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ABSTRACT

A tragic massacre in May 1921, commonly referred to as the Bulhoek Massacre, was associated with the ecclesiology of the Church of God and Saints of Christ, founded by Enoch Mgijima. If it were not for the theology of eschatology that this church adhered to, the so-called Bulhoek Massacre would not have happened. The theology of eschatology which Mgijima was focussing on caused the ecclesiology of the amaSirayeli to be the victims of the circumstances.

Dulles defines ecclesiology¹ as the church in the process of self actualisation. There is self understanding of worshippers. In the case of the Church of God and Saints of Christ, such self-understanding caused the Bulhoek Massacre. It is said that when people fervently believe in an Ultimate Being, whether such belief is a construction in their minds or a reality, then those people will be willing to defend their belief and die for, if it needs to be.

For such a believer, it is because of the hope for a better life in the future that they are willing to even defy earthly authorities. When that believer follows a voice of the supernatural, which is revealed only to him and sounds much louder, much clearer and more authoritative than human voices, it is then that he cannot be void. Such an authoritative voice may be transmitted either through ancestors, known as the living dead, or directly from the Supreme Being. In the case of the said church, it is both.

¹. Dulles, 1986p39

Secondly, an ecclesiology of the Church of God and Saints of Christ should be understood in the light of their mother church in America under the leadership of Crowdy the founder. Such ecclesiology should also be understood against the religious backdrop of the African Initiated Churches (AIC). These two factors, the mother church in America and the religion of the African Initiated Churches, will be the main components that drive this thesis, and thus illuminate the spark in the said church.

Owing to the proliferation of the African Initiated Churches in the continent of Africa², there is a wide speculation that Africa, of the 21st century, will be the centre of World Christianity. Whether this is just a dream or a reality remains to be realized. But the fact remains that, these churches continue to be a religious force that forms part of the church history in Africa.

While this thesis will constantly be referring to the 1921 events, an ecclesiology of the said church is a present phenomenon because the church survived the massacre and is still active today.

The two researchers, Robert Edgar from Los Angeles University in the USA, and Martin Mandew from the University of Natal, completed their doctoral theses on the Bulhoek Massacre. Edgar was researching on, *The Fifth Seal*. Enoch Mgijima, The amaSirayeli Bulhoek Massacre, 1921. Mandew concentrated on, *War, Memory and Salvation*, The Bulhoek Massacre and the Construction of a Contextual Soteriology.

Since both researchers come from a distance, and are unable to speak the language of the people they were researching, there were of obviously unfilled gaps in between.

2. Saunders CC 1994p145

As mentioned about cultural differences, therefore, knowing the language of the worshippers makes a big difference. There needs some analysis of idiomatic expressions, enunciated and other formal and informal expressions that tend to be important during communication. However, I acknowledge their research programme but I will go further from their product.

This thesis examines the ecclesiology of this church and then relates it to the massacre where they were killed for their own beliefs. It is also important to analyse, as this thesis does, the church-state relations in South Africa in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in order to establish how other religious bodies related to the governments of the said period.

RESEARCH METHOD

The analysis in this research focuses on the Church of God and the Saints of Christ, commonly known as the amaSirayeli. From now on, I will shorten the title of the church by simply referring to it as the amaSirayeli. Where there is a need to use the whole title, it will be stated but generally we will use the shorter title.

Methodologically, the process was to observe this group in their own territory whilst interacting with God in their own language during worship services. A series of interviews with the leaders and the worshippers of the church was part of the methodology. This included a visit to their annual celebrations to familiarise myself with their spiritual journey.

A number of questions were raised. These were some of them: Why are the annual events around their leader Mgijima so important to them? What role do these

celebrations play in their spirituality? What goes on in their minds as they engage in these historic celebrations? How does the line of authority function? All these questions were adequately answered when the researcher attended their celebrations. It was noticed that the amaSirayeli are a multi-ethnic group that comprises of members coming from certain provinces of South Africa. Their headquarters is in Queenstown in the Eastern Province. It was during the time of General Smuts in 1913, that the Land Act was promulgated. This promulgation restricted most African people from owning properties. Enoch Mgijima, who was one of the prominent leaders of the area, was granted a piece of land.

Not only was he a prophetic leader; but also he was a founder leader of the amaSirayeli church. We are told that as his followers had no place to stay, he decided to summon them to his birth place which is Ntabelanga. He gave them a piece of land that was allocated to him. At a later stage, the presence of the amaSirayeli at Ntabelanga displeased other people and the government.

This eventually caused Smuts of thinking to forcefully removing them. He failed yet maimed the amaSirayeli. On the other hand, the land that Mgijima gave to the amaSirayeli was seen as a gift from God. Like Naboth about his vineyard (1 Kings 21), the amaSirayeli contended that they would rather die defending their religious land than allowing the government to remove them. The result of all this was the historic massacre of the 24th May 1921, the day which they commemorate on a yearly basis.

As the Church of God and Saints of Church is historical, the research method to be used will be approached historically. Because such church was not founded in a vacuum, I tried to gather as much information as possible about them. It is also true that most denominations nearer Mgijima at the time were affected numerically. The

denominational life of the Mgijima church was examined to discover the kind of a rich heritage they have. A comparative study between Mgijima, the leader and other black church leaders of his time, was conducted.

Doctrinal, devotional and ritual practices of the church, was researched. Activities that meant so much to Mgijima were researched as well. Some practices that are regarded as the corner stone of the church were reviewed.

The so-called the **Seven Keys** taught by prophet Mgijima and the **Ten Commandments** coming from the Old Testament, were the central point of the churches' departure in worship. They are taught for the purpose of encouraging, empowering and preparing them for their spiritual journey. It is through the seven keys and the Ten Commandments that the prophet continues to speak to his people even when he is no longer with them.

SOURCES

While observing the amaSirayeli in their worship services, I paid particular attention to historical data, such as primary sources, interviews, records of words which were left behind, gathering testimonies from church members, especially church leaders and acquaintances, visiting the grave-sites, attending the commemoration of festivals such as the Bulhoek Massacre, Feast of Esther (Purim), Passover and visiting Synod.

Much field work was carried out in the process of collecting the data from which their ecclesiology was analysed. Since this study research deals partly with past events, some information comes from the initial work of Robert Edgar in his doctoral thesis, which brings us closer to the original events. South Africa has an extensive gallery of

archives and libraries, especially at Unisa, in which pictures and descriptions of the amaSirayeli can be found.

The retrieval of relevant information, audible cassettes and newspapers from these archives provided the researcher with the needed primary sources.

Some of the primary sources used were the *Daily Dispatch* of East London, *Imvo zabaNtsundu* of King Williams Town, and the *Daily Representative* of Queenstown. All these newspapers provided good coverage of the events of 1918-1921 at Bulhoek. My appreciation goes to the Unisa Art Gallery for allowing me to view some of its art collections.

In addition to the sources mentioned above, there are the churches' archives, which are very rich with relevant information for this work. This information is in the hands of prominent leaders of the church. Some of the surviving leaders who experienced the events of the massacre are taking part in the church's daily activities. During the yearly commemoration of the Bulhoek Massacre, Bishop Mzimkhulu would remark that much has been spoken about us, now time has come for them to listen to our own side of the story.

He, together with the secretary of the church, who is Evangelist M. Mzimkhulu, would read reports from the documents which the church leaders had compiled about the massacre. As bishop Mzimkhulu would read patiently in a dialogue form, the congregation and visitors present would attentively listen. At the end, one would say that everything that Mzimkhulu uttered was necessary, because he was uncovering and exploring agreements and disagreements between the church and the government.

CHAPTER ONE

MAPPING THE LANDSCAPE

1.1 BACKGROUND

The then, Premier of the Eastern Cape, Reverend Makhenkesi Stofile, commented during the inauguration of a monument to the Bulhoek Massacre in the year 2001, on the way South Africa has been notorious for the lopsided way in which her history is recorded. He uttered these words during his official opening of the monument at Ntabelanga. This event occurred in May, 1921 and about 850 men from the church of the amaSirayeli died there. More will be said about the actual event later.

After the signing of the declaration of South Africa as a Union in 1910, African political leaders, in 1921, met in Bloemfontein where Pixley ka Isaka Seme addressed the first meeting of the new Congress. It dawned on them that the Union of South Africa had not brought an end to discrimination; instead it was a strong weapon for derailing human dignity.

During that time, a meeting chaired by Seme gave birth to the South African Native National Congress, which later in 1923 assumed the title African National Congress (ANC), the ruling political party of today. Seme had for some time favoured a, native union, in which Africans would forget their tribal conflicts and unite against racist laws.

Seme was elected, as the new president of the ANC organization in 1930, replacing Josiah Gumede.

Based on such a political background, traces of religious dependency on the domination of white missionaries were noticeable. Mgijima was among those Africans who desired and worked hard for religious independence. Before 1913, all people of the land, both black and white were legally able to buy land in all of the Provinces except the Orange Free State. It was forbidden from that Province to buy the land. In 1913, the Native Land Act severely limited black opportunity to acquire land within the reserves³. The dispossession of blacks was forced by law, which meant that any attempt to have this process reversed would be regarded as subversion.

As the South African government gazetted the Native Land Act in 1913, the Queenstown magistrate, Nightingale, drafted and sealed a document that prevented black people from owning free-holdings in his area of jurisdiction. He, however, granted permission only to a small number of blacks.

Small pieces of patched land were set aside for the purpose of cattle grazing whilst most of the land was allocated to white farmers for livestock, to traders and for police stations. After the land distribution to white farmers, many African people began to seek accommodation in any open space, thus squatting.

The Cape Commissioner for African Affairs categorically stated that Africans were forming a political movement⁴. Together with the government of the day, he argued that

3. Saunders CC. 1994p183 (A reserve was a place set aside for Black, Indians and Coloured residents e.g. Transkei, Ciskei, Mitchell's Plain, Phoenix etc)

4. Cochrane, 1987p27.

any Black Nationalist movement, whether political or religious, was a potential rebellion. Besides squatting, there were other important socio-economic areas of injustice and dissatisfaction. As the years passed blacks found that, they were expected to continue to accept inadequate housing, low wages and discrimination in employment. They had little chance of upward social mobility. Their needs for work made them targets of resentment from white workers and of exploitation by white owners. This state of not having adequate houses was not resolved, up until in the 1950's when Vundla⁵, became involved in many attempts to alleviate the living conditions of his fellow blacks. PQ, as Vundla was commonly known, made representations for improved housing, education, working conditions and wages.

Moreover PQ was firmly committed to peaceful change and critical of violent solutions believing that, what you achieve through violence, you will need ever greater violence to maintain, and that those who say bloodshed is the answer, have other people's blood in mind, not their own⁶. Some churches spoke out in opposition to the 1913 Land Act. This further caused a number of independent churches to be recognized as agitators.

Mgijima, an outstanding church leader, was given a small piece of land. Since many of Mgijima's followers were landless and religiously active, he decided to summon them to Ntabelanga his birthplace, in the year 1918⁷. The reason for summoning them was that it is believed that God spoke to Mgijima through a vision about the end of time. This kind of vision was an eschatological liberation. Therefore, he wanted to warn his people.

5. Vundla 1973pp56-57

6. Tutu 1975: Soul Mates or Antagonists? in Wilmore and Cone (eds) p490

7. Edgar, 1977p87.

During this time, he was the beacon of hope that was desired by people at large. People believed that Mgijima had received Gods revelation. It was in such visions that Mgijima is said to have seen God dwelling among his people at Ntabelanga. As numerous people responded to his call to come to Ntabelanga, the place soon became crowded. When white farm owners became aware of this congestion, they became worried about their livestock. They protested and demanded that General Smuts should evict these people from Ntabelanga, Mgijima's own birthplace.

1.2 RELEVANCE FOR CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

The Bulhoek Massacre must not be viewed in isolation from other acts of resistance in the African context. Common features in many of these rebellions can be found. In most cases, leaders are religious people who combine native and foreign belief systems. They are either community leaders who will be remembered or enthusiasts with no religious label but with motivations, which are religious. Similar to the visions of Mgijima in 1921, I can sight other incidents. There was also an interesting development happened in Ghana.

Appiah, a Methodist preacher like Mgijima, had several visions and began to practice divine healing. He also spoke in tongues. On 19 October 1922, he and some friends met and decided to form a faith society, which continued to meet regularly. This action caused the church to react against Appiah and was expelled. After his expulsion from the Methodist Church, he formed a church and named it the 'Musana Disco Christo' church.

He and his people bought land for a settlement at Gomoa Abodom and in the year 1925 moved in. They renamed the place Mazamo, believing that the name had been revealed to them by an Angel. This Ghanaian Independent Church, popularly known as MDCC is an interesting development because it parallels exactly with the amaSirayeli in a number of ways.

Firstly, the Ghanaian church was founded in the 1920's about the same period as the Bulhoek Massacre in 1921.

Secondly, the founder was a prophet who was formerly a Methodist preacher, known as Appiah. Mgijima was also a Methodist member whose conversion came through John Ayliff, a Wesleyan Missionary. Mgijima's parents were staunch followers of John Ayliff ever since they were in Butterworth under King Hintsa of the Gcalekas.

Thirdly, Appiah had a vision of three angels in 1919, which sent him on a mission. The three visions of Appiah again parallel that of Mgijima the leader of the amaSirayeli. The call that Mgijima made to his people was through to him in a vision that God was due to destroy the earth. This was a millennial call.

Fourthly, the MDCC exhibited certain characteristics of an army; hence they recognised themselves as the, Army of the Cross of Christ. Mazamo was known as the holy city. Members of this church wear distinctive copper rings and crosses and this custom continues today. This is like Ntabelanga, which is also a Holy Place to the amaSirayeli. Bishop Mzimkhulu of the amaSirayeli recalls two prominent prophets, Mgijima and Crowdy whom we will explain about him in the thesis.

The East London *Daily Dispatch* of 1922 mentioned three outstanding African prophets who were active in the Eastern Cape, Nongqawuse and Ntsikana ka Gabha are added to that list. The prophecy of a girl called Nonteta was also uttered in 1918. They predicted a change that would cripple the white government and bring black leadership into action.

Tradition tells us that Nonteta first resisted her calling. If unwilling, she was told that God would use her son Dumalisile instead. She agreed and started to do mission work of preaching. She preached to people whom she believed to have strayed from the love of God. Like in the case of Nongqawuse, her prophecies resulted in suicides in the history of the Xhosa people.

As I am focussing only to the civilian protests, after the Bulhoek protest that resulted to the massacre of 1921, another civilian protest that drew the attention of the world to the South African form of racism was the Sharpeville massacre of 1960. The protest was a reaction from blacks to the hated pass laws which were designed to force them to carry pass laws wherever they go in the country, whereas their counterparts i.e., the white people were exempted from that.

The government's response to what was meant to be a peaceful march was to shoot and kill the marchers on the 21st March 1960. The difference between the Bulhoek Massacre and Sharpeville protest is that in the latter, people were peacefully marching while in the former, the amaSirayeli were fighting back. In both instances the events were politically driven and it was black people who died.

In the same political context, in 1976 school children in Soweto mobilised themselves against the teaching of Afrikaans subject in black schools. Students and teachers saw this as a weapon to destroy black people and the black culture. This resulted to political organisations, black schools and civic organizations joining the unrest. Chaos was widespread in the country.

Throughout the country many students joined the protests. Riots were so severe that many young people were shot. The government of the day decided to ban these political organisations and many young and older people went into exile. It was only after the release of Mr Nelson Mandela on the 11th February 1990, that many people returned to the country and took part in the first democratic election in which Mandela was elected as the first black president of South Africa.

Another civilian protest was that of the Bisho massacre. When the 1992 Bisho massacre took place at the Bisho stadium, Brigadier Gqozo was the ruler of the Ciskeian government. As a native from Kroonstad, he was appointed by the South African government to lead the Ciskeian government.

Gqozo made an in-famous decision by allowing his soldiers to shoot the political protesters who were going to the Bisho stadium. The driving force behind the killings at Bisho was the same as all of the above during that era. A comment that might be cited is 'there was no way that Gqozo could not have acted like Smuts because both were of the same regime, let alone the era.

Both the governments of Smuts and of Gqozo did not take Livingstone's advice that

says; *never point a gun at a native unless you mean to shoot him*. What both of them performed, was to point a gun and shot numerous of black people. All of these incidents had ugly reverberations among black people who were for self-control and determination. Even if the white government lamented about its ignorance of the native customs, the fact of the matter remains that what the government did was uncalled.

The government could have resorted to other means of resolving the clashes. Therefore, judging from the nature and the contexts of the events mentioned above, there is no doubt that it can be deduced that they were all politically motivated. However with the amaSirayeli there was an element of religion involved. There was a combination of Jewish and African traditional religion that brought the millennial recognition.

Therefore, the relevance of this study must be seen in the light of the other events that are similar to the Bulhoek massacre. A very important consideration should be in how such happenings can be avoided, in the 21st century and under a government which is democratic? As the amaSirayeli were described by General Smuts, the Prime Minister of the time, as religious fanatics⁸, this research seeks to investigate such allegation. What constitute a religious fanatic? From which tone of expression was Smuts uttering such words? Who decides that one is a religious fanatic? What is the criterion that is used for deciding that one is a religious fanatic or not?

These are outstanding questions to be viewed, inter alia to establish in fact that Mgijima and the amaSirayeli were fanatics in their beliefs, or whether religious fanaticism is

8. East London Daily Dispatch, May edition, 1921p8.

expressed in Mgijima's interpretation of his vision. In his book, *African Religion and Philosophy*, Mbiti⁹ unambiguously says that, Africans are notoriously religious. If so as he expresses is religious fanaticism the same as notoriously religious'? This might be so, for some people of their religious expressions are rational; some are abstract, some are mystical, and others are very socially oriented.

Considering these expressions; where does one draw the line for religious fanaticism? Reading Mgijima's teachings and visions, he is concerned with the Second Coming as the destruction of sinners and the rupturing of the saints. Wherever and whenever he preached, he would emphasize total repentance and from destruction of sinners. He drove the mission of God through such motive.

Mgijima would also point out that the main objective for the amaSirayeli to be relevant in the society was their critical theological analysis. Mgijima was determined to find out whether it was justifiably correct to call him a religious fanatic and a blood bath at Bulhoek. One cannot adequately answer such questions unless one understands the churchmanship of the amaSirayeli.

Another side of this study is to investigate another important aspect in their theology, which is the music. Music has always been in their pulse. When looking at this aspect which is social in form, I will consider the non-amaSirayeli in Queenstown, who wherever there is a festival for the amaSirayeli, they would come and witness to the oral tradition of the church which is music. Again, it is clear that the present hierarchy of the church

9. Mbiti, 1969p4.

is the church's historians. They give out messages and questions that enliven members. Some of the questions are as follows:

- i. to what extent did the Land Act of 1913 influence the amaSirayeli to occupy Ntabelanga by force?
- ii. to what extent did Mgijima's attitude towards the government during the negotiations make the government say enough is enough, now we are sending troops and the amaSirayeli will be driven out by force?
- iii. what can the present government learn from the Bulhoek Massacre?
- iv. what is the contribution of the amaSirayeli in the religious and the secular sphere?
- v. as Mgijima, their last hope, was crushed, what message do the present leaders of the amaSirayeli give to their followers?

1.3 THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Bulhoek Massacre of 1921, that was carried out under the leadership of the South African police commissioner, Colonel Truter, was and is still painful to relate by the amaSirayeli. This was confirmed by one of the interviewees, known as Evangelist Ntloko, during an interview in 2000, at Queenstown. However, what is important is that Mgijima's theology provided his church with a firm belief system. It was and is a theology of the people who believed in a Creator God who speaks through their leaders.

The basic idea of the amaSirayeli's religion is that God reigns supremely. There is no realm above or beside him to limit his absolute sovereignty. God is subject to no laws

or powers. He is the law and the power unto himself. As this power is ascribed to God, leaders of the amaSirayeli are seen masterminds who design their church polity based on their belief system. The language doctrine of their church has strengthened their faith over the years. Their theology is based on Jacob, an Israelite whose people had unwavering belief in a God who never changes.

Language in services is different and the church has its own way of meeting and speaking with God. When Truter tried to force the amaSirayeli out of the commonage, like Naboth from his vineyard, they said to him with a convincing language: we will not leave this place unless our God gives us a command¹⁰.

In Genesis 27, one reads the story of the Biblical Jacob who would not leave until his father Isaac blessed him. Considering this story, the connection between the amaSirayeli and the house of Jacob becomes clear. The amaSirayeli know God as a personal God who demands personal loyalty. In the same way, Mgijima, the leader of the amaSirayeli, considered himself as the elected one of God, was chosen for a specific purpose that he made clear to his people at Ntabelanga.

According to Mgijima's theology, it was a heritage, which needed to be passed on from generations to generations. Thus, the amaSirayeli are carrying the message. Their theology of liberation revolves around such heritage. The heritage of this liberation

10. Verbal report was done by Bishop Mzimkhulu during negotiations at Ntabelanga on the 24th May 1920.

theology is a command, which is obeyed. It supersedes every other command. This reminds students of ecclesiastical history of the importance of the Word for the reformers of the 16th century, particularly for Martin Luther who emphasized the concept *sola scriptura* (scripture alone). Scripture was fundamentally understood as the Word of God. One can compare the amaSirayeli with Luther, who was a fundamentalist. The amaSirayeli are thus also fundamentalists.

Fundamentally, the founding of the Church of God and the Saints of Christ in South Africa was a curious combination of traditionalism (African traditional religion), Jewish religion and Christianity. It is common to find Christians secretly practising traditional religion because of their cultural roots, but it is rare to find practising Christians embracing Jewish religion. However, it is true to say that the Christian religion emerged from Judaism, hence we speak of the Judaeo-Christian religion. It is not common to find devout Christians who are also devout Jews and thus practise Jewish religion.

Therefore, the Church of God and Saints of Christ is a peculiar denomination. This peculiarity will be explained in this thesis because it impacts on the church's ecclesiology. One may even argue that the theology of the amaSirayeli went beyond Luther to radical reformers like Thomas Muntzer. He believed in a direct communication with God. According to Muntzer God could even command people to fight, which is what he died doing.

The millenarianism found in Mgijima is, in many respects, reminiscent of Muntzer's. One should consider the fact that Mgijima prophesied about the imminent end of the world and that the perceived unbelievers should be physically removed in order to prepare for

God's kingdom. Millenarians confine the right spirituality and the right doctrines to themselves. They see themselves as the remnant of God, who lives in the last days.

During Mgijima's era, the church was mission orientated. The church became the servant of its members. Through his leadership skills and zeal, Mgijima played a very significant role in guiding the rest of his people into millennial beliefs, which eventually provoked the government's opposition. Prophecies of Mgijima proclaimed the message of urgency in the return of Christ.

Members of the Seventh Day Adventist Church (SDA), who believe in the Second Coming of Christ, embrace such messages. Many SDA or members of Mgijima with whom I have been exposed to into contact with, believe in their prophets who taught them about the Second Coming of Christ. These people, especially the SDAs, would often stand on the corners of the streets explaining the idea of the Second Coming of Christ. So knowing how obedient his people were, Mgijima called them to Ntabelanga to await the Return of Christ.

1.4 THE SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This is the first chapter. The second chapter of this thesis will review the AIC's in connection with their origin, nature and their ethos regarding Christian faith and their African theologies in South Africa. I will examine the missionaries who introduced Christianity to Africa and the Africans who originally believed in both ancestors and the Supreme Being. Here I will reflect on the impact of African traditional religion. I will examine black church leaders, who eventually realized that to maintain the dignity of

blackness, it would mean moving away from the mission churches and building their own churches.

The third chapter explores the role and the emergence of the Fourth Commandment churches. The Fourth Commandment churches are churches that strictly believe in adhering to the Fourth Commandment, which says, *Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.* (Ex 20:8). I will also notice the amaSirayeli emerging because of demographic and institutional needs, and a growing legitimation of ethnicity within the churches. There will also be discussion on the relationship of the amaSirayeli with other churches.

This third chapter will deal with how the mainline liberal church leaders understand ethnicity and how they expressed their identity in their congregational activities. Then I will look at how the evangelicals understand ethnicity, a concept that reaches out to non-Christians. One concern is that there is a lack of ecumenism in this church. This undermines dialogue with other religious bodies.

The fourth chapter traces the important visions and dreams of Mgijima in the form of identifying a territory for the amaSirayeli at Ntabelanga. The two outstanding leaders: Chief Kama, the chief of the territory and Prophet Mgijima, the leader of the people occupying the land of Kama will be compared. I will find out what caused the schism from the mission churches. Then I will begin to show that God does not command segregation between human beings and churches.

The fifth chapter deals with the vast history and the background of the amaSirayeli,

which will show us how the American roots of this church have contributed to its development in South Africa. I will deal with the how of both Crowdy and Mjijima came to be known as prophets. Finally, it is from this chapter that I discuss the Seven Keys and the Ten Commandments, which Mjijima refers to as the church's plan of salvation.

The sixth chapter focuses on the clashes that resulted into the Bulhoek Massacre between the amaSirayeli and the Smuts government. I will discuss what exactly caused the schism from the mission churches. This chapter further examines the different reactions of church leaders after the confrontation. Some reactionaries resorted to a mass schism. After considering the reactions voiced by concerned church leaders, we will look at the life of the amaSirayeli thereafter.

The seventh chapter examines the ideals and interests of the amaSirayeli congregations and considers how they build themselves into solidarity. The chapter concentrates on how the theology of the amaSirayeli is exercised through worship, polity of the church and other activities. Of particular interest is the involvement of and the role played by women in the church.

The eighth chapter emphasizes the leadership of Bishop JC Mzimkhulu. I will look at the practical ways, which identify the church as the amaSirayeli. The ecclesiology of the amaSirayeli and the most religious festivals that revolve around the Bulhoek incident will be discussed. Special festivals and other celebrations will be discussed as well.

The future of the amaSirayeli and some final remarks where there is a possible relationship of the amaSirayeli with other churches challenges their lack of ecumenicity

and dialogue with other religious bodies. The concluding chapter encompasses the findings as to whether the amaSirayeli are religious fanatics or not. If yes, then in what sense. We will look into conclusion and thereafter what I recommend would be ideal for the amaSirayeli to consider for survival in the future. There is also an Appendix. It focuses on the interviews that I did with Bishop JC Mzimkhulu.

1.5 CONCLUSION

From chapter one, I drew a mind map of the whole research study. The declaration of South Africa as the Union of South Africa in 1910 shook the whole country into forming some political organizations. One of the outstanding organizations that was formed in 1912, was the African National Congress (ANC). As if there was a competition between the government of South Africa and the political organizations in the country, the country promulgated a Land Act in 1913.

The Act became the yardstick dividing black people from whites in term of land property. Few individuals from the black section were given titles deeds meanwhile the entire white section had properties. Together with the Land Act, there was the formation of African Independent Churches. As churches were busy forming up, there was one outstanding church known as the Church of God and Saints of Christ known as the First Black Jews in South Africa (the amaSirayeli), which took shape in 1910.

The leader founder of the amaSirayeli was Enoch J Mgijima residing at Ntabelanga in Queenstown. The shifting of his congregation from their one place to another for the purposes of being near to their leader caused concern between Mgijima and the

government. Eventually the conflict resulted into the Bulhoek Massacre. The theological significance of the amaSirayeli had an impact on the Bulhoek Massacre.

Having mapped the landscape and the scope of the research study, chapter two will examine the missionaries who introduced Christianity to Africa. As mentioned, Africans had already their own religion, where they worship God as well as venerating their ancestors. Here we will be looking into differences of culture and styles of worshipping God the Creator.

CHAPTER TWO

A REVIEW OF THE AFRICAN INITIATED CHURCHES (AIC'S) - THEIR ORIGIN, NATURE AND ETHOS REGARDING THEIR CHRISTIANITY AND AFRICAN THEOLOGY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Missionaries brought Christianity into Africa. When missionaries arrived in Africa and in South Africa, they found that Africans had their own religion. The mission theology of challenged both Black Theology and African Religion of the indigenous people. Besides worshipping God, the indigenous people were also venerating their ancestors. It was noticed that differences on cultural backgrounds were going to be one of the focal points from the start. This resulted on most African Church leaders to lead an

exodus from the mission churches.

The history of the exodus in South Africa has references to congregations even outside the country. Some of the congregations that we will discuss are Rusape from Zimbabwe under the leadership of Makuwaza. The second one that Hoskins¹¹, an outstanding English church historian writes about is the one that Samuel Oshofa found which is the Celestial Church of Christ (Aladura).

These two congregations resemble the amaSirayeli, in form and style. The three of them fall under the Seventh Day Adventist organization. All three leaders believed that they received a call from God.

Outstandingly, is the call of these three leaders. They all claim that it happened in a forest during an eclipse. The question asked is, how come that such leaders could have the same visionary styles, more or less at the same not exact locations, during the eclipse? How come that members of the Celestial Church of Christ wear exactly the same uniform and ribbons as the amaSirayeli and the Rusape congregations, if they are not of the same family group?

Why did that Oshofa and Makuwaza, get lost in the forest for several days. About Oshofa the story goes like that, he felt called to preach, heal and raise the dead. He went to Porto Novo in the Republic of Benin. In 1947, he founded the Celestial Church

11. Hoskins 1998 pp65-66

of Christ.

The amaSirayeli also have a story to tell. For them, as the First Black Jews in South Africa, the Bible is a vital book in their lives. The experience of the Black Jews¹² comes from Brotz when he explain the Black Jews of Harlem. Mbayi¹³ also agrees that as the lost tribe when the black people were sailing south their boat broke and found themselves on the seashores of the Eastern Coast.

Experience has shown me that the amaSirayeli do not practice singing of any songs except those hymns coming from the Bible. Their services are a mixture of influential culture, music and rituals. Their rituals include prayers, preaching, witnessing and confessing. When witnessing they pray for the guidance from God and protecting of their leaders. Their church, which is the Church of God and Saints of Christ, is their last refuge on the world.

The church of Oshofa the leader also has visions, trances and prophecies conducted by their leaders. It was in 1993 when Joseph Tach caused a schism and became the new leader of the New Celestial Church of Christ. He took the church more in the direction of conventional Christian beliefs.

About 50 splinter groups rejected this new direction and remained faithful to Oshofa's teachings. Theologically, the Celestial Church of Christ comes from Adventism and

12. Brotz 1964pp32-36

13. Evangelist Mbayi during an interview at tabernacle number 5, in Queenstown 9 24-26 May 2001)

American Judaism. It observes Old Testament dietary practices and festivals and frigidly maintains the Sabbath worship. The church regards Africans as the literal descendants of the ten lost tribes of Israel, thus deviating from traditional Christian and became the Black Jews. The church is non-Trinitarian and rejects Christian holidays.

Although the church is known as the Celestial Church of Christ, however, it does not accept traditional Christian beliefs such as Christ's divinity and humanity, the resurrection and salvation by grace alone. As the amaSirayeli are also a Sabbath worshipping group, however, there are similarities and differences between them and the Celestial Church of Christ.

Concerning the AIC's, they trace their origin from African Church Leaders like Revs Nehemiah Tile, James Dwane, James Mzimba, Makhubu and Rev Limba. Tile, one of the outstanding leaders of the 'Independent Churches', was the first to lead the church out of its mother church. Makhubu's approach to African traditional religion is from the perspective of challenging those who claim knowledge about the name of his church. I will concentrate only on five main African Church leaders who broke away from the mission churches for various reasons.

Ngada, one of the outstanding African indigenous church leaders, lay stress to the opinion that African independence churches, are happy to stay with the phrase 'Independent Churches' because the name embraces Ethiopianism thought¹⁴ . What is Ethiopianism thought? History says that Africans believed that Africa belongs to them. They believed that

14. Makhubu 1988pp4-5

no foreigner was could come and claim African continent besides being an African himself. Focus will also be on the alleged reasons for the presence of Christianity in Africa.

2.2. THE ROLE OF THE MISSIONARIES IN PLANTING CHRISTIANITY IN SOUTH AFRICA.

An introduction to the role played by missionaries is vital to start with. Missionaries who came in Africa brought along certain objectives, which reflected negatively on Africans. Such negativity fell within what we call liberation trajectory that encompasses African experiences on God and cultural clashes. It is said that missionaries were so strict that Africans were negatively portrayed as 'babes in faith'. Such a portrayal by missionaries and other black leaders who did not join the missionaries caused a schism damaging the image of Africa and her people.

Apartheid mythology taught that the first settlers in South Africa entered a religious vacuum when they landed and encountered its indigenous inhabitants. This is manifestly untrue. Far from being an 'empty container' into which religion could be emptied, Khoisan and Bushmen cultures were already religiously rich. While the early settlers included a small number of Catholics and Jews, only the Reformed faith was officially recognized.

It is said by Sundkler¹⁵ that in 1804 the de Mist Order set the stage not only for a proliferation of Christian denominations at the Cape, but also for other religions. However, Christianity remained strongly favoured, with some churches subsidized by the Cape

15. Sundkler, 1962: 8.

government, with passing of the Voluntary Act in 1875, while recognizing the importance of religion in the Colony, effectively re-constituted faith communities alike as voluntary societies. The then Union of South Africa had little pretension of being a Christian State. The relationship between her early leaders, such as Generals Jan Smuts, Louis Botha and Barry Hertzog were politically significant. Because of this, the rise of African nationalism in 1912 was closely connected with Christianity. The rise somehow shook the liberal values of the original missionaries.

Ironically, many people championed for segregation and for policies that faced the opposition of their citizens. While many of such policies were identified with apartheid, violation and suppression of human rights, it was evident that chaos was looming. Meanwhile, an ideological change came about in 1948 with the coming to power of Dr DF. Malan's new National Party the party espoused an ideology called Christian Nationalism, which was a synthesis of neo-Calvinism. This party was seen as going to transform the entire country.

The 19th century historian, Kenneth Latourette, confirmed that missionaries came as the watershed of the native cultures. Never before had the situation began to change throughout the world than the way it did during the 19th century. Many Africans went to work at the diamond and gold mines causing mission societies no longer resist concentrating on the urban areas.

Etherington¹⁶ argued that in rural areas the decisive factor in religious secession was the

16. Etherington 1979p129ff

increasing restrictions on Africans in terms of land ownership, job opportunities and salaries. This issue is the causal factor between Mjijima and Smuts as seen in chapter six. Another historian, Sundkler¹⁷ argued that transitions between churches affected mostly pastors rather than anybody else. He believed that many factors that account for the creation and growth of independence lie solely to them. Looking at the basic causes for the growth of independent churches, it was not only opposition to European control, but also a positive desire to adapt the message of the Church to the heritage of black population who has a place to worship.

Above statements, show that although it may seem strange that conflicts were associated with evangelization, yet it is clear that the spread of the gospel had primary aspects that strove because of cultural integrity and spiritual autonomy. Such aspects sprang to a creative response of a breakdown of old forms, thus forming new groups that provided fellowship, security and guidance. The formation of these new groups caused inseparable parts of African culture. I can mention that a deeply rooted African culture is said to have led to a widespread misconception of black political parties.

A common misconception in this regard is that the African National Congress (ANC) was viewed as a political projection of Ethiopianism, yet it is well known that leaders of the Ethiopian movement did not establish the ANC. Instead, the latter has always appealed for the end of exploitation and colonialism. The ANC demanded political independence from colonial rule. During that time the nature of Ethiopian objectives, however, was cultural and religious than political.

17 Sundkler 1962p47.

Religiously, the Moravian Society was the earliest society, which sent missionaries to South Africa specifically between 1732 and 1862. The London Missionary Society followed them. Activities by Wesleyan missionaries developed with the arrival of the 1820 Settlers. In spite of the number of missionaries, African traditional religion prevailed. An African fairytale of the big tree with enormous branches that could not be pruned to the finish became a reality. Its buds would not stop blossoming and gave glory to the beauty of the tree again. Below are the names of some religious leaders who pruned themselves from the big tree, i.e. the missionary churches, and yet the tree continued to blossom. All these leaders left the Wesleyan church.

- i. Nehemiah X. Tile formed Thembu Church.
- ii. James Matta Dwane formed Order of Ethiopia.
- iii. Klaas Oliphant founded Church of Christ.
- iv. Charles Sigxabhayi also led Church of Christ.
- iv. James Ngcanjeni Limba became the third Christian leader to establish a fully-fledged Church of Christ.
- v. Enoch Mgijima established and led the amaSirayeli.
- vii. John Msikinya became the first bishop of the Church of God and Saints of Christ, from which Mgijima was excommunicated.
- viii. Silwane Nkopo and his brother William followed Msikinya.
- ix. Rev J.H. Hlongwane led the Bantu Methodist Church.
- x. Rev Joel Xaba left the Wesleyan Church.

The list is long. Some of the indigenous churches are branches of the mission churches while others have no direct overseas institutional control. Some have moved a

considerable distance from their traditional life and thought forms while, other churches are wrapped in the local culture and traditional religion.

However, the congregation of the amaSirayeli possesses features of the Church of God and Saints of Christ in America. Many people have attached themselves to some other churches for healing purposes. Healing, laying on of hands, praying and vibrant music enable the indigenous churches to reach out fairly easily.

At this stage, it is appropriate to attempt to provide a balanced perspective on the role of the missionaries in Africa, especially in South Africa. The early missionary effort, especially in the 19th century, is to be commended for sowing the seed of Christianity among the black churches of the 20th century.

These missionaries carried out extensive evangelistic campaigns and laid the foundations for subsequent developments. The two main theological teachings came from Calvinism (Presbyterian) and Wesleyanism (Methodist). In terms of Calvinism, one should recall a Scottish minister who served the Scottish soldiers and civilians in Cape Town in about 1812¹⁸. His name was Reverend George Thom.

Tom further established a Presbyterian congregation, which met for its services in a building in Wale Street. When the Highlanders' Regiment was recalled to Britain, we learn that Thom moved to Caledon to minister in the Dutch Reformed Church. One is reminded of Rev Thom's grandson who was also a minister of the same denomination at Fort

18. Hofmeyr & Pillay: 1999 / 2002 pp69-71.

Beaufort in the Eastern Cape; Rev Dr Gideon Thom, who was once a lecturer in Church History at the University of Fort Hare.

Early missionaries co-operated in medical missions, education, and Bible translation and in distributing Christian literature. Rev Robert Moffat became the first minister to translate a Bible into the Tswana language. Missionaries further developed modern educational systems, promoted literacy and raised the standard of morality. Examples of their dedication are seen in the institutions they founded, such as Lovedale, Shawbury, Healdtown, Bensonville, Buntingville, Adams College and many others.

Students still attend classes there and many blacks have come out of these institutions as inspired African leaders. Presbyterian missionaries opened the Lovedale Press and started printing Bibles and other literature, whilst the Methodist mission opened numerous schools, hospitals and churches. Presbyterians and Methodists started an ambitious medical plan, with projects such as itinerant medical workers travelling throughout South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland.

They erected educational institutions, medical institutions, mission houses and churches and fulfilled their ministry by their presence among the people. Christianity led to the establishment of churches, provided fellowship among believers, and increased the cohesion and unity of the people.

It was the missionaries who brought about social reforms and introduced industries, which improved living standards among African people. Christian theology changed African

society and provided new ideas for the future. Christian theology liberated people from disease, ignorance and fear of evil spirits.

The establishment of Christian hospitals was like a fresh wind, blowing away ancient superstitions and musty practices, relieving people of fear and suffering in amazing ways. These missionaries brought the best of healing even to the poorest of the poor, who were often completely neglected by the rich and the ruling classes.

Missionaries believed that medical and institutional work was the best form of evangelizing to the poor and the illiterate. The most impressive and efficient form of education used by the missionaries was the Bible study group model. This model spread all over the country. It can truly be said, that those who sat in darkness were able to see the Great Light through the printed pages.

Johannes du Plessis¹⁹, an early expert on missionary history, argued that missionary history has been for long the subject of bitter ideological disputes. He positively commented on African Indigenous Church leaders who practised healing by laying on of hands, praying and enabling indigenous churches to reach out fairly easy to members of the society. In justifying the permanent occupancy of the land belonging to 'inferior nations and tribes' by 'vigorous and enterprising nations', such churches held their services on its outskirts.

19. Johannes du Plessis, 1911 pp264-266.

That is what Du Plessis discusses in his book entitled '*History of Christian Missions*'. Forty years later, Dora Taylor²⁰, a white academic using a pseudo-African name of Nosipho Majeke, took the opposite stand. She wrote that missionaries 'came from a capitalist Christian civilization that unblushingly found religious sanctions for inequality and whose ministers solemnly blessed its wars of aggression'.

According to her, Christianity could not spread so much into true conversions. It was due to such indigenous people who defeated the colonial powers that destroyed their political and religious structures. In this case, colonial interest and missionary prospects seemed to be pretty much the same.

To make missionaries and colonialists partners was not acceptable, but simple a generalization, and besides, the evangelized people eased the process of conversion. About rural areas, Majeke commented that the best thing a chief could do was to put one foot in the church and keep the other outside. The chief would listen to the missionaries while strictly adhering to his African traditional culture.

Although missionaries were seen to be right in teaching morals, it was hard for them to reconcile with blacks concerning ancestral veneration. Admittedly, they adopted various kinds of respectful ceremonies from Africans but not ancestral veneration. On the other hand, African Christians decided to worship one God, and give filial piety to their parents during their lifetime.

20. Taylor was nicknamed Nosipho Majeke.

Ancestral veneration was a cultural and religious way of receiving rewards and blessings. Filial piety was the basis of all relationships in the traditional African mind. This can be seen from the father-son relationship, which is dominant over that of the husband-wife relationship. Such father-son relationship intends to ensure unity and harmony in the large family system and in the nation.

An African belief is that every man has two souls. The first takes its abode in the ancestral tablet of the deceased. For kings and chiefs the choice of the site of their grave is considered very important. In view of the fact that this is so, ancestral veneration by Africans, became the biggest obstacle for missionaries to overcome. The other soul is that of giving life to people.

During discussion time with Jafta²¹, he concurred that an encounter between Christianity and indigenous beliefs involved a massive process of interpretation and reassessment after which churches began to grow in numbers. He went on to say that, there was also a tendency in certain Christian circles to engage in a cordial dialogue with the powers that be, resulting to adulteration and compromising of Christian values. This, in turn hinders the preaching of the gospel. Some churches consider Romans 13 as the key scripture on the topic of Christian obedience and co-operation with the state. If that is the case, then the state has the following criteria:

- i. She has authority under God. The state is legitimized²² as long as it acts according to what God expects it to do.

21. Jafta, during an interview at Unisa.

ii. The state has to be 'the servant of men'²³. She not only serves God but also human beings. Citizens do not exist to serve the state but the state should serve people.

Following this, Motlhabi argues that it is only God who is our freedom, so by definition, our freedom is reflected in the image of God. Motlhabi's experience about God in South Africa is that he conceived God as both creator and liberator of all people, not only religious but also socially, politically and economically.

Therefore, according to Motlhabi, one is faced with a holistic call to the cosmology of African Traditional religion. Within the mind of the oppressed as African leaders and their people, God is experienced as freedom and truth, a comrade and a friend in the struggle. Most Afrikaans churches pride themselves in a liberal tradition. One would say that these Afrikaans churches conform to the civil authorities ²⁴.

Although, they based their convictions on the Bible, however in contradiction they did not wish to oppose government policy. They could not equalize all people before God. They preferred to reconcile certain section of people to God and translate God's love into action on all the problems affecting them. Yet there were other churches that could not keep silent about injustices done by the same government to its citizens.

22. Men: should be understood to include women as well in this thesis.

23. Gruchy 1978p27

24. Ibid 1978 p 28-29

Certain Christian individuals such as Drs Beyers Naude, Motlhabi, Archbishop Tutu, Dr Gqubule etc, stood up for burning issues that were inherent in the nature of the gospel. They had to give support to the silent voices against the oppression from the government. The government had to realize that the fortress built for them was no more a safe haven. I personally remember when Gqubule, the then President of the Methodist Church in the year 1982, had to burn his own permit allowing him to host a Church Conference in Johannesburg. Some ministers of the church had to follow their leaders by also burning such permits.

In conclusion, de Gruchy agreed that most Christian churches found themselves struggling in apartheid policies. These churches could not voice out their oppressive feelings. De Gruchy further pointed out that a Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) Conference held in Pretoria (Cottlesloe) decided after some time to enter into frank discussion of racial affairs with members of churches who were so strongly critical of the DRC in not wanting to condemn apartheid.

During this time, outstanding members like Beyers Naude from the DRC, became vocal in wanting the apartheid system dismantled. De Gruchy believed that a large number of black Christians were able and willing to assume the mantles of spiritual leadership for the thousand of Africans in towns. It was through their kind of a missionary theology that the government of the day embraced them. They were seen as great models to be emulated.

Those churches whose origin was not traced from European countries were often looked at with suspicion. While the mission churches had minor ecclesiological differences, they

were not dangerous to the government. They were perceived as collaborators with the government and not inimical to them. They could not overrun the state. As the DRC was confronted honestly and openly, the church realized the risk of silence, pains and death caused by familiar and comfortable zones. The church decided that there is a dire need to vacate such zones for the process of growth and rebirth. It became clear that all the DRC Christians were trapped in their comfort zones of material, emotional, spiritual or social actions and thinking.

Therefore, the DRC found herself in the process of painful and scary times, and it was evident that something should be done. When apartheid was formally dismantled in South Africa by the year 1994, justice-loving people rejoiced and the religious institutions gave glory to God.

2.3 ESTABLISHMENT OF BLACK THEOLOGY

Like a strong theology of women in experiencing God, black theology is seen as a reaction to mission theology. Mission theology portrays a white God to the service of Western culture, leaving no room for African culture to the Africans. Similarly, missionaries used God to legitimize white power structures. As explained above, the 19th century era brought both good and bad news to Africans.

Even those African churchmen who ordained to the ministry were regarded as having less status of assistants to the missionaries. In fact they were thought of as merely glorified evangelists. Even though they were considered as full members of the Methodist, Baptist, Anglican, or Presbyterian Churches, yet for them to attain higher positions were solely in

the hands of their white counterparts.

Black theology, therefore, was brought in to endeavour a discovery about God's salvation in black culture. It justifies God as legitimize in black aspirations which such aspirations lead to extreme forms of Liberation theology. The liberation theology reacts to oppression and redefines the gospel in terms of liberation. Although black theology is liberation theology, not all liberation theology is black theology. Black theology can be described as a situational theology. It rather lays greater stress on the situation of a black person at a given time and space. It also analyzes biblical teachings as an end in themselves. Liberation theology is definitely a theology of praxis that emphasizes faith in theory and leads such faith into action, obedience and righteousness. Biblically, the Epistle of James supports categorically, that faith without works is dead.

Black theology is also a people's theology. It embraces sorrow, bitterness, anger and hatred. It is more concerned with how God liberates people from oppression than with a study of God's nature and revelation as an end in itself. African theologians and church leaders introduced Black theology to their followers because it affirms blackness and liberation. It is therefore correct to describe black theology as revolutionary and reactionary.

So, it can be firmly stated that unlike from black theology point of view, the survival of Mjijima's church despite white oppression and black opposition, confirms in their minds that God was and is on their side being the provider of everything. This is indeed liberation theology.

The secretary²⁵ of the church, Evangelist M Mzimkhulu, says that black elite, who opposed Mgijima, eventually admitted that he was not motivated by politics but amaSirayeli were prepared to suffer rather than compromise. AmaSirayeli believe in the letter of Jesus that says: 'He who is not with me is against me and he who does not gather with me, scatters. From the black elite highlighted by Mzimkhulu, JT Jabavu was also suspicious of Mgijima. He regarded him as a political leader.

The church does believe in ecumenism, however, the leadership lacks the theological background, which might expose them from other well-learned leaders. Perhaps Jabavu was correct to say about Mgijima, The Israelites of Bulhoek are a tough lot. They have withstood the blandishments of the Native Affairs Commission and the Government to obey the laws of the country. When one looks at the Israelites at this time, they had not given the government any other course than that of coercion.

Jabavu was also suspicious of Mgijima, as regards to being a political leader. At Fort Hare College, Jabavu warned his students about individuals such as Mgijima saying that, if there is anything the college should do for the country, is to produce level-headed men and women who will save their kith and kin from mistaken leadership, showing that Jolobe was totally confused about Mgijima's role.

2.4 AN INTRODUCTION TO AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGIONS

2.4.1. The Term **Africa**

25. Evangelist Mzimkhulu from the Queenstown section reporting in the 2002 Synod

Since the time of Pliny the Elder, who is reputed to have first used, the term, Africa, Banana) says that this has been a bone of contention because it means different things to different people. Mudimbe describes the intellectual processes of the opening up of the African continent to European interests. He claims that Africa has been an extension of Western epistemology and as a result Africa has always been a victim of European epistemological ethnocentrism.

Such ethnocentrism has resulted in Africa's marginalization in every thing. For many people all over the continent, Africa is essentially a racial group; for some, Africa is a geo-political entity carved up in the last century at the Berlin conference of 1884-85; for others, Africa is a linguistic- cultural entity that describes the life of the African peoples that belong to the following communities: the Niger-Congo, the Nilo-Sahara, the Afro-Asiatic and the Khoisan linguistic groups.

Generally, today, we are conditioned to view Africa as a conglomeration of different ethnic groups bound together by the colonial divisions of Africa which still persist today in independent Africa. Again looking at Africans, they have their own philosophy which can be contrasted with the scientific world-view who believed to be characteristically Western.

An African philosophy is grounded in their cultural experience. Such cultural experience is predominantly communal. In the light of Africa's colonial legacy, African religion is confronted with problem of establishing its own unique African order of knowledge. But this attempt to articulate an African response to European order of knowledge has been marked by a paradox which Mudimbe describes as follows:

Most attempts at presenting African alternatives are still within the framework of the external models they try to subvert. The path to truth in African religion is, therefore, still an external model accomplished in the West, imposing rules for the renunciation of the African will to be self.

The question that this paradox raises is whether it is possible or not? And if it is possible, how to achieve a religious order which is African while remaining within the purview of a Western frame of reference.

2.4.2. The Concept of African Religion

It was believed that through missionaries, African primitive culture could only produce the most elementary and primitive belief systems. Until recently, treatment of African traditional religions by Western intellectual tradition caused them to be impossible to speak out for their own religion and cultures. Up to a point, the crisis of relevance on the nature of their own religion and culture were seen as contributing factors to their indigenous knowledge of African traditional religion. Banana, one of the outstanding African Church leaders brought a fresh concept of God to Africans.

According to Banana and others, he sees God as before and above us in all aspects. God is seen as bigger than anyone of us, and yet among us. The God before us consecrated the past and the future. The God above us guards the present, and stirs the initiatives of the revolutionary forces of the world today.

2.4.3. From History to Culture

In any discourse about African religion, one must start from a perspective of worshippers and devotees of African traditional religion. One can start describing African religion as a this-worldly religion of salvation that promises well-being and wholeness here and now. African religion affirms and celebrates life in its fullness. This accounts for the lively and celebrative mood which characterizes African worship in all of its manifestations. A research study of the beliefs and practices of the African people led to my theological observation that African traditional religion is a religion of wholeness.

A careful analysis shows emphasis on this wholeness as the, *raison d'etre*, of African traditional religion. Because Africans believe that life is a complex web of relationships that may either enhance and preserve life or diminish and destroy it, the goal of religion is to maintain relationships that protect and preserve life. For it is the harmony and stability provided by such relationships, both spiritual and material, that create the conditions for the whole well-being. This is why Africa is known as having a rich heritage.

The threat to life, both physical and spiritual is the premise of the quest for salvation. The threat is so near and real because, for the African, life is a continuum of power points that are transformed into being and life is constantly under threat from evil forces. This logic of the relationally of being and cosmic life gives rise to the view that all reality is inter-related, like a family. This same relational metaphysics is what under girds the life of the individual in community.

A prominent Kenyan Christian leader known as Mapaayei, according to Mbiti said at a Pan African Christian Leadership Associations (PACLA) conference held in Nairobi in 1976, that 'in most of our ethnic groups it is difficult, if not impossible, to separate the

socio-cultural aspects of life from the religious'. African religion encompasses a Black man's whole existence. Even before Africa was given the Bible, Africa had already spoken to its own heart and conscience through tightly-knotted relationships in its tribal systems.

Therefore, Africa has been accommodating with regard to the religions of others. Mbiti who has been described as the father of African theology, has explored all aspects of African traditional religion. Cone on the other hand, stresses the continuity between Africa and the Bible. He says that African traditional religions have prepared people to receive the gospel as the perfection of other religions.

Cone believes that Christ did not come to replace African traditional religions but to fulfil them. He mentions that other religions such as Hinduism, Islam, Rastafarianism and Christianity, to mention but a few are simply different roads to the same destination.

2.4.4. Individual in Community

Following Cone, Mbiti captures a relational metaphysics, of Descartes. He says: *I am because we are and because we are therefore I am. This is the concept of ubuntu.* The life of an individual comes into fruition through social rituals which are the rites of life passage. These rites are processes that help individuals to attain goals of his or her destiny given to him at birth by God. It is believed that those who successfully go through such passages of life become candidates for ancestor hood the goal of the ideal life. For an African, ancestors are much more than the dead parents of the living. In fact, they are known as the living dead. They are the embodiment of what it means to live the full life that is

contained in one's destiny.

2.4.5. God, Creation and Cosmic Life

Commenting on God in Africa, Jafta sees God as a relational being that is known through various levels of relationship with creation. In relation to humanity, God is the greatest ancestor of the human race. All over Africa, God is portrayed more in terms of parent than as sovereign. In relation to the Feminist theology, God is either a father or mother who stands behind the creative fecundity of the earth that sustains all human life. In relation to creation, God is the creator from whom life flows and sustains. In relation to the divinities, he is their father who requires them to care for the cosmic processes.

2.4.6. Unity and Diversity

By definition, African religion is simply referred to as a religion of Africans that practise from antiquity to the first contact with white settlers. As practised today, African religion is contested amongst those who espouse a kind of a purified form of religion. Various elements of African religion make up what I personally call transcendental structure of African religion. They are expressed differently by various African peoples on the basis of their social organization and environment.

Through various political parties that revamped the whole continent caused African religion to resurrect. Kinghorn²⁶ adapted a kind of religion that suits its resources within Christian

26 Kinghorn 1990pp21-23

tradition. Knowing that, African religion has provided an open set of resources for negotiating human existence and tradition scholar. Mndende, an African traditionalist, envisages that African religion is not only something 'handed down, but was taken up. Clearly, this shows that some ideas of the traditional' were useful to oppressive regimes that wanted to lock Africans into some small cocoons in life.

Hence at this stage one can say Mgijima refused to accept such ideas. When calling all of his people to Ntabelanga he was preparing them for the second coming of Christ. He became aggressive in his teachings for the sake of the gospel. Looking at the experience of God from African people in South Africa. Mgijima had strong abilities. There were profound struggles against racism, for and Mgijima noticed that they were trapped in apartheid.

On the otherside there is an emerging profile of God that is sketched by African women. Mndende²⁶, again through creative literature and theological reflection was outstanding in reflecting on this aspect. She sees a need to establish the nature of the reality of God in African women.

Together with Pato, Mndende emphasizes the qualitative difference between African veneration of ancestors and worship of God by women which is totally different from the one practised by African men. Pato specifically, points out that many Xhosa-speaking Christians still participate, although privately, in ancestor veneration. Based on what Pato says ancestor veneration which is a belief in life after death makes most African Christian

27. Mndende 1994p23

to be at fault thus guilty as charged.

Pato concurs with Jafta in saying, that the dead are simply the departed people who have gone to live elsewhere. Although dead, ancestors are alive. They are known as the living-dead, this is Jafta's deduction. The practice of offering libations between the surviving and deceased members of the family is ceremonially maintained. It is said that the dead may give the living some advices in dreams and visions.

Pato's concern about Christians who play hide and seek thus guilty as charged, is that they are spiritually suffering as a result of conflict between their secret continued personal veneration and their own Church's condemnation of ancestral veneration, showing that they are in-between two masters. In fact Pato agrees entirely with the book of Hebrews, where it confirms that Jews believed that there is a relation between the living and the dead (Heb 11:4). Any nation, either black or white, has its own way of venerating the dead.

In some sectors of African traditional religion, ancestors are believed to have power over the living being. It is said that they can inflict punishment on those who do not show respect and pay homage to them, nor do well to their family and members of their lineage. They are not supreme, in spite of their power over family affairs, God is supreme. Then Mgijima did not, with regard to any of his visions, maintain that God would be lesser than the ancestors.

In fact the amaSirayeli practice ancestral veneration to a lesser extent than most African Independent Churches do. In his doctoral research, Jafta discusses similarities and differences in the belief systems of the traditional Zulus of Southern Africa under the title

God-Consciousness.' He raised a much debated topic of a God who can speak the language of any individual.

Seeing God as the Creator (*uMdali*), Jafta is convinced that God as uMdali gives life, rain, crops and everything to his creatures. He describes God through various attributes given to him as God. He sees a Creator-God whose performance in history is revealed in his attributes. Christians could also gain much by meditating on those divine names and attributes which are missing from standard theological text-books. To perceive the richness behind these symbolic expressions, any Christian must interpret them in the light of their cultural and religious background. Jafta speaks also of Africans as 'God-conscious'.

