

AFRO-PENTECOSTALISM AND CONTESTED HOLINESS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

The proliferation of charismatic and Pentecostal movements in southern Africa, and indeed the whole continent of Africa, as well as the recurrent competition for recognition and authenticity makes one astounded regarding the direction in which Christianity in Africa is developing. Is this connected to the historic Pentecost recorded in the second chapter of the book of Acts? If it is, why are there acrimony, strife and rivalry among the various members of the Christian body? This paper hypothesises the possibility of a parallel idea of holiness in African traditions which undergirds some of these religious movements and in turn challenges the idea of authenticity in African Christianity. If the various movements are somehow tapping into African traditions for miracle working power, does this suggest that the said traditions are alternative axils of holiness? Would this, by implication suggest that Christianity in Africa can be anchored thereon?

Keywords: Afro-Pentecostalism; contested holiness; southern Africa; Christianity

INTRODUCTION

This paper is a sequel to an earlier paper entitled: ‘Reflections on the morality of some prophetic acts in Zimbabwe’s Pentecostal movement’.¹ It is a philosophical examination of a solemn aspect of religious phenomenon – holiness. One of the

1 Chimuka. Reflections..., in *Prophets, profits and the Bible*, (Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press, 2013), 119.

chief goals of philosophy of religion is critical reflection of religious ideas.² It is interesting to note that for a very long time, African traditions have been condemned as dark, sinister and evil forces.³ As a result, there developed despondent attitudes regarding the possibility of anything good coming out of the continent. Using the method of philosophical analysis this paper examines the prospects of Afro-centred Pentecostalism in promoting an authentic Christianity. Can authentic Christianity be feasible in the context of fusion with African practices? The paper also seeks to ascertain whether holiness is antithetical to African spirituality. It also examines whether the holiness of African traditions can enhance the quality of Christianity in Africa in terms of its authentic expression. In this endeavour, secondary literature on the subject will be sifted in order to resolve the problem at hand. Holiness becomes a contested concept in light of a forked dichotomy in which; on the one hand, there is a rise in Christian churches laying claim to agency by the Holy Spirit of God; and on the other hand there is the accusation that these ‘Spirit churches’⁴ are using pagan powers, especially from African traditional religions to perform wonders and institute acts of healing.⁵ The new Pentecostal churches lay immense emphasis on the ministration of the Holy Spirit⁶ in the healing of the sick and casting out evil spirits⁷, prophecy⁸ and the performance of other miracles.⁹ If the charge that they are using pagan power sticks, then their claim to authentic Christianity is seriously compromised. There is staid criticism from mainline Christian churches which allege that these new Christian movements are surreptitiously drawing powers from African spirituality.¹⁰ Naturally, this provokes the question of the status of African spirituality. If the new Pentecostal-charismatic churches¹¹ are angling for power from African traditions to perform wonders, acts of exorcism and healing the sick, would not this constitute a contradiction? It is interesting to note that historically, African traditions have been condemned as dark and sinister.¹² If this is granted, one wonders how the same forces of darkness could conceivably work towards their own demise. Does it mean that there is a competing puddle of holiness in the various African traditions accessible to Afro-Pentecostalism?

2 Meister. *Introduction to philosophy of religion*, (New York: Routledge, 2009), 1.

3 Okon. 2013. Distortion in facts, (*International Journal of Asian Social Science*, 3(1): 100.

4 Gunda. African biblical Christianity, in *Multiplying in the Spirit*, (Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press, 2014), 148.

5 Meyer. Christianity in Africa, (*Annual Review of Anthropology*, 2004), 449.

6 Pfeiffer. Commodity Fetishism, (*Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry*, 2005), 256.

7 Biri. The silent echoing voices, (*Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, 2012), 36.

8 Vengeyi. Zimbabwean Pentecostal prophets, in *Prophets, profits and the Bible*, (Bamberg: Bamberg University Press, 2013), 29.

9 Vengeyi, 29.

10 Mwandayi. *Death and after-life rituals*, (Bamberg: Bamberg University Press, 2013), 24.

11 Meyer. Christianity in Africa, (*Annual Review of Anthropology*, 2004), 453.

12 Biri, 33.

In pursuance of the objectives above, the paper is divided into three sections. We commence by setting the debate in context. Thereafter the article examines how selected African traditions viewed the ideas of the holy and the evil. The article concludes by seeking to establish the benefits of this conceptual archaeology.

PROPHETS IN AICS AND AFRO-PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES IN AFRICA: IMPOSTERS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT?

