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DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES AND THEOLOGY

**MT DARWIN AICs: CONTINUITY OR DISCONTINUITY WITH
BIBLICAL PRE CANONICAL PROPHETS?**

BY

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my husband Mr Cahu Chiratidzo Nyamupingidza and my family for their moral, material and financial support.

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The successful completion of this work has not been my might; neither has it been by power but by the hand of God. To Him Be the Glory.

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Richard Pirirani

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFM	Apostolic Faith Mission
AIC	African Indigenous Churches
JMNN	Johane Marange Nyeredzi Nomwe PaHosea
MAC	Mugodhi Apostolic Church
ZZAC	Zviratidzo Zvavapositori Apostolic Church
ZCC	Zion Christian Church
ATR(s)	African Traditional Religions
OT	Old Testament

ABSTRACT

This thesis critically examines and compares the prophetic activities of AIC and modus operandi of AIC prophets with the pre canonical biblical prophets. There have been constant criticisms among Zimbabweans, both Christians and non-Christians about the prophetic activities and mode of operation of AIC prophets although the research is limited to Mt Darwin. The research is limited to Mt Darwin area because has the finger tip knowledge of the churches under discussion and a resident of the area. The misunderstanding and the misconceptions in the mode of operation of some AIC in Zimbabwe have called for a study of the kind of analysing the prophetic activities and modus operandi of these prophets. Besides examining the prophetic activities and modus operandi of prophets in Mt Darwin Area, the thesis will also compare their operation with that of biblical prophets to find out the similarities and dissimilarities. The primary data for this study were obtained through interviews. The researcher visited some shrines of the churches selected in Mt Darwin area and interviewed prophets, leaders and members of the churches. Secondary data were obtained through relevant literatures. The researcher read some books and articles on the topic. The study revealed that the A prophets in Mt Darwin area are African Traditional fundamentalists and as such biblical prophets are seen to have adopted some concepts from other cultures and religions like that of the Canaanites and the Egyptians. Many AIC prophets are found tapping into African Traditional Religion in their activities and mode of operation.

Table of Contents

APPROVAL FORM	i
RELEASE FORM.....	ii
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iv
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	v
ABSTRACT.....	vi
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCING THE STUDY	1
1.0 Background of study	1
1.1 Statement of the problem	2
1.2 Aim	3
1.3 Objectives.....	3
1.4 Justification	4
1.5 Scope of work.....	4
1.6 Research Methodology	5
1.7 Data collection	7
1.8 Literature review.....	8
CHAPTER TWO	11
2.0 INTRODUCTION.....	11
2.1What are the African indigenous churches? – Definition.....	11
2.2 Historical overviews to the Johane Marange (Nyeredzi Nomwe paHosea), Mugodhi Apostolic Church and Zviratidzo Zvavapositori Apostolic Church.	13
2.2.1 Johane Marange (The Seven Stars of Hosea).....	13
2.2.2 Mugodhi Apostolic Church.....	16
2.2.3 Zviratidzo ZvaVapositori Apostolic Church	17
2.3 Conclusion.....	18
CHAPTER THREE	19
THE PROPHETIC ACTIVITIES AND MODUS OPERANDI OF AIC PROPHETS IN JMNN, MAC AND ZZAC	19
3.0 Introduction	19
3.1 Activities of prophets in Johane Marange (Nyeredzi Nomwe paHosea), Mugodhi Apostolic Church and Zviratidzo ZvaVapositori.	19
3.1.2 The nature of prophecy in Johane Marange (Nyeredzi Nomwe), Mugodhi Apostolic Church and Zviratidzo ZvaVapositori Church.	21

3.1.3 Modus operandi of prophets in JMNN, MAC and ZZAC.....	23
3.2 Conclusion.....	25
CHAPTER FOUR	27
THE COMPARISON AND EVALUATION BETWEEN MT DARWIN AIC PROPHETS AND PRE CANONICAL BIBLICAL PROPHETS.	27
4.0 Introduction	27
4.1 Call Narrative.....	27
4.2 Aspect of Prophetic Guilds.....	29
4.3 Ecstatic Prophecy	30
4.4 Types of Prophecy.....	31
4.5 Mode of Operation	32
4.6 Evaluation on the AIC prophets and biblical pre canonical prophets.....	33
4.7 Conclusion.....	34
CHAPTER FIVE	35
SUMMARY AND CONCLUDING REMARKS.....	35
5.0 Introduction	35
5.1 Summary of the study.....	35
5.2 Concluding remarks	36
5.3 Conclusion.....	37
REFERENCES.....	38

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCING THE STUDY

1.0 Background of study

This research lies in the field of the Old Testament as well as in the area of New Religious Movements (AICs). If there is anything that has caught the attention of many (both Christians and non Christian) today as far as the church is concerned, it is the many “men of God”, who assume the title “Prophet”. It can be noted that most of these so called “man of God” in African indigenous churches (AIC’s) in Zimbabwe are under scrutiny in as far as their prophetic activities are concerned. The AIC’s prophets modus operandi has become a point of concern and a worry to many Zimbabweans. The impact of these prophetic movements has changed the face of Christianity not only in Zimbabwe but around the world and they seem to have introduced a new concept in Christianity. In other words the impact of the prophetic figures in AIC’s has an everlasting impact on the people as a whole.

Many scholars have attempted to explain the phenomenon of AICs in Zimbabwe, though the term AICs poses some problems because of the middle letter which is slippery. The researcher chooses to use the term African Indigenous Churches because it reveals the true nature of the churches. Even though some researches have been done on why African Indigenous Churches are growing fast in Zimbabwe and the prophetism in the African Indigenous Churches, it appears that some scholars like Gunda, Taringa to mention just a few have looked on the mode of operation of AIC prophets. Hence, this study attempts to find out if there has been any more works related to the activities of AIC prophets, if any to what extent did the prophetic activities go hand in glove with those of the biblical prophets.

There is no doubt about the fact that, most of the African indigenous churches are cults. The embracing of African concepts by these churches forms a strong basis of African spirituality. The modus operandi of the prophets in these churches won them the label “cultic prophets”. In their activities, African concepts as well as Christian concepts are found being conflated hence their modus operandi is questioned. This is what propelled the researcher to investigate the nature and modus operandi of these AIC prophets so as to find whether there is a continuity or a discontinuity with biblical prophets. This research focuses on the operation of Mt Darwin AIC prophets from Johane Marange Nyeredzi Nomwe paHosea, Mugodhi Apostolic Church and Zviratidzo Zvavapositioni Apostolic Church, since they are the most well known in the area under study and have been associated with large gatherings which made them popular. It will be the endeavour of the research also to analyse the prophetic activities of these prophets in light of biblical prophets as mentioned before.

1.1 Statement of the problem

Scholars within and outside the church in Zimbabwe have raised many questions and doubts about the prophetic activities of the AIC prophets. Others are worried about their nature as whether they are a continuity or a discontinuity with biblical prophets. Prophetism is not a new phenomenon. There have been a number of these prophets in the history of the church in Zimbabwe. The aspect of borrowing religious elements from other religions is the subject of concern to academic and non academic circles. AIC prophets in most apostolic (white and coloured garmented) are being accused of borrowing elements of African traditional religion and conflating them with elements from the Christian religion. The element of syncretism has tainted their image but on the surface of it syncretism is not really a problem as such given that almost all religions are syncretistic.

