

# **A Missiological study on the perspectives and function of prayer in the AICs**

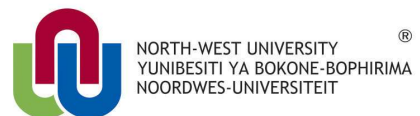
**M. J. Moletsane**  
**12664251**

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Magister in Missiology at the Mafikeng Campus of the North-West University

Supervisor: Prof. Dr J.J. Knoetze

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## **DECLARATION**

I, Tshidiso Jeremia Maferika Moletsane declare that this dissertation, submitted to the North-West University, Mafikeng Campus, is my own work and has not been previously submitted to any other University. Sources used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references according to the prescribed method by the University.

.....

Signature

Full names: Tshidiso Maferika Jeremia Moletsane

Student Number: 12664251

## **PREFACE**

1. I dedicate this to my late Mom, Mamothepane Elisa Moletsane. You prayed and asked God for this, when you were still with me, and now God has answered your prayers. I love you Mom and I will always love you.
2. My spiritual academic/supporter/mentor Father Prof. Sarel van der Merwe thank you very much for believing in me even though I could not do it, you believed in me may the good Lord bless continue bless you family.
3. My wife, Keneilwe Lydia Moletsane. Thank you very much my love for your support and our two most beautiful children Remotshepile and Aotshapahala Moletsane.
4. My only Sister. Meikie Selinah Padi and my family Michel and Jani kgarara, Matlalanane Kgetsji, and my Sister Alinah Riba and the Husband thank you very much for your support.
5. My promoter/mentor Prof. Johannes Knoetze thank you very much for the support and encouragement which words cannot express. Thank you may the good Lord bless you and your family.
6. Lastly, to the Almighty God, Creator of heaven and earth, the one who controls. God I thought I was alone, but you were there for me, I was tired and you gave me strength thank you very much Lord for your blessings

## **ABSTRACT**

No matter how diverse religions are, the fact of the matter is there is one common practice they all embrace and that is prayer. Hindus do it, Buddhists do it, Muslims do it Christians do it and the African Independent Churches (AIC) also known as African Indigenous Churches also pray (Masondo 2014:2). But even if prayer is a common practice in different religions, the Mainline Mission Churches (MMC) (started by the missionaries from Europe and America) in sub-Sahara Africa are experiencing a movement of its members from the mainline Christianity to the African Independent Churches (AIC) especially the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) for prayer requests in times of emergency.

African members of the Mainline Mission Churches in times of emergency feel that their needs cannot be addressed by the Mainline Mission Churches (MMC). They then patronise the priest in the African Independent Churches (AIC) especially the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) of Bishop Barnabas Lekganyane because the African Independent Churches (AIC) are believed to serve the needs and the character of the African people. Therefore, Christian African members of the Mainline Mission Churches (MMC) turn to become members of the African Independent Churches (AIC) in moments of crises in their lives (Mercado 2004, 2005:105). This study will look at different aspects of prayer in culture. The Lord's Prayer as model for prayer, and the African traditional view on prayer and the view of prayer in other religions. This will be done from a missiological perspective on the function of prayer in the growing ministry of the AICs.

### **Key terms:**

The Lord's Prayer, African Independent Church (AIC), Mainline Mission Churches (MMC), Zion Christian Church (ZCC),

## **OPSOMMING**

Alle godsdienste, ongeag hulle diversiteit koester die een gemeenskaplike praktyk van gebed. Of dit Hindoeïsme, Buddisme, Moslem of Christene in die algemeen of in die Afrika Onafhanklike Kerke is almal bid (Masondo 2014:2). Ongeag of gebed 'n algemene praktyk is in verskillende gelowe, die hoofstroom sending kerke (wat begin is deur sendelinge van Europa en Amerika) in sub-Sahara Afrika beleef 'n uitwaartse beweging van sy lidmate na die Afrika Onafhanklike Kerke en dan veral na die "Zion Christian Church (ZCC)" vir gebed in tye van nood.

Baie swart lidmate van die hoofstroom sending kerke beleef dat hulle gebeds behoeftes nie werklik aangespreek word deur die hoofstroom kerke nie. Hulle besoek dan die priesters in die Afrika Onafhanklike Kerke, meer spesifiek in die "Zion Christian Church (ZCC)" van Biskop Barnabas Lekganyane, aangesien die oortuiging is dat die Afrika Onafhanklike Kerke die behoeftes en die karakter van swart Afrikane beter verstaan. Om hierdie rede keer swart lidmate van die hoofstroom sending kerke in tye van krisis maklik hul rug op die hoofstroom kerke om lidmate te word van die Afrika Onafhanklike Kerke wanneer hulle 'n krisis beleef (Mercado 2004, 2005:105). Hierdie studie gee aandag aan verskillende aspekte van gebed in kultuur. Die Onse Vader gebed word as model gebed gebruik, wanneer die Afrika tradisionele seining van gebed bespreek word, ook vanuit sienings oor gebed in ander godsdienste. Die bespreking vind plaas vanuit 'n missiologiese perspektief rakende die funksie van gebed in die groei van die Afrika Onafhanklike Kerke.

### **Sleutel terme**

Onse Vader gebed, Afrika Onafhanklike Kerke (AOK), Hoofstroom Sending Kerke, "Zion Christian Church (ZCC)"

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# CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

No matter how diverse religions are, the fact of the matter is, there is one common practice they all embrace and that is prayer. Hindus do it, Buddhists do it, Muslims do it, Christians do it and the African Independent Churches, also known as the African Indigenous Churches (AIC), do it (Masondo 2014:2). Even if prayer can take up different forms like intercession, thanksgiving, requesting and beseech according to Letsōsa (2005:75), it should be understood that prayer differs from religion to religion in the way the divine is conceived (Anon 1975:75). Especially, looking at the African continent and the present version of Christianity Africans have accepted, whereby, during times of emergency, they patronise prophets from the African Independent Churches (AIC) for prayer requests.

It is a well-known fact that, the membership of the African Independent Churches (AIC), especially in the African continent is growing rapidly (Adamo 2011:1). On the other side, the Mainline Mission Churches (MMC) in Africa, especially in South Africa, are experiencing a movement by its members from mainline Christianity (started by the missionaries from Europe and America) to the African Independent Churches (AIC) (started by Africans for the Africans), especially the Zion Christian Church (ZCC).

Van der Walt (2003:115), in describing the whole movement of members of the African Mainline Mission Churches (MMC) to the African Independent Churches (AIC), made us aware that the majority of Christians in Africa are mere adherents of mainline Christianity and not real converts. Mbiti (1975:30) also added by saying that many Africans belong to more than one religion, even if they are recorded to be counted in a census as believers of a specific religion. The implication is that African Christians, especially in South Africa, are today in the Mainline Mission Churches (MMC) as confirmed members of the Church (MMC) and tomorrow may be joining another church like the African Independent Church (AIC), especially the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) of Bishop Barnabas Lekganyane because their spiritual (prayer) and physical (sickness, misfortune) needs are not being met.

If prayer (prayer request) is the reason why members of the Mainline Mission Churches (MMCs) move from their churches to the African Independent Churches (AICs), it should be acknowledged that indeed prayer is an important aspect that should be attended to with care and understanding. Prayer is a core religious practice and should not be neglected any more as a subject of research.

It is also revealed to this researcher that the issue of prayer in different religions is a topic to be carefully investigated and discussed, so that illusions can be dispelled, suspicion removed and conflict minimised (David 2001:1). Therefore, there should be a critical dialogue between the MMCs and the AICs, regarding the present version of the prayer and how it is used in relation to tradition to increase membership of the AICs. The importance of prayer can be seen in how believers react when finding themselves in a moment of crisis. Today they are in this church; tomorrow they are in that church for their prayers to be answered. When one feels that his/her prayers are not answered, people become disappointed and frustrated and later they find themselves in other churches for a special secret prayer request specifically in the Zion Christian Church (ZCC).

In Peter's (1958:73) view on the issue of prayer there are distinctive notes of prayer that should remain at the centre of everyone's thoughts and practices. These distinctive notes include that prayer is to the glory of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

With the evidence gathered around the issue of prayer, it is evident that to some degree prayer is a sacrosanct subject, many people from different religions are reluctant to subject it to empirical investigation. Nevertheless, the subject is of such importance that the study on prayer should be done so that any African Christian should understand why he/she should pray, what should be prayed for and is God able to answer prayers?

## **1.2 THE PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The mainline mission church (MMC) in South Africa is experiencing a movement of its members to the African Independent Churches (AICs). It is also observed that members of the Mainline Mission Churches (MMC) in Africa, especially in South Africa, attend their worship services by day and come furtively to African Independent Churches (AICs), especially the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) of Bishop Barnabas Lekganyane, by night for special secret prayer requests for healing and protection from bad spirits.

This indicates that the African Independent Churches (AICs) seem to know how to serve the needs and the character of the African people through prayer. Hence, this study wants to investigate the role of prayer in the increase in membership of African Independent Churches (AICs) and the decline of membership in Mainline Mission Churches (MMCs).

## **1.3 THE CENTRAL THEORETICAL STATEMENT**

If the Mainline Mission Churches (MMCs) in Africa, especially in South Africa will give more attention to understanding African worldview on prayer and how it functions or is used in Africans'

daily lives, they will adapt the use of prayer in their whole ministry. Therefore, their members will not go to other churches in times of crises.

#### **1.4 THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The main research question is: What are the influences and characteristics of prayer and how does it influence the growth of the AICs especially the ZCC?

##### **1.4.1 Related questions that need to be answered are:**

- How does our worldview influence our prayers?
- What is the understanding of the African Independent Churches (AIC) on the role and function of prayer?
- What is the characteristic of the Lord's Prayer in Matt 6: 9-13 that may guide the dialogue?
- Is prayer one of the AICs' mission strategies?
- What are the differences in prayer actions and expectations between the MMCs and the AICs

#### **1.5 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

##### **1.5.1 Aim of the study**

This study aims is to understand the different perspectives and functions of prayer within the African Independent Churches (AIC), and why members of the Mainline Missionary Churches (MMC) move from their church to join the African Independent Church, especially the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) the one of Bishop Barnabas Lekganyane.

##### **1.5.2 The objectives of the study are:**

- Understanding the influence of a worldview on our experience and expectations of prayer.
- Understanding the reason why prayer is viewed as more important and effective in the AICs than in the MMCs.
- Using the characteristics of the Lord's Prayer as guidance for what prayer is.
- Critically discussing the objectives of prayer as observed in the AICs and MMCs from a Biblical perspective.

- Acknowledging different attitudes and expectations of prayer as observed in the AICs and MMCs

## **1.6 METHODOLOGY**

The study will follow a literature review. A literature review revealed that in the study of the mission, prayer is a neglected theme (Peter 1958:67), although it plays a major role in the ministry of Jesus as well as the New Testament Church. Therefore, a literature study will be the focus of this research. Some personal experiences, discussions and observations which include an investigation of the motives of prayer, the different effects of various forms of prayer and the physiological processes active in prayer (John 1985:113), will be used to enhance the conclusions made from the literature

## **1.7 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **1.7.1 Prayer in different religions**

In defining prayer from religion to religion, Finney and Newton (1985:104) see prayer as an inward communion or a conversation with the power recognised as divine. According to Clark (2006:294), it is a communication between the visible realms of reality. In other words, it is a communication link between the physical and the spiritual. From Finney and Newton's (1985:105) point of view, prayer in different religions can be described as an intimate communication with a benevolent deity. In Christianity it means a personal union between a human and the person of the Trinity (God the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit) experiencing the deep love of this relationship and communication (Baesler 2001:205).

In accepting that prayer can be understood in different ways in different religions, it is also important to appreciate that prayer has its own function in each religion. According to Thaddeus (1980:210), in Muslim tradition prayer is regarded as an act of enlightenment. From Anon's (1975:75) point of view, prayer in Muslim tradition is regarded as a ritual which must be performed in Arabic to express obedience and praise to god. This in a sense is corresponding with some views of traditional Africa on prayer. It should be noted that in praying the Muslim prayer words seem to be less important, the important thing is to perform it correctly. The words in prayer are mainly praising god also taking refuge with god, asking blessings upon Muhammed, Abraham and greeting the fellow worshippers. Prayer in the Muslim tradition may include a request to be forgiven and saved from fire but there is no detailed confession of sin or direct communication to god, but only a ritual that must be performed by each and every adherent of the Muslim tradition.

In Hindu tradition, Baesler (2001:206) indicates many names of gods are been used for example "Vishnu", "Krishna" and "Rama". There are a range of Hindu gods and goddesses who are worshiped with different names, forms and qualities. There is a prayer in the name of "Namjapa". Namjapa one of the Hindu prayers means a "repetition (Japa) of the name (Nama) of the lord" (Baesler 2001:204). The Namjapa prayer consists of many gods and it is given secretly to a disciple by a guru (another god in Hindu tradition). Namjapa's main function is concentration, in other words one has to focus on what he/she is praying or communicating to. All prayers in the Hindu religion, according to Baesler (2001:205), is for "concentration, meditation and contemplation in uniting the individual spirit of a person with the greater spirit of gods". Also these views on uniting with the spirits are in different forms observed in the traditional African view of prayer.

Prayer in a Mainline Mission Churches (MMC), according to Sander (1977:11), is worship and is for adoration, confession of sins, thanksgiving and supplication for healing. In prayer, Christians see God to be essentially all-loving and all powerful, the one who revealed himself in Jesus Christ (Finney and Newton 1985:105). Within the AICs, there are four different types of prayers to be observed (Clark 2006:295). These are: first the "Petitions prayer" (earnest request), second "Adoration prayers" (praising and honouring the Supreme Being), as well as expressing devotion and dependence, third "supplication prayers" (lamentations, particularly for forgiveness for wrong doing or extreme frustrations of persistent problems), and last "gratitude prayers" (prayers of thanksgiving). Above all, prayer in many AICs is believed to be a communication between the living and the world of the ancestors (Clark 2006:294).

Nyirongo (1997:25), in explaining the hierarchy of the spirit world, pointed out that at the top is the supreme being, below is the chief divinities that are believed to control the natural phenomena, below the chief divinities the glorified ancestors who are the closet intermediaries between the higher beings and man. Above all it can be concluded that prayer in the African Independent Churches is regarded as a major form of communication with the supernatural or the link between the living and the world of the spirit ancestors.

It should be noted from what has been discussed above that, religion and perceptions of the divine and prayer are formed by the people's worldview and it has its own function in every religion. This study will investigate the Missiological study on the perspectives and the functions of prayer in the AICs, therefore prayer within the African culture, the Lord's Prayer as model of prayer and the African traditional view on prayer will be looked at in the whole study to understand perspectives and the function of prayer in the AICs.

## **1.8 PROPOSED CHAPTERS**

1. Introduction and problem statement
2. World views and prayer in Africa
3. Understanding the role of the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) and whether prayer is one of the church's (ZCC) mission strategies.
4. Characteristics of prayer in Matthew 6:9-13.
5. The African view on prayer.
6. The necessity of dialogue between the MMCs and AICs as a way forward

## CHAPTER 2 WORLD VIEWS AND PRAYER IN AFRICA

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

Every human being is a cultural being, Van der Walt (2003:93), in explaining culture in an acceptable point of view said, culture regards human life in its totality. In other words it looks at people's ordinary attitudes, customs, behaviour, values, beliefs and institutions. Culture in the whole world plays a prominent role; in this study special attention is given to the African continent because Africa is made up of "multiple identities" and is ethnically multicultural (Maluleke 2001:37; Afebe Vester 2004:48). According to Mageso (2002:16) and Mbiti's (1969:1) observation, it is evident enough that there are many different religious systems and religions in Africa. Van der Walt (2005:53) points out that the following list gives an impression of the existence of a great variety of religions in Africa: The "world religions", like, Islam, Buddhism, Shintoism, and Christianity (Biblical religion) with all its sub-divisions and denominations are "Primal" traditional religions. Chitando (2005:299) refers to this group as African Indigenous, with vague superstitions and many cults.

It is important to realise that the diversity in religious concepts and practices in Africa, made Africa to be notoriously religious (Mbiti 2008:1). In other words, each people (group) have an own religious system with a contextualised set of own beliefs and practices. According to Mbiti (1990:1), there is a singular philosophy underlying religious life in Africa. In other words, religions of black Africans, according to the point of view of Kruger et al. (2009:35), share a sufficient number of characteristics that are similar enough to talk of one African religion in a generic sense.

According to Kgatla (1997:1), there was much debate on the issue of interpreting the African religions by the world. African Religions (Indigenous Religions) were constantly being treated as occurrences of African culture (Amoah 2005:358). This was because "missionaries, settlers, and colonial administrators recorded their findings on indigenous religions (African religions) all over the world. With remarkable consistency over a period of five hundred years, these European observers reported that they found people in the Americas, Pacific Islands and in Africa who lacked any trace of religion" (Masondo 2014:1). Irrespective of the approach by the missionaries, settlers and the colonial administrators to interpret African religions in the world many authors like Masondo (2014:1) believed that African religions deserve to be understood, instead of being condemned as "paganism".

