to remain under the grace of God. And so when the world wanted to remove them from Ntabelanga the Prophet told them that he had been a sinner but God sent him to preach.

Their refusal to leave Ntabelanga has to be understood in terms of what attracted them in the first place. In the words of one petitioner: "People had gone to Ntabelanga because they wanted eternal life" (Petition 2). They had found God's grace at Ntabelanga, they had experienced God at Ntabelanga. In the words of another petitioner, "Ntabelanga was like the sea which ejects all impurities"

(Petition 1). Ntabelanga became the physical location of a spiritual reality and in this sense it had assumed a sacramental identity and character. This spiritual reality constituted the grace that had transformed Mgijima the sinner into Mgijima the preacher. It is this grace that the *Israelites* in 1921 were not prepared to give up. The preacher then continues to give account of Mgijima's position regarding the demand that they move from Ntabelanga:

When the authorities asked him how long they were going to be praying there he replied that God had as yet not told him, and he would let them know as soon as God had told him. And so when they were threatened with the law of the land they preferred instead to obey the law of God. And so this day of the 24th happened.

In accounting for Mgijima's position the preacher highlights the special relationship referred to earlier as *umbhobho* (literally 'a pipeline') that Mgijima had with God. In other words, Mgijima was in direct communication with God. What is to be inferred from this is that had the authorities taken serious cognisance of Mgijima's connection to a higher power they would not have threatened him with inferior human power. And so, Mgijima preferred to submit to the higher power. And so paradoxically the 24th can be seen as the *Israelites* succumbing to a higher power.

Another aspect of the retrospective dimension is the theological definition of the day of 24 May 1921 as well as the theological identity of those who fell. This day is theologically defined as God's day. According to the first preacher it is a day chosen by God amongst many other days. This day which falls on the same month on which Solomon started building the house of God, is in the same month on which God received 'his' nation through the shedding of blood at Ntabelanga. "On this day God chose lambs (*uThixo wazoniyulela amaxhwane*) as payment for the black nation in its totality (*isizwe esimnyama siphela*)." Those who fell are identified as lambs that God had selected so that they might pay for the black nation. What this homily does not clarify is why this payment was demanded in the first place. In other words, the first preacher does not account for what the black nation had done that such a price was exacted. A possible answer to this question lies in the second homily based on Revelation 6,9-11 where the preacher proclaims: "They (the saints) asked when God would avenge the blood of those who had been killed and they were told to wait until more like them were killed to

add to the number of the others and complete it. What nation was ever killed while at prayer?"

A further aspect of retrospection consists in how the suffering and death of those who fell is accounted for. In the words of the first preacher: "They were steadfast and courageous (*banyamezela*) through all the suffering and death that they had to endure. They kept the faith." In the words of the second preacher: "I saw how my own parents suffered abject poverty, dressed in rags, but they kept the faith. They endured all sorts of hardships, but they never stopped coming to church on the Sabbath." The negative experience of suffering, death and poverty is accounted for in the positive terms of steadfastness, courage, and an enduring faith. It is out of this retrospection that introspection, the second temporal dimension arises.

### **9.2.5 The commitment of memory**

The dimension of introspection in the commemoration service represents the moment of taking stock of and accounting for the present position of the church in the light of where it was and the road it has since travelled. It is a moment for the spiritual assessment of the gains and losses of the church, both spiritual and material. In the words of the second preacher:

In 1912 when the church started Rev. Metcalfe of the Methodists said that it would not last beyond three months. He thought that because it was started by black people it would not last. But where are we now? How far are we from 1912? The heathens burnt the Tent of Meeting where the name of God was preached, where prayer was held, where the Good News was preached. The heathens took as booty the Ark of God where the Ten Commandments were kept. We want that Ark.

The basic point that the preacher is making is that the CGSC has come a long and hard way and has survived. It has survived the violent heathen assault and the skepticism of the white missionaries. According to the second preacher, what has made this survival possible is God's intimate involvement with the church. As he put it:

God has said that this church will go through suffering (*elibandla lizakungena embandezelweni*), it will go through blood (*lizakungena egazini*), it will go

through fire (*lizakungena emlilweni*). But this church will never disappear, it will never come to an end.

From the perspective of the preacher the church has survived not in spite of its past but *because* of its past. Asserts the preacher:

Gamaliel told them that if this thing was of human origin it would come to an end, but if it was the work of God no one will be able to stop it. Instead of disappearing the church is getting stronger. This is God's project (*Umsebenzi lo ngokaThixo*). This is what Mgijima said before he died, he said, 'I hand this work over to God's hand' (*Umsebenzi lo ndiwunikela esandleni sikaThixo*). And so God took the work into 'his' hands. God is in charge.

The moment of introspection is the affirmation and confirmation of the divine origin, the divine ownership, and the divine programme of the church. It is this which makes it unstoppable. The second preacher describes the present state of the church as follows: "Things are much easier now." It is quite striking that in taking stock of the present position of the church it is only the womenfolk who openly admit that the commemoration service is a painful exercise. Prays the first petitioner: "Our wounds are always touched and the pain revived when this day comes.... This day fills one with pain. We have endured pain and hardship until this moment." Prays another one: "This church has a painful story, a painful history as we hear it being related."

