

## **2. SOSHANGUVE AND ITS CHURCHES**

### **2.1 SOSHANGUVE: THE PLACE AND ITS PEOPLE**

Soshanguve is one of the largest black residential townships of South Africa. It is situated in the Gauteng province, about 40 kilometres north-west of Pretoria, and was established in 1974 (Mashabela 1988:138). Soshanguve covers an area of 65 square kilometres. In 1996 the estimated population of the township was 500 000 (Faber-van Zyl 1996:170). Since then there has been an influx of residents from the Winterveld area of the North West Province (HSRC 1998:144). Soshanguve has continued to grow, especially on the southern side where numerous extensions have been developed.

Soshanguve residents work mainly in Pretoria and in the nearby Rosslyn. They are dependent on chiefly bus, train or taxi for transport. Residents spend a lot of their wages on commuting.

The name Soshanguve is an acronym for SOtho, SHAngaan, NGUni and VEnda, thus showing the multi-ethnic composition of the population (Mashabela 1988:138). The major African languages of South Africa are heard in Soshanguve (Anderson 1992a:11). According to Anderson's research, done in 1991, the largest group was the Northern Sotho (35,4 %), followed by Zulu/Ndebele (29,5 %), and Tsonga (11,5 %). In recent years many Tswana people have come into Soshanguve from the North West Province.

Soshanguve experiences problems typical of a South African township. These are poverty, high population and housing density, poor infrastructure, unemployment, air and water pollution, few open spaces, and a high crime rate (Faber-van Zyl 1996:170). In terms of service needs and provision a Human Sciences Research Council report (HSRC 1998), published in 1998, provides the following information:

- The unemployment rate is 42 %, which is the highest in Gauteng Province.
- The so-called 'poverty gap' is among the largest in Gauteng Province. This means that many households in Soshanguve are living below the poverty line. The report indicates also that a small segment of the Soshanguve population is wealthy.

- The education problems are illustrated by the fact that there are 52 black pupils per teacher, which makes it the worst figure for the whole province.
- The percentage of informal housing is 28 %, which practically means that thousands of people are living in shacks.
- Elderly people have inadequate facilities in Soshanguve. Only 5 % of the population aged 65 years or older is in retirement dwellings (the figure for Pretoria is 20 %).
- The percentage of households with access to running water is 48 %, a figure which places Soshanguve halfway between Pretoria (95 %) and rural areas such as Cullinan (27 %).
- With regard to electricity there are different figures for formal and informal housing. 67% of formal housing in Soshanguve has access to electricity, while the figure for informal housing is 34 %.

The Combined Social and Service Index, which assesses and rates available services on a scale of 0-100, scores Soshanguve at 77. This is the worst in the Gauteng Province, but an improvement on the rural areas found in neighbouring North West Province.

## **2.2 SOSHANGUVE: THE CHURCHES**

Anderson found that “Soshanguve is a remarkably Christian township” (1992a:8).

According to his results, 92 % of the population claim to be members of a Christian church. Although the traditional African beliefs are still very much alive, even among church members, it can be said that Christianity is the most common religion in Soshanguve.

Other religions have not yet made inroads into Soshanguve. For example. There is no mosque here as there is in Mamelodi, one of the other black townships in the greater Pretoria area.

Anderson found an astonishing variety of Christian churches in Soshanguve. He recorded a total of 263 denominations (Anderson 1992a:261), and the number has increased since then.

At the time of his research the largest single church in Soshanguve was the Zion Christian Church (the ZCC with a star emblem), accounting for 10,3 % of the total population. The ZCC was followed by the Dutch Reformed Church with 9,7 %, the Lutherans with 7,7 % and the Roman Catholic Church with 7,1 % (Anderson 1992a:7). It is useful to give a summary of Anderson’s findings here.

He divided the churches into different categories:

1. Pentecostal Mission Churches (e.g. Apostolic Faith Mission, Assemblies of God)	6,0 %
2. Independent Pentecostal Churches (e.g. Victory Fellowship Church)	2,9 %
3. Indigenous Pentecostal-type Churches (e.g. Zion Christian Church, St John Apostolic Church)	32,4 %
4. Indigenous Ethiopian-type Churches (e.g. Bapedi Lutheran Church, Holy Gospel Church)	8,0 %
5. African Independent Baptist Churches (e.g. African Baptist Church)	2,4 %
6. 'Old' Mission Churches (e.g. Dutch Reformed, Lutheran, Anglican, Roman Catholic)	37,5 %
7. Unclassified Churches and Sects (e.g. Jehova's Witnesses)	3,2 %
8. Other Religions (e.g. Islam)	0,2 %
9. No church affiliation	7,4 %

Anderson's overview of the type of churches one encounters in Soshanguve is helpful.

Anderson defines group 1, the Pentecostal mission churches, as those having their origins in predominantly white 'mission' churches, and are still part of, or connected to, white Pentecostal churches (1992b:7). These churches emphasize the power and supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit, and reject traditional religious practices (1992b:75).

Group 2, the Independent Pentecostal churches, are the younger Pentecostal churches with exclusively black leadership, independent of white control. With regard to doctrine and religious practice they are much the same as the previous group but they exhibit more American influence through figures such as Kenneth Hagin and Benny Hinn, and through Rhema Bible Church (1992b:10-11).

Group 3, the Indigenous Pentecostal-type churches, are also known as Zionist-type, and Apostolic-type churches. They too are *dikereke tsa Moya* (churches of the Spirit). The ZCC of bishop Barnabas Lekganyane is by far the largest in this category. Members of these churches wear uniforms and make use of symbolic objects such as staffs, holy water, ropes, ashes and the like (1992b:12). The attitude to traditional religion is more ambivalent than in the previous groups (1992b:68).

Group 4, the Indigenous Ethiopian-type<sup>7</sup> churches, are those that broke away from mission churches on broadly political grounds, during the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (1992b:57). Similar to the churches in Group 3 an ambivalence exists in the stand taken on traditional religion. In liturgy and doctrine they remain modelled on the parent churches.

