

5. THE ZION CHRISTIAN CHURCH

5.1 Introduction

Research conducted among individual members of the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) led to the following conclusions:

1. The beliefs with regard to the person of Jesus Christ are vague. Only 57 % affirm the divinity of Jesus. ZCC-respondents find it difficult to differentiate between the three persons of the Trinity, especially between the Father and the Son.
2. Jesus Christ is primarily seen as a provider of needs for daily life (health, prosperity, etc.), as well as a protector against certain dangers in everyday life (witchcraft, accidents, etc.). There is no clear dividing line between the work of the Father and the Son.
3. Jesus Christ is not regarded as an authoritative figure in a Christian's life and faith. In the view of ZCC-respondents the ZCC has taken this authority upon itself (through its head, the bishop, and through its laws and instructions). It seems that 'to live according to the rules of the church' would, generally, better describe the attitude of ZCC-members than 'being led by Christ (through his Word and Spirit)'. There seems to be a legalistic trend in the ZCC.
4. When it comes to aspects of salvation such as forgiveness of sins and repentance, a tendency towards ritualism appears (e.g., through baptism).

In order to shed more light on these issues, a more qualitative type of research was employed during the second phase of the research. Two methods were used: field research and content analysis.

Field research

With the help of members of my congregation I was able to build a rapport with local leaders and church members of the ZCC in Soshanguve. I had several in-depth interviews

with two church leaders, as well as interviewing ten ZCC-members and five ex-members of the ZCC. Through my work as a pastor in Soshanguve I have had numerous smaller conversations with members and ex-members of the ZCC.

My pastoral duties throughout the years have included participation in quite a few funeral gatherings where ZCC-leaders led the preaching. During the course of my field research I attended a Sunday afternoon church service in one of the ZCC-branches in Soshanguve and a church service in Atteridgeville, when bishop Lekganyane delivered the sermon.

Content analysis

To my knowledge the ZCC has not yet published any books. But since April 1985 a magazine called *The ZCC Messenger* has become a regular publication. It contains sermons by, and messages from bishop Lekganyane, and a variety of articles by other church officials. It is published three times a year and gives insight into the thinking of ZCC-leaders. Although the church itself is very reluctant to give the magazine to outsiders, ZCC-members in Soshanguve were helpful and gave me several issues for perusal. So far I have been able to lay hands on 50 % of the issues that have appeared between April 1985 and April 1999, namely the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 11, 12, 14, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 37, 43.

One other document that I have been able to obtain, is the *Katekesima ya mathomo ya Z.C.C.* (First Catechism of the ZCC). This 4-page document gives a short explanation of the following: (1) the ten commandments, (2) taboos concerning food and beer, (3) baptism, (4) holy communion, (5) confession of sins.

5.2 Two church services

Church service: Soshanguve

In February 1997 I visited a ZCC-church service in Soshanguve. I accompanied a ZCC-minister whom I had interviewed several times during the course of my research.

Services are held in the afternoon, and as the congregation of Soshanguve has been unable to finance a church building, their meetings take place in temporary shelters

constructed of poles and corrugated iron. There is also a small room where church documents are stored.

I had arrived early so there was time for my friend to show me around the church premises. The first activity we encountered was the so-called 'gate test'. All those entering the grounds were sprinkled with a handful of water. "This is Ezekiel 36", my guide said, "I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be cleansed." Being a guest I was not forced to undergo this ritual. We went to the office where my friend explained to the church secretary who I was, after which I was allowed to attend the service.

As the service had not yet started, different choirs were still practicing in various places on the church premises. The *mokhukhu*-dancers were busy dancing and singing (they had started on Friday night). It is an impressive sight: seventy men, in a large circle, dressed in the ZCC khaki-uniform and white Grasshopper-shoes, singing and moving rhythmically to the beat of a song. In the middle of the circle is a conductor, holding a whip. Suddenly, all the dancers jump two or three times, stamping their feet in the dust. The next group was the *bomme ba thapelo* (prayer women), some fifty women, dressed in a green skirt and yellow blouse. They were also singing. The third and largest group consisted of approximately one hundred women all wearing a blue dress. All of these groups were singing simultaneously. Standing there in the middle, and hearing this cacophony of sounds was quite an experience.

The service started and everybody moved towards the large shelter. The men sat on one side, the women on the other. A large tinbox was placed in the centre and many people walked past to throw some coins into it. My guide explained that this practice has its origins in Luke 21, "the copper coins of the widow". After everybody was seated, one of the ministers opened the service. The congregation responded by singing a hymn and then a church leader took a small piece of a paper, set it on fire, and let it fall to the ground. This, my guide explained, is based on Numbers 8, "lighting the lamps in the house of the Lord". Following this the church secretary read the announcements of the day. These included a letter from the church headquarters at Moria in which instructions were given for the next Easter festival to be held there. After reading this letter, the secretary showed it to the congregation and said: "*Lengwalo le le na le setempe sa Mookamedi*" (this letter has got the stamp of the bishop on it).

Then it was time for prayer. Everybody knelt down and prayed simultaneously, which produced a loud, murmuring sound. This suddenly died away whereupon everyone sat down again. The male choir then had an opportunity to perform a few hymns. Some fifteen men, dressed in a special uniform, gave a short concert of high quality singing. Scripture reading and preaching followed. It was announced that four ministers would take part in the preaching. Each one had a text and delivered a short sermon (sermonette) of about ten minutes duration. While the ministers were preaching, five or six prophets moved around the congregation, uttering strange sounds every now and then. A prophet would point to a certain member of the congregation, who then accompanied the prophet to the prophet's enclosure in order to receive his revelation.

The first minister preached on Amos 8:11

"The days are coming", declares the Sovereign LORD,
"when I will send a famine through the land –
not a famine of food or a thirst for water,
but a famine of hearing the words of the LORD."

The minister explained that people would throng to the ZCC to hear the words of the Lord. The ZCC has power. He illustrated this with an incident from his personal life whereby the power of the ZCC had rehabilitated a lame leg and enabled him to walk again.

While the minister was preaching a prophet suddenly approached me, pointed a finger at me, and beckoned me to go with him. Two other men also stood up and went with us. We entered the prophet's enclosure, knelt down, and the prophet recounted his vision concerning me. In the first place it was revealed to him that in the past week there was contact made between the ancestors of bishop Lekganyane and my own. So it was known to the church that I would visit the congregation in Soshanguve, and indeed, here I was! Secondly, the revelation indicated that my congregation would grow: "*Kereke ya gago e tlo ba le batho*" (Your church will have people). The only condition was that the ministers of the ZCC must pray for my church: "*Baruti ba ZCC ba go rapelele o be le setshaba*" (The ministers of the ZCC must pray for you so that you can have a people). Lastly it was revealed to him that I had a certain illness, a "*bolwetsi bja dipeine*" (illness of pains). I probably had pains in my feet. At this point, the other men stopped the

prophet and inquired whether I indeed had a problem in my feet. I did not, so I denied it. The prophet continued and then said I had a problem in my shoulders. Again he was stopped and again I denied it. They asked me if I perhaps had a problem somewhere else in the body. As I felt perfectly well, I still said 'no'. The situation led to an apparent unease and a discussion developed amongst them, which I was unable to follow. The prophet subsequently finished his revelation by giving me the ditaelo (instructions): I had to go to a well, draw water from it, take this to the ZCC-ministers so that they could pray for it, and then I would be healed. The prophecy was over and I rejoined the church service.

The second minister had chosen Psalm 137:1.