Having given account for the past, and having taken stock of the present the *Israelites'* soul is extended further in time towards the future. This constitutes the prospective dimension of the commemoration service. In the words of the second preacher:

Our parents were looking forward to the city of all cities, the promise of the New Earth which will come from the Lord. The people of the world already have theirs, but we are still awaiting ours. We are still waiting to be freed. The people of the world are preoccupied with all sorts of things and their vision is focussed on this side whereas we are looking beyond. They do not do what the king of Niniveh did when Jonah preached, announcing that in forty days the city would be destroyed.

For the present generation the prospects of the future are in continuity with the hopes of past generations. It is a future that comes from the Lord and is radically

different from the present. It is different from the present myopic vision of the world which is not aware of the impending destruction. The hallmarks of this future are newness, freedom and life. The second preacher continues his proclamation:

As the Word says, 'Those who hear the words and keep them have already passed through death and have entered into life'. Babylon has fallen. The people were told to leave Babylon. Leave the city children so that you may not be counted with the nations. We preach the kingdom of God, the government of heaven, the government of the city towards which we are going, the New Jerusalem.

What is expected from believers is that they should keep the Word, they have to leave the city of the nations lest they be destroyed with them. They have to leave because death and Babylon have been overcome. In Kantian terms, what the *Israelites* may hope for is transcendent freedom and a new life metaphorised as the New Jerusalem.

This service is the occasion for those who are living now to draw strength in celebrating the memory of those who fell. The first preacher expressed this as follows: "On this day we too get courage to endure all suffering. God will remember us in our suffering if we commemorate this day." Another petitioner prays: "May God continue to strengthen us....May God revive within us the faith that the people of Ntabelanga had" (Petition 1). Or in the words of another petitioner: "My request is that God should make me steadfast and determined as those people at Ntabelanga were"(Petition 2). Another petitioner (Petition 3) requests the faith that her forefathers had and for steadfastness in the face of problems and hardships while another one (Petition 5) prays that she may be loyal to the CGSC. This celebration of the memory of the Ntabelanga heroes serves two purposes, i.e. it is both an example of and a resource for faith and steadfastness.

### **9.3 The salvation of memory**

What notions of salvation can be gleaned from these two commemorative religious festivals? With regard to the service commemorating the death of Mgiijima quite a number of needs are expressed, spanning all three concentric circles in Nürmberger's scheme of comprehensive wellbeing, viz.. the inner circle

representing personal relationship with God, the middle circle representing transcendent needs and the outer circle representing immanent prerequisites of human survival and wellbeing. However, what needs to be taken note of in this celebration is that unlike the other festivals where the laity make a substantive contribution through their input in the petitions of the saints, in this service such an input is totally absent. In other words, the service commemorating the death of Mgijima is more clergy-centred than the other three festivals.

The overriding need expressed by the bishop in the service commemorating the death of Mgijima is the need for *impilo*, comprehensive well-being. This need for *impilo* is occasioned by the congregation's state of ill-health, being troubled in their souls and in the flesh. The people have a deficiency in terms of the most basic christian virtues, viz. faith and love. The salvific act requested of God is that God may breathe on them, shape them and make them one. The bishop expresses both immanent and transcendent deficiencies. In his homily the preacher of the day focuses on the *Israelites'* transcendent needs. The *Israelites* are in need of blessings. Some of these transcendent needs he expresses metaphorically. The *Israelites* should arm themselves. They should request a letter from the King so that they can go safely past their enemies and overcome their difficulties. Also, they need to build the walls of Jerusalem at Shiloh. Lastly, all are in need of God's forgiveness and mercy.

In terms of the Last Prayer of Mgijima the first salvific notion is embedded in the redemptive nature of the Prayer itself, in the way it confronted the destitution, isolation and ostracism faced by the *Israelites*. The prayer urges God to arise in 'his' majesty. Beyond this, the Prayer conceptualises the death of the saints at Ntabelanga in *neo-paschal* terms as a second sprinkling with blood, a salvific act. The bloody death of the *Israelites* at the hands of the armed forces of the state is akin to the angel of death passing over the *Israelites* because of the blood sprinkled on their doorposts. This conveniently leads us to the service commemorating the 1921 Bulhoek Massacre.

With regard to the actual service commemorating the 1921 Bulhoek Massacre, the first notion of salvation can be gleaned from the celebration's retrospective dimension and it pertains to the identity of Ntabelanga, especially with regard to its attraction and the *Israelites'* defiant refusal to leave (Ntabelanga) is accounted

for. Because those who went to Ntabelanga experienced it as a place of salvation we can identify it as having been a sacrament of God's salvific intent. The next set of soteriological notions is embedded in the introspective dimension where the *Israelites* articulate their state, needs, and deficiencies especially as they are expressed in the petitions of the saints. We saw that these encompass all three concentric circles in Nürnberger's soteriological schema of comprehensive wellbeing, viz. immanent prerequisites, transcendent needs, and the relationship with God. The *Israelites'* needs at the present moment stretch from employment through the need for loyalty to the need for a purified relationship with God. In terms of the prospective dimension the dominant notion of salvation towards which the *Israelites'* soul is extended is *the freedom of the city*, the New Jerusalem, which only God can bestow.