Group 5, the Independent Baptist churches, are generally strongly opposed to traditional practices (like groups 1 and 2), but also object to 'charismatic' practices such as speaking in tongues (1992b:70).

Group 6, the Mission churches, are in general, those that were started by white missionaries. Most of these churches are 'old' in the sense that they originated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Their members are less regular church-goers than those in the previous groups. They do not use traditional African styles of expression in services (drums, etc.), but are generally more open to traditional religious practices (ancestor veneration, etc.) than other groups (1992b:70-71)

Some of Anderson's terminology has been questioned. H.J. Becken considers it "problematic" to list the third group (which Anderson labels 'indigenous Pentecostal-type churches') under the heading "African Pentecostalism" (Becken 1993:334). He does not believe that the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) is a 'Pentecostal-type' nor does he believe that ZCC members or leaders would like to be labelled that way. There may be historical roots in Pentecostalism, but Zionism in South Africa today is distinctly different from the Pentecostalism found in the Apostolic Faith Mission and other charismatic churches. Anderson also indicated that the 'real' bazalwane (members of churches belonging to group 1 and 2) do not consider Zionists to be saved (1992b:100), neither do the Zionists and members of Apostolic churches deem themselves to be 'bazalwane' (1992b:5). What John Bond, an Assemblies of God church leader, wrote in 1974 is probably still the prevalent view amongst Pentecostal Christians: "African independent churches of the Zionist variety have degenerated so far from Christian teaching that it is probably true to say that most Zionist churches are a blend of a garbled form of Christianity with primitive

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<sup>7</sup> 'Ethiopia' here represents Africa as a whole. It is taken from Psalm 68:31b which reads as follows: "Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God." (KJV) "The name Ethiopia, with its mystical connotations, was soon interpreted to refer to all black Africa, and a longing arose to plant authentic, indigenous churches across the entire continent." (Pretorius & Jafta 1997:214)

tribal religion. Pentecostals object to any identification with these churches and would regard their ideas of 'uMoya' (the Spirit) as more demonic than divine" (1974:14). Personal experience has taught that Anderson's groups 1 and 2 are viewed as one group: the 'bazalwane'. Even members of the Baptist churches (group 5) are often called 'bazalwane'. Anderson's group 3 however, is perceived differently. I have never heard people referring to these churches as 'bazalwane' churches. In fact people tend to subdivide them into two groups: the Zionists (*Masione*) and the 'Apostolics' (*Maapostolo*).

In summary: Anderson's classification is useful as it gives a good overview of Christian churches in Soshanguve, but his use of the word 'Pentecostal' is problematic with regard to the Zionist- and Apostolic-type churches.

From a theological point of view, and speaking very broadly now, black churches can be divided into three groups:

- 1) Mainline churches or 'old mission churches', with a clear doctrine, traditional Western style in liturgy, and some openness towards traditional religious practices.
- 2) African independent churches, with a doctrine that is not well defined, African style in liturgy, and an ambivalence towards traditional religious practices.
- 3) Pentecostal/charismatic or 'bazalwane' churches, with a clear doctrine, a style that shows modern Western influences, and rejection of traditional religious practices.

For the purpose of this research it was decided to choose one church from each of these groups.

From group 1 the *Lutheran church* (ELCSA) was selected. The Lutheran mission was one of the earliest churches to commence mission work among the Pedi- and Tswana-people in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and is therefore, one of the largest denominations in Soshanguve. A second reason for choosing this church is the fact that not much is known about how the Lutheran church fulfills its purpose in an urban setting.

The *Zion Christian Church* (ZCC) was selected out of the second group, mainly because it originated among the Northern Sotho people, from which it has a strong following, also in Soshanguve. The ZCC was chosen also because there has been debate on the christological position of this church (see references in par. 2.4).

From the third group selection has been impossible because there is no single church large enough to be taken as an object for research. So it was decided to take *a mixture of Pentecostal churches*: 50 % from the older Pentecostal churches (Apostolic Faith Mission and Assemblies of God) and 50 % from the younger independent Pentecostal churches (Praise Tabernacle church, Forward in Faith Ministries, Revival Christian Church and other small groups).

### **2.3 THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN S.A.**

#### History

Two Lutheran mission societies initiated mission work in the Transvaal: the Hermannsburg Mission Society (HMS) among the Tswana people and the Berlin Mission Society (BMS) among the Pedi people.

HMS missionaries arrived in 1857 in the Western Transvaal and started working among the Tswana people. There was rapid growth and expansion up to 1885. Then followed a period of stagnation due to a variety of problems such as lack of funds and political tensions between the British and the Boers. Florin observes: "In spite of these difficulties the Hermannsburg missionaries were able to accomplish the objective of their policy: the establishment of a national church" (:96). Among the Tswana people it was not only individuals but whole tribes that decided to 'become Christian', the only case of this sort to happen in South Africa. The result apparently was twofold: firstly a remarkably high percentage of Christians among the Tswana, secondly a low standard of Christianity (Kritzinger 1985:129).

In the North Eastern Transvaal BMS missionaries started working among the Pedi people in 1861. The work grew rapidly, but the relationship with the Pedi chiefs was problematic. In 1866 chief Sekhukhune ordered the Berlin Mission stations closed and the missionaries had to shift to areas controlled by the ZAR (Boers). There they built mission stations like the famous one at Botshabelo. Financial difficulties in the Berlin Mission Society towards the end of the century caused the black Lutheran churches in the Northern Transvaal to become self-sufficient at a rather early stage (Florin 1967:97).

Unfortunately a lack of funds prohibited establishing an indigenous church staff. In addition the Society was unable to send enough missionaries to strengthen the young church, nor could it advance to the emerging townships around Pretoria and Johannesburg. Florin observes: "If the Berlin Mission had been able to follow its people into these newly developing townships, it would not today be primarily a rural-based organization with a largely rural outlook" (:97).