By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept

When we remembered Zion

He explained that we should always remember the present-day 'Zion', the Zion of bishop Lekganyane. He, too, highlighted the powers of the ZCC and considered the light emitted by the ZCC sufficient to enlighten the whole world.

The third minister preached on James 5:19-20.

"My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires."

This minister emphasized that the ZCC is a church of peace, moreover she wishes to spread this message throughout South Africa and the world. Looking in my direction, he said that even white people are hungry for this message.

The fourth minister had chosen Matthew 5:5-7 as the text for his sermon, but before he could start preaching a small group of people entered the shelter. These were the new converts. They had been baptized in a river nearby, and were now welcomed into the church and given the necessary instructions.

After this the *mokhukhu*-men had the opportunity to sing. To my surprise (and maybe because I was there) they sang a song in Afrikaans¹⁸:

Kom na die Here, die Here soek vir jou

Kom na die Here, die Here soek vir jou

¹⁸ Translation: Come to the Lord, the Lord is looking for you (2 times). What will you do, the day when Jesus comes? The door has been closed and you will be standing outside.

Wat sal julle maak, die dag as Jesus kom

Die deur is toegesluit, dan staan jul buitekant.

The proceedings were interrupted at this stage by the onset of rain. This caused some consternation as people sitting in the rain tried to find shelter. The service was brought to a rapid close; a few final words from the leaders of the church, a last prayer offered, and the congregation was dismissed.

Church service: Atteridgeville

On the 23rd of May 1999 (it was the day of Pentecost) I visited a ZCC-church service in Atteridgeville, a township on the western side of Pretoria. ZCC-members had told me that bishop Lekganyane was coming to Atteridgeville “to solve problems there”.

According to the rumours a group of young men had been disobedient to the local church leadership. Allegedly they had even beaten up two ministers.

I decided to go and listen to Lekganyane’s sermon. On Sunday afternoon, at about 1:00 p.m., I arrived at the church building and parked my car in a nearby street. I moved through the crowd towards the entrance of the church site which was packed with people. According to a newspaper report the next day, about 30 000 people had attended the service.¹⁹ The *mokhukhu*-dancers were still busy doing their job. I asked one of them to direct me to the office. I was led through the crowd, around the church building, to a small room which he called the room of the *dikgosi* (kings). Among the few people waiting inside was, indeed, a tribal chief from the Warmbaths region. Our names were written in a register.

At about 2:00 p.m. we were led to one of the entrances of the church building. There we waited for Lekganyane to arrive. Approximately thirty minutes later we suddenly heard people applauding and shouting. The bishop had arrived. He and his company immediately entered the church building and took their seats behind the curtains on the stage. Then the people were allowed to enter the church: the ministers, dressed in green, in the right half of the church, the women in the left half. People were silent or talked softly. Seated in the front of the church were the church officials, and the sound technicians.

¹⁹ Pretoria News May 24, 1999, p. 3.

At 2:45 p.m. the curtains were opened and there he was: bishop Barnabas Lekganyane, the *Mookamedi*! Everybody stood up. With him on stage were about fifteen church officials.

A minister from Venda started the proceedings with prayer. Everybody knelt down and prayed simultaneously. After two minutes the minister called ‘amen’ and everybody was seated. The minister then announced the singing of hymn 111:1, 2 of the *Difela tsa Sione* hymnbook: *Ke na le modisa* (I’ve got a shepherd).

Thereafter another minister welcomed everybody, especially bishop Lekganyane “and his office”. He then read three statements. The first was a declaration by the ZCC condemning a report in the Pretoria News of the day before. Apparently the report had suggested that bishop Lekganyane was coming to Atteridgeville to speak about the upcoming general elections of June 2, 1999. This was not true, the statement said. The bishop had come to “bring blessings to his children”.

In the second statement church members were asked to accompany the bishop on his visits to other places.

The third statement was read, first in English, then in Northern Sotho. It was a decision by the church council, dated 29-11-1998, written by the general secretary of the bishop’s office. This statement enunciated the decisions taken by the church leadership with regard to the problems in the Atteridgeville congregation. A group of eight members of the congregation had caused problems in the church. These individuals, mentioned by name, were summarily excommunicated. “*Ba phumulwa dipukung tšohle tša kereke*” (Their names are erased from all the books of the church). They would not be allowed to enter the church premises again, nor take part in any church activity. No ZCC-minister was allowed to lay hands on them again. This drastic step was taken in order to promote peace and unity in the Atteridgeville congregation.

After the congregation had sung a few hymns and the Atteridgeville male choir had given a performance, it was time for the bishop to deliver his sermon. He spoke in Northern Sotho, and was also translated into Tsonga and Zulu. The bishop appeared to be angry. He read Proverbs 22:24-25

Do not make friends with a hot-tempered man,
Do not associate with one easily angered,

Or you may learn his ways
And get yourself ensnared.

The bishop spoke about factions in the church in Atteridgeville. He criticized the behaviour of the group of eight. He accused them of causing tension and division in the church and even used the word 'gangsterism'. He asked everybody to foster peace in the church. He promised that peace would return to the congregation. "*Ke tshepiša gore kereke ya Atteridgeville e tlo boela go maemo a yona bjalo ka dikereke tše dingwe tša ZCC*" (I promise that in the church of Atteridgeville everything will be back to normal just like in other ZCC-churches). He urged the congregation to listen to the Word of God and the instructions of the church. He ended his sermon by shouting three times: "*Pula! Pula! Pula!*" (Rain! Rain! Rain!)

Once the bishop was seated, the congregation sang a chorus: "*Re a mo leboga*" (we thank him), and another one: "*Mong wa rena o a re lwela*" (Our Lord is fighting for us). After another prayer and a few songs, the service ended. The bishop and his officials left through a side door, climbed in their cars and drove off.

Evaluation

The most striking thing with regard to Lekganyane's sermon was that he made no reference at all to Jesus Christ. The name of Jesus was never mentioned, except in formulas. The same applies to the Holy Spirit. Although it was the day of Pentecost, Lekganyane had nothing to say about the work of the Holy Spirit. There may have been special reasons for the bishop's visit to Atteridgeville, but this exclusion was remarkable. In fact Lekganyane's sermon should not be classified as such. It was rather a speech by the leader of a movement, aimed at restoring order among the ranks.

With regard to the church service in Soshanguve, the evaluation is similar. Not one of the four ministers said anything about the work of Jesus Christ or the work of the Holy Spirit. In both services the church itself held centre stage. The power of the ZCC, peace in the ZCC, the necessity of obeying its laws and instructions: these were the main issues.

5.3 Bishop Lekganyane's sermons

I have studied 67 sermons by and messages from bishop Barnabas Lekganyane, most of them written in the Northern Sotho language. Twenty-four of these sermons were held during gatherings at Morija at Easter (April), Consecration of the New Year (September) or Christmas (December). The majority of published messages from the bishop were delivered at prayer meetings convened for traditional chiefs and kings or other important people. A typical example of the titles heading such messages is, "Sermon delivered by His Grace the Right Reverend Bishop B E Lekganyane at the Royal Kraal of King Makhosokhe II before a Congregation of the ZCC on the 7.3.1999".³

Some general remarks about the sermons of bishop Lekganyane may be useful. It is noteworthy that bishop Lekganyane always uses a Biblical text as the point of departure. He manoeuvres the text to suit the gathering he is addressing. When speaking at more secular meetings (e.g. prayer meetings for chiefs) he often concentrates on giving guidelines for a peaceful society and good leadership. When addressing church gatherings he shows more concern for issues relating to a Christian lifestyle. In his choice of preaching texts the bishop shows no special favour for the Old or the New Testament. Of the 67 sermons and messages I studied, he had 34 NT texts, 29 OT texts and on 4 occasions he used a combination of texts.