Mbiti uses an Ashanti proverb from his own Nigerian background in this regard. He says: 'No one parent is able to show a child the Supreme Being', meaning that everyone knows and accepts that God exists. As an African anthropologist who knows more about ancestral veneration, Mbiti says that African ancestors taught their offspring the concept of acceptance.

Children never confuse their parents, during prayer and leisure times, with God. A wish to see God is never expressed by Africans because this would bring a curse and death to the families. For every African child it is enough to know that God exists in heaven.

Mbiti emphasizes the greatness and the holiness of God by saying that children have been taught from youth not to point a finger towards heaven for fear of an omen. The Supreme Being is accepted without question. This is illustrated by Exodus 36: 6, when Moses saw

a burning bush without being consumed, he sought to see God, but God allowed him only to see his back.

Jafta concurs fully with Mbiti and adds that the theological message for humankind is that humankind is part of nature. Both Mbiti and Jafta are sure that God reveals himself in various ways, including nature itself.

Jafta believes that the concept of God is strongly coloured and influenced by the historical, geographical, social and cultural background and the environment of each person. Therefore, it is a fact that our God, the Father, is not a foreigner because he is the same whom our ancestors had known before Christianity came to Africa.

He believes that, man's estimate of himself and his destiny, his interpretation of ancestral worship and his philosophy of the dead, depend upon this one central point which is belief in God. Jafta asserts that 'God is universal and so is his revelation.' Here he also agrees with Mbiti who says that 'everywhere people look at one sun, so all have one God'.

Betty Govinden ⁽²⁸⁾ in her article '*In search of our own wells,*' quotes Malusi Mpumlwana, a South African poet, by saying that Mpumlwana was once asked *a question,*

What is the essence of, **I believe in God?**

Is God of the '**Die Stem**' and of '**Nkosi Sikeleli Afrika**'

one and the same God?

The answer that Mpumlwana gave can definitely be different these days. For me as the researcher the answer to the question of the national anthem is, absolutely **Yes**. Again such a question demonstrates a reality that God is the same, today tomorrow and yesterday and He is the One Lord (Deut 6:4). God is experienced as an all-pervading reality. He is a constant participant in the affairs of humankind, judging by the everyday language of Africans. As God is the foundation of life, so nothing happens without Him.

As God lives, he does not die, and so indeed humans do not die. Even when people do not occupy a physical body during death, yet they still live on. The way we experience God is portrayed in the language we use about him, especially the names by which he is known. Early researchers into African traditional religion, such as Mbiti recorded for us, several African names of God with copious annotations, which need not be rehearsed at this stage.

Such description by traditional religion does not equate the use of such attributes by other religions. What needs to be said is that these names are still current from all religions. Also, many other names that describe people's experience in God are available in proverbs, songs, and prayers. These names are not mere labels.

They are descriptive of character and depict people's experience of God. When words fail, symbols take over. The eclipse in the year 2002 in the Musina region of Limpopo Province was a symbol acting for people, indicating, 'I depend on God and not on myself.' Such a symbol of hope was also saying, 'There seems to be something in heaven, God let it reach

28 Govinden, 1996 pp112-135.

my hands.' The dependence of the existence of the human spirit on the spirit of God is expressed in another symbol on the belief that without God nothing holds together.

This is also interpreted as, 'except God' or 'unless God'. On comparing this, it is a fact that a Muslim does not project into the future nor talk about the past without a qualifying phrase *insha Allah*, meaning 'by the will of God'. White Christians will say, *God willing*', in Xhosa *uThixo evuma*, whereas a Zulu person will convince the other that all is by the grace of God' (*kungomusa kaNkulunkulu*).

This confirms that nothing and no situation is without the presence of God. A Xhosa person will say *zonke izinto zixhomekeke kuThixo* (everything pertains to God). So everyone maintains that an integrated view of the world has been expressed by many thoughts in various ways.

In his autobiography, Mandela writes about his father's ability and says, 'my father was an unofficial priest and presided over ritual, and local rites. He did not need to be ordained, because traditional religion of the Xhosa is characterized by a cosmic wholeness so that there is little distinction between the sacred and the secular, between the natural and the supernatural²⁹. Mandela comments from his book about his initiation into manhood. He says, that I know that Qamata (God) is all-seeing and never sleeps, but I have a suspicion that during my initiation time, he (Qamata) may in fact been dozing.

Mandela carried on to say that if this was the case, the sooner he died the better, because

²⁹. Mandela 1995 pp12-15

then he could meet him and shook him awake and tell him that the children of Ngubengcuka, the flower of the Xhosa nation, were dying. This reflects an experience of many African fathers and sons. They do not need to go and attend any formal school in order to be trained for manhood. Response to this is seen in prayers about the divine and highly potent power with which God created the universe, and maintains his societal laws.

Abimbola ³⁰, on the other hand, maintains that belief in the all-pervading power and the presence of God endows the universe with a sacramental nature. Abimbola's view of the world is nourished by a cosmology that is founded on a Source Being, the Supreme God, and other divine beings that are associated with God.

In conclusion, God is experienced as the very foundation of existence in both human beings and all other creatures. All these examples, demonstrate difficulties in translating words to express people's experience about God. With the experience of God in man, it is possible for mankind to distinguish between good and evil. God is a revolutionary God who loves justice and grants equal rights to all of us. He came to engulf the whole world through Jesus Christ his Son (John 1:14).

Lastly then, as God dwelt and hugged the world, Mgijima saw an open a gap to trust and love such a God. He pushed himself into such love and trust, that Mgijima grew and made his people conscious of the fact that they cannot determine their future but only can they discover it as they live in Jesus Christ.

³⁰. Ambiola 1972 p19

2.5. AFRICAN BELIEF IN GOD AS THE PROVIDER

2.5.1. General

Believing that God provides, encompasses the unity of the cosmos with the nature. God's kind sustenance and beneficence are seen in the rain as well as in the sunshine. When dark clouds begin to gather, some would say that, God is angry, while others would say, God is blessing us. If there is much rain or flood, then it cannot be attributed to the love of God, but to the anger of the divinities is associated with nature. Some associate this, to the ancestors of whom they may have been wronged by some unethical behaviour or lack of remembrance for what pertains to the spirit world.

The experience of God as good and not allowing evil things to humankind becomes very challenging to Africans. Kwesi Dickson, elaborates on the African belief, that some would maintain that everything comes from God but, when God gives one some sicknesses, he also gives the cure.' Therefore, God is the all provider to his people. Africans experience some total dependence on God during prayers. As God features in prayers, greetings, blessings and curses, he is the ultimate receiver of all prayers. All libations begin with calling upon him.

When someone says, God will pay you back, the utterance is taken most seriously. Whether as a potent curse or blessing, people believe that God has spoken. Taken as a curse, people are discouraged from using it, as it may rebound on them. This happens when they have received something at the hands of those they have cursed.

In African beliefs, it is not God who gives sufferings and some curse instead human beings do this to each other. Against this background, it is not God who suffers at the hands of the exploiter or the oppressor, it is an individual. However, when individuals suffer through evil spirits which are not of their doing, God, who is the Provider and the Creator of all human beings, comes in and demonstrates his concern. Behind the unpronounceable curse, is an expectation that God judges impartially and sees when stronger ones cheat and exploit the weak. Most importantly, one notices an experience of God, who guards the weak.

Lastly, this African experience of God as a Liberator has encouraged many other churches in Africa. They are able to confront governments regarding the lack of caring for their populace. In turn, God as an all Provider has been experienced during the Bulhoek Massacre, by the amaSirayeli. It was not for them to ask questions about God's presence during the event, because they know that God cares.

2.5.2. Black Women's Experiences of God

Mostly, I have concentrated on male's experiencing on God, however, it is true that also women do have an image of God revolving around them as a patriarchal model that supports them in times of need. The symbolic '*man*' for God, attracts both gender and colour. There is a strong overtone of authority that '*God is male*'.

This is a repercussion in Christianity that cannot continue to be upheld by all people. As black theology of liberation, Mndende is relevant to the South African situation. She says that she can no longer afford to perpetuate any form of domination, not even male domination for that matter. If it is liberation, then she says it is not human enough to exclude

the liberation of women.

In most African countries, liberation is articulated by women who have constituted themselves into a Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (CCAWT). Oduyoye³¹, one of the outstanding women in Africa, says that most churches are exerting pressure on women, but it would be less if priests and other ministers resisted it. She protested against female discrimination and thus together with other established CCAWT organization.

Since men and clergy are presumed to speak for God, and demand obedience from women, it is not easy for the latter to experience God as empowering and liberating them. Oduyoye cites women's experience of God, as facing the superior ordering them the subordinates to serve and never be served.

She views this domination as something that should cease so as to allow God to cater for all equality. Oduyoye argues that even if God is seen as having made women with a body deemed to be the locus of sin and impurity, however, all are equal before Him. Oduyoye further argues that the perception of God being the source of women's oppression, and Jesus as the author of the exclusion of women from sacramental roles in the church, hold no water.

According to Christian tradition, this God is the one who wants women to be loved and obeyed. For many women, this is a clear substitution of the will of the male for the will of

31 The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians came into being on the initiative of mercy Amba Oduyoye to enable African Women to contribute to the theological literature that is being developed by Africans Since its inauguration in October of 1989 two Pan-African books and three regional ones have been published. Papers from the August 1989, Pan-African conference are being processed for publication

God. On the contrary, many women experience God differently. They cannot allow themselves to be subjected to cultural codes that mask the image of God on them. Women experience God empowering them with spirituality of resistance to dehumanization.

An androcentric Bible and church have not been able to warp women's direct experience of God as a loving liberator. An experience of God is articulated by women in terms of a theology of creation. This is an implication of Christian affirmation that, God was in Christ engulfing the world unto himself'. Writings of women theologians from Africa are replete with the above experiences.

In *The Will to Arise*, Teresia Hinga³² describes an experience of God in Christ that is very real to African women. Women often describe Jesus as the friend and companion who helps bearing their life's burdens. Hinga provides from her book a notion of prophecy. She cited the prophetic Jesus who challenges oppressors and hypocrites but forgives sinners, yet in Jesus, women experience God who is love.

What is coming out clearly is that though women are sinned against by men, however, their experience of God affirms them. Women describe themselves as being the image of God even if sexism denies their dignity. Despite making sexism difficult for them, an experience of God in the church has nevertheless witnessed to their experience of God in Christ. Christ is the one who brings salvation.

32. Hinga. 1995 pp56-58

Oduyoye³³ further speaks of women who experience God as groaning with them, when they participate in straining toward the birth of a new` child. She demands that South Africa should be free from sexism and racism, from poverty, exploitation, and violence. All women have experiences of *'love beyond self'*.

Oduyoye goes on to remark that life-giving is understood to be such expression of love. She adds that all that enhances the dignity and worth of women is attributed to God. Within the circle of women theologians, studies of God's hospitality, African hospitality, and women in the household of God, these theologians reveal some experiences of women regarding God as the Great Householder. He empowers all and recognizes children in a parent's home where they sit around one big strong table.

Women give expression to experiences of God who sustains in times of dire need. God is seen as bringing victory where it is least expected. Women have constantly attributed all recognition and inclusiveness to the power of God which transforms human beings and their conditions. They express their experience of God in affirming cultural beliefs and practices, while they feel called by God to denounce and deconstruct oppressive ones.

While critical of certain aspects of biblical culture, they have nevertheless testified to their experience of the liberating God in the events of their own lives. Women take the image of God in human terms and look at it seriously. In some faces of the starving children around them and all those who suffer needlessly in Africa, women feel the pain and start caring. They are expressing a caring God in whose image they are created. Hopefully,

33. Oduyoye 1995pp190-191

those who experience love, justice and compassion will realize that God is present. In the same manner from the church of the amaSirayeli, women play a very significant role within their jurisdiction.

Finishing up, during the battle between the amaSirayeli and the Smuts government, women did not fight but were morally and spiritually active behind those who were dying. For any responsible person to think, these women were seen as part of liberating the entire nation set aside by Mgijima. One may rightly say that, this was a precursor of the women's liberation of which many people talk about today.

The aftermath became the time where women had to march with strength and hope that the police would give them permission to soothe and care for their ailing and dead heroes. Indeed, it was the courage of these women that recreated the Church of God and Saints of Christ in South Africa today.

2.6 DIFFERENT RACE GROUPS AND THEIR VIEWS ON THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

2.6.1. African Religion and African Culture

Experience, from the past to the present, often brings fulfilment into one's life. Different race groups need to understand each other's culture. Ignorance of other people's culture could also be dangerous. Some may deny the existence of such ignorance. There are matters that books cannot teach, and while functioning in one language and one culture only people cannot learn anything from there.

This is the kind of ignorance that I am referring to. Its danger is frequently demonstrated around the world in conferences where different people of different cultures gather. Although now there are earphones to interpret one spoken language to the one that fit the hearer, still there are some differences of opinions. People frequently not only disagree, but fail to understand one another.

Tension, strife, false accusations, mistrust and even physical tensions become a kind of solution. When missionaries were dealing with African Christian leaders, in examining different church activities similarities and differences would emerge clearly. Such differences were often caused by cultural and religious groupings that simply assimilate new ideas into their own ideas and practices. Sometimes the acceptance of other ideas by the younger generations would appear differently in a generation gap.

Even missionaries, who lacked an African cultural background³⁴, contributed towards this process by creating a negative background against which the African Independent Churches were formed. For this reason, the lack of understanding in African cultural background, African church music becomes popular from the South African youth. This is the same as the black American called Negro Spirituals, who revealed black aspirations based on the African heritage. Such music has benefited not only people in Africa but also the entire populace in the world.

34. Makhubu, 1988 p56

2.6.2. The Power of Language

The power of music from different cultures does contribute to the power of language. The power of language possessed by a person can either positively or negatively contribute towards the way one interacts with others. European languages, especially English, are widely spread around the globe making many Europeans to see no need to go beyond their borders.

This kind of thinking can rightly be attributed to the nineteenth century writers, who placed European culture over and above all other cultures and expected others to learn from theirs and not vice versa. Again experience has taught us that understanding other cultures facilitates mission work. On the other hand, failure to do so renders the mission impossible.

One who continues to use a foreign language presupposes that the people he is meeting are the same as they are, yet they are not. Trying to teach people whilst in the mission field about the meaning of their own culture, is like playing tennis when one player only sees the shadow of the ball.

Again, it is like someone joining a basketball team, and consistently playing by the rules of soccer. Terms like, penalty, offside, half-back and pass become meaningless up to a point when one grasps what is going on in a game of football.

This was the mistake of the missionaries from the beginning of their mission in Africa. Therefore the power of language is very important to understand. The power of gifts in

African tradition is also often misunderstood and misinterpreted by people who are not familiar with such other culture. An example, it is often said that Africans buy wives through the system of lobola. This is not so. The system is only an exchange of gifts between the consenting families, thus building up relationships.

One has to observe the system of lobola from beginning to the end in order to understand that it is not the buying of wives, which outsiders think is, but rather that a cow given in exchange for a wife in a traditional African community is loaded with diverse meanings and symbolic significance. These diverse meanings can be cited as building family ties with another family, forging relations, love and trust to one another.

Finally, the power of language is also realized from the amaSirayeli who would wake up early in the morning and exercise their religious dances, singing and waving their shields. This kind of action portrayed used to confuse and frustrate whites and the nearby farmers. They would inaccurately think that the amaSirayeli were preparing for war, forcing them to call on the government to either stop the amaSirayeli or evict them.

It is therefore, advisable that one should be aware of the meanings of some actions done by those people nearby or those who have a foreign language to the populace. And also various aspects of body language will often confuse any person who is unprepared to meet such messages. Therefore the massacre at Bulhoek had a message of its own from both the amaSirayeli and the Smuts government.

2.7 AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION AND CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS

2.7.1. General

The prophetic gospel began to emerge long before the missionary church existed in Africa. The level of the prophetic gospel is known as coming from the grass-root of people. These are the simple people of the gospel. Their gospel is preached, lived, celebrated. It has been developed over a period of nearly two hundred years of the suffering people of South Africa.

It is a fact that the gospel represents a bewildering complexity of interpretations and practices, of which some are very traditional, whilst others have much in common with Charismatic or Pentecostal groups. They are totally independent of the missionary churches. They are thoroughly African independent. According to Archbishop Ngada they have religious freedom. On the contrary, Nolan believes that the gospel preached and practised in these churches is not always and consistently prophetic.

He firmly believes that their form of independence, has given them freedom to explore new ways of interpreting and living the gospel the way they deem fit. This results to an understanding of the gospel in terms of their experience in suffering, insecurity and oppression. When comparing the belief systems of the African traditional religion and Christianity, a belief system of the amaSirayeli combines the two together.

Facing the history of African religion, one notices a growing interest among historians, missiologists, and theologians. African religion is one of the most promising historiographical fields in South Africa today. African Independent Churches, also known as African Indigenous Churches or African-Initiated Churches, began to multiply in the late nineteenth century.

This happened when an early first black clergy who had not been ordained to be a full

priest, became frustrated because most blacks were only able to fill subordinate positions in the colonial churches. Because of that decision by colonial churches, this not yet ordained priest, Tile decided to start his own church, known as the Thembu Church.

According to the 1991 census, from Statistic South Africa archives, the African traditional churches owe their success to their own ability to respond to the human and spiritual needs of the black population that was marginalized by apartheid, political violence, and uncontrolled urbanization.

Excluded from seminaries and theological faculties due to financial reasons and lacking a sound understanding of English, AIC ministers today are in sizeable numbers corresponding theological subjects. With more finances available mainline churches were in a better position and made more efforts to write their history than the African Independent Churches.

Durheim³⁵ mentioned that Sundkler, as the pioneering author of *Bantu Prophets in South Africa*, was able to make a distinction between Zionism (prophetic movements, closer to African traditional religion) and Ethiopianism (churches based on a European model, but with a black leadership).

Equally important is the book of Durkheim, on the origins of the Ethiopian movement in South Africa. He argues that African religions did not disappear when the missionaries

35 Durheim. 1925pp167-168

arrived. On the contrary, they are more alive than ever in modern Africa. Exposure to the modern technological world poses a major challenge to the African traditional lifestyle. However, religious beliefs remain a basic component of African life.

Mbiti observes that what people do, is motivated by what they believe, and what they believe springs from what they see and experience. So he believes that action and belief in African thinking cannot be separated. They belong to a single whole. There are some white people who claim to be converted into African thought form. They claim to be white/African traditional healers.

This does not seem to contain much truth. A white man who claims to be an African traditional healer at the same time is nonsensical. There is more to African customs than a mere knowledge of herbs. Instead, their main elements that were brought into an African religiosity were biblical teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ and his gospel. Western missionaries were bearers of the Good News about Jesus and not mixing with African customs as they claimed. African religion had already done the groundwork of making people fully receptive to the gospel of Jesus Christ. The teachings of the Bible taught them to call on Jesus.

After the Africans had searched for Jesus in the twilight, they could be able to see him in the dawn of the day. Prayer, faith, salvation, missionary vision and the impact of the Bible were now at the core of their Christian faith.

Certain other signs of discontentment with the mission churches amongst Africans were also heard. Another African church leader who broke away, following Tile was Mokone in

1892. Mokone began to look at missionaries with critical eyes. The effects of Mokone's efforts last even today.

There were restrictions that placed his desires in becoming a great African church leader into jeopardy. He became terribly frustrated and felt torn between two worlds - that of the missionaries and that of his tradition. Unwilling to deny his faith or turn his back on his tradition, Mokone found a solution to the problem.

Realizing the role of African leaders as essential to the social upliftment of the community, Mokone and other church leaders decide to be independent from the European control. This longing was not so much from clerical or political control but rather to return with a clear conscience to a social system that was completely African. The inferior status of their fellow Africans encouraged them to act.

Mokone played a prominent role in establishing an African Christian arena for his nation. He viewed that the days where Africans had to rely on whites to communicate with the colonial government, were over. Gone were the times where whites would isolate themselves from their African counterparts by means of prejudice. Complaints by African leaders against abuse of power and ill treatment by whites, Mokone thought that these were going to be wiped out.

Out of such abuses, Mokone emerged from the pains of oppression, but not out of the joy and experience of a Christian faith; rather from that evil experience of oppression. With the rise of national feelings, the foreign nature of the church caused distress to and anxiety among black leaders, especially because missionaries could not overcome it.

Dissatisfaction with missionaries was not the only reason for the eventual schism from the mainline churches; Africans also desired to express their faith in ways that would be compatible with African traditional life.

Furthermore, black consciousness affirmed the positive value of being black in reaction to dehumanizing effects. It is given that Africans experience God-Qamata as a good parent, a grandparent. Some say, *He is Father in Heaven*; others say, *she is our Mother-earth*. But the sentiment is the same; Qamata is the source of loving-kindness and protection. Although there are many religions in South Africa, Qamata is the base of our African religion.

According to the hosts of Hinduism, Animism, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, God is seen as **She**. From other religions, God as **our Father in Heaven**, he satisfies. It would be interesting to compare the influence that the Bible exerted on Christians in general and on Africans specifically. Briefly one may say that the coming of Christian faith left a complex effect on the African world view. It partly disrupted and enlarged their discontentment.

Early in 1920, before the Bulhoek Massacre, **black** youngsters at the Kilnerton Mission Institute near Pretoria, and other theological students at Fort Hare, rioted and burned down college buildings to enforce their demands for better services. This shows the seriousness and the ugliness of the art of segregation. The very first serious violence in South Africa took place in Cape Town, which later spread to Port Elizabeth and took firm roots there. The leader was known as Masabalala.

We hear that Masabalala pressed a peaceful meeting to strike for higher wages. A few days later, he was arrested without any warrant of arrest specifying charges laid against him. When some whites demanded that he should either be charged or released, the government refused and then violence started.

Evangelist Mzimkhulu reported that, although twenty-four Africans to be killed and many wounded in the violent, none of the government officials were punished for such a display of violent force.

The second incident, during 1920, is that of a certain white doctor by profession, who used a pseudo-name of Wellington Buthelezi³⁶ caused a stir in the Transkei. It is said that Buthelezi, a disciple of Marcus Garvey, announced that a day of salvation was at hand in which black Americans were coming to liberate African from European bondage.

The government's response to Wellingtonism was slow in developing because it was unable to collect evidence against Wellington, because Africans refused to assist the government to gather the evidence. Finally, the government judged Wellington by threatening the stability of the Transkei. On the 1st of March 1927, Wellington was banned from the Transkei. At the same time in 1921, a much more dangerous development began to arise in the Bulhoek location. Enoch Mgijima of the Bulhoek location, prophesied to have millennial visions that were viewed as threatening the government of the time. This is mentioned in this instance to show the seriousness of authoritarian rule.

³⁶. Krentzmann 1986 pp62-65

2.7.2. Culture Clash between Religious World-views

As complexity of religions escalates, there is an open door for culture clashes. Such clashes between religious worldviews are common among people. While it is not even easy for people who have the same cultural background to understand each other, it becomes extremely difficult to accommodate views and lifestyles that are culturally different. The reason that makes it so hard to adapt to a different culture is known as a 'culture clash.

A culture clash forces one to learn different things in life. There is a shock of self-discovery. Again, a shock that goes along with one's role shakes one because of the transition one enters into. Behaviour that is considered more important or less important is part of one's cultural paradigm. Newly arrived foreigners may not know the cultural paradigm of the local population, which is why everyone at first experiences difficulty in functioning effectively within another culture.

Experiencing risk and pain, social blunders and wrong conclusions lead to anxiety. These aspects of losing control over oneself results frustration of not achieving goals. It is better for one to learn new culturally-appropriate behaviour when free of the constraints and social sanctions of his or her native culture.

Malina³⁷ defines a culture clash in terms of in-groups and out-groups. He says that

37. Malina, 1993 pp73-74

in-groups consist of family and close friends. In this sense, Africans see their own standards of value as universal and intrinsically true. They form in-groups because of their strongly developed group feeling. They always strive for cooperative relations with in-group members. They reveal a tendency to ubuntu (compassion), which goes even beyond close relatives and friends. They are obedient to in-group authorities.

Interacting with people of other cultural backgrounds opens doors to better learning. The more one interacts, the more one learns to understand how people react under varying circumstances. Hence, one may conclude that tension resulted from the collision between the traditional and the Christian worldviews.

Since the Africans were never without God, it would be an oversimplification to claim that non-western peoples are still pagan inside and Christian outside. African theologians of today are exploring the effects of Christianity on those who were previously non-Christian.

Some African pastors and leaders have moved away from the habit of turning their congregation into black versions of the English Puritans. Even churches whose roots can be traced from European countries are becoming more and more Africanized. This is clearly shown by the marimbas, drums, clapping of hands and irons which are used in different churches in an attempt to make music more African with rhythm and style.

2.7.3. Solutions to the Problems of Unknowing Different Cultures

- i. *Use of Local Languages.*

Building relationships and giving genuine and long lasting help to the whole nation are essential. The practice of accepting visitors as if they are angels is widespread in many parts of Africa, and is also Biblical³⁸. A visitor asked to teach or preach should perhaps take that opportunity. However, let him not deceive himself into believing that what he is saying is relevant, helpful or understood by the local people.

Communication is no ancillary issue to the outsider who intends to work with people, neither is it only about the spoken word. It rather encompasses all words and behaviour in any public place or when in contact with locals. How one responds to a visitor at one's door speaks volumes. How one responds to an acquaintance met on the road is also vital.

The right way of introducing oneself in church should be taken cognizance of. Even the time of eating meals and the location of the participant is important. It is a very widely acceptable practice in Africa for men and boys to eat separately from women and children. Language itself can be used or abused. Women are rarely referred to by their names, but much more often by the names of their eldest child.

Saints from the Church of God and Saints of Christ have a special way of greeting one another by saying, '*Botani mSirayeli*' meaning '*All Hail Israelite*'. The meanings of words and accent one must obtain them by listening when used but not only from dictionaries and language books.

The art of listening is the foundational skill of learning to speak the language. As a rule of

38. Heb 13 :2

thumb, an outsider should not take (or be given) a responsible position in a community until he has sufficient fluency to communicate in the home language of that community. The missionaries found themselves being the laughing stock for the above reason.

ii. *Stick to a Lowly Occupation in the Community*

Local elders and family heads carry much authority in many African communities. There are reasons for this. People are suspicious of the motives of others who desire power over them. This tendency of empowerment by clan and family heads extends to the church, in a way that some churches easily split into 'family units' over minors that could have been resolved amicably. Such sad circumstances could help whites in accepting authority even from black people.

Being able to subordinate oneself to the authority of other people is a vital section of someone being able to pass the same skill to others. This can only happen if an outsider has either relinquished the control of the purse strings to those in authority. This is a difficult role for whites to adopt if they consider themselves superior and want to correct and admonish others.

A white person who is serious in his desire to function effectively with Africans needs to disown the power of his foreignness. He should begin to tackle issues of right and wrong carefully and diplomatically from the inside, like everybody else! The desperate need for such behaviour in Africa is glaringly evidenced by the failure of the vast majority of whites to function in a way that is genuinely under the authority of an African church leader.

iii. *A Dual Identity for Church leaders*

Different cultures can be more of a hindrance, rather than assistance to the spread of the Gospel. These days theological colleges function in English, and promote the reading of the Bible and prayer in that language. Church leaders exercise this matter to people of other denominations and non-church people in order to reach out to them. This is 'dual identity'.

Although this practice might be correct in attracting people into Christianity, there is an element of poaching young members in faith thus confusing them. It appears logical for one to condemn certain things that one notices based on moral ethics and understanding.

For example, 'wasting' of large sums of money on funerals when children do not have sufficient funds to pay their school fees, will be viewed differently by other cultures. Questions such as, *Are African people so stupid?* The answer to that is, *by no means*. If certain groups of people begin to condemn others, it is fitting that those condemned should not throw stones at those condemning.

Some missionaries had seen African culture as heathen, doing the work of the devil they claimed that such actions should be rooted out. From such statements, Bishop Colenso, from de Gruchy's book³⁹, 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.

39. De Gruchy 1979 p66

What was required was the transformation of African society, not the detribalization of individuals by turning them into black Europeans. Colenso stood firm in his fight to secure justice for blacks in Natal⁴⁰. It is evident that there is no stronger cause for alienation and hate than an attack on local customs, especially when these go back to a venerable antiquity. This is more especially the case when an attempt is made to introduce the customs of another people in the place of those which have been abolished.

It is better not to draw an invidious contrast between the customs of African peoples and those of whites. One should do his utmost best to adapt to African customs. Even if they are bad and have to be changed, it is better to do so gradually rather than by any direct attack or condemnation in words.

It is widely accepted that the most important teaching in life does not happen in the classroom, but in how we live our lives as examples for others to imitate. This is most clear from values that are found from an individual's background. It is often said that the Christian church rides on the back of colonial influence.

Such an attitude amongst church leaders can cause people to become foreigners to their own culture. One disciple who can continue to speak meaningfully to his own culture may have a deeper impact than those who live in a cultural no-mans-land. Therefore, teaching effectively by example means sharing the cultural environment with its people.

2.8 AMASIRAYELI AS SEEN THROUGH THE EYES OF AFRICAN TRADITIONAL

40. Villa-Vicencio 1988p 61

RELIGION AND CHRISTIANITY

The spiritual journey of the amaSirayeli is anchored to three religious pillars. These pillars are as follows, African traditional religion, Christian religion and Jewish religion. It is important to compare and contrast these specific religions in order to understand the amaSirayeli. In mixing African traditional religion and Christianity, the amaSirayeli are doing nothing unusual because many Christians in the so-called mainline churches do the same, albeit secretly, like, as mentioned above veneration of ancestors by practising Christians.

God as seen in African Religions

Traces of human beings can be found even after the realm of the living-dead. This is one way African religious community looks at God. As God lives forever, human beings also know that they can live eternally with Christ. This is a common ground between African traditional religion and Christianity. African traditional religion as one of the ethnic religious group does not motivate its believers to go and convert people from other ethnic religious group. They are all one.

Contrary to this, an evangelistic mandate of Christianity requires a kind of proselytism. The Christian message calls people out of cultural kingdoms into the Kingdom of God. It is the nature of Christianity to convert every one into Christian religion. In African religion, ancestral spirits and lesser gods are usually the primary communicants with human beings on earth and to show him which religion to attend to.

These are mediators between the living world and the unseen world. Jafta⁴¹ argues that the Supreme Being in most African traditional religions is seen as creating the dignity of human beings and all other living things. They view God as the sustainer of all human beings and He is the Almighty One of Israel. He is often distant from the humans because of certain evil actions caused by them.

There is much discussion among African theologians and Christians alike concerning whether or not, the creator God of African religions is really the Jehovah of the Christian world⁴². Few of these theologians like Manas Buthelezi have distinguished between what they term an 'ethnographic approach' and an 'anthropological approach'. On the other hand, there are other theologians who assert that the relationship between traditional beliefs and mission beliefs is direct continuity.

Setiloane had no distinction between conceptions of Yahweh, Nkulunkulu, Modimo, Badimo, Thixo and Qamata. In his fierce criticism of the Western Christian image of God' he went as far as asserting the superiority of the traditional African gods. He said that, 'God' could easily die because he is so small and human.

The Sotho-Tswana God according to me, the N'go people's God, according to Gaba and the Kikuyu people's God, according to Kibicho, could never die because it has no human limitations and is so immense, incomprehensible, wide, tremendous and unique⁴³ Setiloane here was reacting primarily to the outright rejection of the traditional gods by

41. Jafta.1984 p 87.

42. Kretzschmar.1986 pp26-27.

43. Ibid 1983 p17

Christian missionaries. Not all theologians would agree with the approach of Setiloane.

Meanwhile, Gqubule affirms the supremacy and authority of the Christian revelation of God in Christ. Furthermore, he says that for the Christians, only the Triune God can be the object of worship. Some African theologians such as Tshelane, Buti, Ngada, and many others have chosen to use the traditional African such as for the creator God and others have settled for 'Jehovah' or 'God'. In African religion, human beings are often the battle-ground between evil and good forces in the world.

Human beings can also call upon evil forces to punish or persecute wrongdoers or enemies. Special functionaries have the greatest input into the forces of evil but all people can wield it to a lesser degree. African religion does not divide the world into the seen and the unseen, but preaches on both. Existence of God is lived in the wholeness of the two realities, which interact with each other. Tradition says that some personalities have lived in both realms more than once. People can move into the unseen realm during dreams, visions, or trances and come back again. Prophets are more to this kind of experience. Most African religions have functionaries that communicate with God and the spirits on behalf of individuals and the community. This does not negate the ability of individuals to communicate with the unseen.

The functionaries are trained, initiated and in many cases, form a bloodline lineage that has a special window into the unseen realm. Communication takes many forms and primary among them are prayers, incantations, sacred objects, and incense. Emphasis on the African religion is laid on the family as being at the core of African society. However, society is broader than that. It encompasses friends, age mates, relatives and the

community.

Not only does each member of the community has a defined role to play, but there are responsibilities towards each other, when these are neglected, one is brought to judgement to God or to the spirits. According to the Christian tradition, God has made certain covenants with human beings on several occasions, and those are kept and obeyed.

Israel was a nation formed through such covenants between God and them. Deuteronomy 6: 4 speaks of God as Holy and the only One. Israel, therefore, should respect and honour the unity of God. The breaking of those covenants causes the Creator God to be so distant from human beings.

Looking deeper into African traditional religion and the Old Testament covenant, one cannot but align the two. From both, doing the turmoil of clashes between people and their enemies, the spirits becomes angry. While African religions carry an idea that the soul lives forever, after being brought back into life having spent a period in the realm of dead. Most African religions provide eternal lostness of those who habitually transgress taboos.

2.9 AFRICAN CHURCH LEADERS: REASONS FOR LEAVING MISSION CHURCHES

The reasons for African church leaders to leave mission churches are numerous. They wanted to use the Christian Bible, which all Christians use, to express their African terms. This was not possible when the leadership was white and where the structure was European. Indeed, when they tried to be truly African, things were either made difficult for them, or they were simply cast out.

African church leaders founded their churches with an African ethos. They are autonomous groups with an all-African membership and leadership. Reasons for the schism are numerous, but at its core is the alien character of Christianity as inherited from Euro-American missionaries. The emergence of such churches is an answer to the quest to identify Christianity with African culture.

Black church leaders like Dwane, Soga, Mzimba, Msikinya and many others found themselves in a world of freedom when visiting overseas countries. They found that a black man could address an audience without fear and harassment. Black American church leaders visiting South Africa had a different agenda from that of their white counterparts.

Men like Bishop Turner of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and later Rev Barrett, inspired and encouraged black Christians when they visited Southern Africa. These uneducated, ordinary black American men could not understand why literate blacks were treated like slaves in their own motherland. Makhubu views that God purported by white people as loving, favours only them.

During 1912, the African National Congress (ANC) was becoming stronger in numbers because of its policy. The policy was preaching about equality and better facilities for all. Soon churches became nationalist institutions. Clergymen who were members of the ANC and politicians who were members in these churches were gripped by the prevailing national spirit. There was no way of escaping it and many ANC leaders came from the ranks of the clergy, for example Reverends Dube, Rubusana, Mqoboli Ngcayiya etc.

Chief Albert Luthuli and Rev ZR Mahabane led the list of chiefs and churchmen respectively. Some of the Independent churches were born out of a desired freedom to worship and to have a close-knit fellowship. Africans needed to express their feelings in singing, dancing and praying together aloud.

Prayer meetings for healing the sick by the laying-on of hands could be held without fear. Soon African church leaders grouped together for celebrations and thanksgiving of the Almighty. Unlike many major religions, they passed on their teachings orally from generation to generation.

Closely interwoven with African culture, their religion became valid and gave birth to a new way of life. Since there are no written records of their creeds or dogmas, one cannot speak of either orthodoxy or heresy in this regard. The chiefs propagated a holistic way of life. Although they did not officially engage in missionary activities, they attempted to convert others through their way of thinking, and good actions towards others. Personal closeness at social level became responsible actions, speaking louder than words, whilst white missionaries often failed to recognize this philosophy. The misconceptions of whites, calling Africans 'heathen, primitive and pagan', were still in place. Phrases, like backwardness, crudeness, stupidity or a carefree life in a fictitious world of utopian bliss were also used. In reality, Africans were much different. African religious leaders know that it is Africa that expresses herself in a congregational-type of worship.

The name of God is charged with sacred power and is not to be spoken lightly. In the church of God, some African members are monotheistic people in nature. They worship by singing and clapping hands, or singing and running around in circles, or all of the three.

In connection with politics, Archbishop Ngada⁴⁴ quoted by Lea confirms some common aspects in both religions. He says that members of African traditional churches are politically active. Matters concerning employment, a shortage of houses and financial pressure are realities that make it impossible not to become involved in politics. This is certainly true with regard to church leaders, who often act as chairpersons of certain organizations.

Ngada and Makhubu jointly agree that their church members are informed on political, social, economic, and religious matters. They may not express their views directly or openly, but when strikes or boycotts take place, they give their support. They suffer in silence and feel the pain, but at the same time they struggle to free themselves spiritually from hazardous situations, like Paul who writes, we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed. We are perplexed but not driven to despair. We are persecuted, but not forsaken, struck down, but not destroyed. Always carrying in our body is the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies'. Concerning the doctrine of incarnation, some black Christian leaders believe in the veneration of the existence of ancestral spirits, and not in worshipping them. Believing in Christ as the Son of God and as a Mediator creates problems for them. For some, it is unthinkable that God could have a Son without a wife. Joseph, the father of Jesus Christ, was human; therefore, Christ cannot be the Supreme Creator.

Because of a limited knowledge of incarnation is it difficult for them to accept, Jesus as God, yet he was acceptable as a Jew. Another point is how God, the Giver of Life, could

44. Ngada an archbishop was interviewed during one of his visits in the SANDF Conference in Feb 2003.

allow salvation to be brought about by such a barbaric action as the murder of His own Son. Forgetting that the death was for the salvation of humanity, they want such a murder at least to be avenged. Belief in the Holy Spirit is the corollary of belief in the spirits of the ancestors. Ancestors are believed to move about and exist as invincible spirits.

One can relate to them as one relates to living beings. Their invisible presence is believed to be like the existence and the presence of God. The power of the Holy Spirit is thought of as the Spirit of God, just like the spirit of the living dead. It is noteworthy that the missionaries and their supporters were united in speaking against the rise of the African Independent Churches. They cited the harmfulness of disunity among the churches.

However, when the Ethiopian movement argued that Africans should save Africans, the idea behind the point was that none is better able to understand an African culture than another African. Africans also understood that independence would not be given easily, not even for the sake of unity. Patience should be practised by every believer in Christ. The indigenous churches should decide for themselves what is good for them.

Africans were sure that mistakes made by them were not the result of an evil spirit, but were blunders that could be ascribed to a lack of experience. The unification of certain black churches with some white churches for the purpose of wanting to be control needs to be watched with considerable interest. Indigenous churches should be recognized as Christian brothers and sisters. Those who decide to unite with them should neither persecute nor be sceptical about the African Independent Churches.

Sundkler saw this movement of African Independent Churches as a 'Nativistic-syncretistic

interpretation of the Christian religion which created the bridge over Africans that are brought back to heathenism and ultimately to the African animism from which they started'.

Oosthuizen first denied them any right to call themselves Christians and regarded them as a 'Post-Christian movement', because they maintained traditional religion instead of regarding the Word of God as normative. In his second edition Oosthuizen recognized the Christian orientation of some of these churches as outstanding in their form of worship.

Sundkler argued that Colenso's missionary policies showed a way forward that did not reject African traditional religions, traditions and customs out of hand, as other missionaries tended to do, but intended to leaven African culture, its roots, and its social system with the Gospel.

Even during Colenso's time, many Africans were obliged to work in the mines. Many missionary societies began to operate in the urban areas and large numbers of black Christians were able and willing to assume the mantles of spiritual leadership for the thousands of Africans living in town. Etherington⁴⁵ believed that in the rural areas the decisive factor that influenced religious secession comprised the increasing restrictions on Africans in terms of land ownership, job opportunities and salaries.

He spoke of a blind 'Cushite' evangelist named Johannes, nicknamed 'Khonkotha', who toured the country preaching about Africa for the Africans. Because of his views, Khonkotha was imprisoned three or four times and eventually deported. There were also

45 Etherington 1968p71

those who followed Khonkotha preaching simultaneously about Africa for the Africans.

Daneel maintained that the separatists are 'sheep stealers' who rob churches of their flocks, and are 'twisters of the truth'. He later regarded the AICs as primarily concerned with the need to adapt Christianity to African traditional rituals and symbols. According to Daneel, separatists are exhibiting a genuine 'process of contextualisation.

They create the kind of context in which dialogue and confrontation between the Christian and traditional religion takes place consistently. For Daneel the AICs are realistic. They are eager in presenting the Christian message at deeper levels of traditionalist thought and experience.

Daneel⁴⁶ further amended his views by saying that AICs are distorting the gospel to a certain extent. He admitted that the AICs are grappling with the fundamental problem of relating the gospel to African culture. His allegation that the leaders of these churches are inspired by a lust for power and wealth seems to merit little serious consideration. An examination of a case study of any leader of an independent church will reveal that the leader has an absolute conviction of a vocation to prophecy. This is true of Isaiah Shembe, Lekganyane, Mma Nku and many others. In every case the vocation has come through physical, mental or psychosomatic illness, and was always accompanied by disturbing dreams. After long resistance and final surrender, the said member would gain peace, health and power to heal. In conclusion, most of the AICs take the Bible very literally. All AICs view any black man as an Israelite awaiting deliverance from God.

46. Daneel 1983 p56

Most people in the African church focus on their leader in whom full confidence in their guidance is placed; which is why Mgijima's supporters could accept his visions without any difficulty. I am now going to focus my attention to four of the African church leaders who moved away from their mother churches because of grievances, mainly concerning ill-treatment.

2.10 NEHEMIAH TILE IN THE QUEENSTOWN DISTRICT (1884)

Church division results from deep conflicts within the life of the church. The nature of this conflict is often exceedingly complex and should be analyzed in order to normalize the situation. In some instances, schisms result when church authorities impose heavy discipline on their members. I have already mentioned that Tile founded a Thembu Church as a result of certain conflicts with a missionary, in Transkei during 1884.

The secession of Tile was to a larger extent in reaction to the missionary attempts to remain rulers instead of becoming guides and partners. Together with their reluctance to relinquish control, whites failed to understand and respond wisely to the culture within which they ministered. There was also disagreement between Tile and the white missionary concerning Tile's involvement in the tribal and political affairs.

The conflict can be regarded as the first act of protest in an African church. Tile is regarded as the founder of the African Independent Church movement in Southern Africa. It would also be accurate to say that he is the pioneer of African Christian theology. No study of the African Independent Churches can be of value without mentioning Tile.

2.10.1. Who was Nehemiah Tile?

Tile's origin is obscure. It is unclear whether he was a member of the royal house of the Thembus, the Hala clan or not. As an adviser to the chief, he must have been well acquainted with the Thembu chiefs. As a minister of the Wesleyan Church, his headquarters was at Emqekzeweni, at Paramount Chief Dalindyebo's homestead. He was baptized by Rev H. Dugmore and became a gifted public speaker and a devoted member of his church.

He served as an evangelist and then went on to the ministry. Besides being an evangelist, Tile played a significant political role. While serving the church in Shawbury with Rev Edward Getye, Tile took control of the congregation. He was also a personal friend of two chiefs, Mhlontlo and Lehana of the Basotho nation⁴⁷. Tile did not only befriend Mhlontlo and Lehana, but also chief Chumah, the head of the Thembu tribe, where he spent most of his ministry.

He started as a minister near the hills of Noni, working with Rev JS Thomas, who died shortly afterwards. Tile then worked with Rev Peter Hargreaves, who remained in Clarkebury for almost twenty-four years. Hargreaves' influence in Thembuland was widespread and respected.

He once urged the Methodist church to set up a mission station close to the residence of the Thembu chief. Rev Hargreaves remarked about Tile's progress at Cwecweni. The

47. Balia, 1991 p54

society has increased and been revived. Efforts have been made for the erection of a new chapel⁴⁸. Hargreaves was succeeded by other missionaries, such as Revs T. Chubb and W.S. Davis.

Educational and missionary facilities, such as the Institution of Umgwali, still testify to their work. With the Methodist church's approval, Tile was sent to Healdtown for ministerial training, where he spent three years. In 1878 he completed his theological training and was sent to Qokolweni, where he clashed with Chubb, who did not approve of Tile's involvement in politics.

As the chief's adviser, Tile urged Chief Ngangelizwe to reject the division of Thembuland into four magisterial districts. These were going to be incorporated into the Transkei under the Cape Colonial government. Tile stirred up abaThembu to boycott the payment of the hut taxes. These activities brought Tile into conflict with the Cape Colonial government, for which he was later arrested. Missionaries accused him for

- i. instigating a protest against the aforementioned division of Thembuland,
- ii. addressing a public meeting on a Sunday,
- iii. refusing to keep him (*Chubb*) informed of his political activities,
- iv. donating an ox at the circumcision ceremony of Chief Dalindyebo, heir of the paramount chief of the Thembu⁴⁹

48. Minutes of the Clarkebury District, 1873 p554

49. Kilner, 1973 pp11-13

Although the most important complaint against Tile was subversion, the accusation by Chubb regarding the ox that was donated to the chief, illustrated the cultural gap between the Thembu and the missionaries. This incident led to Tile's resignation from the Wesleyan Methodist Church.

After Tile's resignation from the Methodist Church, he formed a Thembu church. The church became a tool to continue the Thembu protest in a more organized political and religious manner. Tile's mission was to rid his people of white domination. He adapted the message of the church to the heritage of the Thembu tribe, so that it bore the following characteristics:

- v. the church consisted of extended families.
- vi. only clan members or members of the Thembu tribe could be members of the church.
- vii. the church swore allegiance to the Thembu chiefs and their people.

2.10.2. Tile's Started Praying for the King of the Thembu

The prayer for the British monarch was applied to the Thembu royal family, as in other areas. Whenever the chief wanted hymns to be sung, he would command this. A special prayer entitled 'Umthandazo wabaThembu' (Prayer of the Thembus) came into being. The prayer closes with a threefold petition:

- i. God save King Ngangelizwe (*Thixo sindisa ikumkani uNgangelizwe*)
- ii. God save your child (*Sindisa Thixo nomntwana wakho*)

iii. God save the Thembu tribe (*Sindisa Thixo isizwe sabaThembu*).

Tile also changed the Methodist liturgy to make it more suitable for the Thembu people. The political aspirations of the Thembu church were that black Christian ministers should be allowed to express African nationalist viewpoints. Unfortunately, Tile did not live long. He died in 1891, and was buried at Genge near Mqanduli, where a tombstone was erected for him.

Without tabulating some specific differences and similarities between Mgijima and Tile, like Mgijima, Tile regarded his involvement in politics as a legitimate part of his ministry. From the beginning, he made no clear distinction between religious and political matters.

In addition to his nationalist motives, when he founded the Thembu church, the English ministers saw his action as a protest against the exclusive control over church funds. The missionaries viewed this issue as in conflict with the policy laid down by the Missionary Committee in England, that the English would control funds. Kilner said that all contributions from the native churches should be applied for the maintenance of the native ministry, for schools and training institutions, for boys and girls, men and women.

Saunders described Tile's breakaway as both a political and a social protest expressed in religious terms. He further argued that when Tile's protests were not effective, he manipulated the political mood, so that the ecclesiastical protest was then expressed in

political terms. On the other hand, Pretorius⁵⁰ interpreted Tile's breakaway differently, seeing it as religiously motivated.

More importantly though, is that under Tile, Christianity in his area started to give shape in African style. He viewed African theology as the only theology that could bring freedom, dignity and respect to the people of Africa. He further argued that dignity and respect start from the families at home. The second African church leader to discuss is Rev MM Mokone, who I also cited a little bit above.

2.11 THE ETHIOPIAN CHURCH: REV MANGENA M. MOKONE

2.11.1 His Early Life

Mangena Maake Mokone was born into the Sekhukhune tribe in 1851. He was the second son of a subordinate chief who had three wives. While he was still a young man, some Swazis attacked this tribe, killing most of its people. Mokone fled to Natal, where he became a kitchen boy to a Wesleyan woman who took an interest in him.

He entered school and went to Sunday school, where he became well acquainted with Methodism. He attended the services at the Aliwal Street Chapel and later became a teacher, a preacher and finally a minister of religion⁵¹.

As Mokone was a successful man with considerable intellect and piety, he was ordained at the Wesleyan Methodist Conference in 1888 shortly after Tile. While working in Pretoria,

50. Pretorius, 1993 p45

51 South African Methodist Journal, 1884 pp19-20

he and Jeremiah Tabane translated the Catechism into Sepedi. At the Synod of 1893 a letter written by Mokone was read. The letter was expressing his dissatisfaction at what he saw as racial discrimination.

He then left the Methodist church to found an independent church, even though he was still practising as a Methodist minister. Same as Mokone, Mgijima began a prayer meeting of the amaSirayeli whilst he was still a Methodist preacher. Both of them had already founded the first Churches on the Witwatersrand and Ntabelanga respectively, before leaving the Methodist Church.

2.11.2. Mokone and the Ethiopian Church

In the history of African separatism in South Africa, Ethiopianism is significant, not merely because of the early date of its establishment, but because of its desire to emancipate all Africans, both inside and outside Africa. It arose at the turn of the century and was most influential amongst the emerging African elite and wealthy peasant farmers.

Ethiopian leaders were drawn from the mission-educated, emerging black petty bourgeoisie who were largely professional ministers, teachers and clerks. Balia considers Tile to be the true founder of Ethiopianism, even though under a different name. Mokone is considered as the first organizer of it. It is believed that the Ethiopian movement was formally founded by Mokone, Dwane, Xaba and about 50 other African leaders in Pretoria at Marabastad on Sunday, 20 November 1892.

Mokone's reasons for secession rested, to some extent, on racial grounds. He strongly

objected to the church's holding two separate conferences for black and white church leaders. He was also concerned with the evangelization of the Witwatersrand and the self-government of the African Church under African leaders.

In the founders' declaration of independence sent to Rev George Weavind, his superintendent, Mokone cited certain grievances that concentrated on the racial segregation of the district synod. The same rules, however, did not seem to apply to the white ministers, who were permitted to hold leadership positions in the African synods.

Unlike Tile, who used his tribal origin to form his church, Mokone appealed to all Africans to join his church. This shows that Mokone's secession rested on racial grounds. Dwane was among those who came out and followed Mokone. Mokone addressed the people using the Book of Psalms 68 verse 31, and used this text to promote Africanism in the face of Western imperialism.

This gave impetus to the formation of Ethiopian churches whose leadership successfully articulated their beliefs, values and their interests around the interpretation of the above scripture reading, which was seen by Europeans as best encapsulating the promotion of Africanness.

Rev EE. Mahabane, once a Methodist Minister, viewed the idea of Ethiopianism as dependent on the evangelization of Africans. According to history documents from the Unisa Archives, the then President of the ZAR, Paul Kruger recognised the Ethiopian movement in 1893 as an Independent movement.

From its inception, this movement drew its members from different parts of South Africa, since it had no special attachment to one chiefdom, or a narrow regional appeal, like Tile's church. As an independent African movement, the Ethiopian movement rejected European control. The movement was regarded by whites as potentially more dangerous than earlier organizations, which were scarcely influential.

Rev John Kilner, Mangena's Superintendent at the time tried to stop the resignations from the Wesleyan churches. Among the criticisms levelled against Ethiopianism was that the movement's leadership was recruiting members of alleged questionable character. In addition, the Ethiopian church ordained ministers with little or no formal education.

The reason for this lack of education is simply what the white settler population wanted it. The mere fact that Dwane and Xaba were sent to America to effect the affiliation of the Ethiopian church with the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) showed that blacks were regarded as intelligent and gifted people. Unfortunately, Xaba was unable to accompany Dwane.

Dwane returned as the general superintendent of the AME Church in South Africa in 1896. The affiliation of the Ethiopian movement with the AME Church was concluded on 18 June 1896. Mokone was the first to establish links between the Afro-American Bishop Turner, and his own church so that his two ordained priests and seven deacons could be utilized effectively. This proves that in spite of the whites' misgivings, blacks were well capable of running their own affairs.

Mokone's philosophy formed the foundation of African and Black Theology, which appealed

to the African mind. An examination of the spread of Ethiopianism in Southern Africa shows that by 1906 it had already made an appreciable impact on the whole of the region. Ethiopianism was a product of three distinct forces that occurred in the then Transvaal:

- i. the destruction of African political systems,
- ii. the missionaries' role as agents of the white government to effect cultural and social change and the forced relocation of Africans.
- iii. South Africa had and considerable number of ethnic groupings. These groupings have coherent African political systems. By imposing external control, changes in the systems were be produced and therefore had to be resisted.

Mokone's response produced Ethiopianism, which was inevitably a reflection of and a response to the destruction of the indigenous political systems. Missionaries frequently accused blacks of being prone to moral laxity, which was set against the background of Victorian and Edwardian virtues. These were foreign to black culture. The cult of the ancestors began to crumble; industrialization and urbanization fragmented the extended family and weakened the sense of community.

A related factor concerns the African Christian leaders. Black Christian leaders were influenced to a considerable degree by being assigned to positions of lower status. There were no promotion opportunities, because of the general and profound discriminatory practices within denominations. Mokone's ministry was solely aimed at educating other African people. Through his efforts and influence, a school was established, known as the

Kilnerton Institution. It was named after Rev John Kilner⁵² so says Balia, who remained the principal of the Institution until he resigned in 1892. The third African Church leader who moved out of the mission church was James M Dwane of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. I will also detail few points about his breakaway.

2.12 THE AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF REV JAMES MATTA DWANE

2.12.1. General.

The African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) was definitely of a high-status from the beginning. Ministers had a reputation of being properly trained and adequately paid. Their discipline was strict and procedures were highly formal. The organization is very rigid. The church has two outstanding schools which are the Evaton Institute and the Theological College. This church is government recognized and is in close touch with her mother body in America. The main theology for the Ethiopian movement originated from the AME Church. It is said that James Matta Dwane a Methodist minister was granted a visa to raise funds from England in 1887. The aim was to build a college for Blacks in South Africa. Returning from England and having collected a large amount of money, Rev Dwane reported the results of his journey to his superintendent.

His superintendent, Rev Lamplough insisted that the money should become part of the general church's funds. Dwane felt that the original deal had been betrayed, and was very

52. Balia, 1991p69

annoyed by the suggestion; however, he respectfully handed over the money to his superior.

2.12.3. Dwane in the Methodist Church

Prefacing Siggibo Dwane's book, Gqubule, says about James Dwane: 'disappointed and frustrated as he was, Dwane resigned in 1892. He left the church and joined another former Methodist minister, known as Rev Mangena M. Mokone'. Gqubule observes that Dwane during his time in the Methodist church, he was well respected and loved. Seven years after his ordination, he was appointed by the Conference of 1888 to serve on committees, such as the one for extending the Kafir Hymnbook (Xhosa Hymn Book) and the Committee of Native Translation.

The Conference of 1891 appointed him as one of the two Africans on a committee of 25 ministers to organize the studies and examinations of ministers on probation. Dwane then established links between Mokone's Church and the AME Church under Rev Richard Allen in Philadelphia, USA.

2.12.4. Dwane as a Delegate in America

In 1916, a black congregation in Philadelphia in the United States founded the AME Church. Dwane was the only delegate who attended the affiliation service in the USA. This secured his appointment to the office of vicar-bishop of the new fourteen districts of the AME Church in South Africa, which then incorporated the Ethiopian Church.

Having ousted Mokone as the leader in South Africa, Dwane was still not satisfied, although the new church grew rapidly. His leadership was not without problems. He found that Ethiopianism was intended, among other things, to bring about the self-reliance, dignity and respect which had been lost. He realized that freedom from the mission church would give his people a better footing in the community. He was suspicious of Western values and did not impose them on his people.

Dwane realized that dependency is a scaling down of one's worthiness and ability. He was totally against a colonized mind that accepted the superiority of some races and dependency on them. His mind told him that Africans and white people are equal and should be accepted in the body of Christ on their own merits.

At the Conference of the AME Church in 1899, Dwane was asked to approach the Anglicans about a valid episcopate and priesthood in the Ethiopian Church. This was to maintain fellowship with the wider church circles.

The aim was to work closely with the mainline churches, thereby gaining restitution and respect. He also noticed that Ethiopianism represented a reaction against the missionary establishment, and adamantly attempted to bring religion under the control of African political chiefs and church leaders. Those who followed him did so because:

- i. they were to be leaders of their own people, speaking their own language and dancing to their own African tunes.
- ii. the church was an important agent in the politicization of Africans. It provided the ideal environment for shaping a new African religious culture. Like Tile, Dwane wanted to

worship his God in an African style, and pray to his Lord and Saviour in his own African way.

iii outside the church, there were few opportunities to develop an African political consciousness. He knew that there were opportunities to speak to chiefs and their subjects on church premises. Dwane also knew that it was demanded of him to pray for African kings, chiefs and their living dead.

iv. Christianity proved a powerful force in eroding divisions between people of mixed origin and Africans who merged into new classes or cells in the church. Therefore, a strong and united resistance movement against the missionaries was possible through the Ethiopian movement.