The Hermannsburg and the Berlin Mission Societies were not the only ones active in South Africa. Other Lutheran societies working here were the Rhenish Mission Society, the Norwegian Mission, the Church of Sweden, and the American Lutheran Mission. In 1966 a loose federation with no decision-making powers was formed, called FELCSA (Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches of Southern Africa). In 1975 the assorted regional Lutheran churches unified to become one Lutheran church, called the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA), "a large, relatively centralized church" (Scriba & Lislrud 1997:181). ELCSA is organized into dioceses, circuits, parishes and congregations.

The stance of the white Lutherans on the apartheid policy of the South African government, as well as the reluctance of the white Lutheran churches to join ELCSA, caused serious tensions between the white and black Lutherans. In 1989 ELCSA withdrew from FELCSA but shortly afterwards (1991) it rejoined the restructured Lutheran Communion of Southern Africa, LUCSA (Scriba & Lislrud 1997:186). The dismantling of apartheid and the election of Nelson Mandela as president of South Africa in 1994 has eased conflicts between white and black Lutheran churches (Scriba & Lislrud 1997:194).

The Lutheran church is one of the larger denominations in South Africa. The 1996 Census showed that membership of ELCSA is just over 1 million. The overwhelming majority (about 90 %) is black.

### Beliefs

The classical doctrine of the Lutheran Church is well known and thoroughly documented. The essence of Lutheran theology is expressed by Scriba & Lislrud as follows: "that

God's love for a fallen world, given by grace, is received solely by faith in Jesus Christ" (1997:194).

The chief article of the Christian faith centres on the person and work of Christ, on his substitutionary atonement (Preus 1988:405). On the fundamental articles of the person of Christ and His vicarious atonement, Lutheran doctrine consciously follows the great Eastern and Western creeds and fathers of the early church (Preus 1988:405).

The Lordship of Christ is an important part of classical Lutheran theology. Both in the Small Catechism and the Large Catechism the Lordship of Christ is taken as central theme in discussing the work of Christ.

The Small Catechism says (Tappert 1959:345):

"I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, delivered me and freed me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with silver and gold, but with his holy and precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death, in order that I may be his, live under him in his kingdom and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, even as He is risen from the dead and lives and reigns to all eternity."

The Lutheran missionaries who came to South Africa in the 19<sup>th</sup> century were sent out by Lutheran missionary societies. Scherer asserts that these societies "had as their aim the propagation of the pure Lutheran confessional teachings" (1987:75). The missionaries aimed at planting churches with a clearly Lutheran identity. A perusal of the early history of Lutheran mission work in South Africa will confirm this. Missionaries despatched by the Berlin and Hermannsburg Mission Societies did their best to translate traditional Lutheran works and to produce catechism material in the local languages. Some of these are still used, such as the *Katekisisima e nyane*, a translation of the Small Catechism of dr. Martin Luther. Another book still available is C. Hoffman's *Thuto ya Konfirmasi* (Confirmation Lessons), originally written in 1917. In recent years catechism material has been published in English. FELCSA, for example, has published a series of Sunday School books including titles like 'Jesus is our Friend', 'Living in Christ', and 'Christ is my Saviour'.

Lutheran doctrine has been well formulated, but doubts have been expressed as to how well ordinary Lutheran church members knew and practised their 'lessons'. Florin, who

conducted a research in the 1960's, was rather pessimistic about it. He claimed that in the rural areas "Lutheran Christians do not present any great temptation to others around them; other Christians - although in the minority - look down on the Lutherans."

(1967:116) Florin believed that Lutherans are seen as "rather paganized Christians" (:72). The reason seems to be that Lutheran Christians have reconciled the Christian faith and traditional tribal code. "Christianity has been accepted by the Lutheran Christians and pagans alike as a certain cultural and ideological variation of the traditional tribal code." (:116) Consequently Lutherans and pagans seem to live together quite happily. They form one society in which the Lutherans, generally having had more opportunities of education, occupy the upper social stratum and each group complements the other (:72). The Christian faith of the Lutherans, however, does not present a challenge to others around them. The Lutheran church in the rural areas has become defensive and can only maintain the status quo. In urban areas the situation seems to be even worse. Florin stated that "among urban Africans the Lutherans have almost no image" (:71).

With regard to present day beliefs in the Lutheran churches it may be necessary to differentiate between those of ordinary church members at 'grass roots level' and those of church leaders and theologians. Dierks, a Lutheran missionary, has done some research among lay Tswana believers and recorded the following regarding the image of God:

- 1) The image of God the Father has been well received; listening to Tswana's praying one senses that God as a Father has come near to them (Dierks 1986:132)
- 2) The image of God the Son, however, is problematic; Dierks writes: "During the many years I have been a missionary, I have waited in vain for spontaneous christocentric statements of faith by Tswana Christians." (Dierks 1986:132, translated from German.)

Although preachers end their prayer with the phrase 'in the name of Jesus Christ', there is no spontaneous testimony about what the living Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ means to them (:133). Researchers like Erasmus and Reyneke have also stated that beliefs about Jesus as Mediator and Saviour are insignificant in the faith of Tswana Christians (Kritzinger 1985:133). Although their research was not done among Lutherans specifically, it seems that they did not find any significant difference between Lutherans, Methodists and members of other churches on this matter.

3) The concept of God the Holy Spirit has been received but has also been adapted to the traditional beliefs; it seems that Tswana Christians do not see the Holy Spirit as a personal being (the third Person in the Trinity), but rather as an impersonal power. The Spirit is seen as an 'it', not as a person. The image of the Holy Spirit has been influenced by what Tswana's originally believed of the spirits of the deceased and by the conceptions of a dynamic *maatla*, life force (:137-138).

Dierks found the following perceptions of sin, evil and salvation:

- 1) The traditional beliefs about sin have not really changed; sin remains primarily an offence against fellow humans, the community; not an offence against God (:183).
- 2) Customary opinions of salvation are predominant; salvation is brought about by a manifestation of power, not by way of suffering and the cross (:184).
- 3) Essentially salvation is seen as being saved from, and protected against dangers and problems of everyday life: being healed from sickness and having life power; the Biblical concept of salvation is not an integral part of Tswana Christian perceptions yet (:185-195).