In this chapter special attention is given to the African Christianity as a Biblical Religion in the African Independent Churches (AIC) as well as in the African Traditional Religion (ATR). And what does prayer mean/used in the African Traditional Religion ATR as well as in the African

Independent Church (AIC)? According to Mbiti (1969:61), prayer is reported among all African people therefore, this study investigates the understanding of prayer as well as the role of prayer in the African Culture. In other words the use/view of prayer within African cultural religions especially the African Traditional Religion (ATR) and the African Independent Churches (AICs) and the role of prayer within missio-Dei will be investigated.

## **2.2 THE AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION'S (ATR) WORLDVIEW**

African Traditional Religion existed for many centuries before the Mainline Missionary Church's missionaries and the western political expeditions arrived on the Africa continent (Mokgobi 2014:25). Different words have been used to describe African Traditional Religion (ATR), like "tribal", "folk" or "primal" (Van der Walt 2003:62). The word "tribal", according to Van der Walt (2003:62), means African Traditional Religion practices which varies from tribe to tribe, but the substances remain the same.

Taylor (1971) and Styne (1989) use the word "animism" to describe African Traditional Religion and the term is derived from the Latin word "anima" which means "breath" (of life), "soul" or "spirit". Nürnberger (2007:16) and Beyers (2010:1) on the other hand regard the African Traditional Religion as a primal religion, because most of its versions are characterised by a dynamistic (or animilistic) view of reality dependence on ancestry and awareness of a rather inaccessible Supreme Being. Buyers (2010:1) and Thorpe (1992:5) give the following list which can be used as characteristics of a primal religion:

- "It is a religion found among societies consisting of relatively small groups of individuals who are heavily dependent on one another.
- The society is dependent on nature.
- The society does not have a (long) history of written culture.
- Metaphors, symbolism and art play an important role in the culture.
- The religion does not have a specific founder".

It has to be pointed out from the list above that many scholars used many words to describe African Traditional Religion (ATR). For this study it is important to accept that African Traditional Religion (ATR) is "a religion that was practised throughout Africa before the arrival of the Western missionaries" (Manganyi 2015:1). It is a religion that Africans have grown up with from their parents' teaching them to live and practice it (Awolalu 1976:275).

The African Traditional Religion's (ATR) core premise and belief should be understood as the keeping of the African culture with a focus and faithfulness to the ancestors and the accompanying rituals expressing this loyalty. The basic premises are: Belief in a Supreme Being, belief in a Spirit realm that permeates the whole of nature and all of life and belief in the sanctity of a unified society (Sibiso 2001:2).

### **2.2.1 The Supreme Being**

In the African Traditional Religion (ATR) the Supreme Being is seen as the creator, but not the sustainer of everything. After creating, the Supreme Being becomes the distant unreachable one since he withdrew from the world. Horn (2003:53) and Nyirongo (1997:51) point out that, in the African Traditional Religion (ATR), not the Supreme Being but the intermediate spirit beings are actively involved in human life. The Supreme Being is named differently by different ethnic groups in Africa. It is the belief that a number of divinities and spirits were brought in to act as functionaries of the Supreme Being in the maintenance of the world. Supreme Being according to Nürnberger (2007:31) in African tradition can be viewed to be the main source of all dynamistic forces in the universe. It is also a "person" because it has an immense weight since its power and presence are experienced in all dimensions of reality.

African Traditional Religion (ATR) also believes that the world is definitively spiritual, but not definitively divine, and God is all and all is God, but the Supreme Being is important (Mbiti 1990:33). In other words the African Traditional Religion (ATR) is not God centered, although the Supreme Being is important, but the most important are the intermediate beings or ancestors. The religious rituals and prayers have to revolve around intermediate spirit beings and not around the Supreme Being (Turaka 1999:86; and Nyirongo 1997:51). So, life's purpose is not the biblical purpose to respond to God in trust, but to live in peace with the community.

### **2.2.2 The worship in the African Traditional Religion (ATR)**

Worship in the African Traditional Religion (ATR) is recommencing the relations between the living people and the spirits (ancestors or the invisible world) (Mbiti, 1975:60). In other words, Africans support a holistic outlook on life where both body and spirit are taken care of to have full integrity. Without spiritual awareness in this universe and life, Africans will feel lost and life would seem to have no meaning.

Through acts of worship like prayer, sacrifice, dancing, and singing the spiritual and physical worlds are linked, putting the spiritual in touch with the physical. Through the worship of ancestors in some of the AICs, the African Traditional Religion's (ATR) worldview also becomes the intelligent bridge between Christianity and ATR.

Prayer is one of the acts of worship in African Traditional Religion (ATR) (Mbiti 1969:61). It may be private, in other words made individually, or by the head of the families. Other prayers are communal at public meetings and for public needs. There are also people who generally pray on behalf of others, like priests, rainmakers, chiefs, kings and sometimes medicine men who may pray for the general public or for private individuals who ask their assistance (Mbiti 1975:61).

Within the family, in the African Traditional Religion (ATR), praying is normally done by the head of the family or the oldest member of the family. Sometimes a ritual elder or local priest may be asked to say a prayer on behalf of the family.

It should be noted that in African Traditional Religion (ATR) when some people pray, or bring sacrifices and offerings they sometimes address members of their families who died (ancestors). It is like a deep communication between the person praying and the one who is dead (ancestors) for national or communal needs, or to address departed kings, chiefs, clan founders or the divinity, spirits of the area (Mbiti 1969:60). In the African Traditional Religion (ATR) worship revolves in making sure that the spiritual realm is happy.

Many scholars often refer to African Traditional Religion (ATR) as an animilistic religion, in other words a religion where people believe that the spirit world controls the natural world (Taylor 1871; Styne 1989). According to Mbiti (1990:52), the natural phenomena are explained in terms of spiritual or divine activity and assigning spiritual meaning to certain places, mountains, rivers, lakes and stones (Sibiso 2001:3).

In African Traditional Religion (ATR) the spirit beings that are thought/believed to inhabit nature, according to Horn (2003:53), Gehman (1989:138-139), and Mbiti (1990:77-87) can be described as follows:

- Divinities: beings that are created as spirits whose status is just below the Supreme Being.
- Created spirits that are lower than the divinities: found everywhere in nature and are greatly feared because they are unpredictable and dangerous.
- Ancestral Spirits: Spirits of the dead which can be distinguished between the living and the dead. The living dead are the spirits which “African people” are most concerned with and they also believe that these spirits can give guidance to the living and serve as intermediaries between the humans and the Supreme Being.

The relationship with the spirits is of paramount importance. Another relationship that is of paramount importance is the relationship with fellow human beings. Prayer is regarded as the most important tool for communicating with the ancestors.

### **2.2.3 The African Traditional Religion belief in the sanctity of a unified society.**

Community ties are dependent on ancestry, and genealogical ties stretch over the whole community and include the dead, the unborn as well as the totem animal or plant (Mbiti 1990:102-103). In African Traditional Religion (ATR) collectivism calls for obedience from community members, but at the same time its all-encompassing nature effectively does away with individual moral independence and therefore with the concept of responsibility for the self.

### **2.3 THE AFRICAN INDEPENDENT CHURCHES (AIC)**

African Independent Churches (AICs) are growing at a steady rate on the African Continent (Le Roux 2005:200). According to Anderson (2001:12) and Le Roux (2005:200), the AICs in South Africa, consist of two major categories, the “Ethiopians” and the “Zionist” with a third minor category of Messianic Churches. Several scholars of the African Independent Church (AIC) movement followed Sundkler’s (1961) research which places many different kinds of African Independent Churches (AICs) from all over the continent into the two broad categories of “Ethiopians” or “African” churches, and “Zionist” or “Spiritual” Churches. This emergence of African Independent Churches (AICs) has made a radical paradigm shift in the history of African Christianity. Many scholars like Masondo (2014:2) prefer the word “African Indigenous Churches” for the African Independent Churches (AICs), meaning a church which has been founded in Africa, by Africans, and primarily for Africans.

Many scholars like Morinda (2000:234) sees the African Independent Churches (AICs) as the churches that were seen as seeking political, social, economic, cultural, and religious liberation, and were seen as a reaction against colonialism and missionary denominationalism. Morinda (2000:234) added that, they were reacting to the oppression of the colonial era and the Mainline Mission Churches (MMCs). Western mission church leaders and other observers labelled them as “Sects” and “nativistic”, “messianic”, “separatist” and “syncretist” movements (Anderson 2001:10; Crafford 1985:2).

The rapid growth the African Independent Churches became one of the most prominent features of Christianity on the African continent. Statically, Daneel (2013) indicates that between 1940 and 1960 the overall African Independent Church (AIC) membership increased from 9.6% to approximately 20% of the total African population, while in South Africa during the past two decades the number of Independent Churches has leapt from 2 000 to an estimated 4 000, with a current overall membership of between 4 to 5 million (Chidester 1992:114). The growth rate in other African countries may not be as spectacular as in South Africa, but appears to be still on the increase.

Besides the large families of churches in Africa, there are a wide group of churches, which since their beginning, did not have special relations with Western churches, missionary agents or societies, and these churches are also referred to as "AICs" but they are more family orientated. They are churches with an indigenous African orientation because they naturally belong to Africa, which has its own ways of responding to the Gospel (Oduro et al. 2008:28).

According to Oduro et al. (2008:28-29) two groups of the African Independent Churches (AIC) can be identified as follows:

- Traditional AICs: their mission is to glorify their founder and faithfully promote his or her teachings and practices. They have many different forms and even some practices that do not match up with the Christian tradition.
- The reforming AICs: have a deep respect for their founders, but their main mission is to bring God to the community and the nation. They are open to the Christian tradition founded on the Bible and are willing to change and grow in their understanding of Jesus Christ and his Church. These are churches that are reforming, taking on a new shape.

It is important to keep in mind that there are many more types of independent churches than those proposed by researchers like Le Roux (2005:201). This study does not intend to look at the differences but how they use/view prayer, especially the one in South Africa, the Zion Christian Church of Bishop Barnabas Lekganyane and the role/importance of prayer within missio-Dei as they also refer to themselves as Christians.

### **2.3.1 The African Independent Churches' (AIC) Worldview.**

It is very interesting how, according to Oduro et al. (2008:23), the African Independent Church (AIC) contextualises the Gospel, by connecting it with the real needs of Africa. In short, most of the African Independent Churches (AICs) apply Christianity into the African context. And it is difficult to make a theological assessment on the African Independent Church (AIC) because there is such a variety and they are constantly adapting and changing (Anderson 2001:258).

Barrett (1968:143), considers the African Independent Church (AIC) to be integral to the mainstream of Christianity in Africa since most of them accept and apply scripture, believe in a triune God, the involvement and closeness of a creator Father in this life, the salvation and mediation of Christ and the omnipresence of an indwelling Holy Spirit. The AICs also participate regularly in the Sacraments of Baptism and the Holy Communion which are main characteristics of the church. Sundkler (1969) however observed the following as central elements of the Christianity of the African Independent Church (AIC):

- Ancestral spirit and Holy Spirit
- Magic and Divination
- Dreams as means of revelation

With the elements that Sundkler (1969) has mentioned, notice must be taken of Awolalu (1976:275) who further describes the African Traditional Religion (ATR) belief that is found in some African Independent Churches (AIC) of the world's creation by the source of all beings, known as the Supreme Being.

It is believed that the divinities and the ancestors have laid down rules and principles to sustain good relations and harmony in the community. For example, as head of creation and moral agent, man has the ability to distinguish between right and wrong. If man does or does not follow the rules and principles, the Deity (Supreme Being) and his agents (ancestors, good and bad spirits), who watch over human behaviour, can reward or punish man.

Therefore, it should be pointed out, as Awolalu (1976:275), that African Traditional Religion (ATR) belief is found in some of the African Independent Churches (AIC), that the world was created by the source of all beings, known as the Supreme Being. Horn (2003:53) added that, some African Independent Churches (AIC) believe not only in the Supreme Being but mostly in the intermediate spiritual beings which are actively involved in human life. This is the reason why the religious rituals revolve around intermediate spirit beings and not the Supreme Being. It may be evident to say that when some of the African Independent Churches (AICs) pray, they are doing it in the African Traditional Religion (ATR) mind-set, they have God (Biblical) in their minds as the one who created everything but all prayers are referred to the intermediate spirit beings, not even to the Supreme Being.

## **2.4 CONCLUSION**

According to Mbiti (1969:61), praying is reported among all African peoples, the majority of prayers and petitions are addressed to God (Biblical), and some to the ancestors or other spiritual beings, many of whom serve as intermediaries. This study has tried to understand more about the African Traditional Religion (ATR) and the African Independent Churches (AIC) and their worldviews. It should be pointed out from the discussions above that the African Traditional Religion (ATR) is not a God centered religion and it has few contact points with a Christian (Biblical religion) worldview but the ATR on the other hand has deeply influenced the African Independent Churches' (AIC) worldview.

African Traditional Religion (ATR) believes that the world is definitively spiritual, but not definitively divine (Mbiti 1990:33). In other words, the Supreme Being is the creator of everything but not the sustainer of everything because after creating, he withdrew from the world. So, the spirits, especially the living dead are part of life. They are celebrated when the living feel blessed, turned to in times of need and their favour is sought through sacrifices whenever they are upset about some wrongdoing by the living. All prayers are referred to the ancestors.

When it comes to the African Independent Churches, it is extremely difficult to understand their worldview. Because they are not a homogenous group and they are constantly growing, adapting and changing, and most of the African Independent Churches (AIC) regard themselves as Christians or belonging to Christian families. Although many of the African Independent Churches (AIC) believe in divine revelation through dreams (Oduro et al. 2008:23), others accept and apply scripture as fundamentally normative. They seem to believe in a triune God, the reign and closeness of the creator Father, the Saviour and Jesus Christ and the pervasive presence of an indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Barrett 1968:143). According to Maimela (1985:71), the greatest attraction of the AICs is their open invitation to Africans to bring their fears and anxieties about witches, sorcerers, bad luck, poverty, and illness" in most instances in prayer to God. The AICs have gone a long way to accommodate the holistic world view and needs of Africans in a threatening world.

Therefore, it has to be noted that the African Independent Churches (AIC) are strongly African in orientation. Their religious activities are closely related to the traditional African Culture and worldview. They have combined Christianity with certain traditional beliefs to produce a synthesis which differs from the Mainline Mission Church (MMC). In conclusion, firstly, it is difficult to study the African Independent Churches (AIC) as a homogenous group and to determine whether they belong to a Christian tradition or African Traditional Religion (ATR). It is necessary to realise that there are African Independent Churches (AIC) like the Reformed AICs who make sure that their practices and doctrine are biblically based and this would also impact on the way they practice and view prayer. In the more Traditional AICs the African traditions might have a bigger impact on the way they practice and view prayer. The rest of the study will focus more on the Traditional African Independent Churches (AIC).

Secondly, it has to be noted that many African Christians do not see the difference between God (Biblical) and the Supreme Being (god). They believe in a creator God and also believe in the Supreme Being and they believe that the Supreme Being is the ultimate source of power, thinking they are referring to God (Biblical). They also believe that it is not the Supreme Being but intermediate spirit beings that are actively involved in human life.

Praying is reported among all African peoples and it is also evident in the African Traditional Religion (ATR) and to the African Independent Churches (AIC). The question that might be asked is whether all African Christians do address their prayers to God (Biblical) the one who created Heaven and Earth and who is looking after his creation? Many African Christians believe God is remote and inactive due to the unavailability of visible cultic structures and imagery. It is further believed that the majority of African Christian “prayers and invocations are addressed to God, and some to the living dead or other spiritual beings many of whom serve as intermediaries” (Mbiti 1969:61). In a positive manner it must be recognised that the African Independent Churches (AIC) take African traditional beliefs seriously and offer people relief of problems.

## **2.5 THE WESTERN WORLDVIEW**

Western worldview implies a generalisation according to Van der Walt (2003:110), and from his point of view it is a worldview of the Northern part of the world, Northern Europe and North America. It is a worldview which was the principle during the Colonialism period and is still the principle in the Neo-colonialism transplanted in a form of “development” to the Southern countries (Van der Walt 2003:110).

Van der Walt (2003:111) indicates that post-Christianity is part and parcel of the Western worldview while a pre-Christianity is in some instances still part of an African worldview. It is important for us to realise that the African worldview as discussed emphasises the spiritual while the Western worldview emphasises material things. Oduro et al. (2008:38) used the word “enlightenment” as a faith in humankind. In other words the main idea is to put humans rather than God in the center of things. Many scholars like Anderson (2013:73) prefer to refer to the Western worldview as a “faith message”, a concept of God blessing his people with material prosperity.

The emphasis is on individual well-being which is expressed in material as well as in spiritual and mental optimism. The following are the six basic components of the contemporary Western worldview according to Van der Walt (2003:114):

- “To be able to achieve the highest goal of material welfare
- One has to obey the economic laws like competition, production and effectiveness.
- Man, driven by self-interest creates
- Commercialised society in which
- Nature is exploited and

- a future of continuous progress and development is achieved”.