One source of Dwane's dissatisfaction with the AME Church was that it would not entrust large sums of money to him. He also questioned the legitimacy of the Episcopal orders in the AME Church. Subsequently Dwane and others split from it in search of religious autonomy.

The AME Church remained active in South Africa, but distanced itself from other independent churches, and did not engage openly in political activities. Dwane then formed an Order of Ethiopia', which for Episcopal reasons, has been affiliated with the Anglican Church since 1900.

After Dwane had formed, the Order of Ethiopia there was a proliferation of independent churches, for the same reasons that the Ethiopian Order came into existence. The process of fragmentation did not end. Dwane well illustrated the problem of Black empowerment, leadership and stewardship in the English mainline churches. For him, the AME Church

was a stepping-stone to the Order of Ethiopia.

As an Ethiopian leader, Dwane infused Africa with a new political ideal conducive to wide popular support as an exclusively African nationalist movement. The African National Anthem, composed by Enoch Sontonga in 1884, reveals the firm conviction that the whole of Africa would be liberated:

<i>Nkosi sikelel'i Afrika</i>	Lord unite Africa.
<i>Maluphakanyis'uphondo lwayo.</i>	Exalted be its fame.
<i>Yiva imithandazo yethu.</i>	Hear our prayers and.
<i>Nkosi sikelelela.</i>	Lord bless
<i>Woza Moya Oyingcwele,</i>	Come Holy Spirit.
<i>O, Nkosi sikelela, thina lusapho lwayo.</i>	O! Lord unite us, we its descendants.

This African National song could be termed as expressing the 'Ethiopian struggle for freedom', though it is almost impossible to evaluate the missionary influence on the Ethiopian leadership. The formation of the Order of Ethiopia in 1900 was not completely without self-interest because Dwane never had an opportunity to be a bishop in the 'European' church. In fact, according to Lea, the Anglicans denied that they ever promised him such a position.

It is quite clear that the missionaries were often strongly opposed to the principles of Ethiopianism as propagated by Africans. Interestingly, Siggibo Dwane, the grandson of James Matta Dwane, heads the Order of Ethiopia at present.

I am now going to concentrate of Rev PJ Mzimba of the Presbyterian Church in Africa. It is said that he had problems concerning his appointment as a marriage officer. This issue caused him to go away from his own Free Church of Scotland.

2.13. PJ MZIMBA AND THE ISSUES OF HIS APPOINTMENT AS A MARRIAGE OFFICER.

2.13.1 The Philosophy of the Church

Rev PJ Mzimba of the Presbyterian Church in Africa was ordained at Lovedale in 1875. For all Presbyterian⁵³, Mgujulwa says that, there has been the philosophy of Quality as against Quantity. According to Mgujulwa, all Presbyterians have local, provincial and national courts.

The local is composed of Deacons. It deals with all matters like building and maintaining churches and manses, promoting education and helping the helpless, the sick and the elderly either financially. This is the Deacon Court. Although this court has no disciplinary powers, its decisions cannot be revoked and they are the only Court to take legal action against law offenders. This local court manages and deals with all the Spiritual Affairs of the denomination.

Secondly, the Provincial Court oversees all sessions and Deacons Courts under its control. The Presbytery in many cases is the only Law making power in the Presbyterian Church.

53. Mgujulwa p2004

It checks and attests all records of Sessions and Deacons Courts. This court has power to divide and unite Circuits, powers to ordain ministers, subject to the approval of the General Assembly. It is this body that has powers to appoint, discipline, suspends, excommunicate ministers.

Thirdly, the General Assembly is the highest court of all Presbyterians. Its decisions are final. All Presbyterian churches are accountable to this court. The National Moderator is the head of this body and of the entire church. It has powers to divide and unite Presbyteries, to create Presbyteries where possible and necessary. All provincial problems, appeals or any problem that cannot be resolved by other lower courts are sent to this one for solutions.

2.13.2. The Appointment of PJ Mzimba

Now, from its inception, the Free Church of Scotland under the jurisdiction of the Kaffrarian Presbytery appointed Rev PJ Mzimba to the Lovedale Circuit. He was there for twenty-two years. These years were sweet, sour and sometimes ended unchristian. He experienced the some problem, which caused schism between 1908 and 1910.

During the era of JX Merriman who was the Prime Minister of the Cape Colony, representatives drew his attention about Mzimba, who had been appointed as a marriage officer in 1907. It is said that the appointment was a privilege for Mzimba and his church, giving the congregation a measure of recognition.

Between 1908 and 1909, Mzimba appointed four of his ministers as marriage officers in certain areas under his jurisdiction. Other ministers met his conduct with criticism and

distrust. Merriman could not go against the wishes of those in Parliament who desired that blacks should be oppressed. Oppression continued reaching a peak in 1913 when the Natives' Land Act was promulgated.

This experience was extremely harsh to most blacks. Mzimba led a deputation of African ministers to London to protest against the Act that was imposed upon him and other black people. Because of the protest delegation he led to London, his marriage license was revoked. In a letter of resignation to his church, Mzimba mentioned some of the following:

- i. although he did not consider himself to be at loggerheads with the authorities of his church, the Free Church of Scotland, Mzimba was in favour of Africans who spoke boldly about worship in Africa, as any other person would in his home country.
- ii. he mentioned that an African should not always depend on assistance from missionaries, but only on himself and his God. As the second African minister in his church after Rev Tiyo Soga, Mzimba felt that it was time for the Africans to stand on their own feet. That is why he left his mother church to found the Presbyterian Church in Africa.
- iii. he mentioned that his license as a Marriage officer had to be properly scrutinized before being issued and that he had appointed four ministers under his jurisdiction to conduct marriages, and the withdrawal of his license was unacceptable to him and to his congregation.

It is clear that Mzimba was a victim of clear prejudice. There was nothing wrong in desiring to extend the Word of God in the language of his people. Historically and Ecclesiologically, Mzimba reacted in this manner because both he and Mgijima were contemporaries and because both of them came from the Eastern Cape. Only a rivulet separated them, namely

the Tyhumie River. The last African church leader to look at is Archbishop Makhubu of the African Independent church. He is not the only one who is a mouthpiece of the church, but there is also Archbishop Ngada.

2.14 MAKHUBU'S OPINION REGARDING THE AFRICAN INDEPENDENT CHURCHES

Makhubu⁵⁴ a senior representative and leader of the AICs, queries the name used for his church. He says that it is inappropriate. He argues that the title 'indigenous is preferable. For him the title demonstrates that the churches originate amongst the people. 'Indigenous' can be interchanged with 'independent', in the title 'African Indigenous / Independent Churches' (AIC).

Makhubu does not regard the African Independent Church as a 'movement'. He says that his church is certainly a part of the Body of Christ, like any other mainline church. On unity he holds the opinion that 'today the mainline churches are poles apart and will not agree or compromise on certain issues like doctrines, unity.' He is sure that the future of other churches in Southern Africa is in the hands of the Indigenous churches. He does not agree that African Independent churches are Instruments of evil, or retrogression towards paganism, or a political nuisance as claimed by other mainline churches.

54. Makhubu, 1991p45, 1st edition

Makhubu, together with Ngada, another outstanding leader of these churches, remarks that in a sense they are a community that expresses desires to worship freely through different feelings, singing, dancing, shouting, even crying. This can be seen as religious fanaticism. Ngada adds that the Zion church means a newness of life that produces a creative blend of African and Christian traditions. They are an expression of protest against oppression. Makhubu further upholds that for many Africans, joining the Zionist churches is a fundamental struggle for identity, well-being, health, integration and meaning.

Therefore, there was a sweeping flow of Africans from the mission churches to the indigenous churches. After the departure of Rev Tile in 1882, the following churches broke away;

- i Chief Kgatlampe in 1885,
- ii. Mgijima in 1914.

This process continued rapidly.

2.14.1. African Independent Churches Numerical Understanding

In 1991, AIC accounted for more than one third (1/3) of the Christian population in South Africa. AICs are sometimes termed 'syncretistic' in their attempt to combine African traditional elements with mission Christianity. It is more helpful to understand them as 'contextual innovations'.

The first AIC's were not so much a synthesis of African traditional religion as an attempt to rise up as an African middle-class, in order to reconstruct a Christianity that was like its

Protestant forebears, but under the control of Africans.

While the Ethiopian churches of Dwane were African replicas of Christian denominations and were an explicit response to racial inequality, it has been realized that Zionist Christianity arose from the economic conditions of an urban proletariat. Within 'mainstream' Zionism, by far the largest group is the Zion Christian Church (ZCC), which in the 1980s grew from 2.7 to 7.4 percent of all Christians in South Africa⁵⁵.

The ZCC combines worship with sponsorship of successful business and other enterprises. It is perhaps best known for its openness to political leaders, who are invited to its annual gathering at Moria in the Limpopo Province. Also belonging within the family of AICs is the Ibandla lamaNazaretha, popularly known as, the Shembe Church situated in KwaZulu Natal.

This is the second largest AIC in Southern Africa, numbering about half a million members, the majority of whom are Zulu speaking people. Mobilising specifically 'Zulu' cultural resources, the church hierarchy mirrors the Zulu social structure, something that makes it distinct amongst AICs. Although the amaSirayeli are in the minority, they have spread their wings like eagles as far as Gauteng, Western Cape and KwaZulu Natal, though in fact originating from the Eastern Cape.

2.14.2. What is their Ethos?

55. Report from JJ Kritzinger, 1994 pp2-4

The ethos of the AIC's varies. It is even more difficult to generalise in their case than in that of other faith communities. Makhubu⁵⁶ argues that some of the Zionist sects were involved in the political struggle against apartheid and the other section of the Zionists say that much more of the issue should be researched. They have identified themselves with African nationalism and are committed to the liberation movement along with their black compatriots in the mission and settler churches.

The ethos of the amaSirayeli has been less overtly political, although it was recognized by Smuts and his police force as such. Some churches, such as the ZCC, have insisted on their political neutrality. Indeed, they appear to have been aligned with more conservative political forces. But it would be misleading to generalize about these churches. Comprised largely the marginalized poor, it is inconceivable that all their members refrained from the struggle against apartheid. Some of the AICs, including the amaSirayeli, have displayed reluctance regarding involvement in ecumenical activity, either with other AICs or with bodies such as the South African Council of Churches (SACC). For the ZCC to have an ecumenical office in Johannesburg, does not negate the fact that it is non-ecumenical globally.

2.15 CONCLUSION

The discussion above has addressed different views of Christianity and African theology. Now let us summarize a bit what this chapter has shown us in connection with African church leaders and other aspects of mission churches.

56. Makhubu 1988 p56

Firstly, looking at division, I discovered that to a larger extent, missionaries and colonialist attitudes were to blame. They were enormously biased in dealing with social and religious issues. It has come out clearly that white missionaries occupied an ambivalent position during a period that witnessed tremendous social and political conflict and change. Their emphasis on one soul conversion took insufficient account of the community life of the tribe.

Some Africans refused to be converted because they felt that this amounted to abandoning loyalty to their own tribal issues. Others, having been converted, in fact secretly maintained several tribal beliefs and practices. This resulted in a dual and compartmentalised life. Bishop Colenso, one of the missionaries, was resented by white colonists because he campaigned for human rights and equality before the law for blacks.

On the frontiers, missionaries were in varying degrees agents of the colonial authorities, recommending their interests to colonial and African people. So Christianity became an extended experience of political oppression and religious domination, deculturalization, dehumanization and economic exploitation.

Secondly, our brief historical overview showed us that from the perspective of the indigenous peoples, there has been a lack of theological education. Many of them had little, if any, formal education and their congregations were often semi-literate or illiterate. It is said that in some of the churches there was a degree of misunderstanding of the relation between the Old Testament and New Testament.

Thirdly, one should not overlook some socio-economic reasons such as the Land Act of

1913. These Acts strictly restricted Africans with respect to land ownership and farming as well as upward mobility in the industrial and commercial sphere⁵⁷. On a political level, Etherington said that, Africans were restricted in that they were allowed no effective representation in any government. A limited tribal authority of the few chiefs was further subject to the local authorities.

Economically, black pastors were paid far less than their white counterparts and far less than blacks in farming, business, and skilled trades, thus causing their families to suffer because of the poor salaries they earned. One notices processes that culminated in constitutional schism, personalities in both cultures that refused to be degraded, religious events and systems that work for or against achieving God's desired state for human beings.

Considering Makhubu's preference, it is not theologically and politically insignificant that he wanted his church to be seen and recognised as an 'Independent Church'. A significant element for him includes reclaiming and affirming African identity and maturity. It is clear that one can, as an African and a Christian, be as effective in control as white people are. The formation of alternative ecclesial centres was seen by Mokone, Dwane and Tile as empowering Africans to control ecclesiastical structures on earth.

Historical information about Tile, Mokone, Mzimba and Dwane is not included here as it is not relevant. What we have concentrated on from them are their religious affiliations. What

57. Etherington 1979 pp120-122

we are concentrating on is not a political motivation of schism as they were thus motivated. Mgijima on the other side was motivated by the visions of the millennialism.

There are certain common factors from these leaders, Tile, Mokone, Mgijima and Dwane. All were initially Methodist. As they were all dissatisfied with the leadership of the Methodist Church, secessions, become the norm. They were all searching and yearning for African identity. They carried with them the newly founded churches, fresh aspects of religiosity. Methodist revivalism and evangelical fervour were obviously carried over. In the case of Mgijima, there is an additional element of visions which is lacking from the other three churches.

The politics of South Africa from the last quarter of the nineteenth century, when Tile, Mokone and Dwane came into the scene, to the early twentieth century when Mgijima emerged as the leader of the amaSirayeli, were the seed beds of secession. The mission churches were perceived by these leaders as carbon copies of the oppressive governments of the country.

It is interesting to note that the AME Church itself did not originate in South Africa, but was born in the United States. Founders of the AME church in America knew no other culture beside the American culture. Therefore, no matter how black the South African AME is, there is always the stigma that it is not of African origin.

We also noticed a parallel here with Mgijima's church, the amaSirayeli. Its origin was also in the United States. It was inevitable that a truly African church would be founded. Ancestor veneration, as mentioned, was not an American ecclesiological phenomenon. Apart from

the political seed bed which I discussed, there was the yearning for African spirituality, African organization and African administration of the church.

Because the amaSirayeli is a church that believes in visions and observes the Sabbath as Holy, let us carefully examine them in relation to other Sabbath keeping groups as seen by other church historians. The Sabbath keeping churches originate their doctrine from the Fourth Commandment in the book of Genesis chapter 20.

CHAPTER THREE

THE AMASIRAYELI IN RELATION TO OTHER SABBATH GROUPS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Having discussed the issue of missionaries and African traditional religion, it is appropriate to concentrate on the theology of the amaSirayeli. As the amaSirayeli are seen against the background of Sabbath Keeping groups, the principles that these churches embrace will be discussed. This chapter seeks to present a theoretical framework to describe the way in which the amaSirayeli emerged. In constructing such a framework, I will analyze the amaSirayeli's richest heritage and source of inspiration.

Without the knowledge of Biblical Israelites and the hope in Biblical Messiah, it is difficult to conceptualize the amaSirayeli's religion. I have chosen four key concepts of witness in order to lay a firm foundation for an appropriate understanding of the new and transformed life that Mgijima attempted to live. These concepts will be discussed later in this search for the amaSirayeli's affiliation and are as follows:

- i. Witness to God.
- ii. Witness to the covenant.
- iii. Witness to prayer.
- iv. Witness to the hope in the Messiah.

3.2 THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

'Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy. For six days you shall labour, and do all

your work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath for Yahweh your God; you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your servants, men or women, nor your animals, nor the stranger who lives with you; For in six days Yahweh made the heavens and the earth, and the sea, and all that these things hold, but on the seventh day he rested; that is why Yahweh has blessed the Sabbath day and made it sacred⁵⁸. The amaSirayeli believe very much in keeping the fourth commandment. In fact, they worship every part of it. This key aspect of their theology will be explicated in this chapter. The first four of the Ten Commandments determine the relationship of people to God. They are summarized by Jesus when he says: 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with your mind, and with all your strength⁵⁹. This is the greatest and the first commandment, so says Jesus.

Again, 1 John the Apostle, and Revelations⁶⁰, acknowledges God as the one true God and His Son Jesus Christ, whom He sent, as central to having eternal life. The fourth commandment, as an expression of honour to and love of God, is therefore, not an end in itself but shows obedience to Jesus and the Father. This commandment includes the entire system of all holy days to be upheld, e.g. that, of the New Moon.

Tithing, which relates to the feast of first-fruits, and the Covenant Harvest⁶¹ are also based on a system according to which the days are counted. The book of the Hebrews combines the New Moon and other feasts by saying that after the temple, the Jews had an altar from

58. Exod.20 :1ff

59. Ex. 20 :8-11 Jerusalem Bible (JB)

60. Rev 25:4

61. Mal 6 :1ff

which those who served in the Tent had no right to eat.

3.3 THE CHURCH'S INHERITANCE FROM ISRAEL

Both the *Daily Dispatch* and the *Daily Representative* described Mjijima as a false prophet, a charismatic yet a misguided visionary, a self-styled and a stubborn prophet. His church members have been referred to as religious fanatics, the law-breakers of Bulhoek, misguided people and crazy natives. Lea⁶² joined those who criticized the amaSirayeli by saying that they were a fanatical political-religious movement and 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.

However, Edgar⁶³ refers to Mjijima as the Watchman of Israel (*umlind'oSirayeli*), an ambassador of the last days (*unozakuzaku wokugqibela*) and a wise man (*inkintsela*). Focusing on the Seven Keys and the Ten Commandments, especially on the Fourth Commandment, it is made clear that Mjijima represented an alternative being-in-the-world to the Western Christian viewpoint.

My assumptions are that Mjijima emerged at a time when the African nation wanted a leader who would understand their culture. He came to his people as a last hope of freedom. Mjijima, proclaiming himself to be an Israelite, maintained that Israel's faith in Yahweh became firm because of Yahweh's saving deeds that were manifested in their history. Because he came to the amaSirayeli as their last hope of salvation, his followers

62. Lea 1926 pp226-227

63. Edgar 1977 p56

referred to him as an ambassador of the last days. The theological foundation of the amaSirayeli lies in the Seven Keys and the Ten Commandments which were given to them by Mgijima. Both rules function as Canonical rules for the life of the church and her people. The Seven Keys are referred to as the passage or the corridor that leads to God.

They are the foundation of the church and the plan of salvation. They not only define the identity of the amaSirayeli, but are also a guide to each member's behaviour, acting like a code of conduct. It is believed that the keys were first revealed to Crowdy. Ntloko argues that the Ark of the amaSirayeli was built as a result of the Seven Keys.

He rightly considers the Ten Commandments, the observance of the Sabbaths and the Holy Days as derived from the Fourth Commandment, which is found in the Bible. Members of the amaSirayeli share the belief that the Prophet Mgijima was raised up by God when the need arose to speak to his own people in their own language. Since he could be sympathetic towards their culture, he could bring them to God in a uniquely African way by revealing God's plan of salvation to them.

The name of their church is derived and basically rooted in 1 Corinthians 1:1-2. The amaSirayeli are claiming that the name of the church was given to Mgijima the prophet by God through a white sheet that was thrown down from Heaven. In any service that the amaSirayeli conduct, the Jewish tradition from the Old Testament supersedes the Christian tradition.

I can calculate from seventy-five per cent Jewish tradition to twenty-five per cent Christian tradition making an important combination to the theology of the amaSirayeli, which is why

they are considered as the first example of black Judaism in South Africa. The ecclesiological dimension of the amaSirayeli is the powerful foundation of the church's normative beliefs, principles and socio-religious practices.

Since Mgijima believed that black Israelites who have affiliated to the Church of God and Saints of Christ, had descended from the ten lost tribes of Israel, his emphasis comes as very important from the Ten Commandments. Literal adherence to the teachings of the Bible would constitute a positive guide to salvation. The amaSirayeli could then be the descendants of the Jewish people of the Old Testament, just as Christ taught that his church was the continuation of ancient Israel, and as such a further development of its social, cultural and religious values. The following four sub-themes of the amaSirayeli church are also important:

3.3.1. Witnesses to God

Mgijima's theology was not based on the sword and violence but on his sincere conviction that he was the mouthpiece and instrument of God. As a leader who was leading in times of sorrows and bondage, Mgijima was a spiritual instrument sent by God to rescue the amaSirayeli. Biblical Israelites were chosen and called by God not for their own sake, own glory or personal benefit, but to serve humankind by witnessing to God.

As the mouthpiece of God, this was Mgijima's message to the amaSirayeli. The concept of God in Israel was that He is one transcendent God, who is the only God. He reigns over the world. He is the source of all life, but also the end of all things, the Alpha and the Omega.

In paraphrased statement from Peter⁶⁴ speaking to the saints, he says God is holy and demands that His followers should attain holiness and perfection.

The discussion of the Seven Keys of Mgijima in chapter five will illustrate this fact. Therefore, Mgijima's people think of God as the Sovereign Master and as a loving Father who is always with them. It is important here to look at the difficult times of being a witness to God. Bishop Mzimkhulu⁶⁵ of the amaSirayeli, during the Bulhoek celebration made the following statement:

Beautiful Hebrews (MaHebere! amahle!!), meaning Black Jews, you did not arrive at this concept of God by way of abstraction, you came to know and understand God through the prophet Mgijima, through your own lives and the events of your own history.

He further emphasized that their mission was not without difficulties and failures. The 'heathens', as they call white people, were up in arms to destroy them. When Mgijima called his people to Ntabelanga, they were to wait for the destruction of the world. Those who were not God's people would be swept away by the wrath of God. So he further on referred them to the scriptural verse that says, *'Be holy, for the Lord your God is holy. By this scriptural verse Mgijima was teaching them about the lives which should be found in the hearts of each umSirayeli.'*

The context of this statement was the negotiations that took place with the government, which were constant temptations to the amaSirayeli to turn away from Yahweh. If the

64. 1 Peter 1 3-8

65. Bishop Mzimkhulu whilst being interviewed in Cape Town 2002.

amaSirayeli would have done that, then it was going to be an insult to God, because it would make God to be the topic of political bargaining, which lowered his status to the level of fallible and imperfect human beings.

Therefore, Mgijima wished to maintain the status of God and that of the amaSirayeli being witnesses him as an infallible Divine Being. This was evident during the negotiations with Colonel Truter.

3.3.2. Witnesses to the Covenant

It is undeniable that in the Bible God made a covenant with his people, first with Abraham and then through Moses with all the nations, as follows:

Israel, you shall be my people, and I shall be your God, Deut 6:4.

God's covenant was a pledge of his love to Israel. They were chosen from among the nations of the world so that they might serve in God's plan of saving the world. Similarly, as God intended to make Israel a priestly people, to be a bridge between God and other nations, so the amaSirayeli consider themselves as if they are in the same covenant, which requires the same solemn commitment.

The Seven Keys represent their faith in God, in that they are used to observe God's law with loving obedience. This is confirmed by the fact that at different tabernacles their faith is celebrated on every Sabbath. During the Passover festival, the Bishop, Evangelists and Elders bring sacrificial lambs to God on behalf of the amaSirayeli.

After the sacrifice, the faithful receive these offerings in the hope of uniting themselves with the gift that God has accepted. This would be done with prayer and supplication. Everything is done in haste.

The Ark of the Covenant that was brought back from the Albany Library (Grahamstown) on October 3, 1995, symbolizes their commitment. After seventy-four years of darkness, the Ark of the Covenant eventually entered tabernacle No 5 in Queenstown, with Bishop Mzimkhulu leading the amaSirayeli. As it was entering the tabernacle, the congregation was spiritually renewed and emotionally overwhelmed.

On delivering the Ark (*Ityeya yocebano*), Ntloko⁶⁶ urged that it should dominate the amaSirayeli's religious life and history. He further told the group of the amaSirayeli that the covenant was the key to God's plan of salvation and that one should witness the faithfulness of God through it. The Bishop, priests and the elders decided that the Ark should be kept pure and no words of disrespect were to be uttered against it.

3.3.3. Witnesses through Prayer

The amaSirayeli have a rich heritage in religious songs, psalms, liturgical prayers and blessings. Ecclesiologically, this is a wonderful treasure. Steeped in faith and in awareness of God, the amaSirayeli give expression to people's deepest and most varied feelings towards their Creator. Their form of conducting prayer is performed through witnessing.

66. Ntloko has been given a title of Grandfather Abraham at the Temple in Queenstown on the 12 -21 April 1986 by the Bishop JC Mzimkhulu. He is the one who introduced me to the Church of God and Saints of Christ. I take off my hat for him. The message comes from Bishop Shweni of the Queenstown Temple.

After an Elder or an Evangelist has completed his sermon, a deacon will be appointed to conduct a service of witness (*inkonzo yobungqina*). Mgijima taught his people to know the psalms off by heart and they are sung and recited, especially during the liturgy of the Word. All these actions serve as a reminder of the living hope in the saving Messiah. The amaSirayeli should be wholeheartedly religious and have irreproachable morals.

3.3.4. Witnesses to Hope in the Messiah

Prophet Mgijima called his people to Ntabelanga to wait for deliverance and for the Kingdom of God because he saw that his people were suffering and were being led to destruction and disaster under the government. They were invaded and reduced to slavery. They were taken into exile by means of being located to small camps and subjected to the farmers and missionaries.

When the amaSirayeli realized that God was with them their faith matured rapidly. One of the deep-rooted hopes that the amaSirayeli had, was the coming of the Messiah. They never lost that hope at Ntabelanga, not even during the massacre. They hoped for deliverance through God's final requital.

The amaSirayeli's exact identification with Israel can be observed on the Eve of the Passover when they slaughter and roast the sacrificial lamb. All the member families gather for this religious meal. The Bishop, as the father of the family, begins by giving thanks and blessings. He then relates the story of the Passover, and instructs the young people who ask their elders, why that night was different from all other nights?

These themes will be elaborated during the discussion of the Seven Keys. The formal theology of the amaSirayeli is primarily contained in these Keys and the Constitution. The Keys are as follows:

- i. the Church of God and Saints of Christ (1 Cor 1: 1-2).
- ii. wine is completely forbidden in the church of God (Lev 10: 9-10).
- iii. the Church will use unleavened bread and water for Christ's body and blood (Matt 26: 26- 28).
- iv. foot washing is a commandment given by Christ to his disciples (John 13)
- v. Jesus taught his disciples The Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6: 9-13).
- vi. one must be breathed upon with a Holy Kiss (John 20: 22).
- vii. the Ten Commandments are the true theological foundation (Exodus 20:-18).

Analyzing the deeper significance of these rules, one finds that they are intended to act like a church catechism. Readers of history will be reminded here of the catechisms of the sixteenth century reformation. The Keys are also intended to instruct people about what to believe and how to conduct their lives. These rules deal with subjects such as religion as a duty, hypocrisy, envy and jealousy, selfishness, repentance, foot washing, and the Disciple's Prayer. Another peculiar matter is that of members worshipping God in a Jewish way. When relating the history of their church, the amaSirayeli relate their experiences rather than offering a sequential account of historical data, facts and events. This message touches, convinces and liberates them from the bondage of oppression and heals them from illness and sin.

Every member gives testimonies about personal conversion and in public, witnessing during worship services, and in evangelistic outreaches. When these members, like Dokoda, Ntloko and Mbayi, give their testimonies, they always ensure that these have theological relevance for the present, although these were not written down but everyone gave his best.

The oral tradition given by the above church historians is handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation down the line. Their thought patterns are shaped by their oral heritage. These memories are faithful repositories that contain past human experience and also explain the how and the why of its present conditions for the church.

Mzimkhulu explains that this oral tradition is not only spoken, but also sung through hymns. Members of the church understand the Bible literally. During Sunday school, the Bible is thoroughly worked through - every verse, after which an audible response of Amen follows from all. Children are taught from a very young age some verses and stories about their church's existence.

The scriptural reason for this is that Moses included everybody and their animals when asked by Pharaoh about those who would be left behind. He emphasized that every Israelite will go and be with their Lord and Master. Therefore, the march that takes place after the service of the amaSirayeli illustrates practically what Moses told Pharaoh.

3.4 THE GROWTH OF UNITARIANISM

This section considers the historical issue of the Sabbath organizations. These groups

were formally adopted into Unitarianism in 1638⁶⁷. In contrast to the orthodox doctrine of God's triune nature, Unitarianism acknowledges a single personality of the Deity. As a result of their Unitarianism and not for their Sabbath, the Hungarian churches that embraced this belief were persecuted for two centuries and their properties were confiscated.

Francis David, from the book of Lea⁶⁸ one of the staunch members of the Sabbath churches would not compromise his faith and chose to die in prison. Even though he was a Socinus, himself a Unitarian, David tried to persuade him to modify his rigid views to save his life. It is said that he was denied the status of a church membership when even the Jews were granted such status. He, therefore, wrote his sermons out by hand in chain letter style.

The Inquisition was ruthless in its suppression of this system and, in the west Sabbath alone was enough for him and other to be executed. At the beginning of the twentieth century the Sabbath members had 140 churches. A book of hymns that appeared in 1865 made no provision for the worship of Christ. True and faithful remnants of Unitarian churches are Sabbath members. Such remnants in a way resemble the amaSirayeli who survived the Bulhoek Massacre in 1921.

Those that keep the Sabbath recognize the Sabbath days and the Holy days, such as Passover, Pentecost, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of the Tabernacles, the Last Great Day and the New Moons as important days. The Feast of Trumpets, however, is not listed separately in the hymnal. Their doctrine encompasses the physical Millennium of

67. Lea, 1928 p350

68. Ibid, 1928 pp355-356

1,000 years at the beginning of which Christ will return and gather together Judah and Israel.

There will be two resurrections, one to eternal life at Christ's coming and another to judgement by the end of the Millennium. Salvation is by grace but the laws still need to be kept. God calls people because the world in general is blind. Adult baptism is practised. Their doctrine of baptism is absolutely subordinationist Unitarian, much like the early Sabbath Church. Therefore, for the Sabbath Keepers everybody is expected to keep the Sabbath simply by worshipping the One True God.

3.5 NATIVISTIC MOVEMENTS

The lack of indigenous leadership led to the failure of the African church to grow as it was supposed to do and also to the rise of Nativistic movements. The specific nature and characteristics of any Nativistic movement depend largely on the local circumstances, but the main types seem to be responses to the intensity of the frustration and pressures which beset the people.

In many parts of Africa people experienced a socio-religious breakdown of their older patterns of life, which became evident during Mjijima's era. A parallel incident that can be recalled from the history occurred in the West of the USA where Indians were evicted from their land. Wynia⁶⁹, remarks that the West Indians had introduced a ritual called the Ghost Dance.

69. Wynia, 1994 p140

According to this ritual they had been promised the return of the ghosts of their ancestors as allies in the forthcoming fight to rid the community of the white man. As with Mgijima's followers, tradition says that Africans were promised miraculous immunity to the white man's bullets and a resultant relocation of the land to the original owners. As in Ntabelanga, West Indians were promised a better life than ever before.

There was a certain moral obligation to this ritual because many of their leaders insisted that they were suffering because they had departed from the teachings of their fathers and had been corrupted by the white man's ways.

In the same manner, during the unveiling of the late Mrs. Mpondwana's tombstone, Dokoda reprimanded his congregation for not strictly adhering to the teachings of Mgijima and for not obeying the Seven Keys and the Ten Commandments which were the cornerstone of the church (*ziyinkasayiya*).

Dokoda called upon his people to return to the teachings of the prophet. More or less like the Mgijima movement which experienced the Massacre, the Ghost Dance ritual was doomed from the beginning, but to the West Indians it would be the only possible way of escape.

In this regard Mgijima provided a millennial hope of success and an opiate by which people could 'escape from it all'. Developments and movements such as these mentioned here are almost always very short lived. Some of their goals are negative since the people attempt to turn history back and others offer meagre rewards that simply do not

compensate for the enormous effort.

After Mgijima was excommunicated from the Church of God and Saints of Christ, because of his notorious visions, a society that was in the process of introducing changes was formed. New social groupings took place and there was recognition of unmet needs. The history of change in any society never consists of steady upward progress, but also reflects several stages in the process of renewal. After his excommunication, renewal was necessary to cope with the many challenges inside and outside the movement. Futile efforts of survival were eventually made, and came to a head in the valley of Ntabelanga.

Lea⁷⁰, believes that, the rise of a movement may be brought about by a church leader or leaders who find it intolerable in the other body, or who refuse to conform to its discipline, or who have been disciplined by the church, or who want to satisfy their personal ambitions, or desire to administer church property and money, or to form a tribal church with African customs, or as a result of discrimination by white missionaries, or as a result of a need to have official status and become free from white control in ecclesiastical and political life.

Lea further named the following churches as some of the leading secessionist churches, many of them are rooted from the Methodist Church:

- i. The Mount Hermon Church
- ii. The Thembu Church, 1884, founded by Revs. Nehemiah X. Tile and Jonas Goduka

70. Lea 1928 pp127-128

- iii. The Ethiopian Church, 1892, founded by Rev Mangena M. Mokone
- iv. The African Methodist Episcopal Church, 1896, founded by Rev James Mata Dwane
- v. The African Christian Union (Natal), 1986, founded by Rev Joseph Booth
- vi. The Zulu Congregational Church, 1896-1897
- vii. The African / Bantu Presbyterian Church, 1898, founded by Rev P Mzimba
- viii. The African Coloured Baptists, 1899-1901, founded by Rev C S. Morris
- ix. The Order of Ethiopia, 1900, founded by Rev James M Dwane (Provincial)
- x. The Independent Wesleyan Church, 1900, founded by Rev Joel Msimang
- xi. The Church of Christ, 1910, founded by Klaas Oliphant, Charles Sigxabhayi and James N. Limba
- xii. The African Congregational Church, 1917, founded by Rev CB Mvuyana
- xiii. The Bantu Methodist Church (Donkey Church), 1933, founded by Rev JH Hlongwane
- xiv. The Transkei Methodist Church, 1978, founded by Rev de Waal Mahlasela
- xv. The Church of God and Saints of Christ in South Africa 1914, founded by EJ Mjijima

This list is not conclusive. It shows that the Methodist Church of Southern Africa has many men and women who are not only theologically trained but who could also go out and plant new churches, an outreach that deserves encouragement. The perception that secessions were simply owing to a desire to lead is one sided.

An interest for the spread of the gospel was another factor. They were motivated by a true concern to share the Spirit of Christ with other Africans. I fully concur with Professor DDT Jabavu when he observed that the formation of the independent churches was often an attempt by the natives to express themselves and not necessarily an act of antagonism toward the white churches. It is clear that there was no separation on doctrinal grounds.

However, true that black people were sick and tired of being led by white missionaries. They wanted to manage their own affairs. Black ministers had the ability to lead and it only needed to be developed. This ability was never recognized by the whites. Rev Joel Msimang left the church because he was transferred to a malaria-infested place in Mozambique while his children were still small. The church made no attempt to replace Msimang there.

Sometimes an older black minister would be placed under a young, uninformed white superintendent or a white missionary who had no sympathy with black ministers or did not know how to control the church. Ministers from other churches would laugh at such black leaders calling them 'the boys of the white *bafundisi*'.

Following other historians such as Durkheim⁷¹ he remarks 'religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, beliefs and practices which unite into a single moral community called a church'. Beliefs concern the shared ideas that explain the nature of things that religion defines as sacred. By using indigenous hymns as sacred praises of God, Mgijima and his people became a singing church in an appealing, vibrant new style.

In the church of Mgijima, the customs of men shaving their heads and carrying imisimbithi, which represent the stick of Moses, can be regarded as rituals. One symbolic action is that the bishop, elders or evangelists, when reading the Bible, at the end of each verse pronounced an Amen; then follow the congregation with a loud voice also saying Amen, up

71. Durkheim, 1950 p47

to the last verse of the scriptural reading.

My study research shows that the congregation of the amaSirayeli is the only one I know which does this. Another ritual that is distinctive of the amaSirayeli is their singing. The 'shepherd' would wave his stick. The stick has seven colourful ribbons that represent different lifestyles and the presence of the bishop in the church. The colours are as follows white, blue, green, purple, brown, yellow and red. The shepherd always walks in front singing with the choir.

3.6 THE DISPENSATIONALISTS AND MGIJIMA AS A VISIONARY

3.6.1. Who are the Dispensationalists?

One should start by defining the term dispensationalists. The sect of people believed themselves to be the true sons of Abraham and Jacob, and of the Biblical Jews. They claim to be the true owners of the Promised Land. They accept the New Covenant, and set aside the Passover and synagogue for something better. The book of the Romans 9:6 teaches us that there are two kinds of Israelites. There is the ethnic, physical, national Israel *and* the true spiritual Israel, God's chosen people.

Despite Christ's ultimate sacrifice as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, dispensationalism teaches that the sacrificial system will be re-instituted. Mgiijima's thinking stems from the dispensationalists. As in the case with the doctrine of Christian Identity, the fundamental presupposition is that the Israel of God can be identified as a temporal nation. According to the prophets, one kingdom of God was predicted. There was

also one kingdom that began at Pentecost and would be brought to its fullness at the Parousia. But after Jesus, Paul writes that both Israel and Gentiles now worship God together in Spirit for there is neither Jew nor Gentile; all are one in Christ. They do this as united children of God, made one fold through the death and life of Christ. Like Mgijima, dispensationalism claims to depend upon a literalist approach to Scripture.

Dispensationalism teaches that the nation of Israel is still waiting for its kingdom and King, as well as for the reception of the inheritance of the Abrahamic Covenant, similar to what Mgijima asked his followers to come and do at Ntabelanga. The major technique of dispensationalism is that it uses a literal way of Bible interpretation (a hermeneutic).

The problem for dispensationalist scholars is that no one is a strict literalist when it comes to Bible interpretation. Since no one is a strict literalist, again nobody can define what 'consistent literalism really is. Dispensationalists take the following passages from the scriptures literally, which describe Heaven and preparedness.

- i. very soon now, I shall be with you again, Happy are those who treasure the prophetic message of this book. (Rev 22:7).
- ii. the ban will be lifted. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in its place in the city; his servants will worship him. (Rev 22:3)
- iii. nowhere, did Paul ever indicate that he was preaching a Gentile aspect of the Abrahamic promise or that the church was a bracket age after which the things promised to Israel would be fulfilled.
- iv. we do not glorify God through a carnal interpretation of the patriarchal promises.

v. if Christ has not completely fulfilled the prophetic aspect of the red heifer sacrifice the old law is still in effect. If he has fulfilled the prophetic element of that offering the old law has passed, and death has been abolished.

When one reads the last three passages, one will find that all are interpreted literally in some respects and symbolically in other respects by the dispensationalists. In the light of the whole context of redemptive history, it is evident that one must not isolate 1 Corinthians 15 from the entire biblical expectation of Israel and her hopes of the resurrection.

God certainly did fulfill all that He promised concerning the land, and neither the entire chapter of Revelation 20, nor any of the Old Testament prophets have one word to say about a thousand year reign in Palestine during a future millennium.

Since those, and only those, who accept the gospel and profess their faith in Christ are entitled to be called members of His Church, the connection between the kingdom and the Church must obviously be quite close. At the same time, John in the Island of Patmos was full of joy in knowing that the New Jerusalem was now safe with her Husband-to-be (Bridegroom).

Why would there be any reason for Jerusalem to be joyful in a betrothal that would not be consummated for thousands of years to come? Implicit in John's announcement is that, his joy was fulfilled in hearing the voice of the Bridegroom, and the manifest indication that the Husband was near.

The expectations of the 21st century people have changed from those of the first century

Jews. What is interesting is that the amaSirayeli during the era of Mgijima were hopeful of receiving the physical kingdom that the first century Jews had not received.

However, the words of Jesus still ring true, my kingdom is not of this world and the kingdom is within you. The root-cause of the problem of Mgijima and his congregations during that time was their failure to understand the difference, between the physical and the spiritual.

The Rapture, instead of being a Scriptural fact, is a man made fiction. In fact, it is one of the Jewish fables of which Paul warns us in Titus 1:14 do not give heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn away from the truth. The amaSirayeli, as followers of the Black Messiah, still today stress the wholeness of life.

In view of the laws of the state, the doctrine of the church should be respected. An African philosophy was not well developed in Mgijima's mind. To him the major issue was the end of time, as it became clear when one considered that he summoned his followers to encamp at Ntabelanga.

If Mgijima had been obsessed with the idea that Africa should be for Africans, he could have easily joined other African leaders, but his followers believed that real change and true justice could only come from below - thus from the church. Again as a prophet, Mgijima was careful that his people should not go against the Word of God.

He emphasized evangelism and revival meetings for church growth. To his people, he became the watchman of Israel (*Umlind'oSirayeli*). He was regarded as Moses, the liberator. This expectation and the personal expectations of Mgijima not only influenced his

ministry, but also the course that would be taken against Truter.

Like Moses, Mgijima understood himself to be the prophet of God. He was a servant in Jacob's tradition. As a Black Moses, he was the bearer of God's laws. Mgijima taught his people to keep the tradition of the Seven Keys and the Ten Commandments.

Mgijima warned his people against the Anti-Christ, who would destroy their religious heritage. He encouraged them to read and acquaint themselves with the Bible before it was very late. To him it was a joy to share burdens and build some sense of community. This deepened his appreciation for the Christian tradition taught in his church.

The theology of Mgijima is not much different from that of the dispensationalists. I cannot over emphasize that they are literalists. His millennial visions began while he was still a member of the Wesleyan Church. His followers are known as a millennial sectarian church. They have been and are still peacefully waiting for the end of the world, according to the visions of their leader.

The authorities, who did not understand the millennial visions, accused his followers of being religious fanatics. One of the visions concerned the approach of the end of time as Mgijima foretold in April 9, 1907. It is said that Mgijima was hunting in the forest when he had this vision. Like Nongqawuse⁷², the daughter of Mhlakaza who saw a vision in 1856 whilst fetching water from the river, so was Mgijima.

72. Elliot, 1982 p13.

It is believed that an Angel approached Mgijima and explained to him that war was coming soon. Indeed World War 1 took place between the years 1914 and 1918. The Angel of Mgijima explained that nothing would be spared, save those who were following the name of God⁷³. Mgijima firmly believed in his visions; other vision's after 1914, were as follows:

- i. he saw a huge stone rolling down from the mountain, crushing people at its foot.
- ii. there were two white goats fighting, and a watching baboon came and intervened and eventually defeated them.

Mgijima's interpretation of the second vision concerning the two goats is as follows: The two goats represented two groups in a particular church fighting one another for leadership and the baboon represented a black man trying to separate them.

This vision of a violent, disruptive end of the world alarmed the whole church, not only the mother church in USA but also that in South Africa. Mgijima was aware that his mother church, the Methodist Church, could not tolerate his visionary dreams so he left. Crowdy was so concerned about Mgijima's visions in that he accused him as being directed at him (Crowdy).

All of Mgijima's visionaries became a thorn in the flesh of his church authorities. They demanded that he should not share his dreams with anybody in the church any longer. This was hard for Crowdy and Mgijima. Crowdy told Mgijima that he would be expelled if he continued to have such dreams.

73. Makobe, 1996 p25, vol 26 (1)

As visionary dreams were not of his making, he kept on dreaming and the authorities eventually excommunicated him. Crowdy eventually called on Mgijima to renounce his vision, but Mgijima refused. Mgijima was also later excommunicated from the Church of God and Saints of Christ in America.

Having been excommunicated, Mgijima felt that he could not completely leave the Church of God and Saints of Christ in South Africa. It is well known that, Mgijima was disappointment of not achieving a leadership position in the Wesleyan Church, due to his excommunication from the Church of God and Saints of Christ of America.

As it is common practice that when the mother church does not meet the needs of the congregants or does not approve certain individuals in the congregation, a breakaway is likely to take place. Mgijima was not left without followers. His present followers are proud to say, *and God revealed a man from the East by the name of Enoch J Mgijima saying to people, you are worshipping God but in trickery, get out of tricks because God will judge this land with fire.*

While Mgijima was preaching amongst his people, the new church of the amaSirayeli slowly emerged, demanding a great change in lifestyle. So, it came about that the church of the amaSirayeli was founded by Enoch J Mgijima in 1909. He is commonly known as prophet Mgijima and '*Umlind'oSirayeli*'(the Watchman of Israel). The relationship which he had with local white officials and missionaries, outside his property, cast shadows of doubt on land affairs and church doctrines .

As Mgijima was the last hope of his people, he could not stand aloof and be loyal to the

government at the expense of his people. As the shepherd of his flock, Mgijima allocated his piece of land to building a tent of gathering, commonly known as *intente yeNtlangano*.

He received a revelation in a dream which he felt commanded him to plant a church named the Church of God and Saints of Christ. Because of what he had been shown in his dream, prophet Mgijima persuaded Elder Matshaka to baptize him, after which he began preaching and evangelizing.

Later in 1912, Mgijima baptized a large crowd of converts on the banks of the Black River, near Ntabelanga. He baptized them under the banner of the Church of God and Saints of Christ, and they started to be recognized as the amaSirayeli. Tradition says that they came from the Wesleyan, Presbyterian and the Moravian churches in the area.

Tradition says that Mgijima, as the newly appointed leader by his people and God, he appealed to his disadvantaged fellow-members to begin as a society of committed converts in their struggle against idol worship. Usually, such leaders are belittled and described as heretics. Sometimes a church is only organized after the death of a charismatic founder and leader.

When the new leaders are faced with administering a rapidly growing organization, then the people will not only join out of conviction or dissatisfaction with society, but out of love. Some leaders may improve their economic position at this point. This happens when the wealthier members begin to play prominent internal roles in their church affairs.

3.7 NAMES OF GOD FOUND BETWEEN AFRICAN RELIGIONS

As mentioned earlier on about the power of language, Africa has many races which are divided by languages and cultures. The language is a strong bond that binds the clans together and forces them not to be separated. This fascinates the African religions in extending a tight bond.

Starting from the sixteen century, the Bushmen and Hottentots lived in Southern Africa. They were the original inhabitants of the land when the first Europeans arrived in the Cape. Today the true Bushmen, known as Khoisan, are restricted to the Kalahari Desert and Namibia.

Modern Bushmen pray to celestial spirits and tell myths and legends about them. They pay special attention to the moon, which comes into their speculations about the origins of death, a common African preoccupation. The Hottentots have largely become Christian and most of their ancient religious beliefs have disappeared, so much so that it was once thought that they had no former religion. Their ancient gods appear to have been a mingling of natural forces and ancestral spirits.

God is experienced as the good parent, the grandparent, *Qamata*, a source of loving-kindness and protection. Some say that *Qamata* is father, while others say *Qamata* is mother, but the sentiment is the same: human beings experience closeness to God which they describe in terms of motherhood and fatherhood. There was never any need to debate the existence of God. Mbiti points out that African people are notoriously religious; according to him each group has its own religious foundation. The challenge to this

statement is to always discern God at work, and people would look and listen to God conversing with His creatures. Mbiti is sure that Africans know God. The spirit has dominated their lives and therefore, God has not been a stranger to African people.

For Mbiti, to notice that Africans are notoriously religious or are religious fanatics because of their own ways of worshipping God, caused Smuts to insinuate Mgijima and his followers. This shows the difference in cultures from ethnic groups. It is a fact that Smuts could not approve Mgijima's worship styles as a black man.

Does God take sides? If so, whose side is God on, and why? An African experience of God is that ultimately God is on the side of the weak and the side of justice. No one can explain God. No single hand can cover the eye of God and so Africans grant a plurality of approaches to God and experiences of God.

Experiences of God vary according to the circumstances surrounding people's daily lives. To illustrate this, we will review some contemporary scenes that indicate shifts in the language about God that correspond to changed situations. People believe that all the good and well-being they enjoy come from God and that if one is not yet enjoying such well-being; it is because one's time has not yet come.

This is illustrated by the fact that African traditional religion holds that the world and nature are good gifts that God entrusted to human beings. They provide nourishment for life, security and home for our bodies. An experience of God as beneficent does not only come from Muslim or Christian, but is also a living faith of Africans that has been reinforced by African Christian leaders.

In East Africa a common name for the Supreme Being is *Mulungu*, a word of unknown origin, but indicating the Almighty and Ever Present Creator. Thunder is said to be his voice and the lightning his power. He rewards the good and punishes the wicked. The immediacy of God for Africans is also demonstrated through God-related names which are given, such as theophoric names like *Sipho* (gift of God) and *Xolile* (Peace of God).

From the Northern Kalahari through Congo to Tanzania, the name Leza is used, perhaps from a root meaning 'to cherish'. Leza is named thus because he is the one who watches over people and provides for the needy and besets the wayward. Leza is said to live in heaven, and humans pray rain to him, but finally he is transcendent and incomprehensible.

Coming back to the names attributed to God, we find out that in names we encounter the African ontology that is centred on God who is the source of life and cohesion, whose sovereignty over all cannot be questioned. We experience blessings when ideals like unity, community, caring, faithfulness, excellence and steadfastness abound among human beings, for in these we experience God.

Different ethnic groups attribute different names to God. Each name attributed to God describes a certain realized action. Here are some of the attributes of God: Mvelinqangi (the First Offshoot); Qamata; Nkulunkulu (the Great One); Molimo; Hhosi (The Lord); Kalunga (from Angola and Namibia); Ondo (from Nigeria); Mwari (from Zimbabwe); Chilenga (from Zambia); Bore-Bore (from Ghana); Magano (from Ethiopia); Haragakiza (God is the Saviour - from Burundi); UNkurunkuru (The Greatest of the Great - from Malawi).

Another divine name of God is Nyambe, perhaps from a root indicating power, and used from Botswana to Cameroon. A similar name is used in West Africa alongside other divine names such as Ngewo, the God of the Mende people of Sierra Leone, Amma of the Dogon of Mali, Mawu of the Ewe of Abomey, Olorun of the Yoruba and Chukwu of the Ibo and Soko of the Nupe, all of Nigeria. In this regard, I would like to mention specifically a group of the Sabbath community called the Rusape community, to be discussed in 3.9, originally from Zimbabwe, because of their similarities to the amaSirayeli.

The Seventh Day Adventist Movements, as they are normally known, were predominantly and officially Unitarian until 1931 on the death of Uriah Smith. Their official adoption as the Sabbath Movements stemmed from Global Ministries. Other Adventist movements were the Evangelical Adventists and the Advent Christians.

The Christian Connection was Unitarian to which Ellen G White⁷⁴ with her husband James White, belonged. They eventually joined with others to become the United Church of Christ. White was allegedly among the first to introduce the Trinitarian concepts to Seventh Day Adventism.

Andreasenn⁷⁵, who was a co-author with White, pointed out that the Trinitarian concept could have been the result of an editing error but, in spite of the opinions held by the elders of the church, he later confirmed that it was not. These concepts were unedited for some

74. White 1948 pp30-60

75. *ibid*, 1948 p40

time until other Adventist schools of thought emerged.

Their doctrines were more biblical than those of what later became the Unitarian Universalist Church. Durkheim believes that this church bears no real relationship to the Unitarian subordinationist doctrines of the Sabbath churches.

Lastly, another interesting similarity is between the Church of God and Saints of Christ and the Seventh Day Adventist church. Both observe the Jewish Sabbath meaning that they both have and believe to the same doctrinal teachings. This reminds us of an impact of Judaism on the religiosity of the amaSirayeli.

3.8 COMPARISON BETWEEN ANABAPTISTS AND THE AMASIRAYELI

It is fitting that we look at the Anabaptist organization and find out as to what commonalities if any, are there with the amaSirayeli. According to Latourette⁷⁶, Anabaptists (rebaptizers) traced their Spiritual descent from some of the Christian groups in the middle Ages. They were humble folk, and they attempted to reproduce what they believed to be the simplicity and the thoroughgoing commitment of life to the Christian ideals. They wanted to restore the pattern of the early church as much as possible.

They regarded the time of the martyrs as more representative of what the church ought to be. Carson⁷⁷ has characterized the Anabaptist position as resting on a pessimistic view of the world and an optimistic view of the church. According to them, the world will always

76. Latourette, 1980 p383 vol 3

77. Carson, 1981 pp92-93

be the partner of the flesh and the devil, but the church must walk another road and must exemplify within its fellowship the life and the death of Jesus Christ.

It must be a community of the saints whose members aspire to perfection and strive more effectively. They specifically taught that a true church is a voluntary congregation of believers. Such a believer should experience the new birth from within.

Mgijima likewise introduced this concept of new birth into the Christian life of his members wherever he was preaching. He believed he was also directly guided by the Spirit of God. Latourette pointed out that Anabaptists were responsible to God for their own conduct and must not be coerced .

There is an interesting parallel between the ecclesiology of the Anabaptists of the 16th century and that of the amaSirayeli, although it does not mean that every aspect is comparable. Anabaptists hold that churches should be made up only of those who have the experience of redemption. Christians with such experience have direct access to God and should have equal rights in the church.

While Anabaptists reject celibate monasticism, they call for the same complete surrender that the monastery demands. Having noticed what aspired the Anabaptist, it is therefore appropriate to have a scanned view at the Scriptural foundation of the Seven Keys. A more detailed coverage of the Seven Keys and the Ten Commandments will follow in chapter five. The following is just an introduction:

- i. *Abstinence from wine and strong drink:* Wine is a mockery, strong drink is raging

and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise, Lev: 10:9-10.

ii. *Keeping the Sabbath:* Gen 2:2; Ex. 20:8-10; Luke 4:6; 23: 25-54; Matt 28:1.

iii. *Blessing of food and the recognition of only unleavened bread and water as the symbols of Christ's body and blood:* Saying Amen: Blessing, glory, wisdom and thanksgiving; honour, power and might be unto our Lord God for ever and ever. Amen' Rev 7:12; Matt 26:26-28.

iv. *Washing of feet:* This is done when receiving new members or members from other churches who are visiting, John 13:1-23.

v. *Praying three times a day:* Ps.55:17. The Lord's Prayer is used to conclude every session where prayers and worship have been conducted by an elder, an evangelist or the Bishop, Matt 6:9-13.

vi. *The holy kiss:* This is a greeting and a symbol of accepting the power of the Holy Spirit, Rom. 16: 6; John 20:22. The beautiful *Capella*-sound of the choir echoes the lyrics of songs composed by the church's blessed composers, who were inspired by the poetry of Psalms. Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye ands, sing forth the honour of his name; make his praise glorious, Ps. 66: 1-2.

vii. *The Ten Commandments:* Ex. 20: 1-18. Abib (April) is observed as the first month of the year, Ex. 12:2; 13:4. The month is remembered for the deliverance of the Children of Israel out of Egypt, from the bondage of Pharaoh.

viii. When members greet one another they will say: All Hail Oh! Israelite (*Bota MSirayeli*). After every verse of scripture that is read in the church an Amen is pronounced by all. For each of the key elements of Crowdy's church, there is a Bible verse that amplifies its meaning.

Both Crowdy and Mgijima passed their mantles of leadership to Plummer and Silwane Nkopo respectively. They were given the titles of the Grandfather Abraham. Both had the executive council consisting of twelve ordained evangelists and elders who comprise the top hierarchy of the church. The ministry of the church is carried out by Bishops, evangelists and elders. The church of Crowdy known as the Church of God and Saints of Christ in America enjoys substantial support and recognition in America. When Crowdy died in 1908, his church had about fifty-eight branches in the United States of America and twelve branches in South Africa.

History tells us that before Crowdy died, he had targeted South Africa as a mission field, but the government of the day denied him a visa to visit the country. Although he was not allowed to come, the missionary work could not be stopped. He sent one of his members, Albert Christian⁷⁸, who was a sailor and a former African-American Baptist missionary, to plant a church in Port Elizabeth. When Christian stepped on South African soil, a crowd that had long awaited him welcomed him. He managed to plant some mission churches in the Eastern Cape and in the Transvaal (now Gauteng) in 1903. As far as is known, Christian did not meet Mgijima. Mgijima was at the time still a staunch member of the Wesleyan Methodist Church.

When Christian's term of mission work came to an end in 1905, he returned to America. When he left the country, there was no one to lead the Church of God. Nobody, according to him, would be worthy of the title of Bishop. John Msikinya, however, later assumed the role of leadership.

78. The name of Albert Christian was brought to me by Matshaka during an interview in the Bulhoek Passover of 24th May 2001

3.9 RUSAPE COMMUNITY OF ZIMBABWE⁷⁹

In Zimbabwe, as in South Africa, there is a congregation of the Church of God and Saints of Christ known as the Rusape. This congregation is a community based on Judaism. Their Chief overseer is Ambrose Makuwaza, recognized as a powerful man in his mid-70s. The community's primary tabernacle is perched on the side of a rolling, green mountain overlooking the sprawling lake that bounds the village.