With regard to the Old Testament the bishop seems to love the poetical books. His choice of OT-texts was as follows:

- from the historical books: 8 times
- from the poetical books: 22 times (15 times from the book of Psalms)
- from the prophetic books: 2 times

With regard to the New Testament his choices were:

- from the historical books (gospels, Acts): 11 times
- from the epistles: 17 times
- from the book of Revelation: once

Within the context of our research we took a special interest in the sermons by bishop Lekganyane delivered at the annual Easter gatherings at Moria. Especially on this occasion one would expect the bishop to speak on the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In the light of the following passage, cited from one of the bishop's sermons, our expectations are high²¹:

"In a few days' time we shall be celebrating one of the most important dates in the Christian calendar – Easter! I invite all members of our church from all over our country and neighbouring sister African states to join us at Moria City, as we acknowledge and celebrate the supreme sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ when his blood was spilled at Golgotha in order to bring salvation to mankind."

As this quotation shows, the festival bears the name 'Easter' festival, but the event focusses primarily on the death of Jesus at the cross. His resurrection is not mentioned. Twelve of the bishop's Easter sermons were analysed. A summary and evaluation follows.

Easter 1981 ²²

Text: Mark 15:21-41, the crucifixion and death of Jesus.

In the first part of his sermon the bishop retold the story of the death of Jesus on the cross. He went on to explain, in the second part, that the cross symbolises the four directions: north, south, east, west. Jesus is called 'king of the Jews' but as the cross points in all four directions, Jesus is the king of all people: the people in the north, in the south, in the east and in the west.

Easter 1984 ²³

Main message: The signs that indicate the imminent return of the Lord Jesus

The bishop explained that signs in the sky will bear testimony to the return of the Lord Jesus. If God does great things, it becomes manifest by the appearance of signs in the skies. The bishop refers to several Biblical examples: God made lights in the sky to separate the day from the night (Genesis 1:14), God caused the sun's shadow to move

²⁰ *The ZCC Messenger* 43:10, Easter 1999.

²¹ *The ZCC Messenger* 43:14, Easter 1999.

²² *The ZCC Messenger* 1 (no page number), April 1985.

backwards as a sign to king Hezekiah that he would recover from his illness (Isaiah 38), God gave the special star to herald the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ himself said: "There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars." (Luke 21:25). Joel has prophesied: "The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood." (Joel 2:31) Then the bishop asks: Have these signs already appeared? He answers affirmatively: "It happened in the year 1980, on the 19th of May, in the United States of America."²⁴ When God is at work, there are signs. The same applies to the ZCC. Thousands of people flocking to the ZCC are a sign that God is at work here.

In the second part of his sermon the bishop warned against the dangers of alcohol (Proverbs 23:29-30) and tobacco.

Easter 1985²⁵

Text: 1 Cor. 13. Message: only love can save the world

The bishop spoke on charity and love. Love is the solution for all the worlds ills. Love is the reason for the growth of the ZCC:

"The secret of the growth of the church, which is in fact no secret, is simply that we have love. It is because of our love for our God, our love for one another and for all mankind, the love of all that the Lord our God has created, that we as a church have, over the past seventy-five years, grown to what we now are, and have been able to bring the word of God to so many."

The bishop called on his followers to spread love and peace.

Easter 1986²⁶

Text: Matthew 6:9-15 (The Lord's Prayer)

The bishop was blunt and outspoken when he said that he detests "apartheid together with all its discriminatory laws". He then applied two petitions from the Lord's prayer to the situation in South Africa, namely 'give us our daily bread' and 'lead us not into temptation'. He concluded by admonishing Zionists to pray, to use the *ditaelo*

²³ *The ZCC Messenger* 1 (no page number), April 1985.

²⁴ The bishop did not explain, at least not in the written text, to what incident he was referring to.

²⁵ *The ZCC Messenger* 2 (no page number), September 1985.

²⁶ *The ZCC Messenger* 5:4, September 1986.

(instructions) of the church and to attend *mekhukhu* (men's singing and dancing) and *mepogo* (all night prayer meetings).

Easter 1989²⁷

Text: Luke 23:32-48 (The crucifixion)

In a world where everybody wants to be number one, we should remember the example of Jesus. Jesus did not think of Himself when He was on the cross. He could have come down from the cross but He persevered as He had our salvation in mind. "Morena Jesu o bontshitše boetapele ka se." (By doing this the Lord Jesus showed us what true leadership is).

Easter 1990²⁸

Text: Malachi 4:1-3

The bishop did not refer to these verses at all. His message was an appeal for, as he himself put it, "reconciliation, love and to let bygones be bygones". In the difficult times South Africa finds herself, Zionists should be peacemakers and not involved in acts of destruction and murder.

Easter 1991²⁹

Text: Psalm 1

The whole sermon is a passionate plea for peace and reconciliation in the South African society.

Easter 1992³⁰

Text: Psalm 133

Compared to the previous year some positive changes had taken place in South Africa. The bishop was thankful for this. He asked political leaders to show true leadership, e.g.

²⁷ *The ZCC Messenger* 14:4-5, September 1989.

²⁸ *The ZCC Messenger* 17:4-6, September 1990.

²⁹ *The ZCC Messenger* 20:4-7, September 1991.

³⁰ Zion Christian Church 1996?:1-5.

by not contending for positions, by exercising discipline, and by not allowing emotions to govern decision taking.

Easter 1993 ³¹

Text: Isaiah 60:1-5

The bishop described how darkness covers the earth (wars, fighting, stealing, etc.). He then urged his followers to recognize that man cannot live alone, that we should live together and give one another the chance to develop the talents God has given us.

Zionists should pray that the killings come to an end. Jesus Christ was able to conquer sin by saying 'it is finished'.

Easter 1994 ³²

Text: Psalm 27:1-4

This sermon was delivered in the presence of three political leaders: F.W. de Klerk, Nelson Mandela and Mangosuthu Buthelezi. It was a few weeks before the general elections of 27th April 1994. The bishop spoke of his hope for peace in the land. He urged everybody to strive for a peaceful solution, to practise tolerance and to support reconciliation. He encouraged Zionists to "approach the ballot box with Psalm 27 in the heart".

Easter 1995 ³³

Text: Col 3:12-16

The bishop asked what his followers wanted to achieve in life: to be rich, to be honoured? Seek instead the attributes mentioned in Col. 3:12: compassion, kindness, humility, etc. He pleaded for peace and he specifically condemned the witch hunts being carried out by youth in the Northern Province.

Easter 1996 ³⁴

³¹ *The ZCC Messenger* 26:4-5, September 1993.

³² *The ZCC Messenger* 29:6-7, September 1994.

³³ *The ZCC Messenger* 32:4-5, September 1995.

³⁴ *The ZCC Messenger* 35:12-16, September 1996.

Text: Psalm 27:1-4

Choosing the same text as two years previously, but without referring to it, the bishop denied allegations that the ZCC had, to a certain extent, been supportive of covert plans by the SA Defence Force. The bishop also referred to the controversy surrounding PW Botha's visit to Moria in 1985. Though the ZCC had been heavily criticised for inviting Botha, the bishop claimed that this meeting had resulted in another, between Botha and Mandela, later the same year. He reiterated that Zionists are apolitical, pacifists and humble servants of God Almighty.