African initiated churches (AICs) and Pentecostal-charismatic churches are accused by their counterparts of claiming appropriation of the Holy Spirit, yet tapping into African spirituality.¹³ As a result their Christian character is put to question. The raging issue is; how can authentic Christian movements incorporate practices that have been condemned as pagan? The basic problem here is that African Christianity, since way back, has been struggling to establish a concrete identity. The question has hinged on how Africans can practise their Christianity in a manner true to their way of life.¹⁴ This in part is a result of colonial experiences.¹⁵ In any case, it is typical of religion to be violent to other religions – labelling them as evil or false; questioning the authority of the others or accusing the others of evil foundations.¹⁶ Colonialism was largely responsible for peddling the view of the evil Other.¹⁷ African traditions were condemned wholesome as evil and profane.¹⁸ Even up to this day, some Pentecostal leaders are busy attacking gospel songs that have traditional instruments as their platform! The evil Other was a motif popularised by the ‘civilising’ discourse of colonialism which somehow labelled everything African as savagery.¹⁹ Amanze gives us a picture of the wholesome rejection and condemnation of African tradition, especially those that were at variance with Western Christianity with no attempt whatsoever made to empathise with the African cultural situation.²⁰ As a matter of fact, the attitude of Westerners towards African cultures was characterised by intolerance to difference, and wholesale condemnation of African cultures. At their worst, African cultures were regarded as instances of evil and emblematic of the devil. Thus, any serious convert was supposed to flee from such ominous traditions.²¹ In the

13 Chimuka, 114.

14 Wiredu. Philosophy and authenticity, (*Journal of Comparative Theory*, 2007), 72.

15 Coertze. Challenges facing the African church, (Thesis, Pretoria: University of Pretoria, 2005), 1.

16 Hackett. Discourses of demonization, (*Diogenes*, 2003), 198.

17 Hackett, 198.

18 Taringa. Nothing is impossible with God, in *Prophets, profits and the Bible*, (Bamberg: Bamberg University Press, 2013), 207.

19 Shoko. African theology, in *Biblical studies, theology, religion and philosophy*, (Eldoret: Zapf Chancery, 2010), 165.

20 Amanze. *Christianity and ancestor veneration*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), 43

21 Amanze. ATRs in *Contemporary Africa*, (Eldoret: Zapf Chancery, 2010), 286.

end, we see a double-assault against African cultures – from the missionaries who had not bothered to understand these traditions and from the new African converts who were bent on proving their mettle. So, from the mainline missionary churches, African traditions and their pulsating spirituality were evil and by implication, not amenable to the good and the holy.

Another dichotomy to the problem, however, is brought to bear through the rise of AICs and the new wave of black Pentecostalism (Langat 2010). The black variant of Pentecostalism initiated by William Seymour and others at Azusa Street in the United States of America in 1906, is what is herein referred to as Afro-Pentecostalism.²² Other scholars downplay the history of the origins of the movement and insist on the work of the Holy Spirit operating in Africa using different people, in a variety of contexts, and causing miracles to happen.²³ Thus, in Africa there is a variety of manifestations of Afro-Pentecostalism. The significant point is that the Pentecostalism in question has manifested on African soil in a manner which is impossible to ignore in terms of its impact and the issues that ensue.²⁴ Julius Gathogo even elevates Afro-Pentecostalism to be the dominant ecclesiastical paradigm in Kenya.²⁵

AICs represent part of the Africans' struggle against Western dominated ways of worship and emphasis on worshipping God the African way.²⁶ Through enculturation, aspects of African traditional religion (both beliefs and practices) were surreptitiously smuggled into AICs in the name of resistance against the Western condemnation of African traditions.²⁷ The hues of Afro-Pentecostalism are aptly captured by Gathogo:

They refer to the brand of Christianity that goes beyond the traditional understanding of Pentecostal model – a phenomenon where Pentecostalism incorporates some elements of African culture that are compatible with the gospel of Christ. Though not openly or consciously proclaimed, afro-Pentecostalism incorporates African models of concern for the other, caring, listening, and general hospitality. It finds itself at home with African idioms, proverbs, riddles, rhythms and metaphors among other enriching elements of African culture. Despite failure to confess this, their headship represents the true face of African leadership as they clearly capture African ethos of wholeness.²⁸

One of the aspects adopted by the 'emerging Christianities'²⁹ is ancestral veneration.³⁰ This trajectory is demonstrated by Carnislus Mwandayi in a seminal work: *Traversing*

22 Alexander and Young. *Black tongues of fire*, (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), 1.

23 Alexander and Young, 1.

24 Ukah. *African Christianities*, (Johannes Gutenberg Universität, 2007), 1.

25 Gathogo. Theo-political dominance, (*US-China Law Review*, 2014), 1499.

26 Mapuranga. AICs as a gendered space, (*Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, 2013), 303.

27 Kealotswe. Theology of AICs, biblical studies, *Theology, Religion and Philosophy*, (Eldoret: Zapf Chancery, 2010), 232.