The more than one hundred Jews of Rusape pack the tiny building every Sabbath to practice their own form of spiritual Judaism. The Rusape community practices prophetic Judaism, meaning that the community believes that while Jesus was not the Messiah, he was certainly a prophet, as was the Reverend William S. Crowdy who inspired the community's current embrace of Judaism.

Despite this difference, Western Jews would readily identify with the community's holidays (*Shabbat to Yom Kippur, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Succot, etc*), its prayer services (primarily read in English, patterned after the Rabbinical prayer service that Jews use throughout the Western world), and its daily observances, such as *kashrut*.

The community also practices some rituals according to the customs of their neighbours, such as circumcision, which the local Muslims also do. The Rusape congregation is connected with the prophetic congregation Beth El from Northern Virginia, and has developed its culture of observance based at least in part upon the branches of American Southern Baptist-inspired roots.

79. Information found from internet: www.churchofgod1896.org

This convergence of African, American and Ancient Hebrew culture comes together in the magnificent synagogue choir, almost forty congregants strong, which fills each service with joyous, moving prayers in Shona, Hebrew and English set to beautiful African melodies.

Cohen Makuwaza's sermons insist that while the community respects the teachings of Jesus, Jesus was, in fact a Jew, who followed ancient Jewish rituals and was a dedicated member of the Jewish community.

The Rusape Jews believe that their local Shona tradition and culture comes from the same ancient Hebrew community, and that their ancestors brought Judaism from the Promised Land southward over a thousand year trek along the eastern coast of Africa. To the Rusape community, there is little difference between ancient African observance and ancient Jewish culture. Today they struggle to live both to the fullest. This community I can recommend to any researcher who might need to learn something about it.

3.10 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have explored how the God of Israel began to teach his people through Moses and the Ten Commandments. I briefly looked at the approach used by Moses to teach the Israelites the ways and means of observing and revering the Sabbath Day. The amaSirayeli similarly embrace the teachings of Jacob who was an Israelite.

During the era of Mjijima, the amaSirayeli had to live a life of resistance, which forced them to hold on to the new style of worshipping God that was different from the masses of their community. The Sabbath keeping groups have been informal because the amaSirayeli fall

under this group.

Mgijima, the leader and founder of the had been and instrument that showed skills in driving the church to where it is now. The choir which showed us that besides it, the church cannot function without it came out clearly. It was clear also that, amaSirayeli like other churches believe in God and have different names attributed to God.

In chapter four we shall see how Enoch J Mgijima, transmitted his new prophecy, visions and dreams to a big community. Again we will be looking at one of the outstanding figures in the community of Mgijima was chief Kama, who together with Rev Shepstone, the missionary, became the icon of one of the Queenstown locations, known as Kamastone.

We will look at the role played by Kama in Mgijima's life in the next chapter, which will also study the theological visions of Mgijima. We will examine the meaning of such dreams and visions that caused the amaSirayeli to be adamant about their beliefs even to the extent of dying for them. We will examine the indelible teaching that Mgijima put in the minds of his followers.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE AMASIRAYELI'S IDENTITY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the role played first of all by the prophets of Israel and then by Chief Kama and Rev Shepstone. These were the two outstanding civilian and spiritual leaders that featured most in the church of the amaSirayeli. The name of the Ntabelanga mission field is derived from the names of these two leaders.

Reference will be made to two outstanding prophets and founders of the Church of God and Saints of Christ, namely prophet Crowdy from the United States of America and Prophet Mgijima from South Africa. Both had similar visionary dreams and even their church doctrines known as the Seven Keys from heaven were similar. I will also deal with the theology of the land of Kamastone and the leadership of the amaSirayeli, their visions and the issue of encirclement.

4.2 PROPHETIC MESSAGES DURING THE PERIOD OF ISRAEL

Freedman⁸⁰ believes that prophets were men whom God raised up during the dark days of the Israelites. Sundkler⁸¹ also agrees and says that modern pastors are preachers and priests as well as prophets; however, an ancient prophet was neither a priest nor a pastor. The prophets were always Hebrews, and their message was the word of life for Israel. In prophesying about the ruin of a kingdom as a punishment from God, they would appeal directly and indirectly to traditional norms of understanding and behaviour. They would speak fearlessly to the kings who were the rulers of the day and would assist the people who were their subjects. While indicating their sins and failures, the prophets would proclaim, thus says the Lord. Their chief duties were to deal with the moral and religious issues of the people of their time.

As ambassadors of God, prophets were never sent to destroy, but warn the nation to obey God. They were also sent to interpret God's mind in some situations. There was nothing general about the prophet's denunciations. The prophet would expose the cold formalism of the religion of the time and constantly remind the people that Jehovah was the only true God.

Likewise, the prophet spoke not only of the judgement that would come to pass, but was also a fore-teller of future events. Other people were only mentioned when they came into contact with Israel. The following are examples of prophecies:

- i. The dispersion and captivity of God's chosen people.
- ii. The coming of the Messiah and his reign over the whole earth.

80. Freedman, undated px

81. Sundkler, 1961 p15

- iii. The restoration of the chosen people to their own land after the coming of the Messiah.

There are times when we are told about the final collapse of God's people nevertheless, God reveals that the end of the world will not be the end of His plans. There would yet be a glorious future when the Prince of Peace reigns over his people, from sea to sea and from the river Euphrates to the ends of the earth (Psalm 72:8). Prophets, like Mjijima, addressed a community of believers. Prophets would take for granted that their audience shared their basic understanding of God and their religious traditions. This was no problem for Mjijima.

Now prophets of the Bible were deeply aware of the nearness of God and of God's personal claim upon them. Like them, the experience of intimate encounter with God was the foundation of Mjijima's mission and the presupposition of his message.

The community of Mjijima, which was a church on a journey, was changing politically though not religiously. A logical question, to be discussed shortly, would be whether Mjijima was a prophet or not.

4.3 CHIEF WILLIAM KAMA (1798 -1875)

Kama was the chief of the Gqunukwebe tribe, which was located west of the Buffalo River in the Eastern Province. He was the first chief to publicly acknowledge that he was a Christian. He was the second son of Chungwa, who was killed in a skirmish with the Boers in the early years of the eighteenth century.

It is said that the Gqunukwebe were not of the Xhosa royal house, but were descended from a commoner. Tradition says that Kama was born at the time that Van der Kemp unsuccessfully attempted to establish mission work among the Xhosa, later from, 1821, Rev. William Shaw of the Wesleyan Methodists attempted to establish mission stations in the Eastern Cape.

In 1824 Henry Somerset, Commandant of Kaffraria, arranged a meeting so that Shaw could meet various chiefs, such as Ndlambe, Dushane, Mqhayi, Ntsikana, Phato and Kama⁸². Kama was the brother of Chief Phato and second in power in the tribe.

The first of the mission stations envisaged by Shaw was eventually established at Wesleyville, near Peddie, in 1823. Kama was married to Nongwane, the daughter of Chief Ngqika. Nongwane had often listened to Ntsikana⁸³. She had been impressed by his message and by the arrival of Shaw. By the time of Shaw's arrival, Nongwane was already a Christian.

One day Shaw followed Nongwane and discovered that she was going to the place where she used to pray. This was an important experience on the conversion of Kama. Ntsikana decided that he would follow his Lord and Master because of Nongwane's influence.

His final decision to become a Christian was during a visit to Grahamstown, where he attended church services and was especially impressed by the way the Holy Communion

82. Weavind, 1891 p29

83. Gee 1961, 67. Ntsikana was born in 1821, was a Xhosa prophet during the 1856 who prophesied about the nation's wars with the British.

was conducted by the Presbyterian missionary.

Kama and his wife attended catechism classes and were baptized into the Christian family by William Shaw. Kama's baptismal name became William. Wells⁸⁴, who was helping Shaw, commented that Kama 'left Grahamstown convinced of the supreme advantages of a Christian civilization'. After the transfer of Rev Shaw from Wesleyville in 1834, Kama moved as a preacher. When there was no missionary, Kama would preach and lead prayer meetings. Lennox⁸⁵, writing about, Native Religious Ideas, says that Shaw as a missionary confirmed Kama because Kama, 'firmly believed the Gospel and often defended it against the arguments of many of his pagan people. Kama told Shaw that he prays to God daily and when he is at home, he is rarely absent from public worship'.

Although Xhosa tradition allows a chief to have many wives, Kama was convinced that he should have only one wife. This led to some difficult moments, when he had to argue with his councillors.

The test came when Mdushane, the son and successor of Ndlambe, sent Kama one of his daughters as a wife. Ndlambe was a chief of higher status than Kama, but Kama nevertheless refused to take another wife. He was convinced that he could rule the tribe according to the will and commandments of God. The daughter of Mdushane was sent back to her father with a generous gift of cattle and tributes to the house of Ndlambe.

Shaw relates other incidents of the same kind when Kama refused to entertain the thought

84. Wells, 1908 p180

85. Ibid, 1908 p31

of taking another wife. When a complaint was lodged with Maqoma, the son of Ngqika, he answered: '*I, Maqoma, son of Ngqika, do not have authority to question the laws of the God of Kama. To escape the wrath of Phato, Kama, like Mgijima, and their followers eventually settled at Ntabelanga, near Whittlesea in the Eastern Cape.*

When the town of Whittlesea was attacked by the Boers in 1851, Kama and his followers came to the rescue. In gratitude, the governor of Britain granted the Gqunukwebe a permanent territory of their own between the Chumie (eTyhume) and Keiskamma Rivers, near Middeldrift.

The Annshaw Mission was established there, named after the wife of William Shaw. Kama became the leader of the church and was one of the church leaders who promulgated Sunday as a day of rest and worship. Another strong hold of Kama, during the massive cattle killing fever of 1857, was that his followers were never affected by the fever.

Wells the author, described an incident where he went to Annshaw district in 1871 and found Chief Kama to be old and feeble. He described him as someone who could no longer walk to church on his own and had to be taken to the services in a cart.

Chief Kama gradually grew weaker until he died on 25 October 1875⁸⁶. personally visited his gravestone, which is in the church ground in Middeldrift. On it are engraved the words, 'a noble man, a just governor and a faithful Christian.'

86. Lennox 1911 pp98-110

4.4 PROPHET MGIJIMA AND CHIEF WILLIAM KAMA

Lennox writes, it is remarkable to observe how many leading chiefs of the southern Kafir tribes craved for missionaries to be sent to them. He goes on to say that, Kreli, chief of the Gaikas, broken in power, exiled beyond the Bashee and an astute diplomat to the end, was the one who invented the Scotch Presbyterian Churches to send him a missionary. It was very common in history to find a church leader in close association with a ruler of a territory.

This could end in both positive and negative results; but it is always a very interesting development. When the king, chief or prince was converted, it became easy for the followers to assume the same religion as their ruler, even if with no clear conviction.

Mgijima obviously benefited from his association and friendship with Chief Kama, who played a major role in influencing Mgijima's faith. In considering the *persona theologica* of Enoch Mgijima, Kama was the stepping stone.

Although Mgijima was a historical figure, he was, to a large extent, also a theological figure who influenced his followers. The theological identity of the amaSirayeli cannot be separated from how they understand the visions, prophecies and the message of Mgijima. All of his converts were buried at Ntabelanga, his birth place. Mgijima knew the theology of the land and of the people.

Though the amaSirayeli grew in theological maturity, according to Dokoda⁸⁷, they failed

⁸⁷ Evangelist Dokoda uttered these words on the 11th July 2000 during an unveiling of the tombstone of a member of the amaSirayeli, the stone the late Mrs Lulu Gladys Mpondwana.

to drive the church towards its own journey. For Dokoda the goal of a church is to develop her skills, doctrinal identity, ecclesiastical appropriateness and spiritual sensitivity.

Dokoda's views on the church's skills include pastoral functions, healing, reconciliation, guidance, and sustaining or nurturing the church. Dokoda sees the need to develop a strong pastoral identity among the evangelists and the elders so that Mgijima's theological doctrine can become a complete reality in his congregation and to related churches. Dokoda desired the whole family of the church would co-operate in keeping the children of uMlindi together in the understanding of their leaders' philosophy.

Dokoda argues that if their teachings with regard to the Seven Keys and the Ten Commandments were not upheld, the Church of God and Saints of Christ will be failing. According to Dokoda, the church must develop her own doctrines, which will be the basis of her prophetic witness. Doctrinal matters are important to prevent the Church from being swayed by agnostic movements. It is also essential to understand the Church's doctrine, as she has no affiliations with outside foreign churches.

On this issue, Karl Barth⁸⁸ wrote: 'When one most deeply experiences the self, there is a sense of kinship with a Higher Self and a spiritual affiliation with selves of others.' Comparing Dokoda to Karl Barth, Dokoda envisages a congregation that has a growing sense of personal identity.

He sees his church as mature to the extent of owning its doctrine. Dokoda and one of the elders working with him known as Matshoba have affection and respect for their Church's history and tradition, Matshoba compares them with a journey that the church took from

88. Bart, 1985 p25

Ntabelanga to the other side of the river, meaning Jerusalem.

The actions of the amaSirayeli at Bulhoek

Whilst Mgijima was with Kama at Ntabelanga, Dokoda relates a story the amaSirayeli style of worship. He says that the amaSirayeli together with Kama had to sing in rhythm and bow their heads at times (*sihambe - sihambe sivove*), which illustrated what was happening when Mgijima and Truter were at loggerheads and surrounded by the soldiers of Truter.

Every body knew that rhythm was / is the backbone of music. These gestures were both prophetic and en route to Glory. The gestures were showing that the amaSirayeli had developed a growing spiritual dynamic and a personal relationship with God. Love, care and service have always characterized their attitude towards one another.

The identity of the amaSirayeli can be found in their historical tragedy. Through the incident of the Bulhoek Massacre, members of Mgijima became bearers of the church's professional role.

Dokoda believes that the responsibility of the church's membership in providing ministry and positive identification contributes to its member sense of self-esteem as being representatives of both God and of a community of faith. Mgijima's community of faith has developed its ecclesiology by means of his visionary dreams.

In this context it is no paradox to say that out of strife, harmony came. Mgijima's style of prophecy and the church's doctrine were understood in terms of expressions, metaphors and thought forms. To explain Mgijima's theological background, it was never moulded by Greek philosophy and the European enlightenment like other theologians, instead, there

seemed to be evidence of an informal moulding of his theology in terms understood by people of different cultures.

Religiously, the amaSirayeli as they were the first Black Jews in South Africa, live by the biblical teachings as they understand them. The amaSirayeli often deal with the Scriptures at face value or simply on the allegorical level of hermeneutics, meaning, what the scriptures say to the original readers and hearers should be transmitted in such a manner that it makes sense to the modern audience.

Their theological lifestyle is to perform in the way the Bible instructs them to do. This is the nature of an African who is converted into Christianity. Like in the Bible, he leaves all and follows Jesus. This issue to General Smuts was a kind of abnormality.

As a white man trained and thought to be cool and collected when worshipping God. He could not believe that people who are sane could worship in such a way. That is why he had to accuse them by being fanatics. On the basis of the above understanding, their situational theology allows them to act accordingly.

An adequate theological base amongst them is complementing enough for them to be Bible recitation church. Nevertheless, this places their leaders at a lower theological level than those religious leaders who underwent theological training.

Their theology does not call for liberation of the poor and the oppressed. It is thus an exploitative situation of the Old Testament Bible by some preachers. However, these submissions make me not to agree fully with the way the amaSirayeli present their preaching and interpretation of the Bible.

One cannot say that clergies of the amaSirayeli know scriptures more than other pastors, but one thing is sure; they know, read and interpret scriptures well. The religious self-understanding of the amaSirayeli isolates them from the rest of the church community, because there is a tendency within them to emphasize distinctive characteristics found from other churches. This might be due to their vigour in building group identity and loyalty.

In conclusion, the amaSirayeli as the Black Jews who have their own way of interpreting Biblical theology robbed themselves a chance to occupy Ntabelanga. Smuts was frustrated and could not understand the nature of their theology. As male members had knobkerries, assegais and shields, this to Smuts was a sign of waging for war. It was not his intention to eventually maim and kill them.

4.5 KAMASTONE: THE HOME OF JONAS MGIJIMA

Ngwanya⁸⁹ writes that Jonas Mgiijima, the father of Enoch, moved to Queenstown because of his large herd of cattle, where he met some of his family members. From Edgar⁹⁰ opinion, Chief Mhlambiso of the Mfengu tribe, who was ruling in the Kamastone area, gave him land at Ntabelanga so that he could settle there.

The Ntabelanga village took its name from the mountain in the vicinity. Besides two prominent mountains, there is a village and a hillock, both called Bulhoek (Ingxingwa yeNkunzi). If one had looked at the Ntabelanga village during Mgiijima's time, just below a ridge, running down one of the slopes, one would have seen long rows of neat, small houses constructed of unburnt bricks.

89. Ngwanya, 1999 p37

90. Edgar 1977 p46, Chief Mhlambiso was one of the Hlubi chiefs who were received by Chief Hintsa.

Each home had one small and one full-size kraal, one for sheep and goats and one for cattle. Horses and donkeys were kept in stables and farming products in sheds. Fireplaces, made for the women and girls, showed that this was a permanent settlement. Jonas Mgijima and his wife arrived at Ntabelanga with their five daughters.

Although a wealthy man, he was not happy because he had no male heir. He knew the values of a family system. He knew that having boys in the family is regarded as a blessing from God and that the ability to have them is a test of manhood and a source of social pride. Because of this, Mgijima one day went up the Ntabelanga Mountain to pray for an heir. According to Edgar, his prayer was as follows:

*Lord God, you have given me these sheep, goats, cattle, horses and beautiful girls, but I have no son amongst them to tend to this flock. I ask you to grant me a son, even if it will be only one*⁹¹

God granted Mgijima his prayer as He did to Jabez, 1 Chron 4:9-10. Mgijima's next four children were all boys. They were Josiah, Timothy, Enoch and Charles. Enoch attended school until standard three. As a hunter, he liked to look after his father's sheep and cattle.

Mgijima, the Leader-prophet of the amaSirayeli at Bulhoek, was a tall and stout man. As a farmer, he obtained the title deed, from Chief Mhlambiso, to a farm given to him in terms of the Native Land Act of 1913. He also possessed carts and horses because of his property.

This enabled him to erect a tabernacle on the farm where his people were able to worship

91. Edgar, 1977 p87

peacefully; this tabernacle soon became too small for his congregation. Edgar⁹² agrees that after Msikinya's death, two outstanding figures, Enoch Mgijima and Matshoba, contested the position of leadership.

Since consensus could not be reached, the Church of God and Saints of Christ was divided into two groups. One larger group from Queenstown was under Mgijima and Matshaka another church leader was from Uitenhage. It is assumed that the title of Mgijima as a Prophet and uMlindi kaSirayeli came from the Queenstown group.

A close review of this church causes one to notice that members have a Hebrew-Christian faith base. In fact Bishop Mzimkhulu and some other evangelists believe that they are the First Black Jews in South Africa. Even when I interviewed bishop Mzimkhulu in connection with the idea of being the First Black Jews, he emphasized that, a full report is on the appendix of this theses.

4.6 THE LAND AT KAMASTONE

a. Mgijima and his People

Wars between the Xhosa nation and the British colonists between 1846 and 1850 caused Sir George Grey to build a buffer zone between hostile Africans and the colonists. Edgar in his thesis, remarks that Grey drew up a system to allocate land to European settlers, Army veterans and some Mfengu's who were settled in a checkerboard of black and white areas around the Queenstown area.

92. Ibid 1977 p86, Msikinya, probably the first African missionary, before an American slave known as Christian, to know about Crowdy who prophesied about the Church of God and Saints of Christ, Msikinya brought this church from USA to South Africa in 1902.

During that time this land system had dual purposes. Firstly it was for protecting the Cape Frontier from a new outbreak of war. Secondly it was of ensuring that European farmers would have reliable supplies of labour. The grant of land for Africans was insufficient to support all their population hence the title deeds were allocated to the chiefs.

Enoch Mgijima's father was also allocated a land property. On its own, such gesture by the government did not solve the problem. As Mgijima's father owned a property, he was among the few who were registered voters. The Cape franchise restricted the number of African voters leaving at Kamastone to 3,000 inhabitants.

As Kamastone was one of the most overpopulated areas in the region, Edgar mentions that Emma Makalima, one of the residents at Kamastone, aggressively said that, 'the natives of Ovkraal, Ntabelanga and Kamastone are packed like sardines, they cannot move. They are demanding space to occupy. This was an environment in which Mgijima grew up. His father was not only a farmer, but also a Preacher of the Wesleyan Church under Rev Shepstone.

During Mgijima's time there were two established denominations under the Presbyterians and the Moravians. As such, he was not permitted to threaten the two established European denominations in the area. However, during March of 1912, a Moravian missionary invited him to hold a revival service at Shiloh, a mission station nearby, not anticipating that Mgijima would cause a breakaway in his mission station.

Mgijima's services there were interspersed with communal prayers and rhythmic hymn singing, and were highlighted by his intense fire and brimstone preaching. The missionary was impressed with his service and decided to invite Mgijima more often.

As a prophet, Mgijima would sense that people were not faithful in their worship of God. This caused him to be harsh in his sermons. His visions would show him people worshipping God as if he is an idol. He told them that God warns them against being hypocritical. They should be faithful to the Almighty God.

4.7 THE THEOLOGY OF THE LAND

Mgijima is seen by his followers as the bridge between the physical and spiritual worlds. As Mgijima was a role model and a mentor to his followers, he encouraged Bible study and Scriptural recitation. Through his dynamic preaching, he was able to call people to find faith in God. One should point out that Mgijima's converts were landless people.

As the Native Land Act of 1913 was devastating to many blacks from that decade onwards, Mgijima realized a greatest threat to the social and religious stability of his people. In order to be effective to his ministry, he saw an urgent need to alleviate his people from poverty. He realized that to liberate his people from all the forces that hindered them from living fully as human beings, was possible.

The theology of the amaSirayeli calls for much more research. Their theological emphasis cannot be excluded from the perspective of the entire biblical message and global theological reality. It has to be involved with political, social and economic realities, because it is indisputable that the presence of the poor in any society is a burden to and an indictment of that society.

It is a fact that the land issue was still festering when Mgijima began preaching in various church buildings of the Ntabelanga community. Although Mgijima was not concerned about poverty of the people in South Africa, however he was very much concerned of his followers at Ntabelanga. Although humble but bold, yet he could not be silenced by the fact that he

had been granted a title deed. Mgijima a visionary leader and a central character in the scene of the Kamastone, saw it impossible to understand the amaSirayeli without understanding their relationships with the rest of the society. The church never existed in a vacuum. Mgijima, as both instrumental and inspirational could act decisively when faced with the Smuts government.

Exercising his prophetic leadership role, Mgijima decided to summon his followers to come to Ntabelanga. His end state was to change the barren Ntabelanga to Ntabelanga, the New Jerusalem, which was perceived as a safe haven for them.

During that period, Mgijima's followers were not petitioned to be given land for a church building. One should remember that at this time followers were worshipping at Mgijima's homestead. The council did not grant them permission, but people proceeded to make bricks to stay.

Another free piece of land was given to the church of Moravia. After that the government gave permission to the mission superintendents of the Moravian church to administer the free land as they thought fit. At Shiloh, there were many so called coloured people who resided there. In comparing them to other black people, they were fortunate because they received some title deeds.

Regrettably, this situation did not last long, as they were stripped off their land-holdings. The reason for stripping them the title deeds was that they could not pay their land tax and church dues. There was a conflict between them and the missionaries. They were taken to court by the missionaries and had them evicted from the land. They became dissatisfied at the way missionaries were allocating land to them.

In conclusion like other churches, the amaSirayeli functioned at Ntabelanga within an African environment. This was an environment that secured many limitations to the church. It provided a framework of general conditions to the church for its populace to occupy the land and develop it for survival.

A situation like that caused the amaSirayeli to interact with one another in such a manner that they groomed one another. This was not acceptable to General Smuts and the white farmers nearby.

4.7.1. Community of Faith as seen in the amaSirayeli

What is a community of faith? What are its boundaries? How much can it be identified with the actions and interests of its constituents? For while it is true that many faith communities represent in principle a loyalty that cuts across ethnic, racial, gender and class divisions, this is not always so in practice.

The Dutch Reformed Church from an early period could not maintain itself as a single community and had to develop an identity as a racially segregated volkskerk, splitting-off its non-white members into mission churches.

African Initiated Churches can be accounted for in many different ways, for example on the basis of a class analysis as a part of a cultural struggle, or as a response to racism, as well as in terms of an attempt to create an indigenous ecclesial identity. Theological divisions amongst churches also reflect cultural and class distinctions and this is clearly noticed within the amaSirayeli as well.

As of the above statement, it is taken for granted that faith communities exist to exercise

loyalty in a particular faith-tradition within the context of many other competing loyalties. The term faith community is problematic because it seems to indicate a degree of homogeneity amongst organizations as diverse as the South African Council of Churches. It seems appropriate to certain religions, but less so to other faiths.

Looking at the African traditional religion, one may ask as to whether they constitute a faith community in the same way as, for instance, members of the Church of the Province in Southern Africa. Arguably, the boundaries between African traditional religion and Christianity have a different nature from those of Christianity or Judaism.

Evidently, many spokespersons from the African religious community, such as Bishop JC Mzimkhulu and Bishop M Phakade, to mention the current leadership, are practising Christians. Other church leaders of other faith communities recognize them as members of the Black Jews community in South Africa. This community has its own way of looking at religion.

To substantiate the above statement, it is better to notice that the followers of Mgijima isolate themselves from the other faith communities. These faith communities are those which do not hold on to their beliefs or vice versa.

Such emphasis drives home the purpose of building group identity, loyalty which unfortunately excludes and isolate them from the rest of Christendom. Leaders have even stopped their members to attend funerals of other denominations, for fear of the unknown. That is how far their theology goes.

4.7.2. Ntabelanga and her People

Having discussed the nature of a faith community, it is fitting to discuss the community of

Kamastone, which was made poor by the rich and the powerful few. Poverty is characterized by deprivation, not only of material goods and possessions, spiritual, moral, intellectual, cultural or sociological orders, but also of human rights, hopes, ambitions, history, and identity. When one is poor, his or her own dignity deteriorates.

In Kamastone, Mgijima was concerned about people lacking a sense of identity, security and belonging. He decided to take sides with his people in their suffering and struggle against all forms of tyranny, oppression and injustice. The challenge that faced him was the struggle to liberate his people socially, economically and politically.

To many Africans, it was increasingly clear that there was something wrong with the world and that they were no longer in control of their lives. He prophesied that there would be a period of instability and chaos before the millennium. As with other visionaries, Mgijima justified his visions by biblical quotations. In the midst of all this, he guaranteed redemption and salvation for his people.

Taking all these happenings collectively, Mgijima's interpretation reinforced his belief that the world around him was collapsing and that the millennium was drawing near. His perceptions were shared by many others at Ntabelanga.

In Mgijima's theological stance, the challenge was to establish an alternative society, since the images of a New Jerusalem were extraordinarily appealing to his followers who had been waging a losing battle to retain their independence from and identity in an unstable and hostile environment.

At Ntabelanga his elect could withdraw from the temptation and the immorality of a corrupt world. Mgijima and his community could find solace and comfort, as they were not a revolutionary sect. They moved into Ntabelanga not wanting to be worried by the state but

only desiring peaceful time for their Lord's coming.

4.8 THE LEADERSHIP OF THE AMASIRAYELI

For various reasons, the amaSirayeli served under a number of bishops who belonged to different groups, all of which originated from Mgijima's church. I will discuss some of the reasons that caused havoc in the church of Mgijima. The bishops are found especially in the Cape Province, but also in some other parts of the country. They call themselves the lost tribe of Jacob.

This church is classified as an African Initiated Church, but unlike the Zionist or Ethiopian churches, about which much has been written, very little is known about the nature and the theology of the amaSirayeli. It is correct to say that the lack of knowledge about this church probably resulted in its size, location and to the fact that it has made no impact on the socio-ecclesiastical scenario in South Africa.

The amaSirayeli are a relatively small group. The majority of its members are in the Queenstown area, with a small number in Cape Town and another group in the King Williamstown / East London area. There are also smaller branches in other parts of the country. A numerical estimation of the church is extremely difficult because there, no proper records are kept of it.

According to Bishop Mzimkhulu, who was their leader at the time of the research, the membership of the amaSirayeli is about 35,000. This is just a drop in an ocean, comparing to what it could have been without the massacre and the subsequent fear of government involvement.

Another problem of the numerical uncertainty is that there are radical members who always take the side of war than of peace, but the leadership should guard against those. It is believed that Mgijima saw the church as a building block of the tabernacle of God, made by living stones. Even today, his congregation is likened to a bride being prepared by the Evangelists, Elders, Deacons and Trustees.

The top hierarchy have a very strong influence on the ordinary members. It was the intention of Mgijima to lead them to the land of freedom having one mind and one voice. He brought them to Ntabelanga to wait for that day, an action which was comparable to what Moses did when he led the Israelites to the land of Canaan.

The church as a whole makes a big impression on the entire community. Their monotheistic views capture the imagination of everybody who comes into contact with them. The big difference between them and the Jews, although they are the Black Jews, is that they still recognize Jesus. Their ethical standards, church attendance, sincerity when studying the Scriptures or when being baptized are commendable.

When Mgijima and his close followers built a tabernacle at Ntabelanga, their action was met with scepticism by the missionaries and some members of the black elite. This was, however, merely a stimulus for the amaSirayeli to formulate their prophetic theology. Whilst Mgijima was building up his church, he accustomed his members to proselytize no other church members.

Edgar⁹³ believes that when Nightingale was confronted by the authorities he made it clear to that the amaSirayeli were going to adhere only to God's orders. To them the phrase

93. Edgar 1977 p36, Nightingale was the Queenstown magistrate of the time of the massacre of the 24 May 1921

'Thus says the Lord' means exactly that. He is speaking through their prophets as representatives of God Almighty.

4.9 THE PROPHECIES AND VISIONS OF MGIJIMA

Historically, the amaSirayeli should be seen against the background of millennialism, and through their connection with Crowdy. Mgijima's prophetic experiences gave rise to the church's growth and earned him great respect among his members. These prophecies became central themes in the self-understanding and identity of his followers.

His prophecies and visions were not the only factors that identified him as a charismatic founder-leader, but they also constituted a key component in the identification of the church by others. Like all other prophets, Mgijima interpreted his dreams and visions as commands to spread the Word of God.

Considering two of Mgijima's prophecies and visions will clarify the fact that the amaSirayeli are in reality the sons and daughters of his visions. Mgijima would preach and say that he wanted to win souls for Christ. The heavy burden on his heart was to get the unconverted converted. Mgijima's preaching was powerful and his message simple: Get out from false worshipping'.

That the world would be destroyed was a central theme in his message. It was such pending destruction that formed the essence of Mgijima's encounter with the Divine. However, he not only preached doom and gloom but also salvation to those who would listen and change their hearts. Mgijima said to his people:

God is destroying the world. He is destroying it with blood and will leave no survivors. Neither the bird in the air nor the meerkat in its hole, nor a fish in the water, will survive. There is absolutely nothing that will have peace. *(UYehova uyalichitha ilizwe, ulichitha ngegazi uya kulishiya lingenabemi. Akuyi konwaba intaka esibhakabhekeni, iintlanzi emanzini kunye negala emngxunyeni. Akuyi kubakho luxolo⁹⁴.*

Despite the criticism he encountered from other people, Mgijima clearly connected himself with the spiritual needs of his people. His faith had a fiery emotional urgency. His emphasis on a personal relationship with Christ and the call for a return to Bible-based morality was remarkable.

Another clear picture of this prophecy was given by Mculisikazi Vuba⁹⁵, a choir mistress at the Queenstown tabernacle. In her visions, the Watchman of Israel is once said to have flown with a heavenly man. As he was flying, he looked towards the east and saw something that was like a swarm of locusts (umqikela) which, though they could not fly, were able to cause a lot of damage.

These locusts covered the whole world. Whenever they came across any living thing, either a tree or a person, they would devour it. Another vision that is frequently recounted by his followers is the one in which he saw a he-baboon (inkunzi yemfene).

According to Ntloko⁹⁶, Mgijima said: I saw two bulls, one a ram and the other a he-goat in a fierce fight. They fought twice and when they attacked for the third time, there appeared a he-baboon that saw this fight as it was passing by. As it came closer, it grabbed both of

94. Mzimkhulu repeated those words to his followers during Passover of 14-21 April 2001

95. Vuba was an umculisikazi at the Temple, the interview was done during the Passover of 14-21 April 2001.

96. Ntloko is a member of the church, given a title of being Grandfather Abraham.

them by their scruffs and smashed them against each other until they were dead.

Mgijima interpreted the vision as follows: the fighting rams are heathens (*abelungu*) and the he-baboon was a black person. He said that the time was coming when the white people would fight against themselves and the black person would appear and separate them from their fight.

Some interpretations of the picture, according to Dokoda were the eminency of the war that came to destroy everything and everyone who was not a child of God. Dokoda remarks that God will destroy all the people who do not believe and do not keep his commandments. Mgijima warned Dokoda's forefathers that not a single place would be safe⁹⁷. After this vision, Mgijima became a very lonely person and he used to go hunting wild animals.

Even though the destruction of the world would be as a result of a war fought by humans, it would be God's way of dealing with those who did not believe in him and did not keep his commandments. Indeed there were many problems at the time during which Mgijima prophesied.

During the elections of 1994, the ANC won and as the leader of the ANC Mandela reigned for five years. Dokoda⁹⁸ concluded by saying that his mother thanked God and said that even if she were to die then, she would be satisfied that she had seen the fulfilment of the prophecy and the vision. She died in October 2001. The church views Mgijima as squarely

97. Dokoda's words during an interview of the 25-26 May 2001 Commemoration.

98. Dokoda, one of the evangelists in the Shiloh tabernacle was interviewed on the 12-13 April 1921.

within the tradition of the prophetic orators of the Old Testament.

Dokoda, during the unveiling of Mrs Mpondwana's tombstone in 1995, was reminded of the role of Mrs Mpondwana and other women in strengthening the remaining saints after the Massacre. He said that he believed that Moses' Israelites had come and gone the same as Jesus' followers, who also came and had gone, but that the amaSirayeli would live forever till the Lord comes.

The amaSirayeli believed that they were to wait for the Second Coming of Christ. Critically viewing this message, one finds that it has no meaning for any individual save a member of the amaSirayeli, where it carries much weight. Such eschatological speeches have a special meaning to some members of the church.

Many biblical stories of the greater prophets indicate that they showed their people the way out of oppression. Similarly, contemporary and ancient prophets⁹⁹, provided hope to blacks by encouraging them towards salvation.

So the theology of the amaSirayeli prepared everyone for liberation, even if they are not aware of that kind of preparation. After trying times under authoritarian masters, the amaSirayeli found themselves shifting to a new life where decision-making and self-motivation were part of their daily routine.

The daily routines and prayers were needed for survival. Prayer was an essential part of Mgijima's life, since he prayed for carpenters, bricklayers, dressmakers, shoemakers and so on to be raised from his followers, and God granted Mgijima his request. Aspects of the

99. Local prophets of today and yesteryears such as Tutu, B. Naude, Mgijima, Ntsikana, Nonteta.

importance to the amaSirayeli were incorporated on their rituals and practices.

As Mjijima was once a member of the American group, there are many similarities between the church in America and the amaSirayeli in South Africa. The rosettes, sashes, crowns, shepherds' staffs, belts and swords, bugles, mortar boards, various types of greetings, hand shakes and marching styles are all similar. It is clear that Mjijima was religiously inspired as Crowdy was. Both Crowdy and Mjijima were convinced that their followers should return to their Jewish roots and regarded the Bible as their main inspiration.

Wynia mentions that Crowdy quotes from the book of Revelation, 10: 9-10 and said: and I took the little book out of the angel's hands and ate it up. It was in my mouth as sweet as honey; as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter¹⁰⁰.

As Black Moses of his times leading the Black Jews, Mjijima shared history about God as the Deliverer with his people. He yearned to know the actions of God's judgement and of his grace in the midst of daily frustrations.

As an African who had an interest in the Old Testament history, he relied on his identification with the struggle of Israel for identity and freedom. That is why the amaSirayeli could boldly say to Nightingale the magistrate of Queenstown in 1920.

We will rather listen to God than to you. They meant that although they might be loyal to Nightingale, yet their greatest loyalty was to God. These words reveal the deep, loyal relationship of the amaSirayeli with their divine Sovereign.

Although they were tempted to trust more in human devices than in God's providence, they

100. Wynia, 1994 p47

remained true to God's promises, which were better than any other. According to this view, the Old Testament history became a strong source of their faith.

4.10 ENCIRCLEMENT

When disasters occur, people may tend to view those disasters as signs of the end of the world. They think that Jesus is coming. As an example, the HIV/AIDS epidemic is interpreted by some as a precursor of the end of the world. In some churches, preachers talk about the end of the world as if it is around the corner.

This doctrine is not new to the amaSirayeli. Mgijima once called his followers to Ntabelanga where he preached about the end times. Mgijima's church may be placed against the background of Millennialism through the Crowdy connection.

Having said so, let us discuss Mgijima's philosophy of encirclement. Language generates meanings through mutations and transformations. It salvages lost experience. Mgijima salvaged such an experience when he first proclaimed his message to his people.

In one of his prophecies and visions in 1912, he spoke of encirclement (*umngqingo*). He did not elaborate on what he meant. The amaSirayeli interpreted it as a year of the plague (*isibetho*), because of the prophet's message. One member interpreted this encirclement as a great fever.

Different interpretations surround the term. It could be that the world is surrounded (*ilizwe lingqingiwe*). Encirclement could mean that one has problems at home. Bishop Mzileni believes that encirclement refers to the whole message which God gave the prophet that

the world would be destroyed.

Ntloko sees it as a vision of what happened at Ntabelanga in 1921. Most likely, it seems that encirclement suggested the destruction of the world, probably the 1st and 2nd World Wars through which the destruction of the world would take place. The term formed the core of Mgijima's message. He wanted to rescue and deliver the black nation from the Great War. The power of the metaphors in his sermons seized his audience and captured their imagination.

In Nouwen's theory of encirclement, there is an attempt to identify the development of the entanglement of facts and fiction in history. Nouwen points out that encirclement took place with regard to Mgijima, because whatever appeared to be important for a member to remember concerning an event, Mgijima was viewed as absolutely inseparable from it.

Another metaphor that Mgijima used was that of the palm of God's hand, in which he saw the nation placed. These people were sure of their salvation. Mgijima compared the amaSirayeli with grains of crushed mealies (samp) that needed to be thoroughly crushed. Majozi¹⁰¹ sees them as grains that have outer layers (*amakhatshu*); once they are thoroughly crushed they will lose their layers.

According to Mgijima, the saints will be like grains in the palm of God. They will be fully crushed and become useful grains. They will lack nothing. Mgijima knew that those who heard his message and acted on it would pass through death and enter into eternal life. They will be crushed in obedience to the law of God (*bayakungqushwa kukuthobeka nokumamela umthetho kaThixo*).

101. Majozi was one of the evangelists interviewed at Shiloh during the year 2000 of 14-21 April.

The process of crushing is painful. In this process of crushing, grains often escape. One has to continue gathering the grains and putting them inside again to crush them once more. Grains do not talk, even if they feel pain but they trust that they will be put back until they are thoroughly crushed. Majozi, one of the Elders within the church of the amaSirayeli, compared the grains of samp to human beings. He said that it is difficult for an umSirayeli not to go to town on the Sabbath. He compared this with the sweet taste of grapes which is irresistible.

To keep the laws of the church is hard, rather like grains being crushed. Those, however, who could remain faithful whilst being crushed thoroughly, would be in the palm of the hand of God. Therefore, Mgijima's process of salvation depends on obedience, listening to the word of God and waiting upon him so that one might be able to enter into eternal life. Finally, encirclement is essentially a message about the salvation of the amaSirayeli.

4.11 CONCLUSION

It is very clear that without Mgijima this particular church would not have been established. It was through his visions that the amaSirayeli became strong and could look forward even if they were told to go back.

Looking deeper on the amaSirayeli, one found that they have a unique sense of belonging. The visions and dreams of the prophet that kept them moving forward are still carrying the church through even today. That Mgijima had an optimistic attitude towards being what God wanted him to be, gave the whole church an affirmative attitude towards the teachings of their leader.

It has come out clear that an adequate theological base amongst the amaSirayeli needs

complement for they are good in reciting the Bible verse. It is thus an exploitative situation of the Old Testament Bible by some preachers. Their theology does not call for liberation of the poor and the oppressed globally, but they concentrate only to their members. One others aspect that needs attention is that their religious self-understanding isolates them from the rest of the church community, because there is a tendency within them to emphasize distinctive characteristics found from other churches. This might be due to their vigour in building group identity and loyalty.

Evidently, many spokespersons from the African religious community, such as Bishop JC Mzimkhulu and Bishop M Phakade, to mention the current leadership, are practising Christians. As they are recognized as Black Jews of South Africa, by other church leaders from other faiths, that is good because that is what they are in fact. This community has its own way of looking at religion.

So as Black Jews who have their own way of interpreting Biblical theology, this has robbed them a chance to be amongst other congregation members and also to occupy Ntabelanga peacefully.

Smuts as a foreigner to the African culture, found himself entangled in a frustrating mood and could not understand the nature of the amaSirayeli's theology. That, male members had knobkerries, assegais and shields, this to Smuts was a sign of waging for war. It was not his intention to eventually maim and kill them.

To substantiate the above statement, it is better to notice that the followers of Mjijima isolate themselves from the other faith communities. These faith communities are those which do not hold on to their beliefs or vice versa.

Such emphasis drives home the purpose of building group identity, loyalty which unfortunately excludes and isolate them from the rest of Christendom. Leaders have even stopped their members to attend funerals of other denominations, for fear of the unknown. That is how far their theology goes.

Another concern regarding the amaSirayeli is the tendency to dwell more on the past than on the present. This is a disturbing factor because history tells us that people who always look backwards tend to be reactive rather than pro-active. Such an attitude sows seeds of isolation, exclusion and, ultimately, hatred which are out of step with ecumenical and globalization trends.

As this study research unfolds, it is clear that the massacre of the amaSirayeli was the result of their belief system. Attention is drawn to the ways in which they invested themselves in their traditional and cultural-religious practices. Therefore, they are not amenable to outside influences.

They keep to themselves, which is very dangerous especially during this modern world of ecumenism and globalization. We have seen that the acceptance of Christianity provoked significant transformations in many indigenous communities.

Now as we start chapter five we will examine the amaSirayeli as seen by the entire membership and outsiders, we will also listen to members as they witness about their leader and prophet.

Having investigated the role played by the churches that believe in the Fourth Commandment, it is now necessary to establish the message the church brings to its members. The next chapter brings us closer to the founders and prophets of the Church of

God and Saints of Christ, in America and in South Africa.

CHAPTER FIVE .

THE CHURCH OF GOD AND SAINTS OF CHRIST IN QUEENSTOWN.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The focus in this chapter falls on the Church of God and Saints of Christ in Queenstown. This church is based in Queenstown under the present leadership of Bishop EN Shweni with his second in charge, Bishop M Masiza.

The church at Queenstown is different from other tabernacles in that it is known as the Temple, the only one possessed by the amaSirayeli since other buildings are called tabernacles. The church was built by Prophet EN Mjijima himself. It contains the chair where the Prophet used to sit, known as the throne.

The Temple also contains the box that carries the covenant and the Seven Keys, written personally by Mjijima. The Temple is the only building that displays pictures of Mjijima and of Crowdy against the walls.

When Bishop Plummer of the American church visits his colleagues in South Africa, the Temple is the venue. Recently, the Church of God and Saints of Christ in America visited the graves of Prophet Mjijima and of the Bulhoek Massacre, and were stationed at the Temple in Queenstown under Bishop Mzimkhulu.

Before I go deeper into the activities of the members of the church, I will need to look at the constitution of the church, the yardstick which holds the church together as a body. I will also concentrate on the founders of this church

5.2 THE CONSTITUTION OF THE AMASIRAYELI

The amaSirayeli's Constitution reads as follows:

We, the Church of God and Saints of Christ of South Africa under the leadership of Prophet Enoch J. Mgiijima and its jurisdiction, declare that members of this Church will be recognized as follows: that after having repented of their sins and being baptized by burial into the water; upon confession of faith in Christ Jesus and received the unleavened bread and water for Christ's body and blood and their feet washed by the Elder as written in John 13:1-23, having agreed to keep the Ten Commandments and having been breathed upon with a Holy Kiss, also being taught how to pray as it is written in Matthew 6:9-13, do try to perpetuate a union among the saints of Christ and maintain a correspondence with all other Churches of God throughout Southern Africa and in America. We, therefore, aim to maintain and keep the Commandments of God and the sayings of Jesus according to the doctrine of the Bible¹

5.3 THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

In order to understand the historical background of the amaSirayeli it is appropriate to provide a definition of the church as seen by Kung, Louw / Nida, and Dulles. According to, Louw / Nida² the basic meaning of the Greek word '*Ekklesia*' is 'assembly'. When people are gathered in a church building for worship, they are known as an '*ekklesia*' or a congregation.

These people assemble inside the church building, and are known as the assembly of the Lord or the assembly of the holy one³. It is the nature of the *ekklesia* to constantly assemble for mutual empowerment and edification. This meeting occurs in the name of Jesus Christ

1. The Constitution of the Church of God and Saints of Christ.

2. Louw & Nida, 1987 pp129-133.

3. Kung 1981 p30

because it is a calling together of the congregation in the Name of the Lord and is therefore holy. Kung⁴ included the creed in the ekklesia. He argued that, it is a creed that is included in the format of the ekklesia that causes members to be known as the faith confession congregation.

So, it is this credal statement that provides a basis for understanding what the church is all about. If one looks at the church proper, one is sure to recognise her as not perceived by human reason but with an eye of faith and is thus known by faith alone.

Therefore, it stands to reason that the church is linked with the power of the Holy Spirit. The church is seen as an object of faith that calls all men to her. I have noticed that the word church has developed a variety of meanings and nuances. Accordingly, the usual word in Germanic languages (church: German kirche; Swedish: kyrke) does not come from Kuria as Luther and Kung supposed. Its origin is from the Byzantine Greek form meaning, *belonging to the Lord or in its full form, belonging to the house of the Lord. ie kyrios-community.*

Then the romance language kept a direct connection with the word used in the New Testament (NT); in Latin, it is *ecclesia*, in Spanish *iglesia*, and in French *eglise*. The word *ekklesia* found in Greek is used in secular contexts. Greeks speak of *ekklesia* when referring to those that are called out and are summoned together by the herald.

The difference between Greek *ekklesia* and NT *ekklesia* is evident. The NT *ekklesia* is not Greek etymology. According to the NT writers, God gathers his people and the *ekklesia* becomes a community of God. The *ekklesia* of God is more than an arbitrary congregation of arbitrary people.

Ekklesia is seen as those previously chosen by God who gather around God as their centre.

4. Kung 1981 p81

When the early Christian community took over the term, they made a claim to be true congregation of God, the true community of God, and the true eschatological people of God.

Dulles⁵ analyzes the church in terms of images or models. Two out of the four images or models that he discusses fit the amaSirayeli. The amaSirayeli are seen as a community of disciples, and as an eschatological church.

Mgijima does not fit the concept of a church being a community of the disciples because his church does not share common religious aspects with other denominations. For example, the amaSirayeli should consider whether they possess aspects of a true church of God or not.

Mgijima as a leader, by virtue of his divine calling believed that his calling superseded all other concerns and obligations, even to bury one's own father, Lk 9:59f. The disciples of Jesus are an example of a group that left everything behind and made a total commitment to Jesus and the Kingdom. One may attribute this model to the church of the amaSirayeli for three reasons.

Firstly, at Ntabelanga, Mgijima secured a sense of solidarity in the oneness with his followers. This was cemented when they chose the path of death and effective relationships with one another as the children of uMlindi.

Secondly, they chose to leave their homes and followed their leader. There was a sense belonging from the group. As he selected and commissioned them, Mgijima based in them a proven discipleship and properly entrusted responsibilities.

Thirdly, there was a sacrifice among them. As Mgijima was unto them a spiritual figure, they knew that whatever he says comes from God. Such appointments sealed the church of Mgijima till the end of his life.

5. Dulles, 1974 pp12-56.

In terms of the catholicity of Dulles, such qualifications of ordination can be questioned. After ordination, the appointment of a church leader should not qualify him to be the lord or master over other members.

When Jesus first chose the twelve disciples, none of them was regarded as superior to others. But since they were called from different spheres of life, it was expected that their performance would differ according to their personalities. This has been the case from the beginning of the church. On the contrary, the discipleship model of Dulles, suggests a human factor, that of a community which undergoes transformation yet still falling short of the ideals.

So, the catholicity of the church is required if the church is to transmit its authentic heritage and build its members according to the pattern of Christ. Christians must live by both word and sacrament. In my opinion it must be both prophetic and priestly by combining personal freedom with disciplined loyalty.

For catholicity, this is a characteristic of the Church that is attributed to the universality of the true church. The catholicity of the true Church includes all those who are joined to Christ by faith. This is different from the amaSirayeli because they have a tendency to believe in themselves as the only church of God.

During the Passover, there are times of administering the Holy Communion, when visitors in the church are not allowed to participate. This is not unique to this church because there are also other churches which do not allow members of other churches to participate in their holy communion. For the apostolicity of the Church, according to Dulles, it may be defined as the permanent abiding of Christians in the doctrine and life delivered by Christ through His Spirit to the disciples, called also apostles, and transmitted through prophets and teachers working by the Holy Spirit.

According to Dulles⁶, a church which comprises one single ethnic group cannot be a true church; this one of Mgijima does not consist of one ethnic group but a large number of ethnic groups. In Gauteng it is found among the Sotho, Tswana, Pedi, Shangaan and speaking people. The amaSirayeli under Mgijima is also found in KwaZulu Natal.

If one speaks of features of the church universal church, the amaSirayeli have none. If Dulles speaks of a true Church as apostolic, then apostolicity does not mean the maintenance of a broken series of ordinations coming down from bishops, as in the catholic theory of apostolic succession.

To be truly apostolic it means to be faithful to the apostolic teachings as set forth in the apostolic writings. In this sense, the amaSirayeli believe that they are faithful to the teachings of their leaders. This is testified by their witness when addressing the hierarchy of the church and the congregation in the following manner:

*The Church of God and Saints of Christ. Bishop the father of the amaSirayeli, evangelists of Israel, elders of Judah, deacons and the trustees, mothers Sarah, Grandfather Abraham, sons of Judah and daughters of Jerusalem and all our guests. All hail*⁷.

This in a way is a sign of apostolicity to the followers of Mgijima. Churches, like the Twelve Apostles, claim apostolic succession and trace the succession from the Apostles, and the amaSirayeli trace theirs from Abraham in the way they think and testify. Mgijima distanced himself from the universal church.

6. Dulles, 1974p56.

7. These are words used when a preacher addresses the whole congregation before preaching or making a point. This kind of addressing I witnessed myself.

According to his followers, Mgijima did not want to be tolerated. This is also noticed among members who are not allowed to mix with other denominations for worship purposes. However, Mgijima believed that hostility among Christians was a scandal to non-believers so he reversed himself.

With regard to the priestly aspect of the Church, Dulles is more reserved. To speak of the Church as a priestly society offering spiritual sacrifices is in the opinion of Dulles misleading. He seeks to banish the vocabulary of priesthood and sacrifice from the ecclesiastical sphere.

He believes that the Church should be seen as having only a prophetic function. He concludes by inviting integration between the evangelical and the catholic concepts of the Church by arguing that the evangelical is essential in order for the church to be free and prophetic.

As Dulles speaks about the church which is One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic, so Kung⁸ affirms that by saying that the church entails these four characteristics. He goes on to ask a question, Can unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity be the marks of the true church. He suspiciously argues that in view of the many false developments, of fanaticism and heresy, even the possibility of a pseudo-church, the question cannot be dismissed as improper.

Kung asks about the where-about and what is the church? He argues that the true church is a believing one which has believers and is for believers. As the ecclesial of the faithful, it is not simply visible but also invisible. Precisely, it is composed of the people of God. Being the people of God, the spiritual building and the body of Christ, she can be recognized as the church.

Answering the where part of the church, one says that there are signs by which the church can

8. Kung. 1981pp263-265

be recognized, and can be perceived by everybody. Non-believers are aware of that even if they do not participate inside. The signs of a true church cannot be read with objective impartiality as though they were street numbers.

They can only be recognized and understood in the blind leap of a trusting faith. Again the true church embraces four adjectives that are found in the Constantinopolitan Creed; one, holy, catholic and apostolic, as mentioned above⁹.

The Church of Christ should represent unity, sanctity, catholicity and apostolicity. The amaSirayeli lacks some of these marks. The unity of the Church is most fundamentally the spiritual unity of faith, hope and charity. But this inward unity embraced by the Mgijima church should come to outward expression. The unity of the Church should be visible, even if not perfect. To break the unity of faith and fellowship is to cut oneself off from the true church.

In the third and fourth centuries of the Christian Church, theologians like Origen and Cyprian seriously addressed the issue of the unity of the Church. Kelly¹⁰ says about Origen that he had a firmer grasp than Cyprian. The Church as an organized community was the congregation of the Christian people or an assembly of believers.

According to Kelly, Origen had high hopes of the office and responsibilities of his ministers¹¹. For him the Church seemed to be a kind of world-like republic with its own laws and constitution. It is the city of God. In his description of the church, Origen thought of the church as the body of Christ, the worldwide church that is scattered all over the world with no geographical boundaries.

9. Dulles, 1974 p54.

10. Kelly 1985 pp178-180

11. Ibid 1985 p189

For Cyprian unity is even more precious. He looked at the unity that was handed down by the Lord through the Apostles. Cyprian was asked as to how this unity was expressed and where its guarantee was to be discerned? The answer to that is that the sanctity of the Church comes from the fact that the Spirit of God is at work in all members who are called saints.

Therefore, the following characters of unity, oneness, catholicity and apostolicity are the marks by which one can recognize a church.

Firstly, ekklesia means both the actual process of congregating and the congregated community itself. Ekklesia is not something that is formed and founded once and for all and remains unchanged. It becomes an ekklesia by the fact of a repeated concrete event, people coming together and congregating for the purpose of worshipping God.

Secondly, congregation, community and church, such words should be seen as being interconnected. They are not in competition, but rather complement one another in translating the very rich and many-faceted ekklesia.

- i. Congregation expresses the fact that the ekklesia is never a static institution, but one that exists through the repeated event of an actual coming together.
- ii. Community emphasizes that the ekklesia is never an abstract and distant super-organization of functionaries set above the concretely congregated community, but is a fellowship of people who meet regularly at a given place, a given time for a given purpose.
- iii. Church makes it plain that the ekklesia is never a disconnected jumble of isolated and self sufficient religious groups, but members, united through their individual service of an all embracing fellowship.

Thirdly, Catholic Church means universal church. It is an increasing apparent reality of the whole church within which an individual church is bound up with another. It is a general and an

all-embracing church. Now where does the amaSirayeli fall in into this category?

If the only true church is the Catholic Church, an all - embracing, total Orthodox Church. As the topic of my research study reads: *An ecclesiological analysis of the Church of God and the Saints of Christ and its impart on the Bulhoek Massacre*, can one be able to strip the topic out and find all the aspects that Dulles is mentioning in connection with the Church. With regard to the amaSirayeli one should consider the following.

- i. Spatial extensity alone does not make a church catholic. Catholicity is not primarily a geographical concept.
- ii. Numerical quantity alone does not make a church catholic. Therefore catholicity is not only a statistical concept.
- iii. Cultural variety alone does not make a church catholic. It is not primarily a sociological concept.
- iv. Temporal continuity alone does not make a church catholic. It is primarily not an historical concept.

If the attributes of a church consists of the above in order to provide identity and universality then the amaSirayeli falls short, and is not a church. In order to be a church the amaSirayeli should make a congregation that ought to be seen and known as a servant church. She should stress Christian activities that cannot be reduced to merely religious acts such as prayer and worship they should go beyond.

In the church of Mgijima, there are shoemakers, builders, shopkeepers, dressmakers, barbers and teachers. Even undertakers are found among the members of Mgijima's church. Since they perceived themselves to be the servants of the Almighty God, they had to obey his command. It was in this sense that they were a Servant Church.

There are, of course, many aspects of servanthood. One such aspect is servanthood in terms

of social services. What is not clear is the extent to which the amaSirayeli serve the wider community.

The fact is that the elderly, the young and the old people are taken care of by the woman's group. In viewing the monument that has been built by the present congregation at Ntabelanga, few other projects and the negotiations for amalgamation of the one body of Mgijima, I can be sure that the church looks at helping the wider community. So in this sense the amaSirayeli may be seen as service the community. Therefore these are social implications from the church activities.