Moreover, the characteristics or traits (prophetic) of most AIC prophets are multi-faceted. They seem to borrow both from ATR specifically the way how they do things at their shrines. In them one can see a traditional healer- cum- prophet hence wonder where exactly they belong to. Are they Christian or mere traditionalists disguising themselves in a Christian garb? That is the question which is still hovering in the minds of many, not only those in the churches, but even outside. This study focuses on the operation of African independent church prophets, its concern is to scrutinize the nature as well their modus operandi in light of biblical prophets. In this research the comparison would be done between the AIC prophets in the churches mentioned before and the biblical prophets. The aspect of symbolism, art and shrines gives this bud of confusion to many Zimbabweans as many of these seem to contradict with what can be seen on biblical prophets (both canonical and pre-canonical prophets). Hence, this study is aimed at unveiling some of the pre-conceived ideas as well as cloud of confusion surrounding the activities of AIC prophets in Zimbabwe.

1.2 Aim

My aim in this project is to examine the prophetic acts and mode of operation of Mt Darwin AIC prophets and find if they are a discontinuity or continuity with pre canonical biblical prophets.

1.3 Objectives

1. To provide brief backgrounds to: Mugodhi apostolic church, Johane Marange (Nyeredzi Nomwe) and Zviratidzo Zvavapositori Apostolic Church,
2. To state the prophetic acts and modus operandi of the AIC prophets in the above stated churches,

3. To compare and contrast pre canonical biblical prophets with the AIC prophets,
4. To evaluate Mt Darwin AIC prophets in light of biblical prophets,
5. Summarize, recommend and conclude.

1.4 Justification

In choosing this area of study, the researcher as the resident of Mt Darwin had the fingertip knowledge of the AICs under discussion and in academic circles the area has not been touched on by many researchers locally, although scholars such as Mangena emphasized on this issue. Most of the scholars have focused much on the rise and developments of AICs in Zimbabwe and the role these churches play in all spheres of life in Zimbabwe thus politically, economically, socially and religiously. Only a few scholars such as Taringa (2013), Ooisthuisen(1997) and Masiwa(2010) have touched on the parallels between the activities of AIC prophets and diviners in ATR as well as their mode of operation, but not on the churches under discussion. Hence, this gap in academic circles propelled the researcher to engage in this research.

1.5 Scope of work

The study deals with the operation of the prophets of the African indigenous churches particularly those in Mt Darwin. Although there are many aspects which are of concern on the AIC prophets in light of pre canonical biblical prophets, it is this area which has drawn the attention of many people, Christian and non Christians. The focus of this study is prophetic activities of AIC prophets in light of biblical prophets.

The study is limited to the Korekore in Chief Nembire area due to time constraints and financial constraints. The targeted churches are Mugodhi Apostolic Church, Johane Marange (Nyeredzi Nomwe) and Zviratidzo Zvavapositioni Apostolic Church. However, this does not imply that cultic prophets or similar churches in other areas were not contacted. This is clear indication that though the study is limited mainly to Chief Nembire area, it amply covers some of other communities in Mt Darwin. The existing body of knowledge had gaps in this particular area, a few scholars had been interested in scrutinizing the mode of operation of AIC prophets in light of biblical prophets. Most of the scholars focused much on the emergence of these churches and on the role played by these prophets in AICs, hence the researcher decided to cover the gap through this research.

1.6 Research Methodology

In conducting the research, the researcher used the phenomenological method. This method generally is a way of pointing to the phenomena as they give themselves. The word phenomenology like phenomena is derived from the Greek word *phainomeno* meaning “that which shows itself” or that which appears (Akron 1998). Some key principles of this method include epoche-bracketing out or suspension of value judgements; empathy; interpolation, non reduction, upholding or endorsing the believer’s point of view and other. It is more concerned with truth questions in order to reach the sore truth about religions. Additionally, this approach is mainly used as an attitude of tolerance of other people’s valued material that one would be studying. It encourages a researcher to make evaluations after properly examining all the information received. The believer’s testimony and experience are always upheld resulting in the building of the relationship that is based on trust. So, as a result of some of these facts, the phenomenological inquiry takes centre stage throughout this project even though the whole study will also use comparative approach and the socio-scientific

criticism as a biblical tool of analysis since the study will evaluate the mode of operation of AIC prophets in light of pre canonical biblical prophets. However, the method has its strengths and weaknesses. Its major strength is to unveil the truth claims about religions and help in giving meaning to some religious practices thus doing justice to religions themselves. Despite this, the phenomenological method is difficult to practise on the ground, the performing of epoche is full of challenges for it is difficult to suspend and bracket knowledge, the judgement passed could be stained with bias or preconceived ideas hence in applying this method one has to be careful in passing judgements on some religious concepts.

Comparative approach

Since the thrust of the study is to evaluate and more of give a comparison on the activities or the mode of operation of AIC and biblical prophets, the researcher is also going to use the comparative approach. This method particularly is a branch which deals with giving a systematic comparison of the doctrines and practices of world religions. It is meant to study religions in an appreciative way and in a manner which is non judgemental. According to Dopamu (2000), “the purpose is not to assert the truth or falsity or relegate any religion or to incorporate value judgemental about other religions, but to show that the religions of the human kind are similar in many ways and also different in significant ways”. Hence in this manner the researcher compares the prophetic traits of AIC (Christian) and biblical prophets (Judaism) as well as their mode of operation which is the heart of this study. This method will aid the phenomenological method in giving a comparison between the two after information on their activities is collected. Though helpful, the method has its strengths and weaknesses as well. In trying to give a comparison, the researcher may fall into the trap of missing important religious aspects of other religions or misinterpret others on the expense of others.

Despite this gap in using the method, it offers helpful information on the similarities and differences between religions and their practices.

Socio- scientific criticism

The study is also going to use socio scientific criticism as a biblical tool. This has been an appropriate biblical tool since the concern of this study is to look analytically at the characteristics, nature of operation of pre canonical biblical prophets. The evidence that has been given in the text in line with their operation in Israel is of central importance in this study. This method of biblical criticism seeks to go into the historical world behind the text than focusing on the historical world given to us in the text. Its aim is to study the biblical materials as a reflection of their cultural setting. Hence this would be an appropriate biblical tool in this study, in gathering as well as after information on the activities of Israelites prophets has been collected. The researcher would analytically look at the mode of operation of biblical prophets, its nature and how it relates or contradicts with that of AIC prophets in Zimbabwe.

1.7 Data collection

Data were sought through observation and personal interviews. The two methods are appropriate to seek out information on AIC prophets in regard to their activities as prophets. Through observation the researcher will be able to relate to what is currently happening and will not be blurred by either the past behaviour or future intentions or attitudes of respondents. Although it is an expensive method it goes hand in glove with the phenomenological method applied. Visits to all the three shrines would be undertaken.