## **2.6 CONCLUSION**

The Western worldview puts human beings first rather than God (biblical), it is an emphasis on an individual well-being which is expressed in material as well as in spiritual and mental optimism. From this perspective it is clear that prayer in the Western world is viewed as more private and personal.

## **2.7 PRAYER WITHIN MISSIO-DEI**

### **2.7.1 The meaning of prayer**

Prayer can be described as active participation in the missio-Dei, in other words, to praise and worship and to actively wait upon God to answer to any prayer. According to Miller (1994:33), it is a process of communication whereby God is addressed by human beings at their initiative. Michel (2003:11) adds that prayer as communication moves from praise and adoration by being obedient to petition and to intercession. It brings the one who prays into a personal relationship with God, and is an expression and a pouring out of the heart to one who is higher. According to Wright (2010:256), it appeals to a higher authority when he says “there is a higher throne”. To the higher authority, to God who was from the beginning the missionary God, through his Word and Spirit. It is God who sends “his incarnate Word, his Son, into the world, and his Spirit at Pentecost” (Bosch 1980:239). Prayer is an appointed means by God to bring grace to his people and glory to himself. According to the Heidelberg Catechism (Question 116), Prayer is “the chief part of thankfulness and God gives his grace and Holy Spirit to those who with sincere desire continually ask it of him.” Prayer is God’s appointed method of people obtaining what he has to bestow (Matt 7:7-11; 9:24-29). It is a fundamental activity of the people of God, engaged in the people’s mission as God’s people.

It is clear from the ministry of Jesus that his participation in the missio-Dei was focussed through his prayer life. Prayer is Gods’ chosen way to bring grace to his people and glory to himself. Praise is what human beings were created for and redeemed for. Every act of prayer implies a conception of the relation of the supplicants to God (Blondeau 2015:49). Therefore, it is important to first understand the creation history (Kerr 1989:19; Wright 2006), as it has been captured in Genesis 1 and Genesis 2. Smither (2014: 1) refers to this history of creation as a “drama of God’s story and mission (missio-Dei)”, which can be told in “three major acts of: Creation, Fall and Redemption”.

God's mission is a dynamic relationship that seeks to bring human beings to a position of reconciliation with himself (and all of creation) "in which they love, worship, glorify him and find their greatest joy in doing so" (Wright 2010:244). This clearly shows that prayer has to be viewed as a living relationship between the Trinitarian God, his Church and his creation. Wright (2006:63) confirms God as, "the sending God", in the sense of the Father's sending of the Son and their sending the Holy Spirit and the Triune God, Father, Son and Spirit sending the church. This understanding implies a living relationship of good communication, obedience and faithfulness.

In dealing with the issue of prayer, it needs to be understood that it is a conversation with the living God as a partner. In this partnership there must be a living relationship of faithfulness, love and obedience. A living relationship depending on God since he is the only refuge when people approach him through prayer, they should know that they are empty handed, they do not even deserve anything good from God, they are sinners, they only live from grace and therefore they need him (Rom 3:10-18). So, their dependence upon God indicates that they are incapable of anything good on their own. Jesus Christ has shown this living relationship with the Father through prayer in his whole ministry.

A holistic Christian worldview on prayer has to be developed within the Mainline Mission Churches (MMC) in the same way as it is functioning within the African Churches. All believers need to understand the meaning of prayer as to actively participate in the *missio-Dei*, meaning to "praise" and "adore" the living God and to actively wait on him to answer to any prayer request. This includes more than to petition and intercede, it is also to act. It has been seen how the African Traditional Religion (ATR) and African Independent Churches (AIC) use/view prayer, now it is important to look at some characteristics of prayer from the *Missio-Trinitatis Dei*. In this regard the study will explore the example of prayer or a model of prayer that the Lord Jesus Christ gave to his church to use in communicating with the Father as it shall be discussed in chapter 4.

## **2.7.2 God the Father**

### **2.7.2.1 A relationship influenced by sin**

Genesis 1-2 gives the "first picture of the biblical God as Creator; speaking, thinking, choosing, planning, executing, evaluating. God had an inclusive plan encompassing the whole of reality extending even to the minor details of life" (Ericson 2001:121). Kerr (1989:41) points out that God has created the whole universe out of nothing through the power of his Word and Spirit. Everything in the universe was created by God. God created everything in relation to and with a specific function and purpose according to their own nature, in order to bring praise and glory to him and for mutual enjoyment. According to Wright (2006:399), God declares "it is good" at every

phase of creation from the initial “creation of light (Gen1:4) to the emergence of continents from the ocean (Gen 1:10), the growth of vegetation (Gen 1:13), the function of sun and moon to mark the days and seasons (Gen 1:18), the emergence of fish and birds (Gen 1:21), and of land animals (Gen 1:25)”. Everything God created was present in divinely declared goodness before God created humans.

God created Adam and Eve in his image that they will obey his Commandments (Van der Walt 2003:121; Gen 1:27). Therefore, the purpose of human beings was to bring glory to God and enjoy a relationship with him to the fullest. As newly appointed stewards humans were to “praise God with their hearts, hands and voices, with rationality as well as emotion, with language, art, music, and craft with all that reflects the God in whose image they were made” (Wright 2010:245).

It can be concluded that Adam and Eve trusted and obeyed God and they had a customary fellowship with God (Genesis 3:8). God delegated dominion over the Earth to human beings (Ps 8:4-8). He entrusted them with responsibility (Gen 1:27-30). There was a good communication between man and God, man could talk to God and even consult before making any decision in order for him to do Gods will. The goal of God’s mission is for all human beings to live to love, worship, glorify, enjoy and have a relationship with God.

Communication between man and God flowed freely, but the disobedience of man destroyed the relationship and communication between God and man. God could no longer rely on humans to accomplish his will on earth and humans no longer worshiped God as it was his original plan when he created the universe. Their hearts were no longer directed in love towards God but rather to themselves.

Ericson (2001:194) indicates that sin produced this immediate transformation. Humans rejected being God’s image and wanted to be god (Van der Walt 2003:121) and they lost the real meaning of being human. According to Wright (2004:194), there was an immediate transformation in the relationship which Adam and Eve had with God. Their act of disobedience ruined the relationship between humans and God, between humans and humans and creation (Nyirongo 1997:68).

Sin changed man’s attitude towards God. Adam and Eve dreaded God’s presence and tried to hide from him (Gen 3:8; 2:25; 3:7; 10). God judges and condemns the sin of Adam and Eve, but acts in grace towards their seeking after them, clothing them and continuing his relationship with them.

Adam and Eve’s disobedience has an effect on all of creation. Kerr (1989:57) views it as inherited corruption. The church fathers termed it “original sin”. Death entered into the world (Gen 3:19), it was not just physical death, but also a spiritual death where man is hiding from God (Gen 3:23,

24; Rom 6:23). But God is a God of love, peace and also a covenant God. He made a covenant of promise to Noah and Abraham of an unconditional love relationship.

### **2.7.2.2 God's covenant with Noah**

During the time of Noah, the sin of the people was so great and so extensive (Gen 6:5) that God resolved to destroy everything, but with the exception of Noah, his family and the animals (Ericson 2001:203). God made a covenant of love with Noah when he said, "Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood, and never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done" (Genesis 8:21). Wright (2006:326) remarked that God committed himself to the created order itself and to the preservation of life on the planet. The covenant God made with Noah provided a platform for the ongoing relationship and mission of God throughout the rest of creation's history.

### **2.7.2.3 God's covenant with Abraham**

God made a covenant promise to Abraham that he will be his God and that he will bless him (Gen 12:1-3). Abraham believed the Lord, and God credited it to him as righteousness (Gen 15:6). God revealed himself to Abraham and spoke to him. Abraham reacted to God's revelation through prayer and obedience. Abraham had a living relationship with God and according to Wright (2006:361) was like an intercessor, reasoning with God not to punish his people (Gen18:23). Through prayer Abraham was speaking to his Father and everything was granted to him by God.

Wright (2006:327) indicates that the covenant between God and Abraham is the most significant of all the biblical covenants. From Paul's teaching the dynamic narrative of God's saving purpose for all nations through Abraham is the heart of the gospel as announced by the Scriptures. It was the origin of God's election of Israel, to live in a living relationship which includes communication (prayer), which he would use to bless the nations. This covenant may be said is God's reaction to the problems (disobedience) posed in Genesis 1-11. It shows God's purpose with his creation. He wants the nations, all of creation, to be blessed through the seed of Abraham (Gen 12:3).

The relationship between God and his people gives a perspective on prayer in Africa. It is significant that in the Old Testament there were three so called prime ancestors of Israel, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and they played an important religious role. According to Nurnberger (2007:59), "they were three because three tribal traditions were combined into one story. They were remembered because they were taken to be the "pioneers" with whom Yahweh had entered into a binding relationship. Their memories were historical monuments of the promise of Yahweh to Israel, but they did not function as mediators or religious authorities." They were not feared, consulted, reconciled or given sacrifices. Unlike, as Nyirongo (1997:51) pointed out, that, because

Africans feel unworthy to approach God directly, so, man must therefore present his needs and worship through intermediaries. Whatever worship and the needs he presents are passed on to God and in turn, God sends His favours via the same intermediaries. In order to qualify to be one of the intermediaries, Nyirongo (1997:52) pointed out that, man's "good" spirit can make him to qualify. So, in case of the human spirits, an emphasis is on the good life of the deceased lived whilst "in the flesh" and also, the candidate must receive full funeral rites.

The point of remembering Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was because of the promises Yahweh had made to Abraham and his offspring. It was these promises of Yahweh that was still believed to be binding for his descendants of years later. It is important that instead of being mediators, they worship the Creator of heaven and earth alone. The Israelites related to the living God alone, not to the dead people or lifeless idols. For example, Moses was a prominent mediator not an intermediary, he represented the people before God and also communicated to the people what God had revealed, and he was an intercessor, praying for his people to God. Since the coming of Jesus Christ the Bible teaches us that we do not need any mediators anymore, we may talk directly to God in prayer

Therefore, it is important to understand who God is. He is a missional God who seeks a living relationship with his creation. Looking at the whole history in the Bible of who God is, what he has done for his people, one can conclude that: There is only one God, who made himself known through creation and in the story of Israel. The people knew him as their God but disobeyed him, but he is love, he loved his children. He sends his own Son, Jesus of Nazareth, in fulfilment of his promise to Israel. So, all other god's are false human constructs that do not provide for human needs and cannot achieve human salvation.

#### **2.7.2.4 Father sending his Son, Jesus Christ (the Redeemer)**

The Heidelberg Catechism, Question 15: "What sort of a mediator and deliverer then must we seek for? Answer: For one who is very man, and perfectly righteous; and yet more powerful than all creatures; that is, one who is also very God". According to Kerr (1989:22), he who was to be our mediator must be both true God and true man. In this section a study will be done on how Christ taught his followers to pray and his relationship with his Father through prayer.

#### **2.7.3 Jesus and prayer**

What makes prayer even more essential within missio-Dei is the very fact that Jesus regularly prayed to the Father. Dunn (1992:618) states that prayer was central for Jesus within the much longer rituals, including sacrificial rituals, focused on in the Temple. He calls the Temple a "house

of prayer” (Mt 11:17). Later in the Letter to the Corinthians the believers are called the temple of the Holy Spirit

Jesus was a man of prayer, because he found assurance in prayer, he prayed for his disciples (Jn 17) and gained help in prayer during the passion (Mk 14:35-42; Mt 26:36-46). Lastly in the book of John, Jesus prayer in the raising of Lazarus (11:41-42) convinced those around him of his divine mission (Letsôsa 2006:72). According to Ericson (2001:248), many references of the ministry of Christ stress the revelation which he (Jesus) gave of the Father and heavenly truth. Jesus Christ was called the Messiah particularly with the respect to the offices of his Kingship, as Prophet and as Priest. In other words he was anointed to be a prophet, a king and a priest.

- As a “Prophet”, he reveals the will of the Father and the heavenly truth
- As “King”, he rules over all of creation including the spiritual world
- As a “Priest”, he comes to serve us so that we can be saved.

#### **2.7.3.1 Jesus as a Prophet**

As the anointed Prophet Jesus reveals the will of God in all completeness, no other revelation is needed (Heb. 1). During Jesus’ ministry on earth revealing God, he lived a life of prayer discerning God’s will. It is clear that the relationship between the Father and the Son was one of dialogue, prayer and obedience. John 1:18 said “No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known”. According to Ericson (2004:248), Jesus’ prophetic ministry was more complete than that of other prophets, since he was sent from God. He had come from the very presence of God. His pre-existence with the Father was a major factor in his ability to reveal the will of the Father, for he had been with him. Although he is one with the Father he always prayed to the Father to discern his (the Father’s) will and Jesus was always obedient to the Father not seeking his own will.

#### **2.7.3.2 Jesus as the King**

Jesus the King will rule over the entire universe. In Ps 110:1 David says “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet”. David declares that no enemy will be able to destroy the Church. The King, Jesus, has already overcome every evil might and power (Col 2:14-15). And as eternal anointed King, Jesus will never leave his kingdom, he will provide till the warfare ends, such is his rule which he has received from his Father. “There is a time coming when the reign of Christ will be complete; then all will be under his rule, whether willingly and eagerly, or unwillingly and reluctantly” (Ericson 2001:250), every knee shall bow and every tongue will confess, that Jesus is Lord.

### **2.7.3.3 Jesus as the High Priest**

Jesus Christ is the High priest, who makes our salvation possible through his death in our place. He is the only and final mediator and sacrifice nothing more is needed. According to Kerr (1989:76), his holiness is to reconcile those who believed in him to be reconciled with God. As for him to perform the duties of the High Priest, he had to bring a sacrifice. He gave himself as an sacrifice on the cross taking away all human guilt and reconciling all sins with God (Heb. 9:22). The offering that we need to bring to God now is our worship and prayers.

### **2.7.4 Jesus Christ as the fulfilment of the covenant**

#### **2.7.4.1 Christ as the Mediator**

Man transgressed the command of God and he was banished from the Garden (Gen 3:23). Adam's wicked legacy was the introduction of sin and death to the human race, as well as to the entire creation. Nyirongo (1997:55) writes that because of this wickedness of man, man has been hiding from God whilst God has been trying to get man back into fellowship with himself, so, the second Adam came, the true divine "Son of God", Jesus Christ. In order for him to bring eternal life and to redeem humanity as well as future glory (Guldenhuys 1983:138).

In the Old Testament, there were other mediators and they were significant only because they pointed to Christ, the only mediator. In the Old Testament worship, the men who qualify to be mediators between God and the Jews were typically prophets and priests (Nyirongo 1997:56). Prophets were communicating to the people what God had spoken or revealed and the priests represented man to God (Deut 18-22; Ex 28:1). This shows that mediators were not chosen by the community but by God himself, and Moses became the most prominent mediator, representing the people before God and also communicating to the people what God had revealed.

In the African worldview it seems the intermediaries are in the place of being the mediators. Mediators between people and the spirits, because according to Nyirongo (1997:51), African people, including African Christians, feel unworthy to approach God directly, so, man must therefore present his needs and worship through intermediaries. Whatever worship and the needs he presents are passed on to God and in turn, God sends his favours via the same intermediaries.

Nyirongo (1997:52) tried to differentiate between these intermediaries that range from the "Higher deities" to ordinary spirits and ancestral spirits, the ancestral spirits being the commonest and handy ones. In the visible world, Kings, Chiefs, prophets, priests, medicine men, witch doctors, diviners and mediums may be included. This group is also believed to be capable of tapping the

blessings from the spiritual realm and passing them on to the individual, families or tribe (Nyirongo 1997:52). So, the African prays and offers sacrifices to many intermediaries, not only one. This belief might be one of the reasons why members of the Mainline Mission Churches go to the AICs for special prayer requests. If blessings are lacking, the conclusion is that the intermediaries are angry and investigations must be carried out through diviners, priests, medicine men or mediums to find the cause of their displeasure. Once the cause has been discovered, sacrifices or offerings must be made to appease them.

The African Christians, especially those who are partly Christians and partly ATR in times of difficulty need be aware that there is only one mediator and his name is Jesus Christ, with him humans do not need other mediators or intermediaries. Because Christ:

- Is a better and only mediator because as God, he is sinless and therefore the only one qualified to be a sacrifice for our sins (Heb. 7:6)
- Is a better mediator because he offered his own precious blood (Heb. 9:12), the blood of bulls and lambs cannot be compared to Christ's blood. Christ's blood is more precious because he is sinless.
- Is a better mediator because his blood takes away our sins. In the Old Testament the blood of animals could only cover sins and the sacrifices had to be made again and again, but Christ's blood cleanses us from our sins once and for all.

Jesus is playing a mediatory role as Exalted King and Judge of all mankind. He is High Priest over the house of God, meaning that he has charge over all the affairs of God's Kingdom. All authority and power has been given to him. All the human being needs to exalt him and then will rule with him (Heb. 3:1-6; Eph. 1:20-23; 1 Cor. 15:25).