#### **9.4 Conclusion**

In this chapter we saw the pivotal and redemptive role that memory plays through the celebration of these two one-day festivals. In the first festival we saw that it is Mgijima himself who set a precedent in terms of remembering by jolting God's memory. In this commemoration service we also saw the extent to which the act of remembering is primarily clergy-centred. In the festival commemorating the 1921 Bulhoek Massacre saw the complex extension of the soul and the memory of the *Israelites* in time. We also saw the extent to which the *Israelites'* strategy of interpreting the 1921 events is inextricably bound to their strategy of reading Revelation 6,9-11. We saw that these reading and interpretive strategies are undergirded by a *deocentric* approach and shaped by interests which read theological meaning into the events while at the same time deriving theological meaning from these events. Lastly, we saw that the act of remembering through these two festivals is not only bound to certain soteriological notions but that they also bring forth other views of salvation. In the next chapter, the final chapter of this investigation, I shall attempt to draw together the various knowledges of salvation that have been engendered, the implications and challenges for the church in general.

## CHAPTER 10. CONCLUSION

### 10.0 Introduction

The overall objective of this investigation was to determine what role the memory of the Bulhoek Massacre of 24 May 1921 plays in the soteriological notions of the *Church of God and Saints of Christ*. My primary hypothesis was that in spite of the bitterness and hurt that it may engender amongst the *Israelites*, the memory of this massacre and the soteriological knowledges it brings forth do provide a model and vehicle for transcending the experience of war, suffering, and death. A further hypothesis was that because of the fundamentally material and physical nature of the Bulhoek Massacre, the soteriological notions of the *Israelites'* will necessarily have their basis in the material context, despite their spiritual and transcendent thrust. After identifying the importance and centrality of the *Israelites'* religious festivals and rituals in the construction of their symbolic universe and the concomitant soteriological notions, I further hypothesized that these festivals have to serve at least three major purposes: (a) to keep the memory of the massacre alive as part of the identity of the group, (b) to stand in some form of continuity with the hopes of those who fell in 1921, and (c) to transcend manifestations of disillusionment to which the memory may give rise.

Given these submissions, this concluding chapter seeks to achieve the following objectives: First, it seeks to determine the extent to which I have been able to answer the question pertaining to the role of the memory of the Bulhoek Massacre in the soteriological notions of the *Israelites*. Second, it seeks to determine the extent to which my various hypotheses have been proved correct. Third, I wish to present the fundamental learnings and key insights that this investigation introduces in our discourse in South Africa. But in order to do this effectively I need to begin by briefly pointing out the key markers on the road I have traversed in carrying out this investigation, as well as the core elements which are constitutive of these markers. Furthermore, it is important that I attempt to establish and demonstrate the links between the various soteriological thrusts which the study has been able to uncover. Let me commence with the key strategies which the CGSC has adopted in the construction of its soteriology.

## 10.1 Strategies for constructing a contextual soteriology

The investigation has shown that in constructing their soteriology, members of the *Church of God and Saints of Christ* have adopted a variety of highly complex strategies. It is evident that though these strategies appear to be mutually supportive at certain key points and crucial moments, the relationship between them and the internal construction of each display a number of very significant contradictions and ambiguities and what we can best construe as socio-theological dissent. It is at these points of socio-theological dissent, of mutual supportiveness and of relational and internal contradictions that some of the fundamental learnings and key insights for our discourse in South Africa are located. But what are these strategies and how is the relationship between them constituted? In the course of the study I discerned the following broad strategies: narrative strategies, ritual strategies, mnemonic strategies, metaphoric and language strategies, hermeneutic strategies and infra-political activity. Let me briefly recapture the salient features of each.

The *Israelites'* narrative strategies have their location in all four of their religious festivals and their key characteristic features are the Ricoeurian emplotment processes that occur through the narrative central to each festival. We saw that though spatially and temporally removed from the present context, the narrative of *pesach* and the narrative of Esther facilitate soteriological notions which have as their thrust the interrogation of the reality of social domination and the abuse of politico-religious power. It is this domination and abuse of power which necessitated salvific action on the part of God through God's agents, Moses and Esther. The outcome of this interrogative process is a discourse of freedom and salvation which is not just locked and trapped in the past but which traverses the present, the past and the future. With respect to the present we saw that this discourse makes *pesach* contextual through the following ways: (a) contextuality obtains by means of the paschal identity of Shiloh as a contemporary location for God's salvific action; (b) that God is the God of salvation is presently evidenced in the special way through the elements of 'his body' (God's ear, wing, and palm) and through the healing power of God which is presently made accessible to the people. In terms of the future, this discourse of freedom depicts a state of salvation in which the *Israelites* will be delivered from those political systems, economic

structures and social relations which hinder the full realization of a transformed existence.

With respect to the narrative strategies embedded in the Fast of Esther the discourse of freedom was central once more, but with a range of very interesting nuances. We saw for instance that though a high premium is placed on the political dimensions of freedom, the limits inherent in these dimensions were fully recognised, especially by certain leading male *Israelites*. However, this recognition is not construed as a justification or motivation for being apolitical. The need to push the stone of freedom was recognised already by Mgijima who was also quick to point out the inadequacy and limits of the material methods of pushing this stone of freedom. For this reason he and his followers proposed and embarked on a radically different programme of pushing the stone of freedom, viz. the spiritual method which necessitated the establishment of the Ntabelanga commune. The *Israelites* therefore do subject themselves to the imperatives of the political dimensions of freedom though they do not place them on par with the prophetic dimensions.