Personal interview

In this case the researcher would seek answers to a set of questions through personal interviews. This method of collecting data is also going to be used by the researcher to collect information from the leaders as well as the members and prophets from the apostolic sects mentioned. This would be randomly done to both the leaders of the churches, the prophets as well as the members from these churches.

1.8 Literature review

Studies and publications on prophetic movements in Zimbabwe have been conducted by a number of scholars in theological and biblical circles. In the centre of these studies is the “men of God” which are prophets and the focus being on their characteristic traits as well as the role they played. Pertaining to these prophetic movements in Zimbabwe, for instance a survey by *Rel.zim.org* on religion in Zimbabwe has it that, the “varying estimates of African Indigenous Churches in Zimbabwe can be found ranging from 10% to 20% of the total population, in which they sometimes hold to one or more African tribal belief systems syncretised with Christianity”. This pointed to the fact that African Indigenous Churches in Zimbabwe are a product of the mixture of beliefs that is undoubtedly the mixing of A.T.R and Christian concepts. As a result, this would affect the operation of the prophets in these churches.

The prophets in AICs are vital for the wellbeing of the church, they have a pivotal role to play but their relationship with traditional religion is not a fact to deny. For instance, Ooisthuzen (1997) studied about the relationship between a diviner and a prophet in AICs and A.T.R in South African towns of Durban, Soweto and so on. He observed that, “some of

the leaders of those churches who have diviner-cum-prophet in their congregations try to hide this fact, others have no inhibitions”. In this study Ooisthuizen (1997) brought out how close the AIC prophets are to diviners and traditional healers in A.T.R. He went on to say that, the operation of AIC prophets is subject to questioning and needs to be cleared. The work to larger extent brought out a common feature of similarities between AIC prophets in most churches which some of them are looked at in this research.

Umoh (2013:38) in his article on *Superstition and Syncretism in Africa* postulated that, “as far as religion is concerned, it is a well known fact that most of the religions evolved from various ancient beliefs, hence the tendency to carry over and blend with former creedal milieu”. This view clearly points out that syncretism is a popular phenomenon in Africa and from the reasons behind the emergence of AICs it can be clearly said that they are a product of indigenised Christianity where concepts from A.T.R are welcomed. The driving force and perpetuators of this are the prophets in these churches through their activities such as healing among others.

Moreso, what one needs to bear in mind is that, Africans are used to concrete ways of healing as shown by their frequent visits to the traditional healers. In so doing, the reason why AIC prophets adopted this was a way to attract people to come to church. Through embracing elements of traditional society people flock to these churches. Masiwa in Togarasei and Chitando (2010:46) supported this saying that, “prophecy plays a pivotal role because it helps these churches to achieve their aim, that is the request for ritual, a belief and a realized community in and through which human immediate needs- social, psychological and physical could be appropriately met”. Depicting from this statement, it is clear however that prophets

in AICs act as catalysts for the perpetuation of A.T.R in these prophetic movements, hence their nature of activities is prone to questioning.

However, studies by Masiwa (2010) went on to explore the AIC prophet's relationship with the biblical prophets. He noted that the idea of prophets in AICs is inspired by Old Testament prophets and this is evidenced in a number of ways. For instance, the changing of names through adopting Old Testament prophetic names like Elijah and Ezekia. Through this adoption of names, AIC prophets claimed that they are guided by these biblical prophets in their activities. He went on to say that, "it seems more apparent that the prophets (AIC) are close to Old Testament seers and diviners as can be seen in 1Samuel 28:8ff". Hence, one can conclude here that AIC prophets also borrowed some traits of biblical prophets although the idea of indigenised Christianity colour their activities as well as their characteristic traits as prophets. This has become a point of concern in regards to their nature of operation thus the interest to investigate whether they are a continuity or a discontinuity with biblical prophets. The pieces of literature reviewed by the researcher would be more considered in chapters 3 and 4 of this research project.

This study focuses on the operation of AIC prophets as to what extent are they a true replica of biblical prophets or whether they are a completely a new brand on the prophetic market, thus a continuity or a discontinuity with biblical prophets.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the researcher is going to briefly discuss the historical background and explain what African indigenous churches are since one of main purposes of this work is to identify and look at the three churches which are Johane Marange (Nyeredzi Nomwe), Mugodhi Apostolic church and Zviratidzo Zvevapositori church. It also discusses the beliefs and practices of the fore bearers of AICs.

2.1 What are the African indigenous churches? - Definition

Oduro (2001:31), defines African indigenous churches as churches that have been established by Africans and or denomination planted, led, administered, supported propagated, instituted and funded by Africans for the purpose of serving a true God. Akrong (1998:17) seems to support Oduro's definition. He sees these churches as independent of mission support and control. The AICs were formed to bring meaning to the gospel to suit African situation and worldwide. Oduro and Akrong's definition had a little deficiency in that they failed to note that there are independent churches, which were founded by non Africans, and yet claim to be African indigenous churches. Some of such churches were established by black Americans, their leaders were black theologians, campaigning for contextualisation of Christianity.

Scholars all over the world have generally used the term African indigenous churches to describe churches that seek to contextualise the gospel to suit the African people understanding of God, through their beliefs and practises. Such churches also seek to renew African Christianity to create meaningful understanding of the gospel through African

culture. Churches such as Johane Masowe Gospel of God Church, Johane Marange African Apostolic Church and Zion Christian Church of Samuel Mutendi come under this category among other Zimbabwean AICs. These churches emerged to protest against the increasingly negative attitude of the missionaries toward African people and their cultural beliefs and practises. The missionaries saw many African practises as evil, for example their way of living, songs, dances and even names. The African indigenous churches were the sure reaction to this negative perception so that African Spirituality which has been relegated or ignored by missionaries would emerge as genuine and equally authentic.

The AICs are churches or Christian bodies in Africa that were established as a result of African initiative rather than foreign missionary organisations. They were planted in Africa by Africans, and not by missionaries from other continents Sundkler (1961). Some AICs in other continents are sometimes founded by blacks in the Diaspora, for instance the Johane Masowe Chishanu had members in the United Kingdom.

However, the scholars use various names to describe AICs. Some scholars refer to them as the African Indigenous Churches, African Initiated Churches, African Independent Churches and African Instituted Churches. These terminologies used clearly portrays that these churches were formed by Africans and their leaders are mainly African people. Sundkler (1961) referred to them as Bantu independent churches because of their roots from South Africa where they were originally known as “Native Separatists Churches”. However, Sundkler’s coinage is derogatory for it was associated with the apartheid regime discrimination of blacks in South Africa. Hayes (1992) replaced the coinage by Sundkler and used the acronym AIC to refer to African Independent Churches which stresses the absence of links to or control by mission founded churches. African Indigenous Churches highlights

African traditional worldviews, and African Instituted / Initiated Churches points to the churches formation by Africans (Hayes, 2003).

The AICs believe in spirituality, prophetism, spiritual healing, relying on the Holy Spirit rather than human intellect. Although the prophecies came from a human being, they still believe it is through the Spirit's guidance. There are certain beliefs and practises which make AICs distinctive. Prominent among them are revelation through the prophets, second is faith healing and AICs are more ritualistic than any other churches. Early Zimbabwean AIC founders were inspired by the older South African AIC movement and some are offshoots of South Africans ones, such as ZCC of Mutendi.