### **2.7.5 The Father and the Son sending the Holy Spirit**

Previous sections have looked at the work of the members of the Trinity, which is the Father highlighted in the work of creation and providence, the Son as having effected redemption for sinful humanity, now in this section it is important to look at what scripture reveals about the third person of the Trinity, which is the Holy Spirit and the role played by the Holy Spirit in *missio-Dei*.

According to Ericson (2001:270), the study of the Holy Spirit is important, because the Holy Spirit gives the faith to live in a personal relationship with the Trinity. In other words this study of the Holy Spirit should be understood that he is active within the lives of the believers, for he lives in all believers. He is the particular person of the Triune God who works in human beings empowering them with gifts for their ministry in this world. The Holy Spirit should not be confused

with the spirit of man as in the African worldview where for a spirit of man to qualify to be an intermediary that spirit should be a good spirit (Nyirongo 1997:52). It has to be noted here that in the African worldview, in case of the human spirit, emphasis is on the good life the deceased lived whilst “in the flesh”. At the end, if it is good (ancestor) then offerings should be made to this spirit because it can bless the family or protect against evil. But the Holy Spirit is always associated with the revealing truth of God to men (Nyirongo 1997:32).

In John 14:15-17: “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever; the Spirit of Truth”. Jesus is speaking of asking for things, and now he speaks of something that he himself will ask the Father to give believers, namely the Holy Spirit. In Romans 8:26 it shows that “the Spirit helps us in our weakness, we do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.” Ericson (2001:279) refers to the advocate as the “Internality”. In other words an advocate which will be within, dwelling within the centre of the human thinking and emotions. By indwelling in believers the Spirit can lead them into all truth, as Jesus promised (John 16:13-14).

To see how instrumental the Holy Spirit was in the early church, look at the first part of Acts which narrates three manifestations of the Spirit, which is probably linked to prayer. According to Du Plessis (2010:8), all the manifestations in the Acts were accompanied by the phenomenon of speaking in tongues, as well as several other signs. There was the outpouring of the Spirit (Acts 2) as the fulfilment of God’s promise, the manifestation after a prayer when the community was severely threatened (Acts 4), and finally at Cornelius’ as a validation of the conversion of a gentile (Acts 10) and Peter’s reference to it in 11:15-18 and 15:8-11.

People were led by the Holy Spirit in the Church, and that can be witnessed in the whole book of Acts as pointed out above. Even at the sending of Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:2), His guidance is closely linked to worship, fasting and prayer. In the book of Luke we see even Jesus is led/directed into the desert by the Spirit and there he fasted for 40 days (Luke 4:1-2). It is evident that prayer and fasting are usually joined together. We see also that the Holy Spirit was instrumental in Jesus’ temptation episode (Luke 4 1-2), the Spirit descending upon Jesus at his baptism in the image of a dove (Luke 3:7-22), and the start of the Galilean ministry in the power of the Spirit (Luke 4:14). These indicate some form of empowerment when people received the Holy Spirit as an answer to prayer (Luke 11:13; 18:1-8).

It is evident enough to see the work of the Holy Spirit and what he has done in helping his people in seeing signs (miracles) in validating the truth of the gospel message and the empowering of witnesses in the context of persecution (Luke 2:14; 4:8; 7:55), empowering of the community to stay steadfast in the faith, the guiding of the spreading of the message by the followers.

Jesus Christ's life, death and resurrection is the way God created for all people to be saved and to have eternal life. So, through faith in Jesus Christ, God appointed a Saviour and King. People of any nation can now belong to the redeemed people of God, and be found among the righteous when God would intervene again through Jesus in the approaching day of the final judgment (Wright 2006:192).

The important aspect which should be pointed out from the work of the Holy Spirit to the Church in Africa is that the Holy Spirit is always associated with revealing God's truth to man. Without him, all men cannot come to the true knowledge of God. It is the Holy Spirit who gives inspiration to the Scriptures when they were being written, and he reveals them to us as we meditate on them (2 Pet. 1:21). This simply means that before anyone can know God, he/she has to depend on, or listen to the Holy Spirit not to the intermediaries, but to the one who uses the Word to reveal God's will to man. He convinces men of their sin, points them to Christ as the solution.

In the Church, the Holy Spirit empowers believers dispensing His gifts wisely and in sovereignty to whom and when he wants for a life of service. The Church relies upon the Holy Spirit for the revelation in the Word of God and to guide them into his will.

## **2.8 CONCLUSION**

Right from the beginning there is a need to realise that religion and perception of the divine are formed by the worldviews of people. The study above shows the use/view of prayer in the African traditional Religion (ATR) and even in different contextual Christianity's like the African Independent Churches (AIC) and Western Christianity (which will be dealt with in the following chapter), determines the way in which the divine is being perceived.

Because prayer is reported among all African peoples (Mbiti 1969:61), it is important to realise that when they pray their prayers and reveal their wishes, Africans are communicating with God through the medium of the ancestors. This can be done on behalf of the people by, for instance, the traditional healer who advises on how to communicate with the ancestors, depending on the purpose of the communication and the type of ritual that needs to be performed.

The majority of African Christians like the Mainline Mission Churches (MMC) and other Christians address their prayers and invocations to God. But the African Traditional Religion (ATR) and the Traditional African Independent Churches (AIC) address their prayers to the living dead or other spiritual beings many of whom serve as intermediaries. It is clear that in the African Traditional religion, when performing rituals, it always revolves around the intermediaries and not God.

The question needed to be asked is, does worldview influence worship practice and prayer life, especially in the African Christians around the African continent? Secondly, does the African Christians understand prayer, the power of prayer and to whom prayer should be addressed, since they go from church to other mediators? The next chapter will help to understand the importance of prayer, and the meaning within the African context.

## **CHAPTER 3 UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF THE ZION CHRISTIAN CHURCH (ZCC) AND WHETHER PRAYER IS ONE OF THE CHURCH'S MISSION STRATEGIES**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

According to Ramagoshi (2016:24), each year during the Easter holidays members of the Zion Christian church (ZCC) of Bishop Barnabas Lekganyane go in their millions, about 5 million in 2015, to Moria in Polokwane to meet the Bishop to receive blessings and prayers. This is the most important meeting and it comes only once a year during Easter. Members attend this meeting, then after the meeting they feel relieved, new, protected and full of hope as they believe in Boloji "Sorcery" according to Ntsimane (2006:163).

In this regard it can be regarded that prayer plays a major role in the Zion Christian Church (ZCC), for it is believed that God's healing power is achieved through the prayer of the faith healers like the Bishop Engenas Lekganyane. This is one of the main reasons why members of the Church, even non-members, go in numbers to Moria to meet the Bishop. In this chapter the literature will help to understand the role/use of prayer in the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) because it seems prayer plays an important role in the lives of members of the church, so the question, whether it is one of the church's mission strategies?

This chapter will give a short historical background of the early origins of the ZCC, the lives of Bishop Engenas Lekganyane (1880-1948) and Bishop Barnabas Ramarumo Lekganyane (1975) and looking at the worldview of the church (ZCC) will help us to understand the church.

### **3.2 THE FOUNDER OF THE CHURCH (ZCC), BISHOP ENGENAS LEKGANYANE (1880-1948)**

According to Anderson (2000:68), for us to understand and trace the origin of the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) we need to look at the man believed to be the founder of church (ZCC), Ignatius Barnabas Lekganyane. He is also known as Bishop Engenas Lekganyane, the only person, according to Anderson (1999:287), to whom the title Bishop is given and whose hereditary office is for life.

Bishop Engenas Lekganyane was born in Thabakgone in the Mamabolo area which was known as the Northern Province around 1880-1885 (Anderson 1999:287). Many people used to describe Bishop Engenas Lekganyane as Mopedi the son of the late Barnabas Matseleng and Sefora Lekganyane, Sefora was a famous medicine man of Chief Mamabolo (Van Wyk 1973: 852).

Bishop Engenas Lekganyane plays a very important role in the lives of his members. According to De Visser (2011:1), wherever the Bishop went, he was followed by a large crowd of people and his picture adorns the walls of many homes and what is important is his name is still used in the prayers of his followers.

### **3.2.1 The origin of the Church (ZCC)**

According to Peagler (2010:49), everything started after the Bishop Engenas Lekganyane left the AFM. Bishop Engenas Lekganyane started his own church at the village called Thabakgone among the gaMamabolo tribe of Bapedi after he was chased away from the gaMamabolo territory because of differences with the tribal chief.

From the document that was released during the 100th anniversary in 2010, De Visser (2011:2) point out that, it is believed that the church was founded in 1910 by Bishop Engenas Lekganyane. The reason for the Bishop to start a new church was that he had a spiritual experience which he interpreted as a divine call. Anderson (1999: 287), in explaining this spiritual experience the Bishop received said that, the Bishop was praying on the mountain near his home, when he experienced “a revelation by means of a whirlwind that told him that he would be followed by a multitude of people.” Therefore, from that moment the Bishop started functioning as an evangelist, minister and bishop in various churches.

After serving in other churches, Bishop Engenas Lekganyane started his own church and named it the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) (Peagler 2010:49). The name was based on Hebrews 12: 22-23 the “Zion heavenly Jerusalem”, but other scholars like Jenkins (2011:45) point out that the church’s name originated from John Alexander Dowie (1847-1901), the man who “worked in Australia before setting up a shop in Illinois, where he founded Zion City north of Chicago and expected it to become the capital of a Millennial Kingdom.” It is still difficult to understand why the Bishop named his church the Zion Christian Church (ZCC).

Many followers of Bishop Engenas Lekganyane even today believe that God has given all his powers to his chosen prophet, Bishop Engenas Lekganyane (Anderson 1999:291). Bishop Engenas Lekganyane was regarded “as a true kgosi (Chief) ya masione (king of the Zionist), a paramount chief who acted as a mediator between the supernatural and his people and the one who find solutions for his people’s spiritual, social, political and material problems”. To his followers the Bishop was seen as the outstanding charismatic leader known to be an exceptional healer and miracle worker. All kinds of miracles like rain making, good harvests, healing of barren women and employment was ascribed to him (Lukhaimane 1980:62-63).

It is still not clear when Bishop Engenas Lekganyane died. Peagler (2010:49) avowed that Bishop Engenas Lekganyane died in 1947, while Martin (1964:139) suggested the year 1949. Other scholars like Wouters (2014:59) believed that Bishop Engenas Lekganyane died on the 1st of June 1948 ending his ministry of healing.

### **3.3 THE ZIONIST CHRISTIAN CHURCH (ZCC)**

Because of the high volume of people following Bishop Engenas Lekganyane after his death there was a pivotal question regarding which sibling would become the new leader, considering how important Bishop Engenas Lekganyane was to his followers and the role he played in their lives. Bishop Engenas Lekganyane had “three wives and consequently only his first wife’s children were regarded as possible future leaders” (Lukhaimane 1980:11), since the leadership position was inherited because the Zion Christian Church functioned as an African tribe.

In 1935 the Zion Christian Church comprised of 2 000 members and during 1942 the church was officially recognised by the government and by then its membership had grown to 27 487 members. They were divided between 55 congregations situated in Gauteng, the Northern Cape, Zimbabwe and Botswana (Anderson 1999:270). It was a great shock to members of the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) to find that the oldest son, Barnabas, of the late Bishop Engenas Lekganyane died only seven months after his father’s death. This was before the one year traditional mourning period for his father Bishop Engenas Lekganyane was completed (Van Wyk 1973: 857).

After Barnabas’s funeral, Joseph (his son) gathered his own followers and he took over the existing Zion City as his headquarters after the traditional year of mourning. He named his church the St Engenas Zion Christian Church adding his father’s name. His followers referred to themselves as the people of healing and retained the original badge but added the well-known dove emblem. There was another group of members who were not with Joseph, but following the official mourning period for the Bishop Engenas Lekganyane this group of members asked Edward (Joseph’s older brother) to return to the Boyne area and established his own Zion Christian Church with the new Zion City Moria. Edward did as he was asked by this group of members who were not with Joseph and started the new Zion Christian Church (ZCC) with letters that are engraved on the badge which is pinned onto a circular black piece of cloth and again onto a rectangular dark piece of cloth. Even though there were two Churches, one for Joseph (“leebana”, dove) and the one for Edward (ZCC) it should be noted that there are similarities in practices and in beliefs.

After a few years Edward died of a sudden heart attack sometime in October 1967, by then there were about 80 000 registered members (Schlosser 1985:197). When he died it was not clear how many wives Edward had, but a Drum Magazine (1971:10) article indicated that Edward had at least 23 wives. Before Edward died he chose Barnard as his successor and everybody in the house was aware of it (Mathebula 2002: 65). Edward changed Barnabas' name to Ramarumo which means "Father of Spears" according to Hanekom (1975:45) and he succeeded Edward after his death.

When Edward died Ramarumo was 15 yrs old and the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) was governed by superintendents until he came of age. In 1968 at the Easter Conference of the Zion Christian Church, the general council confirmed Ramarumo as the new Bishop of the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) although he could only become the official leader after his 21st birthday in 1975. By then it was estimated by the 2001 census report that the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) had more than 4 million members (Van der Merwe 1985: 22-23). Because of this huge number, the Zion Christian Church was regarded as the largest African indigenous Church in Southern Africa with an estimated membership of about 20 million.

### **3.4 THE ZION CHRISTIAN CHURCH'S WORLDVIEW (ZCC)**

According to Lukhaimane's (1980:62-63) description of the Zion Christian Church (ZCC), it is clear that healing the sick is one of their most important ministries, and this is one of the reasons why many people are joining the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) as a result of sickness and misfortune. According to Peagler (2010:209), the worldview of the African can be regarded as the worldview of the Zion Christian Church (ZCC).

In Saayman (2014:408), the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) is described as one of the Indigenous African Churches that combines Christianity with some elements of Traditional African beliefs. Looking at the whole Zion Christian Church ministry of healing and their respect for the traditional African religious belief regarding the powers of the ancestors, gives the impression that the worldview of the Zion Christian Church is to maintain the phenomenological aspects of the African Culture in receiving healing and protection from bad spirits and freedom from misfortune (Oosthuizen 1971: 10).

An observation when attending one Zion Christian Church's main service on Sunday 16 March 2014, is that there are several structures that have been created within the church to provide prayer and communion forums or settings for members and non-members. These structures are as follows and they will be discussed in detail: Mokhukhu, Mpogo, Female choir, male choir, brass band, and Nkedi. All these structures seem to be used for healing purposes and the role of prayer

is easily seen. In this Chapter the main focus will be on the nature of healing and the role/use of prayer in these structures that are created to meet the needs of members and non-members of the Zion Christian Church (ZCC).

#### **3.4.1 The main service at the Zion Christian Church (ZCC), Tlhabologo village.**

According to observations at the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) main service on Sunday, 16 March 2014, the researcher realised that the main service is attended by a large number of people - members and non-members of the Church. Members of the Church wear their official Zion Christian Church (ZCC) attire and men dress in green or khaki uniforms and women in green and yellow attire or blue choir dresses. Visitors and some members are allowed to wear their personal clothes.

The service began at about 14:30 and concluded at 16:30, but most of the people, especially members, arrived from 13:00 onwards with some visitors coming earlier and members and non-members of the church had to undergo the cleansing ritual at the gate before entering the church grounds. It is believed that water cleans them and takes all the evil spirits out.

A senior Moruti (Minister) started the service by asking the female choir to stand and sing and then asked another moruti to open with a prayer. What was so interesting when the service began was to be welcomed and made to feel free even as non-members of the church. After this, the senior moruti initiated a communal prayer and this prayer is a personal prayer and the names of Bishop Engenas Lekganyane, Kgomo (cow), kgosi (King), are often referred to in the prayer. At the end there followed the Lord's Prayer by all of the congregation. It was very interesting to see all the attendants including this researcher personally going down on their knees with faces to the floor and praying together the Lord's Prayer. At the end of praying the Lord's Prayer the leading moruti (minister) said, kgotso (peace), to which the people responded by saying "A e ate" (may it spread) or some said Amen. It must be noticed that the Lord's Prayer is an essential part of the worship service.

Kiernam (1985:95), in trying to explain the reason for a communal prayer, pointed out that during the process of praying together as a church (communal prayer) "power" is generated by a communal prayer and its source is the Holy Spirit. While attending the Church service, when the communal prayer was said, the power, in the togetherness in that moment could be felt, but because there were some names who were called or referred to during the prayer, it was like members were asking help from someone somewhere. Peagler (2010:9) and De Visser (2011:1) pointed out that members of the Zion Christian Church (ZCC), according to the Church's teachings, are encouraged to pray in the name of Bishop Barnabas Ramarumo Lekganyane. This

brought the researcher to the conclusion that it is perceived that (all) the help comes from the Bishop himself. This is why members are encouraged to pray in the name of Bishop Lekganyane as the one who plays a major role in their life through prayer.