They are all seeking to collaborate with one another in applying evangelical values as solutions to human problems. During Mgijima's era, he set aside his followers at Ntabelanga by calling them as the Saints of Christ'.

Although they are called saints on earth, during and after Ntabelanga they were groomed to become saints in Heaven. Like John Wesley, Mgijima believed in sanctification, namely, that people grow in faith. It would be grossly unfair to deny the amaSirayeli the holiness they claim for themselves. It all depends on how one defines holiness.

1 Peter 2: 9, refers to the chosen people as the holy nation, God's own people. The writer of this epistle surely does not assume that everyone in the assembly of Christians has reached the required mark. Nevertheless the writer refers to Christians in the process of being made holy - fellow travellers in Christian faith.

When writing to his congregations at Corinth, Rome and Philippi. Paul greeted them as **saints**, knowing that they were still far from what was expected of them. These Christians are seen as travellers or pilgrims on a long and enduring Christian journey.

If the amaSirayeli call themselves, *Church of God and Saints of Christ*, then Paul would agree with them, given the description of the assemblies cited above. The Church takes its pattern from its founders. It is clear that the amaSirayeli are proud of their painful history and journey, it is this makes them who and how they are today.

Prophet Mjijima reminded his followers constantly that they should always remember their history with remembrance, hence their celebrations. This is easily noticed when they commemorate their anniversaries. They ensure the future by ploughing deep in the present.

Finally, the history of the church that is discussed here is not only very human, but a deeply sinful history. It is also very true that Mjijima was the voice of reason to the amaSirayeli.

5.4 BISHOP J. MSIKINYA¹² OF UITENHAGE

Msikinya was born in the little town of Fort Beaufort, in the Eastern Province about 1867. His parents, being staunch members of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, had the child baptized as John Msikinya. Msikinya received his basic education and teacher's certificate at the Healdtown Institution, in Fort Beaufort. He then taught in the Aliwal North and Kimberley areas.

Later Msikinya, with his little brother Henry, left the Wesleyan Methodist Church to join the

12. Msikinya went to the USA for studies and met Crowdy there. He converted to the teachings of Crowdy and brought them in SA. He was the first to plant the Church of God and Saints of Christ in South Africa. The story is retold by Bishop Mzimkhulu of the amaSirayeli when I interviewed him during 14-21 April 2000 when they had a Passover in Queenstown.

African Methodist Episcopal Church. They soon obtained a church scholarship to study in America during 1908-1912.

In America, Henry received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Wilberforce College and later became a principal at Wilberforce Seminary in South Africa. This seminary is an African Methodist Episcopal institution situated in Evaton in the Gauteng Province of South Africa. At Lincoln University in the USA, Msikinya became a biblical scholar.

Under the influence of William Saunders Crowdy, he left the African Methodist Episcopal Church and joined the Church of God and Saints of Christ led by Crowdy. Crowdy taught John church administration and doctrine, after which he became fully authorised to act as a Bishop of the organization that he would later establish in the Uitenhage location in South Africa.

After completing his studies in 1912, Msikinya left America for South Africa. On arriving in the country, he became the first Bishop of the Church of God and Saints of Christ. Through his preaching and teaching, he attracted many people from different backgrounds. Msikinya recruited members from Peddie, Fort Beaufort, Healdtown and Grahamstown.

Although Msikinya was a powerful preacher, he encountered many problems in planting and extending the church which he had established in the Eastern Cape. It was not long after planting the churches that the government of the day considered Msikinya to be a threat. The government viewed him as an instigator because during Masabalala protest march, Msikinya was also seen among the protestors.

He, together with nine other men, were arrested and imprisoned for almost four months. However, this did not hinder the church's growth. Two of his brothers, namely Samuel and Peter Matshoba, who were church elders, continued spreading the gospel.

Immediately after his release, Msikinya shifted his attention to the Queenstown district. In

Queenstown itself a schoolteacher named Joseph Tuso invited Samuel Matshoba to speak about his church's doctrine. Tuso also invited many Queenstown inhabitants to the occasion. Edgar¹³ argues that before Matshoba returned to Healdtown; he baptized many converts to his church, which included the following:

- i. Joseph Tuso
- ii. Victor Ndlangisa
- iii. John Ntlangweni
- iv. Enoch Mgijima

Both Msikinya and Mgijima were prominent black members of the Wesleyan Methodist Church under the Presidency of Rev Albert Hodges¹⁴, Millard says that ironically while Hodges and his secretary were holding a Wesleyan Methodist Conference in Queenstown; some members of his flock were being baptized at a different church. Because Mgijima was trained in the Methodist Church, he studied all the Methodist ways of preaching.

He drew a large crowd of converts to the Black Kei River, to be baptized. After the baptism, Msikinya was faced with a huge dilemma. As Mgijima was like an evangelist from his former church, Msikinya did not know which position to give him in the church, since he already commanded a sizeable personal following. Msikinya decided to appoint Mgijima a Chief Evangelist for the Kamastone Region.

The next year, 1914, Mgijima went to the Passover with more than a thousand converts. This was evidence that Mgijima was a very effective chief evangelist in that region. Msikinya was plagued by envy and feared that his flock would follow Mgijima instead. When Msikinya died in 1914, Mgijima continued the work, holding the title of Commander in Chief of the

13. Edgar 1977 p67

14 Millard 1990 p78 (Methodist Conference in Queenstown 1912. Yearbook 1999)

amaSirayeli¹⁵

5.5. MGIJIMA'S LIFE AT NTABELANGA

It is very interesting to speak about someone you know and his or her origins. Even the community speaks favourably and constructively about such a person because he or she might have become a source of hope and life among them as a community.

It is very important to know about the background of Enock J. Mgijima, the founder and leader of the amaSirayeli. Mgijima was born at Bulhoek near Queenstown in 1858. He was the third of the four sons and five daughters of Jonas Macaws Mgijima¹⁶ Mgijima originated from the Hlubi tribe, the Radebes and the Mtimkhulus.

During the Mfecane, Chief Hintsa of the Gcalekas accommodated the Mfengu tribe in Butterworth in the Eastern Cape. Some members of the Mfengu tribe are still today in Butterworth and in the surrounding areas.

In Butterworth, Chief Hintsa ordered his subjects to give the Mfengu tribe some cows so that they would have enough to feed their wives and children. Hintsa commanded that Mfengu chiefs should also be respected and given land¹⁷.

After this goodwill gesture by Hintsa, some members of the Mfengu tribe spread around Butterworth while others left Butterworth and crossed the River Kei. They went further south until they reached the banks of the Fish River.

15. Daily Dispatch 1921 p6

16. Edgar, 1977 p17.

17. Ngwanya , 1999 p121.

Finally, Peddie and other surrounding towns became their new home. On the 14th of May 1814, the Mfengu tribe accepted the Christian faith and made some vows with an oath to the government under a milkwood tree (umqwashu) in the Peddie region.

The occasion was attended by the chiefs, ministers of religions, evangelists, men and women of the community, school children and their teachers, even the animals were grazing around witnessing the solemn gathering under their chiefs and Religious ministers. Rev John Ayliff was in Peddie at the time and he was the one who contracted the people with the following VOWS:

- i. We will honour God.
- ii. We will obey the government.
- iii. We will educate our children¹⁸

Jonas Mgiijima and his family were among those who followed the Wesleyan Methodist minister Rev. John Ayliff. He was converted when he settled in Fort Beaufort, so says Edgar¹⁹. He further commented on the conversion of Mgiijima's father. Mgiijima was a well known hunter.

One day Mgiijima saw an animal running past him, but did not take any interest in it at the time. He later saw two dogs following the trail of the animal. When he looked at them, he saw that these dogs were not ordinary dogs but wolves. He later saw that they had caught the animal. This reminded him of a Methodist hymn, which says:

Nkosi yam ubundithanda
Ekulahlekeni kwam,

Lord my God,
you loved me when lost.

18. Soga, 1910 p397.

19. Edgar, 1977 p57.

*Nkosi yam waman'ulanda
futhi emkhondweni wam,
Ndafunyanwa Nkosi yam.*

Lord my God,
you followed my trail.
I am caught, my Lord.

5.6 MGIJIMA: A PROPHET AND LEADER OF THE AMASIRAYELI

As the black people were in their native land, and were ministered to by English speaking missionaries, few of them could understand, let alone speak English. They did not understand the religion of the white people. Enoch J Mgijima brought back the ancient of days. One should remember that it was the early 1900s and black people had no stability.

Furthermore, they had nowhere to live because of the Land Act of 1913. Mgijima was the creative reason of the amaSirayeli's existence and search for an identity. Mgijima was not very well educated. The amaSirayeli feel that it was through Divine intervention that their congregation has lasted for nearly 100 years in this country. Nevertheless, through a seemingly Divine intervention he was able, in a very short time, to establish a vibrant and flourishing church. He also had his congregation wear a very specific uniform. The purpose was to have everyone dressed alike so that no one would be ashamed to come to church if they were under-privileged or poverty-stricken. He did not want anyone to feel too ashamed to come to serve God. Mgijima knew that the Old Testament is the foundation of every church. The amaSirayeli had to live and do as the Bible says, and celebrate the Passover for all generations to come.

In their search for truth, the congregation still uses the King James Bible as a guide. They know and understand that things are not always, as they appear and that everyone seeks to know God on his/her own level.

Given the above information, it would appear that, because of Mgijima's leadership, the Church of God and Saints of Christ was founded on some true aspects about Church history, textual criticism, Bible translation, and the relationship of the Old Testament to the New

Testament.

Realizing that a fully established church was necessary, Mgijima moulded the amaSirayeli to be what they are today. This not only elevated his role of itinerant evangelist to that of a leader of a newly established and recognized church, but also provided him with a vehicle to further communicate his prophetic visions.

5.7 THE TABERNACLE, MGIJIMA'S ROBES AND THE ORDINATION CREDENTIALS

The Tabernacle

Ntabelanga is for the amaSirayeli both their physical and spiritual home. At Ntabelanga, the tabernacle has a religious purpose. As the Black Jews, the tabernacle is a place for church gatherings, a temple and a synagogue. Parallel to this, in the Northern Province there is Moria the headquarters of the Zion Christian Church, which bishop Lekganyane claims as his spiritual home. Members of the amaSirayeli are about three thousand and two thousand five hundred from various tabernacles. There are thirteen tabernacles that are considered big, while others are relatively small. The big tabernacles have a maximum number of regular worshippers of about four hundred and fifty to five hundred. The smallest tabernacles have a regular attendance of about one hundred to one hundred and eighty churchgoers.

The Robes and the Ark

As Mgijima had no proper church building at the time, his tabernacle consisted of a number of Tent poles covered with canvas. In the tabernacle, there were wooden benches for the parishioners and an armchair or a high throne for the leader.

i. Now the armchair is kept at Temple No 5 in Queenstown. Mgijima's robes were confiscated and kept for display by the authorities when the police captured the Ark of the

Covenant in 1921.

ii. The editor of the East London Daily Dispatch²⁰ once mentioned that he was privileged to examine the attire of the bishop at the Police camp in 1921. Again a detective, John Tyobeka, from the East London police station, was proud to show people the Prophet's robes.

iii. Evangelists Ntloko and Mbayi explain²¹ that, It was in one piece and, like a woman's frock, was slipped on over the head. The skirt is scarlet, decorated with golden braid, while the upper portion of the costume consists of a pale yoke of blue silk with long sleeves of the same material and colour.

Mgijima wore a beautiful stole over his shoulder, fastened in front with small chains. His headgear was decorated with velvet and gold laces with two golden streamers dangling from the back. This he wore only on very special occasions. His staffs were hand-made out of wood.

The fact that the amaSirayeli even published the requirements for the prophet's attire from Lovedale Press at Alice, proves that Mgijima's robes were not merely a custom or owing to personal taste but a sign of being a prophet and leader among his people.

From the information given to me by Ntloko and Mbayi, it seems that the robe of Mgijima signified that he was a servant of God sent by God to his people, and so the amaSirayeli respected their leader as the anointed One of God.

iv. After some time the Ark of the Covenant was transferred to the Albany Archives in

20. East London Daily Dispatch, 1925 p4.

21. Both evangelists Ntloko and Mbayi explained the attire worn by Mgijima during those days he was alive and preaching Good News to the people.

Grahamstown by the government for safe keeping. It is fitting to find out as to what the prophet's robe was like? Ntloko says that the seizure of the Ark and Mgijima's robes by the government was a blow to them. Nevertheless their numbers continued to increase.

Later the Passover was then held at Kamastone around his homestead. He would wear his robes, carry his staff during confrontations and go in front of his members as a recognised leader. When the Ark of the Covenant returned to Temple No 5 in Queenstown on the 14th October 1996, the amaSirayeli had to reclaim it.

Bishop Mzimkhulu was instrumental in recovering some of the attire and the Ark. It is true that the amaSirayeli have been kept alive till now. This was done through reflecting on the past. A whole range of symbolic systems and stories that relate to human experience were created. This is seen from their festival commemorations. Mzimkhulu stated that as long as he still led them, commemorations of various events will be recognised.

Ordination and the Credentials

Another outstanding mark that the amaSirayeli are known by, are the Bishop's credentials that were described in the East London Daily Dispatch of 1925, pages 4-5. Below is the format of the credentials given to the ordinands after they have been ordained.

Whenever the Evangelists and Elders are ordained, they are given certificates after the laying on of hands by the bishop and other evangelists of the church. It is a joyful celebration when one is ordained. Family and friends come to witness when they are blessed. Below is the format of the credential certificate.

Credentials of the Church of God and Saints of Christ

Certificate of Ordination

The Stone of Truth

This is to certify that Bro--- E. D.-- of Saint ---was ordained to the work of the gospel ministry by laying on of hands and prayer by Saint, on the---day of ----In the year AD (20)----Upon the confession of this Brother's faith, he is now counted by me worthy to preach the gospel wherever providence allows.

I do this on behalf of this brother, as I believe him to be in good standing in the name of the Father, Son and of the Holy Spirit, from the Church of God, Tabernacle No-----Our beloved brother has a right to all ministerial powers trusting the Father through his Son and Holy Spirit to endow him with all needful grace and understanding that through him many a soul may agree to grasp each other's hands with love and truth.

God grant that we all may agree to lock hearts one with another in secret love without respect to race, colour or condition. Affixed by Bishop ENOCH J. MGIJIMA, Bishop of Saint----.ordained at---by---Elder of Saint's of----Elder of Saint-----Secretary Saint.

5.8 DRESS CODES DURING PASSOVER

The history of the dress code in the Church of God and Saints of Christ can be traced back to Crowdy. The following issues are important when one is preparing a Passover and all other festivals that are taking place during the year. All festivals have their own dress codes in the Church of God and Saints of Christ.

Whatever festival is recognized, the amaSirayeli wear the appointed attire. Each church attire is attractive and members wear it with pride and dignity. Mgiijima decided to give a great deal of consideration to the uniforms of the members. He also looked at the function of the church choir. These thoughts are recorded and are used to set the standards that continue to be adhered to today.

5.8.1. The Dress Code during Passover

From Tuesday to Friday men wear khaki shorts and shirts with sky blue sleeves, ordinary sandals and long blue socks. They hang trumpets on their shoulders. Women wear sky blue satin skirts and khaki blouses with white shoes. They still wear blue carnation bows on the left-hand side of their heads. This attire symbolizes bravery (*isinxibo segazi*). It shows that they have been freed from oppression since 24th May 1921. It also symbolizes holiness. When a girl in the church is married, she wears such attire as a sign of purity.

The last day of the Passover, which is the Sabbath day, everyone wears all white attire. Men wear white suits, white shirts, shoes, socks, a white tie and the Prophet's badge. Evangelists and elders wear their clerical collars, which symbolize purity. Females wear white long satin dresses and a white blouse, white shoes and stockings and a white bow. On this day they prepare to return home.

Finally, a black suit with *umthika* is worn every Sabbath Day as a sign of mourning because there are deaths throughout the year. Women wear black skirts and white blouses. Every member wears a church badge that carries the head of Mgijima. Women pin the badge on their ties, whilst men pin theirs on the *umthika* (black suit)

During these occasions, church officials invariably open proceedings with Scripture reading and prayer. Narratives are recited and acted by the group. Each time some reflections of their original understanding and beliefs that their prophet and leader taught are practices.

5.8.2 Festivals

Two recognised festivals from the Jews are the Feast of Esther and the Passover. Another important event is the assembly of the Synod when church affairs are discussed. These constitute the liturgical highlights of the church calendar. As amaSirayeli are classified as

Black Jews of South Africa, it is appropriate to notice that this section deals directly with them.

Wynia²², remarks that the feast of the Wilderness was called Black day because of the form of dress they wear. Two groups of songs are sung by the amaSirayeli, the secret and the public songs. The secret songs are those usually sung or prayed only on special occasions, such as Passover, Funerals, Weddings and the Esther celebrations. There are also those public songs that are sung at anytime during the year.

During such occasions, all possible means of communication are used to confirm the church's identity and to instil such identity to the younger generation. During these celebrations and services, participants are addressed as 'children of Israel' (*abantwana bakaMlindi*).

During the Passover, members from all over the country gather for festival celebration. During the time of Mgijima, one or two bodyguards carried firearms, to protect him. They carried swords and trumpets.

Today swords are not compulsory any longer, while the use of firearms has completely fallen away; men no longer act as bodyguards in the church. Men wear ribbons which identify their status in church, and are white, blue, green, purple, brown, yellow and red.

5.8.3. Hierarchy.

Six levels of hierarchy for men in the church are recognised: from the lowest level, Trustees, through the Deacons, the Elders, the Evangelists, and Grand Father Abraham to the Bishop. Trustees and Deacons wear no rosettes or ribbons but all display a badge that shows the face of the prophet Mgijima.

22. Wynia, 1994 pp50-51.

Elders have four colourful ribbons in white, brown, green and yellow, which hang right in front on their left-hand side as far as the waist. An evangelist's rosette has six colours: white, brown, green, blue, yellow and purple. The tassel is knee length. The seventh colour, red, is only added to the Bishop's attire: the only sign that differentiates the bishop from other men. Wherever the bishop is present in a particular service, seven colours should be displayed by the Shepherd boy.

The shepherd boy has a stick where the colourful tassel is hanging from. The aim of the shepherd stick is to honour the presence of the bishop in the church. When the church embarks on prayer, the congregation stands, the men lift up their hands with their eyes wide open. Women, on the other hand, bow their heads, but also keep their eyes wide open. As they pray, the members and whole congregation are joined by the little finger to one another, showing unity in the Spirit.

5.8.4 Women's style of dress

Women do not cut their hair, but have a blue or white bow in the form of a carnation on the left-hand side of their heads. This is a sign of the respect and dignity due to them. Women wear black skirts and a white satin blouse with a white carnation bow and a tie. One will notice that as in other churches, it is the organization of women that shape every church denomination. They are much more energetic and enterprising than men. They get things done.

As the Passover proceeds, for the two days following: Sunday and Monday, members wear a brown veil. Women wear a brown satin veil and blue carnation bows. Men and young men wear a long brown mens wear coat (*known as umthika*). This attire symbolizes the amaSirayeli as people on a journey. The blue and brown costumes that are used on this occasion establish a tradition which the church has preserved over many years.

5.8.5 The Passover Meal

The amaSirayeli's Jewish customs, costumes and traditions are communicated and displayed and have a special message to all of them. During the Passover meal, members are served while seated. As saints, they observe cleanliness in their diet. Vuba²³, one of the church members, recalls that they were instructed by the prophet to follow a strict dietary code.

They are not allowed to touch, let alone eat pork or food coming from the 'gentiles'. As a sign of health and cleanliness, washing their hands before eating is very important. They are also prohibited from mixing dishes, for example, milk with meat. In this regard, they observe Leviticus 11:3-10 and 39 to the letter in this regard.

5.8.6 The Trumpets

Mgijima instructed the men to use sacred trumpets and the attire known as *amagorha*. These trumpets played a major role, which was similar to that of the Israelites Ark of the Covenant. The amaSirayeli claim that their ancestors had trumpets because they were a holy people. Once they also had a book, because they were a wise nation. These trumpets and sacred books might still be in the hills surrounding the Bulhoek Mountain.

Ntloko assured me that he could not tell me what he knew about the sacred trumpet of Mgijima because they were not allowed to reveal that to 'heathens': members of other churches and white people. He did, however, inform me that they knew only a little of what happened to the Ark of the Covenant before it was recovered in 1985.

From the interview I conducted with Evangelist Ntloko, he was so happy when speaking about the church's law. He added that they always keep the law and continue to regard themselves as the people of the law.

5.9 BUILDING UP THE AMASIRAYELI.

23. Vuba was one of the choristers in the Church of God and Saints of Christ whom I interviewed for the importance of diet in the church of Mgijima.

5.9.1. General

Mgijima once uttered the following phrases during his preaching:

- i. This church would go through suffering (Eli bandla liyakungena ezimbandezelweni).
- ii. She will go through blood (*liya kuntyumpa-ntyumpeka egazini*).
- iii. The church will go through fire (*liyakungena emlilweni*).
- iv. But she will never disappear; she will never come to an end.' (*Kodwa alisoze liphele*)

The above mentioned phrases were given to me by Evangelist Mbayi of Shiloh tabernacle in Whittlesea. In elaborating on building up the church of the amaSirayeli, Mbayi²⁴ recalls a narrative about a big boat, which was steered by missionaries.

Suddenly a terrible storm of racism nearly destroyed all of the Black Jews. He recalls that the boat was broken into two pieces without the attention of the sailors. Mbayi says that some of them reached the shores of this country; others went with the second half of the boat. He confesses that he does not know where the other people had gone.

Then Mgijima, the founder of the amaSirayeli, came to their rescue by preaching to them. Together with Ntloko, Mbayi says that a God-Sent Star guided their boat to various places and eventually to Ntabelanga. So are the lost tribes of Israel came to land at Ntabelanga as the Black Jews.

5.9.2. Literalism and their Bible

Lack of a sound adequate theological training for the amaSirayeli is complimented by biblical

24. Mbayi was interviewed during the Passover of April 14-21 2000.

recitation. This places them on a middle level with that of a theologically trained minister. Another tradition peculiar to the amaSirayeli is their interpretation of biblical hermeneutics. Mbayi continued to argue that : *'As we have secret codes, there are words which cannot be revealed to other people.'*

The secret code used, is a language used for different connotations from the ordinary. Such language is used when the Bible is read, and **'Amen'** is pronounced after each verse by the reader and the congregation follows. This tradition started with prophet Mjijima during his establishment of his church.

He introduced the use of the Appleyard Bible version. In using the Appleyard version, in which certain grammatical forms and words are not found from modern Bibles. When the amaSirayeli read this version, they feel very near to Mjijima and to God by their own literal interpretation of the Bible.

Songs from hymns are engraved in their minds. An outsider might think that amaSirayeli are a congregation that has no hymn-books. It is through Sabbath school teachings that by elders that make them unique.

5.9. 3. Baptism

When someone is converted, the person is baptized and becomes a member of the church. Baptism is conducted only to adults. A Bishop or an appointed evangelist conducts the ceremony of adult baptism in the river, which has running water. After baptism, follows first, the service of receiving new names by new members. The bishop, as the head of the church, leads the congregation. The name-giving ceremony appeals to all members because it endows the saint with a heavenly status.

The bishop addresses Saints and he gives new adopted names such as Evangelist, Elder,

Sister, Mary to them. Membership does not naturally follow confirmation. Another requirement is that of attending Sabbath school in order to learn and recite the Ten Commandments, the Seven Keys and the Sabbath hymns.

Secondly, foot-washing is regarded, as necessary for the amaSirayeli because baptism by immersion demonstrates the burial of the old life to the rebirth into a new spiritual life. Foot washing is part of an invitation for acceptance into the church, which is the body of Christ. Again, baptism and foot washing are presented as appropriate for the Christians to engage in Christianity. When Jesus washed his disciples feet, he was teaching them about the theology of service.

The amaSirayeli's customs, festivals and rituals come from the Old Testament resonance, thus nurturing the amaSirayeli into a better and stronger community. One Semitic rite they practice is circumcision, calling it baptism, or the spiritual circumcision, making the amaSirayeli of the Eastern Cape different from the Church of God and Saints of Christ of Ntshangase in KwaZulu Natal.

The Bishop emphasizes the connection between entering into full membership in Old Testament times and the present. Such a functional ceremony is the occasion where and when newcomers become part of the covenant of God.

Finally, Ntloko points out that Exodus 12 is the most important piece of Scripture for the amaSirayeli and adds that they combine such service of baptism with the Pesach (Passover) festival. During festivals, they sacrifice a lamb 'to appease God'.

Ntloko adds that they do not follow a Christian calendar but a Jewish one in determining the dates of the festivals. Although, believing in the communion of all believers, they do not confess nor sing the Apostles' Creed. For me as the researcher this was quite amazing. On asking why not, they did not provide a straightforward answer. Therefore, I decided to leave

them on that matter although it is of great theological importance.

5.9.4. The amaSirayeli as New People

Reasons for the amaSirayeli not to evangelise other people of another community will be outlined shortly. During the Mgijima era, the amaSirayeli wore sandals and skirts, declaring *I am an umSirayeli* so as to distinguish themselves from other church when they were being rounded up for internment camps. While the government was at war with the amaSirayeli in 1921, female members organized themselves to support their respective congregations. As primary social institutions, in the community, these congregations served to maintain ethnic ties and to reinforce a specific cultural identity.

Two generations later, the congregations of the amaSirayeli are undergoing a significant transformation into ethnic congregations. These groups are all members of the Church of God and Saints of Christ (the amaSirayeli). They have different leaders of the same community.

Groups which were once at war with one another are now pray and worship together with common songs, liturgies and religious understandings. Those who distanced themselves from the others are now uniting under a single, but fluid group identity and new subculture. As congregational entrepreneurs, leaders have chosen the newly constituted racial group as *abantwana bakaMlindi* their spiritual market niche.

One may ask why? The answer may be as follows: many members were increasingly feeling that many groups were weakening the witness of the amaSirayeli. The more separated they were, the more vulnerable they became and were thus a prey of other denominations.

However, contrary to expectations, these members are not declining; neither are they opening up to all. They are actually trying to become a one united congregation. Today, the amaSirayeli have mobilized themselves around ethnic identities that are not fixed, but fluid.

Because the experiences of the group vary by ethnicity, generation, class and gender, their identity tends to be more symbolic in nature rather than grounded in a common cultural or linguistic background.

Similar to the notion of symbolic ethnicity, a symbolic racial identity deals more with the expressive feeling of connection to a group than the commonalities that affect their daily lives. Building solidarity and mobilizing a congregation around ethnic identity is significantly different from organizing around common roots, as previous ethnic congregations have done.

As the group boundaries of the amaSirayeli are relatively undefined, ministers as cultural entrepreneurs have much saying and influence over the construction of the new grouping. Good relationship among members of the church was always a matter of great concern for Mgijima. Worshippers were expected not to speak evil of other members.

No one should undermine the other person. Bishop Mzimkhulu later emphasized that if people could not speak good words about others even if they are sinners, then one should hold his peace. This is in fact what Mgijima himself had taught. This was and continues to be imperative for all those who are members of his church.

5.9.5 Uniqueness of the amaSirayeli

A question frequently posed by outsiders is whether members of this church are courageous enough to reach out to people through their preaching. Can this group gain followers in any other manner except through music? If there is reluctance to reach out, what is the reason? A general answer is that proselytizing entails a process of identification with a certain belief or code of conduct.

The identity of ancient Israel as a distinct ethnic group attracted much attention from this group. It is widely accepted by Bright that the Deuteronomic history, which describes the pre-

monarchic and monarchic periods in the history of Israel from its establishment (in approximately 1200 BC) until the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC, was formulated as a response to Israel's identity crisis after its exile, and complete assimilation through cultural diffusion and eradication was a realistic threat. The function of this tradition may have been precisely to preserve the original identity of the amaSirayeli, but it resulted in a more xenophobic attitude. A nation or tribe is exposed to many different influences when it is in the process of becoming established (a very important phase in the history of the amaSirayeli). Such influences made a constructive contribution in their forming an identity that is important to them.

It was virtually impossible to define their identity before the Bulhoek Massacre, or to give a clear account of their social processes in the quest for forming their identity. Obviously, it is no simple matter to compare their ecclesiology with that of biblical Israel. Nevertheless, studying the amaSirayeli as a pre-industrial group of 1911-1921, with their unique characters, has cast light on their socio-cultural structures.

5.9.6. Characteristics of a Family Circle

One of the amaSirayeli's distinctive characteristics is their focus on the family. They are not supposed to marry outside their church family except when an outsider becomes a member of the church as a result of proselytization. In earlier times, one could be a member of the church only by birth, but now outsiders are allowed to join the church. Judaism appeals to the amaSirayeli because of the exceptionally strong concept of the extended family. This is deeply rooted in their minds.

God is seen as the Father of a specific family of people that has the same ethnic source of identity. Such a type of bonding, also took place during slavery. If a male non-member wishes to marry a girl from this church, he must undergo certain rituals and purification processes. He is taken to a river and is baptized by immersion, after which an animal is slaughtered and eaten.

The custom symbolizes a double purification process. This is through fire and water after which his head is shaved as a sign of acceptance in the church. The member has to observe all the customs of the group. After this any member of the clergy can solemnize the marriage ceremony. When a woman from another church marries umSirayeli, she must undergo certain rituals to be accepted into the church. She will also be baptized.

5.9.7. Theological Training of the Congregation

As there is no formal theological training for members of the amaSirayeli, evangelists and elders of the church, receive their training first, and afterwards train their members in their Sabbath School. The training is conducted in order to develop their members theologically and doctrinally.

Charlton Mzimkhulu, another bishop who held office after Mgijima's death, told his son Jehu Mzimkhulu, the previous bishop, about the book-reciting tradition. Present bishops of the amaSirayeli seek to give priority of place to the Bible as the necessary starting point for learning. Good as it seems, but they do not depart from them but dwell there until their end.

Mgijima would enlighten his people about the foundation of the Old Testament scriptures. This was amazing to some missionaries who had to ask him to preach to their Native Churches. Through the biblical studies and recitation, it is worth noting that the views of Mgijima and Crowdy contain both Jewish and Christian elements. Many major theological themes of the amaSirayeli have some important Jewish overtones.

Problems related to historical doctrines, except petty problems pertaining to leadership, have to be resolved by the discipline committee in the tabernacle. When I interviewed Mbayi, I found it very remarkable when he pointed out that for them, education started from cradle. It is also

remarkable that Mgijima could achieve so much in spite of a lack of formal education. Through their religious zeal, today the amaSirayeli continue to grow spiritually and numerically.

5.9.7. Ethnic Grouping and Solidarity during the Clashes

It was mentioned earlier that the Seven Keys and the Ten Commandments were Mgijima's code of conduct and the amaSirayeli's common life. An establishment of congregations around ethical and racial identity, instead of national culture or language as with the amaSirayeli, raises the following issues for the study of ethnic institutions:

- i. What factors influence the generational transition of ethnic congregations so that they assimilate, remain ethnic-specific, or transform into an ethnic entity?
- ii. How do leaders build solidarity around new groupings of people who shared no prior association?
- iii. How do congregations give appropriate expression to group identities that are new?

5.9.8. Assimilation Theories

This view of ethnicity tends to see assimilation, in particular, acculturation, as the eventual outcome of contact between different groups. The influences of public education and media homogenize different ethnic groups so that African-born and raised generations share a common language and culture.

As Africans assimilate culturally and socially, they no longer need ethnic institutions to provide distinct, language-based services or a sense of community and belonging. Not only do individuals acculturate, but ethnic institutions assimilate into the African religious landscape as well. It is suggested that ethnic churches de-ethnicize as they adapt to generational differences.

Immigrant congregations, preserving the culture for newcomers, maintain language and ethnic traditions. As the older generation dies out, congregations broaden their target group and create an environment that would attract those outside the immigrant population.

The process of accommodating English-speaking members and incorporating families of mixed marriages led to the transition from ethnic congregations to multi-ethnic congregations.

This straight-line trajectory of assimilation assumed that generational, cultural changes are the primary determinants of church organizational form and congregational culture. Below I would like to mention few instances concerning the assumptions of cultural theories.

Firstly, it assumes that cultural distinctions serve as the basis for group solidarity and mobilization. In contrast, culture is an implication or result of group boundary formation rather than a primary and definitional characteristic of an ethnic group.

Here one cannot predict which cultural characteristics actors will consider as definitive of the group. For example, what binds an umSirayeli to another may not be a traditional African value, but rather inclusion together within their ecclesiological identity.

Secondly, the persistence of Mgijima during the negotiations and the amaSirayeli's aggressiveness despite the government caused them to shift their challenges.

Thirdly, an increase in the distinction of religious identity does not necessarily signal a concurrent decrease in ethnic or racial identity. Even though the amaSirayeli have primarily converted to a Jewish / Christian faith, their religious identities are not necessarily in conflict with their ethnic identities. In fact, religious and racial identities may intersect and become integrated rather than competing with each other.

Congregations continue to organize around ethnicity to further religious efforts such as evangelism, thereby promoting both ethnic consciousness and religious awakenings. Sociologists have developed theories on the emergence, revitalization, and social construction of ethnicity, and have argued that re-organization of groups into larger-scale ethnic identities results from modernization and competition over resources.

Groups with common interests find that mobilization along ethnic and racial boundaries makes them more competitive. This is clearly recognized, for instance, when soldiers are mobilized into one place for training. Group consciousness and unity will develop in pursuit of common interests.

At some stage some groups are organized to secure concrete political gains in areas such as jobs, housing, training areas, church buildings and educational access. If competition encourages the emergence and re-emergence of ethnic solidarity, then a decline in competition should decrease the need for ethnic animosity.

The church of Mgijima, during his era, organized themselves to fight against oppression due to an eschatological call. It is this kind of ethnic solidarity that causes them even today to commemorate the 1921 Bulhoek Massacre. It is also that same courage that causes them still to be active and vibrant. The following are additional issues that are important in their spiritual lives.

- i. Spiritual discipline, which includes practices such as praying three times a day, praise, worship, confession, fasting, meditation and study.
- ii. Christian discipleship which calls for the fulfilment of their duties to the body of Christ. The amaSirayeli are committed to such a lifestyle.
- iii. They glorify God with their bodies because they believe that their bodies are the temple of God. They use neither tobacco nor alcohol as in their view that defile their bodies.

iv. To Mgijima the family was the most basic unit of human relationship and as such it formed a foundation for his church. The hierarchy consists of family members. The evangelists, elders, grandfathers and grandmothers are all related to one another. The amaSirayeli are in true Spirit family church.

v. The Seven Keys are the stronghold of the church. This makes it virtually impossible that a member of the church will be arrested for drinking alcohol or abusing women.

vi. When the amaSirayeli pray, an emphasis is placed on 1 Tim 2:8-10: I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or dispute. I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God.

5.10 THE SEVEN KEYS: THE PLAN OF GOD

The amaSirayeli, as the body of the first Black Jews in South Africa, is a community that is sustained by regular searching of the Scriptures and listening to spiritual guidance. According to an oral tradition, a Lunar Star (*uzatshoba*) flashed at night above Mgijima's house in 1910. His brother Josiah, who was living near him, noticed it but as it was at night, he went back to sleep.

The next day he woke up early and went to his brother's homestead, where he found Enoch awake and writing. His brother asked him a question which he could not answer, instead Enoch pointed at the written exercise book that was on the table.

He went on to explain that the content had been given to him as the Seven Keys and the Ten Commandments. He was told that these were the plans of salvation. Mgijima believed and thought that these were concrete and practical models for winning the world.

Although Dokoda believes that the Seven Keys and Ten Commandments were given to

Mgijima²⁵, yet they were exactly the same keys that had been revealed to Crowdy. No member of the body believes that Mgijima might not have inherited them from Crowdy.

Ntloko²⁶ admits that the Seven Keys and the Ten Commandments were given to Crowdy. Mgijima was the last to inherit the keys, which were the only plan of salvation (*izitshixo ezisixhenxe ezizi kukuphela kocebano*).

During the course of 1919, at a revival meeting at Kamastone, Mgijima was heard to be praying: *'I fully agree my Lord, use me. I will go and preach to your people.'* The congregation was astonished at what they heard. After this revival event, Mgijima studied and preached the Seven Keys and Ten Commandments. Ntloko²⁷ says that Mgijima dedicated his home to the congregation that he converted.

The message from God was that He would destroy the world and no one would survive. Ntloko referred me to the Seven Keys, the weapons of the plan of salvation. As I have noticed that after baptism, new members receive new names, and then they commit themselves by uttering the following words: ***'I bind myself unto the Seven Keys and the Ten Commandments because they are my way to eternal life.'***

Ntloko argues that if a member does not uphold the Seven Keys, he is not a saint of the church. Dokoda reminds his members of the first message from Mgijima by saying:

i. The Lord God has given me a message. God says that I should gather up his sheep into the cave because there is a great hailstorm that is coming.' (*UYehova uThixo undiyalele*

25. Dokoda, Shiloh Passover 14-21 April 2001.

26. Ntloko, Queenstown Passover 14-21 April 2001.

27. Ibid, during an interview between 14-21 April 2001.

ukuba ndihlanganise iigusha zakhe emqolombeni ngokuba kuza isiphango esikhulu²⁸. As Mjijima was still a member of the Methodist Church, he preached to various churches on invitation. One Sunday his message was as follows:

ii. 'God says that you do worship him, but you worship him with trickery. Abandon your tricks because He is coming to destroy the world. On that day neither the bird in the air, nor the meerkat in the hole nor the fish in the water will know rest.' (UYehova uthi niyamkhonza kodwa nimkhonza ngeqhinga. Uthi phumani eqhingeni ngoba ilizwe uza kulitshabalalisa kungasali nento. lintaka esibhakabhekeni, negala emqolombeni kunye nentlanzi emanzini aziyi kuphumla).

The dominant churches in the area were the Methodist Church at Kamastone under Rev Metcalfe, the Moravian Church at Shiloh under Revs Sonderberg and Sherif and the Presbyterian Churches at Shiloh under Rev Reed.

Rev Metcalfe told these other ministers how good Mjijima's preaching was and that he called heathens to repent. Because the other ministers were impressed, they invited him to preach in their churches as well. At Shiloh, Mjijima started his preaching by saying:

iii. 'I have come to open a furrow that does not conduct water and to direct water.' (Ndize kuvula umjelo ongangeni manzi ukuze akwazi ukubaleka).

Rev Sonderberg was pleased with Mjijima's preaching. He was under the impression that Mjijima would be able to help him to halt his declining membership. Sonderberg, however, was unaware that he was losing members day by day while Mjijima was building a congregation with members of other churches, as Ntloko testified.

28. Words of Enoch, 1911, uttered by Dokoda on the 14-21 April 2001.

Mgijima's prophetic preaching and teachings led to the growth of his own church but not that of Sonderberg. Respect for Mgijima grew among his members and he was regarded not merely as a great leader and administrator, but also as a prophet. Even today, the church views Mgijima as one of the prophetic orators in the Old Testament tradition. Dokoda reminded the congregation during the Passover at Shiloh that Mgijima would emphasize the strengthening and healing of the saints who fell during the Massacre.

Dokoda would argue that the amaSirayeli would live forever until the Lord comes. Through the Seven Keys and Ten Commandments, Mgijima's focus was on the reestablishment of a generation free of oppression.

Dokoda relates that the Seven Keys, the Stone of Truth and the Ten Commandments, which were received by Mgijima, might have been translated as the 'Book of the Light'. He remarks that in a different context, the amaSirayeli called themselves the 'Stone of Truth'. This implies that they embody truth and are the 'People of the Light' or the 'People who bring light'. Each key has its basis in a number of scriptural verses to be covered in the following paragraphs.

A1. **The First Key: The Church of God and Saints of Christ** (1 Cor.1: 2)

To the ***church of God*** in Corinth, ***to those sanctified in Christ*** Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ-- their Lord and ours: 1 Cor 1:2 (NIV)

Evangelist Mbayi from the Shiloh congregation explains that all Scriptures were given under the inspiration of God. The Bible is God's way of communication and explaining the way to righteousness. The amaSirayeli believe that Heaven is for those who are saints on earth. Every righteous person will enter heaven and enjoy the banquet. However, Mbayi believes that the righteous will remain on earth and only when this earth is destroyed will they occupy the New Jerusalem.

Theologically the amaSirayeli have an attachment to Mgijima. At Ntabelanga, they waited for the New Jerusalem after the destruction of the Old Order. Dokoda believes that members of the amaSirayeli are saints still on earth. Therefore, the First key constitutes the official name of the church. It indicates its spiritual origins and rootedness in God and Christ.

Mbayi agrees that the first key is based on 1 Corinthians. It reveals the church's true nature and style. One evangelist, known as Mbonde, argues that a person who is an umSirayeli receives a call (*uyabizwa*). One does not just join the congregation, but is called to the church of the amaSirayeli. This shows how difficult it is, to be an umSirayeli.

I can agree to this because there are many visitors who always come as witnesses to their conversion after a long time of being visitors. When I listened to Dokoda, it became clear that after conversion to the church of the amaSirayeli, one goes for baptism. The church is not only rooted in God, but members are drawn in, by the strange power of God. They do not just reflect what the church stands for but embody the church within.

B2. The Second Key: Do not Drink Wine (Lev. 10:9)

"*You and your sons are not to drink wine* or other fermented drink *whenever you go into the Tent of Meeting*, or you will die. This is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. Lev10:9.

The Book of Leviticus 10:9 gives an instruction to anyone who calls himself / herself an Israelite / umSirayeli that he or she should abstain from any kind of strong drink. This key applies to all products that are made of grapes, including unprocessed natural grapes.

When God commanded his people not to indulge themselves with wine, he knew that sober minded people make right decisions. Here members of the entire Jewish faith are warned not to take wine.

Paul also shows the Corinthians how important their bodies are. He says, do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's spirit dwells in you? The drinking of wine is a way of defiling the temple of God.

Many other denominations believe that although the warning is there, it refers only to excessive alcohol drinking. Their members are asked to use strong drinks temperately. The Church of God and Saints of Christ of America, under the leadership of Crowdy, strongly condemns taking any kind of wine.

Even the present generation of the amaSirayeli follow in the footsteps of Mgijima by condemning anything that might disturb their sober minds. When administering Holy Communion during the service of Passover the amaSirayeli make use of ordinary tap water replacing wine.

The second key strongly supports total abstinence. Even the youngest of the members in the church knows that wine or any alcohol is not to be taken by members of the church.

They may not even plant grapevines in and around their gardens. The application of this key is so strict in that it encourages resistance against desires of lust. This also encourages members of the younger generation to hold on to one wife only. They should not follow in the foot steps of their fore-fathers who had many wives.

C3. **The Third Key:** Take Unleavened Bread and Water as the Body and Blood of Christ. (Matt.26:26-28)

26. While they were eating, **Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it**, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "**Take and eat**; this is my body." 27. **Then he took the cup**, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "**Drink from it**, all of you. 28. This is my blood of the covenant,

which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Ntloko argues that one should believe and accept what Christ means when speaking about his body and blood. Christ refers to wine and bread as his blood and body, (ref. Matt. 26: 26-28).

Like in many other churches, the Holy Communion is of value to the amaSirayeli as Christian-Jews. It strengthens their faith. It is an act of showing how they receive Christ in all forms (*ngandlela zonke*) follow on his example and do what he did.

Majozi²⁹ says that the Second Key is the foundation of the third key. He points out that water that dropped from the 'wound of Christ' is used during Holy Communion. Again the Holy Communion is the main event during the Passover Festival and the Feast of Esther. During the Feast of Esther, Communion is celebrated on the day before the day of fasting as a means of the preparation for spiritual journey. During the Seven Day of the Passover, serving people the Holy Communion is done for the whole duration of the festival.

The bishop would be assisted by evangelists who were by that time appointed by him. People are served from their comfort zone, meaning that from his place, whilst singing and praising the Lord. The Scribe would read the scripture verses that are relevant for the occasion.

D4. **The Fourth Key: Feet Washing** (John 13 1-17)

When he had **finished washing their feet**, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. John 13:12 (NIV)

Like in many other countries, it is African tradition to give guests water to soothe their feet after

29. Interview of Majozi at Shiloh Passover 14-21 April 2001.

a long walk. This gesture is a sign of warm welcoming the guests from home. The command to love one another was not a new commandment from Jesus to the church, because Jesus quoted the Law of Moses.

The amaSirayeli practise this welcoming tradition of guests not only as a sign of closeness in relationship but also as a sign of welcoming angels at home. This key signifies the relationship between God and human beings. It is a gesture of servanthood between person and person.

Vertically, a person has a direct relationship with God and horizontally, a direct relationship to another person. Jesus gave an example to his disciples by washing their feet. Then he said to them: I leave you with this example, as I have done this, so do this as well.

When umSirayeli enters the home of a fellow mSirayeli whom he has not met for some time, the first thing he does is to wash the feet of the stranger, before they discuss each other's well-being and other matters.

By doing this, the spiritual and social relationships among the amaSirayeli is expressed and emphasized. These were also the teachings of Mgijima the prophet; his followers in turn pass the tradition from generation to generation.

E5. **The Fifth Key: The Disciple's Prayer** (Matt 6:9-11)

This, then, is how **you should pray**: **'Our Father in heaven**, hallowed be your name.

This Key shows the importance of Lord's Prayer to the children of uMlindi. All prayers and requests are concluded with this prayer. The Lord's Prayer is the basis of all prayers and allows all other prayers competence. Human needs are recognised in this prayer.

God is identified as the provider of daily bread and, therefore, He plays the main role in human

survival. Postures of men and women are different in prayer. Prayer is, said in a standing position. Men keep their eyes wide open and look upwards. They lift their hands up with small fingers joined together. Women form a human chain while their hands are hanging loosely down. They bow their heads looking down towards the ground.

In this respect, there is a difference between Mgijima and Crowdy's group. In the latter, both women and men lift up their hands when praying, and do not close their eyes. Both Crowdy and Mgijima's people wear long and short tassels and ribbons depending on the ranks given to the individual.

F6. **The Sixth Key:** You must be Breathed upon with a Holy Kiss (John. 20:22)

In addition, with **that he breathed on them** and said, "**Receive the Holy Spirit.**"

This Key signifies birth in the Holy Spirit. Majozi said that after one has accepted the call (*ubizo*), one would be baptized in the river through immersion. After baptism feet washing will follow, the celebration of the Holy Communion, and the reception into the church by kissing the new member(s) forehead.

According to Bishop Mzimkhulu, when members have accepted such a Holy Kiss, it is then that they are closer to God as his children. As Jesus breathed onto his disciples and received the power of the Holy Spirit, so shall members receive also a spiritual sign (*luphawu*) of being members of the amaSirayeli.

When one member has received the breathed of life from the officiating Bishop, then the whole congregation proceeds to kiss the new member with a holy kiss as a sign of welcoming him/her. An implication of this action is that the Holy Spirit is seen to be dwelling within believers and not as something that has to be invoked from outside sources.

H7. **The Seventh Key: The Ten Commandments** (Ex. 20:1-17)

"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Exod 20:8 (NIV)

The Ten Commandments are mentioned separately from the Seven Keys. Every Christian knows that God gave Moses the Ten Commandments, on Mt Sinai. These commandments are the foundation of the church.

All Ten Commandments are important, but the fourth commandment that emphasizes the keeping of Sabbath holy is considered more important than the rest. As the amaSirayeli are Sabbath keepers particular, stress is placed on this one.

Mbayi concludes by saying that the Seven Keys are the keys that lock and unlock the doors to salvation. Dokoda says: 'There is absolutely no mSirayeli who can be arrested for children and women abuse, theft and all these 'common day offences'.

If that happens, one should know that the same individual has not read the Seven Keys and the Ten Commandments, as they are the crux of our calling (*ziyinkasayiya yobizo lwethu*). Ntloko says: *and so if you ask us how we see salvation and where it is, we only point you to the Seven Keys and Ten Commandments. That is where our salvation lies.*

5.11 ANALYSIS OF THE KEYS

On analyzing the Seven Keys from the church's ethical point of view, one realizes that the Seven Keys are also biblically based. Comparing the amaSirayeli to other African Initiated Churches one needs to remember that African Initiated Churches qualify as Christian churches as do the amaSirayeli.

In the final analysis a church is judged by the Word of God she stands for. If the church is firmly

grounded in the Word of God, then it deserves to be known as One, Holy, Apostolic and Catholic Church³⁰ The church as the body of Christ should always ask: Who are we in relation to Christ?

According to St Paul³¹ the word *ekklesia* (church) is tied with the verb *ekkalein*, meaning to call out from the world, not to leave the world but to live in the world and its society and there to be different. The teachings of Mjijima are just following that teaching of St Paul.

Again, I want to stress that a sociological and organizational aspect of a church is fundamentally of secondary importance. The outward structure of the church can be misleading especially when one's analysis of what a church should be is superficial.

The fact that the amaSirayeli give Christ a place in their devotional system brings them closer to the sociological aspects of caring one another. It is divinely true that a Christian church should reject sorcery and witchcraft, thus bringing closer to the Kingdom of God.

St Paul always insisted that his people should change by showing signs that they have genuinely left their old life behind them and that they have embarked on the new way. They must no longer live as Gentiles do.. Focusing on the church of Mjijima, it was summoned to Ntabelanga to be trained for the Coming of the Lord.

Even Mjijima demanded his people to change so that there could be a distinction between them and the non-the amaSirayeli. His primary concern to his people was that they should be one. What could make them one in a society where they preach Christ as other denominations do is their oneness in proclaiming the eminent coming of Christ? Mjijima was strong in his teaching that Christ is on his way to proclaim his own.

30. Dulles, 1974 p167.

31. Gal. 1:2; 1 Thes. 1:1; 2 Thes. 1:1.

5.12 CONCLUSION

Since the amaSirayeli are the first Black Jews of South Africa, it is fitting that they must live a godly life. Dulles³² analysis of the church in terms of images or models, has given me much attention to the amaSirayeli.

From the four models, two of them fit the amaSirayeli. Mgijima does not fit the concept of a church being a community of the disciples because his church does not share common religious aspects with other denominations.

Eschatological, the amaSirayeli fit perfectly. When the early Christian community took over the term, they claimed to be the true congregation of God, the true community of God, and the true eschatological people of God. The amaSirayeli should consider whether they possess aspects of a true church of God or not.

There are issues that have contributed to the model of Dulles that can be seen from the amaSirayeli. One may attribute this model to the church of the amaSirayeli for three reasons.

Firstly, Mgijima had secured a sense of solidarity to his followers. This was cemented when the amaSirayeli chose the path of death and effective relationships with one another instead of running away when the Smuts government threatened them.

Secondly, they chose to leave their homes and followed Mgijima. In here I look at the sense belonging which is still looming among them. As he selected and commissioned them, Mgijima entrusted in them a proven discipleship and properly faithful responsibilities.

32. Dulles, 1974 pp12-56

Thirdly, there was sacrifice among them. As Mjijima was their spiritual figure, the amaSirayeli knew that his words came from God.

Whenever they want to address the hierarchy of the church and the congregation, they would start by saying: *The Church of God and Saints of Christ. Bishop, the father of the amaSirayeli, evangelists of Israel, elders of Judah, deacons and the trustees, mothers Sarah, Grandfather Abraham, sons of Judah and daughters of Jerusalem and all our guests. All hai*³³

This shows the characters of unity, honeliness, catholicity and apostolicity, which are the marks by which one can recognize a church. What is not clear is the extent to which the amaSirayeli serve the wider community. Fact is the elderly, the young and the old people are taken care of by the woman's group.

Viewing that the monument has been built at Ntabelanga, few other projects and the continued negotiations for amalgamation of the one body of Mjijima, cannot give surety that the church looks after the wider community. One may be convinced that the amaSirayeli are service the community.

It is clear that the Seven Keys were designed in the way that they would fit every generation of the church. The fact that the amaSirayeli do not use hymnbooks but only the Bible as their Christian Holy Book shows that the church is advancing. Mjijima believed and thought that the Seven Keys were concrete and practical models for winning the world. It is alleged that one of his message was as follows:

'God says that you do worship him, but you worship him with trickery. Abandon your tricks

33. These are words that are used when a preacher addresses the whole congregation before preaching or making a point. This kind of addressing I witnessed myself.

because He is coming to destroy the world. On that day neither the bird in the air, nor the meerkat in the hole nor the fish in the water will know rest.' (*UYehova uthi niyamkhonza kodwa nimkhonza ngeqhinga. Uthi phumani eqhingeni ngoba ilizwe uza kulitshabalalisa kungasalinento. lintaka esibhakabhekeni, negala emqolombeni kunye nentlanzi emanzini aziyi kuphumla*).

This shows that the church of Mjijima was a church that journeys along with its leaders and has a purpose. They realized that there would be no other broad chest (*sifuba sibanzi*) after him, no other *Nkintsele* and more importantly, no other children of *Umlindi*, if they were going to allow Smuts to tread on them and leaving their leaders behind.

In connection with hierarchy, six levels are recognised. From the lowest level, there are the Trustees, through the Deacons, the Elders, the Evangelists, and Grand Father Abraham to the Bishop. Trustees and Deacons wear no rosettes or ribbons but all display a badge that shows the face of the prophet Mjijima.

Elders have four colourful ribbons, which are white, brown, green and yellow, which hang right in front on their left-hand side as far as the waist. An evangelist's rosette has six colors. They are white, brown, green, blue, yellow and purple. The tassel is knee length. The seventh colour, which is red, is only added to the Bishop's attire.

That is the only sign that differentiates the bishop from other men. Wherever the bishop is present in a particular tabernacle, the Shepherd from his shepherd stick should display the seventh colors. This is the sign of honouring his presence in the church.

When the church is going to pray, the congregation stands up. The men lift up their hands with eyes wide open. Women, on the other side, bow their heads respectfully, their eyes wide open of course but others close eyes. As they pray, the congregation is joined by the little finger to each other. This is the sign of unity in the Spirit.

As almost all of the amaSirayeli yearn for peace, since most human beings need a peaceful society in which to raise their children and live in coexistence with their neighbours, the amaSirayeli were never taken serious on the issue of land.

The next chapter discusses negotiations between Smuts and the amaSirayeli and the eventual clashes that resulted to the Bulhoek Massacre.

CHAPTER SIX

THE CLASH BETWEEN THE AMASIRAYELI AND SMUTS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines in depth negotiations that took place between the Smuts government and the church of the amaSirayeli. These negotiations put emphasis on the promulgation of the notorious Land Act of 1913. After 1913, burning desires by Africans were land occupation and security. These burning desires were like a thorn in the government's neck.

Through them there existed apocalyptic patterns such as Zionism, Messianism. Many other African leaders, namely Khambule and Shembe possessed land for their people. The, fact

that only few possessed land resulted into clashes between Mgijima's congregation and Smuts.

6.2 THE AMASIRAYELI AT NTABELANGA BEFORE NEGOTIATIONS.

As mentioned earlier on that Ntabelanga was a home base for Mgijima thus making it a safe haven for his members, traditional thought patterns and suspicions from white farmers played a major role. As he was found to be deserving loyalty and trust, nevertheless he was blindly trusted by his followers.

At Ntabelanga, the available land for occupation was on swampy ground. Authorities gave permission to few people to build on common grazing land, which belonged to the Crown. Mgijima's own house was on Crown land. When Mgijima summoned his members to Ntabelanga, more and more of them marched through the nights of doubt and sorrow to Ntabelanga, to be with him. As more and more people moved into the area, they built temporary huts wherever they found empty space. They were watched with suspicion by the community of Ntabelanga. As the church of Mgijima was an eschatological community, its remnants gathered at Ntabelanga by God's mercy.

During their summon to Ntabelanga, people believed that they were going to enjoy the eschatological blessings of the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit in their present and future dispensations. It was at Ntabelanga that they were to await the coming of the Son of God thus their entrance into the future glory.

The call influenced even those who were distant from the birthplace of Mgijima. They had to come all over the country, because God has spoken. As Mgijima was gathering and educating his people for God's own possession, so the church was going to be eschatological.

Soon Jan Smuts interpreted the Ntabelanga developments as rebellious and a return to African tribalism. In South Africa, General Smuts viewed Africans as problematic native. They had to be monitored and controlled by a white government. In the context of the Native Land Act of 1913, for the government of the day Africans were, therefore, accused of illegal squatting.

The white community around Queenstown was alarmed. Complaints of stock theft and the undesirability of having unemployed Africans near their farms, were lodged. At that stage farmers called for the destruction of the Ntabelanga settlement.

As it is customary for Africans to sing, dance and March carrying their knobkerries and shields, so it was with the amaSirayeli during their early morning worship. The amaSirayeli were seen instigating conflict.

The nearby people of Oxkraal complained that their grazing land was no longer available, and farmers also complained that the newcomers were stopping their workers from working and moreover they were thieves. These negative comments did not stop the amaSirayeli from worshipping their God the way they desired. In fact, Mgiijima refused to fall victim to these insults and insinuations. He believed that the hand of God was with him and his people.