It is also evident that the fundamental contradiction inherent in this discourse of freedom and salvation is its construction along androcentric lines and on patriarchal/kyriarchal bases. We saw that the soteriological agency of queen Esther is defined and recognised by the *Israelite* menfolk as a masculinist reality and as a phenomenon of machismo. At the level of the public transcript the *Israelite* womenfolk appear to endorse these hegemonic views which are perpetuated by this discourse of freedom and salvation. However, a closer look at what we can describe as their narrative and discursive arts of dissent, the *Israelite* womenfolk displayed what are clearly non-consensual silences and consequential reticences regarding these universalizing and dominating narrative strategies.

The narrative strategies obtaining in the festivals commemorating the Bulhoek Massacre and the life of Enoch Mgijima are best understood in terms of their very intimate link to the *Israelites'* mnemonic strategies. We saw that the act of memory plays a redemptive role because it is an act of anamnestic solidarity with those who fell in 1921. The study has also shown that the collective memory of the *Israelites* plays a soteric function primarily through the requests for *impilo*, comprehensive wellbeing, which has its basis in the material context, despite its

transcendent thrust. This transcendent intent renders the event of the Bulhoek Massacre and the life and death of Mgijima as having a theological and logical fit within God's overall soteriological scheme. As the emplotment theory of Ricoeur intimated, these various events and seemingly unrelated incidents are brought together to form essential components of the plot in the story of salvation. For this reason the Bulhoek Massacre is construed as an event which has soteriological implications and the *persona theologica* of Mgijima is fundamentally construed in terms of his soteriological agency.

With respect to their ritual strategies the bodily practices utilised by the *Israelites* have a resistant aspect and stand in a symbiotic relationship to the mnemonic strategies. The aspect of resistance is constituted in the variety of religious dress codes, ritual accessories and liturgical accoutrements which the *Israelites* have adopted for their festivals, as well as in their dietary and consumption prescriptions. We saw that the soteric objective of these bodily practices is to resist the commodified structuring of society through a remystification of the body. We saw that this resistance is further constituted in the act of fasting during the festival of the Fast of Esther and the festival commemorating the Bulhoek Massacre. This act of fasting constitutes proscribed consumption in opposition to the domination of compulsive consumption of capitalist society. Again, we can clearly see the material context which generates these ritual strategies. The proscribed consumption is further evidenced in the carefully structured and meticulously executed ritual of the paschal meal which inaugurates the festival of *pesach*, as well as in the strict proscriptions relating to the consumption of wine and the source of its origin, unprocessed grapes and its other easily identifiable derivatives. We saw further that in terms of their mnemonic dimension these bodily practices render the experience of *pesach* and the *Fast for Freedom* contextual by ritually sedimenting these experiences across space and time in the bodies of the *Israelites*. Also, it is clear that the memory of Bulhoek and Mgijima is redemptive to the extent that the *Israelites* retain it in their collective memory through the performance of these rituals and corporeal practices, including the paschal dance in which the Lord passes over the *Israelites* in their present context.

In terms of their metaphoric and language strategies we saw that the *Israelites* base these on the prophecies and message of Mgijima. In this regard the dominant metaphors for salvation are understood in terms of their opposition to destructive

forces and the destruction of the world, representing the opposite of salvation. Those who are saved are those who will be in the palm of God's hand, having been thoroughly stamped like samp which is produced from maize through a laboriously painful but effective process. Furthermore, to be saved is to recognise and accept the soteric agency of Mgijima which is contained in the task given to him by God, viz. to herd God's sheep into a cave in the face of an impending hailstorm. An equally significant metaphor is that of the two he-goats who were locked in a mortal struggle for supremacy, power and domination but who were eventually overcome by the he-baboon. The *Israelites* appropriate these visions of salvation variously in their testimonies, homilies and petitions. This appropriation spans all three of Nürnberger's concentric circles of comprehensive wellbeing, viz. the inner core depicting the relationship with God, the middle circle relating to transcendent needs, and the outer circle pertaining to the immanent prerequisites of human survival. Therefore, my summation is that the message of Mgijima is not so much a message about the destruction of the world nor is it an escapist or spiritualizing mechanism. Rather, it is a message about salvation which takes serious cognisance of the material context but with a profound transcendent thrust. In other words, this message of salvation must necessarily go beyond the inherent limitations of the material context.

The hermeneutic strategies of the *Israelites* are also best understood in their relation to the infra-political activity specific to the women sector of the *Israelite* community. The inherent contradictions and relational ambiguities are best discernible in the gender-specific interpretive strategies of the narrative of Esther. As I have already intimated, the interests and commitments which underpin the interpretive strategies of the *Israelite* menfolk have the thrust of freedom though this freedom is not self-critical in terms of its male domination, male-definition and kyriarchal construction of Esther's soteric agency. On the other hand we saw that on their part the interpretive strategies adopted by the *Israelite* womenfolk underscore very important qualities such as the depth of her spiritual disposition and her total reliance on God. This soteric identity and agency of queen Esther stands in stark contrast to that of the malefolk which tends to be domesticating. My summation therefore is that these women-specific hermeneutic strategies of reticence and silence are best construed as theological infra-political activity with a resistant and dissentient thrust which is either conscious, half-conscious or unconscious. My further submission is that unless the dominant male-centred

soteriological strand in the *Church of God and Saints of Christ* takes cognisance of this reality of domination and marginalization which it engenders, this soteriology will be unable in its turn to confront and transform the dominant soteriologies of the mainline churches with their uncritical acceptance of the commodified structuring of society.