28 Gathogo, 1499.

29 Gathogo uses the phrase 'emerging Christianities' synonymously with 'Afro-Pentecostalism'.

30 Malobi. Ancestral veneration, (*Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, 2005), 112.

the thin line between 'Chibhoyi' (indigenous spirituality) and miracle working (2013). Mwandayi argues that from the time local miracle-making preachers like Pastor Makandiwa, Uebrt Angels and prophet Khuleya, the media has been invaded by such healing episodes.³¹ Mwandayi contends, to use his words, 'there is interplay between the miracles being done these days and chibhoyi or chivanhu, "traditional spiritualism"'.³² This point is corroborated by Taringa who asserts that AIC prophets appropriated one of the fundamentals of ATRs – healing.³³ The charge by Taringa is that in the AICs, 'traditional fundamentalists are masquerading as prophets'.³⁴ These prophets tap into traditional religion by adopting a holistic approach to healing.³⁵ He cites the case of prophetess Mrs Ziki-Dube, of the Holy Apostolic Church as an example.³⁶ The prophetess, according to Taringa, uses material objects as a means to healing.³⁷ Shoko and Chiwara allege similarities between Makandiwa and a n'anga in traditional African religions.³⁸ Shoko argues that there is a strong resemblance between the n'anga of African traditions and the prophet of the AICs and the new Pentecostal churches. Shoko contends further that even though Afro-Pentecostal leaders such as Emmanuel Makandiwa claim to be used by the Holy Spirit of God, they have the same pneumatological status as n'angas' ministering under the influence of the ancestral spirit, which is the Holy Spirit according to African traditional religion.³⁹

Shoko and Chiwara have concentrated on drawing parallels between prophet Makandiwa and what n'angas normally do. They cite belief in spirit world; the manner of the call; the ability to foresee and forth-tell; mentoring by spiritual fathers; wonder working episodes and acts of exorcism; and the use of personal assistance, among others.⁴⁰ The conclusion reached by the duo is that prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa can be regarded as both Christian and traditionalist.⁴¹

Thus, for Shoko and Chiwara, the similarities between Makandiwa and the traditionalists are too numerous to ignore. If Makandiwa is like a n'anga, it follows that he is one! I think this claim argues for too much. This conclusion is based on

31 Mwandayi. *Traversing the thin line, in Prophets, profits and the Bible*, (Bamberg: Bamberg University Press, 2013), 321.

32 Mwandayi, 231.

33 Taringa, 208.

34 Taringa, 208.

35 Taringa, 208.

36 Taringa, 208.

37 Taringa, 208.

38 Shoko and Chiwara. *The prophetic figure, in Prophets, profits and the Bible*, (Bamberg: University of Bamberg), 219.

39 Shoko and Chiwara, 220.

40 Shoko and Chiwara, 221.

41 Shoko and Chiwara, 223.

a very loose conjecture. If two phenomena (A) and (B) display similarities in some respect, does this necessarily point to the same cause? Why would it be wrong to argue that Makandiwa's ministrations are similar to those of the Bible, so he is a prophet used by the Holy Spirit? Shoko and Chiwara must establish with cogent reasons that Makandiwa is not being used by the Holy Spirit of the Christian religion and that he is plugging into African spirituality. There is need also to prove that African spirituality is satanic.

On the other hand, Taringa's conclusion is that the prophet in the AIC utilises a holistic approach to healing and therefore plugs into the fundamentalism found in African traditional spirituality.⁴² Taringa lays emphasis on the holistic healing in African traditions and appears to preclude the same from non-African styles of healing. He does not offer an argument to this effect. One is left wondering whether healing by the Holy Spirit in the Christian religion is not concerned with the whole person. One also wonders whether Taringa insinuates that healing by the Holy Spirit does not trace the cause of the sickness. Consider the healing of the woman with an issue of blood (Matthew 9:22). Jesus offered wholeness to the woman. Unless Taringa also proves that holistic healing was confined only to African healings, then we cannot draw much from his observations. Mwandayi too has a conclusion to a similar effect. He admits that the spirit world is dense. It needs to be treaded carefully. Christians in Africa are aware that expatriate pastors, for example, and even some local pastors are not comfortable with handling issues from the spirit world, where illness is at times ascribed to deep spiritual, cultural and social causes.