Prolonged waves of natural disasters and diseases hit the country periodically during Mgiijima's time. As the severity of drought continued, there was an incident in which Rex Mattushek³⁴ was involved in. Rex Mattushek was one of the white farmers at Oxkraal.

Three men of the amaSirayeli went to buy fodder from Mattushek, but he thought that these

34. Rex Mattushek was a farmer who was farming near to the Encampment of the amaSiyareli during Mgiijima's era.

men intended to steal his livestock and shot at them. One of them, Charles Dondolo, was wounded, another killed, and the third man ran away. Mattushek was brought to trial for culpable homicide.

The witnesses consistently refused to appear before the court, as they only recognize the principles of the laws of God. Charles Mjijima, was subpoenaed to appear in court, but refused. A warrant of arrest was issued but could not be enforced.

Eventually the government published a gazette insisting that all South Africans both white and black, should respect the courts of law. As years of conflicts continued, it was in 1921, when the amaSirayeli refused to provide their names for the census, saying that God knew who they were³⁵.

They also claimed that it was because of his leadership that they followed Mjijima to Ntabelanga. Mjijima had brought to them a sense of unity and encouraged church growth. They saw his leadership as authentic. He alone, the prophet and chief over his area of supervision, exercised control over them. Mjijima was not only respected by his congregation, but by the community as well.

6.3 ATTITUDES OF THE AMASIRAYELI DURING NEGOTIATIONS.

One of the most crippling that motivate human's emotions is fear. Any fear has the negative ability to incapacitate individuals, families, communities and nations, but it can also be a positive motivator to move forward, to overcome, to conquer, or to seek new goals.

It should be clear that Mjijima was never a politician but a church leader. His preachings

35. The Bulhoek Tragedy Daily Dispatch of 1921, 6

were somehow interpreted as both political and social, because of the mass congregation he was servicing.

Gutierrez³⁶, in 1971, echoed some words that Mgijima once spoke when he was motivating his members by saying, Our God whom we serve will fight for us. He will liberate us from the hardship. Gutierrez was not quoting a politician, but a church leader. It was only his millennial visions that would make other people see him as a politician, though he was not. Gutierrez went on to say that *God* is a God who liberates slaves. He is a God who causes empires to fall and rises up the oppressed.

Mgijima seemed to suggest that liberation starts from the premise that the Kingdom of God is not only a future reality but also something that is present here and now.

As Mgijima called his people to Ntabelanga, he was calling upon God's liberation, for his people to enjoy the fruits of freedom at Ntabelanga there and then. His emphasis was on eschatological voyage with the amaSirayeli.

That is why he was relaxed when negotiating with the Smuts government. For Mgijima, he viewed God as the great negotiator. His eschatological ministry persisted and made him to refuse to go out of Ntabelanga.

He desired that his people should be saved in this world first and then in the next. Mgijima knew that the God of the whites was also theirs, but somewhere things seemed not to be Godly, and people were full of fear.

Looking at his enemies, Mgijima was not fearful because he knew whom he was serving. The Bible sometimes considers fear rather negatively. Jesus said: *Do not be afraid of those*

36. Gutierrez 1971 P67

who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell, Matt.10:28. Psalm 111:10 observes that, *the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.*

Mzimkhulu concurred with the Psalmist by saying that it was wise for Mgijima to fear the Lord, for He is the Lord alone who could deliver them. He added that God had protected their ancestors, and all through their lives, God had become their shield and mighty fortress.

Mzimkhulu went on to express the congregation's trust and confidence by quoting John's gospel: *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and the only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life* (John 3:16).

In John 14:6 Jesus said: *I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me.* Therefore, in terms of his faith, although the Smuts government thought that Mgijima could be attacked economically, socially and intellectually, yet Mgijima lived his life with bravery. He acted confidently and boldly to accomplish the purpose which he envisaged, knowing that God would never leave nor forsake him. He would encourage his members to go forward at all costs because the war was for God not for them.

Finally, as his followers could not be forced by Smuts to leave Ntabelanga, Mgijima was convinced that God was on his side. He remained visible to his members by word and in actions. The amaSirayeli preferred the realities of the new order to the old order. One of the crucial elements was to live *a new and transformed life* here on earth with respect and dignity. They then formulated and articulated their hopes for the future here on earth.

6.4 ACTUAL NEGOTIATIONS BEFORE THE CLASH

6.4.1. General

Meredith³⁷ has observed that it is neither the critic who counts, nor the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, nor where the doer of deeds could have done them better, but the credit belongs to the man who is actually on the spot.

That somebody is a man whose face is marred by dust, sweat and blood. It is he who knows the deep inner feelings, who spends his time for a worthy cause, the one who at best, knows that in the end the triumph of high achievement comes. These words would have inspired Mgijima when he was preparing himself to face Smuts.

Against Mgijima's heavenly visionary background of a large and looming war, the threats by the Smuts government that Mgijima should let his people leave the area were nothing. The strong faith of the amaSirayeli against the harassments by other Africans within the vicinity enabled them to reject any offer, railway fare, food that could transport them to various places that was offered by the government.

The murder and death of their members by Mattushek and the government's silence on that caused them to wish to be left in peace so as to worship their God. That Mgijima had an uncompromising commitment to God and was vibrant was a threat to an uninformed person who only guards the interests of the few individuals.

That Mgijima showed an uncommon commitment to his God and in the context of Bulhoek his people were not afraid, gave little hope of negotiations. Whenever he met with Smuts he would ask for a delay. He knew that he had to make an extraordinary commitment in order to obtain a sustained success.

Lengthy processes of negotiations in which the government tried to force them to leave,

37.. Meredith, 2002 pp199-201

failed. Not even the policemen who went to Ntabelanga to remove them by force could deter them. The amaSirayeli knew that their leader was uncompromising in his commitment with God. He knew that he was not going to quit.

Mgijima knew that negotiations were not between him and Smuts, but between Heaven and earth. Heaven was prepared to be closer, only if the earth was in obedience. As Black Jews their strength in commitment would bring them back to God. They were constantly in contact with God of Israel to draw strength outside the Tent of gatherings at Bulhoek.

They would go outside their camp to bear witness to their Lord and master. In this light Mgijima's endurance and willingness to be persecuted should be religiously understood. The Bulhoek massacre was for a divine purpose. Although outsiders could not realize that and called Mgijima's people *religious fanatics*, they could not obey any other save God the Almighty. The amaSirayeli were ready to resist any kind of government provocation. They told themselves that they would keep on going and accepted the risk that went with Mgijima's commitment. Before making a final decision to attack, Smuts also considered negotiations such as to:

- i. take no immediate action in the matter,
- ii. attempt another personal visit to Ntabelanga,
- iii. influence the amaSirayeli to disperse, and
- iv. persuade the amaSirayeli to leave at government expense. (The government would furnish rations and free railage to those who had homes, either private or in locations, so that they could return to where they came from).
- v. negotiate a general dispersal of the amaSirayeli, before he would apply for site at Ntabelanga which could be used for the religious purposes of the sect. such a site would not be used for permanent habitation but only for attending religious festivals from time to time.
- vi. arrange for all those who had sold their land and now had no money to be accommodated in a Crown location occupied by members of the same tribe.

All these proposals made no sense to the amaSirayeli and were unsuccessful. The amaSirayeli declared that they would let the government know when it was convenient for them to go. Other crucial sessions took place just weeks the attack in the month of May. The amaSirayeli again responded to the government that their present status at Ntabelanga should be allowed to continue indefinitely.

6.4.2. The issue of the White Farmers Associations

Besides the government that insisted in helping the amaSirayeli, there was also a positive attitude coming from the white farmers' association. Although their black brothers and the association decided to give the church a grace of three months, the Smuts government had already prepared for an attack within two weeks of that month. The brutal Bulhoek massacre had, already been planned. The government informed the commission as follows:

- i. The present condition at Ntabelanga as Mgijima has decided cannot be allowed to continue indefinitely.
- ii. The majority of those natives now residing at Ntabelanga were influenced by religious fanaticism. They had disposed of all their worldly possessions for the common cause and were now penniless.
- iii. Any attempt to remove them by force would be resisted; therefore, bloodshed would inevitably follow.
- iv. The community at Kamastone was not a criminal one, there was no proof of common law offences, although the amaSirayeli were breaking the statute law and defying the government.
- v. Smuts said, Now that Mgijima and his followers, do not want to back up, we shall fight with growing confidence, we shall defend our land, whatever the cost may be we shall fight in the hills and in the fields and we shall never surrender.
- vi. But let us give them the last warning, the commissioner should call them for the last chance.

The last statement opened again a door for negotiation. The commissioner called the amaSirayeli and the following resolutions were final.

6.4.3. The Last Offers from the Government to the amaSirayeli.

The commissioner, Mr Nightingale, visited Bulhoek to discuss the situation. The delegation put the same conditions that were contained in the previous report, but the offer was again rejected. The Government again presented the amaSirayeli with a list of proposals in order to assist them with moving if, they so decide:

- i. providing free railage to those who had homes.
- ii. the government was prepared to consider an application for a site at Bulhoek.
- iii. the government was willing to give them free food.
- iv. the government was willing to give black people land away from where they were.

It was clear that the amaSirayeli did not want to leave the place. They believed that they were in their site legally. They rejected the offer from the Government. The amaSirayeli maintained their attitude. When they refused to be moved from Ntabelanga, it was because they were obeying God. This was their theology of the land.

The amaSirayeli unambiguously argued that it was the Will of God that they should settle at Ntabelanga. Furthermore they had several tabernacles at Ntabelanga. They also wished to have their major ceremonies there as this is where their ancestors could continue to communicate with them and they were buried there. Therefore, as servants they would obey the command of the Master God and remain at Ntabelanga.

6.4.4 What the Newspapers reported during Negotiations.

Many representatives pursued attempts to persuade the amaSirayeli to peacefully move, yet their appeals were ignored. Although there were many outside negotiators, however nothing came right. Below are some of the attempts from three different voices. Eventually, an ultimatum to move the amaSirayeli by the government was issued.

i. *Imvo zabaNtsundu* of the 17th May 1921p3, a leading Bantu Newspaper, founded by JT Jabavu, took a firm line against Enoch and his followers. Jabavu wrote, The Israelites of Bulhoek are a tough lot.

They have withstood the blandishments of the Native Affairs Commission and the Government to obey the laws of the country. When one looks at the Israelites at this time, they had not given the government any other course than that of coercion.

ii. The Johannesburg *Star* of the 17th May 1921p3, strongly criticized the government. It insisted that more tactics could have been used to uphold the looming bloodshed, thus causing the amaSirayeli to calm down. The editor commented, When dealing with Natives and especially with the religious fanatics like the Israelites, enough stress cannot be laid upon the value of moral effect. The Natives are looking for martyrdom. Why not save men's lives with as little bloodshed as possible.

iii. *The General Council of the Transkeian Territories* passed a resolution condemning the Israelites and calling on the government to enforce the law, if possible, without bloodshed. The Government sent the Native Affairs Commissioner in December 1920 to persuade the sect to leave but this was to no avail.

They did not allow their names to be taken by Mr Nightingale because their names were written in God's Book. As God is greater than any man is, they were powerless to give him their names.

This ultimatum expired on 24 May 1921 at 08:00. The commissioner of police, Col Truter,

then deployed his force of 719 police with artillery, since all these actions had been unsuccessful and the amaSirayeli had declared that, we should let you know when it is time that we go.

The Bulhoek Massacre had an enduring significance for the amaSirayeli. They found Smuts to be a coward whose actions went far beyond the acceptable limit. They sought new goals and meaning for their lives. Their request was clear: *Leave us alone so that we can worship our God in peace.* They spoke boldly, because they knew that God encouraged them not to be fearful. The image of Ntabelanga was primarily an objective designation of the Christian Jews and only secondarily a figurative description of the inner fabric of their common life, by remote association, a picture of Christ's continuing activity.

6.5 CLASH BETWEEN MGIJIMA AND THE POLICE AT BULHOEK

6.5.1 At Ntabelanga before the Clash

Mgijima was responsible for the care of hundreds of homeless people. He adopted and integrated many of his followers into the Ntabelanga community and gave them a sense of belonging. Mgijima was a pivot around which the amaSirayeli could develop their lives. They were encouraged to believe that the millennium of peace was rapidly approaching.

Mgijima would preach sermons, which would suit the time and the place where the amaSirayeli were located. At Ntabelanga, he delivered a deeply moving and personal speech about the second Coming of Christ and the rapture of those who were saints. The amaSirayeli were very moved by his words, which is why they stood firm with him. Before the amaSirayeli took arms, Mgijima delivered the following statement:

Be quiet and calm, my compatriots, for what is taking place is exactly what you came here for. You are going to die, but what is that to you? Brothers we are drilling the death drill. I, *being a Xhosa*, say that you are my brothers and sisters. Wherever you are coming from, we

will die like brothers. We are the children of Israel; raise your war songs for though we have no guns as them, we come by the Name of God. God will fight for you³⁸.

They chose the plan of God. They chose to dance the death dance. They led and supported one another to achieve that final dignity. Ntabelanga became the amaSirayeli's comfort zone because they could be with their leader. As Ntabelanga was Mgijima's birthplace, it became their ritual centre from 1914.

At Ntabelanga, they had a safe place to hide the Ark of the Covenant and the Ten Commandments. At Ntabelanga a place they called Gethsemane, was there where Mgijima used to go to pray.

Mgijima would normally retreat to the Mountain of Ntabelanga as Jesus retreated to Gethsemane. When ascending the mountain, he believed himself to be filled with the power of God. The people believed that Yahweh had chosen Ntabelanga as His eternal dwelling place.

The temple was the centre of all worship. They would be comforted by their prophet and continued to await the fulfillment of Mgijima's prophecies and promises. Like the prophet Haggai, Mgijima would cry aloud and say:

Take courage, all you people of the land and work. But if one is afraid, let him go back home because there comes a time, and now is the time, that men will trample on top of the bodies full of blood of their brothers.

38. These were the words that Bishop Mzimkhulu kept on encouraging the amaSirayeli with during the Passover celebrations. Mzimkhulu would mention that these were uttered by Mgijima when encouraging his men before the battle could start on the 24th May 1921 at Bulhoek.

The Lord of Israel says, *I am with you and my spirit abides among you, fear not!*, Hag.2: 4-5. The Chief Evangelist, Saint Charles Mjijima, would encourage people with Zechariah's words by saying: *Neither by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts*, Zech.4:6. Then the amaSirayeli would reply, *we would fight by the power of God*.

6.5.2. The Battle Started.

Negotiations did not succeed. The amaSirayeli became adamant more and more. The authorities became angry because the amaSirayeli refused to speak to them. Whenever they tried to approach Ntabelanga, they were turned back by their guards. There seemed to be a stalemate.

Many white and black people regarded the resistance of Mjijima as an unjustifiable eruption of violence. Unless the root cause of these dissatisfactions had been addressed no amount of security legislation, oppression, deportation, detention or banning would have made for peace. Smuts and Mjijima took up arms.

Edgar³⁹, tabulated the action taken by police as they prepared themselves for the battle. He mentions that the police force consisted of over 700 heavily armed men: 612 officers and mounted police officers, an officer and 42 troops from a machine gun unit, two officers and 55 troops from an artillery detachment, medical officers and a small staff.

On the other hand, the amaSirayeli numbered 1050 men with Old Testament-style weapons such as swords and knobkerries. They also had the Word of God. Without any sign of panic Mjijima posted his guards to guard and protect the belongings of the congregation. He did this by meeting his followers face to face.

39. Edgar, 1977 p146

The Clash.

After fifteen minutes⁴⁰ of shooting and fighting, a period of defeat and disillusionment was felt. During the battle, Mgijima was on top of the mountain, next to a tree, which still exists today. He treated them with respect and dignity and they died for him. During the massacre elderly and young men were maimed by the government. Women were left to tend to the wounded and bury the dead.

The battle lasted about fifteen minutes and 850 people were left dead, 129 wounded and 95 people imprisoned. Only one policeman was wounded and a police horse killed. As the massacre continued women were watching the massacre of their fathers and husbands.

By that time there was no way they could retaliate, other than kneeling and praying for them, whilst the bullets were tearing their heroes apart. Thus the Bulhoek Massacre at Ntabelanga caused history.

Although the women were not very prominent, they played a major role in restoring the image of their heroes after the massacre. After the battle, the prophet appeared and asked the women to pick up the wounded men of God.

Some men and soldiers picked up the dead saints and put them into a massive dug grave. Mgijima was later arrested for his criticism and sedition. Merriman, a member of the ruling class, accused Mgijima of seeking to be a prophet.

Mgijima was condemned and imprisoned for six years. His brother Charles and Gilbert Matshoba were also arrested. They were tried for sedition and dispatched to the

40. The Bulhoek Tragedy: The full story of the Massacre 1924 p8.

Queenstown jail. Truter's police later sent to the Kimberley prison.

Surviving members of the amaSirayeli buried their dead ones. In a macabre scene, policemen and soldiers supervised the prisoners as they dug three mass graves and buried their slain brothers.

In exciting development women took a brave stand to ask permission to bury their loved ones after the clash. To restore the dignity of the fallen, just before they could be buried, one of the saints named Paulus Gwazela, conducted a funeral service and commended them to the Lord and Saviour of the souls.

6.6 THE AFTERMATH OF THE MASSACRE

After the 1921 Bulhoek Massacre, the amaSirayeli church was left with many mourners: widows, disabled people, fatherless children and orphans. One of those survivors was Grandfather Silwane Nkopo. Grandfather Abraham Nkopo still has his Bible and a sword and brought them along to the 1992 commemoration of the Bulhoek Massacre.

Apart from sorrow, grief and the mourning for those who lost relatives and friends, the massacre left behind more refugees, orphans and a pervasive fear. We have seen how the amaSirayeli committed themselves in the fight against oppression.

As they refused to be enslaved of that government, Mjijima's first task after the massacre was to win the confidence of his followers. He started by convincing his remaining leaders and members that they had a special relationship with God.

By persuading members that their leaders could personally communicate with God, a foundation was laid for a close relationship and confidence in a personal God who is immanent and can be relied on even in times of fierce persecution.

Such was also the experience of the early Christians. There had been a widespread depersonalization of community relations in which the killers had been known to the victims. Those that survived from the tragedy were church members who were uneducated and uninfluential in terms of leadership.

The new generation started to build a cornerstone where they still worship. They are more educated and have more enthusiasm about the future of the church and their own personal lives.

6.7. THE AMASIRAYELI CONQUERED FEAR

Although the years of the 1920's were the years of the Great Depression, they were also the years of depression for the amaSirayeli. The centre of Mgijima's message during that time was a call of *Becoming Courage*. Mgijima was addressing his people as though God Himself had come down to each individual.

The idea of *swartgevaar* from the government reinforced some powerful racist tendencies. This idea became the ideal platform for both racist political and theological views.

Mgijima's rejection to the offers made by the Smuts government came not only because of years of frustration, oppression and anger, but also of African human dignity. At that, time there was an urgent cry for total liberation.

The theology of liberation was at every Christian leaders' mind. Despite political issues, the amaSirayeli were full of hope on conquering the situation. Instead, the government of Smuts did not react through ignorance that blacks had such aspirations, but the pride of Smuts told him that he could not be forced by any citizen as to what to do.

Smuts decided to turn this issue into one of violence, brutality, and detention of the leaders.

Mgijima acted with distinction. He did not shy away from the Word of God, which gave him direction, although the amaSirayeli were tempted to do that.

Despite being humiliated by Smuts, Mgijima received more zeal and power. The political situation was so bad in that the amaSirayeli thought it was the time of the last days. They also remember St Paul from 2 Timothy 3:1 saying, by this, know that in the last days perilous times shall come.

Maybe Mgijima foresaw times like these and offered hope to his members. Mgijima made sure that the amaSirayeli would not be troubled again. He comforted them by showing them that one can be fearless in a world of turmoil, hatred, war, and uncertainty.

The only way is to trust the One who says to us, *Do not to be troubled for I am with you.* Since the amaSirayeli trusted Mgijima, they gave their lives completely to the Lord.

Quoting from the Word, Psalm 112:7, Mzimkhulu said, *God told us that we should not be afraid of evil tidings: our hearts are fixed and trusting in the Lord.*

Fear is the opposite of trust. The devil continually tried to frighten them, but as followers of Christ, they were not to be fearful, but to trust in the Lord. Since the amaSirayeli trusted Mgijima, they gave their lives completely to the Lord.

Quoting from the Word, Psalm 112:7, Mzimkhulu said, *God told us that we should not be afraid of evil tidings: our hearts are fixed and trusting in the Lord.* Fear is the opposite of trust. The devil continually tried to frighten them, but as followers of Christ, they were not to be fearful, but to trust in the Lord.

Dokoda stated that, *we are not discouraged because some of our grandfathers and*

fathers died. They did not achieve victory at first. Yes, it sometimes takes several bouts with the devil to win the round. If we lose one battle, surely we are not losing all battles. Determination will cause the Lord to bring victory to us. If we have chosen to trust God and not to fear the enemy, then victory is on our side. We know that, our grandfathers and fathers chose the plan of salvation which is the only true plan of salvation.

The same approach of Dokoda is now used by the present generation of the amaSirayeli. Beginning with a strong will, they decided that the plan to amalgamate the three groups of the amaSirayeli into one family would strengthen them. They decided to accept God's forgiveness and reconciliation.

Bishop Shweni mentioned that the amaSirayeli had to decide whether they want to be conquerors or not. If so, the power of God would perform miracles in them, as they trust God.

For the amaSirayeli to conquer as their ancestors did, one of the evangelist known as Mwezo stressed the fear of physical sickness. He called for inner emotional healing which is sometimes the key to receiving a physical healing.

He emphasized that the Lord begins our healing from the inside out. Once we have been cleansed in our hearts and souls, then the body will also respond and experience healing.

Mzimkhulu⁴¹ remarked that when the fight broke out, those who were left behind were mostly women, young women and children singing and praying in the Tent of meeting (*intente yeNtlangano*). Their duty was to strengthen the weak knees of their leaders and uphold their prophet and leader in prayers.

In conclusion, the amaSirayeli were able to face and conquer the government with the

41. Mzimkhulu during an interview at Ntabelanga, 24 May 2002.

knowledge that they were not alone but accompanied by the God of Israel. They were aware that standing for the truth at times leads to suffering and sometimes to death. Mgijima had to stand in the gap between his people and the promised hope. What are some reactions about the massacre?

6.8 SOME DIFFERENT REACTIONS ABOUT THE MASSACRE

Various reactionary remarks came after the famous Bulhoek Massacre. There were reactionary remarks from Newspaper before and after the Massacre. All had different remarks but focussing on one incident, the Bulhoek Massacre. Some of the papers were against the amaSirayeli.

Remarks from the Newspapers

Before the Bulhoek Massacre, the Editor of the Daily Dispatch of the 13 December 1920 on page 4, said that, *that the authorities were not enforcing the laws, the impression is that the amaSirayeli were winning.*

Six months later, the Queenstown Daily Representative of May 6, 1921 on page 6, wrote a letter to Mr Turner an MP saying, *I regret to say that in the event of the government still neglecting to immediately takes steps to oust Mgijima and his Israelite people, I would willingly and thoroughly recognized and representative commando which may be raised for the purpose of quelling this Kamastone scandal and so saving the country at large the horror of Black Bolshevism.*

Whilst only four days before the clash, the Correspondence of 20 May 1921 page 2, remarked that, *a general feeling was that the police should immediately advance towards the camps of the amaSirayeli. Some people held that the hot headed Israelites*

(amaSirayeli) will not surrender without a struggle.

Christian Reactions.

The reaction by the white church leaders was disturbing. They showed little sympathy for the amaSirayeli. Cochrane⁴², citing Bishop Colenso, (Anglican Church) felt that the Bulhoek Massacre was an inevitable result of threatening behaviour against the government. Rev. Lea (Methodist Church), argued that the amaSirayeli were 'a fanatical politico-religious body from America' which had caused a disturbance.

None from them was able to realize that Mgijima was justifiable protesting against the land issue. None affirmed the amaSirayeli in expressing solidarity with them in their struggle for liberation. Christianity is supposed to bring redemption and dignity to all people, but the amaSirayeli were treated as outcasts.

In 1922, the Christian Commission realized that the union of the Indigenous Churches was much to be desired. Rev ZR. Mahabane of the Wesleyan Church argued at the General Missionary Conference of 1925 that in the interest of effectual evangelism, a recasting of Native ecclesiastical order should be undertaken.

The Missionary Society of South Africa was viewed as playing double standards. It was not clear whether they were on the side of the oppressors or on the side of the oppressed. This was unacceptable to African Christian leaders.

Justifiable, Mgijima, desired to liberate his people from the bondage of the oppressive

42. Cochrane, 1987: 128.

social structures. For black communities, it was necessary for the protest to be led by its own people and claim the land of their ancestors given to them by God. They knew that to own land meant having dignity and becoming a respected person.

That was the way Mgijima reacted to the suppression of Smuts. Eventually he had to be imprisoned, suffered a severe hardship and thus dies for his convictions. According to Mgijima's faith, he embraced the Bible and protected himself with it, teaching his followers everything in it.

The moral and ethical teachings by Mgijima became part of their heritage journey. The teachings of Mgijima were the laws that they accept because they came from the living God who created the world.

The Parliament's Reaction.

The widespread reaction about the tragedy was also debated in Parliament. The government sector viewed the Bulhoek Massacre as an event that was undoubtedly provoked by the Native Land Act of 1913.

Smuts, remarking about the Bulhoek Massacre, said that the government had done its best to avoid bloodshed. The government had made it clear to the people that whether white or black, they had to submit to and obey the law of the land.

In the light of this speech, I am reminded of Mr Kruger, the then Minister of Police during Biko's death in 1977, when he remarked by saying *Biko's death left me cold...* So Smuts was in such a dilemma. He and his troops were condemned by the world and by the patriotic South Africans. As far as Moscow, Russians called Smuts the *butcher of Bulhoek*.

At home, the opposition leader, General Hertzog, said that Smuts' footsteps' dripped with

blood. So Smuts was in such a dilemma. He and his troops were condemned by the world and by the patriotic South Africans. As far as Moscow, Russians called Smuts the butcher of Bulhoek. At home, the opposition leader, General Hertzog, said that Smuts' footsteps' dripped with blood⁴³.

Reactions by Community Leader

Firstly, the Bulhoek Massacre has taught the public that, African thought patterns could no longer be taken for granted. In order to better control people and to affect better co-existence of cultures, the government of the day should thoroughly understand their thought patterns and belief systems. Smuts did not understand the value of God to the African people.

Secondly, the government's attitude should have been one of tolerance. As for the reasons why the amaSirayeli did not abide by the law, the response is that causes stemmed directly or indirectly from the government who executed Land control Act.

The Act destroyed all hopes that blacks had on land ownership. It must be admitted that both the government and the amaSirayeli had a serious regard for land. Though reasons for this highly regarded issue for land vary from culture to culture, land produces food for all.

Neither the government nor the amaSirayeli denied this fact. Every where around the world, this issue of the land is taken seriously. One may take an example of Zimbabwe, about this issue.

Thirdly, divergence comes about when some cultures seriously venerate their ancestors who lay resting in the same land that is for food to others. For those whose ancestors are buried there, the land is regarded as sacred ground. Albert Luthuli, the great Zulu chief, a great

43. Daily Dispatch of 26 May 1921 May.

Christian and a stalwart of the African National Congress, once remarked that to deprive an African his land is tantamount to depriving him his soul. This may sound like an exaggerated statement, yet it conveys a profound truth about the attachment of an African to the soil.

Therefore the government of Smuts did not understand that ancestors continued to speak to black people, because they are the living dead. Although dead yet they live. Even those who have pieces of land do not possess it sufficiently because their extended families.

The government should exercise its control cautiously, because she is the guardian of the public. She is bound to care for her citizens both white and black alike and in a proportionate way. Privileges of self-expression-political, social and religious should be granted to all. There should be a policy of non-interference on all sides.

Fourthly, institutions like the Universities of Cape Town and the Witwatersrand during those years opened up and strengthened faculties of Anthropology, primarily to study African life and their languages⁴⁴.

Fifthly, Edgar argues that the government of South Africa could have devised some other means to curb the violence. It spent more than a year trying peacefully means to settle the dispute at Ntabelanga. She even offered incentives and alternatives to the Church of God and Saints of Christ.

She could have controlled the tension in a better way. Perhaps the word control is not the correct word here. The situation would have been better managed if there had been co-operation between the two sides. Those who enforce the law must co-operate with those to whom the law is enforced.

44. Walker, 1928 pp589-591.

What the Jabavu Family thought about the amaSirayeli.

Firstly, JT Jabavu and his son Don openly opposed and accused Mgijima for being untrained, undisciplined and simply mad by confusing politics and Christian worship. This accusation misjudged Mgijima's intent.

Secondly, the Jabavu's opposition to Mgijima was unfounded. They claim that Mgijima was an embarrassment to the society. Such reaction was a massive display of human weakness because the Jabavu's regarded themselves as the sole representatives of Cape Africans.

On the contrary, Mgijima was not an ignorant mSirayeli. He believed what the missionaries taught him in their institutions. They emphasized piety, virtue, righteousness and justice, of which Mgijima lived by.

Thirdly, the Jabavus who were against the amaSirayeli, never had been treated equally to whites. Mgijima knew beforehand that the whites would be hypocrites if they showed no understanding of the values for which he stood for. This was not clear to the Jabavus. Mgijima was regarded by whites and the Jabavus as heathens. He would not allow his members to be demeaned by whites.

Lastly, the reaction from the Jabavu has shown how some African elite view Independent churches. These churches are struggling to develop their African identity, and are seeking to revise their religions.

In African traditional religion and in Mgijima's mind, to be converted to a theology of liberation meant closeness to God. Religion brings about liberation to the oppressed and the poor. Therefore, the attitude of the amaSirayeli was aimed at social reforms.

Bulhoek and Bisho⁴⁵ Massacres

The lesson of the Bulhoek Massacre does not merely lie in the past, but continues to surface in many forms. Land use and state ownership played a major role in the symbolic significance of their resistance.

The difference between the Bulhoek Massacre of 1921 and the Bisho Massacre of 1992 is that the former, was led by religious worshippers, whilst the latter was led by political activists who were against the Ciskeian government. In both incidents, the people were protesting.

6.9 MUTUAL RESPECT AFTER THE BULHOEK MASSACRE

After the Mgijima realized that few community leaders and church leaders were with him after Bulhoek Massacre, he decided to build up his congregation. As a result, of this, his church group grew closer and closer to each other. They went through difficult times. It was heart souring to watch their fellow worshippers dying like flies.

Nevertheless, they believed that God had saved them for a purpose that needed to be fulfilled, if not during their time, at least by their posterity. The bond that they had between themselves and God was so strong that nothing could destroy it.

Their understanding of the biblical term *Immanuel* was that God was not only with the living amaSirayeli but was also with those who died at Bulhoek and even with those yet to be born. It is a fact at Ntabelanga both men and women suffered persecution and opposition together. By their share in Jesus, they were all made sharers in both tribulation and endurance. They lived in each other's hearts. Men who died together were buried in one massive grave.

45. Bisho Massacre Tape. 7th September 1992

Those left behind had to carry on with the mission work up to this day. They participate as joint heirs in the single promise and in joy that God's love has brought into their hearts.

Mutual love is expressed in depths when intercessory prayers were conducted jointly at the Tent of Gatherings (*intente yeNtlangano*). Consolation and nourishment from the messages of the prophet, prayers from women permeate their lives together.

Contemporary thought gave attention to the positive implications of ecclesiological pattern of thinking. It was time for the amaSirayeli to yield to God the work of the Final Judgment and thereby cease their mutual judging and despising others.

They must avoid any action that would injure other religious groups. As they are giving priority to the common good, to God's work of building his household, they should rather do that without self-esteem and self-interest. To the degree that they are truly strong in faith, they must bear the full burden of those who are weak in faith.

The amaSirayeli must cease measuring the faith of other religious members by their own faith. They must respect both the independence and the interdependence conferred by the common faith, knowing that the only thing that now ranks as sin is the attitude and action that do not spring from faith.

Mgijima should be aware that this sin is nothing less than a defilement and destruction of God's work. They must live in such harmony with one another in that they can glorify God with one voice, such as in their music and in clapping a hand as they do. In fellowship with every person, they should incur obligations of mutuality respect, closeness and harmony.

6.10 COMMON LIFE AFTER THE CLASH.

a. General.

I have thoroughly considered the fellowship of the amaSirayeli. I now need to say more about their belief system and its implications. None can express faith in Jesus as Lord except through the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 12:3) and none can receive the Spirit except by faith (Gal. 3:2). the term (*pistoi*) in Greek can be translated by the two nouns believers and the faithful.

More frequently, the early Christians such as Paul used the participial form of the Greek noun: *the believers*. Very frequently, this phrase is used to indicate the distinctive power of the common faith (*pistis*) over those who believe, indicating that both they and their actions are born of faith and produced by it.

Here, evidence compels the conclusion that such terms as believers, the faithful, and those who have trusted in the Name' were often used as inclusive descriptions of the entire community of the amaSirayeli. They were called and set aside as the only children of God who were to be saved at Ntabelanga.

When the prophet prayed to God for skilled people, God, who hears the prayers of his people, granted Mgijima his request. The researcher has seen shoemakers, dressmakers, tailors, barbers, trumpet-makers and shop owners, living a common life. The book of Acts speaks about breaking bread together, and this is the life of the amaSirayeli.

God is the object of this community. If He should prove not to be worthy of this trust, the whole structure would collapse. So too, the prophet, in whom trust was vested was the faithful one (*ho pistos*). Because of their belief, the amaSirayeli were introduced into a family in which they became the sons and daughters of the prophet. As amaSirayeli began a pilgrimage in the long line of exiles until they reached Ntabelanga, their company was linked to the total past and future of God's work of salvation. How does their common life contribute towards

our understanding of their inner cohesion as a community? How does faith affect the structure of their common life?

The fact is that all the amaSirayeli believers are considered saints. The act of believing creates a new person who lives in a new community in a new age, thus causing the members to live a common life. It would be contradictory, indeed, if believers did not find themselves bound together with new bonds.

6.11. CONCLUSION

Based on the above discussion about clashes and negotiations between the amaSirayeli and the Smuts government, I have come to the following conclusion.

i. Mgijima was reluctant to negotiate with Smuts because he did not want his good reputation to his people to be compromised. He was suspicious of other church leaders who might easily yield to Smuts demands. He also found some negative reactions from his civilian counterparts.

ii. It was clear that the Jabavus were unfair to him as a person because he was not as educated as they were. They showed exactly how some other educated African elite could be very negative towards other religious leaders who lead African independent churches.

The Jabavus were also not happy of some elite members of the community who shifted from the mission churches to form their own churches. They saw Mgijima as an embarrassment to them. Therefore, changes and upheavals also had some bearing in Mgijima's Church of God and Saints of Christ.

iii. Mgijima showed the entire world that he had put his faith in God. He could not yield

to the demands, which he thought were coming from the world through Smuts. Even the incentives that were offered by the government meant nothing to him as compared to the Word of God.

iv All of his members obeyed him even during the clash, the amaSirayeli could not back down. The saints were singing as if there was nothing happening in terms of clashes. The daughters of Zion as are normally called prayed for their husbands and fathers asking God's mercy towards them. Indeed, there was co-operation among all the saints.

v. The Bulhoek tragedy brought attention to all sectors of people in the world. There were reactions coming from all over. As far as Moscow, Russians saw in Smuts the butcher of Bulhoek and someone whose hands were dripping innocent blood of the Africans. Here at home the Bulhoek Massacre was seen as another horror of Black Bolshevism. Mgijima was seen as a fearless defender of his faith. He would not allow his members to be demeaned by whites.

The significance of Mgijima's eschatological visions caused him not to be compromised by anything. I saw him taking significant steps towards empowering and motivating his members. It is, therefore, true to say that Mgijima had always been a beacon of faith and hope to his church, even to this today.

CHAPTER SEVEN

RELIGIOUS LIFE AND ACTIVITIES OF THE AMASIRAYELI

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Now that chapter six has dealt with the clash and the Bulhoek Massacre of the amaSirayeli, the last two chapters before the final one deal with the general activities of the amaSirayeli. This chapter examines the ecclesiology of the Church of God and Saints of Christ of America

in combination with the amaSirayeli, with particular reference to their religious symbols, worship through music, and the use of scripture. Their creed and their doctrine, which are very different from those used by other churches, these characterize the amaSirayeli.

Like Paul (1 Cor 3:6-9), Mgijima became a planter of churches, an organizer of a far-flung little community around the country. He united clusters of desperate people in the startling confession that God had raised a crucified man, Jesus, from the dead and initiated a new age in which the whole world was to be transformed.

The survivors of the massacre became witnesses of the new faith. Though separated from the amaSirayeli whilst in prison, same as Paul, Mgijima continued to offer them exhortation and counsel about how to conduct their common life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.

I would like to draw particular attention to the significance of the amaSirayeli for interpreting as well as the moral vision of Mgijima. I would contend that Mgijima's ethics were fundamentally grounded in his character as a preacher and founder of his church.

We begin to grasp his moral vision when we understand that he sees the church as inheriting the corporate vocation of God's covenant people, Israel. We have noticed that the guidelines of the Seven Keys and Ten Commandments are rhetoric, consistently aimed at reinforcing group cohesion and loyalty within the community of faith.

Mgijima developed his account of the new community in Christ as a fundamental theological theme in his proclamation of the gospel. His focus on the community was part of his answer to the question:

What is God doing during the interval between resurrection and Parousia? In Mgijima's ecclesial terms, God is at work through the Spirit to create communities that prefigure and embody love, reconciliation and healing of the world.

The fruit of God's love is the formation of the communities that confess, worship, and pray together in a way that glorifies God. Such communities are noticeable signs of God's reconciliation of the world.

The vocation of the community is to become the righteousness of God, to embody God's righteousness in the world'. The theological claim about the identity of the church is extraordinary, but Mgijima was foundational in his thought.

Such a claim is possible only because he understood the church to be God's new covenant people, those who bear God's name and disclose his true will and character.

The ethical implications of Mgijima's ecclesiology are diverse. Those who are baptized, like Paul, he insisted, that are one in Christ Jesus, and no longer divided by former distinctions of ethnicity, social status, or gender. That you are in Christ you are all sons and daughters of God, and you all belong together in a single family in which you are all joint heirs.

Since Mgijima's faith was on a Jewish / Christian combination, his desire was to maintain Torah observance. He was not going to engender the works of righteousness. His aim was to unify the community of Christ. This is noticeable especially in the fact that the amaSirayeli adhere to the Passover as the Black Jews in South Africa rather than to the Christian Good

Friday.

7.2 SPECIFIC FEATURES FOUND IN THE AMASIRAYELI

a. Fellowship in Faith

When Paul the Apostle addressed a letter to the Church of God in Corinth, he used two phrases that characterized this and other congregations: *to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called [to be] saints'* (1 Cor. 1:2) The result of using both the noun and the verb in this description is that when the noun *saints* appears, its content is defined by God's action in sanctifying the people.

When the term *to be sanctified* is used, the reader knows that the sanctification has, as its result, the creation of saints. Do the amaSirayeli as a church align with such a description? This question is embarrassing, for the answer includes virtually the whole of the church's community.

It would not be difficult to show that every demand placed on the amaSirayeli is a demand implied by its status as a fellowship of saints. Time and space in this study allow only a few representative indicators as answers.

The fellowship of the church confers upon it the task of witnessing in the world. Saints are sent by him who sanctified them; this oneness in mission and in love is what unites them under one Name, one glory and one truth, John 17:18-26.

Watching Mgijima, the visionary, one looks at someone who listens attentively to the Word of God when asked to go and collect the lost sheep that had no shepherd. Mgijima would listen to the Lord the one who would come to proclaim and save his own.

The book of Acts pictures the Holy Spirit going before the apostles and falling on them, making them saints and requiring other saints to recognize them as such. The Gentiles were the first to be added to the group. Hence the Holy Spirit erased the distinction between Christians and Gentiles.

The church is, therefore, under an obligation to accept such new developments and not to add any further requirements to what the Spirit has demanded of the new saints. (Acts 10:44 - 47; 11:15-18; 15:6-11). This is also clear from Mzimkhulu's point of view, as he calls his followers the Children of the Watchman (*abantwana bakaMlindi*), although he believes only in the Father and less in the Son.

Within the church, the Spirit that creates saints also confers on them whatever gifts are needed for their empowerment in the work of ministry, (Eph. 4:12). Provision of various gifts so that no rivalry and no anarchy might appear is the work of the same Spirit.

As every gift is Spirit-bestowed, every gift is designed for the common good. That God apportions the gifts to individuals as he wills, the exercise of the gifts must proceed according to the measure of grace, (I Cor. 12:1-11; Rom. 12:3-9).

For the Christian-Jews the portion of the gift of the Spirit is beyond comprehension. The company of saints is fully qualified to provide arbitration when disputes arise, although the need for such arbitration indicates a failure to live by the common sanctification.

Saints should not defraud one another in any way; they should even allow themselves to be defrauded rather than become involved in disputes that demonstrate the absence of the standards of the Kingdom of God, (I Cor. 6:1-11). As saints, they must regard holiness as something to be perfected in the fear of God', (2 Cor. 7:1). This, is an accomplishment attained daily by presenting their bodies as a holy sacrifice, (Rom. 12:1), or by putting on the new humanity, (Col. 3:10 f).

To be a saint, one must act as a saint with compassion, meekness and patience. Perhaps the most inclusive list of actions required of saints is found in I Peter, where every exhortation can be viewed as an inference from the rule. *You shall be holy, for I am holy, (I Peter 1:16).*

Just as there is no use of a saint in the singular, so too there is no private or individualistic ethic in the New Testament. Every demand for holiness is a demand placed upon all the saints by him who, in sanctifying them, created a single community with a single mission and gave to that community some gifts designed to build up the common good.

To be a saint, one needs to become a participant in this common good. This is an action that requires all the saints to become what the Spirit had already made them to be.

When this requirement was fulfilled at Ntabelanga by forcing themselves in every action, Smuts judged them and said all what they did was the cause of fanaticism. However, Mgijima showed some signals of social and spiritual submission to his Lord. (222)

7.3 THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH OF GOD AND SAINTS OF CHRIST.

Sing oh! Daughters of Zion shout oh! Israel

Shout rejoice and be glad

There is a prophet in the land

He is teaching the Ten Commandments

Rejoice and be glad

Our father will be pleased when children stay in the 'seven keys'

Rejoice and be glad⁴⁶.

46. Wynia, 1994p 96.

The Daughters of Jerusalem is an organization within the Church of God and Saints of Christ, in which women exercise their roles as leaders. This organization was founded during Mgijima's era. The original purpose of the group was to meet the physical needs of members incapable of caring for themselves. Several committees took care of such needs, namely:

- i. The Look out Committee that cares for travelling ministers and congregational members
- ii. The Sick Visiting Committee visits and takes care of the sick.
- iii. The Widows and Orphans Committee ensures to it that widows and orphans have the necessities of life.
- iv. The Baptism Committee.
- v. The Pulpit Committee sees to the basin for washing feet, makes sure that the pastor has water during the sermon, and keeps all articles surrounding the pulpit clean.
- vi. The Pastor's Table Committee collects a silver offering from each member and sees to it that the pastor's table has a beautiful linen tablecloth and adequate refreshments for the Sabbath.
- vii. The Pastor's Clothing Committee makes sure that the pastor is appropriately dressed.
- viii. The Board of Trustees looks after the financial management of, the daughters.
- ix. The Storehouse Committee maintains the stock of food and clothing necessary for conducting the functions of the other committees.

Women have always played a major role in the Church of God and Saints of Christ. In addition to the above functions of the Daughters of Jerusalem, they are responsible for purchasing and making the uniform and accessories, such as hairpins, bows, ribbons and badges.

They also keep the church records of births, baptisms, deaths and weddings. Some keep

accessories of the church services such as funeral processions, mourning, foot-washing, blessing of children and their programmes in stores of the church. The following outline structures the organization of the whole church.

i. *Grand Father Abraham:* He is the person who officially opens and closes the meetings. He is the head of the church where there is no Bishop.

ii. *Grand Mother Sarah:* this title is given to the oldest member of the Daughters. She sets up local auxiliaries in places where tabernacles exist and ordain officers there. Her word is final and cannot be superseded by any one except Grandfather Abraham.

She also sets the times for meetings, receives credentials of delegates and appoints any committees necessary for various functions. She upholds the laws of the organization and annually makes a report to the Bishop annually.

iii. *Grand Rachel:* She is the right hand of and supports Grand Mother Sarah. She must travel and assist her in the work of the Daughters. If Grand Mother Sarah cannot attend a meeting, Grand Rachel presides over it.

iv. *Assistant Grand Rachel:* She carries out all the work and duties of the Grand Rachel in the absence of the former.

v. *Grand Leah:* She is the left hand support of Grand Mother Sarah.

vi. *Grand Mary:* She is the secretary of the organization.

vii. *Assistant Grand Secretary:* all official correspondence is her responsibilities. She is also the assistant of Grand Mary.

viii. *Grand Martha, Treasurer:* She is the bag-holder of the organization. It is her duty to hold and keep track of all funds. Annually she has to make a written report on the financial situation of the organization. She must also make an annual report to the Bishop.

ix. *Grand Storehouse Mistress:* She fulfils the duties of a head clerk. She is in charge of all the storehouses which provide the Sabbath attire for the church body.

x. Mother Exhorter: She is the counsellor of the organization. She is empowered to instruct the Daughters on all matters pertaining to their welfare, best interests and duties. If a Daughter encounters any problem, then Mother Exhorter is there to try and solve it⁴⁷.

During the leadership of Mgijima, the women held an enormous responsibility. We see them during the confrontation between the church and the police force, praying hard at the Tent of Gathering. They were frequently placed in pastoral roles.

During the Passover celebrations, the importance of the Daughters of Jerusalem is demonstrated. During Friday evening and Saturday services six women will stand up and speak on the significance of the organization. Each member would articulate the way in which participation in the group had enabled them to have a full and active church life. They would demonstrate the bond that has developed among women of the Church of God and Saints of Christ through the organization's activities.

7.4 RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES OF THE CHURCH⁴⁸

i. Observance of Sabbath

The church does not recognize Sunday as a day for worshipping God, but recognizes Saturday, the last day of the week, the day when God retired from work. On Saturday the congregation may not make any fire before sunset, as ordained by the scriptures. The meals are prepared on Friday so that nothing hot is served on Saturday. There is no coffee for a visitor to entertain him or her on Saturday.

47. Manual of the Daughters of Jerusalem and Sisters of Mercy (June 1898 - June 1948) Philadelphia 1948 p2.

48. Manual of the Daughters of Jerusalem and Sisters of Mercy (June 1898 - June 1948) Philadelphia 1948 p4-5.

Absolutely no work must be done on Saturday except by those who are in white employment and who cannot escape working on that day. Bishop Mgijima preferred his people to be self employed or at least to be employed by other members of the church. Even shops and butcheries are closed on the Sabbath.

ii. The Ordinary Service

Ordinary services are held on Sabbath days. The day is divided into two sessions, a morning session and an afternoon session. On the stage sits the Bishop, his evangelists, elders and two elderly women.

The congregation sit in the main body of the temple, and as in other black churches, men mostly occupy the right side, and women the left. Their hymn-book is the Holy Bible and some hymns composed by the Prophet. Their harmonious singing makes music more African in rhythm and in style.

The whole service takes about two hours. During the service the offering is taken. In the interval between the two services, those members living outside Queenstown remain on the church premises and eat their lunch.

It is interesting to note that during prayer or the sermon all are quiet except for the men and the bishop, who groans and expresses approval as befits his role of a mediator between his people and God.

Prayer is also an extemporaneous affair with the Bishop playing the same role that was played by Jesus Christ. The bishop transmits the prayer to God in the same way as Jesus Christ and the bishop does not say to his followers that, besides me you cannot enter the Kingdom of heaven, yet it is a fact that his followers admit, *uTata umi phakathi kwethu noThixo wakhe*, Our bishop (father) stands between us and his Lord who is our Lord as well.

This shows that God the Father has a direct relationship, not so much with the congregation of Mgijima but with the Bishop himself. There is no pulpit that may only be occupied by the Bishop as in other churches however, there is a rostrum (a red carpet) that preachers stand on when preaching. There are vestments or robes for preachers as well. At the end of the message the Bishop makes his own remarks and observations.

c. Discipline

As in other church spheres, the Bishop is unchallenged in matters of discipline. This state of affairs finds Biblical justification. I managed to receive the translation of the old disciplinary and moral code of the church. The following is part of the law of God that is normally read in the church⁴⁹.

- i. A brother who has anything against another should go to him at that moment and talk with him; if the other brother does not take heed he should take another and go with him; if he will not heed still, he must take the (*sic*) third one and if he continues not to heed they must bring him before the congregation and if he will not heed the church then he shall be expelled⁵⁰.
- ii. A brother in the church who will not obey the one in charge will be admonished two times, on the third occasion he will be expelled, if he continues not to heed. But if another brother saw him doing something wrong, and (*sic*) not bring him in front, they shall both be expelled⁵¹.
- iii. It is not permitted in the church that there are many ministers.
- iv. The discipline of the church is so strict in that there is no one in the church who knowing that a certain passage should have been taught and (*sic*) starts teaching it himself.

49. Dokoda at Shiloh during the Passover of the 2001

50 Matt. 18:15-19.

51. Heb. 13: 7.

Instead he should go the (*sic*) leader and tell him about that point⁵²

v. Slanders should be avoided by members of the church⁵³

vi. Preaching rudely is not allowed⁵⁴. A brother who has been seen doing such things will be warned twice (*sic*) and on the third occasion he is expelled.

vii. The money from the tithes is not to help people from their domestic difficulties; it is for the promotion of the work of God.

viii. A law relating to sisters is like this: it is not permitted that a woman should control her husband, neither to preach to him, she must bear herself quietly with all due respect. If she wants to know something she must ask it from her husband at home. A single woman should go to the head of the society not to the Bishop⁵⁵

ix. If any brother is the head of the church and found to be in sin, the congregation cannot discuss the charge. The headquarters in Queenstown should handle the matter⁵⁶.

x. Members of the church are expected to be humble, quiet in their bearing, courteous, kind and obedient. They must neither smoke nor take any intoxicating wine. If they do take any of these, then they would defile the temple of God. They must live a clean and healthy life, be decently dressed in their costumes and shoes made of cow skin, avoiding the use of obscene language and all rowdiness. Dokoda, once said when preaching that, an uMsirayeli should always be seen as the embodiment of what Mgijima was always teaching.

The church teaches moderation and abstinence in all things. It requires a strong moral fibre to do any of these things. For most of the men in the church who join at a mature age, maybe smoking and drinking, they should become clean as well.

52. 1 Cor. 4: 15; 2 Tim. 3: 14, 15:1; 1 Tim. 6: 3-5.

53 Lev 19:16-17; Ps.101:5; Prov,18:8;22:10;26:20-22,28:Deut.27:24.

54. Rom. 1: 30-31; Eph. 4: 29; Col. 4: 5-6.

55 Prov. 14:1; 1 Cor. 14: 34-35; 1 Tim. 2: 9-15; 1 Pet.3: 1-6.

56. 1 Tim 5: 19.

When Lea⁵⁷ says that the standard of morality in the separatist churches is lower than in the European controlled churches, he speaks out of context and is just insulting such churches that adhere to discipline. This is a sweeping statement to make. The case of the amaSirayeli which is representative of the separatist movement does not support this generalization.

The amaSirayeli church is active in trying to root out immorality. The Bishop of the Church discourages his members from going to court for disputes arising between one member and another. Although this move is commendable, the entire church does still go to court over quarrels that pertain to authority.

Even in the matter of a dispute arising between husband and wife, the Bishop has the final word of reprimanding the members. The chief aim of the Bishop was to seek reconciliation rather than retaliation or punishment. The point that the Bishop was stressing is that there should be fellowship among his members.

Even when one looks at this issue critically, one will notice that the Bishop would seek his people to make peace in all of their wrong dealings. They have still records of what Smuts and his men did to them. When asking as to why it is so, the Bishop showed me the history of the church.

7.5 THE AMASIRAYELI AND ORAL TRADITION

i. General.

In less than one hundred years since Enoch J Mjijima founded the Church of God and

57 Lea, 1928 pp243-245.

Saints of Christ, his followers have developed a religious music unlike any other. The stylized songs (many taught to them by Angels in divine visitations), featuring haunting, beautiful and harmonies have earned a unique place in the history of the amaSirayeli church music.

The musical performances as well as the history, doctrine, traditions, and worship services of the Church of God and Saints of Christ constitute a little-known, yet important aspect of African Religious expression in South Africa.

Many aspects of the amaSirayeli are a result of the founder's mandates and other historical occurrences. The sum total is not duplicated in any other known denominations.

Individualistic aspects include the observance of the Sabbath on Saturday, the form of the worship service, the keeping of certain holy days such as Passover and the Holy Convocation, rituals, such as the Whole Armour for receiving new members, and certain traditions such as the wearing of special uniforms by members and the marching of the choir during worship services.

The music and musical performance practices of the amaSirayeli also differ from the established mainline African religious styles such as the spiritual, jubilee, quartet, hymn, or gospel songs.

Although some of these styles are employed in the amaSirayeli, the majority of songs sung have been composed by members and taught orally without using musical notation. An extensive song repertoire is known denomination-wide, in large part a result of the teaching of songs at the yearly denomination-wide gathering in observance of the Passover.

It is a fact that IBandla lamaSirayeli is a fruit of Christianity that is rooted in African soil. It is an institution in which the gospel is incarnated into African culture, mentality and in community life. The amaSirayeli worship God in an African style which is not written but

spoken: part of oral theology. It consists of theological reflection which takes place in sermons, addresses and hymns. In this manner the church addresses the needs of her people.

After an address by one of the respected members of the church, one of the members is elected to conduct a witness service (*inkonzo yobungqina*). In this service, reports on events in the recent past are all given in the form of a personal recollection.

People narrate their own experiences of such historical events, which is different from recounting what someone has been told or what one regards as common knowledge. They express experiences rather than offering sequential accounts of chronological dates, facts and events.

In the style of the Gospels and Acts, they witness the power of the gospel as it is relived in their minds. Different ordinary church members testify about their encounter with the powers that confront them. One such encounter is the massacre.

By recounting the events that took place, they liberate themselves from the bondage of the evildoers. They also give testimonies of personal conversions during this time. Their understanding of testimonies is that they are not only stories of the past, but also have important theological meaning for their present time. Such stories are a treasure of oral church history.

ii. History of the Choir

Singing has apparently been an important aspect of the worship services of the amaSirayeli since early in the denomination's history. Once being a member of the Methodist Church, Mgijima used to sing in the choir and in the Young Men's Guild. After the founding of the denominational newspaper *The Weekly Prophet*, tabernacles routinely sent in reports for

publication describing worship services and Sabbath Day activities.

Singing and marching were usually mentioned, along with the other activities of the services, which included prayer, testimony and sermons. The reports commonly stated that the service or meeting was opened with singing and prayer, and a standard phrase was *at the fifth hour the trumpet was sounded and the choir marched in singing.*

The choir and its singing are integral components of the structure of all the worship services of the amaSirayeli. There is, in fact, no separate congregational singing, and the choir actually functions as the backbone of the congregation.

The choir is sometimes greater in number than the congregation, and many people in the congregation on a given day are either retired choir members or those choir members caring for children. Many people in the congregation, including children, sing along with the choir, and the children also have the chance to sing as a choir themselves.

iii. Performance Practice

An average of twenty to twenty-five songs are sung during the Sabbath service. Songs are used to begin the service; to prepare for prayer, Communion, or, at Passover, the serving of the Lamb; as an aid to worship during the Invitation, as testimony; for enjoyment; for demonstration marches; and to close a service.

In the typical choir arrangement of a local tabernacle, singers are placed in two rows, facing the congregation, with the women in front. The altos and basses are placed stage right, and the sopranos and tenors at stage left, with the centre aisle dividing the two sides. The Chorister is seated facing the choir, directly opposite the centre aisle which divides the choir.

Songs are conducted by the Chorister, who holds the baton in the right hand. Rather than following the standard patterns of choral conducting, the style of conducting varies according to the individual Chorister. The basic pattern is a waving of the baton from side to side indicating the basic beat.

The Chorister may plan ahead for the choir to sing certain songs, but he or she also chooses songs according to the spirit of the service. The style of song the choir sings at a given time in the service is in keeping with the mood or activity of that time.

The Chorister often steps in time with the singing, as does the choir, if the members are standing. The chorister also claps on the off beats of the songs. The choir may either stand or be seated when singing.

The motion of stepping in time with the song is often called *prancing*, while the directing of the chorister is often called *waving*. The prancing that is done by the amaSirayeli is a kind of worship. They leap and skip all over the show whilst singing. This they had to do when in the service, while they are praising the Lord. The way Mgijima visualised the choir he bestowed on it the title *Singers of Israel*. It is thus considered an honour to be a member of the amaSirayeli choir. There is no limit to the number of singers who might participate. To become a member, a member needs neither previous vocal training, an outstanding voice, nor the ability to read music.