2.2 Historical overviews to the Johane Marange (Nyeredzi Nomwe paHosea), Mugodhi Apostolic Church and Zviratidzo Zvavapositori Apostolic Church.

2.2.1 Johane Marange (The Seven Stars of Hosea)

The origins of the Johane Marange African Apostolic Church can be traced back to a Zimbabwean Christian leader and prophet Johane Marange (1912-1963). The founder was born Muchabaya Momberume in 1912 near Bondwe in southern Rhodesia in the tribe of Marange. An article entitled *The Origins of Johane Marange 2015* stated that in 1917 at the age of five, Muchabaya received the Holy Spirit which revealed to him he was to be called John the Baptist hence the name Johane Marange. Other sources said Muchabaya encountered the Holy Spirit when he was at the age of 20. He was a Methodist and in 1932 he returned from a journey in the bush proclaiming that he had visions in which he was told to

become an itinerant preacher and to baptise people and finally to establish a new African church.

The church founded by Marange in the 1930s attracted more people mostly the poor and the majority which attended were from the mainline churches such as Methodist ,Roman Catholic and Anglican who were well to do people (*The Origins of Johane Marange,2015*). Mr Maisokwadzo a member of the Marange sect reveals that, before Muchabaya died (the founder), the Holy spirit had already revealed to him about the church's future after his death, hence he instructed the elders that his sons would run the church as priests (interview, 20/06/2015). As a result, before his death in 1963, Johane appointed his youngest and favourite son Clemence who was only 8 years old when he died to succeed him in leading the church. Unfortunately Johane's wish was not fulfilled since Clemence was too young to lead the ballooning church so they had to install Abel/Abero and Judah Marange to take over the leadership of the church. The Holy Shrine for the Marange sect is in Bocha which they visited for important church gatherings once a year, even those who are abroad.

After the death of Johane Marange, there arose tension among the family of Johane and his brothers which lead to disputes over priesthood, for the wish of Johane that Clemence should lead was not considered. A member from Taguta and Ngomberume families coveted the position, thereby giving birth to today's friction that has seen various Johane Marange sects dotted across the country among whom we find the Johane Marange Nyeredzi Nomwe paHosea sect emerging from. Since the focus of the research is on the above mentioned sect, the researcher finds it helpful to trace the history of the founder of the Johane Marange sect up to the time of the faction which gave birth to new groups under the name Johane Marange.

The Johane Marange Nyeredzi Nomwe paHosea as a sect has origins which are difficult to discern through fieldwork because its local leaders and members are vague about it, or appear too little interested in questions of the church history. Despite these difficulties, the roots of the sect are linked to the Johane Marange African Apostolic Church and its origins pointed to Noah Taguta one of the Marange brother's son who is part and parcel of the succession disputes. This sect is known for wearing white garments with red and green belts and known also for the use of what they call the Dicksenz and Highsenz types of dance. The Highsenz type of dance is associated with movement and a jumping pattern. This grouping is also known for its use of *mhiko* (covenants) to perform their healings and their philosophy is "an eye for an eye", enemies are not supposed to live. It is well known in Mt Darwin area, that once someone from this sect ties a covenant, no one, not even a traditional healer can undo it. In their worship they use red clothes, needles, eggs, leaves, roots from the *mutova* (a shrub known as *ectadiopsis producta*), *mutara* (small tree *gardenia jovial tonantis*) and *muhacha* (hissing tree) and above all this church does not read the bible.

Moreso, the aspect of spirit possession is rampant in the Johane Marange Nyeredzi Nomwe paHosea. The ones who are associated with the gift of prophecy are identified with the spirit of Moses. For easy identification, they are supposed to grow locks (ndaza) but the permission for this should be from the spiritual leader in Guruve. The interviewed members who wanted to remain anonymous stated that the identification with the spirit of Moses is linked to the incident where he murdered an Egyptian. An article entitled *The Cultic Mindset of Pentecostals Links to the Occult and the History 2013* identifies the training of the prophets in these churches. It states that, "they are also guided by the angels or the mermaid, in the majority, the apostolic sect leaders and traditional healers are usually trained at the same

place usually underwater”. The prophets in these churches are seen as healers, diviners, forthtellers and are also exorcists.

2.2.2 Mugodhi Apostolic Church

The origin of Mugodhi Apostolic Church can be traced back to the 1940s when it still held the name Mugodhi Faith of Kruger. It was formed after its leader Elijah Mugodhi was expelled from the Apostolic Faith Mission for taking a second wife. The identification of Kruger with Mugodhi church is linked to former as one of the most important and prominent missionaries in AFM. Maxwell (1999) said, “the Mugodhi church headquarters are in Wedza in the Western Zimbabwe”. The well known and prominent leader in Zimbabwe now is Tadeu Mugodhi. Members wear white garments just like other apostolic churches. Reading of the bible is given an upperhand and is central to the church, they wanted to convey biblical teaching as understood “in the context of their (African) cultural belief system” (Amanze, 1998:116). In their healing they use water, milk and salt and wool thread usually green and red. Wool thread (shinda yemajuzi) is corded in 2s with 6s of a knots and tied to a person’s waist so that evil spirit can be trapped and this is usually done on pregnant women in order to avoid any intended harm on the child being carried in the womb.

Moreso, the aspect of prophecy is central to Mugodhi Apostolic Church. One named prophet Eria Mashonganyika was open and clear on how they become prophets. He clearly stated “*Kwedu kana usina kutsika Chitope hausati wava muporofita chaiye*”(If you haven’t visited Chitope, you don’t meet the standards of being a true prophet). In explaining further, he went on to say that, all prophets have to be tried out in Chitope, Hwedza where they are given certificates of passing (interview 02/07/15). Hence one cannot talk of prophets in Mugodhi

Apostolic Church without mentioning the centrality of Chitope in Hwedza. It is central in the sense that, prophets in Mugodhi Apostolic Church are trained and approved at Chitope. The sect is also known for attaching importance to speaking in tongues (glossolalia) when the spirit is upon them. The Holy Spirit (*mudzimu unoyera*) is seen merging with the traditional beliefs and the prophet as the central figure shows the manifestations of the Holy Spirit. Shoko (2007) is in line with this notion that Zimbabwean Apostolic AICs use of the Holy Spirit is reminiscent of African Traditional beliefs. According to Shoko “spirit possession forms a vital link with tradition. Independent church members operate under influence of the Holy Spirit. When the spirit possesses a member, he enters into ecstasy. The individual shakes his head and shouts with a different language...then in possession he utters revelations by the Holy Spirit”. Women are allowed to keep hair so long as they do not plait it while men should always keep their hair short.