Mwandayi observes that the reluctance by the mainline churches to deal with issues related to African spirituality has left a gap which AICs and Pentecostal churches are taking advantage of in wooing their converts by promising total healing. Mwandayi delves into a very crucial issue; the source of authority of the prophets in the AICs and Pentecostal churches:

What is mind boggling, however, about the whole issue is the source of power used by these charismatic prophets. This is an area which has fascinated many researchers, especially considering the ability of these prophets to perform mysterious actions which are similar and which may even surpass what people are used to seeing their traditional healers perform. While such actions have helped lift the flag of some churches, in some cases it has dragged them into the mud of controversies.⁴³

Disagreements abound concerning the source of prophetic authority in the Christian churches leading to divisions and accusations of witchcraft.⁴⁴ Mwandayi notes that both researchers and Christian followers are divided over this issue. This is compounded by the biblical injunction; 'touch not my anointed ones and do not harm

42 Taringa, 205.

43 Mwandayi. *Traversing the thin line*, 239.

44 Shoko. *Independent healing*, (*Studia Historiae Ecclesasticae*, 2006), 136.

the prophets' (1 Chronicles 16:22). Some researchers see the prophets as providing a very good service and so should be encouraged.⁴⁵ Others leave it to religious pluralism and still others want us to check on the fruits. The fact of the matter is that some condemn, while others approve. Mwandayi argues that the exercise of prophetic activities in the AICs and Pentecostal churches is fishy.⁴⁶ Some n'angas in eastern Zimbabwe claim to give people whatever powers they need, including churning some people into prophets. Mwandayi argues that the works by prophets of the AICs and Pentecostal churches cannot but be classified under *chibhoyi* or *chivanhu* – such as a three day gestation period; making the lame to walk; and promising restoration of hair to bald-headed people.⁴⁷

One is faced with a serious quandary regarding the operation of the Holy Spirit in AICs and Pentecostal churches in Africa. Mwandayi, Phiri, Taringa and Shoko are in the main dismissing such miraculous works as tapping into traditional African spirituality. Does it mean that the Holy Spirit cannot operate outside mainstream churches? Does it mean there is no holiness in African traditions? If Makandiwa, Angels and Khuleya are using African spirituality to cast out devils and heal the sick, what is the pneumatological status of African spirituality?

The authors in the paragraphs above demonstrate that African spirituality is pervasive and very strong, as AICs and neo-Pentecostal churches are using it in the healing and wonder-making escapades. As a matter of fact, through the AICs, traditional African cultures have transmogrified into Christianity⁴⁸ and these AICs are considered as constituting 'bridges back to paganism'.⁴⁹ The implication of all this is that there is no holiness in African cultures.

Interestingly, the new upcoming Pentecostal churches, mostly in urban centres,⁵⁰ are purported to break from either the African past or from the mainline churches and connecting to global paths.⁵¹ However, accusations that the Pentecostal-charismatic churches are tapping into pagan traditions are continuing.⁵² Paul Gundani points out that these prophets not only ask for tokens of appreciation from their clients, but also no longer place the primacy of healing on Jesus Christ. In addition, they are registered with the traditional healers' body (ZINATHA).⁵³ These factors make people cast aspersions on the authenticity of the Christianity practised by these prophets:

45 Gundani. Church media and healing, (*Word & World*, 2001), 141.

46 Mwandayi. Traversing the thin line, 242.

47 Mwandayi. Traversing the thin line, 242.

48 Kealotswe. Theology of Independent Churches, *Biblical studies, theology, religion and philosophy*, (Eldoret: Zapf Chancery, 2010), 232.