Interim-evaluation

When analysing these sermons, it becomes clear that bishop Lekganyane, being the head of a large denomination, considers it necessary to speak of the situation in the country. He probably uses these occasions to speak to the country's leaders, knowing that they will listen to him, as he represents a large part of the electorate. One should, therefore, be cautious in drawing conclusions from these sermons.

It is clear that the bishop uses Biblical texts, but that he does not really expound on them. One could say that he uses the texts as starting points for practical messages.

Furthermore, it is clear that there is not much Christological content in these sermons. In only two of the twelve Easter sermons did the bishop actually refer to the death of Christ, while Jesus' resurrection is not referred to at all.

Other sermons of Lekganyane

Analysis of other sermons by and messages from bishop Lekganyane confirms that there is not much Christological content in his sermons. He seldom speaks about the person or work of Jesus Christ.

The only meaningful references to Jesus Christ were found in sermons delivered in the early years of Lekganyane's leadership. In a message delivered at the commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the ZCC (1980), Lekganyane summarized the position of the ZCC under three headings: 1. How we are justified, 2. Why we should obey the law of God, 3.

Why we should respect the government. Expounding on the first point Lekganyane said³⁵:

“How can we be justified? The answer is in Romans Chapter 5, Verse 1 where it says: Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. To explain, it is natural for man to think that through good works he may obtain favour with God. But the truth is that no amount of good deeds can ever cancel the debt of sin. Jesus has done that for us and our part is to accept by faith what He has done for us. When we do this, we are justified, without our good works entering into the transaction at all. But the faith that accepts the death of Christ will also accept the power to overcome through Him, and then good works will follow as a result of faith.”

In another sermon, delivered in 1985, Lekganyane portrays Jesus as the suffering servant of God. Jesus, Paul and others were prepared to suffer for the cause, the kingdom of God. But afterwards they all received the crown of glory. Lekganyane concludes his sermon as follows³⁶:

“Jesus Christ did all, and yet He suffered most severely in the service of God. He is now the Chief Ruler with the Saints who once inhabited this earth. He is now the King of kings and the Lord of lords with blessings, honour, glory and power for ever and ever.”

In both sermons one could hear Lekganyane speaking at length on the work of Jesus Christ. In most cases, however, Lekganyane’s sermons are practical messages, full of exhortations for peace, love, reconciliation, and a Christian lifestyle (no drinking, no smoking). He then proceeds to act as the head of the church by giving instructions to, and expecting compliance from his followers. Even when the text itself gives ample opportunity to proclaim Christ, this is not done. A few examples:

Pulo ya ngwaga (Opening of the Year) 1988 ³⁷

Text: John 3:16

“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.” Lekganyane calls this text the “*motheo wa bophelo bja sekrise*” (the foundation of Christian life). The application of this (translated from Northern Sotho):

³⁵ *The ZCC Messenger* 1 (no page number), April 1985.

³⁶ *The ZCC Messenger* 1 (no page number), April 1985.

³⁷ *The ZCC Messenger* 12:6, December 1988.

“Show the love that God showed to the whole world in giving it His only Son. Your duty as a ‘Mosione’ (member of the ZCC) is to show love by praying for all people who have problems, without discriminating between them.”

ZCC-members should thank God for His love by showing love to others, whether they be Zulu’s, Venda’s, Xhosa’s, or whatever. A Zionist is a Zionist. This is the way of the ZCC founding fathers, Lekganyane’s father and grandfather (translated from Northern Sotho):

“This is the way that was chosen by those who founded this church: grandfather Engenase and father Edward.”

To give preference to specific people or nations, is against the will of God. Therefore the ZCC has always shown love to people of all nations and will continue to do so.

There is no reference to the work of Christ in the sermon.

Prayer Meeting for Chief Mabena II of the Manala tribe, 1994³⁸

Text: John 14:1,6

The bishop commences his sermon by referring to the many means people employ to try and reach their goals. Some use jealousy, some use hatred. But on the way to ‘Canaan’ there is no room for these things. When coming to the text, “Jesus answered: I am the way, the truth, and the life”, bishop Lekganyane concentrates on the word ‘*therešo*’ (truth). The truth is that kings and chiefs have been appointed by God. Therefore people should respect their kings. With regard to the second part of John 14:6, “No one comes to the Father except through me”, the bishop comments:

“The word ‘Father’ is very important in this prayer meeting for the Manala-people. The word ‘Father’ represents safety. The word ‘Father’ represents prosperity. The word ‘Father’ represents happiness. The word ‘Father’ represents peace. So it is in the Manala people. This people has received its chief Mabena II because God wants to give them safety, prosperity, happiness and peace. The chief has been sent by God to give these things to the Manala-people.”

Though the text speaks about Jesus Christ, the bishop did not refer to Jesus Christ at all.

Prayer Meeting for chief Mnisi, 1996³⁹

³⁸ *The ZCC Messenger* 28:4-5, Easter 1994.

³⁹ *The ZCC Messenger* 34:6-8, Easter 1996.

Text: 1 John 2:1-2

From a Christological viewpoint this text has a rich message: “We have one who speaks to the Father in our defense – Jesus Christ”. The bishop explained the text as follows (translated from Northern Sotho):

“The secret of this reading of the Word of God is that God loves you. If your faith is strong, know that God loves you. If your faith is weak, know that God loves you. If, at times you stumble and fall, or if you feel strong, know that God loves you. From today onwards, you should know that according to the Word of God, the love and acceptance of God are with you. They do not change, they are there always, whether you are weak or strong. This is the main message of our reading from the Word of God.”

The bishop then assures the audience, especially chief Mnisi and his people, that they are loved and welcomed by the ZCC. Again, even with this text, there is no word about Jesus Christ.

Evaluation

In the early days of Barnabas Lekganyane’s leadership there were some positive signs, suggesting that Biblical Christology formed part of his theological thinking. Whether these were incidents, or whether Lekganyane’s theology has subsequently changed, is difficult to say. The analysis and evaluation of his sermons must lead one to conclude that the Christological quality is poor. The name of Jesus is mentioned primarily in formulas. But Jesus Christ is not proclaimed as Saviour, Mediator, or Lord. Even when the text almost obliges the preacher to speak of Jesus Christ, bishop Lekganyane does not say a word about Him. No negative references or comments are directed at Jesus, it is just that Jesus is, for all practical reasons, *absent*.

5.4 The position of bishop Lekganyane

When discussing the Christology of the ZCC, another important question is: what position does bishop Lekganyane hold in the beliefs of ZCC-members and how does this influence the Christology of the church?

One way of investigating the position of bishop Lekganyane in the ZCC, is to read the praise poems that appear regularly in *The ZCC Messenger*. These poems contain a wealth of titles bestowed on the bishop, and some amazing pronouncements about him. Furthermore, many articles sing the praises of the ZCC and, especially, of its leader. Occasionally the bishop allows insight into how he sees himself when he speaks about himself, his father and his grandfather. We shall firstly take a look at the different titles given to the bishop and secondly, analyse some statements made about him, either by others or himself.