2.2.3 Zviratidzo ZvaVapositori Apostolic Church

The sect is known for wearing white garments with yellow belts and some of the garments have yellow stars on the shoulder and chest. The headgear which they call *samaria* has a yellow star and meetings are on Fridays. The origins of the church are not clear for during the interviews on who exactly founded the church, reference was given to two persons. The church has been linked to one Madzibaba Gwasha Samuel from Mawaya village Mt Darwin and another name which is mentioned is that of Mr Shonhiwa from Chaka village. Therefore it was difficult to discern who possibly started the church in Nembire Area.

From what the researcher gathered in regards to their way of worship, she observed that practices give an insight into the nature of the church. During worship, they do not clap hands on some of the songs and use mainly the Morodai dance (sideways movements). There are

also known for having an event called *misi mitatu* (derived from Tuesday being the third day in a week and the day when it is done) and it served the purpose of strengthening the faith of the members through prophetic utterances. On this particular day they use a big clay pot (*zigate*) tied with a white cloth and then placed on the centre close to the *kirawa* or (shrine). In the big clay pot will be a mixture of milk and lemons to be given to the children present so as to protect them from the evil forces which might want to attack them. Every child has to drink from it. On that particular day the members are prohibited to eat, and they also use the *muhacha* tree for making small crosses tied with white sewing thread.

However, the origins of the Zviratidzo Zvevapositori Apostolic Church was difficult to discern from the existing literature on AICs for the information was scarce. Scholars have not yet touched on this new movement among the apostolic AICs hence the researcher relied on interviews done.

2.3 Conclusion

African Indigenous Churches emerged as a result of various reasons, the reasons vary from being political, social, economical, historical as well as religious. Apart from the reasons behind the emergence of each of these churches, one can overally say that these churches were formed in a bid to seek an African identity, a sense of belonging became the driving force. AICs had not only their roots in Africa but also from abroad but still they embrace the African values. The Johane Marange (Nyeredzi Nomwe), Mugodhi Apostolic Church and Zviratidzo ZvaVapositori are the products of African thinking and values and they are going to take a centre stage in this research as shall be seen in the following chapters.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PROPHETIC ACTIVITIES AND MODUS OPERANDI OF AIC PROPHETS IN JMNN, MAC AND ZZAC

3.0 Introduction

In this chapter the researcher will be looking at the activities of prophets in Johane Marange (Nyeredzi Nomwe paHosea), Mugodhi Apostolic Church and Zviratidzo ZvaVapositori. The chapter will also deal with the issue of the mode of operation of these prophets.

3.1 Activities of prophets in Johane Marange (Nyeredzi Nomwe paHosea), Mugodhi Apostolic Church and Zviratidzo ZvaVapositori.

From the researcher's observation, the prophetic activities of the prophets in the three above mentioned churches seem to be similar. The prophetic roles identified by the researcher are the following: healers, forthtellers, exorcists of evil spirits and prophetic utterances. Due to these roles as well as their activities, the prophets became the centre of attraction and the soul of African indigenous churches. On the aspect of healing, the prophets play a crucial role in the healing session. It is a common phenomenon in these churches that the causes of illness are similar to those attributed to in African Traditional Religion. They seem to tap into the African perception of the cause of illness. According to Taringa (2013) " what the AICs prophets practise, therefore is consistent with the African thinking that illness has a spiritual cause where it is ascribed to witchcraft or to the anger of neglected ancestors and ancestral spirits or to possession by shave (alien spirit)". It can be noted therefore that the prophets in AICs take into consideration the traditional thinking when it comes to problems like that of illnesses.

Moreover, the cause of illness can also be attributed to the behaviour of other human beings such as sorcerers and witches. In this case prophet Ishmael Mwale from Zviratidzo ZveVapostori Apostolic Church submitted that as a prophet, in such a case of bewitchment, he usually asked the patient whether the illness should be sent back to the sender or not, in the case that the patient agrees, the spirit of illness is sent back and maliciously attacks the sender (interview on 25/05/15). This has been supported by de Waal (1979:249) who says, “in the process of healing the healer may attempt to purify the patient to counter the evil influences and send the magic power back to the sorcerer by reversing the spell”. This aspect of getting rid or warding off of the spirit has been adopted from Shona traditional religion whereby this task is undertaken by a *n’anga*.

From the researcher’s observation of Johane Marange (Nyeredzi Nomwe paHosea) service on a Friday, the belief that illness is brought about by supernatural power is also rampant. A certain old lady who had problems with her legs for so many years was clearly told by the prophet that, what has been diagnosed at the hospital was not the actual cause of her problem but, this has to do with the supernatural powers which need to be exorcised. The prophet (name unknown) ended up in a state of *kuhakira mweya* (a Shona practice which involves messages and purification). Taringa (2013) explained this practice saying, “the spirit is bribed into leaving the body; good spirits may be placed in the patient’s body to drive out the evil spirits and transferred into the body of the healer, who is capable of dealing with it”. Hence, prophets in these mentioned churches uphold the traditional thinking on causes of illness and also adopt African ways of dealing with the problem and this role had makes the prophets the heart of these churches.

In addition, from the interviews carried out by the researcher, the prophets in all the three churches tap into A.T.Rs emphasis on diagnosis. Just like in A.T.R, the AICs believe that the diagnosis of the cause of illness is important and crucial step to a therapy even after the death of a patient. This is clearly shown on the event of a mysterious death of a family member which leads to the consultation of a traditional healer to sort the cause of a death (Ooisthuizen 1997). In both ATR and AICs prophets as observed by the researcher, in diagnosis of any problem they both held same views, and the Shona traditional belief that is preoccupied with ancestral spirits is at the centre. Daneel (1971:167) clearly stated that, “unlike the European medical doctor, both *nganga* and prophets ascribed the causes of illness to a personal agent, be it ancestral or alien spirit, operating alone or in conjunction with a living enemy (*muveni*)”. It is clear however that, AIC prophets are traditional religious fundamentalists and it is a task fraught with challenges to separate the prophet from thought patterns and values of African peoples.

3.1.2 The nature of prophecy in Johane Marange (Nyeredzi Nomwe), Mugodhi Apostolic Church and Zviratidzo ZvaVapositori Church.

The other important role of the prophets in these churches is that of prophesying and this helps these three churches to reach their aim which is to meet the human immediate needs. The nature of prophecy in these churches is mainly predictive as illustrated by Mrs Mwale of Mugodhi Apostolic Church : “ *Vaporofita vanoratidzwa zvinhu zvisati zvaitika uye vanobatsira kuti kana zviru zvakaipa zvisaitike*” (the prophets receive visions of what is to happen, and if it is bad, they prevent such events from occurring further, they also assist those already facing such problem) (Mwale, interview 16/05/15). Basically, the prophets from these churches seek to talk about the future of their clients particularly what the future holds for them, whether it is good or bad. In this way, the prophets play the role of a divine-cum-prophet and this is due to the accommodation of African concepts by most of them. As a

result, according to Chavunduka (2001:4), "... many Zimbabweans who became Christians did not resign from African religion nor did they abandon African culture completely, they have maintained dual membership".