With regard to traditional customs and practices (ancestor veneration etc.), Anderson found that 37 % of Mission church members acknowledged that venerating of ancestors was still practised; 39 % said that church members consulted diviners. Anderson did not differentiate between mission churches, so the percentages could vary for each church. However, he did not find major differences between the Lutheran members and others.

During the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Lutheran church in South Africa was exposed to new theological influences. Young black theologians were sent to Europe or the USA for postgraduate studies. There they acquainted themselves with modern trends in Lutheran theology. Manas Buthelezi, who was to become a leader of ELCSA, was influenced by Moltmann and Tillich (Bosch 1974:101). Pityana asserts that the anthropology and christology of Buthelezi "were essentially drawn from liberal Lutheran theology" (1994:176). It was a time in which the Lutheran church internationally was rethinking its theological stance. There was a fierce debate between those who defended

the classical Lutheran doctrine of 'justification by grace through faith' and those who felt that this doctrine had to be redefined in terms of liberation theology (Hanselmann 1990:4). It appears that the latter approach has gained the upperhand.

Three illustrations.

One: The theme of the 7<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), held in 1984 in Budapest, was: "In Christ – Hope for the World". The resemblance with the title of Moltmann's book *Theology of Hope* is probably not accidental. Perusal of the presentations and reports of the conference shows that classical Lutheran tenets such as the need for repentance and salvation through grace received almost no attention.

Attention was focused on the promotion of peace, human rights, care for the environment, and ecumenical relationships (Mau 1985).

Two: The theme of the 8<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the LWF, held in 1990 in Curitiba, was: "I Have Heard the Cry of my People" (Hjelm 1990). This time one is reminded of the content of another of Moltmann's books: *The Crucified God*. A perusal of presentations and reports of this conference shows that the classical Lutheran theme of the sinner who needs a gracious God is totally neglected. The need for conversion is mentioned, but what is meant is that Christians should be converted from being passive spectators to taking actively part in attempts to improve the conditions of this world. The LWF-president sums it up as follows: "We are called to lend this world a hand, this world so in need of improvement and so worthy of improvement, so as, above all, not to leave the poor to struggle alone but rather become their advocates in prayer to God and publicly amidst our fellow men and women, and by so doing, prove the generous freedom of our Christian Reformation faith" (Hanselmann 1990:5).

Three: When it was not forgotten, the theme of 'justification by grace through faith' was redefined. It was emphasized that 'justification' implied the active promotion of justice in the world (Scherer 1987:90). A Lutheran conference formulated this as follows: "The God who justifies us in Christ calls us to do justice" (Scherer 1987:90). Lutheran conferences explicitly condemned the South African apartheid system (:82).

Liberal theological trends had their influence on Lutheran leaders in South Africa. In the 1970's Manas Buthelezi used Tillich's correlation method in emphasizing that Christian theology must be 'situational' in order to be relevant (Buthelezi 1976:40). The situation of black people in South Africa, at that stage, was a life under the apartheid government, a life marked by poverty and powerlessness. Buthelezi's dependance on Tillich's

‘situational principle’ led him to concentrate theologically on two problems inherent to the situation of the black man in South Africa: first, the question of meaning of life (“Why did God create me black?”), second, the question of the wholeness of life. With regard to this second question Buthelezi consciously links up with the African worldview and understanding of life (*impilo* in Zulu). Significantly, the Lutheran tenet of the justification of the sinner by the grace of God does not figure in Buthelezi’s approach. Buthelezi became one of the main exponents of the black theology movement, though not in its most radical form (Maimela 1998:116). Another Lutheran theologian involved in the Black Theology movement is Maimela (1998:116).

A related but somewhat different brand of contextual theology, called African theology, also has its exponents in the Lutheran church. African theology is marked by a sympathetic interpretation of the African traditional religion. It also tries to integrate the old beliefs to a certain extent into African Christianity (Bediako 1998:10). A representative of this theology in the Lutheran Church in South Africa was Makhatini who stressed that Biblical notions, such as sin and salvation, have to be redefined in a way that is relevant to African people. He attacked ‘Western ways of worship’ and wanted African people to worship God in an African way. He would suggest there be room for traditional African rituals and that they be combined with comparable church rituals such as baptism and confirmation (Meiring 1975:117).

African theology has been received warmly by the international Lutheran community.

Illustrative in this regard is the LWF-report ‘Theological Perspectives on Other Faiths’ (Mwakabana 1997). In a Summary Report from the working group on African Religion a very sympathetic exposition of African traditional religion is offered: (Pre-Christian) Africans live by faith, they are deeply religious, their spirituality is geared towards fullness of life, they are not individualistic but experience life in community with others, they acknowledge “that problematic areas (sins) exist” (:35), i.e. “activities by which individuals attempt to destroy, to diminish and threaten the lives of the community members” (:36), they have designed methods to provide salvation and relief from these social sins, *inter alia*: protective rituals, magical recipes and charms (:37).

There is no word of disapproval by the Lutheran theologians. In fact they feel that the church can learn much from African traditional religion. Examples: The church should

take note that taboos may help in preventing people from abusing nature (:39). The church should be less dependent on “a kind of messianic figure to rescue humans from their misery” (:40) and learn from African religion “that survival and salvation are brought about by human willingness to work for them” (:41). African religion is praised for having encouraged people “to take life into their own hands” (:41). The church is reminded that “sin is not only an evil activity which is directed against God but also has to do with social evil between individuals in society” (:42).

The report states that “our premise and impression is that African Religion and Christianity are not at enmity with each other” (:45). Therefore they feel that Christianity and African Religion can enrich and illuminate each other (:45). No wonder that the Lutheran theologians have to conclude that one theological problem has been left unsolved: “... there is the big theological question of Jesus Christ and African Religion...” (:45).