Ramarumo

The title most often used for Lekganyane is *Ramarumo*, which means: father of the spears. Obviously this title conveys the message that Lekganyane is very powerful. An example from a praise poem is the following: *Ntate Ramarumo, ruri o tlo buša dikgutlo tsa lefase kaofela*, which means: Father, Ramarumo, he will really rule all the corners of the earth⁴⁰. The first part of this poem goes like this:

Ntate Ramarumo, ruri o tla busa	Father Ramarumo, really he will rule
Dikgutlo tsa lefatshe kaofela.	All the corners of the earth.
Jo! O ya halalela, ruri o ya halalela	Yea! He is holy, really he is holy
Mora' Monare.	The son of Monare.
Leha ba ka bua dipuo tsa mefuta	Although they may say many things
Borena ke ba hao, Kgomo.	The kingship is yours, Kgomo.
Jo! O ya halalela, ruri o ya halalela	Yea! He is holy, really he is holy.
Mora' Lekganyane.	The son of Lekganyane.
Mawatle le dinoka,	The seas and rivers
Dithaba le maralla	The mountains and hills
Mafatshe kaofela ho tla tsejwa Kgomo	In all countries Kgomo will be known.
Jo! O ya halalela, ruri yoa halalela	Yea! He is holy, really he is holy
Naledi ya meso.	The Morning Star.

⁴⁰ *The ZCC Messenger* 6:22, December 1986.

Kgomo

The name *Kgomo* that is used in this poem, is found in many other praise poems and articles as well. Apparently the *kgomo* (head of cattle) is the totem animal of the Lekganyane family⁴¹. At the same time, considering the tremendous importance of cattle for the African people traditionally, it is understandable that this name gains 'surplus value'. The name acquires additional imagery by suggesting that Lekganyane is the one to feed and sustain the people. An example, taken from an article by A. Rammutlwa in which he proclaims the importance of the Lekganyane's family, proves this⁴²:

"Kgomo e fepa batho ka moka ka maswi
e sa kgethe mebala go ba mohlobo wa motho."
(Kgomo feeds all the people with milk
without favouring colour or race)

Kganya

The name *Kganya* means: Light. It is another name used for Lekganyane. An example⁴³:

"Lord Lekganyane you are the guardian of all people. Your glory is on the whole world.
Your love is amazing, in heaven, and everywhere on earth. We say, *Kganya*, ask wisdom
for us in heaven."

Mookamedi

The most common title for Lekganyane is *Mookamedi*, which corresponds to the Greek *episkopos* (one who watches over, an overseer, guardian). The word is derived from the verb *go okamela*, which means: look down, watch over, supervise. A *mookamedi* is thus a supervisor, a guardian, someone who watches over. Zionists, when speaking about Lekganyane, would often not use his surname but rather refer to 'the Mookamedi'. The title 'Mookamedi' in itself does not give Lekganyane divine or messianic status. Initially it probably was nothing more than a translation of the English word 'bishop'.

⁴¹ Kruger (1970:40) says that the ox is the totem animal of the Lekganyane's. An ox, however, is called a *pholo* in Northern Sotho.

⁴² *The ZCC Messenger* 34:20, Easter 1996.

⁴³ *The ZCC Messenger* 43:18-19, Easter 1999.

The things that are said about this ‘mookamedi’, however, often raise him to a higher, nearly divine status. Here follow a few examples, the first one from a praise poem⁴⁴:

Utloang diphala di a lla	Listen to the sound of the trumpets
Di bega Mookamedi o fihlile	They tell us that the <i>Mookamedi</i> has arrived
O re swaretše nnete ya go phela	He brings us the truth of life
Tate yo bolo ke Yena o tile	He is the good Father, he has come.
A re di lateleng tša Mookamedi	Let us follow the <i>Mookamedi</i>
Re iše dillo tšohle go Yena	Let us take all our cries for help to Him
A re amogele ka matsoga a mabedi	Let us accept with both hands
Mmušo wa magodimo e be wa rena	That the kingdom of heaven may be ours

A Rammutla writes⁴⁵ (translated from Northern Sotho):

“He who puts his trust in our helper B.E. Lekganyane, will have peace in the midst of many difficulties. Because our *mookamedi* knows what we need. Put off the old man and put on the new man and let us follow our *mookamedi*. Because he is the way to go to God the Father.”

An additional aspect is the fact that God Himself is called the ‘mookamedi’. The word then describes God the Father as the one who provides His children with what they need and protects them against dangers. In the hymn book *Difela tsa Sione* the title ‘Mookamedi’ refers to God Himself. The popular hymn nr. 17 has the following chorus:

Mookamedi ea renang	The Overseer who is ruling
O tseba se re se hlohang.	knows what we need.

In the context of the song this refers to God. The hymn describes how ‘the Mookamedi’ protects His children, how He is able to change our situation for the good, how His love is unfailing, that He is always there. It follows that, as Zionists habitually think of Lekganyane when using the word ‘Mookamedi’, they will easily mix the two. All the good things that are said of God, are applied to Lekganyane himself. The ZCC-members probably do not even see a contradiction here. Whatever is said of God, can be said about Lekganyane, and vice versa, because God works through Lekganyane.

An example of this confused identification of God with ‘Mookamedi’ and Lekganyane is found in an article reporting on the launch of a bursary fund for young students of the ZCC. The writer mentions the fact that bishop Lekganyane donated R 100.000,-- to the

⁴⁴ *The ZCC Messenger* 17:14, September 1990.

fund. This, according to him, was ‘breathtaking’ and he goes on to say⁴⁶: “The Psalmist sings: *“Mookamedi wa re lwela, empa rena ga re mmone.”*

This time we did catch a glimpse, however small, of the truth and magnitude of that sentiment.” (M11:12) The Sotho sentence means: The Overseer fights for us, but we do not see Him. It is clear that the writer of the article sees the Mookamedi personified in Lekganyane. The statement *Mookamedi wa re lwela* (The Overseer fights for us), is often used as an exclamation at the end of an article⁴⁷.

Messiah

Another title that is actually given to Lekganyane, is that of ‘Messiah’. A short list of examples reads as follows:

PM Kubayi writes⁴⁸:

“Besides what I have stated above, there are still some more examples which can be given to prove that the Right Reverend Bishop B.E. Lekganyane is the present-day Messiah. First of all, it is a well-known fact that Jesus was a religious Messiah, and not a political Messiah. I think I shall be quite right to state that our present-day mediator is not a political mediator. He is the peace-maker. He is a king of peace. As a result, He expects his followers to be peace-makers at all times. Secondly, Jesus used to heal the sick when he was on earth. This function is fulfilled by our mediator. He also heals the sick. Thirdly, Jesus used to travel from one place to another, spreading the Word of God, and also doing miracles. Our mediator also travels from one country to another, e.g. he has already visited the countries such as ga-Muila, ga-Mulima, Nzhelele, Giyani, Bochem, Transkei, Kimberley, Secunda, Tafelkop, Qwaqwa, New York, London, Washington D.C. etc. At each of these places, miracles occurred, e.g. at ga-Muila and other places, rain fell, although they had no rain in the past. At ga-Mulima the farmers got much harvest, but this was not the case prior to His visit. At Qwaqwa, people had no rain for a couple of months, but when our Bishop visited there on the 9th-10th December 1989, it rained cats and dogs.”

TM Sekoati writes a praise poem to the Lekganyane’s under the title ‘Tribute to the Mentor’⁴⁹:

⁴⁵ *The ZCC Messenger* 34:22, Easter 1996.

⁴⁶ *The ZCC Messenger* 11:12, September 1988.

⁴⁷ Another example in *The ZCC Messenger* 11:15, September 1988.

⁴⁸ *The ZCC Messenger* 16:27, Easter 1990.

⁴⁹ *The ZCC Messenger* 17:36, September 1990

"For lo, Asia got its Mohammeds;
 Europe received its Popes and Bishops;
 Australia rallied to its Aborigines
 While America settled for Chiefs and Bisons.
 Mother Africa... was exhumed by the timely birth of Zion
 When Ignatius Lekganyane torched the Light
 Like the Messiah that he was
 He spread the Holy Gospel."