Except that, singers must *sing with the Spirit, Sing with the understanding, and be willing and obedient*. As mandated by Mgijima⁵⁸ none of the choir members or a member of the congregation would read music from their hymn-books. They know their music off by heart. Every Wednesdays there are music and song practices for every member of the church.

58. Dokoda during an interview on the 13th March 2002.

For them to sing off by heart is a glorious event. Since the Biblical scriptures are the primary basis for the words of the songs for the amaSirayeli, each singer is expected to be familiar with the Scriptures.

Since it is the constitutional duty of the Chorister is to compose and receive songs and to teach songs to singers, the Chorister in particular is charged to have knowledge of the Scriptures and ability to apply them in composing.

The Chorister occupies a very important position in the structure of the local tabernacle of the amaSirayeli. He or she is appointed by the Pastor of the tabernacle with approval from the Executive Officers.

The Chorister must know a vast repertoire of songs and be able to choose songs which are appropriate for the various activities of the worship service. He or she must also know how to properly direct the songs.

iv. Song Composition

The composition of songs by members of the Church of God and Saints of Christ is an integral aspect of the denomination, and much emphasis is placed on this aspect. Members say that Prophet Mjijima himself composed songs.

There is a hymnal of the amaSirayeli where Mjijima's own songs are identified. There is documentation of song composition occurring at least as early as 1908. On August 28, 1908, the Weekly Prophet carried a notice requesting singers to bring the ballads they had composed to the Assembly, so as to have them published for the Passover.

Chorister Vuba⁵⁹ suggests that there are many hymns composed by the amaSirayeli members that are unpublished. I was given a manuscript of songs by Evangelist Mbayi asking me to bind it so that it can be published in the year 2002. This I did and now they have a bound copy of their hymn-book.

Members who compose hymns consider their compositional ability to be a blessing or gift from God to the denomination. Composers speak of the Angel of Song as the source of their inspiration. Vuba states, we were taught that we would be visited by the Angel of Song. And that's the way it works.

Two Chief Choristers explain the process of composition in the following manner. Songs are composed, because the Angel of Song gave them to you. When you feel the spirit of the song, the words come naturally. And whatever tunes the Lord gives you; you use that with the words. It is very hard to describe. You get it in a dream, or going through a trial, you may be depressed or distressed; the song will just come to you.

The Conductor of Music, evangelist Dokoda, stated that he keeps a tape recorder in his bedroom, so that if a song with a certain key and tune came to mind he would wake up and sing the melody. This helps to remember the melody the next day.

Composers have also received songs while at work, riding in a car or on a bus, or in a worship service. When this happens, one might be in a position of writing down the song and even practice the melody he/she has heard being sung. Several composers report that a song came when they were troubled or low in spirit.

On one occasion, a song was composed jointly by husband and wife, who each received

59. Vuba a chorister at the Temple in Queenstown under bishop Shweni, interviewed on the 12 July 2002.

inspiration for part of the song. Occasionally two composers will compose a song that later would be seen as virtually the same song.

Choristers sometimes create medleys of pre-existing songs, drawn from either within or from outside the amaSirayeli tradition, for example, *lift Up Your Heads All Ye Gates*. Composers in the Church of God and Saints of Christ consider it a gift to be able to compose songs, and often point out the historical basis for the practice.

Their method of writing or composing music came down to them from the founder, Enoch Mgijima. There is no explanation for this except being spiritual. He taught the first choir, and that is where the style and methods came from. This process has continued over time.

7.6. THE BEAUTY AND JOY OF THE SINGING STYLE

This section stresses the beauty and the joy of the style that is found in the music, both of the African and the American choristers. There is no prohibition against instruments in the Church of God and Saints of Christ, but because the Church developed a hand-clap style, there was no need to bring instruments into the tabernacle. When a composer teaches the melody of a new song, the choir is able to harmonize immediately, based on these known patterns. Minimally, the harmonization would follow well-travelled chord patterns, but the choirs and composers of the amaSirayeli take pride in creating more than just basic harmonic progressions. It is evident that much satisfaction and joy is derived from creating, as a group, complex, chromatic passages.

The texture of the songs of the amaSirayeli is a melody accompanied by one or more lines of music moving in the same rhythm with vertical organization, predominant. A kind of call and response, specifically called, after beats and typical of Southern Gospel hymns, is found in a number of songs.

In this texture, the soprano sings a phrase, immediately followed by the lower parts (or the middle parts) in the form of an echo, as heard in sections of *In Him I Live and Move* and *Praise God Almighty*. By far the predominant motion of the parts is parallel rather than contrary.

Members, who grow up in the Church of God and Saints of Christ, and most do, since the number of members who join from outside the denomination each year is small, are immersed in the style of singing from their childhood.

Sandisiwe⁶⁰ a composer from the Shiloh section states, *I think it is love of music. We grow from childhood to adulthood hearing and listening to harmonies like these. And most of us, even from childhood, we know the discord when we hear it. . . . I guess it is a good background to learn naturally, because you are surrounded by church choristers.*

She argues that even at home, church, all day long, not only the choir sings, but the whole body of Christ sings. There are several choir rehearsals in which this is accomplished, and one day is set aside as Singers' Day, on which each tabernacle choir is called upon to present any new songs composed by their members. The mass choir is thus able to hear the song with all vocal lines intact. New songs are performed from the individual tabernacles.

7.7. MUSIC PERFORMED BY THE AMASIRAYELI

i. General

Members state that when the Church was founded, pre-existing songs such as hymns were sung in the worship services. Shortly thereafter, however, members began composing original songs, and for many years, the singing of songs, which were not composed by

⁶⁰ Sandisiwe is a chorister at the Shiloh tabernacle

members, was frowned upon. Today a variety of styles is employed. Some of these original compositions date from early in the history of the denomination.

Through the years, members of the Church who originally belonged to other denominations brought with them songs or styles they had previously known, such as hymns or standards. Composers cite the media as having a great influence on the repertoire today, especially in the case of younger members, resulting in songs from external sources being sung in the Church.

One composer estimated that of the songs sung in a given service; approximately thirty percent would be of outside origin, and seventy percent of Church of God and Saints of Christ origin. The lead-singer (*mculisikazi*) initiates praise and worship.

Firstly, the lead-singer introduces a line in a humming fashion, way that is either repeated or completed by the whole congregation. He or she cannot function without the group's response. He or she acts in a 'mnemonic' way to ensure transmission and maximum participation.

This oral formula emphasizes the meaning of the hymns. The meaning is differently located in oral-based and text-based codes. Next to the caller, are two young men. They are known as Shepherds. One of them carries a shepherd stick, which has seven beautiful colourful ribbons and the other is helping the choir-mistress.

Secondly, there are a number of hymns, which the congregation repeats during different performances. In music, it is possible to detect a number of recurring formulas.

Thirdly, the live performance invites a strong congregation participation with interjections and dancing, which cannot be represented in a written transcript. The clapping of a hand strengthens this. This oral-formulaic has a significant influence on the meaning of the hymns.

Listening to this music during the service, the researcher had a feeling that the meaning is differently located in oral based and text based codes.

During the service, there are outsiders who come in as visitors and to enjoy the worship, some of whom become members of the church. When a speaker, either a bishop or an evangelist, addresses the congregation, everybody shares in the message. By contrast, readers of books know that the authors write for those who are absent at the time and from the place of writing.

This relative detachment from a social context allows the author to exercise control over the supposed reader in a manner quite different from the technique of a performer of a live speech. Participation in the events of the amaSirayeli is more spontaneous than in the case of the reader-writer relationship.

The amaSirayeli, as a gathered church and an audience perform vibrantly. Even when they are outside of the tabernacle, as a group, they act as if they are in the tabernacle. Without their strong, somatic voices, there is absolutely no performance. Their worship is full of joy and vigour, which enlivens the church.

Mzimkhulu says that the source of their theology is through hymnology. Their hymns form the basis of their worship and the theology expressed in their hymns contains more substance than the actual sermon, which is why they place more emphasis on singing than on preaching.

Some of the factors that contributed to building up the amaSirayeli are as follows: singing songs, listening to sermons, praying, and constructive conversations, reciting Scripture during Sabbath Schools and valuing the symbols of their church such as the bowing service and the witness service and reading short documents about them.

Songs, recitations and certain prayers, for example, may take the part of everyday language, but are specifically memorized. Sung messages ensure reliable transmission, because the melody serves as a mnemonic device. The bowing dance service developed in Mgijima's religion because the prophet foresaw the resurrection of the recent dead / massacred at the hoped-for renewal of the earth.

The principal ceremony which is the bowing service includes a single handclap. It is intended to please and satisfy the senses of the participants.

That handclap has a sound that gives rhythm to music. The handclap and sound together give joy to the entire music. Men, women, children of all ages would feel welcomed into the faith through such music.

Such music becomes a soothing consolation in the presence of an umSirayeli who has passed into some grievances of life.

Below are some of the hymns that were composed by both South African and American choristers in the Church of God and Saints of Christ and others extracted from Scriptural texts.

ii. The Hymns

The amaSirayeli have a variety of hymns to choose from. There are solemn and dignified ones; there are occasional hymns, praise and worship and hymns for prayers. The content and the context of the hymns sung have significantly Africanized the church.

The content / context of their praise is noticed when a call is made for testimonies, homilies and petitions (*inkonzo yobungqina*). During this part of the service of *inkonzo yokungqina*, one is allowed to request his / her favourite hymn. *Yiva umthandazo wam undihlangule* is

usually requested.

The presence of the Holy Spirit can be felt. This encourages and renews their hope for a better life. Hymns devoted to praying can also be heard. This solemn music changes the whole mood into a heavenly banquet. Such music also provides the immanent prerequisites for a relationship with God.

Hymns that depict the message of the prophet have salvation as a common goal. The sweet African melody that accompanies the hand beat from *mculisikazi* (choir-presenter) is a soothing prayer to an aching heart.

In Africa, Africans beat drums and marimbas, but when *mculisikazi* uses her hand beat skillfully, it can replace the African drums. Without the hand beat the music would be dull and empty. The following is the list of hymns and songs that were composed by the Prophet and Founder of the amaSirayeli. Some have been collected from the Bible.

Gqobokani ukuba niguquke.	Acts 3:38
For the promise.	Acts 2:19
I will deliver thee.	Job 5:19
Naaman go and wash	2 Kgs 5
Thina ngokwesithembiso sakhe	2 Pet 3:13
Liyincwele igama lakhe	Lk 1:49
Lead me to the rock.	Ps 61:2
By the rivers.	Ps 137
Behold I come quickly	Rev 22:12
Yehova uyawathanda amasango eZion	Ps 87:2
Kuyakuphuma umthetho eZion	Mic 4:2
They that trust in the Lord	Ps 125
Who is coming from Edom	Is 63

Truly, my soul waited upon the Lord	Ps 62:1
Phezu kwendonga.	Is 62:6
Sizelwe ngokwenyama	Joel 2:28
Uncedo lwam	Ps 121:2
Ndeva ilizwi	Rev 14:2
Ndiyakusuka ndiye kuBawo	Lk 15:18
Naxeshikweni nina nithandaza	Mk 1:24-25
Bona ndiyakuthuma	Mal 4:3
Yizani kum nina nonke	Matt 14:28-29
Bekani indlebe maZulu	Deut 32:1
Bathi bakuqamba	Rev. 5:3
Mikhulu yimimangalaliso	Rev 15:4
Ukuba uThixo unathi	Rom 8:31
Ngako oko akukho kugwetywa	Rom 8:1

The next composition of hymns and songs come from some church members and their prophet Mgiijima. Some have no scriptural references. The bracketed numbers are page numbers from a hymnbook, which they do not use.

ii. <i>Hamba uyekuhlamba</i>	(51)
<i>Go and wash</i>	(12)
<i>Le nyanga uAbhibhe</i>	(55)
<i>Endikhokhela ndiyakumlandela</i>	(51)
<i>Hark oh ye saints</i>	(16)
<i>Rejoice, rejoice believers</i>	(31)
<i>if God before us</i>	(22)
<i>Udumo kwigama lakhe</i>	(63)
<i>UMprofite ufikile</i>	(65)

Mzimkhulu believes that the bowing march service is a major part of praise and worship. The singing brings the congregation closer to the glory of God than any other part of the service. It takes place especially during Passover services. The young adults, both male and female, go out and start singing outside. Inside the tabernacle, the bishop selects one, either an evangelist or an elder, to whom all those who are singing outside will bow.

When the choir is due to enter the temple, they sing while forming a line and leaping up and down. A trumpet is then blown. The first in line will act as the shepherd and carry a shepherd stick. While they are entering the temple, they are still singing and dancing.

By so doing, they make the other members of the congregation aware of God's holiness. While the shepherd is singing and leaping towards the appointed leader, the whole congregation inside and the leader are also singing and leaping. The shepherd then bows to him and the leader returns the gesture.

After that, the shepherd turns towards the next in line and bows to him. This action is then repeated by about two hundred worshippers who sing and leap towards the leader to bow to him. The act is very religious. The rostrum (the red carpet that is laid in the tabernacles) represents the Holy of Holies and the leader represents an angel. They give their respect and obedience to God, who is represented by the leader.

Looking closely at the service, there is interplay between biblical truth and tradition. The tradition interprets the gospel in terms that are more practical. There are two reasons for this. In the *first* place, the historic meaning is embodied in these symbolic actions and communicated, perpetuated and developed in this manner.

In the *second* place, religious symbols express the life of the community. The community experiences Mgijima's and Mzimkhulu's spirituality and not that of the missionaries, who concentrated on humility and poverty. Mzimkhulu's spirituality is practised through the hymns, the bowing march, the witness service, the sacrament of unleavened bread and ordinary

water for Holy Communion and many more.

Through these actions and symbols, the community proclaim the mighty deeds of God in Jesus (*Mikhulu yimimangaliso imisebenzi ka Thixo*); (Great are the Wonderful Works of God) (Hymn 56). During and after the bloodbath the amaSirayeli placed their strength in music. Music has played a pivotal role in defining and developing them.

This church is strong today through the music she renders. The art of music was employed to provide spiritual food to the whole congregation. Significantly, Wesleyan hymns established a realm of experience within their community. Within this realm, they operate at their best. None of them sings out of a hymnal but they do have their own hymnbooks.

They learn and recite music from their Sabbath school onwards. Ntloko mentions that their children learn music and Bible verses from the cradle. Their religious experience has become a driving force behind the logic and melody of the songs.

What has emerged clearly from this study is that the amaSirayeli in their tabernacles are seen as people, coming from the world being spiritually tired by the occurrences of the week, now they are called by their bishop saying, *Yizani nina nidiniweyo* (Come all that are wearied). When such a hymn is sung, everybody becomes spiritually strengthened.

One of the choir mistresses (*mculisikazi*), Ms Vuba⁶¹, believes that this hymn gives fibre and strength to the tired members of the church who have been working throughout the week. When the time comes for them to attend the Sabbath, they are called upon to soothe themselves in the power of the Spirit of Christ. Humming contributes toward the general emotions experienced by the congregation.

61. Ms Vuba a choir-mistress in the Temple congregation interviewed during 2001 Passover.

Listening and letting them burst into vocal music with trumpets and the hand beat is an experience which is hard to explain. The solemn dignity in the service attracts people so that they may also become members. The amaSirayeli, therefore, proselytize not by force but through religious practices. Outside the temple, many people come as spectators.

Any person can express his/her emotions in music. The music of the amaSirayeli has thoroughly proved its significance to others in their ceremonies and commemorations. Non-members are also often invited as guest speakers to their celebrations.

Music conveys the doctrinal points of the church, and conveys an understandable contentment to the participants. Music also a unifying factor that emphasizes the amaSirayeli's commonness of purpose and oneness in life. The performers are not regarded as specialist musicians, because every Israelite should sing and dance.

Hymns (*amaculo*) are associated with ceremony and celebration. Mgijima was himself a prolific and talented composer of hymns (*Ibandla lika Thixo neNgcwele zika Krestu: Izifundo namaCulo*). The hymns that he composed employed the styles and rhythms of African praise poetry.

In one of his favourite hymns, he invites his followers to join him at Ntabelanga, where they will listen to God's great miracles (*Ibandla lika Thixo neNgcwele zika Krestu: Izifundo namaCulo: Bekan'indlebe maZulu (ingoma yoloyiso) p.49*).

Therefore, music in their church like in any can be regarded as socio-religious, in the sense that it forms the cement of social and religious thought. Music also enables them to hear and touch God. This can be ascribed to an African background that urges one to seek divine involvement.

i Hymns with Christological Content

Hymns with Christological content are numerous. They are found in the history of the church. Such hymns are centred on a dominant personality. There are special claims about Mgijima that are beyond his role as a prophet. In a way, Mgijima becomes their mediator and their black messiah.

Looking closely to the hymns one notices that there is little room for the Son of God from them. Even the Apostles Creed is neither sung nor spoken when they worship, in fact I can say that it is not known at all. The hymn expresses happiness, confidence and loyalty. Even without hymnbooks no note is missed.

The few references to the life of Christ that there are in the hymn-book are interpreted as being repeated and re-enacted through Mgijima. Mgijima is more than the promised prophet of Deut. 18:15 instead he will send you a prophet like me from among your people and you are to obey him. Mgijima, therefore, became the holy one who continues to live at Ntabelanga, which is why men still go to the grave of Mgijima to ask him to bless the Passover when it is about to commence.

The present collection of their hymns serves as the basic frame of reference for their Christology. The reasons for the Christological themes are that the church was established under an indigenous leadership, that Messianism is an answer to the political pressure and the search for spiritual well-being at Ntabelanga.

On the Sabbath, trumpets are blown by the bishop, evangelists and elders at 09: 55, which is 15: 55 Jewish time. Members enter the tabernacle at the second call at 10: 00, or 16: 00 Jewish time. Then the choir-mistress leads the choir with the first hymn that is taken from Matthew 11: 28-30:

<i>Yizani Kum Nonke</i>	Come to me
<i>Yizani kum nonke nina nidiniweyo</i>	All ye who are tired
<i>Nithwesiwe kakhulu</i>	Ye who are heavy-laden
<i>Ndandiya kuthi mna ndiniphumze.</i>	I will refresh you.

As the choir sings, the saints enter joyously, while rejoicing in and glorifying the Lord. According to the hymn they should offload their baggage and give it to God. As they sing, they express their feelings to God after having travelled a long journey during the week and express their hope of being revived. Humming rhythmically adds to the atmosphere and the sense of longing felt by these members.

The kind of music that they render brings them closer to the presence of Christ their Master. The only instrument added to this harmonious music is the clapping beat by the choir-mistress. The clapping is also significant because it is taken from the Bible, Psalm 47:1:

<i>Qwabani izandla nonke nina bantu</i>	Clap your hands all peoples!
<i>Mbongeni uYehova ngamaculo</i>	Praise God with loud songs
<i>nangeendumiso</i>	

For the amaSirayeli, Sabbath becomes a time of joy, happiness, togetherness and socialization. This is clear when the service is about to start. After everybody has taken his / her seat, the choir-mistress announces a doxology. The Bishop and all other members of the congregation stand up. By this time the shepherd is waving his stick with the seven ribbons, mimicking the choir-mistress in front.

<i>Ndithand'ibandla loThixo</i>	I love thy church, o God!
<i>Indonga zalo zoma</i>	Her walls before thee stand
<i>Zithandeka nje ngentlaka yeliso</i>	Dear as the apple of thine
<i>eye.Zenzelwe esandleni sakhe</i>	Engraved on thy hands

<i>Inyembezi zam zoma</i>	My tears dried
<i>Umthandazo wam wonyuka</i>	My prayer ascended
<i>Kwizima nenyameko zinikiwe</i>	To my toils and cares be given
<i>De inzima nentsizi ziphele</i>	Till all problems fade
<i>Zimnandi iimvuyo zam</i>	Beyond my highest joys
<i>Ndobamb'ezeZul'indlela</i>	I prize her heavenly ways
<i>Izibambiso zikaSolomoni</i>	The promises of Solomon
<i>Ezothando iingoma zozuko</i>	Her hymn of love shall end.

When this doxology is sung, its interpretation is demonstrated by their movements and humming. Tears of joy and sorrow may fall, with the hope that God is the only one who understands the language of tears. Hardship is the strengthening of their faith encourages them to pull themselves together in personal growth and gives rise to the hope that one day these tears will be washed away.

With their choir-mistress in front, they swerve like branches of trees in the breeze. While doing so, they bow, in front giving glory to God at the beginning of each stanza. Even the bowing comes from the Bible, Psalm 138: 1-3.

<i>Ndiyakubonga Thixo ngentliziyo yam yonke</i>	I thank you Lord with all my heart.
<i>Ndiyakukudumisa pambi kwezithixo</i>	I will sing praise to you before the Gods
<i>Nijongene neTempile yakho engcwele</i>	I face your holy temple
<i>Vovani nibonge igama lakhe</i>	bow down and praise his name
<i>Ngenxa yothando nemfesane engaphel'endawo:</i>	because of your constant love and faithfulness,

<i>Ngokuba undibonisile ukuba igama lakho:</i>	shown that your name and commands
<i>nemithetho yakho mikhulu kakhulu:</i>	are supreme. because you have
<i>Undiphendule xa ndikubiza</i>	You answer me when I called you
<i>Ngamandla akho uye wandipha amandla</i>	with your strength you strengthened me.

7.8 THE CONDUCT OF A REGULAR MORNING SERVICE

The major worship service of the amaSirayeli occurs on the Sabbath. Since the Sabbath actually begins at sundown on Friday, a Friday evening service is held signifying the beginning. On Saturday, members remain in church from 10: 00 am. until sundown.

The service itself usually lasts until between 1: 00 and 3: 00 pm. Two bugle calls, known as trumpetcalls, announce the beginning of the Sabbath service, the first signalling the members to take their seats, the second formally opening the service.

The choir would sing *I Love Thy Church Oh God*, with the Church anthem. After spoken Lord's Prayer another hymn is sung. The scripture passage is read by a preacher appointment for the day. From each verse read there is a congregation response of **Amen**.

This is followed by the testimony segment of the service, singing alternates with spoken testimony. This usually takes about an hour. There are times of 'trumpet calling. This signals an elaborated demonstration march with singing that is taking place outside.

Here a chorister directs the choir members to go and march outside. They are led in various March formations by a member holding the position of Shepherd Boy, who holds and waves a stick that has seven colourful ribbons.

During the march, female choir members put on bows called crowns, symbolizing the crowning glory of salvation and life everlasting. Some elders, evangelists, sisters and children join the choir in performing the march.

After the march is completed, the choir sings another song while standing moving side-ways in all four directions. After one or two more songs a closing song may follow, then closing words are spoken, and finally a 'trumpet' signal ends the service.

Members of the Church uphold many traditions established in the early years of the denomination. One of the most important is the wearing of the special uniforms mandated by Prophet Mgijima for worship services.

For the Sabbath worship services during the year the women's uniform consists of a long-sleeved blue blouse and long black skirt. The men's uniform consists of a Black English walking suit. Children also wear the Church colours. Here follows the value of hymn singing in a conducted service. Prayer forms one of the main liturgical elements of a service in a congregation of the amaSirayeli. After singing / dancing, the bishop will appoint one member of the male section to pray. He will commence by saying, and when you stand and pray, forgive anything you may have against anyone, so that your Father in Heaven will forgive the wrongs you have done, (Mark 11: 25-26).

He will continue and say: In every church service, I want the men who are dedicated to God to pray, to lift up their hands in prayer without anger and argument. I also want women to be modest and sensible about their clothes and to dress properly, not with fancy hair styles and with gold ornaments or pearls or expensive dresses, but with good deeds as is proper for women who claim to be religious' (1 Tim. 2:8-10). As required, all men and boys will raise their hands with eyes wide open while the women will modestly look down, and pray:

Our Father in heaven,

May your holy name be honoured,
may your Kingdom come,
may your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
Forgive us the wrongs we have done
as we forgive the wrongs that others have done to us.
Do not bring us into hard testing
but keep us from the Evil one.
For thine is the Kingdom,
the glory and the power everlasting. Amen. (Matt 6: 9-11).

After the prayer, the saints will sit down and the choir-mistress will start the following hymn of prayer.

<i>Yehova ndithi ndithembela kuwe.</i>	Jehovah I trust in thee
<i>Maze ndingadaniswa</i>	Let me not be disgraced
<i>Yiva umthandazo wam O! Yehova</i>	Hear my prayer, O! my God
<i>Thobel'indlebe ekukhaleni kwam</i>	Listen to my plea
<i>Ndihlangule ngobulungisa bakho</i>	Save me by your righteousness
<i>Uze kum; undikhulule.</i>	Come to me and save me.

This prayer will remind any Anglican and Methodist of the Siyakudumisa, the TE DEUM. The first two lines: *Yehova ndithi ndithembela kuwe; mandingadaniswa*, are a replica of the last line of the Methodist TE DEUM which, of course, is traced from the Anglican prayer book. It could also be that this is taken directly from the Bible. Keep in mind however, that Mgijima's familiarity with Methodism could have had an influence in the formulation of his church's liturgy.

The Anglican Prayer Book emphasizes that there is no health in us. We, therefore, stand naked before God and are in need of salvation. When the amaSirayeli stand, as if they are naked before God, they remind us of the traditions mentioned above. When this solemn hymn is sung, the singers' facial expressions are also solemn. The mood is similar to that of mourning and some even burst out crying.

Even the choir mistress either holds her tears back by looking up high or allows her tears to fall. Her spiritual duty is to clap her hands rhythmically. This is the amaSirayeli's only prayer time. They are not allowed to pray any common or individual prayer as in other denominations. In fact the only one who is allowed to pray is the one appointed by the bishop at the time.

During the prayer every member realizes that he / she is standing naked right in front of God. No visitor is left untouched by the sincerity and total commitment expressed by this prayer hymn.

7.9 CELEBRATIONS OF AFRICAN MUSIC IN RHYTHM

i. General

The amaSirayeli place the gospel in an African context because that is where an African interest in the Old Testament stems from. Music from the African community does not only go with rhythm but also with drums.

It is clear that African Initiated Churches do seek their sense of belonging from African music. This allows them to worship God with drums and marimbas. African spirituality begins with the joyful recognition that the values of the ancestors still abide deep inside them.

Spirituality is stimulated by rhythm, and provides a sense of identity and praise. One example of a hymn in the form of a doxology is the *Siyakudumisa Thixo* (Methodist Church Doxology), which is sung by the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, the Church of the Province and the Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa.

They churches sing the *Siyakudumisa* differently. For each the rhythm and the tone are to identify their respective church members and denominations. Similarly as in the church of the amaSirayeli, the words of the above hymn elevate worship to a higher level where everyone feels connected with the Spirit of God.

Most members further portray this style, as they sing with eyes closed. Those not familiar with this custom may be looking at the words. Where this doxology allows for high, middle or low pitches, the choir conductor allows for this.

If one of the elders in the church has the gift of interrupting in praise, singing ukumemelela, he does so without disturbing the rhythm and the tone. This action puts this elder in the same platform with God's children and his Creator. In rural areas, an elderly person in the church may remark: I felt as if, even if the Lord could take me at that time, I will go straight into heaven with joy.

The beat endeavours to create a dialogue between the 'beater', the congregation and God. This spiritual satisfaction is not the result of only one specific hymn, but of the way in which all hymns are sung.

Mgijima's hymnology does not differ from the general hymnology as described above. The amaSirayeli's hymns contain their church doctrine and are, therefore, a sound catechism of both Christian and Jewish doctrines.

Finally, the experience of African people forms the background for their hymns and communicates a message, which is paradoxically more exclusive, although holistic in nature. One such hymn is the *Kuyakuphuma umthetho e Ziyoni*. The singer acknowledges that the law of God and the church doctrines will be forwarded to Zion.

ii. Hymnology in African Traditional Churches

Africans are notoriously known by the gifts of laughter and of singing. If not laughing then they may be singing. Laughter comes naturally for a black person, not only when happy, but also when tempted by sorrows and troubles. When black people travel by train, bus or a taxi, they, would seldom hide behind a newspaper or book. One of them may tell a joke about any thing, some of those nearby will burst into laughter.

Even during funeral services, one or two of the speakers will tell a joke about the deceased, people will find themselves laughing, even those who are bereaved. The same applies to singing. If one starts a song or a hymn in a train everybody nearby joins in and within a short space of time, the harmonious clapping of hands will probably follow.

Generally, many blacks enjoy memorizing and know most hymns by heart, no matter how long they might be. Different voices join in naturally. When blacks are gathered for a particular feast singing plays a major role. In most cases, African singing is not accompanied by pianos or organs. In the amaSirayeli church, hymn singing is a major part of worship.

The Methodist Church, Young Men's Guild have a smart 'beat' which specifically allows the leader to harmonize music in the church. The preacher becomes more inspired by the singing and it has a direct influence on the service and the preaching.

At funerals, hymns express deep sorrow. Hymns such as *Hamba ntliziyo yam siye*

Ezulwini, kuba akukho ukuphumla apha emhlabeni, are an example. This hymn expresses the joy of being a Christian and going home to heaven. Makhubu⁶² has shown that many of the African Independent Churches have no hymn- books of their own.

However most of the Zionists and the Ethiopians use the well-known *Amagama okuhlabelela and Umbedesho namaCulo amaWesile.* These hymnbooks contain the most beloved and generally accepted hymnals of the African Independent Churches, especially those of the Zionists. Some examples are given below.

<i>Nkosi sihlangene</i>		Lord here we have met
<i>Kuyo indlu yakho</i>	I	In your house.
<i>Yiza nawe sesingene</i>		Please come
<i>Ebusweni bakho.</i>		As we meet before you.
<i>Intliziyo zethu</i>		Our hearts
<i>Ziya kugulela;</i>		Long for you.
<i>Kwane miphefumlo yethu</i>		Even our souls
<i>Iya kukhangela</i>		Seek unto you.
<i>Ubuncoko bakho</i>		Let your pleasure
<i>Bawo masibuve;</i>		Be felt by us.
<i>Lakutyhilwa ilizwi lakho</i>		When your Word is revealed
<i>Nawe masikuve.</i>		Let us hear you.
<i>Ma usilungise</i>		Cleanse us,
<i>Thina bantu Bakho;</i>		We your people.

62 Makhubu, 1988 pp65-67.

Sakububa, singenise ezulwini lakho. When we die, we enter into your
heaven. Amen

This hymn is sung mostly at the beginning of a service. The people understand the words very well, and that is why it is used as an introit hymn. It is also a prayer hymn. The congregation asks God to illuminate their hearts so as to understand the Word when it is read.

Liturgically this hymn sets the tone for worship. The tune is also important. During funerals, one of the favourite hymns from the *Amagama okuhlabelela* is the following:

<i>We ntliziyo yami, ma uhlakaniphe</i>	My heart be alert
<i>Zikuhaga izitha zakho</i>	Your enemies surround you
<i>Zivukela wena.</i>	And have risen against you

This is a song of vigilance against sin. The words coming from the song are taken seriously and literally. This is so because Christian life is taken seriously. When they sing with African rhythm, they do not shiver but swerve as though there is strong wind pushing them side - ways. Another popular funeral song is the following:

<i>Khayelihle khaya lami</i>	Beautiful home, my home
<i>Mangingene esangweni</i>	Let me enter through your gates
<i>Mangiziphomuze kuwe</i>	Let me rest in you.
<i>Khayelihle khaya lami.</i>	Beautiful home, my home
<i>Kade ngangi zula zula</i>	I have been wandering
<i>Ngingaboni ubuhle bakho</i>	Not seeing your beauty.
<i>Sengifuna ngokufisa</i>	Now I am longing

Ngikubone, khaya lami

To see you, my home.

When this song is sung at a funeral service, the meaning become clear. The comments are appropriate to the occasion and the eschatology is clearly expounded. The belief that God is worshipped eternally is expressed in the hymns.

Singing is a way of expressing feelings, inner thoughts and what would have been expressed on public platforms if they had been available. So the ethnic influence in hymnology is quite evident. The original mission church and the particular group influenced the type of hymnbook that is used, e.g. the Southern Sotho hymnbook is *Lifela tsa Sione* (a Zion Hymnal).

Three factors are taken into account when a hymn is chosen, namely the melody or rhythm, the mood of the occasion for which the appropriate rhythm will be decided, and the meaning of the words. The rhythm grips the people, especially when the words and the occasion suit it. The following hymn is an example:

<i>Sigcobile kuwe</i>	We rejoice in you
<i>Kuba siphila kamnandi</i>	While we live well
<i>Ngofefe lwakho Bawo</i>	By your grace, Father.
<i>Sibone uSindiso</i>	We have been saved
<i>Nangazo iinceba zakho</i>	By your mercy;
<i>Nezipho zakho</i>	With all your gifts
<i>Imfesane inkulu</i>	Your compassion is great
<i>Izonwabisile iintliziyo zethu</i>	It has gladdened our hearts.

This hymn of thanksgiving is usually sung at the beginning of the service. The body

movements which accompany the song come naturally, such as the clapping of hands or the stamping of the feet, the swaying of the body or a combination of all three.

This hymn is also sung in times of sorrow. The leader's comments allow the hymn to fit the circumstances. The mood arouses emotions which will make the meaning appropriate.

At a funeral, the tune and the rhythm create an atmosphere that unites the people and the commentator. To sing a hymn loved by the deceased provides a special relevance, even if the hymn does not suit the occasion.

7.10 THE CREED OF THE AMASIRAYELI

The creed of the amaSirayeli has its own peculiarities and emphases, which are indicative of the theological emphases of the church. It differs for examples from the Nicene Creed. The Creed of the amaSirayeli reads as follows:

- 1 WE BELIEVE that there is a creator. He is both Creator and Ruler of everything: terrestrial and celestial.
- 2 WE BELIEVE that the Creator is one and that there is no unity like His.
- 3 WE BELIEVE that the Creator is incorporeal, having neither matter nor substance.
- 4 WE BELIEVE that the Creator is eternal. He was; He is; and He always shall be.
- 5 WE BELIEVE that the Creator alone must be worshipped; He is God; His glory shall not be given another, nor His praise to graven images.
- 6 WE BELIEVE that God's prophets are true and that by a prophet our forefathers were delivered from Egyptian bondage and by a prophet we shall always be preserved.
- 7 WE BELIEVE that the prophecy of Moses, our foremost prophet is true, that God rose up unto us prophets like unto Him and those prophets are William S. Crowdy and Enoch J. Mgijima.
- 8 WE BELIEVE that the Ten Commandments were divinely given to Moses.
- 9 WE BELIEVE that the Ten Commandments are immutable.

- 10 WE BELIEVE that God knows all the acts and thoughts of men.
- 11 WE BELIEVE that God rewards and punishes.
- 12 WE BELIEVE that the Messianic Age will come.
- 13 WE BELIEVE that there is resurrection.
- 14 WE BELIEVE that heaven and hell are not geographical locations.
- 15 WE BELIEVE in the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man; you cannot have one without the other. The Brotherhood of man presupposes the Fatherhood of God.
- 16 WE BELIEVE in the equality of all men and the equality of the sexes. Women have an equal right in the Spirit of God and their spiritual rights should be protected.
- 17 WE BELIEVE that we should love others irrespective of whether they love us.
- 18 WE BELIEVE in the potency of prayer as a means of an approach to God.
- 19 WE BELIEVE that Judaism should and does provide a complete guide to all phases of human life-moral, social, economic and political.
- 20 WE BELIEVE that there is no conflict between science and pure religion and there is complete harmony between the two.
- 21 WE BELIEVE in the pure existence of faith and reason and that the natural desires of man should not be crushed, but should be guided in the proper channels so that they can be worked out under, by and through a dynamic God-consciousness.

Whoever reads the creed of the amaSirayeli will conclude that it is based on the Old Testament tradition. Because they believe in One God' (Deut.4: 6), the emphasis is only on God the Creator.

Therefore is a tendency that comes from the amaSirayeli saying that the creed makes them much different from other churches. This I doubt that is so. As originated from the Methodist Church, Mgijima decided otherwise. It is clear that Mgijima could not practise his visionary ministry openly in the Methodist Church, so he decided to establish his own church doctrine based on the Old Testament.

Paragraphs 6 and 7 of the Creed place an emphasis on the Biblical Israelites who were delivered from bondage. The amaSirayeli believe that when God comes, he will capture those who belong to him.

This is why Mgijima summoned them to Ntabelanga. For them to wait for God at Ntabelanga culminated in a massive killing, but that did not weaken their conviction. I can summarize Mgijima's ministry as follows, as articulated to me its by Bishop Mzimkhulu:

We have noticed that in faithfulness to Jesus Christ, Mgijima refused to make the amaSirayeli patient when their conditions were worse. They required land as a means to bring back their human dignity. Human dignity is the birthright of every human creature.

Owning land meant a radical challenge to white politicians at the time and was against the trend of South Africa which established structures, laws and patterns of conduct that oppress human beings. To own land would be a move towards a new identity for most human beings in South Africa. It would equalize and give full rights to all South African citizens. That is why Mgijima refused to let the Smuts government trample on his identity. He viewed himself as a beacon of hope for spiritual renewal among his people. To the amaSirayeli, this was a rewarding experience. Therefore, clear horizontal and vertical levels can be distinguished in Mgijima's ministry namely with God and the people of South Africa.

7.11 THE RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE

The religious observances of the amaSirayeli are based on religious concepts, which members describe as Judaic-Christian. These observances were instituted by Prophet Mgijima, who believed they were a mandate from God. The most important observance is the Feast of the Lord's Passover, which the denomination observes together in a selected city from April 13 to April 20 each year.

On the evening of April 13, Passover Eve, a service is held from 7:30 pm. until

approximately 2:00 am. The climax of the feast is the Partaking of the Lamb at midnight, at which time members are served lamb and unleavened bread. Non members of the church are not served this meal, even if that member is a full member in another church denomination.

Services are conducted for all these seven days during the day and in the evening. The other major religious observance is that of the Holy Convocation, commonly known as the feast of Esther, which occurs from January 3 to January 10.

By order of Prophet Mjijima, members are not to do any work that week, and they are to be in the tabernacle each day for services. Members also rise early each morning for prayer in their homes. The service on the seventh day begins at 7:00 am and must end in time for a feast to be prepared and eaten at noon. The Holy Convocation concludes at sundown of the seventh day. A seven-day denomination-wide gathering known as the General Assembly is held in October each year. This gathering is smaller than the Passover since it is a business meeting and serves primarily administrative functions.

Since Christmas and Easter are not Biblical feasts for the amaSirayeli, they do conform to the nation's annual calendar. They do not celebrate the birth of Christ on December 25. As Christmas and Easter events, save the Passover, are not celebrated by the Church of God and Saints of Christ in South Africa, however they are not against anyone who celebrates these events. They, however, have a Sabbath Day that is earmarked thrice a month which is for commemorating the three women found next to Christ's empty tomb.

a. The Times of Salvation: A Time of Resistance

The amaSirayeli as the Black Jews, introduced the time of salvation by adopting the Jewish system of determining the hours of the day. Their watches are set accordingly. The days of the week and months of the year are inscribed in their minds. The days of the

week start on Sunday and end on the Sabbath Day.

It should also be stated clearly that the months of the year in the Jewish calendar, start with April who is Abib, and ends with March which is Adar of the next year. The Passover, the Synod and the Feast of Esther are the main events during the year.

Abib, (April) is the month of the beginning of the year. It is fundamentally linked with freedom. Jews celebrate the liberation of the Biblical Israelites in April. The end of the year falls in the month of Adar (March) which is linked with the death of the Prophet Mjijima which was on the 5th of March 1929.

Finally, freedom, according to the amaSirayeli, is the key element in understanding 'salvation time'. They know that salvation is through freedom. When the Israelites were released from Egypt, they were freed from the oppression under Pharaoh.

b. Hours of the Day and of the Week

Each tabernacle has a clock that is hung against the wall which displays salvation time to members of the amaSirayeli church. It is set to calculate the first hour from sunrise. Dokoda says that they are not controlled by any international clock which, according to them symbolizes domination by the heathens.

The amaSirayeli, according to Dokoda, have 'tamed' the clock to be sacred. They believe that their clock is used not to be in step with the affairs of the world but to be in accurate step with the times of salvation. For this reason worship times are well respected by even the youngest of all.

All worship services are guided within their salvation time. Everything outside such a time has a heathen orientation, which again demonstrates that they are a group that literally

believe in the Scriptures and desire to follow what scripture tells them to do. This tradition is taught to members of the church even when still young. One may well ask how well do the amaSirayeli fit into the ordinary South African society.

The present the amaSirayeli are very submissive to their God and the government of the day. Although many of them work for the government, some as teachers and others as ordinary employers, however they are not denied their religious rights to worship as Sabbath members.

Women do not preach or do anything in the presence of the menfolk during Sabbath. When they need to exercise their religious rights in the tabernacle there must be a male figure present. That figure is called Grandfather Abraham who always guides them.

7.12 CONCLUSION

I mentioned that the chapter six dealt with the clash and the Bulhoek Massacre of the amaSirayeli, and now the last two chapters before the final one deal with the general activities of the amaSirayeli. I have been examining the ecclesiology of the amaSirayeli, with particular reference to their religious symbols, worship through music, and the use of scripture. Their creed and their doctrine are different from those that are used by other churches.

The Seven Keys and the Ten Commandments have been emphasized as the guidelines to reinforce group cohesion and loyalty within the community of faith. Mgijima has been seen as developing his new community after the Bulhoek Massacre. His focus on the community was part of his answer to the question: *What is God doing during the interval between resurrection and Parousia?*

In Mgijima's ecclesial terms, God is at work through the Spirit to create communities that prefigure and embody love, reconciliation and healing of the world. The fruit of God's love

is the formation of the new community of the amaSirayeli through confess, worship, and pray together in a way that glorifies God.

According to Mjijima, the vocation of his community is to become the saints of Christ, to embody God's righteousness in the world. The theological claim about the identity of the church is extraordinary, but Mjijima was foundational in his thought. The ethical implications of Mjijima's ecclesiology are diverse. Those who are baptized are one in Christ Jesus, and no longer divided by former distinctions of ethnicity, social status and gender. Because they are in Christ they are all sons and daughters of God, thus *elders of Judah and daughters of Jerusalem* says the Bishop when addressing his community. The Daughters of Jerusalem is an organization within the church of the amaSiyareli, in which women exercise their roles as leaders. This organization was founded during Mjijima's era. The original purpose of the group was to meet the physical needs of members incapable of caring for themselves.

The history of music from this church is outstanding. The musical performances as well as the history, doctrine, traditions, and worship services of the amaSirayeli constitute a little-known, yet important aspect of African religious expression in South Africa.

The beauty and the joy of the style that is found in the music, has been amazing. The amaSirayeli place the gospel in an African context because that is where an African interest in the Old Testament stems from. Music from the African community does not only go with rhythm but also with drums.

It is clear that African Initiated Churches do seek their sense of belonging from African music. This allows them to worship God with drums and marimbas. African spirituality begins with the joyful recognition that the values of the ancestors still abide deep inside them.

Chapter eight will deal with the life and leadership of Bishop JC Mzimkhulu. His leadership in the church of the amaSirayeli for the past sixteen years of his service has been outstanding. It is his memory that will serve as his information tank. All the commemorations that are the church is specializing with are the product of Mzimkhulu. The establishment of the church's monument where the mass grave is erected is one of Mzimkhulu's pride.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE ERA OF BISHOP JC MZIMKHULU⁶³ AND CERTAIN COMMEMORATIONS

8.1 INTRODUCTION

Memory is one of a person's supreme endowments. Everyone acts today and hope for tomorrow. This is done in the light of the past experiences that have been woven into the minds. When we want to know about another person, we ask him to tell us about himself. In this way the person discloses who he or she really is.

This chapter relates to one outstanding figure in the Church of God and Saints of Christ situated in Queenstown. His name is Jehu C. Mzimkhulu. For almost sixteen (16) years, Bishop Mzimkhulu has demonstrated a keen interest and awareness of the teachings of Mjijima to the people he led.

63. Bishop JC Mzimkhulu was the Bishop of the Church of God and Saints of Christ over the period 1984 to 2002. He led the Queenstown section with dignity and high responsibility.

It is from Mzimkhulu that I became aware of and gained an understanding of Mgijima's sensitivity to the predicament of Smuts. His own apparent understanding of the position of Smuts has been an example to the amaSirayeli of bearing no grudge against the then government, although the nickname the whites as heathens. In this chapter I will indicate a number of important points about the leadership skills of Mzimkhulu. The focus will be on:

- i. His life and the times of his leadership.
- ii. Commemorating some important events
- iii. The religious fanaticism

8.2 THE LIFE OF BISHOP JC MZIMKHULU

Jehu Charlton Mzimkhulu was born in the Mzimkhulu district in the Eastern Cape. His father also, Charlton, was one of the first four elected bishops after the death of Prophet Mgijima in 1929. Tradition has it, that Charlton in a dream heard a voice calling his son Jehu: *Come this side Jehu! Come this side.* Jehu obeyed in the belief that he was fulfilling a prophecy of Mgijima the church founder.

Mzimkhulu entered the church and became an outstanding member of the whole congregation. He agrees that when he was elected as the leader of the church in 1984, he was fully aware of his new responsibilities. Bishop Mzimkhulu is a humble soft-spoken man.

He led the church of uMlindi with respect, love, responsibility and fairness to all. At all time he was a professional leader and a representative of the church. Mzimkhulu has defused many faction fights, both within and outside the families of the amaSirayeli.

Bishop Mzimkhulu now resides in Cape Town with his grandchildren. Unfortunately, his dear wife passed away in the year 2000, and was buried with dignity by all members of the

church. Mzimkhulu is now retired as a leader of the church. His successor is Bishop EN Shweni, who was his second in command.

8.3. THE LEADERSHIP SKILLS OF BISHOP JC MZIMKHULU.

During the course of his leadership, Mzimkhulu portrayed humbleness and a strong spiritual commitment to his followers. As a responsible leader, Mzimkhulu held his church's constitution with high esteem. He was a person of deep faith and was convinced that his work would only add value if he was personally involved in all church activities.

This attitude required many personal sacrifices for he knew that he was personally responsible for the destiny of his followers. Mzimkhulu was an authentic African churchman of his time. During the 16 years of his leadership, Mzimkhulu served his congregation with dignity, recognizing all church events and celebrations as Godly events.

The amaSirayeli supported Mzimkhulu spiritually. They would participate wholeheartedly in the processes of the church. This made them more fully understand their church theologically and structurally. This also gave them a sense of identity and belonging.

Mzimkhulu also taught his congregation a very important principle, namely that the more one knows of oneself, the better one understands others and learns to appreciate the difference. He also tried with sincerity to search for the truth regarding the teachings of Mgijima.

A humble Mzimkhulu would comment to his people, *I, am proud to gain respect from you and I would urge you to do the same to the next leader of this church. Remember, I am not the only leader, there are others coming after me. Leaders come and go*⁶⁴. *Mzimkhulu would utter such words with respect. People were sure of the sense of hope*

64. Mzimkhulu during Passover of the 12-14 May 2002.

and vision for the future. Mzimkhulu made them aware that comparing themselves with other members of other churches would not be feasible. They are only unique and are grounded in believing in Mgijima's visions.

Their experience of the holy, from both transcendent and immanent levels, would reconstruct a series of traditions that are related to God. These traditions involved both Christian and African matters. Their Christian traditions strongly assert the transcendence of God as an element from their Judaic heritage. Basically the amaSirayeli possess the theology of remembrance of sacraments and celebrations.

i. References about Mgijima

Concerning the traditional values of the amaSirayeli, Mzimkhulu referred me to umlind'oSirayeli, who was the founder and the prophet. Mzimkhulu, proudly, argues that he was one of the honest few still maintaining the theological roots of Mgijima.

The amaSirayeli as a black nation that lived closely with white farm owners and traders strongly believed that *inkintsela* was God sent. This emerges clearly when they commemorate the life and actions of the prophet's appearances in the Eastern Cape, especially at Ntabelanga.

About Eastern Cape, Evangelist Dokoda says that it is not only a birth-place of Prophet Mgijima but also was earmarked by God to be the only place where God chose to be known by the Black Israelites.

Mzimkhulu made many improvements, in relation to ordaining evangelists, elders and deacons. Two evangelists became his deputies. They were Bishops A.S. Masiba and NE Shweni, Mgijima's last daughter, Nobantu Njoloza, became grandmother at that time.

Ntloko⁶⁵, an outstanding church historian, was elected as the grandfather.

ii. Reference to the Festivals

During festivals, elders and members of the congregation would rejoice and sing praises to God. The Bishop would elaborate on the event of the day, be it a festival, a Passover or commemoration. The occasion would be a blessed one. At the end all of them would better understand their spiritual journey to the Promised Land. Mzimkhulu added many thematic commemorations during the course of his years.

The themes clearly distinguish the group from traditional Christianity. Such religious practices made them to be characterized as the first examples of Black Jews in South Africa as constantly mentioning them thus. The New Testament does, indeed, play a major role to this.

iii. Reference to Mgijima's Calling

Biblically, God spoke to Moses and to other prophets so that they could speak in turn to their people. This same form of communication between God and his people was between God and Mgijima.

During the missionary era, Mgijima would visit his members and followers displaying a strong element of trust in them. This characteristic also led to many invitations by other mission churches to preach in their churches.

When Mgijima explained how he was called by God through visions, many would see him in a negative light especially those in authority, both ecclesial and political. Those in church

65. Ntloko held the title of a Grandfather at the Queenstown section during the time of Bishop Mzimkhulu.

authority were very distrustful of him, as were the white farmers and the Smuts government. Even though the amaSirayeli were mocked with insulting phrases, they were not discouraged; the Watchman of Israel was always with them.

Mgijima was known to be very committed to the Bible as his primary source for guidance. Bible stories, as told to him at Sabbath School, sustained him until the end of his life. Mgijima's early sermons in various churches provided clear and adequate evidence of his Christian orientation.

The amaSirayeli fully trusted Mgijima as a warning light that flashes showing a message that says, *at the end of time nobody would survive the wrath of God*. Such testimonies and experiences in the person of God personified in Mgijima convinced the amaSirayeli to trust and obey the Lord strongly.

To the amaSirayeli, an experience of Jesus' greatness was rightly displayed in Mgijima. Mzimkhulu argues that the amaSirayeli would not have been able to believe in God without Mgijima. It is no wonder that he was openly declared a saint by his followers. During his last days, he continued to encourage his followers with outstanding words.

iv. Reference to the Spirit of Mgijima

Mzimkhulu further argues that there was an indissoluble link between the visible and the invisible church. The visible church, which is the amaSirayeli, and the invisible spirit of Mgijima are joined together. Mgijima as a living dead (ancestor), is joined with the living spirits.

The following words are prayers he said before he was arrested, drew from the biblical story of Moses, *I would have liked to live longer. . . But I'm not concerned about that now. I want to do God's will. He allowed me to go up the mountain and I've looked over, and*

have seen the Promised Land.

*I may not get there with you, but I want you to know that we as people of God will get to the Promised Land. Love and respect your leaders as you have done to me. Now I leave you with peace, trust God and He will protect you⁶⁶. After saying these words, he sang, **Udumo kwigama lakhe** and the police came and arrested him.*

v. Concerning Marriage

Mgijima believed in the existence of powerful mystical forces that controlled his church at any time. These mystical forces led him to establish the principles of marriage. Concerning marriages in the church, Mzimkhulu agreed that the parental attitude of Mgijima should be upheld.

During and after the massacre, Mgijima ordered that the surviving members should *bekind* to one another. Mgijima called on the church to take care of the widows and widowers as they belong to the church.

Such an African tradition is useful when faced with scores of widows and fatherless children due to calamities. The solidarity they portrayed had a strong impact in organizing the amaSirayeli in accordance with the moral laws of society.

Mzimkhulu emphatically pointed out that Mgijima's imprisonment in Kimberley did not discourage women from taking part in church activities. In the Tent of Gathering, they would sing *Udumo kwigama Lakhe*, one of their most beloved hymns. One important role played by women during the massacre was the act of ceaseless prayer.

66. Mgijima last speech before his arrest on the 21st April 1921. This was related by Dokoda on the 14th April 2002.

Mzimkhulu says that such positive attitude encouraged community members, even those who were just eyewitnesses of the massacre. Mgijima understood his role as a continuation of the ministry of Moses, Jesus, the apostle Paul, and the Prophet Crowdy.

The statement *Love thy neighbour as thyself*, (Matt 5: 43-48) serves as an example for common behaviour within the group. As good relationship among members of the church was always a matter of great concern for Mgijima, worshippers were expected not to speak evil of one another and none should undermine other⁶⁷. Bishop Mzimkhulu later emphasized that if people cannot speak good words about others even if they are sinners, then one should hold his peace⁶⁸. This is also, what Mgijima himself had taught. This requirement of both Mgijima and Mzimkhulu was and continue to be an imperative for all those who are members of this church.

i. Apostolic secession

After Mgijima, Bishop Steven Shweni led the church until 1983. He was followed by Bishop Mzimkhulu, the third Bishop of the church in Queenstown until 2001. In the year, 2002, an evangelist Elijah N. Shweni was elected as the Bishop. His father Shadrack⁶⁹ was once a Bishop of this church. Bishop Shweni's deputy is Bishop M. Masiza. In the Ntabelanga / Hewu areas, where the Bulhoek Massacre took place, Bishop Mzileni was once the Bishop from 1953 to 1966.

After Mzileni, Bishop Phakade took over and is still the Bishop in that area today. Recently there are five churches due to divisions from the Mother Body. They are as follows;

67 Mgijima in the Cradock tabernacle of 1925 during Passover.

68 Commemoration of the Ark of Covenant in 1995.

69. Shadrack was one of the elected bishops by Grandfather Abraham Silwane Nkopo.

- i. The Temple is under the leadership of Bishop EN Shweni
- ii. The Tabernacle at Shiloh is under the leadership of Bishop M Mgijima
- iii. The Hewu Tabernacle is under the leadership of Bishop JM Phakade
- iv. There another Tabernacle under th leadership of Bishop JC Mzimkhulu
- v. The last Tabernacle is under the leadership of Bishop M Mdekazi

It is said that the position of leadership in the church of amaSirayeli is hereditary. Let us then analyze the prophetic leadership style of Bishop Mzimkhulu.

8.4 LEADERSHIP ABILITIES OF EJ MGIJIMA

i. Introduction

One of the characteristics of leadership in any organization is the ability to get others to accomplish something willingly with a particular situation. Leadership is said to be the art of ensuring that the right things are done at the right time in the correct manner.

Courage is also something that people respect, and because they respect it, they listen to and are guided by the behaviour of courageous people. The guidance of a respected colleague is often easier to accept than that of senior leaders. Three kinds of leadership will be discussed.

a. Instrumental Leadership in General

An instrumental leadership style focuses on punishment and rewards. Acknowledgment of good performance is given in the form of a reward. If adequate performance is not provided, no reward will be forthcoming.

So rewards and punishments depend on the quality of performance. Instrumental leaders

attempt to satisfy the current needs of their followers by focusing on rewards and punishments to enhance the effectiveness of their followers.

b. Inspirational Leadership in General

Inspirational leadership focuses on transformation and vision. An emotional and ideological appeal to change the work and lifestyle of an individual is made. A vision associated with such a leadership style communicates confidently to those who follow and further challenges their performance.

It is generally agreed that inspirational leadership includes behaviour such as identifying, articulating and interpreting a vision. Such leaders provide an appropriate role model for others, fostering the acceptance of group goals by setting high performance expectations.

c. Visionary Leadership

Visionary leadership provides individualized support to followers by being intellectually challenging and stimulating; recognizing accomplishments, empowering others and taking great personal risks for the betterment of others.

Such leaders, now and again, echoed the words of Martin Luther King Jr by saying, *I have a dream*. As Mgijima was a charismatic and motivational figure, his members were capable of sharing his dreams and make them happen. Mgijima was a visionary leader that is why he members respected and followed him.

As I have discussed the three kinds of leadership, Mgijima the founder and prophet of the amaSirayeli possessed these qualities. It is through such leadership skills that sustained the amaSirayeli till today.

Even if there are now five divisions under different leaders, nevertheless the church still exists and is very strong. What is noticeable at this time is the project of negotiations done by two sections that need to come together. This is much appreciated.

8.5. CELEBRATING THE UNVEILING OF A TOMBSTONE

Considering some festivals of the amaSirayeli, one needs to understand their thrust as fundamentally interwoven in stories together with memories that play a major role in constructing and strengthening a church.

Whenever the amaSirayeli discuss events during commemorations, they will be confronted with past memories that are used in the present situation relating to future reality. The stories that the amaSirayeli relate to are stories that concern struggle and resistance against domination. Any event of the amaSirayeli is used as an opportunity to relate their past encounters to the present generation.

During a funeral of a member of the church, a coffin is robed in sky blue, black and white materials. These are the official colours of the church. Relatives of the deceased also wear black knot for some time to show that they are in mourning. As a sign of having a strong bond with one another church members also mourn. Mourning clothes for members are black suits for men, black and white dresses for women.