There is also a divinatory aspect to the type of prophecy found in these churches which helps them in identifying the cause of their client's problems and the use of divinatory instruments like clay pots, rods/staff, pebbles and some cloths are used. Prophet Utopia (Yutopia) Chaka of Johane Marange Nyeredzi Nomwe paHosea commented on this issue identifying that, most of his clients came as families to consult him on the deaths (usually mysterious ones) of their family members. He clearly stated that this practise is similar to that of the Shona called *Gata* and did not deny its links to what he did. (interview, June, 2015). Depicting from the above, it is clear that the prophets from African Independent Churches had Christianized the Shona practice of *gata* after the deaths of their relatives (consult a traditional healer concerning the cause of the death of a relative especially the mysterious ones). The other two Mugodhi Apostolic Church and Zviratidzo ZvaVapositioni members and leaders interviewed admitted to practise the same thing. It is the function of the prophets that clearly show the divinatory nature of their type of prophecy and are also associated with witch hunting as this had become a serious problem amongst the members and the community as well.

It is more apparent however that, the prophets in these churches are closer to seers and diviners in the Old Testament as can be seen in the first book of Samuel. Although divination was disapproved in Israelite prophecy (Deuteronomy 18:9-12), prophets from the previously mentioned churches are thriving on it and most of them are clearly identified as diviners. Another important aspect is that of the Holy Spirit. In these churches the speaking in tongues, vision and dreams is understood as signs of the presence of the Holy Spirit and that one has

been filled with the Holy Spirit. Much emphasis is put on the prophet in these churches to exhibit one of these gifts of Holy Spirit.

Another important aspect is that of the prophetic utterance they deliver to the congregation as well as their clients from outside. Whatever they utter is seen as the commands and will from God or the ancestors. Mr Mhako one of the elders in Zviratidzo ZvaVapositori (ZZAC) concurred that, “*kubata tsanangudzo dzawapiwa ndicho chinhu chakakosha kuti uchibate nekuchiita*” (the prophetic utterances are crucial and have to be carefully understood and properly done). The same aspect features also in JMNN and in MAC where the church is considered to have its foundation laid upon the words. Hence, prophetic utterances are the heart of the church and the members clearly admitted that the absence of such a thing shows the absence of the Holy Spirit in these churches are the focal point and had multi- faceted tasks to play.

3.1.3 Modus operandi of prophets in JMNN, MAC and ZZAC.

The operation of the prophets in the churches identified is the major focus of this whole research. This forms the centre stage of this whole project, and focus is made on how they carry out their tasks as well as from where they operated. The prophets from the three identified churches operate from numerous places, homes, hilltops and plains known as *masowe*. As for the JMNN and ZZAC, they operate from home, hilltops (*masowe*). The home usually used belongs to the prophet. The room in which he operates from is surrounded by other small rooms where those with serious problems could live. The clients can live there as if they are home that they can even stay there for more than a month if the problem is complicated. The prophets usually operates in pairs and they have their assistants, who usually speak on behalf of the prophet. When they operate at home, this would be on the weekdays thus Tuesdays and Thursdays in the afternoons. An observation carried out by the

researcher in one of the prophet's home one of the days, shows that during weekdays the prophets are preoccupied from sunrise to sunset. The services are offered for both members of the church and clients from outside.

In addition, they also operate from *masowe* on Fridays and Saturdays. These worship venues are marked by the acacia shrubs, most are identified with clay pots, pebbles and the *tsanga* plant (water weed). The explanation behind such things on their shrines is linked to the time of the exodus from Egypt when Moses wandered in the wilderness with the Israelites. Their clients visit and are helped there. Most of the shrines are situated near rivers, dams for the purpose of *majorodhani* (baptism) and washing away of misfortunes from the clients. This is usually done where there is a waterfall (*mapopoma*) where the practice of *kurasira* can be done. For instance, if an evil spirit has to be driven away, the patient is baptised while the prophet speaks in a language (incantation) to appease the spirits. The clothes used by the patient should be left at the waterfall so that the water washes them away and this will be the driving away of the spirit.

In these operations, the prophets from JMNN, MAC and ZZAC offer free service to the clients. The dominance of those of lower class in these churches is marked by the free services offered by the prophets. Gundani (2001:41) argued that, "prophets offer excellent and affordable services for the majority poor in Zimbabwe". Hence memberships in these churches thrive. Despite this increase in number of the poor, the rich also visit these prophets for help most on their business issues as well as family matters. The outsiders are expected to pay an incentive for the services offered but the members of the church are not expected to pay anything. Those from well to do backgrounds come for prayers for protection. The fear of traditional magic has sends some professionals to these churches as they offer protection

from spells and protection against their enemies. If the problem is associated with bewitchment, the persons who can only offer assistance in these ailments are prophets and traditional healers hence most people from Pentecostal churches are found frequently visiting prophets for it will be impossible for them to visit traditional healers. Most women visit prophetesses in these churches for help in marital problems, barrenness, continuous miscarriages and the prophetesses act in this case as social advisors and can even undertake the healing process.

3.2 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the prophetic activities of the prophets in JMNN, MAC and ZZAC as well as their mode of operation. The prophets in these churches have been found by the researcher to play multiple roles in their churches. These roles aide the growth and strengthening of the churches mentioned. The roles played are that of being a healer, forthteller, prophetic utterances and exorcists. In these activities however, the prophets employed African Traditional Religious aspects. The prophetic activities done can lead one to conclude that, the prophets in these churches mentioned are African Traditional fundamentalists and this is evident in the application of Shona traditional practices in the diagnosis of the problem and the way they deal with problems at hand.

The aspect of religious healing applied clearly shows that the prophets from these churches tend to protect the past in African Traditional Religion. This makes ATR more powerful (thus the old) than the new (Christianity) in the ways that the prophets use in most healing rituals. The chapter contends that AIC prophets can therefore be regarded as ATR fundamentalists who have rescued Shona religious traditions from being undermined by Christian ways of healing. The prophets are seen operating closer to people's homes at hilltops and plains

(*masowe*). The services offered are free to the members within the JMNN, MAC and ZZAC and a small incentive is paid for the services by the outside clients as noted in this chapter. The activities and the mode of operation of AIC prophets in JMNN, MAC and ZZAC and their link to African Traditional Religion leads to the evaluation of those prophets in light of biblical prophets which shall be looked at in detail in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE COMPARISON AND EVALUATION BETWEEN MT DARWIN AIC PROPHETS AND PRE CANONICAL BIBLICAL PROPHETS.

4.0 Introduction

This chapter gives a comparison between the AIC prophets in JMNN, MAC and ZZAC and the biblical prophets. The focus will be on the prophetic activities as well as the mode of operation of both prophetic groups. The chapter will also give an evaluation of the AIC prophets in Mt. Darwin in light of biblical prophets.

4.1 Call Narrative

In order to understand the activities as well as the mode of operation of any prophet from any religion, the most important stage is that of their call. The call of any prophet determines the operation of the prophet therefore the comparison on call between AIC prophets from these churches and biblical prophets would be the starting point in this chapter. The AIC prophets interviewed by the researcher had various call narratives and most confessed that they were called through supernatural means. Some by the ancestors and or the Holy Spirit and some by their great grandmothers. Mostly through dreams, they were told to become prophets. Ooisthuizen (1997:169) supported this saying, “in these churches dreams which played a role in “calling” people are checked and evaluated by a prophet or prophets, upon the decision that the dreams are genuine, the calling is accepted as genuine”. In this line of thought, the calling to be a prophet can come as a dream and one can be commissioned in that same dream although a few identified another way of calling into their profession/prophetic office.