Striking in these expositions is the optimistic view on humankind and the playing down of the seriousness of sin as sin against God. The cross becomes a token of hope, not a place where substitutionary atonement for sinners has been effectuated. Salvation is redefined. It is not by grace anymore but by ‘human willingness to work for it’. Man is able to save himself.

## 2.4 THE ZION CHRISTIAN CHURCH

### History

The history of the Zion Christian Church<sup>8</sup> (ZCC) has been outlined by various authors, such as Kruger (1971), Hanekom (1975), Lukhaimane (1980) and Anderson (1992b).

The ZCC itself has recently recounted its history in an article in the *ZCC Family Bible* (published in 1995).<sup>9</sup> As this official representation of the ZCC’s history is probably still fairly unknown outside the ZCC, we quote parts of it:

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<sup>8</sup> Sometimes people use the name *Zionist* Christian Church (e.g. Naudé 1995), but the official name still is *Zion* Christian Church.

<sup>9</sup> The *ZCC Family Bible* is available at major ZCC-branches only. It contains the Bible in three languages, namely Northern Sotho, English (N.I.V.) and Zulu. It carries a message of bishop Lekganyane, a brief historical background of the church, and some photographs of ZCC-leaders, -gatherings, and -church buildings.

“In 1910, the founder of ZCC had a vision and calling. He then went to Rev. Mahlangu of Zion Apostolic Church. In 1912 Rev. Engenas became a member of Zion Apostolic Church.

In 1913 Engenas became ZCC minister and later on, he erected a church in Thabakgone.

In 1913 Rev. Engenas bought Maclean Farm, where Moria City is situated today.

In 1914 Rev. Engenas and Mahlangu had seriously argued about visions.

In 1917 a split between Rev. Engenas and Rev. Mahlangu.

On 11 April 1922 Edward Lekganyane was born at Mamabolo.

In 1924 a final split between Rev. Engenas and Rev. Mahlangu.

In the same year Rev. Engenas built a church in Mamabolo and named it Zion Christian Church.

In 1948 Bishop E.E. Lekganyane was inaugurated as Bishop of the ZCC. This was shortly after the death of his brother, Barnabas. The Bishop was twenty-two years old.

In the same year Engenas passed away. He was buried at Zion City Moria.

In 1949 Bishop Edward Lekganyane got ZCC's silver emblem. In 1951 Bishop Edward Lekganyane founded ZCC the Silver Brass Band.

In 1955 ZCC's following was estimated at 20 000.

In 1960 Bishop Edward Lekganyane visited the United Kingdom and America and other important places.

In 1963 ZCC was accepted by the government as one of the important churches.

In 1965 ZCC members were estimated to be more than 30 000 and the ZCC had 500 ministers.

In 1965 Bishop Edward Lekganyane introduced the church bursary at the University of the North, the Khotso Bursary.

At the end of 1967 Bishop Edward Lekganyane passed away and Bishop Barnabas took up Edward's reins.

In 1969 Bishop Barnabas Edward Lekganyane officially opened Zion Christian Church as Meadowlands – Johannesburg.

In 1971 Bishop Barnabas Edward Lekganyane officially opened another ZCC at Mamelodi.

In 1975 Bishop Barnabas Edward Lekganyane completed his studies at the theological school called All Africa School of Theology and his graduation ceremony was held at Zion City Moria. In the same year, Barnabas was officially appointed as the Bishop of the ZCC.

In 1977 ZCC in Atteridgeville was officially opened by Bishop Barnabas Edward Lekganyane and on 24 February 1980 he officially opened that of Tembisa, Germiston. In 1985 ZCC's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary was celebrated.

Bishop Barnabas Edward Lekganyane was and still is the driving force behind peace and negotiations in South Africa. This was clearly proved by the Message of peace he delivered at Easter on the 19<sup>th</sup> April 1992. Present were the S.A. State President, F.W. de Klerk, IFP leader, dr. M. Buthelezi, and ANC President dr. N. Mandela

(Then follows a lengthy summary of the Bishop's message and his activities with respect to the promotion of peace and reconciliation in South Africa. The last two paragraphs read as follows:)

In 1994 the total church membership is estimated at 7 million spread throughout South Africa, Mozambique, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Malawi, Zaïre, Tanzania, Swaziland, Lesotho, Angola and Namibia. The church has at the moment 2000 branches and approximately 140 000 priests.

Above all, Bishop Barnabas Edward Lekganyane is generally regarded by many observers within and outside Zion Christian Church with bewildered and sometimes indignant admiration. It is equally impossible to ignore the fact that the Bishop is like a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory and a river of pleasure to those who believe and practise his holy teachings.”

Some remarks with regard to this summary:

In the first place this document suggests that in 1948 Edward Lekganyane took over the leadership from his father Engenas before the latter died. The truth is that Engenas died without a successor having been appointed. His death resulted in a power struggle between his two sons Edward and Joseph, who both wanted to succeed him (see e.g. Lukhaimane 1980:98-103). Consequently two separate churches were formed, Joseph's followers employing a dove emblem on their badge, and Edward's using a star emblem. People differentiate between the two by referring to *ya leeba* (the one of the dove) and *ya naledi* (the one of the star). Edward's church became the largest and is now called the Zion Christian Church. The other one is called St Engenas Zion Christian Church. Secondly, the stated membership figure of 7 million is probably too high. According to the 1996 South African population census, the ZCC had a membership of nearly 3,9 million people (Froise 1999:64). This would imply that the ZCC has 3,1 million members in other countries, which is unlikely. Still, the ZCC is the largest single church in South Africa.

In the third place the final paragraph illustrates the elevated position bishop Lekganyane has in his church. How his position in the church is to be interpreted, is a question which we will deal with in chapter 5.

The members of the ZCC meet three times a year at Moria near Pietersburg: at Easter, at Christmas, and for the *Pulo ya ngwaga*, the consecration of the new year, in September. These gatherings are momentous occasions. Hundreds of thousands of ZCC-members come together, hoping to get a glimpse of the *Mookamedi* (the Overseer or Superintendent: bishop Lekganyane) and to receive his blessings.