49 Kealotswe. *Acceptance and rejection*, (Gaborone, University of Botswana, 2005), 109.

50 Parsitau. God in the city, (*Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, 2010), 95.

51 Meyer. Christianity in Africa, (*Annual Review of Anthropology*, 2004), 448.

52 Gundani. Church media and healing, (*Word & World*, 2001), 141-2.

53 Gundani, 140.

Another reason for questioning the credibility of the “professional prophets” is related to their mode of healing. Many who cast aspersions against the practice argue that some of the prophets seem to use their home of origin as an attractive lure for clients rather than using the name of Christ...Hence, it seems that some prophets tend to cash in on this traditional and historical symbolism while marginalizing the name of Christ.⁵⁴

This point has been alluded to by Mwandayi and is now corroborated by Biri, who points out that Guti of the (FIF) and Makandiwa of (UFI) came from rural areas well known for nʼangas and witchcraft.⁵⁵ In addition, Kealotswe finds similarities between the prophets and traditional healers. The following are parallels – ancestral spirits in ATR correspond to the Holy Spirit in Christianity; magic and divination in ATRs correspond to prophecy and healing in Christianity; and dreams in ATRs correspond to revelation in Christianity.⁵⁶ Granted that there is no holiness in African traditions, it would be surprising to see how the prophets in the AICs are tapping into them to cast out devils and to perform miracles of healing. Yet, according to Biri, many Pentecostal churches burn their energies against African traditional religion which they call ‘powers of darkness’.⁵⁷ These Pentecostals consider ATRs to be demonic and hence need to be exorcised.⁵⁸ Now, if the AICs and some Pentecostals are synergetic, does this imply that there is something of spiritual value in ATRs, some holiness perhaps?

THE IDEA OF HOLINESS IN AFRICAN TRADITIONS

The issue of holiness in African traditions is contentious, given that Christianity has always ridden on the wave of holiness by default. The importance of holiness cannot be overemphasised, given that Christians are called to a life of separateness characterised by devout piety. The nagging question has always been whether the holiness of Yahweh can be augmented by that espoused in African traditions. This section focuses on whether the idea of holiness co-presented in selected African traditions, measures up to universal Christian standards. This will be approached from (a) the need to eradicate evil; and (b) the promotion of individual purity. From the onset, however, there is the need to mention that African traditions are numerous, and no allusion is made to any form of homogeneity.

It is common knowledge that African traditions had some vision of the good and happy life and strove to eradicate evil – which manifested in the form of tormenting spirits, sickness which manifested in the form of tormenting spirits, sickness

54 Gundani. Church, media and healing, 140.

55 Biri. The silent echoing voices, 39.

56 Kealotswe. Theology of AICs, 236-40.

57 Biri, 33.

58 Biri, 33.

and moral evil.⁵⁹ Goodness has its source in the supernatural order of things.⁶⁰ In African cosmology, there is a hierarchy of being, with God at the top.⁶¹ God has been understood variously among the African cultures – as the Creator, the Supreme Being, the Great God, or the Almighty.⁶² It is not entirely clear whether the various appellations in African traditional religion refer to the same being. James Cox, for example, argues that the Shona name *Mwari*, which has come to refer to Yahweh, was a name of the local god.⁶³ This point was made earlier by Isabel Mukonyora who contends that initially, Mwari was god of the ancestors of a certain lineage (the Rozvi).⁶⁴ Furthermore, the translation of the Shona Bible saw the name of the Christian God getting the name ‘Mwari’.⁶⁵ This was seen largely as a political manoeuvre to lure the Shona into accepting Christianity.⁶⁶ Perhaps the same thing happened to the translation of the Christian God into – Olodumare.⁶⁷ The gods of the African pre-Christian traditions have turned out to be the gods of Christian worship.⁶⁸ This throws us into the metaphysical lagoon of the being and appellations of the Christian God.

Yahweh (God) is the author of holiness.⁶⁹ There is a hierarchy of beings from God down to human beings.⁷⁰ These intermediaries facilitate communication between man and God.⁷¹ Evil, by contrast, would be anything contrary to God and his order of things. Africans believe there are spirits that work contrary to God’s will and are largely responsible for metaphysical evil.⁷² In human affairs then, evil is the injury inflicted by supernatural or human agents.⁷³ The evil which was largely a result of human beings and the choices they made in conduct, has been coined moral evil.⁷⁴

Drawing from Shona cosmology, for instance, it is apparent that there are spirits which mediate between God and man. Some of these are good spirits (mhondoro

59 Harries, Good-by-default, 2009, 152-3.

60 Izibili. African traditional approach, (*Studies in tribes and tribals*, 2009), 12.

61 Mbiti. *African religions and philosophies*, (London: Heinemann, 1969), 29.

62 Ekeke. God, Divinities and Spirits, (*American Journal of Social and Management Sciences*, 2010), 210.

63 Cox. *Invention of gods*, (Cambridge: Acumen Publishing, 2013), 67.

64 Mukonyora. Women and Ecology, (*Word & World*, 1999), 278.

65 Togarasei. The Shona Bible, (*Studies in World Christianity*, 2009), 58.

66 Mbuwayesango. How local divine powers..., *The Post-colonial Bible reader*, (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 2006), 66-67.