The same PM Kubayi writes in another article⁵⁰:

"To the Right Reverend Bishop BE Lekganyane, I say, "Kgomo", I have experienced that
 you are indeed the true Messiah and the true Mediator between the Zionists and God. No
 Zionist can ask something from God, or communicate with God, except through you!"

Mediator

Another title frequently applied to Lekganyane is 'Mediator'. The last quotation from PM
 Kubayi illustrated this, with the words: "No Zionists can ask something from God, or
 communicate with God, except through you!" That this sort of statement is no incident,
 can be proved by many other examples. A short list reads as follows:

PM Kubayi, in another article under the telling title 'The Right Reverend Bishop B.E.
 Lekganyane is the present day Mediator between the Zionists and gods and God', writes
 as follows⁵¹:

"I publicly proclaim that (the Right Reverend Bishop of the mighty Zion Christian Church)
 is the Mediator between the people and God. He is the way to God. No one can
 communicate with God except through Him. He is the only person who reveals God's will
 to the human beings. He is the only person who can communicate with our gods. Through
 His message, the prophets and the ministers of Zion Christian Church, God's will is
 proclaimed to the people. My fellow Zionists, you are fortunate, because you have the
 Mediator or Spokesman. I am saying this from experience. At this moment I have
 experienced the power of Zion Christian Church through our Mediator. My fellow Zionists,
 as a teacher, I have realised that in our Mediator, all things are possible, expecially if you
 respect and obey "ditaelo" from God through our Mediator".

⁵⁰ *The ZCC Messenger* 32:18, September 1995

⁵¹ *The ZCC Messenger* 16:26-27, Easter 1990.

It is also apparent from this article that Lekganyane not only mediates between Zionists and God, but also between Zionists and the ancestral spirits: "He (Lekganyane) is the only person who can communicate with our gods."

Two quotes from an article written by Bhejile H.D. Ncube⁵²:

"The Beloved and Honourable Bishop B.E. Lekganyane mediates between his congregants and the Holy Ghost..."

"The Lord through his chosen mediator bishop B.E. Lekganyane has sent us to the world as his ambassadors."

SC Mntahli writes⁵³:

"The mediator between the Zionist and God, Father Ramarumo, who is the Bishop and the spiritual leader of this church, blesses everyone personally, physically and spiritually."

Counsellor

On several occasions Lekganyane is portrayed as the promised 'Counsellor' of John 14:16 and 26.

A Rammutla⁵⁴ writes about John 14:16 and asks the question: who is this *Motwedi* (Counsellor) whom Jesus promised to send? His answer: Firstly, according to John 14:26, it is the Holy Spirit. Secondly, this promise was fulfilled in the person of bishop Lekganyane who was sent by the Lord to convict the world of guilt in regard to sin, and to bring righteousness and judgment (John 16:8). The flow of the argument is as follows (translated from Northern Sotho):

"How can we know this Counsellor? We as Zionists know him, because we are with him all the time, and he teaches us to behave properly and what love is about. Jesus says: Love each other as I have loved you (John 15:12). When we do that, we will be on the way of truth. Jesus said: I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you (John 16:7). As He said, He went to heaven and He sent the Counsellor to us Zionists. He makes the world *recognize sin* and he sows a spirit of reconciliation, love and righteousness (Mal. 4:5-6). The mistake we make, is that we are waiting, and then we say

⁵² *The ZCC Messenger* 33:14, December 1995

⁵³ *The ZCC Messenger* 37:45, Easter 1997.

⁵⁴ *The ZCC Messenger* 34:20, Easter 1996.

we are waiting for the Lord Jesus. Behold, the Jesus whom we are waiting for, has sent the Counsellor to the church of Zion: His Grace the Right Rev. B.E. Lekganyane, whom the world will not have recognized nor received at the time that Jesus comes to judge the world (John 16:10). As Jesus said: the Counsellor will convict the world of guilt, because I go to the Father and you will see me no more. Now with regard to the works of the Counsellor, what do they tell us? Dear Zionists, the sermons of the 'mookamedi' of Zion during his journeys and the festivals, are they not like the message of the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit? Does he not teach us love, respect, righteousness and reconciliation so that the people may be built up? If this is true, why should we doubt that our head is the Messiah? Our head was sent to the world to save the children of God."

PM Kubayi in an article quoted from earlier, conveys the same message⁵⁵:

"When Jesus was still on earth, He once said, "I will never leave you alone. I will ask the Father and He will give you another helper, who will stay with you forever" (John 14:16) ... My fellow Zionists, I do not doubt myself that the Helper who is referred to here, is the Right Reverend Bishop of the mighty Zion Christian Church. Consequently, I publicly proclaim that He is the mediator between the people and God."

Other Messianic or divine titles applied to Lekganyane

Other Messianic or divine titles bestowed upon Lekganyane, are the following:

- "Kgosi ya dikgosi" (King of kings)⁵⁶
- "Lion of Judah, descendant of the House of David"⁵⁷
- "our Father, our Healer, our Comforter"⁵⁸
- "beloved Son of man"⁵⁹
- "Son of God"⁶⁰
- "the messenger of God"⁶¹
- "light of the nations, head of everything"⁶²
- "Rrago ditshaba" (Father of the nations)⁶³

⁵⁵ *The ZCC Messenger* 16:26, Easter 1990.

⁵⁶ *The ZCC Messenger* 11:7, September 1988.

⁵⁷ *The ZCC Messenger* 11:25, September 1988.

⁵⁸ *The ZCC Messenger* 30:28, December 1994.

⁵⁹ *The ZCC Messenger* 33:18, December 1995.

⁶⁰ *The ZCC Messenger* 32:19, September 1995.

⁶¹ *The ZCC Messenger* 32:19, September 1995.

⁶² *The ZCC Messenger* 4:16, Easter 1986.

⁶³ *The ZCC Messenger* 11:26, September 1988

- “*moya o mokgethwa*” (the holy spirit)⁶⁴
- “*moleti wa bohle*” (guardian of all)⁶⁵
- “*tsela ya go ya go Modimo Ntate*” (the way to go to God the Father)⁶⁶

Biblical prophecies attributed to Lekganyane

Not only titles, but also Messianic prophecies and Biblical statements are regarded as attributable to Lekganyane. Examples:

A praise poem probably refers to Psalm 110, in saying⁶⁷:

Holela hodimo Morena Lekganyane	Become great, Mr Lekganyane
O kalle maru, o phahamele dira tsa hao,	Touch the clouds, conquer your enemies
Di tle di be ka tlase ga bohato ba maoto a hao.	That they may be under your feet.

D Seloane, in an obvious reference to Psalm 118, writes the following⁶⁸:

“Therešo ke gore ramarumo ke Lebje leo le nyaditšwego ke baagi.”

(The truth is that Ramarumo is the stone that was rejected by the builders.)

PM Kubayi, writing about Lekganyane’s headquarters at Moria, says⁶⁹:

“Moria City is the city which was prophesied some thousand years ago (sic!) in the Book of Psalms 132.”

G Rampyapedi, referring to Psalm 2, says this of Lekganyane⁷⁰:

“Dira tša gago Modimo o di arabile ka Psalm 2”

(God has answered your enemies with Psalm 2)

Praying in the name of the Lekganyanes

It is common knowledge that ZCC-members, when praying, use the formula “in the name of Engenas, Edward and Barnabas”. The church magazine provides many instances of this. N.M. Malembe, discussing the healing power of the ZCC, writes⁷¹:

“God in trinity chose Engenas and instructed him to found the healing Church, the prominent ZCC. (...) That is why the Zionists pray firstly in the name of Engenas, for God.