Why is the ZCC able to attract such large numbers? Makhubu (1988:14) gives two motives for appeal: “The healing ministry and the promise of prosperity to members has been the main reason for attracting adherents to this church. The practice of polygamy is another reason.” West offers two more reasons that partly overlap with those given by Makhubu. The first is that the Christianity of the ZCC (and other Zionist churches) has a link with traditional religion. Charismatic aspects such as prophecy, healing, spirit possession, dancing ‘in the spirit’ and so on, “heark back to traditional possession, ancestor cults, purification rites” (1974:28). West says, secondly, that socially deprived and powerless people find a home in a large church such as the ZCC. They find strong

leadership there, there is 'power'. This is a comforting experience for people who are suffering from many physical and social disabilities.

### Beliefs

Although it is the largest denomination in South Africa, it is no easy task to pass fair judgment on the ZCC. Kruger (1983:29) mentions several difficulties: The first problem is that the ZCC has no written confessions or statements of faith. The church has a constitution which contains laws and regulations about church meetings and church leaders, but no treatise on the doctrine of the church (the text is available in Lukhaimane 1980:139-148).

There is a little catechism booklet, called *Katekesima ya mathomo ya Z.C.C.* (First catechism of the ZCC), published under the leadership of Barnabas Lekganyane, which has five parts: (1) the ten commandments, (2) laws about the prohibition of eating unclean food and drinking beer (3) baptism, (4) holy communion, (5) confession of sins. Interestingly, parts 1, 3, 4 and 5 have literally been taken (without indicating this) from the Northern Sotho translation of Luther's Small Catechism. The only new part is part 2 about the prohibition of eating unclean food and drinking beer. Whether Luther's teachings have had any appreciable influence on the ZCC through this booklet remains to be seen. I do not have the impression that it is used extensively. The ZCC does not have catechism classes for young or new members anyway.

One may ask why the ZCC chose to quote from Luther's Small Catechism and not from other catechisms. The answer is probably to be found in the fact that the Lutheran church and the ZCC both have a large membership amongst Northern Sotho speaking people.

Many ZCC-members have a Lutheran background and attended catechism classes in this church when they were young. On acquiring positions of leadership within the ZCC, and recognizing the need for a catechism, it would be quite natural for them to fall back on what they received in their previous church.

The reluctance of ZCC church officials to grant information about their beliefs is another problem. Perhaps the ZCC fears unjust criticism. Therefore even those who have the authority to give information, are not willing to do so. Kekana, in summarizing the history of the ZCC, speaks of "82 years of mystery and secrecy" (1992:2). He says that he has discovered "just how difficult, if not impossible, it is to obtain first hand

information about the ZCC. Members of this church refuse to divulge information and it seems to require more than a miracle to have an audience with the leader of the church, Bishop Barnabas Lekganyane” (:2).

Despite this problem, researchers like Häselbarth (1965), Kruger (1971), Hanekom (1975) and Lukhaimane (1980) have gathered information about the ZCC and described the basic doctrines of the church. A summary follows:

### *The Bible*

Members of the ZCC, when arriving for the Sunday service, are not seen in possession of a Bible. During the service, though some verses from the Bible may be read, there is no expository preaching. “Ministers preached on how a person is healed, how a barren woman conceived, how a witch was caught, and other social problems which were solved in the church” (Lukhaimane 1980:46-47). Lukhaimane’s evaluation is that preaching in the ZCC is better described by the term *go kgothatša*, which means: to comfort, to encourage (:47). On a more positive note, some researchers claim that there is a surprising openness to scriptural teaching in the ZCC (Van Wyk, quoted by Lukhaimane 1980:49). In the 1960’s, under the leadership of Edward, researchers found that there was a tendency to give the Bible a more central place in the life of the church (Kruger 1971:59). Whether this tendency has persisted under the leadership of Barnabas is questionable. In 1992 Anderson still says: “Although there are signs of change, the ZCC does not give much significance to the Bible: and it is hardly used in preaching at all.” (1992b:100)

### *God: Father and Son*

Lukhaimane expressed the concept and position of Jesus Christ in the ZCC as being the same as that of God the Father (:42). Jesus is believed to be alive in heaven but ZCC-members do not really know how to differentiate between Him and the Father. Häselbarth states that “Jesus is respected in the Zion Christian Church, but He is not central” (1965:7). What may have happened is that the divinity of Jesus is acknowledged but that He is absorbed in the term God (Kruger 1971:102). Oosthuizen points out that “Jesus is

pushed into the background although in one of the two main texts in its constitution, Eph. 2,20, Jesus Christ is referred to as the corner-stone” (Oosthuizen 1968:37).

This seems largely due to the fact that bishop Lekganyane to all intents and purposes takes the place of Jesus. Häselbarth said: “Lekganyane strictly denies to be the Messiah of his people, but so far his people actually regard him as their saviour. Since he combines the priestly functions of a diviner and prophet with those of a chief, his followers see in him their religious leader and redeemer” (1965:7). Lukhaimane’s assessment was that “to his underprivileged followers Engenas was a messiah who had come to deliver them from bondage, especially from the horror of superstition and the power wielded by the medicine men” (:37). Lukhaimane concludes by saying: “The ZCC of Engenas was a syncretistic-nativistic-prophetic-separatist-messianic Christian sect” (:40).

Researchers have differing opinions. Anderson feels that “the ZCC cannot be named a ‘messianic movement’ in the strict sense of the word” (1993b:102). He states: “At ZCC services in Soshanguve and during the 1992 Easter Festival at Moria I witnessed Jesus Christ being given pre-eminence as the universal Lord, both in singing and in preaching.” (1993b:102.) Anderson feels that, generally speaking, Pentecostal-type churches (and for Anderson this includes the ZCC) give Jesus Christ a major place in their life and faith. He does not hesitate to say: “To contend otherwise is to indulge in futile and misinformed speculation.” (1993b:100.) He also quotes an article in *The ZCC Messenger* saying: “The ZCC is a society of Christians who believe that Jesus Christ is the Saviour and Son of God and that He died on the cross for our sins” (1993b:100). Anderson comments: “No weak Christology there!”