## **10.2 The material context of *Israelite* soteriology**

In terms of the hypotheses which shaped this study I intimated that because of the material nature of the Bulhoek Massacre, present soteriological notions amongst the *Israelites* will of necessity have a material basis. I have already hinted at this at various points in the preceding section. Let me continue with this exposition. When I revisited the events which precipitated the Bulhoek Massacre my endeavour was to demonstrate that issues of domination and hegemony and questions of power and ideology were central to these events. That this was indeed the case became evident in my analysis of how the variety of actions adopted by Mgiijima and his followers in their dealings and interaction with the officials of the government constituted what Scott has termed subtle arts of resistance and what Ricoeur's theory has defined as the dynamic mutual-yet-ambiguous relationship between ideology and utopia as practices of the imagination, with a special emphasis on the subversive function of utopia.

The fundamental question in this regard related to who has power and control over a specific piece of land and how the *Israelites* as a dominated group would have access to this land. This however does not mean that the *Israelites* had as their objective the political overthrow of the government of the Union of South Africa because of its land policies. What is important to recognise is that the government of the Union had the power to render and define a specific piece of land as crownland or as private property primarily because of capitalist colonial expansionism which on its turn was and continues to be based on a commodified structuring of society. In other words, the land policies of the Union government such as the Land Act of 1913 were intended to serve the interests of capital and its commodification of social relations. What Mgiijima and his followers really wanted was to have access to the specific land at Ntabelanga for religious purposes and for the establishment of social relations which were structured along non-commodified lines and were thus opposed to those of capital. In other words, the

*Israelites* did not have a political agenda in the narrow sense of a party-political programme of action because, as evangelist Dokoda intimated, they are a prophetic movement, not a political one.

My initial guess that the soteriological notions of the *Israelites* will have their basis in the material context primarily because of the material nature of the Bulhoek Massacre itself was correct, but to a very limited extent and in a very narrow sense. It is clear from the investigation that the material basis of *Israelite* soteriological notions is not premised solely on the material nature of the Bulhoek Massacre. The study has revealed that the *Israelite* notions of soteriology have a much deeper basis and a much more fundamental location, viz. in the very nature of the *Israelite* theological programme and lifestyle at Ntabelanga - a programme and lifestyle which were structured and constructed on ritual kairotic time. In this sense the Bulhoek Massacre was a logical and inevitable outcome of the nascent utopian dispensation at Ntabelanga which sought to realise not only an alternative symbolic universe but also an alternative material universe. Mgijima and his followers used a variety of creative ways in the realization of this alternative christian symbolic-material universe.

At one level the realization of the alternative symbolic-material universe meant the institution of a strict socio-religious lifestyle and the introduction of social relations which sought to resist and negate the temptation and seduction of commodified society. To do this effectively, the reconstitution and reconstruction of time was crucial. For this reason Mgijima introduced resistant kairotic time by adopting the Jewish calendar, the Jewish day and certain Jewish festivals which have an overt soteriological intent. Thus, to be an *Israelite* essentially and practically meant to live in the time of salvation and to structure one's life in accordance with the dictates and imperatives of this time.

As we saw, Mgijima was forbidden to preach and to hold Passover services at the Moravian mission station at Shiloh. He was also obliged to seek permission from the Inspector of Locations before he could hold the Passover at various other places such as Kamastone, Mchewula and Ntabelanga locations. Therefore, the first step to be taken in the realization of this alternative christian symbolic-material universe was a practical one - the acquisition of land. Because of the power and absolute control of the government over land and because of the fact

that land had been rendered a mere commodity which could only be acquired (and disposed of) through the racially-defined employment of capital, the *Israelite* strategy for the acquisition of land had to occur via an alternative route. In adopting this alternative route the *Israelites* utilised a range of infra-political activity and discursive strategies which constituted a sophisticated contention and contestation of power but which would eventually culminate in the Bulhoek Massacre. The material context of *Israelite* soteriological notions is evidenced at yet another level, the material context of the only two (out of the many) biblical festivals which the *Israelites* have chosen to adopt and commemorate.

Both *pesach*, the festival of being passed over, and the *Fast of Esther*, the festival of freedom, have as their material context the socio-political oppression and religious domination of the Hebrews by foreign powers. Salvation for the Hebrews in these contexts meant deliverance from these systems of oppression. We saw in the Pass-over hymn and in the reading of Exodus 12 during the paschal meal that "God showed mercy to the Hebrews" by sparing their firstborns and by granting them freedom. The Hebrews were protected from the destruction to which the land of Egypt was subjected. The *Fast of Esther* depicts and re-enacts God's effective intervention in the predicament of the *Israelites* in exile through the agency of Esther. The soteric role of Mgijima in the impending destruction of the world is analogous to the soteric agency and salvific role of Moses and Esther. In this sense both these biblical festivals provide a hermeneutic key for understanding the soteriological thrusts of the *Israelites* as being linked to the material context.