⁶⁴ *The ZCC Messenger* 43:18, Easter 1999.

⁶⁵ *The ZCC Messenger* 43:19, Easter 1999.

⁶⁶ *The ZCC Messenger* 34:22, Easter 1996.

⁶⁷ *The ZCC Messenger* 4:8, Easter 1986.

⁶⁸ *The ZCC Messenger* 4:17, Easter 1986.

⁶⁹ *The ZCC Messenger* 12:15, December 1988.

⁷⁰ *The ZCC Messenger* 37:16, Easter 1997.

⁷¹ *The ZCC Messenger* 11:5, September 1988. The article is written in (poor quality) English.

Secondly, we pray in the name of Edward and thirdly in the name of Barnabas, for the completion of the new trinity in the black nation in this extreme south of Africa.”

G. Dzivhani, in answering the question ‘Is the God of Engenas, Edward and Barnabas Lekganyane a different God from the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob?’, writes the following⁷²:

“The God of Engenas, Edward and Barnabas (EEB) applies the ten commandments of Exodus 20, just like the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (AIJ) does. The God of EEB is powerful, just like the God of AIJ. The God of EEB heals the sick as the God of AIJ used to heal the sick through His Son Jesus Christ and the disciples. I can give an unending list of the similarities. Therefore the God of Engenas, Edward and Barnabas Lekganyane overlaps in all respects with the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.”

L.J. Mathopa explains that praying in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit combines well with praying in the name of the three Lekganyanes⁷³:

“It is common practice in the whole of Christianity to pray in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Quite frankly, and to the best of my knowledge, we in the ZCC also pray in these names. However, in addition to these three names, we also pray in the name of Engenas, Edward, and Barnabas. (...) We do not pray Engenas, Edward, and/or Barnabas, but we pray to the Almighty God *in the names of* these three leaders! Put another way, we basically believe in the God of Engenas, Edward and Barnabas. And why just these names and not any other? It is simply because these names are superior to others: we were able to see the power behind the Word of God through these three Sons of God.”

How Lekganyane sees himself

The ZCC does not have a formulated doctrine on the position of its head as, for example, the Roman Catholic Church has about the pope. I do not know of any statements made by Lekganyane where he discusses his own position. More can be learnt from his sermons which occasionally reveal his perceptions of himself.

An example is the sermon on Psalm 46 which he delivered at the Christmas festival of 1996.

Concentrating on verse 9 (“He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear, he burns the shields with fire”) he begins by applying these

⁷² *The ZCC Messenger* 25:21, Easter 1993.

words to Jesus Christ. After that he applies them to the Lekganyane-dynasty. We now quote extensively from the sermon in order to show the flow of the argument (translated from Northern Sotho)⁷⁴:

In the Psalm we have read, the Lord Jesus is called a Helper. He is also called the One who breaks the spears. And He is the One who burns the shields with fire. A single message emerges from each of the names given to Jesus, a message about our church of Zion, since its inception till today. Who can the Helper be if not also the Peace-maker? What constitutes a refuge, if there is no protection of peace? Who is the One to end wars other than the One who sows peace? The One who sows peace is He who speaks out against spears and guns. He is the One who burns the shields with fire. In the history of the Zion Christian Church this is us, Engenas, Edward and myself, who repeatedly say 'Kgotso' (Peace). We only want peace in the church of the ZCC.

There is one question. When the Lord Jesus, who is the Helper, the Refuge, the One who ends the wars, the One who shatters the spears, and the One who burns the shields with fire - when He decided that Engenas and Edward should persevere in being helpers, in ending the wars, in breaking the spears and burning the shields, and if they have appointed me to be the Helper, the One who ends the wars, the One who sows peace, the One that burns the shields with fire in this church of the ZCC in South Africa and the whole of Southern Africa, you as a pastor, you as a young man, you as a choir member, you as a member of the church, why are you unable to do what I have told you, just as I have been told to do myself? Why do you love the things that are wrong? In short my message is: you pastors uphold the truth and sow peace. You young men of the *mekhukhu*, stop quarrelling and listen to your leaders. Zionists, be lovers of peace."

Lekganyane postulates a connection between Jesus Christ and the trio of Engenas, Edward and Barnabas. What was started by Jesus, is continued by the Lekganyanes. The significance of this historical perspective is strengthened further by a supernatural one. There is thought to be a connection between God and bishop Lekganyane, comparable to the connection between God and the Old Testament prophets. On several occasions Lekganyane has stated that he has done something on 'divine guidance'. Examples from his 1996 Easter sermon⁷⁵:

⁷³ *The ZCC Messenger* 37:6, Easter 1997.

⁷⁴ *The ZCC Messenger* 37:4, Easter 1997.

⁷⁵ *The ZCC Messenger* 35:13, September 1996.

“Acting on DIVINE GUIDANCE, I proclaimed the church’s well known attitude towards violence as a tool to solving problems. I, as the SPIRITUAL LEADER of this church, endorsed the ZCC’s craving and thirst for peace to prevail in the Republic of South Africa” (capital letters by Lekganyane).

“In 1985 and 1986 feelings were so high against the church that some of our members faced hostility in Alexandra Township. However, this “hostility scare” diminished after I issued a divine injunction which was carried out in Alexandra and all the other branches of the church on the reef.”

Lekganyane’s position as head of the ZCC

JRL Rafapa has written an interesting article⁷⁶ on the system of church government in the ZCC. Rejecting autocracy, bureaucracy and democracy as failures, he proclaims that the ZCC is a theocracy and that it is ‘run by God himself’ through the person of bishop Lekganyane.

“The administration of the ZCC comes directly from God – a theocracy. All Zionists know that the Church is run by the administration of the Holy Spirit. We are guided by ditaelo in our day to day lives. That is why terms like autocracy (dictatorship), bureaucracy and democracy are not applicable to the ZCC. The only applicable term is theocracy, which is spiritual and not solely intellectual. We all know that Bishop Lekganyane is a spiritual leader. That is why he is perfect. He is the vicarious leader of the Church, acting for the Holy Spirit, i.e., for God, as God and the Holy Spirit are one. Politicians, professionals and tradesmen are solely intellectual. That is why they are all imperfect.

In a true theocracy (government by God) leaders are not voted into office by human beings. They are appointed to their office by the Holy Spirit (God). That is why in the ZCC, for instance, we never hold elections to vote for a new Bishop. Also, unlike the solely intellectual baruti of other churches, it is not even necessary for our Bishop to qualify in college or university. If our Bishop goes to school at all, it is out of interest or God-willed compromise to worldly formality, just as the Lord Jesus had to attend tuition in synagogues.

Appointment, which is a characteristic of theocracy, goes hand in hand with dynasty/lineage. Likewise the Israelites were, for the most part, led by the house of David. Israelite leaders were appointed and not elected. We all know how God appointed Moses, Joshua,

⁷⁶ *The ZCC Messenger* 20:18-19, September 1991.

David et al. We even shudder with fear to recall the plagues that befell those among the Israelites who disobeyed God-appointed leaders. (...)

As our Bishop is a spiritual leader (not a solely intellectual one), everything he does is performed vicariously for the Holy Spirit. He and the Spirit and God are inseparable. The Bishop “appoints ministers, priests, staff and serving officials”, as the editorial of *The ZCC Messenger* put it in the December 1990 issue. His word is final, for his word is His word and this is a theocracy. The appointment of leaders in the ZCC is a spiritual matter which we mortals dare not challenge. (...)