Another way identified by prophets in the churches identified is that they went through the experience of being ill as happens when traditional healers are called to assume office. This

has resulted in most cases that the one who becomes a prophet would at first accept the vocation of being a diviner. As time goes, they claim to have been called to become prophets and the spirit which has been at work before continues to possess the prophet. The element of ancestral attachment to their activities holds more water in this case; the Holy Spirit and the ancestors play a crucial role in the calling of these prophets.

However, the calling is associated with changing of names as many adopted Old Testament prophets' names. This is due to the idea that, "they are greatly inspired by Old Testament prophetism such that some of the prophets ... left aside their birth names to adopt names of some prominent Old Testament prophets" (Gunda : 2010). The rationale behind is that, these prophets claim to be guided by the O.T prophets in their operations. The African conception of being guided by the spirit of those who are long gone however seems to taint this whole aspect.

On the other hand, biblical prophets had also their call narratives and the whole act was attributed to the deity. Alstrom (1979) has it that, "the call is viewed as coming ultimately from a deity and by means of a dream, a vision, or an audition or through the mediation of another prophet". The same ways of calling are the same for both the Mt. Darwin cultic prophets and biblical prophets. In a call through a vision, an example of a Hebrew prophet Jeremiah suits the part. He was called in the form of a vision in which he was told by Yahweh that he had already been chosen to be a prophet before he was born (Jeremiah 1:5). Another way is that of the call in an audition like Prophet Samuel, others were also called in guilds and according to Alstrom (1979) this is "when the will of the deity is mediated through a prophet who is the master of a prophetic group or an individual follower, and such a call is

seen as a mandate”. These suits well the context of Elijah and Elisha for the spirit of the prophet master was transferred to the disciple.

Depicting from the previous paragraphs, it is clear that there are close affinities between the call of Israelite prophets and the prophets in AICs. The ways both groups are called is the same as noted previously and both are commissioned on their call. Although there are some slight differences whereby calling of AIC prophets has to do with the involvement of the ancestors, the similarities in calling outdo the differences therefore one can be tempted to say that there is continuity between the two.

4.2 Aspect of Prophetic Guilds

This element is also associated with the AIC prophets; the prophets in the churches under study had their disciples, but were a small number not exceeding five persons. They were referred to as the closer companions of the prophet and are known as the *musondosi* (closer companion). Their role is to interpret what the prophet could be saying to the client since it would be in what they call heavenly language. They even assist in the practice of *majorodhani* (baptism) and could even play the role of the prophet in his absence or while preoccupied. According to the research carried out, after the death of the senior prophet or upon old age the *musondosi* are usually appointed to take over the task. It is believed that the same spirit which used to operate within the senior prophet would continue to work through the successor and could even continue using the prophetic name of the predecessor.

The same can also be noted in Israelite prophets. Prophets were usually organised into guilds in which they received their training. Alstrom (1979:392) said. “The guilds were led by the prophet master and their members could be distinguished from other members of their society

by their garb or by physical marks or grooming”. In Israel some prophets such as Samuel had been a leading figure among these prophetic bands (1 Samuel 19²⁰). According to *New World Encyclopaedia* these seers and sons of prophets (ben nabim) prophesied in a trance like state induced as they played various musical instruments and engaged in ecstatic dancing”.

Comparing the two, the similarities can be noted again, the phenomenon of prophetic guilds plays a crucial role in prophetic circle. The training of the prophetic sons in Israel and *musondosi* is meant to enhance the prophetic activities in both situations. They both played a similar role of aiding the senior prophet. The aspect of ecstasy also features in both different situations whereby through music and musical instruments they fell into an ecstatic frenzy. This shall be discussed in the next section, hence it is clear that the cultic prophets in Mt. Darwin are more in line with the biblical prophets.

4.3 Ecstatic Prophecy

The ecstatic prophets are considered as being filled with the divine spirit and in an ecstatic state could communicate the divine will. In the JMNN, MAC and ZZAC this is a common phenomenon. The prophets and the leaders of these churches clearly revealed that, this is the best state in which a prophet can speak in a heavenly language for some time. The prophet spoke as if it is the deity himself. Nissinen (2003) postulated that, “the ecstatic oracles, therefore, are generally delivered by the prophet in the first person singular pronoun and are spoken in a short rhythmic style”. An observation made by the researcher at the Mugodhi Apostolic Church shrine in Maendaenda Village bring the fact clear that, when the cultic prophets are in a trance, they behave like madmen and this was evidenced by Prophet Eria when he rolled on the ground, shaking violently speaking in a strange language and after a while became normal again.

In Israel, the same is the behaviour of other prophets who used to fall into an ecstatic frenzy. Just like the AIC prophets in Mt. Darwin area, they lost control over themselves as they would be possessed by the deity. Prophets in Israel who underwent such an experience include the 6th century BCE Hebrew prophet Ezekiel as well as Elisha. This was usually noted after music and dance, and they would fall into such frenzy. And again this is similar to the cultic prophets under study.

4.4 Types of Prophecy

This is crucial in classifying the prophets in AICs as well as the biblical prophets. Prophets here can be classified on the basis of inspiration, behaviour and office. There are divinatory prophets, cult prophets and revolutionary prophets. The AIC prophets fall into two of the categories divinatory and cultic prophets while the biblical prophets include the seers, soothsayers, oracle givers and diviners. According to De Jong (2007:317), “all of them predict the future or tell the divine will in oracular statements by means of instruments, dreams, telepathy, clairvoyance, or visions received in the frenzied state of ecstasy”. Depicting from this statement both elements suit both the Mt Darwin AIC prophets and biblical prophets. The exception on AIC prophets is that, there is an element of traditional concepts. Biblical prophets also possess the same elements and some Israelite prophets such as Samuel was a seer and the divinatory aspect seems to have tainted the prophetic activities of the others and this had been a borrowed element from Israel’s neighbours such as Egypt, Syria and so on.

From the previous paragraph, one can come to the conclusion that, the types of prophecy are the same for both the M t. Darwin AIC prophets and biblical pre canonical prophets. Both are seen engaging in same activities and fall in same prophetic category.

4.5 Mode of Operation

As noted earlier on in the previous chapter, the AIC prophets in Mt Darwin operate from home, hilltops and plains. On Fridays and Saturdays as well as during weekdays these places are found being oceans of white and a few reds (garments) clients waiting for the prophet's services. Israelite prophets also operated from various places, others worked as the cultic staff under the mandate of the cult. These cult prophets are also known as the priest prophet and may act as an ordinary prophet and are "part of the priestly staff of a sanctuary and his duty is to pronounce the divine oracular word at the appropriate point in a liturgy". (Nissinen, 2003).