The strength of Christology in the ZCC is clearly a matter that needs further investigation and will be an important issue in the course of this research.

### *The Holy Spirit*

Anderson has labelled the ZCC as a ‘Pentecostal-type’ church. Not a Pentecostal church in the strict sense of the word, because it does not have “fundamental beliefs like the necessity for being ‘born again’ and the empowering of the believer through Holy Spirit baptism” (1993b:119). Nevertheless, he believes, “the ZCC still has what might be characterized as Pentecostal phenomena” (:119), such as prophets in the church and

healing of the sick. As described earlier, theologians like Becken have contested Anderson's terminology. They feel that the ZCC may have historical roots in the Pentecostal movement, but cannot be termed Pentecostal or even Pentecostal-type today. A complicating factor is the apparent confusion among ZCC-members with regard to the person of the Holy Spirit. It seems that beliefs concerning the Holy Spirit are mixed up with those concerning the ancestor spirits. Häselbarth and Hanekom have stated that many ZCC-members are unable to differentiate between the Holy Spirit and the spirits of the deceased, the *badimo* (Häselbarth 1965:13, Hanekom 1975:83-84).

Anderson quotes a local ZCC-church secretary as saying: When the Holy Spirit came on people in the services there was singing and speaking in tongues, and other manifestations like jumping around. A person who reacted in this way was left alone until he gave a message of prophecy, because "it was evident that he is speaking *with the ancestors or with God*" (1993b:119).

In the ZCC it is believed that some people have the Spirit more strongly than others. Some people may be 'possessed' by the Holy Spirit. According to West they will show this "bodily – in writhing, bobbing up and down, jerking rhythmically and sometimes running about haphazardly – and to a lesser extent verbally – by shouting, groaning, sighing and so on. In this no specific message is conveyed to the congregation, other than that the Holy Spirit is present" (1974:25).

### *Sacraments*

Adult baptism plays an important role in the ZCC. Hereby one gains access to the church. Converts are baptised immediately after joining the church. Baptism preferably takes place in 'living' water, which means: in a river or stream with running water, and is done by way of full immersion. According to Kruger baptism has lost its Biblical meaning in the ZCC (1971:163). Baptism is seen as a ritual that has purifying powers: sins are washed away, converts are made holy. A typical view of a ZCC-member, as quoted by Anderson, states: "When you are baptised, you first confess your sins to the minister, and then your sins are removed by the water. You have left those sins, and are now given the church instructions as a member." (1993b:52) The view of ZCC-members is that there is a strong link between baptism and receiving the Holy Spirit.

The importance of Holy Communion seems to have decreased during the years. Communion is administered at the Moria headquarters during the Easter and September conferences. Communion may be administered in other areas, on the condition that the bread and wine have been blessed by the bishop. In local congregations the Holy Communion is never administered. Many ZCC-members have never taken part in it. According to Lukhaimane, Holy Communion, “like baptism, had the function of forgiveness of sins and cleansing thereof” (1980:54). Kruger believes that Holy Communion is a ritual that has the purpose of giving powers to those who participate (1971:163). “The conclusion is inevitable that seeing that the receiving of power for this life is so all important in the ZCC, the sacrament is greatly cut loose from Christ and becomes a magical means to receive power” (Kruger 1983:33).

#### *Prophecy and healing*

“Here we are at the heart of the activities in the Zion Christian Church”, Häselbarth observed (1965:10). The ZCC practices ‘faith healing’ but not in the way Pentecostal churches do. The most common healing method in the ZCC is the sprinkling with ‘blessed water’ (*meetse a makgethwa*) or ‘water that has been prayed for’ (*meetse a thapelo*). “This water is taken home and sprinkled as a ritual of purification or protection, or it is drunk or washed in for healing purposes.” (Anderson 1993b:76) Besides this ‘holy water’, the ZCC uses symbolic healing objects such as sticks, cloths, tea and coffee, salt, sand, etcetera. At the entrance of many ZCC-homes one finds a wire tied across the gate to protect the family against sorcery.

The prophet is regarded as a very important figure in the ZCC. He is a person who “with the aid of the Holy Spirit, and sometimes also his ancestors, is able to predict, divine and heal” (West 1974:26). The healing factor is of paramount importance. West asserts: “The prophet is believed to be able to use the power of the Holy Spirit to heal the sick – through prayer, laying on of hands, giving of holy water to drink and so on.” (1974:27.)

#### *Laws and instructions*

Observing the *molao* (law) and the *ditaelo* (instructions) of the church is of grave significance in the ZCC. They also adhere to some of the ‘Old Testament laws’.

Members should abstain from alcohol, tobacco and pork. There are laws for menstruating women. After menstruation a woman must undergo a purification rite before she is allowed to return to the service of the congregation (Kekana 1992:3). A person who is ill can go to the church and receive specific 'instructions' from a prophet, e.g. to get water from a river or a well, bring it to church so that it can be prayed for. Obedience to the instructions guarantees healing while disobedience secures the opposite.

#### *Attitude to traditional beliefs*

Anderson found that "for most ZCC people the ancestors still play an important role" (1992b:104), but that they are opposed to consulting traditional diviners. Individuals in need should not consult traditional healers but come to the church prophets. Regarding ancestor spirits, Lukhaimane asserts that "the ZCC did not restrict its members from making sacrifices to their ancestors. This practice may also suggest that the ZCC believed in the guidance of people by their forefathers who were said to have control over people on earth" (1980:51).

## **2.5 PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES**

### History

Pentecostal Christians are commonly dubbed 'bazalwane'. The term 'bazalwane' denotes Christians belonging to Pentecostal and charismatic (and baptist) churches. It is derived from the Zulu word 'abazalwane' which means: 'the people who have been born together'. It is the equivalent of 'brothers and sisters' in the Christian sense of the word.