After the communal prayer and the Lord's Prayer, the baruti will sit down on their chairs on their platforms dressed in their green attire, khaki attire or their personal attire. One of the baruti will now start preaching to the attendees who listen to the whole of the baruti because all of them are given a chance to preach one after the other. The researcher realised that the sermon is related to the sickness, diseases or natural events like failing of crops and sin. The whole congregation is encouraged to repent from their actions and submit to God and to the Church's teachings.

During the sermon there were prophets moving amongst the attendees calling whoever they want. According to De Visser (2011:4), prophets or seers of the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) are regarded or are believed to be the ones who receive revelation from the Holy Spirit or from the ancestor spirits which enable them to predict events known to be the cause of illnesses and prescribed instructions for healing. Therefore, during the service, prophets will move in between attendees summoning those in need of divine healing regardless of the procedures that are in progress. In other words prophets have authority to act at any time by calling on individuals to a spontaneous prophesying session. They then give out a prescription for treatment (Ditaelo) and send them back to the ministers (Baruti) for a prayer. The Baruti will tell them what to do with the prescriptions. Some of the prescriptions could be to buy products outside the gate at the stands or at the administrative offices. It can be products like coffee or Vaseline and all these products will have to be prayed over by the minister (baruti) and be prepared according to the given prescriptions (Ditaelo). The person could be asked to stay at the Holy City for a specific period of time, to join Mokhukhu or a female choir of the Church.

After the sermon and the work of the prophets those who want to be baptised in the Zion Christian Church will be called to come forward. The minister (baruti) will pray for them and they will be taught the church's teachings after they have been told they will be baptised. It was interesting to see how some of the non-members decided to be baptised in the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) after their consultation with the prophets or seers.

#### **3.4.2 The role of Mokhukhu in the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) during the main service**

During the visit to the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) in Tlhabologo Village, before the church service started a group of young and old men were dancing or worshipping together. This group of young and old man wearing khaki attire are called Bana ba Mokhukhu "Men sing and dance in a group setting". In trying to explain Mokhukhu, Moripe (2004:2) pointed out that mokhukhu is a

form of dance that is executed during worship in the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) during a church service or before the church service.

Little has been documented about the Mokhukhu dance, but it is believed that it helps in delivering from oppression of evil spirits and a source of healing as it penetrates into the being of the person who worships. During worship in Mokhukhu there is a senior member who holds the walking stick in his hand and a whip in his other hand. This person will dance in front or in the middle of the formation/ group. It is believed that this walking stick and the whip should be prayed over first by the Bishop Ramarumo Engenas Lekganyane himself before it can be used. Not anyone can hold that walking stick except the senior member who has been chosen by a minister or prophets and it is believed, according to Anderson (1980:67), that this sanctified walking stick and the whip are used to protect members against misfortune.

It can be regarded that the prophets or the ministers can encourage the person who is ill or having some problems to join the Mokhukhu as one of the healing processes.

#### **3.4.3 The role of “Mpogo” in the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) during the main service**

It is not easy to understand the meaning of Mpogo. According to Lebeloane, “Mopogo” is a ritual prayer song which is normally sung when there are issues that need to be addressed by the Church, If a member feels there are some bad spirits in his/her house and they cannot sleep at night then the prescription will be given to sing Mpogo for the whole weekend. Or if a member’s business is not in a good position then a ritual prayer “Mpogo” is needed to help a member with a business.

This song can be sung, but what is strange is that the words of this song are simply “Mpogo” and nothing more. In this regard “Mpogo” can be regarded as a ritual song without words but important in the healing process in the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) during the main service and also in the lives of members of the Church.

### **3.5 CONCLUSION**

Everything in the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) started with a prayer. Bishop Engenas Lekganyane, a former member of the Zion Apostolic faith mission was praying on the mountain near his home when suddenly he experienced a revelation by means of a whirlwind and was told that he would be followed by multitudes of people.

After he left the AFM, Bishop Engenas Lekganyane (ZCC) started his own church at the village called Thabakgone among the gaMamabolo tribe of Bapedi in 1910, the reason being told that he will be followed by many people. A charismatic leader who believed that he was chosen by

God on the mountain, known to be a unique leader and miracle worker to whom all kinds of miracles like rain making, good harvests, healing of barren women and employment was ascribed. It is believed that he is a mediator between the supernatural and his people, the one who finds solutions for his people's spiritual, social, political and material problems.

It can be regarded that prayer in a communal prayer (personal) and the prophets' prayer plays an important role in the ministry of healing in the Zion Christian Church (ZCC). What should be researched further are the names like "Kgomo", "Kgosi" "Lekganyane" that are been referred to in the prayers especially during a communal prayer and the reason why members of the Zion Christian Church are being encouraged to use the name of Bishop Engenas Lekganyane in their prayers.

Therefore, it is evident from the study above that, prophets or seers are playing an important role in prayer and also in the whole church ministry of healing. The reason being they have received the revelation from the Holy Spirit or spirits from ancestors and prescribed instructions for healing, which can force the sick to join the church with his/her whole family.

Mokhukhu is important for members and non-members of the church for it is believed to deliver a person from the oppression of evil spirits and a source of healing. Together with "Mpogo", a ritual prayer song, which is sung when there is an issue like bad spirits that needs to be addressed by the Zion Christian Church (ZCC).

Therefore, it can be regarded that communal and prophets' prayers referring to the names "Kgomo", "Kgosi" and Lekganyane play an important role in the healing ministry of the Zion Christian Church. Therefore, in this regard a communal prayer with much focus on the following names "Kgomo" "Kgosi" and Lekganyane and lying on of hands by the Prophets and receiving revelation from the spirits at the end prescribing the instructions can be regarded as one of the church's mission strategies.

Mpogo, a ritual prayer song, and Mokhukhu, can be regarded as structures that are being put to address the character of the African peoples.

## CHAPTER 4 CHARACTERISTICS OF PRAYER IN MATTHEW 6: 9-13

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will give attention to the question: What are the characteristics of the Lord's Prayer in Matt 6: 9-13 that may guide the dialogue about prayer between the MMCs and the AICs? As indicated in the previous chapter, prayer is a sacrosanct subject. It has been strongly revealed that in the study of faith (and mission), prayer is a neglected theme (Peter 1958: 67). Because it is a neglected theme it becomes most often misused (Klopper 2013:196) or misunderstood by different religions or non-religious people around the world. Sander (1977:11) indicates the Lord's Prayer is a topic that can be explored and when carefully studied some misconceptions can be dispelled.

Haemig (2015:22) considers the Lord's Prayer as the very best of all prayers, because the Lord Jesus Christ is the author. Botha (2010:42) regards the Lord's Prayer as a significant summary of the teaching of Jesus Christ, and contains the essence of all his preaching and outlines what God has promised in showing his people how faith responds (Felde 2015:66). The Lord's Prayer is generally accepted as an example for Christian prayer. Many scholars like John Calvin (1509-1564) referred to it as a "prescribed form", Martin Luther (1483-1546) called it a "Brief formula" for prayer, and Matthew Henry (1662-1714) described it is a method for praying.

The Lord's Prayer is the core prayer of the Church and it is prayed mutually or independently almost every Sunday in worship services. According to Mmualefe (2011:63), the theme of the Lord's Prayer is the building of the "Basileia", meaning the "Kingdom" of God. The Kingdom of God is based on love and mutual care for one another. The Basileia is also one of the important resolutions of the *missio- Dei*.

The Lord's Prayer takes one who is praying near to the Father according to Murray (1981:27). Greenway (1999:88) indicates being near to the Father, makes the person who sincerely prays hungry to see God praised and worshipped everywhere on earth. In other words, the Lord's Prayer calls those who pray to realise that it is a missionary act and to accept that they are being chosen for God's mission to accept all that it entails (French 2002:18). It is a life with and for God.

The Lord's Prayer, as found in Matt 6:9-13, occupies quite a prominent place within the body of the Sermon on the Mount (Lanier 1992:58). In other words, it occurs in the body of the Sermon on the Mount, within the larger context of the behaviour commanded of citizen's in the Kingdom of God. The people (followers of Christ) were being warned or made to understand that they

should not be as hypocrites by praying in public. They are to live a faithful life of obedience, love, forgiveness and service as proclaimed in this sermon.

When praying the Lord's Prayer one has to be reminded that all is to the Father (God), creator of heaven and earth, to the one whose holiness is wholly other and who seeks the transformation of the world through righteousness and justice. Believers praying the Lord's Prayer with the mind of Jesus (Phil 2:5) will be aligning themselves with the holiness of God and a life of faith in Christ. Felde (2015:66) says it is to have a total life of faith in God, because it (prayer) also indicates what God has promised through showing his people how faith responds. At the end, Beveridge (2008:564) states clearly that when praying the Lord's Prayer the person is busy penetrating to those riches which are treasured up for the heavenly Father, the Heavenly who is immanently, intimate, and yet transcendent, the creator and the sustainer of all life. Therefore, prayer is faith that is being put into words.

Looking at the Lord's Prayer as a whole, according to Beveridge (2008:591), God's boundless goodness can be seen (Matt 6:9; Luke 11:2). The core theological and ethical beliefs that drove Jesus and that must drive Jesus' followers if they are to participate in God's mission to the world of God's love can be found. Felde (2015:66) considers the Lord's Prayer consisting of two divisions and those two divisions bear a striking resemblance to the two great commandments as Jesus enumerated them: "You shall love God your God" and "You shall love your neighbour as yourself" (Matt 22:37-39).

According to Beveridge (2008:592), the Lord's Prayer is divided into six petitions. The first three petitions summarise the deepest and ultimate goal of mission: "Hallowed be thy Name", "Thy kingdom come", "Thy will be done on earth as in heaven" (Matt 6:9-10), which clearly state all the Glory to God alone. The three remaining petitions, according to Beveridge (2008:592), are devoted to things which are useful to ask.

Felde (2015:69) considers that praying the first three petitions is to say to the Father in heaven "Be God to us", it is in replying to God's request to allow him to be our God, in our thoughts, words and deeds. The second set of petitions presents the overarching grand petition to the Father in heaven, "Be good to us" (Felde 2015:69). In other words, "God bless us", "take care of us", "give us life", or "protect us" and "give us your peace".

Therefore, the content and interpretations of the Lord's Prayer can also be studied from an African perspective (worldview) as it had become the distinguishing prayer for Christians including African Christians in Africa, and it is part of almost all worship services across the world.

## 4.2 THE STRUCTURE OF THE LORD'S PRAYER

Looking at the exact content of the Lord's Prayer, it is important to realise it is not a law or a mantra that has to be repeated to be effective (Bosch 1983:8). It does not have to be treated as a magic prayer formula or as if it has some ritual powers. Rather it should be treated as encouragement to pray, "a guide to be followed without being bound to this or that wording" (Schweizer 1978:147). Every word, every expression has a meaning.

Bosch (1983:8) gives us a structural analysis to "underline the fact that each phrase in the prayer is a vital and necessary part of the total mosaic and should therefore receive due attention". According to Bosch (1983:4), many scholars have pointed out that the Gospel of Matthew is a masterpiece that is written in a special way and is different from the other gospels in several respects. It is evident enough for readers to understand and to know that the Gospel of Matthew contains five quite long "sermons" or "discourses", each of which is preceded and followed by an equally long narrative or "story".

Bosch (1983:4), in analysing the content of the Gospel of Matthew, found "a total of eleven main sections five of these being discourses, the other six narratives". These eleven sections are arranged in such a way that Chapter 13, the sixth section focusing on the Kingdom of God is the centre around which the other ten are arranged. According to Bosch (1983:5), the five "sermons" or "discourses" in Matthew can perhaps be referred to as:

- The Sermon on Discipleship popularly known as the Sermon on the Mount. (Chapter 5-7).
- The Sermon on the apostolic mission (Chapter 10).
- The Sermon on how the kingdom comes (Chapter 13).
- The Sermon on church discipline (Chapter 18).
- The Sermon on false teachers and on the end (Chapter 23-25)".

We find the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9-13, within the Sermon on the Mount, within the bigger background of the behaviour instructed to each citizen in God's Kingdom. Those who pray realise that when they pray they should not pretend but they should pray in secret and the Father, who knows everything will reward them in public (Lanier 1992:58). In the Gospel of Luke the Lord's Prayer is found in Luke 11:2-4, just after Luke 10 where Jesus sent out the seventy two and in the rest of Luke 10 he also teaches about discipleship. Klopper (2013:72) indicates that these two books "are preceded by Q's, translation in Greek. In both Luke and Matthew the prayer is built up

by six petitions, three 'you-prayers' and three 'we-prayers'". The version in Matthew is longer than that of Luke. The doxology in Matthew was added at the end and there are some additions in the address. "The third you-petition and the deliver us-petition in the third we-petition. The shorter text in Luke is regarded as the older of the two" (Klopper 2013:72). A version which corresponds largely to that of Matthew is Didache 8; 2 a second century manual of the Church (Bosch 1985:7).

It is in the Didache or the teaching of the Apostles, where the Lord's Prayer is indicated as the unique prayer for Christ followers of that time. According to Jeremias (1964:4), it was an honour to be allowed to pray the Lord's Prayer in public. According to Adeyemo et al. (2006:1122), the principles of prayer were an important part of Jewish religious life, devoted Jews prayed three times a day: at dawn, midday and dusk (Dan 6:10; Acts 3:1). Stendhal (1980:74) writes that, the Lord's Prayer in the gospel of Matthew and in the early church served "the function of a kind of distinguishing creed that bestows unity and identity on the group." Sometimes it is used in the same way in Africa. The Lord's Prayer also became to them the representation of their new life in Christ as citizens of God's kingdom. In the African traditional view where a crisis is viewed as a disturbance of the relationships within the clan/family, prayer (and rituals) will then be necessary to restore these relations. The structure of the Lord's Prayer is as follows (Bosch 1985:8):

#### 4.2.1 The Lord's Prayer Matthew 6:9-13

##### OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN

- 
- A 1. Your Name be hallowed
  - B 2. Your Kingdom come
  - C 3. Your will be done on earth as in heaven
  - D 4. Give us this day our daily bread
  - C 5. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors
  - B 6. And lead us not into temptation
  - A 7. But deliver us from evil

In the structure above, according to Bosch (1985:8), the first petition is linked to the last (the seventh), the second to the sixth, the third to the fifth, whereas the fourth petition constitutes the

centre of the entire prayer”. Understanding the whole structural analysis, it is realised that each word in the prayer is an important part of the prayer with specific meaning and should therefore receive due attention.

Mmualefe (2011:62) noted that, the Lord’s Prayer starts with the word “Father” and it is key to realise calling God our “Father” established the relationship that makes the rest of the prayer possible and a departure from being subject to any other authority in recognition of God as the only authority. It is very important also to realise that according to the Heidelberg Catechism’s (Sunday 46) answer 120, “God has become our Father through Christ and will much less deny us what we ask of him in faith than our Father would refuse us earthly things”. It is important to realise that the Lord’s Prayer is prayed not only to the creator God, as is done in ATR but to the Trinitarian God as revealed in Scripture.

#### **4.2.1.1 “Hallowed be thy Name” (vv. 9) “ἁγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου”**

According to Watson (1985:30), “Hallowed be thy Name” in Latin the words are, “Sanctificater Nomen tuum”, meaning “Sanctified be thy name”. Smith (2007:4) indicated that the word hallowed comes from the Greek word “hagiazō” meaning “sanctify”, “make holy”, therefore, in this petition God’s name has to shine forth gloriously, and may be honoured and sanctified. Watson (1985:30) pointed out that this petition also embedded in the forefront of prayer to indicate that before anything else God’s name must be sanctified.

The Heidelberg Catechism Lord’s day 47, Question 122’s, answer: “teach us that, the most important thing is that we may rightly know God, and sanctify, glorify, and praise him in all thy works, in which shine forth his almighty power, wisdom, goodness, righteousness, mercy, and truth. It also grants the Christians to direct their whole lives, thoughts, words, and actions that God’s Name should not be blasphemed but always be honoured and praised”. Mmualefe (2011:63) added by saying, whenever we say these words “Hallowed be thy name” we need to recognise that God’s name has something special that needs recognition and praise. It simply means, according to Murray’s (1953:28) point of view that in true worship the Father must be first. They who worship God, has to learn to forget themselves so that God may be glorified.

“Surely the use of God’s name and other verbiage conveying spiritual reality (heaven, hell) should not be used lightly or in a manner that contradicts biblical teaching” (Smith 2007:4). Therefore, praying this clause reminds everyone that we have not been called to build or defend our own name, but to glorify and sanctify God’s name. It should be clear especially to the African Christians and churches around the African continent that in saying this clause “Hollowed be thy name” one is committing himself/herself to live to glorify the honour of the Trinitarian God as he reveals

himself in Scripture. The implications are that the life of the one praying this prayer must convert to a life as is expected from the citizens of the Kingdom. Living in union with Jesus Christ and from the redemption of Christ is to sanctify the Name of God.

The importance of a name within the African worldview is very important, especially when it comes to the honouring of the family name through continuous remembrance. This leads to many rituals and customs in Africa.