There is yet another important level at which the *Israelite* soteriological notions are fundamentally linked to the material context, viz. the petitionary focus of the *Israelite* womenfolk. What is particularly striking at this level is the ordinariness, simplicity and sheer down-to-earthness of the petitions of the womenfolk compared to the much more grandiose formulations and poetic articulations of the menfolk. It is in the down-to-earthness of these petitions that the power and potency of the women's soteriological thrusts lies. The petitions of the *Israelite* womenfolk are very direct in confronting the conditions from which they seek deliverance. Though their predicament spans all three circles in Nürnberg's scheme of comprehensive wellbeing, it is the outer circle of the material prerequisites for human survival which enjoys the most pronounced vocalization. Salvation consists in the deliverance from the conditions of poverty, sickness and

disease, ignorance, violence, suffering and death. Moreover, these soteriological thrusts of the womenfolk cut across all the festivals and celebrations where they are given room to express themselves and to articulate their need. In terms of their direct petitions, what the women highlight in these instances is deliverance which aims at meeting the material prerequisites for human survival. It is along these lines that they understand and interpret the soteric agency of the significant figures in these festivals. My next set of concluding remarks concerns the role of the memory of the Bulhoek Massacre in the soteriological scheme of things.

### **10.3 A community of memory - a community of salvation**

In my hypotheses I hinted that the Bulhoek Massacre must engender some measure of bitterness or hurt amongst the *Israelites*. That this pain exists is expressed by one of the *Israelites* as follows: "Our wounds are always touched and the pain revived when this day comes....This day fills one with pain. We have endured pain and hardship until this moment." The study has shown that it is not only the massacre itself which inflicted a lot of suffering but that its aftermath was equally devastating to the *Israelites* because of the material destitution, religious marginalization and social ostracism which they had to endure. We saw that the feelings engendered by the massacre and its aftermath were most vividly encapsulated by Mgijima himself in the highly prized *Prayer for deliverance* which he wrote and left for his followers before he died. In the words of Dokoda, "Basically this prayer is dealing with that pain of being isolated." This prayer already contains important points pertaining to memory and its significance.

In this prayer the blood spilled during the massacre is remembered not as an isolated incident but as having an organic theological link and emplotment relationship to the blood that was sprinkled on the doorposts of the *Israelites* during their last days of slavery in Egypt. Through this blood on their doorposts the *Israelites* escaped death. The role of *Israelite* memory as portrayed in this prayer is to transform the experience of death during the 1921 massacre into an experience of salvation in a manner which is analogous to the Lord passing over the *Israelites* in Egypt. In this way, though they acknowledge their experience of death the *Israelites* look beyond it by granting it a soteric quality. It is in this way that the memory of death becomes a memory of salvation. Another important aspect is that the act of memory constituted in and through this prayer is not

limited to the *Israelites'* collective memory but it recognises memory as a divine act in that it is to the active memory of God that Mgiijima appeals in this prayer. There is a link between these two levels of memory, viz. the collective *Israelite* memory and the divine memory. In their act of memory the *Israelites* seek to touch and activate the memory of God.

The mnemonic aspect of this last prayer of Mgiijima plays an important role at another significant level, namely it occasions and facilitates the insurrection of subjugated knowledges. Through the annual recital of this prayer of Mgiijima the motivation and rationale for the establishment of the Ntabelanga utopian community is brought to the surface. The socio-theological programme and the alternative social relations at the heart of the commune and the events which precipitated the massacre are recalled. The insurrection of these subjugated knowledges is further evidenced at the festival commemorating the actual massacre.

On the occasion of this festival the following subjugated knowledges are brought to the surface through a variety of mnemonic devices. The corporeal practice of fasting and prayer underscores the view that the *Israelites* were killed for the gospel, despite a keen awareness of the political dimension inherent in their act of defiance. The first set of knowledges in this regard is that the gospel brings about a new time which demands a radical shift in personal lifestyle and social relations; that the time of the world enslaves and dominates rather than frees; that the time of the world occasions destruction rather than salvation.

The next set of knowledges is that given the above, the Bulhoek Massacre was inevitable because of the price that has to be paid in the process of faithful witness to God's word by means of such a radical lifestyle as experienced by the *Israelites* and as foretold in Revelation 6,9-11. Furthermore, the theological act of remembering the massacre brings to the surface the knowledge of hope for the future which was engendered by and foretasted in the Ntabelanga commune. In the words of one of the preachers: "Our parents were looking forward to the city of all cities, the promise of the New Earth which will come from the Lord." Central to this hope is a future in which the *Israelites* will be completely free to worship God, unlike the present dispensation where they are encumbered by the dominating time of the world.

A further set of knowledges that is brought to the fore is the role of Mgijima in relation to the establishment of the commune at Ntabelanga and the subsequent massacre. The role of Mgijima is soteric because as a prophet meant for the context of Africa he stands in the line of prophets "who were sent to remove the seven seals and to bring light into the thick darkness which covered the earth." Mgijima was a pipeline which facilitated direct communication with God. It is as such that he was recognised by the people who flocked to Ntabelanga.