67 Bewaji. God in Yoruba belief, (*African Studies Quarterly*, 1998), 2.

68 Harries. Name of God, (*Exchange*, 2009), 271-2.

69 Robinson. Forgotten dimensions of holiness, (*Horizons in Biblical Theology*, 2011), 123.

70 Ozumba. *African traditional metaphysics*, online.

71 Ndlovu. Mediation as conflict resolution, (*Africana*, 2012), 169.

72 Kasomo. Investigating sin and evil, (*International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, 2009), 145

73 Balogun. Nature of evil, (*Lumina*, 2009), 1-2.

74 Balogun, 2.

and vadzimu) and others are evil ones.⁷⁵ Takawira Kazembe identifies good spirits as *maGombwe* (territorial spirits), ancestors, and some *mashave* (talent-endowing spirits).⁷⁶ There are also bad (evil) spirits whose mission it was to cause suffering and torment the lives of people. These include bad *mashavi* (talent-endowing spirits), *jambwa* (spirit that causes infertility/unproductiveness),⁷⁷ *ngozi* (avenging spirit)⁷⁸ and *huroyi* (witchcraft).⁷⁹ These spirits, it is believed, cause untold suffering on people ranging from diseases to deaths.⁸⁰ However, there have always been people, such as *n'angas*, appointed to meet these challenges.

In traditional African cultures, witchcraft⁸¹ was such a menace to communities and individuals that considerable effort was devoted to either preventing or countering it.⁸² This paper is not out to prove the metaphysical reality of witchcraft, but assumes it to be one of the social realities of African life as attested to by traditional healers⁸³ and Spirit churches.⁸⁴ Now, witchcraft was condemned by *n'angas* (traditional herbalist/doctor) who worked tirelessly to eradicate it; there is a sense in which African traditions were committed to the good life in the community.

The idea of holiness can be approached also from the perspective of personal purity with respect to certain rites of passage. Apart from the ordinary impurity of women as a result of the cycles of life, such as the menses and post-partum pollution,⁸⁵ there were also other forms of impurity and pollution in the traditional sense. This involves among other things: touching a corpse⁸⁶; excessive anger; adultery and meanness⁸⁷; or simply breaking the *taboos* of that culture. A *taboo* simply means some forbidden thing – be it an object, an action or a person to be avoided.⁸⁸ Whereas some of the taboos had to do with environmental protection⁸⁹, others had to do with the sanctity and preservation of life.⁹⁰ Whereas some were meant to keep the individual

75 Gelfand. *The Shona religion*, (Cape Town: Juta, 1972), 42.

76 Kazembe. God and people, (*The Rose+Croix Journal*, 2009), 58.

77 Muchinako. Tackling human infertility, (*Research Journal of Social Sciences and Management*, 2013), 26.

78 Kazembe, 56.

79 Okon. African Worldview, (*Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2012), 69.

80 Okon 2012, 70.

81 Kibor. Witchcraft and sorcery, (*Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology*, 2006), 151.

82 Asamoah-Gyadu. Witchcraft accusations, (*International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 2015), 24.

83 Mafico. Witchcraft belief and realities, (*Zambezia*, 1986), 122.

84 Mafico, 122.

85 Sibisi. Some notions of purity, (*Unpublished*, 1975), 21.

86 Sibisi, 21.

87 Kyalo. Initiation rites, (*International Journal of Philosophy and Theology*, 2013), 40.

88 Mhaka. Rituals and taboos, (*Academic Research International*, 2014), 374.

89 Gumo et al. Communicating African spirituality, (*Religions*, 2012), 525.

90 Tarira. The Role of *Zviera*, (*Indigenous Knowledge and Technology*, 2000), 147.

pure for initiation⁹¹, others were meant for their own preservation.⁹² Whereas some were meant to preserve wildlife⁹³, others were meant to preserve a clean relationship between humans and the gods.⁹⁴ Taboos were considered consecrated and harmful; hence it was in people's best interest to avoid them.⁹⁵ Anyone who came into contact with an object or performed an act considered to be a taboo, became unclean and was in need of purification. Uncleanliness or profanity was something that was out of place and would signal danger or punishment.