#### **4.2.1.2 “Thy Kingdom come” (VV.10) “ἐλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου”**

According to Smith (2007:5) and Roussakis (2007:1), the words “Thy kingdom come” “involves three dimensions: Submission of our hearts to his authority, the reaction of the world by fearing God’s glory through people’s testimonies and the anticipation of God’s ultimate reign on earth”. Bosch (1983:16) understands the words “Thy Kingdom Come” as the rule of God over Israel as King, but also God’s rule as King over all the nations, and all of creation. Mmualefe (2011:63) uses the Greek word “βασιλεία”, meaning “God’s rule”. Praying for the consummation of the rule instated in Jesus’ first introduction, and the Basileia “Kingdom” of God which is based on love and mutual care for one another.

In explaining the words “Thy Kingdom Come”, Schulze (2011:163) indicates that it is nobody’s kingdom, but God’s Kingdom. From Lanier’s (1992:59) view, our Lord Jesus Christ “first concern is for the reputation of God the Father, for his Kingdom to be established and for his will to be accomplished upon the earth.” The Heidelberg Catechism Lord’s day 48, answer 124 teaches us, “God rules us by his Word and Spirit that we more and more submit to him. Preserve and increase his church. Destroy the works of the devil, every power that raises itself against him, and every conspiracy against his holy Word. Do all this until the fullness of his kingdom comes, wherein he shalt be all in all”.

African Churches with an African worldview should look at both the biblical view and the African worldview on the meaning of the word “Thy Kingdom Come”, it is not to be misunderstood. A more comprehensive study of the African worldview concerning the kingdom will be dealt in the following chapter.

In praying this petition, one has to be reminded that the ultimate and glorious kingdom is still to come. But for now it includes the growing of the church and the destroying of the work of the evil one.

#### 4.2.1.3 “Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven” (vv. 10) “γενηθήτω τὸ θέλημά σου, ὡς ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς”

According to Smith (2007:7), this petition continues the leitmotif of the preceding two petitions, which express the goal for God to be adored amongst his people. This petition consists of two parts, according to Watson (1985:31), firstly, it is the “matter” to do God’s will and secondly the “manner”, the how, as it is in heaven. Watson (1985:31) also added that there are also two views on the will of God. The first one is “Voluntas decreti” God’s secret will, and the second “Voluntas revelanta”, meaning God’s revealed will, as in Scripture, which is his Word and a declaration of his will.

According to Bosch (1983:19), the reference to God’s “will” is referred to more in the Gospel of Matthew than in Luke or Mark. Grundmann (1965:201) indicates this reference of God’s will in Matthew is in fact a central concern to Matthew. Therefore, “Thy will be done in earth” has two meanings; first, active obedience to the commands of God’s will. Second, passive obedience, one should patiently surrender to God’s will in what he imposes (Watson 1985:120).

The Heidelberg Catechism Lord’s day 49, question 124’s answer teaches us that “we and all men may deny our own will, and without any murmuring obey his will, for it alone is good, and also that everyone may carry out the duties of his office and calling as willingly and faithfully as the angels in heaven”.

African Christians still believe that, “life is life in community there is no other possible life” (Nurnberger 2007:23). Therefore, the life of the clan is determined by the ancestors who constitute an individual’s actual life and not God. This means that in the African worldview, ancestors are the principal religious help of the living, “they make their will known and express their displeasure in the form of droughts, barrenness or other mishaps in the lives of their descendants” (Nurnberger 2007:29). The implication is that ancestors in their mediation to the Supreme Being can influence the powers of the universe, therefore God the Creator is viewed as absent from this world.

The word “will” should be understood according to the African worldview also so that African Christians in the African continent should understand the meaning of the word from the biblical perspective. This will be dealt in the next chapter.

Therefore, it really shows that the word “thy will” commits Christians to a personal obedience to God’s will and not any other god. Believers are instruments of God when living according to the reality of the Kingdom. The prayer of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26:36-46) is a profound parallel to the petition of God’s will. Jesus, suffering in Gethsemane, should remind

everyone that it is an integral part of a Christian's lifestyle to look for the will of God rather than their own (Bosch 1983:19).

#### **4.2.1.4 “Give us this day our daily bread”. (vv.11) “τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον δὸς ἡμῖν σήμερον”**

Within the words “Give us this day our daily bread” two things can be observed in this petition, the order and the matter. According to Watson (1985:156), looking at the words from the beginning, “Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, Give us this day our daily bread”, to seek God's glory is more important and must be preferred before our deepest concerns. Bosch (1983:21) pointed out the turning point in the Lord's Prayer. In the first part the prayer is focussed on God, but now the focus is on “us” his followers, his children. Grundmann (1968:205) and Lohmeyer (1965:159,274) are of the view that the fourth petition forms the core of the Lord's Prayer.

Lohmeyer (1965:157) continues to say “this petition is the threshold leading from the kingdom of the longed for consummation to the realm of present human need.” In other words, God wants his children to be concerned not only with him and spiritual affairs but also with his involvement with their physical concerns and needs. Lanier (1992:60) observes two important things, one it is the first time that Jesus is also praying for himself and two, he prayed for necessity, not for abundance. This petition is “an appeal to God to continue to act in a way consistent with God's nature (righteousness) and human need” (French 2002:23). The importance of these comments needs to be emphasised or understood, by the Mainline Mission Churches in Africa. Especially in South Africa the Mainline Mission Churches needs to understand the African worldview of its members. .

Crucial to this petition is to understand the Greek word “epiousios” “daily”. Morning prayers were offered for the needs of the new day and evening prayers were offered for the needs of the next day. The prayer expresses humanity's reliance on God the Father to provide for all his children's needs. Therefore, it can be said that prayer means to pray for what is necessary for existence as mentioned by Lanier (1992:61). The Heidelberg Catechism Lord's day 49, question 124 points out that it “provide us with all our bodily needs so that we may acknowledge that Thou art the only fountain of all good, and that our care and labour, and also his gifts, cannot do us any good without his blessing. Grant therefore that we may withdraw our trust from all creatures, and place it only in him alone”.

From an African worldview many African Christians still hold on the thought that, community life is centred on the ancestors, not on God. Ancestors provide the security and stability to the whole

community, and if anyone in the community ignores the ancestors' will, he/she shall have all sorts of misfortunes (Nyirongo 1997:140). African Christians and churches in Africa should understand this petition as to recognise God as the source that sustains life and provides it with joy and purpose (French 2002:23). The word "bread" in the petition might symbolise the most basic food that humans cannot do without (Lev. 26:5; Ps. 146:7; Prov. 30:8; Eccles. 9:7). It can be said that the word "bread" in the Lord's Prayer stands for basic or essential food, and as we see in the Bible, the word also related to water (Deut. 9:9), clothing (Deut. 10: 18), oils (Ps. 104:15) and wine (Eccles. 9:7, Ps. 104:15). Therefore, this petition expresses absolute dependence of humanity upon God to keep and sustain physical and spiritual life.

**4.2.1.5 "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors". (vv.12) "καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν, ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν"**

The previous petition and this one are the requests for basic needs in the life of a follower, and "as we forgive" is a "pledge" to participate in meeting the needs of others. It really shows that forgiveness is a key idea in this petition. In explaining the word "forgiveness", Bosch (1983: 26) gives us examples of the centrality of forgiveness in the ministry of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. For us to understand what the word forgiveness means we need to understand the categories of sinners in Jesus time. Bosch (1983:26) indicates the following three categories "The Jews, who could always count on God's mercy and forgiveness. The second group is the Gentiles, who could come to Israel's God but without much hope of being heard and forgiven; And [the third group] the Jews who had become like Gentiles, Prostitutes, Lepers, Tax collectors."

The Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 50, question 126, teaches us that, "for the sake of Christ's blood, do not impute to us, wretched sinners any of our transgressions, nor the evil which still clings to us, as we also find this evidence of his grace in us that we are fully determined whole heartedly to forgive our neighbour". Therefore, the entire people like the ones above who were lost (sinners), and had no claim on God's mercy were being liberated from their debts. This makes the reason more understandable why the Gospel of Matthew is called the good news, because God is seen as God of all people and the Messiah who liberates people from their debts and relieves them from their burdens (Boff 1983:92-93).

Therefore, this prayer is offered by people who know God's mercy through Christ. People who are authorised to call God, Abba, through their redemption in Christ and the faith the Holy Spirit worked in them and people who have already received forgiveness. African Christians on the African continent need to understand that this petition teaches us that, one will realise that a person cannot pay his/her own debts. In this instance "debts" do not refer to some aspects of a person's life, but to a person in totality.

#### 4.2.1.6 “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil”. (vv.13) “καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν”

Jesus taught his disciples in Gethsemane, “watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation” (Matt 26:41; Mark 14:38), “being a similarity to the Lord’s Prayer, this language implies that “peirasmos”, unaccompanied by vigilance and prayer, can lead to spiritual or moral failure” (Smith 2007:8). Therefore, this petition may be viewed as a petition for the Lord’s protection from circumstances that might lead believers to sin. Watson (1985:207) indicates this petition has two focusses. The first focus is, “deprecatory”, “leads us not into temptation”. The second focus is: “petitionary”, “but deliver us from evil”. The question we often hear people asking is: “Does God lead us into temptation?” the answer to the question is, “For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone” (Jam 1:13).

The Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 52, question 127 teaches us that, “in ourselves we are so weak that we cannot stand even for a moment. Moreover, our sworn enemies, the devil, the world, and our own flesh do not cease to attack us. Will God, therefore, uphold and strengthen us by the power of his Holy Spirit, so that in this spiritual war we may not go down to defeat, but always firmly resist our enemies, until we finally obtain the complete victory”.

For, us to understand these two petitions Bosch (1983:32) pointed out that, these “two petitions parallel each other in every detail” and gives us the following structure to understand it better:



As we look into the structure, both verbs indicate to movement in opposite directions from A to B or B to A “leading into” and “rescuing from”. The first is a prayer not to be led by any temptations from outside that will take us outside God’s will. The second movement is a cry out in sorrow to keep us from the evil one (Bosch 1983:32).

The plea, “lead us not into temptation”, refers to something other than the testing of faith. In praying the Lord’s Prayer, one has to know that this petition says: “When temptations come, God gives me strength”. So this petition warns against spiritual bravado (boasting). The Heidelberg Catechism describes it as follows: “that is, since we are so weak in ourselves, that we cannot stand a moment; and besides this, since our mortal enemies, the devil, the world, and our own flesh, cease not to assault us, do thou therefore preserve and strengthen us by the power of thy Holy Spirit, that we may not be overcome in this spiritual warfare, but constantly and strenuously

may resist our foes, till at last we obtain a complete victory". Within the context of African spirituality it is important to note the remark of spiritual warfare.

According to Bosch (1983:34) the verb is usually translated as "deliver" which literally means to "rescue" or "snatch away". In this petition the "evil is regarded not as an idea but as a reality according to Bosch (1983:34).

#### **4.2.1.7 Doxology "for yours are the kingdom and the power and the glory forever"**

The last words of the Lord's Prayer are "For yours are the kingdom and the glory forever, Amen" a doxology. The doxology does not appear in the original version of the Lord's Prayer, neither in Matthew nor in Luke. The Doxology is only found in the Didache as a later addition and since then the doxology was added when praying the Lord's Prayer.

According to Bosch (1983:37), the inclusion of the doxology in the gospel of Matthew indicates the way in which Matthew concludes his Gospel. The Heidelberg Catechism (Answer 128), describes it: "All this we ask of Thee because, as our King, having power over all things Thou art both willing and be able to give us all that is good, and because not we but Thy holy Name should so receive all glory forever".

### **4.3 CONCLUSION**

We have looked at the words and structure of the Lord's Prayer and determined that every word has a meaning. Bosch (1983:8) gives us a structure, for everyone to understand the meaning of all the petitions. In many Christian communities on the African continent, and all over the world, where the Lord's Prayer is prayed regularly in worship services it is taken for granted that everyone who prays this prayer is aware of the full meaning of each of the petitions of the prayer. If Christians in Africa understand the full meaning of the Lord's Prayer it might impact their lives and world views in different ways, especially those who utilise it in personal and public devotions.

When praying the Lord's Prayer, Christians are not simply repeating the prayer Jesus prayed, but they are in a way confirming the beliefs contained within the prayer.

The first three petitions revolving around the concerns of God are both contrasted with and linked to the last three petitions that hold human concerns up before God. These two sets of petitions are structured around the petition for our daily bread as a hinge between the spiritual (God's world) and physical (human world).

Bread in its double meaning of people's physical needs which links it to the second set of petitions, and of a people's worshipping of God, that with Christ's wounds they were healed, they were

confirmed children of God. “Despite the undeniable differences between the two sets, they are intimately linked to each other, for God’s name is hallowed now, his kingdom begins to come now and his will is done now, with that people receive what they need from God and are forgiven by him, are enabled to withstand temptation, lastly they are delivered from the evil one” (Schweizer 1978:158). This world, with its three fold powers of debt, temptation and the evil one, has been overcome.

Understanding the context when Jesus is praying this prayer one realises that prayer is not a way to manipulate God into fulfilling anybody’s wishes. Rather the one who prays must submit and convert into a servant of God. Prayer may also be viewed as to actively participate in the *missio-Dei* (that is to praise and adore) and to actively wait on God to answer (that is to petition and intercede).

We may say that, as Roussakis (2007:3) indicated, that the Lord’s Prayer contains a specific understanding of Christian belief. God is worshipped as the Creator, Sustainer and Redeemer of all humans. Praying the Lord’s Prayer may also be viewed as a confession of faith. Prayer in African Tradition should be investigated, whether it is understood only as worship, or is it also a confession of faith? Chapter 5 will look at how, the African Traditional religion views prayer.

All Christians should be taught the Lord’s Prayer and understand its content and always be reminded that God answers each and every prayer.

## **CHAPTER 5 THE AFRICAN TRADITION'S VIEW ON PRAYER**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

Prayer is reported among all African people according to Mbiti (1969:61) as discussed in chapter 3. Prayer is regarded as one of the acts of worship in the African traditional religion to link the spiritual and the physical world by putting the invisible in touch with the visible world. Mbewe (2015), in explaining this link said that, although God exists, the fact of the matter is he is distant. God distances himself from his people (human beings) through two layers in the spirit world. The one layer is that of angels and demons (i.e. bad angels) and the second layer is the spirits of departed.

Unless these spirits that dwell in these two layers are appeased, God's blessings cannot reach his people. It is therefore important to appease especially the ancestral spirits because through them (ancestral spirits) blessings will be able to reach the human beings. Now, the question might be ask, whether African traditional people use/view prayer as to actively participate in the missio-Dei that is to praise and adore God who created heaven and earth, and the one who is looking after it. Or are their prayers is to worship the ancestral spirits in order to receive blessings from them, since they believe the living cannot approach God directly? This chapter will investigate possible relations between African Traditional Religion (ATR) views and the structure of the Lord's Prayer.

### **5.2 "HOLLOWED BE THY NAME" "ἁγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου"**

From Chapter 4 the structure of the Lord's Prayer has been looked at in detail. The first petition, according to Watson (1985:30), embedded "in the forefront to show the hallowing of God's name to be preferred before all things". In other words, God's "Name" should not be used carelessly or in a way that challenges biblical teachings (Smith 2007:4). To an African a "name" does not simply indicate one's identity on the pay-roll, but it influences his/her personality (Van Der Walt 2003:69), and this leads to many rituals and customs.

#### **5.2.1 The importance of the "Name" in Africa**

According to Koopman and Ngubane (2002), and Thabethe (2013:2), the "name" in Africa is more than a label. In other words it is part of the total identity of a person and has strong roots in culture. From Nyirongo's (1997:100) point of view, a "name" is a seal on a man's individuality or personality and most of the African names are meaningful (Mbiti 1969:119).

Usually an individual is given a new name at each important state of his/her development, e.g. immediately after birth, at puberty and with the birth of the first child (Van der Walt 2003:69; Nyirongo 1997:101). According to Mbiti (1969:115), the whole process of naming a child or any person in Africa is an key event which is often celebrated with ceremonies in many societies, for ancestors to recognise the person in the whole family and regard him/her as part of the family, and to open doors for him/her to find a job and protection from bad spirits.

Choosing of a name, to the African people, is a conscious decision rather than a random process. Neethling (2003) pointed out that, "parents or guardians bestow a personal name on a child that has social and cultural relevance and meaning". The name is a seal on a man's individuality or personality (Nyirongo 1997:100). For example, some names may refer to the occasion of his/her birth, other names may describe the character of the individual, or some key occasions in his/her life. Bujo (1997:28) added that "every child gets his/her name according to the circumstances of birth, therefore, the name is never without individual meaning but expresses something of the person's being, it characterises the personal ontological reality." What needed to be aware of is that, other names given to children may come from the living dead who might be thought to have been partially "re-incarnated" in the child

Thabethe's (2003:2) point of view is that personal names are originally aimed at giving personal and cultural identity, preserving people's identity, heritage and transmitting it from generation to generation. It can be concluded that a "name" in the African tradition is important and those who give names do it purposefully. It is also evident in the African tradition, according to Mbiti (199:48), that African people have names for God, names which describe him. Here are some of the names for God according to Mbiti (1991:47):

- In Angola some African names for God are "Nzambi, Suku".
- In Burkina Faso an African name for God is "Náangmin".
- In Burundi an African name for God is "Imna".
- In Cameroon, some African names for God are "Ngingi, Ngooiy".
- In Central African Republic, some African names for God are "Nzopo, lo, Mbori".
- In Gabon some African names for God are "Anyame, Nzame".
- In Ghana some African names for God are "Bore-Bore, Dzemawon, and Mawu".
- In Botswana some African names for God are "Modimo, Urazhwa".