Another set of knowledges pertains to the identity of Ntabelanga as a place of salvation - as a place where believers could remain under the grace of God. "Ntabelanga was like the sea which ejects all impurities." This recognition of Ntabelanga as having a soteric function did mean that it would have far-reaching political implications because, rather than capitulating to the demands of the political dictates the *Israelites* at Ntabelanga "preferred instead to obey the law of God." Apart from facilitating the insurrection of the subjugated knowledges which I have enumerated, the memory of the Bulhoek Massacre plays another role, viz. that of constituting the *Church of God and Saints of Christ* as a community of memory.

The CGSC understands itself as a community of believers which came into being as a result of the Ntabelanga vision of an alternative community - a community of salvation. It is this community which the heathens sought to destroy through the Bulhoek Massacre. In spite of being scattered as a result of the destruction of the physical location of the community in 1921, the *Church of God and Saints of Christ* continues to exist. In coming to terms with the reality of the massacre the CGSC has learnt to live within the tension of the two opposing times - abstract chronotic time and ritual kairotic time. The two elements of this adaptive existence is toleration of the limits imposed by dominating time while remaining true and faithful to the original vision of a community structured on the basis of the time of salvation.

That it must continue to exist is critical to the self-understanding and identity of the CGSC. Despite being physically scattered all over the country its continued existence is contingent on it remaining true to the original vision of a community of salvation. Its existence is contingent on it remaining true and faithful to the memory of those who fell. They remain true and faithful to the memory of the

fallen not only through the act of retrospection but also through an act of prospection, by looking ahead at the future with the eyes of those who fell. There is thus a continuity between the present generation and those who fell in 1921 not only by looking back but by looking ahead as well. In other words, as the present generation looks back they continue to dream the dream of salvation that those who fell dreamt in their final sleep. It is in this remaining true, faithful and in continuity with those who suffered at the slaughter bench of history that the *Israelites* transcend their experience of death. I move now to my final set of concluding reflections in which I shall attempt to make a critical delineation of the fundamental learnings and key insights that this investigation introduces in our discourse in South Africa.

#### **10.4 Foundations for a critical contextual soteriology**

The two critical insights which this study contributes to our discourse in South Africa relate (a) to our discourse of freedom and (b) to the role of memory in transcending the experience of war, suffering and death. Let me begin with the insights pertaining to the discourse of freedom.

The late 1980s and early 1990s saw a number of spectacular and far-reaching changes not only on the international political scene but also in South Africa. In terms of the international scene what grabbed the attention and imagination of the world was the spectacular collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the demise of socialism in the old Eastern block countries, including the collapse of the Berlin Wall. This demise of socialism ushered in what has come to be known as the 'new world order' under the leadership and tutelage of the United States of America - an order which is characterized by the global acceptance of capitalism (with the noticeable exceptions of Cuba and the People's Republic of China) in which 'the market' reigns supreme as the new god.

With regard to the South African scene this period saw the collapse of apartheid, the unbanning of the liberation movements, the release of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners and, finally, the victory of the African National Congress in the first democratic elections in the country. This achievement of freedom has been hailed as a miracle by some sectors of our society, especially the so called mainline sector of the christian community, no doubt because of what they

perceive to be the relatively bloodless nature of the revolution in which they see themselves as having played a critical and prophetic role.

As a result of this achievement of freedom South Africa is being rehabilitated into the community of nations and within the new world order as an equal partner. But this 'equal partnership' and rehabilitation into the new world order has meant that South Africa has had to succumb and submit herself to the reign and dictates of 'the market', the new god of this new world order. The widely acclaimed macro-economic strategy entitled *Growth, Employment and Redistribution* adopted by the new government on 14 June 1996 is a case in point. Apart from certain quarters within labour and the working class movement of the liberation alliance, the prophetic and critical voice of the progressive mainline churches has been rather silent in respect of the new macro-economic policy and some of the assumptions on which it is based.

The current dominant discourse of freedom is one which accepts the domination of the market, its related forces and its commodified structuring of social relations. The silence on the part of the progressive church movement may be ascribed to what many perceive to be the obsolescence of the Marxist paradigm and the political-incorrectness of socialism-speak. This discourse of freedom is presently punctuated by what is deemed to be the challenge of translating political freedom into economic growth and prosperity for all. It is these economic imperatives and objectives which form the heart of the new macro-economic strategy.

What the prophetic role of the church community is in this dispensation is not very clear. There are those who are of the view that the organised christian community needs to align itself with the objectives and processes of the *Reconstruction and Development Programme* of the new government. There is the view that the church community has achieved the goals it set for itself through the various resistance programmes, prophetic pronouncements and anti-apartheid campaigns such as the *Kairos Document*, the *Road to Damascus*, and the *Standing for the Truth Campaign*, to mention but a few.

It is felt by some that the church can now go back to its 'original' mission and proper business and leave political questions and economic issues to politicians and economists now that apartheid has been removed. Though these views are not

shared by all there is still very little that comes to the fore in terms of what constitutes the prophetic role of the church in the new dispensation. Now that freedom has been achieved it is not clear what the role of liberation theology is, especially given that what are perceived to be proper and sound economic and other policies are being put in place by the new government.