The term is used in the Zulu translation of the Bible. In 1 Thess 4,10 it occurs two times: "Nempela niyakwenza lokho kubo bonke *abazalwane* abaseMakedoniya lonke. Kepha siyaniyala, *bazalwane*, ukuba nivame nokuvama kulohko." (And in fact, you do love all the *brothers* throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, *brothers*, to do so more and more.")

Interestingly, when I asked Sotho-speaking people to translate the word 'bazalwane' into their own language, they would often translate it as *ba ba phološitšwego* (those who have been saved).

The three oldest Pentecostal churches in South Africa are the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM), the Full Gospel Church (FGC) and the Assemblies of God (AOG). Each originated in the first decade of the 20th century. All three began as independent missions, initially aimed at black South Africans, and have grown steadily into fully-fledged denominations (Hofmeyr & Pillay 1994:193).

The beginnings of the AFM, the FGC and the AOG have been documented many times (e.g. Hofmeyr & Pillay 1994:187-193, Anderson 1992b) and it is therefore unnecessary to repeat well known facts about Azusa Street and Wakkerstroom here. It is important to note, however, that these churches have their roots in America and not, as was the case for most mission work done before, in Europe. In the initial years visits and revivals led by American preachers were a frequent occurrence.

From a very early stage these churches witnessed an emergence of black leaders. Most prominent amongst them are Elias Letwaba (AFM), Nicholas Bhengu (AOG) and, at a later stage, Richard Ngidi (AFM).

Growth continued well into the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Politics and 'the struggle' caused friction between the black and white sections of these churches. The case of Frank Chikane and the AFM is a well known example (Anderson & Pillay 1997:239).

Another important phenomenon was the emergence of so-called independent Pentecostal churches during the eighties. Anderson reports a strong Western influence in these churches both in liturgy and in leadership patterns (1992b:10). Popular American evangelists, such as Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland and Benny Hinn, have been influential in promoting the 'prosperity message', among other things. "Perhaps the greatest influence on these churches in South Africa is the Rhema Bible Church of Ray McCauley, as some of the leaders have attended his Rhema Bible Training Centre." (:10-11.)

According to the 1996 census membership of all Pentecostal/charismatic churches in South Africa was nearly 2,7 million (Froise 1999:48). The largest group is the Apostolic Faith Mission with 1,1 million members. The majority of AFM members, about 70 %, is black (Froise 1999:61).

## Beliefs

Pentecostal Christians believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. Bhengu's movement for example, believes that the Bible is "inerrant in the original writings and of supreme, absolute and final authority, in all matters of doctrine, faith and conduct." (Dubb 1976:159). Bond, chairman of Assemblies of God, has asserted that Pentecostals "view with the deepest suspicion anything that might be considered liberal in theology" (1974:15). Pentecostals are strongly fundamentalist.

Pentecostal doctrine in most cases follows Protestant tradition. An example of this is the doctrine of the Trinity. Jesus Christ is believed to be both God and man. There is emphasis on the fact that He is risen, that He is seated at the right hand of God and elevated to the position of power and authority. Assemblies of God stress the Lordship of Jesus Christ: "We confess the Lord Jesus Christ and no other, as Head of the Church, and as our Lord." (Watt 1991:225).

The South African 'bazalwane' view the work of the Holy Spirit in much the same light as other Pentecostals, sharing their belief in the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit. To quote the dogma of the Assemblies of God: "We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Baptiser in the Holy Spirit, and that this baptism, as a distinct experience from the New Birth, is promised to every believer." (Watt 1991:227) Bond has asserted that "most Pentecostals in South Africa believe in a two-stage spiritual experience: 1. Salvation by faith alone in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. 2. A second experience of the Baptism with the Holy Ghost" (1974:15).

Divine healing is widely believed to be one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Speaking in tongues is another, although it is more important to some groups than others. Bhengu, for example, was afraid that too much emphasis would be given to 'Pentecostal experiences' (Dubb 1976:130). In his congregation no special services were held to 'help' believers experience baptism in the Holy Spirit (:130). In fact the 'older' Pentecostals have been critical of the charismatic movement and accused them of over-emphasising the charismata (Bond 1974:16).

Missiologists debate on whether African belief of the Holy Spirit has been influenced by African perceptions of 'power'. Some stated that the Holy Spirit in Africa is seen as an impersonal force which can be possessed and is at a person's disposal. Oosthuizen wrote

in 1968 that sometimes “that Spirit’s activity is not related to moral guidance but rather to vital force” (1968:122). Others, like Daneel and Anderson, have denied that this is the case in African Pentecostal churches and even Zionist-type churches. Anderson has tried to fight what he calls “myths of an ‘impersonal’ and a ‘manipulable’ Spirit” (1991:7). Salvation is a very important doctrine in Pentecostal churches. Anderson states: “Salvation is usually viewed as the salvation of the individual soul from sin, Satan and hell. It comes to a person through faith in Christ and results in the forgiveness of sins.” (1993b:66) Closely connected to this is the view that only those who have made a ‘personal decision’ to ‘receive Jesus Christ’ are saved. Those who haven’t received Jesus Christ (for example members of African independent churches and members of mission churches) are seen as unsaved people.

Rhema Bible Church in Randburg is a Pentecostal group that has gained influence in black Pentecostal churches through its theological courses and TV broadcasts. Although sharing many Pentecostal traditions it does however stray from ‘mainstream’ Pentecostal theology as it bases its doctrines and practices on the teachings of Kenneth Hagin. Clark has criticized Rhema for its use of so-called ‘faith formulae’ (“you have what you say”). He feels this gives the impression that the believer can manipulate God by uttering ‘faith formulae’, thus endangering the sovereignty of God (1983:6). He has also criticized the movement for its emphasis on prosperity and healing. He feels that Rhema’s approach creates problems for church members who expect healing and/or prosperity but do not receive it. His criticism extends to its one-sided use of Scripture, and the inherent dualism (God-satan) approach (:27). To what extent church leaders in young black Pentecostal churches have been influenced by the Faith movement, will be an important question during the course of our research.

Pentecostal Christians are known to reject traditional African beliefs and practices radically.