The amaSirayeli believe that their members are in heaven, because it is the place of their origin. They also refer to the grave as the place of their origin. When they die they return to their original homes. They also believe that in the millennial reign of Christ, the saints will be with Jesus in Heaven.

At the Second Coming of Christ, the saints will be proclaimed into heaven. After the visible

return of Christ, he and his saints will reign on earth for a thousand years⁷⁰. This millennial reign will bring salvation to the amaSirayeli. They will establish universal peace on earth⁷¹. Bishop Mzileni once conducted a service for the unveiling of a tombstone which is like the funeral service. A service of this nature, when conducted by the amaSirayeli reveals some of the gifts that lie in their leadership styles.

The procedure of such a service would be described in the following paragraph. The chorister, usually a female, controls the music with a 'beat'. She is the only one allowed to control the music according to the church's doctrine.

A young man, known as the 'shepherd', carries a stick that has seven rainbow tassles. He rhythmically waves the stick in front of the choir. The rhythm causes choir members to swerve from right to left whilst being filled with praise. An elder elected to lead the service will stand in front of the congregation and will swerve along with the dancing and the beat.

The Bishop and a number of evangelists and elders will sit in front, also singing. One verse or stanza from a hymn-book is enough to shake the pillars of the church. The rhythm controls the beat and humming. It also stimulates the spiritual atmosphere in an African mood.

Here lies the core of African values, and is nurtured within the context of *ubuntu* and grounded in a cultural experience. When the procession is ready to precede to the graveyard, young men wearing white jackets, act as marshals. The choir forms a procession and March towards the grave whilst singing and humming. The procession is led by the Bishop, who is carrying his staff (*umsimbithi*), together with his evangelists and elders.

70. Zech. 14: 5; Rev. 1: 7; 19: 11-14, 20: 1- 6.

71. Micah. 4: 3 - 4; Ps. 72: 3- 8; 20: 1-6.

The service was conducted by Elder Dokoda in Ntabelanga where the late Mrs Mpondwana was residing in 1995. Dokoda reminded other members of the church about the role of Mrs Mpondwana and other women played in strengthening the remaining saints after the Massacre.

She would emphasize Mgijima as a miracle-worker. She said, *when I saw miracles of God flying by to help our fallen heroes during the massacre, I started with other women to grab that opportunity.*

She could not stop relating how she and other women built the church by focussing on the young members and womenfolk. Responding to God's miracles in a positive manner, it was for Mgijima to build up the Body of Christ afresh, not only in Ntabelanga but also nationwide, by healing, strengthening, nourishing, and treating with dignity all of her members.

When the bishop unveiled the tombstone he reminded the people. This tombstone stands out as a memorial of what God has done, is doing and will continue to do in the family.¹ This again affirms the amaSirayeli faithful commitment to God. The tombstone symbolizes a rendezvous between the people and their God⁷².

The service at the unveiling of Mrs Mpondwana's tombstone had an empowering message of hope for people who suffered for their faith: they lost their land, their economic resources and their political autonomy underwent malnourishment and wretched housing and a campaign of cultural genocide aimed at eradicating their languages, customs and their beliefs.

72. During an unveiling of Mrs Mpondwana's tombstone on 30 April 1995 - Kamastone.

In connection with Mgijima's philosophy, Dokoda⁷³ would teach, instruct and guide the amaSirayeli about Mgijima's philosophy. He would say that they, including himself, had failed to understand Mgijima's teaching. He wishes that the amaSirayeli would abide by the principles of the Seven Keys and the Ten Commandments.

Dokoda called for the entire congregation to return to the message of the Watchman of Israel (*Umlind'oSirayeli*). To emerge into a complex of beliefs and rituals rather than be an exclusive religion was entirely in accordance with Mgijima's respect for Traditional African Religion which he reinforced by his revelation.

Sentiments that were expressed by the bishop at the time were as if he was converting the stone itself. It seemed as if it was no ordinary stone but rather the pillow of an angel of the family.

8.6 COMMEMORATING THE DEATH OF PROPHET ENOCH J. MGIJIMA

One of the ways in which the memory of the past is kept alive is by commemorative events. The success and the turning points of our history are commemorated each year with celebrations. Any event that took place in South Africa is it political or religious may or may not be commemorated. It depends on how important that event is to those attached to it.

To either forget or loose memory of such past event is not only to lose contact with our roots but also to lose contact with the wealth of experience that has been gained over the years. At this time the amaSirayeli are playing an important part in remembering who they are, where they come from, how did they come into existence, who and how they are presently performing including what their future looks like?

73. Dokoda at Shiloh on the 15th April 2001.

Among the commemorations that are recognized by the amaSirayeli there is the remembrance of the prophet's death. The prophet died on 5th March 1929, equivalent to 5 Adar 1928, on the Jewish calendar. Before the commemoration as is been discussed, it is appropriate to elaborate on the philosophy of the commemoration.

A critical reflection on the church's commemorations can be a revealing and an informative ministry today. Reflecting upon ecclesial praxis can no longer be given a low priority in the life of the amaSirayeli. Generally speaking, the past is present in our conscious and unconscious memory. To understand this one needs to understand oneself and only then will it be possible to structure the future.

Such reconstruction is a formidable task for contemporary churches that seek to achieve inner and outer transformation for social victims. Bishop Mzimkhulu confirmed that reflection on the past by means of commemorations made it possible to rebuild the church of the amaSirayeli after the massacre and after Mgijima's death. Mzimkhulu confirms that through commemoration services the past becomes alive.

Now let us look at the commemoration of Mgijima's death. The commemoration of Mgijima's death began when women from the Queenstown group held some gatherings in the 1970s to remember their fallen heroes.

The Shiloh group followed in the 1980s with similar gatherings. As women continued to celebrate the death of their founder and leader, Bishop Mzimkhulu decided to put it in the church's diary as an officially recognized.

Ntloko⁷⁴ believes that when the church is celebrating, she does not only celebrate the life

74. Ntloko the Grandfather Abraham of the Queenstown section was interviewed during the Passover of the 14-21 April 2002.

and works of Mgijima, but also important things that Mgijima taught them, such as Bible study, eschatological visions that are rooted in the Judeo-Christian heritage and the call he made to the amaSirayeli to assemble at Ntabelanga.

Evangelist Mbayi⁷⁵, says that the Bible had led Mgijima to prefer love and non-violent protest rather than hate and violence. So the new generation is taught to embrace love than always nicknaming whites as heathens.

Prophet Mgijima would often point out that the Bible was not only important to those who were summoned to Ntabelanga, but it is just as important to future generations. Mgijima's influence upon his church projected a new image of the Christian lifestyle and social consciousness in the ministry of his followers. Through this, it was clear that in the valley of despair and death God had brought new hope through Mgijima.

Following Mbayi, Dokoda spoke about the cultural roots of the church's religious tradition which are similar to the church's heritage. He says that social injustices of racial oppression during the Smuts government formed Mgijima's theology which was carried out in practice.

During preaching, Mgijima would tell of a new beginning which God will bring about. In this spirit, Dokoda would call for a return to the practice of the Seven Keys and the keeping of the Ten Commandments, by doing this, people would return to their homes with new knowledge and new faith in God.

It was through those teachings that even Mgijima himself and his followers could endure persecution and police brutality. His tolerant attitude towards the Smuts government

75. Chief Evangelist Mbayi of Shiloh section was interviewed during the 14-21 April 2001.

brought redemptive suffering that was carried by Jesus on the cross. Mgijima's theological understanding in Jesus' ministry was grounded upon an understanding that the amaSirayeli would retain their inner and outer transformation. Dokoda maintains that, the important part in remembering Mgijima is to remind them of their social, religious and cultural developments that he (Mgijima) created for them.

In such a service opportunity of requesting and receiving *impilo* (well being, life, health) from God through the prophet's spirit, was essential.

Lastly, the amaSirayeli hold a belief that every time they visit Mgijima's tombstone their needs are eventually met. The significance of a tombstone is further highlighted by Pato. After the unveiling of a tombstone, little stones are placed on the tombstone by those who were absent during the time of the funeral.

These little stones are understood to symbolize a covenant (*umnqophiso*) which is a mutual agreement between the participant and the deceased to visit one another.

Even if the deceased has long been laid to rest there is a belief that he/she continued to communicate with the participants. Jafta refers them as the living dead, because they listen as we speak and listen to them as they communicate with us.

It is in such celebrations that one realizes that the life and death are never completely separate. Dokoda concluded by saying that the day in which Mgijima fell asleep will never be forgotten. He mentioned that their belief is that when they go to his grave, they receive new life; they speak to him spiritually.

For the Mgijima is not dead but asleep. That is why they commemorate this service again

and again⁷⁶, Ntloko responded in that way.

8.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BULHOEK MASSACRE TO MZIMKHULU

As Bishop Mzimkhulu was explaining to me about the commemoration events of the amaSirayeli, it became clear that he should clarify to his congregation the importance of the massacre.

It is clear that the church stands at the periphery of time, the crossroads of decision making, because the church's traditional role as the protector of its culture and the conscience of the leadership were at stake. Any choice made would determine whether they are to live as a redeemed community in this land where God has become a friend.

Historical commemorations of the Bulhoek Massacre strengthen the church tremendously. On such occasions the Bishop would rededicate the entire church spiritually to the Almighty Lord. The congregation listens to church historians when retelling and reliving the words of Mgijima.

Few members take turns in telling the story about Mgijima. Evangelist Mbayi would emphasize that this prophecy was a gift from God. Other important points about the Bulhoek Massacre that are recalled as follows:

- i. Belief in God by the amaSirayeli means that Jesus is able to overcome all their problems that imprisoned them. Jesus has paid for their wrongs on their behalf
- ii. Again the Bulhoek Massacre is an ideal sacrifice. The amaSirayeli as well as their leader offered themselves in self-sacrifice. Prayers that were rendered by the women-folk

76. Ntloko during the 14-21 April 2002, Passover.

controlled the status quo of the government by not destroying and harassing their husbands and fathers inhumanely.

iii.. The new generation has taken the church into their hands and does not want the church to die before they reach the promised land. These were the words of Evangelist Lerula during the funeral service of the late Mrs Matshoba, one of the staunch members during Mjijima's era.

Following on the above, Mandew proposes⁷⁷, an anthropological research on the relation between any physical spirit of Mjijima and the Spirit of God in order to cast new light on the history of the early ecclesiology of the amaSirayeli. He speculates that Mjijima demonstrated a different personality when he was under the influence of the Spirit of God. He would preach and condemn demonic practices.

For Mandew, this kind of force used by Mjijima was an action that indicated he was under the influence of the Spirit of God. Mandew further explains the original concept of the amaSirayeli in salvation as a theory that stems from experience of Mjijima.

In this way, Mandew's theory fills the gap which was left by Edgar in his theory. Edgar⁷⁸ failed to explain some development of the salvation theology in the amaSirayeli. Instead, he examined the message and miracles of Mjijima.

As much as Edgar failed to explain the salvation theology of the amaSirayeli, it was the aim of his theses. Ecclesiologically, one other aspect of importance in the massacre for the amaSirayeli is that Mjijima preached the Kingdom of God as a future reality and not only as a present reality.

77.Mandew in 1977p 129 quoting Evangelist Lerula during an interview at Shiloh tabernacle 2001

78.Edgar 1977pp189-192

Jesus not only presented himself as an eschatological prophet or an Elijah-like miracle worker, who made the future kingdom an existing reality to his followers. Mgijima also presented himself as a teacher of the future reality and the observer of the Law of Moses, which was to empower his congregation in maintaining their faith in the future hope of glory. Looking at Mgijima today, as an eschatological prophet, he could not be relevant. He was closer to a kind-hearted preacher who preached gentleness and love, but as a historical figure, he retained his eschatological character as the charismatic teacher, healer, and exorcist who believed in the soon-to-be-realized Kingdom of God.

Some of these characteristics, however, have been gradually replaced by other, more gentle, characteristics since the Bulhoek experience. Certainly various characteristics appeal more to the younger generation than to the older group.

In conclusion, the model of Mgijima as an apocalyptic prophet provides the best approach to understand his life. It also gives context to the history of the movement in continuing his legacy. He was a Torah-observant so are his followers. In a similar fashion, the amaSirayeli joined up with Mgijima to keep the Sabbath and its members pure because together they are expecting the imminent judgment of God.

8.8. THE FUTURE OF THE AMASIRAYELI

It is impossible to note the future of the amaSirayeli without taking its present and past into consideration. (A critical analysis will promote an understanding of the future of the church. For this purpose the history, images and the theology of the amaSirayeli need to be understood.

From the onset it must be clear that the 24th May 1921 was a crisis day on the lives of the amaSirayeli. As this day was one of crisis, it called for a national dialogue and confrontation. The damage done in the spiritual realm was perhaps even worse than the physical damage.

The destruction of their tabernacles and the loss of many souls touched the very heart of their religion. This happened, they believed, when God was about to collect the elect and leave those who were not his.) What is the future of the three groups of the amaSirayeli?

I contend that there is a quest for reconciliation in and outside the groups of the amaSirayeli. They should honestly engage in the actual process of change and be on speaking terms with all the other groups.

The goal should be to help them to a united church and a participating one in the process of transformation, informed by faith, especially by a faith which grapples with socio-political issues.

So we ask, what does the future hold for the amaSirayeli? They were notoriously known as **religious fanatics** by Smuts, but are now well-known in the vicinity of the Eastern Cape not as religious fanatics but as children of uMlindi ka Sirayeli. They are now fighting a cold war to each other. As one could claim that the origin of this church was rooted in confusion and is thus continuing in such confusion.

Many things have happened since the primary research took place at Ntabelanga and Queenstown. The amaSirayeli have developed their skills and talents extensively. They have recorded music cassettes and they are beginning to amalgamate. The building of the monument has also been finished.

Those younger members that have joined in promoting peace and stability are overwhelmed by the older generation that continue to lead the church. From the Queenstown region, there is call to unite with the other two groups. This is closely monitored. Young adults are taught different skills just as Mgijima would have liked. The amaSirayeli believe that Mgijima's divine involvement in teaching the congregation such skill, they would well develop their church.

Another issue is that of music. Through the strength they have in church music, they could make some funds by recording more of their hymns. This would be of great help not only to the church in terms of fund raising but also render a service to all those who love music. The theological reflection of the amaSirayeli leadership remains a challenging factor to the ecumenical world.

Such knowledge requires developmental strategies that will help them move forward. As much as it is interesting to listen to the stories that they share within themselves, yet it is advisable that one should not always look at the stories told but also at the principles behind the stories. Stories may apply later, but the principles and the framework will. I believe that their future depends on how they respond to those critical issues.

8.9 SHOULD GOD BE FREED FROM RELIGIOUS FANATICISM?

The subject of religion entails religious fanaticism, same as the subject of any interesting occasion to anyone entails fanaticism. This kind of fanaticism usually produces a deep sense of transformation - such as death and birth to something.

When I interviewed Ntloko at Ntabelanga on 24 May 2002, he would utter phrases such as, *God save us from religion*. I did not understand what he meant. He explained, *we really need to save God from religion. It seems that people are free to project any deity they so wish to worship, for as long as they like. It is true that they are free to worship or perform any ceremony they like in keeping with their particular pathway.*

So Mgijima called his followers to a place which was for the whole humanity but for a chosen few. He was sure that those who had come so far could not go back, because of their religious obligations. Some of the obligations were inspired by the founder's project and others had their own inner experiences. Mgijima did not need help in removing the platform of frustration and of anxiety because Ntabelanga was his own platform. Each

person came had a goal inside, besides that of the prophet. This goal, desire, anxiety was so severe in one's heart to the extent that it could drive someone mad. For an outsider who did not such desire inside himself, would call that particular individual by different names.

Hence Smuts came with what he thought was an insinuating name that would destroy the faith of Mgijima and his people, yet the name encouraged him. Such phrase of fanaticism, gave drive to the amaSirayeli to remain obedient even further to their God even when such obedience was not warranted.

Again the beauty of the temple with its seven colourful drops, convey a message that the amaSirayeli are used to have something to project their inner God. Without that something, they might not be able to relate to the message that their leaders give them.

This was again a religious fanaticism from outsiders, it would have meant nothing from anyone who is not directly involved yet to its owner and their God that was portrayed clearly. Here a process of understanding the nature of God is clearly religious fanatic. Such a message directs and connects the amaSirayeli with their God as the Black Jews of South Africa.

Mgijima would say to his followers, *in difficult times when you face all calamities and problems our God is the only force that can protect you, and you are also that force.* Again what does this mean to an outsider? Really it means nothing.

From all of these instances God is at the centre. He is seen as the driving force of every movement. To those close by, the feeling of God's presence cause them to be viewed as insane. Words of encouragement uttered by simple honest men of God to people of God seem to give no meaning to those who are not connected at the time. People like Smuts would say that such people are religious fanatics. Mgijima appointed men to be leaders

who will work to offer many more a direct experience of this Truth. This Truth has been the reality to many for a long time. Therefore, for that reality to be manifested, Mjijima had to represent all of his followers before the Smuts government.

He instructed them to have a direct experience of unity, and separate themselves from others who do travel paths that are different from their own. That is why a member from the Church of God and Saints of Christ will not be found from any gathering other than that of the amaSirayeli.

According to Mzimkhulu, the call for separation from evil and worldly things to eschatological heavens showed that there was no room for the amaSirayeli in the world of darkness.

8.10. CONCLUSION

It is a fact that Bishop Mzimkhulu, had contributed in both spiritually and socially to the children of uMlindi ka Sirayeli. His leadership skills gave the group recognition of not only be viewed as the one which was massacred by Smuts but also as a group that through the talents they have which are unique only to them can be seen as religious fanatics. Being outstanding during his time in the church of the amaSirayeli, Mzimkhulu's leadership was evident.

His leadership and managerial skills had been of help to making the amaSirayeli what they are today. Commemorations and yearly festival that have given blessings to the children of uMlindi have contributed in making the church to be together.

Vibrancy in music, dynamic speeches, inspiring sermons together with teachings and better skills from the group opened windows of support from various non-governmental and government organizations. Such gestures make the congregation and their leaders strong

in faith and vibrant in action.

Without Mzimkhulu, there would not have been such commemoration to the children of Mjijima and without such commemorations; there would not have been such a history. However, what is important is that the amaSirayeli should consider joining ecumenism with other liberation movements in and outside their country.

The best is that they should learn and grow together. Part of building the future of the amaSirayeli depends on reassessing the past and learning from the experience of other churches as well.

Chapter nine is the beginning of an unfinished business into this study. Through findings, recommendations and the conclusion of this study research, suggestions are made to the church for better development rather than destroying the integrity of the amaSirayeli.

For researchers to come, the message is clear, more investigation about the Church of God and the Saints of Christ, better known as amaSirayeli is vast. That God always intervenes in history, time and space he has led His people from captivity to freedom.

Now the amaSirayeli are rejoicing. They can rejoice because the future for the next generation is clear. The good historic legacy of Mjijima is left to the sons and daughters of the Black Jews in South Africa.

CHAPTER NINE

FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 INTRODUCTION

My own interest in this study was awakened through contact with members not only of the amaSirayeli as a church, but also various community members some ten years back. I started to realize that there were people whose interest was in the theology and practices of this church.

Increasingly, I also witnessed that they were echoing earlier voices and events of this church that speak about the Mass grave at Ntabelanga and about men who wear frock dresses. This vibrant noise encouraged me to pursuit such voices, thoughts and experiences.

In this study research, I sought ecclesiologically to analyze the experience of the Church of God and Saints of Christ, and more importantly to find about the reasons of the Bulhoek Massacre. An analysis through describing the origin, the cradle until their mature stage and the main broadly features of the amaSirayeli was done.

Differences of Mgijima and Smuts contextual interest together with various elements that integrated the groups into identifying the root cause of the Bulhoek Massacre and the desire to understand themselves by means of applying faith into the same cause, the two leaders recognized these issues.

It was clear that the Smuts political stance and the Mgijima's theology of liberation through obtaining land were crucial issues that were unavoidable without blood shedding. None of them was willing to let go.

Therefore, the issue of the land from the government as well as from Mgijima did not contribute positively, but to the amaSirayeli, it left bruises. Understandable that both need

land for various reasons, that issue was not conveyed clearly to both parties. Mgijima from his own way as a prophet and leader of the amaSirayeli summoned his people to a sacred place called Ntabelanga for waiting God's imminent time needs a thorough deeper understanding.

The government on the other hand required land to resource production through livestock and crop farming. He was adamant to allow a large proportion of land to the amaSirayeli. These issues from both parties were not addressed properly.

However, the leaders made history both nationally and globally. Mgijima alone is extremely significant, not only to the lives, nature and theology of the amaSirayeli in South Africa, but also to scholars, theologians, historians, in fact to all kinds of academics. Whatever field of study one desires to venture through the church of Mgijima, one will find a contextual and fitting topic.

Before bringing my findings, conclusion and recommendations into light, I have opened a door for other religions, theologians and church historians to interpret, through their own understanding the meaning of *ecclesiology* within the Church of God and Saints of Christ today. The ecclesiology of Mgijima is firmly rooted into the hearts and minds of the amaSirayeli and that ecclesiology makes Mgijima essential.

The leadership of the amaSirayeli always reminds their member to:

keep the memory of the Massacre alive as part of their identity. This memory continues to give meaning to a common story that stands as a lighthouse with the hope that the teachings of their founder will always shine in their minds. Again, the church's leadership has been given an important task of spiritually nurturing such sacred teachings for the maturity of generations to come. By nurturing these teachings, they will in turn enforce the heritage of the church of reconciliation to the young generation, which has deep-seated hatred of the whites as 'heathens'.

Mgijima's strong religious beliefs were anchored like a pillar to his followers. His opinions

towards Jewish / Christian beliefs caused him to be a stranger to most of the people around his community. Not only religious leaders of the mission churches but also political leaders like Prime Minister Smuts verbally mistrusted him. This happened particularly by those who were schooled in the Western traditions, such as the Jabavus.

One would have thought that people who considered themselves rational and believe in diversity of everything would understand, Mjijima that he had the interest of his people at heart. Whenever and wherever he could he would seek for basic human rights to be observed, that which his people were denied. The amaSirayeli in turn engaged themselves in restoring own human dignity in their church.

9.2. FINDINGS

The above observations resulted from a close investigation into an ecclesiological analysis of the Church of God and Saints of Christ, with the view to focus into the impact that the Bulhoek Massacre have to the amaSirayeli today. Coupled with this was a desire to determine the truth of the allegation made by General Smuts to Mjijima as a Religious Fanatic. Therefore, this study research has discussed attempts to reach for the solutions to the problem related to the Bulhoek Massacre.

It is underlined that the purpose statement of the amaSirayeli's theology and their connectedness with the God of Israel was land. This warrants respect. It is further notice that the government of the day viewed land as the country's resource.

Therefore, nothing should temper with land. Both parties had vested interest on land, yet differently. Even if Mjijima deserved land to stay, that land was going to mean nothing in an empty stomach. Smuts wanted to feed Mjijima as his subject with crops and livestock that came from the land.

Every word and action at Ntabelanga by both the amaSirayeli and the government was tainted with political implications. Both sides sought to be understood, yet each risked being misunderstood by its own people. So, I look at two different vested interests.

i. Mgijima the prophet who was also the founder of the amaSirayeli was exposed to both civilians as well as religious parties. Every operation he was focusing to was viewed on religio-political perspective. This was because of his expectations that an eschatological Messiah was coming very soon.

The Messiah was to liberate them from the Smuts government and give them better Eternal Land. The congregation of Mgijima also demonstrated the same principles of their leader. This is noticed especially when they hurried, both young and old, coming to Ntabelanga when the trumpet was blown, leaving everything behind and followed their leader.

When Mgijima brought his people together at Ntabelanga, many of them saw their salvation in obeying him. Their prayers were full of hope, although at Ntabelanga, they would spend most of their time trying to make a living in a society that was reserved for whites, since the commonage was already earmarked for certain individuals.

ii. As mentioned that the theology of the land was for both the cause of disagreement, after Mgijima called his people to Ntabelanga, he proceeded with his Master spiritual call.

Ecclesiologically, although they lack some of the four models of Dulles's understanding of the church, yet as the Black Jews of South Africa, the God of Israel appeared to Mgijima and gave him visions, hence the eschatological coming of the Son of Man. Like other Sabbath observing churches, the amaSirayeli keep good faith in Biblical teachings. On the point of Sabbath education, the amaSirayeli emphasized that if they do not teach their children from the young age then the church and the society will collapse.

iii. They have an unwavering belief in keeping the Sabbath holy, hence the Seven Keys and the Ten Commandments as the norm. Their different styles of worship appeal to different personalities and to the same personality at different stages of their pilgrimage of faith. This is shown clearly during Passover when celebrating and praising their pilgrimage together as one united children of uMlindi.

iv. The church does believe in ecumenism, however, the leadership lacks the theological background, which might expose them from other well-learned leaders. Perhaps Jabavu was correct to say about Mgijima, The Israelites of Bulhoek are a tough lot. They have withstood the blandishments of the Native Affairs Commission and the Government to obey the laws of the country.

When one looks at the Israelites at this time, they had not given the government any other course than that of coercion. Jabavu was also suspicious of Mgijima, as regards to being a political leader.

As a lecturer at Fort Hare College, Jabavu warned some of his students about individuals such as Mgijima. Jabavu warned them that the values of the Fort Hare College should be maintained.

He added that, if there is anything the college should do for the country, is to produce level-headed men and women who will save their kith and kin from mistaken leadership⁷⁹.

This shows that JT Jolobe was totally confused about Mgijima's role, thus viewing him as something which he was not.

v. The Bulhoek Massacre did not come as an isolated issue, but it came because of the failed negotiations about the land. This affected and infected most African Indigenous

79. South African Outlook July, 1921:108

Churches that broke away from the mission churches.

A painful history about it is the stressful relations between the Smuts government and the amaSirayeli, both bearing testimonies of being misunderstood. Smuts was slow to realize that the situation at Ntabelanga was very sensitive and should have been viewed in that light.

vi It was discovered that the constant affirmation of the amaSirayeli about their separate identity suggested legitimizing their past. The past has always reminded them about the sufferings they received during the Smuts era. This further was embedded into the minds of the young generation.

The stubbornness of the amaSirayeli and the Smuts government was the struggle against oppression from each other. Emphasis on power to the land by the amaSirayeli was in no way an expression of hatred to whites.

vi. Lastly, there is nothing wrong to be a fanatic of something, a lover of music. One can be a Jazz fanatic, a soccer fanatic, a woman/children fanatic, a religious fanatic or anything that one has a like for it. It is because of Mgijima's strong convictions in God's promises together with the fulfilment of such promises that Mgijima was branded a religious fanatics.

Therefore it is a fact that a church needs to be transformative in order to be a developing agent. When this happens it will be clear the even leaders of the church will be transformed.

9.3. CONCLUSION.

In chapters four; five and six, I discussed an interpretative ecclesiology of the Church of God and Saints of Christ.

It was from these chapters that I was confronted with the identity of Mgijima. Through investigating the historic nature of the church, I found that God had called Mgijima to be its founder and father.

Discussing the historical nature of the ecclesiology of Mgijima has largely been descriptive in that the church is meaningful and challenging. The summary of the chapters rest on the following points:

- i. It is true that the Church of God and Saints of Christ known as the amaSirayeli was founded in 1909 by Enoch J. Mgijima. In turn the amaSirayeli are thankful to God for giving them a magnificent gift in Mgijima.
- ii. This Church is a movement by which God, through Mgijima, sought to awaken in a black person, a sense of intrinsic value and worth as a child of God.
- iii. As a means of identification, Mgijima called on black people to identify themselves with act of glorifying and praising God.
- iv. Mgijima, with his brilliant mind that always shine to the essence of his people, realized that until the amaSirayeli asserted their humanity and personhood against the inhumanness portrayed by Smuts to them, there can be no justification of an authentic church for them.
- v. Smuts realized that Jabavu would have been justified to call Mgijima a disgrace to the humanity; however Mgijima like Ntsikana knew that something fanatic was driving him to the yet unrealized by many.
- vi. The sacrifice of self can go as far as physical death. It has rightly been said that every spirituality has martyrdom as one of its dimensions. Martyrs are those who give their lives because they believe in God the Giver of life and they love the dispossessed. Here I am looking at the amaSirayeli whose blood became victims that marked a fruitful path for their generations to come.

Then Mzimkhulu⁸⁰ said to them, Let us remain in communion with the martyrs. They have laid the strongest foundations for the divine city that is rising up toward eternity.

The death of so many in Ntabelanga, some anonymous individuals and others known, contributed positively towards a deeper understanding of the Lord's coming. Even today, the amaSirayeli have joy that springs from the hope that death is not the final word in Christian history.

vii. The disagreement with the government of Smuts that resulted to the Bulhoek Massacre had not destroyed the faith of Mgijima and his people. Dokoda⁸¹, believes that God gave Mgijima a ministry of reconciliation, of liberation, of justice, of peace and of love.

viii. The amaSirayeli as the Black Jews in South Africa under their leader and founder Mgijima adopted a principle that forced them to decide to work themselves into a powerful group, hence the commemorations and the outstanding support by the Arts and Culture Department in the Eastern Cape.

ix. The ideas of Mgijima live even if he died long ago. It is again clear that during the commemoration of any event the spirit of Mgijima is found to be alive. All, who speak about Mgijima, give glory to everything he was during his time.. The above observation is due to my eagerness to wish to relate in much clearer detail about the situation of the amaSirayeli. It is true that there is a growing awareness of the role of the church's leadership which may be called upon to play in the emancipation of their membership.

As the amaSirayeli were redefining themselves in developing their sense of identity, of belonging and of security, the congregation realised that their faith in God and their stay at Ntabelanga was strengthened more and more.

80 Mzimkhulu was interviewed at the time of the Passover of the year 2002, about the martyrdom of the amaSirayeli. He calls them, Our hereos

81. Dokoda when he was preaching in a service of a funeral of Mrs Matshoba at Ntabelanga Queenstown.

Lastly, for the amaSirayeli, Mgijima was a pillar of strength. They always expressed much pleasure and surprises at the quality of leadership, Mgijima had shown.

9.4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Throughout this research study it has been emphasized that the amaSirayeli are a community that is different in style of worship from other religious communities. As a church that embraces both Jewish-Christian religions, the amaSirayeli have a faith that emphasizes freedom of praise and worship.

One hope that as the amaSirayeli are embarking on a freedom journey of amalgamation with all the children of uMlindi, such move would be strengthening the future generation for peace and stability.

It has come out clear that after a long recent debate regarding amalgamation the amaSirayeli summoned all of their leaders to a ministry of fellowship. As a community we are looking forward to a future long lasting fellowship of all the children of prophet and founder Mgijima.

As much as is in favour of the oppressor, one of the hardest lessons to be learned by the amaSirayeli is to allow the past to be forgotten and concentrate onwards to the process of reconciliation.

With all fairness, this will help in shaping as well as equipping the young generation of the amaSirayeli towards healing. In this way genuine reconciliation and building up good morale will be nurtured.

If reconciliation among themselves is secured, then a quest for a united religious voice from

the Christian community will be of value. Looking back during the Bulhoek Massacre, there was a negative reaction coming from the religious bodies. Almost all church leaders were against Mgijima, viewing him as being motivated politically.

For the amaSirayeli to feel accepted by the religious bodies, the suggestion is that the site at Ntabelanga to improve for being a social and religious centre that should be a joint venture, maybe the name of the monument should be the responsibility of the amaSirayeli. The presence of the members from the African Independent Church in 1998, when there was a Bulhoek Massacre commemoration was much appreciated.

Relations between the Sabbath Keeping churches should be encourage. The amaSirayeli as the Black Jews in South Africa should seek other Jews of both races to forge a good relationship. There are other congregations besides those that broke away from the mother body of Mgijima that should be invited as well. These are as follows:

- i. One group under Bishop Ntshangase from KwaZulu Natal, who do not have kind of affiliation with Mgijima but with Bishop Crowdy in America.
- ii. Another group is in the Eastern Cape in Uitenhage, under Bishop Matshaka, also originated from America under Crowdy.

If these three groups could come together as one body, the two founders namely Mgijima and Crowdy would be happy wherever they are, because as Jafta says, they are the living dead.

As some church leaders today both black and white in South Africa cannot stand up for their convictions and Christian principles, it is suggested that the amaSirayeli should not be alienated by a number of adherents they found themselves trapped into because of the circumstances.

They should rather be judged by their non-participating to the larger society. Based on that criterion, they should be placed among the important African movements in history.

In conclusion rather than imposing a rational understanding of justice which is one-sided, as is common, the entire society should develop a formal structure of justice for all. The first step should be the notion of reconciliation as South Africa is practising it now, then the religious bodies would critically look into all their ecclesial structures.

APPENDIX ⁸²

82. The appendix has aimed as to show the interviews taken during the Passover festival from three different bishops of the Church of God and Saints of Christ. There are also different tabernacles and their leaders that are tabulated to be noticed. The dates from two different churches and the names of the months that are used by the amaSirayeli are also mentioned and tabulated.

Aim

1. The aim of this appendix is to tabulate professionally some important interviews taken; different tabernacles, important dates from two different churches and the names of the months that are used by the Church of God and Saints of Christ.

Scope

- 1.1 Questions and Answers on Doctrine.
- 1.2 An Interview conducted on the Election and the Ordination of Bishop JC Mzimkhulu.
- 1.3 The Months of the Year and their Biblical References
- 1.4 The Link between two Churches namely Crowdy and Mjijima's.

Analysis

1.1. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON DOCTRINE

The following questions and responses came from an interview that I conducted to Bishop JC. Mzimkhulu. The interview was conducted at his home in Cape Town. The originally language of interview was in Xhosa.

1. *How can your congregation profess to practice Judaism with a name like Church of God and Saints of Christ?*

When our congregation was established in 1911, our founder, Prophet Enoch J. Mjijima took the Church of God and Saints of Christ, because he claimed that the name came to him in a dream written in a white sheet. Although the name was used in America under Prophet S. Crowdy, but he thought to retain it. Then we preferred to be known in South

Africa as the amaSirayeli.

We interpret this name as a religious organization, which is directed by God (*Church of God*) and we are followers of the anointed Christ (*Saints of Christ*) (1Cor 1:1-2). We hold that in 1911 God spoke to Enoch J. Mgiijima in a spiritual vision and revealed to him the religion of the ancient Hebrews.

This prompted him to re-establish this religion among the suppressed black people. We use the term re-establish when describing the work of Prophet Enoch J. Mgiijima, for he did not found a new religion, but he revived a long established religion of solid Biblical origin, the religion of the ancient Hebrews.

Although we believe that, Jesus is the Son of God, yet we do not believe that he is God. We do not take him as our Lord and Saviour. That is why we do not observe Good Friday but Passover.

History has taught us that Jesus was a strict adherent of Judaism, an ardent practising Jew who observed all of the Biblical Jewish holidays. His mission, as suggested in St. Matthew 5:17, was the spiritual promulgation and application of the Law and the Prophets. We, therefore, believe in the religion of Jesus and not the religion about Jesus.'

2. What type of Judaism does your Congregation practise?

By the way we are the First Black Jews in South Africa. We categorize our religious beliefs and practices as Biblical Judaism, which assume a more basic and purist approach to the Jewish faith. We follow the Biblical mandates more closely, especially the prophetic teachings with their heavy emphasis upon such principles:

of love of God, Deut 6:5,

faith in God, Hab 2:4,
love of our fellow man, Lev 19:18,
practice of high ethical and moral standards, Mic 6:8, Is 1:16-17
devotion to God's commandments, Jer 22:3, Amos 5:24.

We accept Judaism as our faith rather than our culture. Our form of Judaism does not always agree with the norms of the current Jewish establishment with its Orthodox, Reformed and Conservative groupings.

The beliefs and practices of these groups have evolved through centuries of post-Biblical development of a law and custom set forth by rabbis and scholars of various nationalities and persuasions.'

3. *Why does the doctrine of your congregation not putting Jesus on an equal level with God?*

Deut 6:4 states: Hear, O! Israel: the LORD our God is One'. As adherents of Judaism we believe that there is only one God and besides Him, there is no other. We believe that this God created the universe, (Gen 1:1) and everything in it, (Ps 24:1).'

4. *Why does the doctrine of your congregation not rejecting Jesus?*

Jesus was a strict adherent of Judaism. He did not change any of the laws of the Torah, (Matt 5:17). He worshipped God, (Matt 4:10), and observed the Sabbath, (Lk 4:16) and the holidays listed in the Torah, such as Passover, (Lk 2:41-48, 52).

We believe that Jesus was a prophet and we accept all biblical prophets of God who taught the laws of God. Jesus lived an exemplary life and on that basis we embrace his teachings of the love of God and man.

5. *Why does the doctrine of your congregation not recognizing the Trinity?*

We believe that there is a distinction between God and Jesus of Nazareth. In particular, we believe that God is the Supreme Being in the universe and that Jesus was merely a human being; a noteworthy prophet, see (Matt 21:11), but a human being nonetheless. We do not believe that God exists in three 'modes of being', nor do we believe that God has (or needs) any sub - or co-deities.

In fact, the dogma of the Trinity originated from Babylonian pagan ideas. Trinitarianism was intertwined with Greek religion and philosophy. The idea of 'God the Son' is Babylonian paganism and mythology that was grafted into Christianity.

Three centuries after Jesus of Nazareth, Constantine the Great forced the minority religion of the Trinity upon the Council of Nicea. Thus, Catholicism and all of its derivative Protestant denominations inherited this pagan-based Tenet.' So we do not believe that God has neither two nor three forms.

6. *Why does your congregation believe in the medium of prophecy?*

In the spirit as found in (Num 12:6, Amos 3:7 and Jer 1:5), we believe that the calling of prophets did not terminate in ancient Israel. Since our re-establishment, our religious norms have been and continue to be shaped by what we believe to be divine revelation. This is manifested in a succession of leaders from Prophet Mgijima to our present leader.

Thus our religious practices are monitored by progressive, living insights into the spiritual ideals to which we aspire. We are guided neither by rabbinic consensus, nor by political expediency, but rather by a dynamic God-consciousness actualized in prophetic ideals and symbolized in the cry of the Biblical prophets of old: Thus saith the Lord, God.

7. *How can people of African descent practise Judaism?*

Judaism is a system of religious beliefs that governs the life of the individual who chooses to practice it. Thus anyone, regardless of race, nationality, or ethnicity, can embrace the religion. According to the census, there are millions of people worldwide who profess Judaism.

Among these are people of African descent residing in South Africa. There is growing evidence that the ancient Hebrews of the Bible were an Afro /Asiatic people. Many Egyptologists and biblical scholars, including Yosef Ben-Jochannan, Charles Copher, Cheikh Anta Diop, Cain Hope Felder, and Ivan Van Sertima and Rudolf Windsor have asserted that the people of the ancient biblical world were an African people.

Today, many people of African descent around the world practise Judaism and trace their lineage to ancient times. For example, the 'Beta Israel' of Ethiopia believes that they are descendants of Menelik, son of Solomon and the Limba Church in Port Elizabeth in South Africa believe that they are the descendants of the tribe of Levi.'

8. *You are observing the Sabbath instead of Sunday, Why?*

Throughout the entire Bible, the seventh day of the week is designated as the Sabbath. Originally sanctioned by God, the observance of the Sabbath on the seventh day of the week was practised by the ancient Israelites, the prophets, Jesus, the Apostle Paul and early Christians.

An attempt to change the Sabbath to Sunday was man-made and not Biblical. In 321 Constantine the Great, who was emperor of the Roman Empire, passed a series of laws sanctioning Sunday as the Sabbath and outlawing the worship of the Sabbath on Saturday.'

9. *Why does your congregation not observe Christmas?*

According to many historians, Christmas, which means Mass of Christ, later shortened to Christ-Mass, was not among the earliest festivals of the Christian Church. In the Bible, no one is recorded to have kept a feast or held a great banquet on his birthday.

Early Christian Church fathers associated the observance of the anniversary of one's birth with paganism. So, disassociating themselves from pagan practices, they did not designate a date to honour the birth of Jesus until the fourth century.

It is commonly believed that Christmas derived from practices observed by the Romans. The Romans observed the festivals of Brumalia, December 25, and Saturnalia, December 17-24, which celebrated the shortest day of the year (the going out of the sun) and the new sun (emergence of the new sun) respectively. Their celebrations were very popularly characterized by riotous merry-making.

In the year AD 321, when Emperor Constantine the Great converted to Christianity and Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, many old festivals were abandoned. Brumalia and Saturnalia, however, because of their popularity, were more difficult to give up.

Hence, as a compromise, 25 December was adopted as the birth date of Jesus, instead of the former sun worshipping festivals. The official adoption of 25 December as the birth of Jesus came from Bishop Liberius of Rome. In the year AD 354 he ordered all Christians to celebrate the 'birth of the Christ child' on this day.'

10. *What makes the Temple in Queenstown more important in the Church of God and Saints of Christ?*

Our congregation is incorporated under the name Church of God and Saints of Christ. We hear that the name that was revealed by God to Prophet William S. Crowdy in 1892, although our prophet received the name through a vision, and Prophet EJ Mjijima continued to operate under this name.

Prophet Mjijima started to build a temple in Queenstown during negotiations with the Smuts government. I have shown you the size of the temple that was built by Prophet Mjijima and I also showed you the piece of the building we built ourselves to enlarge our temple.

The Temple is the safe haven of the Covenant, the Chair of the Prophet and the Seven Keys, all these are kept in the Temple. Therefore, the Temple in Queenstown is our national headquarters.'

11 *Why do you prefer to be called the amaSirayeli and not Jews?*

As mentioned we are the First Black Jews of South Africa, however, we believe that Judaism is not a race but a religion. Hence we prefer the term 'the amaSirayeli' in referring to members of our congregation.

Religiously and doctrinally, the Bible which is the Torah is about the History of Israel and God's disclosure of Himself to us (*the amaSirayeli*). We are referred to throughout the Bible by God and His prophets as *the amaSirayeli / abantwana boMlindi* and not by the term Jew. Biblically, the commandments were given to Israel. Jacob's name was changed to Israel a blessing.

Therefore, it is our opinion that we should continue to call ourselves '*the amaSirayeli*'

specifically because there are many members of this church that are led by different Bishops. To God, they became agents through whom he could bring his blessings to the world.

End

1.2. An Interview Conducted on the Election and the Ordination of Bishop JC Mzimkhulu⁸³

When I interviewed Bishop JC Mzimkhulu at his home in Cape Town in 2002, he informed me about the way he was elected and eventually ordained. I have decided to insert the interview in the appendix. For clarification three abbreviations will be used in this interview and they are:

Q: stands for Question.

R: stands for Response.

83. This interview was conducted in Xhosa. The bishop was at his home then in Cape Town.

S: stands for Summary and Suggestions.

Q: *When did you start leading the Church of God and Saints of Christ?*

R: When Bishop Steven Shweni, the father of Elijah Shweni, died in 1984, it was clear to the church that a new bishop who will lead the amaSirayeli is needed. The Church of God and Saints of Christ decided not to elect during Passover festival, but to appoint Evangelist LK Xintolo who was his second in charge to conduct the Passover. It was during the Synod of that year that seven men were nominated during the session.

- i. Evang LK. Xintolo
- ii. Evang JC. Mzimkhulu
- iii. Evang M. Manzi
- iv. Evang E. Masiza
- v. Evang M. Mzimkhulu
- vi. Evang R. Nkopo
- vii. Evang A. Masiba

S: From the seven men, Xintolo and JC Mzimkhulu were selected, and in the voting for leadership of the church Evangelist JC Mzimkhulu was elected. Then Evangelist Xintolo, who was second in charge to Bishop Steven Shweni, ordained Evangelist JC Mzimkhulu as the Bishop of the Church of God and Saints of Christ.

He read from the book of Joshua chapter 1 verses 1 - 11. Therefore, Bishop JC Mzimkhulu's first Passover was in 1985.

Q: *With whom were you leading the Church of the amaSirayeli?*

R: I led the church with the following evangelists:

- i. Evang A. Masiba : Second in Charge
- ii. Evangelist LK Xintolo: Second in Charge
- iii. Evang M Manzi : General Secretary
- iv. Evang E Masiza
- v. Evang R Nkopo : Grandfather Abraham
- vi. Evang Dinga
- vii. Evang Nkabi

S: It is clear that the church should be led by a collection of men. One does notice that the womenfolk are not in leadership positions. They are only allowed to be Sarah's, Leah's, Rebecca's and the daughters of Jerusalem, who are under the careful eye of Grandfather Abraham.

Q: *Am I correct to assume that this church is led mostly by people who are related?*

R: Partly, yes. It is true. The church leadership is hereditary, but the constitution in paragraph 8 says that the Quarterly Meeting suggests that there should be two and not four evangelists who are appointed as second in charge. That is why I nominated Evangelists Xintolo and Masiba. There maybe some kind of relationship there because of their fathers who died during the Bulhoek Massacre.

If you are a stranger and attend the church, you will notice that everybody is related to one another. The church is, therefore, full of family members and relatively few people who have no relatives or members who died during the Bulhoek Massacre.

That is why one can mistakenly think that appointments are made deliberately from family

members. Some members of the church deny the hereditary system, although it is noticeable.

S: If one looks at the leadership of the amaSirayeli, it is clear that leaders are related. The two sections that are well known are the Shiloh and the Temple. The leaders of the amaSirayeli are relatives of the fathers and grandfathers who were also leaders of the amaSirayeli.

It is therefore not an insult to voice one's opinion that if you one is not related to a leader, then that one will never be a leader in the church of the amaSirayeli. One true example again is that, if the son of Bishop Phakade who worships in the Temple and would like to be a Bishop, he should leave the Temple and go to the tabernacle where his father is worshipping.

Q: What can you say the amaSirayeli have developed through you that you are proud of?

R: Since the breakaway of the amaSirayeli into two groups in 1947 because of some differences in dates of laying the tombstone of our heroes, I noticed that I have a responsibility of building the church anew.

Although there are two headstones at the grave of the heroes of the Bulhoek Massacre, I found that my first responsibility was to bring back those who followed the tradition of keeping the Temple pure in Queenstown.

This I say because some remained at Ntabelanga under the leadership of Bishop M Phakade. They eventually broke away into two groups in 1985 to form another group under the leadership of Bishop Mzileni. To those who went to Queenstown, I introduced commemorations of our heroes. There are many different commemorations I introduced

of which I can mention a few, like:

- i. The remembrance of Prophet EJ Mjijima ' s death.
- ii. The commemoration of the Bulhoek Massacre.
- iii. The remembrance of Esther (Purim).
- iv. The keeping of the pure Passover Festival.
- v. The Synod where all members are invited to participate.

Recently, two groups of the amaSirayeli, from the Temple and from Shiloh, met for the purposes of amalgamation as one united group. For me, this development has caused not only the amaSirayeli to feel proud but also the entire community of South Africa who happen to know about us. I have also managed to call upon the government of the Eastern Cape Province, under the Department of Arts and Culture to sponsor us by building a Monument that will cater not only for the amaSirayeli but also the whole community of Queenstown and the surroundings.

They did this under Ms Nosimo Balindlela who was the MEC of Arts and Culture then now the Premier. There are many issues that, I can be proud of to mention, but this was a joint venture with the amaSirayeli, said Bishop Mzimkhulu.

Lastly, what I want to tell you, Mfundisi wam (my dear Reverend) is that the amaSirayeli for me means a sacred point in any time. I drink from their cup. Her sweet fragrance lingers on my lips mellowing the theology and smoothing me with her music.

Mfundisi wam allow me to say to you that these two are a combination, which involves my senses, the whole of my life. Mfundisi, I want to finish up by saying to you, in the amaSirayeli I have found my dreams, my life, into the amaSirayeli I have found myself.

S: As a researcher, I noticed that Bishop Mzimkhulu, now an old man, has invested his

life more in his church than in his family. His wife died during his term of office but he carried on being the loyal leader of the church.

Q: *As a leader of this church, what challenges, both positive and negative, did you encounter?*

R: Let me refer you back to the death of the prophet in 1928. Grandfather Nkopo took over until 1933. During his reign in 1933, he appointed four Bishops. They were SP Mjijima, P Gwazela, S Mzileni and C Mzimkhulu. A split in the church took place in 1947 because of the tombstone saga.

The schism created two sections. One was led from Queenstown Temple and has some tabernacles under it to rule. The other group was at Ntabelanga, and there were also some tabernacles under it. This split carried on until today and now there are three groups.

Some of the bishops who were leading the church during the split included Dokoda who was ordained by Evangelist Tamane. Bishop Dokoda led the church in Queenstown after the death of Bishop Gwazela in 1950.

Bishop S. Shweni led the amaSirayeli in the Temple in Queenstown whilst Bishop S. Mzileni started leading the amaSirayeli of Ntabelanga in 1953. Bishop Mzileni led the Ntabelanga group until 1966. Bishop JM Phakade took the reins of the amaSirayeli of Ntabelanga from Bishop S Mzileni in 1966.

It was in 1983 that the amaSirayeli of Ntabelanga took a split again. Evangelist Oliver Mzileni, the son of Bishop S. Mzileni went away with a group. He landed at Shiloh as his headquarters. Therefore, I, as the bishop, was elected and ordained; I tried to bring the three groups together.

These were enormous challenges to me. My strategy was that everyone could come and join the church with his own title that he held. Some came and others remained.

S: My own view of these challenges is that these were not easily resolved. Bishop JC Mzimkhulu tried but failed to unite the three groups. The present bishops were, Bishops Elijah Shweni and Oliver Mzileni, together with their assistant bishops, Bishops A Masiza and M Mgijima, whose fathers had been bishops of this church.

These four bishops are now trying to bring birth to one united group. They are combining two sections, Queenstown and Shiloh to be one section. The drive by the four bishops is promising.

Q: *What have been the most transforming events in your own church during your leadership?*

Q: Mfundisi what has kept us alive even today was the creation of our mission statement and live by it.

- i. Our first mission statement was created during the first five years of my leadership.
- ii. Our second mission statement was developed in stages over a period of thirteen years.

Throughout these years, such mission statement has created a common sense of destination and a manner of leadership that has represented our social will, culture, and spirituality.

R: Directly or indirectly, unconsciously or consciously, almost everything else in our church and families has grown out of the statement. We made a decision to put principles ahead of each other and of our family circles.

I believe that a healthy church starts with a healthy home. Putting principles first has given

a sense of appropriate priority to everything else.

Part of our drive was to gather the leadership together before and after every festival, be it a Passover, Feast of Esther or a Synod, to discuss some shared experiences, laugh, and bond, philosophize, and share values.

Out of the discussions we would discover that there were some abilities such as surviving in distressful times, learning to communicate with or without knowing the person, solving problems.

We learned to survive through our ingenuity and the knowledge we had gained about what we could and could not eat and drink during our Passover festival. Mfundisi wam, let me finish this portion by saying to you, the mission statement has given us a clear, shared vision of our destination.

Our sense of looking at destination allowed us to better understand our present situation and to realize that the ends and means are inseparable. Therefore, I am happier to say that what I envisaged to do has been fulfilled.

S: Bishop Mzimkhulu has not only been a leader in his church but also a father figure to the families he was leading in and outside the church as well as abroad on the USA.

Q: *If given another chance of leading the church in this twenty-first century what would be your message?*

R: You know Mfundisi; I don't like the idea of a split church of Mgijima. I can positively say that when the Prophet built this church, he did not envisage that one day there would be three or four groups under his name. I know that numerically we need to grow and extend.

This should not happen through faction fights. It could have been better said that we separated harmoniously rather than we are divided because of the love of leadership. Now the two groups are not on good terms with one group, that of Bishops Phakade and Mzileni. Bishop Mzimkhulu said, 'we visit both groups, and this is not viewed as correct gesture by other groups. The Shiloh group is not in favour of us visiting the Phakade group.

This hurts me tremendously. I am in the process of reconciling both groups, but it is hard. We are in the process of amalgamating the whole group but Phakade's group does not attend our meetings. I have been trying to talk to both groups and I am still trying to convince them, but it is not easy.

This is serious, Mfundisi, because even if we have our celebrations at Ntabelanga, the Phakade group does not attend because of the Mzileni group. So if given another chance I would still investigate the reconciliation process between the two groups.

S: As much as it is painful that leaders of the two groups are at loggerheads because of infightings between them, yet people on the ground are friends. Remember that they are extended families. Young and old people are eating, conversing and performing things together. In the villages they live together. The differences are between leaders, whose actions are unhealthy for the next generation.

I would like Bishop Mzimkhulu's drive be taken seriously and further by Bishop EN Shweni. There are meetings that are being chaired by Bishops Shweni and Mgijima who are not in the picture regarding the cold war between Mzileni and Phakade; therefore, it is important that the church of Mgijima the Prophet and Founder return to her original status.

Q: *What legacy do you want to leave to the amaSirayeli?*

R: All the years of my leadership, I have been trying to fix damages caused by both people within and outside the church. There have been problems created by the previous dispensation, so I have constantly invited everyone in the church to be at Ntabelanga. The government also has taken part in my anticipation of a process of change in the church.

I have seen that to increase involvement has been one of the major projects of change. The process of change has caused me to be unpopular, though I was not seeking popularity and recognition, but through strong teamwork from the leaders of other sections of the amaSirayeli, I have managed to see good results.

I have also found that, in everything that I do I need to be firm but not harsh. Now I am happy to say that the present leadership is committed to the upliftment of the amaSirayeli's lifestyle.

My wish and prayer is to see sustain-ability and afford-ability in whatever they are embarking on. Although there are still some challenges, I wish that the amaSirayeli, through their bishops, could take a quantum leap and move to the forefront of progressive churches and become challengers of all the opportunities that they face.

So, I wish for a proud, passionate and knowledgeable mSirayeli, to take up arms in building a Church of God and Saints of Christ that can be sustained even when we are laid to rest. That is what I wish for my church, Mfundisi.

S: On listening to Bishop Mzimkhulu, it occurred to me that in their church there is no one of them who is better than any other. Every one of them can make a difference. If they could embrace every opportunity during and after their celebrations at Ntabelanga, things would improve and conflict with each other could cease.

The future of their children and of the church is in their hands. These were the views of

Bishop JC Mzimkhulu. During an interview, Mzimkhulu brought in some other interesting topics, which I found that some were not relevant to this research.

These include the spirit and traditional values of the amaSirayeli, their affiliation to African traditional religion and ecumenical affairs, national and cultural integration, current social development and commemorations.

The response from the bishop was satisfying in that he knew what he was speaking about. He also showed interest in passing the church tradition to the younger blood, so as to give him time to worship in a relaxed form. I thank him for all of this.

1.3 The Months of the Year and their Biblical References

Abib	(Exodus 13:4)	April
Ziv	(1 Kings 6:1)	May
Sivan	(Esther 8:9)	June
Tamuz	(Zach 8:19)	July
Ab	(Ezra 7:9)	August
Elul	(Neh. 6:15)	September
Etanim	(1 Kings 8:2)	October
Bul	(1 Kings 6:38)	November
Kislev	(Neh. 1:1-3)	December
Tibet	(Esther 2:16)	January
Shebat	(Zach.1:7)	February
Adar	(Esther 1:3-7)	March

1.4. The Link between the two Churches.

The reason for making a link between these two churches is that, both are one and

undivided in nature. Although one is in South Africa and the other in the United State of America, yet everything such as doctrine, music, religion, uniform are the same. These are churches that invite one another when there are festivals and important occasions.

There are, however, two other churches of the Church of God and Saints of Christ that do not worship as the amaSirayeli. They are led by Bishops Ntshangase from KwaZulu Natal and Matshaka from Uitenhage. But when certain important occasions are commemorated on either one of them, they visit each other.

Therefore, the researcher felt it important not only to compare some of the important dates for each one but also to address those events that are significant.

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Bishop JC Mzimkhulu:

14-21 Apr 2001,	Queenstown Temple
19-20 Feb 2001,	Cape Town Residence
14-21 Apr 2002,	Queenstown Temple

Bishop O Mzileni:

14-21 Apr 2001,	Shiloh Tabernacle
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Bishop M Mgiijima:

14-21 Apr 2001,	Shiloh Tabernacle
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Bishop EN Shweni:

14-21 Apr 2001,	Queenstown Temple
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24-26 May 2002, Ntabelanga
6-8 Sept 2002 Cradock

Evang. GZA Ntloko:

6-8 Oct 1999, Queenstown Temple
14-21 Apr 2001, Queenstown Temple
24-25 May 2001, Bulhoek Commemoration

Evang, JJ Mbayi:

16; 25-28 Apr 2001, Shiloh Tabernacle

Evang, B Lerula:

25-28 Apr 2002, Shiloh Tabernacle

Evang, CM Dokoda :

14-21 Apr 2001, Shiloh Tabernacle
24-27 May 2001, Shiloh Tabernacle

Mculisikazi N Vuba :

14-21 Apr 2001. Queenstown Residence and Temple

Mculisikazi S Mbayi :

During 2001 - 2003 Shiloh Tabernacle

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