In Chapter Two we saw that with the exception of the AICs the dominant progressive soteriologies during the height of apartheid presented the problem of soteriology as the dichotomy between a soteriology which is "bodily" or "worldly" and therefore liberatory, and on the other hand a soteriology which is "spiritualized" and "other-worldly" and therefore anti-liberation. The latter came under severe criticism for not taking serious cognisance of the material context of racism, sexism, political oppression and economic exploitation. We saw the extent to which some of these progressive theologians went in their criticism of what they perceived to be the inadequacy and irrelevance of traditional soteriology which they construed to be its over-spiritualization of the gospel. I have attempted to expose this criticism of traditional soteriology as being unfair not only to traditional models of soteriology but as doing a disservice to liberation theology itself by basing it on what is clearly a caricature and oversimplification of traditional models. The question which presents itself at this juncture is: What does salvation mean in the newly liberated context of South Africa (within the new world order)? In other words, what is the most appropriate soteriology for the new context in which apartheid has been abolished? Put differently, does the church still have a prophetic role to play within the new context? Is the role of the church merely to ensure that the political miracle in South Africa is successfully translated into an economic one or does the challenge go deeper than the economic imperatives?

The critical insight which the soteriology of the *Church of God and Saints of Christ* contributes to our discourse in South Africa is its exposure of the deficiencies and inadequacies inherent in the freedom which South Africans have attained. The basis of this criticism is not the challenge posed by the economic question but the domination inherent in the commodified structuring of social relations which the market dictates and which economic solutions assume. The study has shown that as far as the CGSC is concerned, real freedom will be achieved only when they are free to worship God when and as they wish, without

having to suffer financial or other losses because of this freedom of choice. In presenting this view of freedom the *Israelites* do not propose a "spiritualizing" or an "other-worldly" or a pie-in-the-sky-when-you-die soteriology.

On the contrary, the *Israelites* are very adamant that it is this world, this very earth which needs to be transformed and made anew. We can therefore describe the freedom envisioned by the CGSC as *transcendent* because it seeks to go beyond socio-political and economic objectives as presently conceptualised. We can further describe the *Israelites'* view of freedom as *prophetic* because this view of freedom was central to the prophecies of Mgiijima who attempted to realise this alternative view of a free society. In other words it is this belief in freedom and this vision for a transformed society which brought about the establishment of the Ntabelanga commune in the first place. It is this critical thrust and prophetic vision which is missing in the soteriology of the mainline churches, including those which profess an overt liberatory thrust or political intent. Let me now move to the the role of memory in facilitating the insurrection of subjugated knowledges, the second critical insight.

The Bulhoek Massacre of 1921 was not the first massacre nor the last which happened in South Africa as a result of resistance against domination. What makes this massacre unique is that it was the first massacre which was directed at what was clearly organised and identifiable as a christian grouping. Many other massacres have happened since and as yet they have not stopped. The key question or challenge which faces South Africans is to transform these experiences of war, suffering and death into redemptive experiences. The key insight which the soteriology of the CGSC contributes in this regard is its use of memory as a vehicle for transforming the experience of war, memory and death into a redemptive experience. The first contribution in this regard is that the collective memory of South Africans has to facilitate the insurrection of the knowledges which these massacres sought to subjugate and conquer. The second contribution is that memory has to play the critical role of ensuring that South Africans remain true, faithful and in continuity with the dreams, visions and hopes of those who suffered at the slaughter bench of history. This is of particular importance given the new context in which those who were oppressed are now in government and in power and are exposed to the corrupting influence of power and high office.

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- (2) *Queenstown and Frontier Museum.* An exhibited written article.
- (3) *Cape Times, The.* 23 July 1921
- (4) *Daily Dispatch.* 6 December 1921. "Israelite Trial. Judge's Strong Comments. Officials' Weakness and Vacillation Criticised. The Trial of the Israelites commenced in Queenstown on Monday, 21st November, and concluded on Friday evening, 2nd December." (The article is reprinted from the East London Daily Dispatch, December 6, 1921).
- (5) *Daily Dispatch.* 1921. "The Bullhoek Tragedy." This is a 30 page three column article.
- (6) *Daily Representative and Free Press, The.* 8 December 1920 - 13 June 1921. These are reports which appeared over 55 days prior to and after the Massacre.
- (7) *Learn & Teach.* May 1993.
- (8) *Representative, The.* 14 August 1981.
- (9) *Star, The.* (cf Roux 1948:146)

### Writings by the members of the *Church of God and Saints of Christ*

- (1) *The Rules of the Church of God and Saints of Christ. The Rock of Truth.* (Imiteto ye Bandla lika Tixo neNgcwele zika Kristu. Ilitye Lenyaniso). Printed by The Daily Representative Ltd. Queenstown. 1974. (Written in Xhosa)
- (2) *Mgijima - a Prophet, Priest and King.* This is an original article written in response to Cylde Daniel's article headed "Mgijima - a charismatic, yet misguided, visionary" which appeared in *The Representative*, Friday 14 August 1981. This response article was written by Mr. Cameron Mavuso Dokoda, an elder in the *Church of God and Saints of Christ*. According to Mr. Dokoda an edited version of the article was published in edited form in *The Representative*. (Written in English)
- (3) *The Bulhoek Massacre: A Synopsis of the History of the Event.* This is an article written by Elder Moses M. Mzimkhulu, sent to President Nelson R. Mandela via the office of Eastern Cape premier Mr. Raymond Mhlaba, as a congratulatory message to the new President of South Africa. 1994.