Purification rites or acts of sanctification were also performed in traditional Africa in a bid to address issues of pollution mentioned above, and they give us some light on the idea of holiness. Traditional African communities held various rituals – birth⁹⁶, initiation⁹⁷, marriage⁹⁸, death⁹⁹, post war healing rituals¹⁰⁰, purification¹⁰¹ and sacrificial¹⁰² rites among others. Of these, the purification and sacrificial rites were considered the most sacred (holy). In addition, the times when these rituals took place were also consecrated.¹⁰³ Without really going into the details as to how these rituals were conducted, suffice it to note that the idea of holiness was present in African traditional cultures. This ranges from places¹⁰⁴, acts¹⁰⁵, animals that played sacred roles¹⁰⁶ and so forth. Some Africans, especially n'angas¹⁰⁷, priests and priestesses and healers¹⁰⁸ had access to sacred powers. The possession of these sacred powers became irresistible to many Africans, including Christians.¹⁰⁹

From the above, one can safely infer that holiness is manifested in African traditions. It also became evident that mystical powers exist in African traditions. It has emerged that the phenomenon of sacredness is well respected in African communities in terms of space, individual conduct and in worship. It is clear that the various rituals are saddled with holiness or purity. Failure to observe such holiness, spells danger to individuals and communities. Finally, it has emerged that individuals

91 Murray. Homosexuality, *online*.

92 Familusi. African culture, *online*.

93 Jimoh. Role of traditional laws, (*Journal of Human Ecology*, 2012), 213.

94 Izibili. Traditional approach, (*Studies in Tribes and Tribals*, 2009), 11.

95 Mhaka. Rituals and taboos, (*Academic Research International*, 2014), 374.

96 Knapp van Bogaert and Ugunbanjo. Post-birth rituals, (*South African Family Practice*, 2014), 45.

97 Kyalo. Initiation rites, (*International Journal of Philosophy and Theology*, 2013), 39-40.

98 Kyalo. Family values, (*International Review of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 2011), 74.

99 Shiino. Death and rituals, (*African Study Monographs*, 1997), 214.

100 Kamwaria. Role of ATR, (*International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 2012), 52.

101 Hatchings. Ritual cleansing, (*Alternation*, 2007), 195.

102 Asu. Sacrificial ceremonies, (*British Journal of Arts and Social Sciences*, 2012), 27, 29.

103 Mhaka, 374.

104 Gumo et al. Communicating African spirituality, (*Religions*, 2012), 258.

105 Filamusi. African culture, *online*.

106 Gumo et al, 531.

107 Masondo. Religion in the face of secularism, *online*.

108 Olupona. African traditional religions, *online*.

109 Nyowe. Dominance of trappings, *online*.

in certain offices, such as priests and diviners, have access to certain mystical powers. What remains, is to uncover the implications of this to the AICs who are alleged to sup with the powers of traditional spirituality.

IMPLICATIONS FOR AFRICAN-INITIATED AND PENTECOSTAL-CHARISMATIC CHURCHES

From the foregoing, African traditions are seen to be a fertile ground for fostering dynamic spiritual fermentation. The preceding section revealed that the said African traditions were a complete system of worship with defined notions of the sacred and the profane. In the course of time and subsequent to the AICs own development, appropriation and transformation of some of the aspects have emerged.¹¹⁰ The appropriation of *ditaola* (divination bones) and certain other objects of art in healing, by some Zionist churches in Botswana, instantiate this perplexing development.¹¹¹ There is also a striking parallelism between the idea and manifestation of power in African traditions and the biblical power. According to Anderson:

The Greek word for power (*dunamis*) refers to “power, ability, physical or moral, as residing in a person or a thing” as well as “power in action”. This concept is similar to “power” in Africa, where the word conveys forcefulness, strength, and ability. It carries with it the idea of dignity, authority, and power over oppression. It also refers to power in action and has its ultimate source in God. This African concept is almost identical to the biblical concept of power that is sought for and claimed through the Holy Spirit.¹¹²

Anderson also sees another close parallel in leadership as led by the spirit. Prophets, like Moses, were powerful since the Spirit of God was with them; in African traditional religions also, the healer became powerful as s/he was capable of mediating between the world of humans and that of the spirit world.¹¹³ Thus, a parallel can be drawn between the healer and prophet.¹¹⁴ The intriguing aspect in all this is that, if the spirituality found in African traditions has some congruence with the Holy Spirit as espoused by Christianity, does this *ipso facto* point to the hand of Yahweh in it? If the various African traditions display powers to perform wonders, acts of healing and exorcism, does that make them agents of Yahweh? The prophet or charismatic leader in AICs or Pentecostal-charismatic churches appears to operate just like a traditional healer in meeting the people’s spiritual and health needs.¹¹⁵ The situation becomes

110 Magesa. *Anatomy of inculturation*, (New York: Orbis Books, 2004), 16.

111 Matsepe. The appropriation of African traditional healing by the Zionist Churches; A challenge to the mission churches in Gaborone, (Botswana. Thesis University of South Africa, 2004).