- In Lesotho an African name for God is “Molimo”.
- In Namibia some African names for God are “Kulunyo, Mkuru, Ndajombi, Kurunga and Pambi”.
- In South Africa some African names for God are “Inkosi, Modimo and Mwari,

The names above clearly indicate that African people are very familiar with the God concept. It further indicates that over the years Africans have formulated certain ideas about God. It is only an idea about God but it is not being emphasised like the one an African child gets. In other words, the name of God does not carry the same meaning as that of a person in the African Tradition. The name in the African Traditional Religion plays an important role.

### **5.3 “THY KINGDOM COME” Matt 6:10 “ἐλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου”**

According to Schulze (2011:163), Thy Kingdom come is to pray for the coming of God’s kingdom, and it has to be noted that, it is nobody’s kingdom, but God’s kingdom. Therefore, in Lanier (1992:59) as discussed in chapter 2, Jesus Christ’s concern in this petition is for the status of God the Father for his kingdom to be recognised and for his will to be done. Therefore, one needs to be reminded that the fulfilment of the kingdom is still to come, but for now it includes the growing of the church and the destroying of the work of the evil one.

In the African tradition the kingdom of God is been recognised but it is difficult to say it is being emphasised and understood within the community as African people emphasise their group, sameness, and communality (Cobbah 1987:320). It is believed that “God is there, he is the creator and ultimate Governor and Benefactor of the whole universe” (Mbewe 2015). But although God is there he is very distant, between him and his people lie the two layers in the spirit world as discussed. It is in the spiritual world where all the authority is established, because in those two layers spirits are appeased for God’s blessings to reach his people. Therefore, authority and land is important to African people and need to be looked at. Issues related to kingdom understanding are the following: The African Tradition is concern with the Kingdom of the Supreme Being, and the ancestors to be honoured and their will to be accomplished in the community.

#### **5.3.1 The importance of authority in Africa**

Authority within the African communities can be defined as “one’s weight or influence in the hierarchical structure of the community and of the universe as a whole that defines one’s identity and position and that continues beyond death” (Nurnberger 2007:25). He continues to describe the word authority in the African view as a “life force” or “personality power” or weight, meaning one’s influence on one’s environment,

According to Van der Walt (2003:281), to the African people a ruler (kingship, ancestors and the spirits) is considered to be the symbol of unity, the embodiment of the essential values of the nation. Therefore, it has to be noted that the well-being of society depends upon the maintenance of good relations with the ancestors or the spirits and the rulers of the community.

It can be concluded that within the African communities the authority of the ruler (kinship, traditional) which is the one who fulfils an important function as an intermediary between the living and the ancestors his/her authority is the authority of the ancestors. In other words the African spiritual kingdom reputation needs to establish within the community and the will of the ancestors have to be accomplished by every member of the community. Therefore, in African Traditional Religion (ATR) authority is not found in Scripture but in persons like chiefs, mediators and prophets and the ancestors. The aim is to serve the tribe or the community.

### **5.3.2 The importance of land in Africa**

Land in an African tradition is a source of livelihood, mostly called “mother earth”. August (2010), and Weinburg (1996:39) regard “earth” as some kind of womb, in other words, it is where life comes from. No individual owns it, it is owned by all collectively (community) for the benefit of each and every member of the community.

According to Moyo (2013:5396), land in an African society is an important economic asset that is critical in the sustenance of human life, a source of livelihood and communally owned for the benefit of every member of the community (Ndlela and Reddy 2010:6). According to August (1996:7-8), land is not only an asset to the African people but a “basis of their God-given self-respect and creativity. Land has a sacred character attached to it and has a particular profound significance for people who live directly on it as a source of life but also part of the African culture”.

The most important thing to be noted is that land belongs to the earth spirit and to the ancestors as well because it is believed that they are part of the community. In African tradition it can be said that, the kingdom belongs to the ancestors. They are themselves the authorities. They are the authors of their message, blessings and punishments and the final recipients of gifts and prayers.

### **5.4 “THY WILL BE DONE IN EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN” (vv. 10) “γενηθήτω τὸ θέλημά σου, ὡς ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς”**

The petition consists of two parts. According to Watson (1985:31), the first part is the “matter”, doing God’s will, secondly the “matter” as it is in heaven. This petition continues the theme like

the previous petition, which expresses the aspiration for God to be glorified in and around His people.

His will be done on earth, this petition commits Christian followers to a personal obedience to God the Father's will and not any god's, and acts as his instruments for bringing his kingdom to full realisation. In African societies, according to Nurnberger (2007:23), life is life in community, there is no other possible life and the life force of the clan represented by the ancestors, constitutes one's actual life and not God. The importance of a community's will has to be investigated more to realise how community is important to the African people.

#### **5.4.1 Importance of the community's will.**

Mostly the Traditional African societies are widely believed to have been bound by a very strong sense of community. Mabovula (2011:38) used the word "Communitarism" as the word which "is derived from the word "community" and refers to any philosophical standpoint that defines a person in the context of social bonds and cultural traditions rather than through individual traits".

Nyirongo (1997:139) defines African community as a family, clan or tribe. In Mawado's (2011:14) point of view a community is a group of people bound together by a sense of belonging. According to Van Niekerk (2009:191), community is regarded as a number of people who have something in common such as language, conceptual framework or working together as a nation or an institution.

According to Moeketsi (2012:149), a "community and belonging to a community of people constitute the very fabric of traditional African life". In other words, an individual is born into a web of relationships, he/she is born as someone's uncle, nephew and brother and this is what defines them (Mawando 2011:13). Therefore, an individual is raised in such a way that they see themselves as the members of the community. Without being seen as a community member one will not be fully recognised as a person. In other words, in African Societies a person depends on others just as much as others depend on him/her, the individual's life and fulfilment is only to be found in community with others.

From the information provided above, it shows that in African communities life revolves around man. In other words, everything happens for the sake of man, man as a collection of individuals in a group. It can be concluded that life within the African community is centred on the ancestors, not God because he is not involved in the life of mankind. It is the ancestors who provide the security and stability to the community. Everything like sowing, harvesting, marriage or death must be conducted according to the rites and taboos originated by the ancestors. They (ancestors) play an important role in the affairs of mankind. The question remains, what are the

influences of this worldview on prayers within some of the African Independent Churches (AIC), since many Africans experience prayers in the AICs as different from that in the Mainline Mission Church (MMC).

### **5.5 “GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD”. (vv.11) “τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον δοῦς ἡμῖν σήμερον”**

There are two things to be observed in this petition, the “order” and the “matter”. We see in this petition everything is directed to “us”, God’s people, “Give us this day our daily bread”. God wants his people to be concerned not only with spiritual life but also with physical affairs and needs.

The prayer expresses dependency on God the heavenly Father to provide for all his children’s needs. In an African view, mankind depends on or is always at the mercy of the ancestral spirits.

#### **5.5.1 African traditional view of provision of man**

From the beginning man is “originally put in a state of happiness, childlike ignorance, immortality or ability to rise again after dying” (Mbiti 1969:93). In other words, God provided man with everything he needs for life either in creation or through equipping man with creativity.

There are some stories from different African tribes on how they see God’s provision right from the beginning of the creation of man. From the Ashanti tribe, they believe that the first man enjoyed a position of great privilege because God made other things for his use and protection, including the spirits. The Abulugia tribe believes that God made provision for the first man in the form of rain which gave them water and animals of which they were to eat hoofed ones and different types of fish. This really shows us that “God and his presence provided for the main needs of mankind like food, knowledge of fundamental skills, domestic animals, light and fire, weapons and tools” in order for him to live (Mbiti 1969:94).

In the state man was in the beginning, it has to be agreed that man was once innocent (Nyirongo 1997:59-60), but became a sinner by offending God. Many African people tried to explain this fall. The Ashanti tribe believed that God originally lived closer to men but one day withdrew into the sky because the mother of these men kept on knocking against him with her pestle (Nyirongo 1997:60). From the Mende tribe, God became angry and withdrew into the sky because men used to go to him and ask for things so frequently that he moved off to another place. It really shows that the African image of a happy life was when God was among the people, in other words, his presence by supplying them with food, shelter, peace, immortality or the gift of resurrection and a moral code. But sin came when men offended God in one way or another, as a result of this fall God withdrew from men, he now deals with man through ancestors and nature gods.

The African belief of God dealing with men through ancestors makes ancestors important within their communities. Ancestors, being important in the African communities simply requires that everything “must be conducted according to the rites and the taboos prescribed by the ancestors” (Van der Walt 2003:70). Because it is believed that ancestors control the well-being of the community, and God is the distant God, he is not recognised and worshipped as the Lord of life. He is only called upon in times of serious crises.

Therefore, African people cannot rely or depend upon God, simply because he is far away, the focus should be upon men, not on God. To African people their social and material welfare, health, protection, property, fertility and a long life are requested from the Ancestors.

#### **5.6 “AND FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS, AS WE FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS”. (vv.12) “καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν, ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν”**

The previous petition and this one are the requests for basic needs in the life of a follower, and “as we forgive” is a “pledge” to participate in meeting the needs of others. It really shows that forgiveness is a key idea in this petition. In explaining the word “forgiveness”, Bosch (1983: 26) gives examples of the centrality of forgiveness in the ministry of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

##### **5.6.1 African tribal wars**

Ethnic conflicts in Africa are everyday occurrences in all regions of the world, and Africa is one of those devastated by violence (Ethnic conflict). Odine (2013:202) and Steaman (1991:367) in explaining this whole situation of violence or tribal wars in Africa said that the reason why conflicts between tribes in Africa continue is because fomented divisions within ethnicities and the used segmentations of disparaged groups to foster colonial rule still exist. Therefore, at the end, due to tribal wars, most communities start to struggle for power or property due to conflicts.

##### **5.6.2 African view of peace**

According to Zulu (1998:186), within an African setting peace is a communal matter and effort, because Africa is emerging from a period where many Africans died as a result of conflicts. In other parts of Africa there have been conflicts in recent years motivated or influenced by ethnic differences or tribal interests (Mbiti 1969:98), while lately there are also religious and even economic wars. Ancestors play a big role in bringing peace within the community. Peace within the community means to be able to fit into the structures of the community morally and spiritually. If this harmony is broken the community as a whole will have to acknowledge the fact that the harmony in the community is broken and for this harmony to be restored ancestors will have to

be contacted through traditional doctors/healers. Everything will have to be done according to the norms of the ancestors in order for peace to prevail within the community.

### **5.6.3 African view of security and stability in the African communities**

From an African worldview many African Christians still hold onto the thought that community life is centered on the ancestors, not on God. Ancestors provide the security and stability to the whole community and if anyone in the community ignores the ancestors' will, he/she will have all sorts of misfortunes (Nyirongo 1997:140).

### **5.7 “AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION, BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL”. (vv.13)**

**“καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν”**

Jesus taught his disciples in Gethsemane, “watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation” (Matt 26:41; Mark 14:38); “being a similarity to the Lord’s Prayer, this language implies that “peirasmos”, unaccompanied by vigilance and prayer, can lead to spiritual or moral failure” (Smith 2007:8). Therefore, this petition may be view as a petition for the Lord’s protection from circumstances that might lead believers to sin. Watson (1985:207) indicates this petition has two focusses. The first focus is, “Deprecatory”, “Leads us not into temptation”. The second focus is: “Petitionary”, “But deliver us from evil”. The question we often hear people asking is: “Does God lead us into temptation?” The answer to the question is, “For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone” (Jam 1:13)

#### **5.7.1 African traditional view of spirit**

The Spiritual world is pre-eminent in the minds of Africans according to (Van der Walt 2003:62). Turaki (1997:54) says, “the spiritual world defines the African worldview and life. Pervasive, hidden, unexplainable, unpredictable and powerful spirits govern, and control everything and everyone and affect the well-being of individuals, families, clans and tribes”. The following “levels” of the spirit world, according to Van der Walt (2003:63), can be distinguished and will be discussed, Divinities (Non-human spirits), ancestors (living dead), and the spiritual forces (Spirits). Mbewe (2015) considers four tiers; God, Angels and demons, Ancestral spirits and human beings.

#### **5.7.2 The Divinities (non-human spirits)**

The divinities are next in rank to the Supreme Being (Adamo 2011:4). Divinities are believed to be created by God according to Mbiti (1969:74). “In the ontological category of the spirits, Divinities are associated with God and often stand for his activities, manifesting either as personifications or as the spiritual beings in charge of the major objects or phenomena of nature”

(Nyirongo 1997:25). The divinities act as intermediaries since they are functionaries of the Supreme Being. To African people the divinities are very important as far as the orderly function of the universe is concerned.

### **5.7.3 The ancestors (living dead)**

“Ancestors are believed to be those who have died but continue to exist in the land of the dead and continue to influence the living, mostly positively” (Zulu 2002:479). According to Adamo (2011:4), ancestors “have made it to the spirit land and are venerated by their descendants. They are regarded as part of the elders of the family with enhanced powers to bless, promote or punish the families.” Mbiti (1969:81) regards them as the living dead who have the closest link men have with the spirit world.

In explaining the role of the ancestors within the community, Tanye (2010:108) pointed out that at death the God-given spirit departs and starts its journey back to the world of the spirits. From the spirit world it maintains contact with the living and mediates between the spiritual world and the earthly family by often visiting their family members in dreams, and through concrete creatures such as snakes, hyenas, caterpillars, and butterflies and through direct contact with the living through possession.

Oborji (2002:24) claims that ancestors are not worshipped. They are only highly respected as members of the families, this is a reason why they are next to the divinities in hierarchy.

### **5.7.4 The spirits (spiritual forces)**

The spirits are the next in the hierarchy (Adamo 2011:5). It is believed that spirits are apparitional entities and belong to different categories of beings. They can be categorized as the following: the ghost-spirits, born-to die spirits, spirits of witches, guardian spirits and diviner spirits. All the spirits are invisible but may make themselves visible to human beings and can become anything such as objects or human beings and can also melt into vapour at any time (Adamo 1983:66). Belief in these spirits permeates the life of Africans and should be taken seriously.

### **5.7.5 The evil**

Evil according to African people include both physical and moral evil (Adamo 2011:4). God is the one who brings forth good in all and humans cause evil in creation. Evil is viewed as any disaster that happens to an individual or a community or any act that disturbs the relationship with God, or other deity or the ancestors.

In Africa evil is generally viewed as the work of evil spirits that use witches and sorcerers as instruments to act on the evil eye, broken taboos, and oaths or even the deity or ancestors.

## **5.8 CONCLUSION**

Prayer is regarded as one of the acts of worship within the African communities. Its main objective is to link the spiritual and the physical world by putting the invisible in touch with the visible world. The study shows that African people do pray to God, but most of their prayers are referred to the intermediaries. African people believe that God the creator of heaven and earth is supreme but the problem is that he is distant and he cannot be approached, the only way to talk to him is through spirits because they are next to him.

African communities believe that the involvement of God the supreme in human affairs is limited. Instead, those who are involved in the affairs of mankind are the ancestors. Therefore, when African people pray the communication is between the human being and the intermediaries since ancestors are the ones who are involved in human affairs. Therefore, God's kingdom cannot be recognised but the African spiritual kingdom (ancestral spirits) has to be established and only the will of the ancestors has to be obeyed by every member of the community. Land belongs to the earth spirits and to the ancestors, for mankind is always at the mercy of the ancestral spirits and everything is seen as the will of the ancestors, not God. A prayer can be said only to God during difficult times.

In the next chapter the role of prayer within the African Independent Church (AIC), especially the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) will be discussed.

## **CHAPTER 6 THE NECESSITY OF DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE MMCS AND AICS AS A WAY FORWARD**

### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

The research question for this study was to look at the influence and characteristics of prayer in the growth of the African Independent Churches (AIC) especially the Zion Christian Church (ZCC). The aim was to understand the different perspectives and function of prayer within the African Independent Churches and the reason why members of the Mainline Mission Churches move from their churches to join the Africa Independent Churches especially the Zion Christian Church of Bishop Barnabas Lekganyane for prayer requests.

The perspectives and the functions of prayer within the African Independent Churches (AIC) has been investigated with special attention to the missional implications and functions. The following headings were used: Prayer within the African culture, the African traditional view on prayer, the characteristics of the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9-13 and the role of prayer within the Zion Christian Church (ZCC). It was done in order to understand why members of the Mainline Mission Churches move from their churches to join the African Independent Churches (AIC), especially the Zion Christian Church (ZCC).