Moreso, in Israel prophets were connected with sanctuaries and among temple prophets officiating in liturgies were the Levitical guilds singers. According to Alstrom (1979) "members of those guilds generally prophesied for money or gift and were associated with such sanctuaries as Gibeah, Samaria, Bethel, Gilgal, Jericho, Jerusalem and Ramah". In the book of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 26), there is the mention of the priest at Jerusalem who was the supervisor of both priests and prophets and that those prophets had rooms in the temple buildings and during pre-exilic period this was not considered to be foreign to Israelite religion.

Hence, the mode of operation is parallel although that of the AICs prophets seems to be on simpler ways compared to that of Hebrew prophets. Places of operation are just the same as *masowe* in AICs and have the same function with the sanctuaries in Israel hence it's continuity in activities of both.

4.6 Evaluation on the AIC prophets and biblical pre canonical prophets.

From the previous sections of this chapter, the researcher tried to pick out some parallels between the activities of the AIC prophets in Mt Darwin and the biblical prophets as well as the mode of operation. The AIC prophets activities are tainted with concepts from African Traditional Religion, they borrow concepts from traditional Shona practices and Christianize them. Although this may sound like a syncretistic tendency the same can be seen from biblical prophets who borrowed some prophetic concepts from the surrounding foreign nations of Israel.

The Hebrew word for prophet “navi” is believed to have been borrowed from Akkadian and the fact that the Israelite settled in Canaan, increases their high chances of borrowing. The borrowing of the word “navi” also points to the same reason, that Israel borrowed forms of prophecy from other nations. Hence Hebrew prophets borrowed concepts from other religions just like the AIC prophets.

The rise of classical prophecy in Israel opened a new chapter in Israel’s prophecy but “what is new in the classical prophecy is its hostile attitude towards Cananite influences in religion and culture, combined with an old nationalistic conception of Yahweh and his people”. (Alstrom, 1979). This had distinguished Israelite prophets from other prophets, despite this the nature of Israelite prophecy is linked to foreign religions like that of the Canaanites.

Moreso, it is evident in the book of Jeremiah 27⁹ that there were diviners and soothsayers who were in the neighbouring countries of Judah; in Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre and Sidon. In such a context the uniqueness of Hebrew prophecy is difficult to assess. Although the Hebrew classical prophets spoke against the Canaanite religious practices not all aspects of

the Baal-Asherah cult were completely eradicated, ideas and rituals from that cult were rethought, evaluated and purified according to those prophets' concept of the true Yahwism. It should be noted however, that some biblical prophets are also accused of Yahwism and Canaanite religious aspects so they cannot be used as a yardstick to judge Mt Darwin AIC prophets activities.

Analysing, the previous paragraphs it is clear however, that the Mt Darwin AIC prophets are a continuity of biblical prophets, they are similar to the biblical prophets in their activities and mode of operation. The research on their activities and operation reveal that, both were products and perpetrators as well as renovators of traditional religious practices as discussed in this chapter.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the activities and mode of operation and gave a comparison between the Mt Darwin cultic prophets and the Israelites prophets. The most important elements are their call, type of prophecy, mode of operation and the aspect of ecstatic prophecy. There are affinities between most of the activities noted. They both have roots in traditional religions and adopt many religious concepts from them as indicated and discussed in this preceding chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter sums up and provides concluding remarks to the study whether Mt Darwin AIC prophets are a continuity or a discontinuity with biblical pre canonical prophets in light of their prophetic activities and mode of operation.

5.1 Summary of the study

The beginning of the AICs had its roots from religious, political, economical, theological and historical reasons. African Independent Churches are Christian bodies in Africa which are meant to give a sense of belonging to African peoples. It should also be noted that, these churches are also found abroad. In a bid to provide a conducive environment for African people, the African Independent Churches embrace the African traditional concepts and contextualises the biblical message to African people.

At the centre of African Independent Churches is the prophetic figure which is found playing a vital role for the churches to accomplish their mission. The research project focuses on the cultic prophets in Mt Darwin area with specific reference to three churches which are JMNN, MAC and ZZAC. An analysis of the prophetic activities and mode of operation of these cultic prophets reveals that, these prophets had multiple roles to play like that of being healer, exorcist, uttering of prophetic oracles and leaders of prophetic bands.

Moreso, the researcher found out that, the AIC prophets' activities from the three churches studied are similar to that of the biblical prophets. The modus operandi also had similarities,

where they operate from and how they operate had some close affinities. Both prophets (biblical and AIC prophets) are found to have borrowed concepts from other religions whereby cultic prophets are seen to be African fundamentalists who uphold African values. As a result, AIC prophets have been found to be a continuity of biblical prophets although they are found to be more of a mixed bag of ATR and concepts from biblical prophets although some denied the fact that they borrow ATR concepts.

5.2 Concluding remarks

The present study was set to compare biblical prophets with the activities of prophets from Mt Darwin taking a special focus on the Johanne Marange (Nyeredzi Nomwe paHosea), Mugodhi Apostolic Church and Zviratidzo ZvaVapostori Apostolic Church. The mode of operation of these prophets was also considered. In trying to find answers to the research problem, roles of prophets, activities, nature of prophecy for both prophets were taken into consideration. The study sought to find out the parallel between the activities and modus operandi of Mt Darwin AIC prophets and biblical prophets. Observations and personal interview were the methods used search out data. It enables the researcher to draw information and conclude on various activities of the prophets in Mt Darwin, Nembire area.

An analysis done shows that AIC prophets from the three above mentioned churches are African Traditional Religion fundamentalists who seek to uphold the traditional concepts and deliver them in the context of Christianity. This has been noted in their ways of healing, of diagnosing a problem to mention but a few, it should also be noted that not all AICs have borrowed from ATRs. The biblical prophets were also found to have questionable aspects in their mode of operation for they were found being also guilty of adopting various religious concepts and practices from the Canaanite, Egyptian and Syrian cultures for example.

Israelite prophecy has most things which are similar to that of non Israelite cultic prophets as mentioned earlier in this chapter. It should be noted that, not all Israelite prophets borrow concepts from the culture of the surrounding nations. Some of them are found denouncing the Canaanite practises for they were considered abominable like Elijah. Amos and Hosea who spoke against Baalism which was against Yahwism.

The study had some limitations. The time constraints and limited funds did not allow the researcher to visit other shrines to carry out interviews and observations although the ones in Nembire, Mawaya and Maendaenda villages were consulted. The researcher also experienced a delay in the collection of data due to most interviewee's reluctance to release and divulge information on how actually the prophets in their churches operate.

Although the researcher faced the above constraints, the few interviews and observations from those who were willing to have their churches studied made a major contribution. These were carried out successfully by the researcher.

5.3 Conclusion

The research focuses on the activities and mode of operation of both the AIC prophets of Mt Darwin and the Hebrew prophets. The research realised that there are similarities between the activities of the two as well as on their mode of operation. These close affinities point to the fact that the cultic prophets in Mt. Darwin are a continuity of biblical prophets in the following manner roles played, nature of prophecy and mode of operation. The only new concept they brought is that of relentless effort to bring back the validity of African values rather than embracing and upholding foreign ones. The discontinuity is very slight for their operation is affected by addressing of different situations.

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