112 Anderson. AICs and pneumatology, (*Word & World*, 2003), 179.

113 Anderson. AICs and pneumatology, 180.

114 Kealotswe. African Independent Churches, 236.

115 Anderson, 181.

even more complicated when the faith healers are becoming commercial¹¹⁶ or are registering with the traditional healers' associations.¹¹⁷ This seems to go against the grain of what it means to be a Christian or a prophet of Yahweh.¹¹⁸

Interestingly, the various Christian groups trade insults against each other as they tussle to gain recognition for authenticity. Some mainline churches accuse the spirit churches of sliding back into paganism,¹¹⁹ but others are amenable to the supposed work of the Holy Spirit.¹²⁰ While some Pentecostal-charismatic churches want no association with African traditional religion,¹²¹ traditional healers claim that these same charismatic leaders come to them for mystical powers.¹²²

For some, the existence of robust and interactive religious movements is healthy as it leads to innovation and creativity in the religious life of the continent.¹²³ Others, however, are worried to the marrow concerning the prospects of evolving a healthy and authentic African Christianity.¹²⁴ For these people, Africans need to be authentic Christians but not the other way round. To attempt to make Christianity authentically African, Western or any other culture is to miss the essence of the religion in question, as it is otherworldly requiring a shift of focus from the traditions of men to the sole worship of Yahweh.¹²⁵ The fears concerning the brand of Christianity in Africa have a basis; for they are generated in part by the syncretism that has invaded the continent and also partly by the spiritual hybridity produced by a synergy of religious traditions.¹²⁶ Serious concern is raised as to whether the resultant phenomena would please the God of the Christians? If holiness is key to the worship of this God and Africa is busy manufacturing her own brand of holiness, is she not putting off the light of authentic salvation? This question is pertinent, given the centrality of Africa in the spread of Christianity in the twenty-first century.

CONCLUSION

From the foregoing, the issue of holiness has touched on many complex issues. In the first instance, it has rekindled the old debate of the contribution of Africa to religion. In the second, it has established that in southern Africa, even if the Christian religion

116 Khaoseb. Thesis (Eastern Cape: Stellenbosch University, 2014), 245.

117 Kealotswe, 239.

118 Fernando. Christian identity, (*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 2007), 121.

119 Shoko. Independent Churches healings, (*Studia Historiae Ecclesiae*, 2006), 129.

120 Snook. What theologians are saying, (*Word & World*, 2003), 189.

121 Meyer. Christianity in Africa, (*Annual Review of Anthropology*, 2004), 448.

122 Biri. Silent echoing voice, 42.

123 Ukah. *African Christianities*, (Gutenberg Universität, 2007), 9.

124 Omulokoli. Authentic African Christianity, (*East African Journal of Evangelical Theology*, 1986), 23.

125 Umoh. Superstition and syncretism, (*International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention*, 2013), 35.

126 Umoh. Superstition and syncretism, 35.

or Islam were taken out of the equation, African traditions would still have notions of the sacred, the holy or the pure. The work has also raised the issue regarding the authenticity of the Christian movements, particularly Afro-Pentecostalism in light of the strong affinity with African spirituality and traditions.

If Afro-Pentecostal leaders are getting their wonder-working and healing powers from the ancestral spirits (or from the African spirit world) but not from the Holy Spirit of God as espoused in Acts Chapter 2, then there is a serious problem. Such a state of affairs gives credence to the fear that the light of salvation in Africa is being blown out. The challenge then is how to develop a brand of Christianity that recognises and dignifies the Africans, but at the same time preserving as it were, 'the pure milk of the Gospel'.¹²⁷ If there is another version of holiness running parallel to the one associated with the God of the Christians, the challenge is how to harness this in the development of authentic Christian worship in southern Africa

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127 Omulokoli. Authentic African Christianity, (*East African Journal of Evangelical Theology*, 1986), 28.

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