The study revealed that members of the Mainline Mission Churches, which were started by the missionaries from Europe and America, are believed to attend their worship services by day and come furtively to the African Independent Churches, which were started by Africans for the Africans, by night for special secret prayer requests for healing and protection from bad spirits. The influence of the AICs and the impact on the decline of members in the Mainline Mission Churches in Africa (MMC), including in South Africa, must receive attention from the MMCs.

The African Independent Churches (AIC) are currently growing very strongly in the whole continent of Africa including in South Africa. Statistically, according to Daneel (2013), between 1940 and 1960 the overall African Independent Churches increased from 9.6% to approximately 20% of the total African population while in South Africa during the past two decades the number of the African Independent Churches leapt from 2 000 to an estimated 4 000 with a current overall membership of between 4 and 5 million. It seems the African Independent Churches' healing ministry serves the millions of Africans as it really meets their needs. This whole situation has raised questions within the Mainline Mission Churches (MMC) about their ministry in and to Africa. According to Oduro et al. (2008:75), it seems as if the MMCs has "separated healing and prophecy from the spiritual mission of the church, which led to the secularisation of health care".

This whole situation poses serious questions about the Mainline Mission Churches' ministry in and to the Africans especially in South Africa. It seems to be difficult for the MMCs to start learning from the AICs, and also from their experiences because it seems the AICs are able to meet the needs of the African people. Therefore, both the MMCs and the AICs should understand that despite all their differences and even disparities between culture and religions, there is a basic stratum of human communalities that can make it possible for people to communicate with each other and to discover points of contact with each other. Such communalities may include common experiences, prayers, fears, questions, and sorrows which people in that community share. Because both the members the MMCs and the AICs are believed to be living within two world views, especially on health, namely the "traditional worldview" and "western world view" which, due to their deteriorating living conditions, render them extremely vulnerable. These two different world views pose a serious challenge to the effectiveness of the Christian ministry, especially of the MMCs in Africa to the Africans.

Therefore, it is proposed that the MMCs and the AICs should engage in a dialogue with each other and the nature of the community they seek dialogue with, since that community should be taken as the locus of God's activity in mission. The dialogue must be focused on healing and prayer from a biblical perspective within the African context. This should be a platform where both groups exchange their views or insights in trying to widen and pinpoint divergences, similarities and criticisms as well as to find a mutual understanding for them to work as churches towards the coming of the Kingdom. The following six characteristics of dialogue by Bosh (1991:483-489) can be taken into consideration during a dialogue:

- Dialogue is based on a decision of the heart rather than the intellect: Accepting the coexistence of different beliefs and to do so not reluctantly. There is a tension between the MMCs and the AICs and this researcher thinks an investigation should be done on the matter, but some of the MMCs think there is no way they can sit around the table with the AICs because it is not a true church of Christ. On the other hand the AICs are saying the MMCs are the Church of law (Form Europe), it does not understand the needs of the people. Both the groups, the MMCs and the AICs need to understand that there are other beliefs out there about God and humanity, sacrifices, afterlife and ancestors. Both have to accept these views as realities to which they have to witness what each has and together witness to the people around them. They both need each other to accomplish their mission.
- A true dialogue presupposes commitment, speaking from our deepest convictions while listening to understand. Both the MMCs and AICs need to understand that without their commitments to the gospel a dialogue will become a mere chatter and without the authentic

presence of their neighbour it becomes arrogant and worthless. Both the MMCs and the AICs need to commit themselves to work together towards the coming of the kingdom of God.

- A dialogue from belief in the presence of God. In other words, dialogue and mission is only possible if both the MMCs and the AICs should know that they both proceed from the belief that they, as the church, are not moving into a void but that they go expecting to meet the God who has preceded them and has been preparing people within the context of their own cultures and convictions. Neither the MMCs nor the AICs are the “spiritual haves” standing over the “spiritual have nots”. It will be better for both groups to understand each other better especially when it comes to the issue of culture which makes it easy for people to understand the other people’s worldviews.
- Both dialogue and mission can be conducted only in an attitude of humility. Both the MMCs and the AICs have been preaching about being humble, especially the MMCs and it is now time for them to practice what they have been preaching, for it is a matter of course for the MMCs. The reason being, the Christian faith is a religion of grace which is freely given and it finds its centre, to a significant extent, in the cross. Therefore, there will be something authentically Christian in an attitude of humility in the presence of other religions.
- Both dialogue and mission should recognise that beliefs are worlds in themselves, the most important thing is to accept, but it is difficult for the MMCs to understand that there are different beliefs out there and which have their own discharges and structures and they face in different directions and ask fundamentally different questions and Christian gospel relates differently to different world views. The MMCs should understand that in this respect both the fulfilment and the relativist model still reflects the modern paradigm which tends to slight these differences but in the end Christianity is taken as a point of departure.
- Lastly, a dialogue is neither a substitute nor a subterfuge for mission. This means that both dialogue and mission are neither to be viewed as identical nor as irrevocably opposed to each other. Both MMCs and the AICs working towards the coming kingdom need each other as both the Lord’s Prayer and the Scripture is fundamental and they should realise that as they both witness to the people around them they should understand that witnessing to the people does not preclude dialogue but invites it, and that dialogue does not preclude witness but extends and deepens it. Both dialogue and mission between the MMCs and the AICs have in the course of time registered a shift from ignorance through arrogance to tolerance and there will be a working relationship between the two and this relationship will help to improve their people’s relationship with God and this will make their life better.

It is very clear from the characteristics above that a dialogue between these two groups, the MMCs and the AICs should start with a Kingdom perspective and should reflect the existing problems of the African community. Because, if the dialogue hides the real problems in and about Africa that divide people in the faith community and if it does not help them to grow their relationships with God and with each other, then it is a futile enterprise and even an insult to human intelligence and a crime against humanity (Muwanhidah 2008:79-92).

From the literature review it is acknowledged that culture plays a prominent role in the whole world, including in the African continent. It was also indicated that the African continent is made up of multiple identities and is ethnically multicultural with different religious systems (Mageso 2002:16). With different ethnic groups that have their own religious systems with a contextualised set of their own beliefs and practices. Special attention was given to both the African Traditional Religions and the African Independent Churches especially the Zion Christian Churches (ZCC) in order to understand the African worldview and the role of prayer within the African ministry. The following questions had to be investigated and answered: What are the characteristics of the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6: 9-13? What is the understanding of the African Independent Churches on the role and function of prayer, and is prayer one of the African Independent Churches' mission strategies?

## **6.2 WHAT DO WE UNDERSTAND ABOUT THE ROLE AND FUNCTIONS OF PRAYER WITHIN THE AFRICAN INDEPENDENT CHURCHES (AICS)?**

From the study it can be seen that culture plays an important role in the whole world, and according to Van der Walt (2003:93), every human is a cultural being. It has to be noted that culture looks at people's attitudes, customs, behaviour, values, beliefs and institutions. Special attention in the study was given to looking at how African people understand prayer according to their beliefs or religious systems. This was done because Africa is made of multiple identities and is ethnically multicultural according to Maluleke (2001:37), and Afebe & Verster (2004:48).

The diversity in religious concepts and practices made Africa to be notoriously religious according to Mbiti (2008:1). Van der Walt (2005:53) pointed out a few of the religions that exist in the African continent and these are as follows: the "world religions" which are, Islam, Buddhism, Shintoism, Christianity with all its sub-divisions and denominations and the primal traditional religions which Chitando (2005:299) referred to as the African Indigenous with vague superstitions and many cults. It should be noted that each group has its own contextualised set of beliefs and practices and the investigation was done on African Traditional Religions (ATR) and on the African Independent Churches (AIC) to understand their worldviews.

African Traditional Religion (ATR) is a religion which had been practiced throughout Africa before the arrival of the Western missionaries. It is a religion that most Africans have grown up with from their parents teaching them to live and practice it and it is still practiced today together with other religions like Christianity. ATR differs from other religions since its origin and founder is not known (Awolalu 1976:275). It can be regarded that the core premise of the African Traditional Religion (ATR) and belief is to keep the African culture with a focus and faithfulness to the ancestors and accompanying rituals expressing that loyalty. The following are the basic premises of the African Traditional Religion, the belief in a Supreme Being, belief in a spirit realm that permeates the whole of nature and all of life and a belief in the sanctity of a unified society (Sibiso 2001:2). Therefore, it can be concluded from the study that the African Traditional Religion is all about making ancestors happy and to be faithful to them and this faithfulness is shown by making some rituals to express their loyalty.

Concerning the African Independent Churches (AIC) the study has revealed that they are growing at a steady rate on the African Continent, according to Le Roux (2005:200). And according to Sundkler (1961), there are different kinds of African Independent Churches (AIC) from all over the continent of Africa and some of these churches are as follows: the first group, the Ethiopians or African Churches and the second group, the Zionist or spiritual Churches. It is very interesting how the African Independent Churches (AIC) contextualise the gospel by connecting it with the real needs of Africa (Oduro et al. 2008:23).

African Independent Churches (AICs) apply Christianity into the African context, even though most of the African Independent Churches (AICs) accept and apply scriptures and believe in a triune God, the closeness of a creator Father. Many scholars like Sundkler (1969) observed the following as the central elements of the Africaness in the African Independent Churches (AICs), the Ancestral Spirit and Holy Spirit, Magic and Divination dreams as means of revelation.

It can be regarded that the African Traditional Religion (ATR) and the African Independent Churches have the African worldview in common. Many of the AICs can be described as Churches which are strongly African in orientation and which combine Christianity with certain traditional beliefs. On the other hand, both the AICs and the MMCs view themselves as Christian and both are using the Bible to explain their beliefs. In both the AICs and the MMCs prayer is fundamental to their faith, and both are praying the Lord's Prayer.

But it should be pointed out that God's Kingdom perspective in prayer is not being recognised in the African tradition but the African spiritual kingdom (ancestors). Therefore, the ancestral spirits has to be obeyed and only the will of the ancestors has to be recognised for mankind is always at the mercy of the ancestral spirits and everything is seen as the will of the ancestors. It can be

regarded from the study that the African Independent Churches (AICs) like the African Traditional Religion is strongly African in orientation and it combines Christianity with certain traditional beliefs while the Lord's Prayer is fundamental to their ministry.

### **6.3 IS PRAYER ONE OF THE ZION CHRISTIAN CHURCH (ZCC) MISSION STRATEGIES?**

According to Anderson (2000:68), Bishop Ignatius Barnabas Lekganyane is the founder of the Zion Christian Church (ZCC). Bishop Ignatius Lekganyane was born in Thabakgone in Mamabolo area which was known as the Northern Province around 1880-1885. It is believed that the Bishop was praying on the mountain and suddenly received a spiritual experience which he interpreted as a divine call and therefore started his own church. Bishop Ignatius Lekganyane played an important role in the lives of his members because wherever he went he was followed by a large number of people. His picture still adorns the walls of many homes and his name is even used in the prayers of his followers because many people believed that God has given all his power to his chosen prophet, Bishop Ignatius Lekganyane (Anderson 1999:291).

Bishop Ignatius Lekganyane was regarded as a true kgosi (chief) ya masione (King of the Zionist), a paramount chief who acted as a mediator between the supernatural and his people, the one who finds solutions for his people's spiritual, political and material problems. Bishop was also seen as a miracle healer because all kinds of miracles like, rain making, good harvests, healing of barren women and employment was ascribed to him (Lukhaimane 1980: 62-63).

According to Oosthuizen (1971:10), the worldview of the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) can be regarded as to maintain the phenomenological aspects of the African culture in receiving healing, and protection from the bad spirits and freedom from misfortune. Therefore, the African worldview can be regarded as the worldview of the Zion Christian Church (ZCC). And the most important ministry in the whole Zion Christian Church (ZCC) is healing the sick, it is one of the most important ministries and it can be regarded as the reason why a large number of people are joining the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) as a result of sickness and misfortune. There are structures in place that are being created to meet the needs of the non-members and members of the church and the structures are as follows: Mokhukhu which is a group of young and old man dancing or worshiping together, a Brass Band, female Choir, and Mpogo a ritual song which is normally sung when there is an issue that needs to be addressed by the Church.

During a Church Service the prophets or seers of the church will move in between attendees summoning those in need of divine healing regardless of the procedures that are in progress for it is believed that prophets or seers are the ones who receive revelation from the Holy Spirit or from the ancestors' spirits which enables them to predict events known to be the cause of illness

and prescribed instructions (ditaelo) for healing and will send people to the minister (baruti) for a prayer and to guide them on how they should follow the instructions.

Some of the instructions from the prophets or seers could be to buy products outside the gate at the stands or at the administrative offices. It can be products like coffee or Vaseline and all those products will have to be prayed over by the minister (moruti) and be prepared according to the given prescriptions (ditaelo). Other prescriptions could be to join Mokhukhu or stay at the Holy City Moria for a specific period of time.

In this regard the prophets or seers and the communal prayer (personal) referring to the following names, "Kgomo" (Cow), "Kgosi" (Chief) and "Lekganyane" plays an important role in the healing ministry of the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) and also structures that are in place during the Church service meet the needs of the African people for members and non-members of the church. In this regard it can be concluded that prayer, especially a communal (personal) prayer using the name of Bishop Engenas Barnabas Lekganyane, can be regarded as one of the Zion Christian Church's mission strategies because people get healed.

#### **6.4 WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LORD'S PRAYER IN MATTHEW 6: 9-13?**

The most important thing the study has revealed is that the Lord's Prayer is to actively participate in the *missio- Dei*, meaning to praise, adore and actively wait upon God to answer. According to Mmualefe (2011:63), the theme of the Lord's Prayer should be regarded as building of the "Basileia" meaning the Kingdom of God, the kingdom of God which is based on love and mutual care for his people. The study has revealed that the Lord's Prayer is the very best of all prayers because Jesus Christ is the author and it is a significant summary of the teaching and preaching of Jesus Christ (Haemig 2015:22). What is more important in the Lord's Prayer is that God is being worshipped as the creator, sustainer and redeemer of all humans and his promises are being shown to his people and how faith should respond.

It has been proven from the study that the Lord's Prayer should be accepted as an example for Christian prayer like many scholars John Calvin (1509-1564) who referred to the Lord's Prayer as a "prescribed form", Martin Luther (1484-1546) called the Lord's Prayer a "brief formular" for prayer and Matthew Henry (1662-1714) described the Lord's Prayer as a method for praying. Therefore, it is very important to read and understand the Lord's Prayer for each petition has a meaning and it will help both members of the MMCs and the AICs to grow their relationship with God and with other people from other religions.

The first three petitions revolve around the concerns of God and are contrasted with, and linked to, the last three petitions that hold human concerns up before God. These two sets of petitions are structured around the petition for our daily bread as a hitch between the spiritual (God's world) and physical (human world). Bread in its double meaning of peoples' physical needs which links it to the second set of petitions and of a people's worshiping of God, and with Christ's wounds they were healed and were confirmed Children of God. Therefore, despite the undeniable differences between the two sets they are intimately linked to each other for God's name is hallowed now, his kingdom has to be done now and his will is done now in that people receive what they need from God and are forgiven by him. In the end, his people are enabled to withstand temptation and are delivered from the evil one (Schweizer 1978:58).

## **6.5 THE WAY FORWARD**

Christian groups that concentrate on prayers for healing are much more attractive than the traditional churches, this is the present version of Christianity in Africa today including in South Africa. Most of African Christians today need healing for many diseases that are rife in Africa, therefore, this makes prayer for healing and wellness undoubtedly significant in African life especially in view of persistent ill-health.

The MMCs has to affirm that the Christian message of healing in Jesus Christ have something to offer to the African Independent Churches (AICs) and to other religions in Africa. It is a hard time for the MMCs to start expressing their love and concern, not only because they are losing a lot of their members to the AICs, but it should be an expression of love and concern to their neighbours in working together towards the coming of the Kingdom. The MMCs, in engaging in a dialogue with the AICs, will also be proclaiming faith and healing in Jesus Christ and the result of that proclamation should be left to the Holy Spirit who really converts.

## **6.6 CONCLUSION**

Neglecting the worldview of the African people has proven from the study that it can be costly for it can separate people from one another and create confusion and people will end up living two separate lives. Therefore, prayer for healing and wellness is undoubtedly significant in Africa today including in South Africa and Christian groups or religions like the African Independent Churches (AICs), especially the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) that concentrates on prayers for healing, are much more attractive to people because of diseases that are rife in Africa they turn to the AICs, especially the Zion Christian Church, for help in time of need or emergency.

Many people find help in the Zion Christian Church due to asking prayers for healing. Indeed, in this regard it can be regarded that prayer plays an important part in the Zion Christian Church's

ministry and is the reason why many people join the Church. Therefore, the influences and the characteristics of prayer in the growth of the AICs, especially the Zion Christian Church, is understood as a mission strategy as seen from the study.

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