Clearly, in order to accept as perfect the running of the ZCC, one needs first to have faith in God. Once you have faith and attend church, the Holy Spirit who dwells only in a believer, will then reveal to you who Bishop Lekganyane is, like the Spirit once revealed to Simon Peter who Christ was. Otherwise you might not accept that God Himself is running the ZCC.”

Views of ZCC-church members

Interviews held with ZCC-members in Soshanguve showed that Lekganyane has indeed received nearly divine status, and that this resulted in a ‘fading away’ of Christ in the faith of ordinary members.

I noticed that church leaders were careful to point out that Jesus Christ is an important figure in the ZCC, but that the average member did not do this. One minister drew my attention to John 3:16 which shows that faith in Jesus Christ is necessary. “*Ge o sa dumele go Kriste, ga o na bophelo bjo bo sa feleng*” (if you don’t believe in Christ, you don’t have eternal life). He also mentioned John 15 (the vine and the branches) to indicate that without Jesus salvation is not possible.

But the average ZCC-member is far more vague on this topic. Many of them would say something positive about Jesus, but for the day to day life of faith they would turn their attention to Lekganyane. As an example, I quote from a conversation I had with a ZCC-woman, a teacher, 38 years of age, who has been in the ZCC since birth:

Question: What does Jesus mean to you?

Answer: He is my Saviour (*ke Mophološi wa ka*)

Question: How do you relate to Him? Do you have a personal relationship with Him?

Answer: I will always go via the senior person to Jesus Christ.

Question: Who is this senior person?

Answer: Lekganyane.

Question: Can you explain that?

Answer: I never go directly to God or to Jesus Christ. This occurs in three stages: first it is me and my problem, then it is Lekganyane, then it is God.

Question: So what does Jesus mean to you practically?

Answer: I don't associate with Jesus that much. This term 'Jesus', I don't use it (*ga ke e berekiše*).

Question: But ZCC-ministers say that Jesus is very important.

Answer: Yes, for ministers He is important, but for us as members not so much. I cannot reach this person (Jesus Christ), but through Lekganyane it is possible. Lekganyane is able to communicate with Him.

Question: So, Lekganyane is very important?

Answer: Yes, he is very important. If you believe in what Lekganyane says, you automatically believe in God.

Another woman, 35 years of age, who had recently left the ZCC and joined another church, said that ZCC-members "see Lekganyane as their God but they won't tell you this." Part of our conversation went like this:

Question: What does the ZCC teach about Jesus?

Answer: They don't use His name very much (*lebitso la Jesu ga ba le berekiše thata*)

Question: When they speak about Jesus, do you feel that He is important to them?

Answer: No, they do not use Him in the right way (*ga ba mo diriše ka tsela e swanetšego*). They don't respect him (*ba mo nyenya fase*).

Question: When they speak about Jesus, what do they say about Him?

Answer: When they speak about Him, they can say: "He died for our sins" (*o hwetše dibe tša rena*), "He was resurrected" (*o tsogile*). They may also say that He is in heaven, and that He will come back.

Question: What is the position of Lekganyane in the ZCC?

Answer: They see Lekganyane as their god, but they won't put it like that (*Lekganyane ba mmona bjalo ka Modimo wa bona, mara ba ka se boelele bjalo*).

Question: Can you explain that?

Answer: They put him in the place of God, they say that all events occur through the power of Lekganyane (*se sengwe le se sengwe se se diragalang, se diragala ka maatla a Lekganyane*). For example, when a baby is born, they are prone to say: we have been given this child by Lekganyane (*re filwe ke Lekganyane*).

Another woman, who had been a member of the ZCC for ten years but then left the church, spoke in similar fashion. A part of our conversation went like this:

Question: Do they preach about Jesus in the ZCC?

Answer: They do not preach about Jesus (*ga ba rere ka Jesu*), they preach about their church, how it was started. They praise Engenas (*ba roriša Engenase*).

Question: When I ask them about Jesus, they speak positively about Him.

Answer: If you ask them, they won't deny Him. They honour Jesus, but they do not use Him (*ba hlompha Jesu, fela ga ba mmerekiše*).

Question: Do they use the name of Jesus in prayer?

Answer: They can pray in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. But they do not like the name 'Jesus'. I remember one day when we were at Moria, there was a man who was new to the church. When he prayed, he prayed in the name of Jesus of Nazareth (*a rapela leineng la Jesu wa Nazaratha*). Then others criticized him, saying: "Don't pray like that. Pray in the name of Engenas and Edward and Barnabas."

Conclusion

It is clear that bishop Lekganyane personifies divine power and salvation. He does not choose to be called 'God' (though it may happen here and there), but neither is any objection raised when statements are made about Lekganyane that are usually reserved for God. Lekganyane is seen as the channel through which God's blessings come to the people.

Lekganyane can play the role of Father, Son and Spirit. He is the *Mookamedi* (the Father-figure) who watches over his people and gives them what they need. He is Messiah and Mediator (the Son-figure) who prays for his people and delivers them from evil, often by way of performing amazing miracles. He is also the Counsellor (the Spirit-figure) who leads his people in the way of the truth.

In terms of Christology bishop Lekganyane combines the offices of king, priest and prophet. He is the king who rules his people, gives them the law, and protects them against evil. He is the prophet who teaches them and is believed to be able to perform miracles of healing and blessing. To a lesser extent he is a priest who prays for his people.

Bishop Lekganyane also resembles a traditional chief. Just as the chiefs and kings had their praise singers, so Lekganyane has praise poems, in which his name is exalted and his mighty deeds are proclaimed. Just as traditional chiefs and kings had their *mošate* (headquarters), so Lekganyane has his headquarters at Moria. Just as traditional chiefs and kings had their council of elders, so Lekganyane has his council of church leaders. When thinking of all these aspects, the picture of a Moses or a Samuel comes to mind. A Prophet-King, representing the people before God, passing on to the people the law of God. A man like Moses, leading the people through the desert, praying and receiving water. A man like Samuel, calling the people to a central place to worship the Lord. With such a leader at hand, who would long for the real Saviour, Jesus Christ? For the day to day life of faith of ZCC- members many similarities exist between Moses and Lekganyane, but the difference is this: Moses *foreshadowed* Christ, Lekganyane *overshadows* Him, he puts Jesus in the shade.

Another comparison that comes to mind is between the pope in the Roman Catholic Church and his position as the *vicarius Christi*. What the Catechism of the Catholic Church writes about the Pope, could within the ZCC well be written about Lekganyane: “He has full, supreme and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered.” (Chapman 1994:205)

Excursus: Anderson’s view of the ZCC

Anderson has offered an evaluation of the ZCC which is quite positive. Not only did he discuss the ZCC under the heading Pentecostalism, his estimation of its Christology was also positive. He made two assertions with regard to the ZCC. Firstly: Members of the ZCC “give Jesus Christ a major place in their life and faith” (1992a:184). Secondly: Although bishop Lekganyane is an important figure in the ZCC, he “does not replace or supersede Jesus Christ” (:187) and therefore the ZCC cannot be named a messianic church.

To support these statements Anderson quotes from interviews with ZCC-respondents. One of them said: “Jesus is the one who saves us” (:184). Another one wrote: “The ZCC is a society of Christians who believe that Jesus Christ is the Saviour and Son of God and that He died on the cross for our sins” (:185). Anderson maintains: “The many ZCC

members we interviewed did not emphasize the role of the bishop; in fact the great majority did not mention him at all. The ZCC cannot really be named a 'messianic movement' in the strict sense of the word. In the perceptions of ZCC members Lekganyane did not in any sense replace or supersede Jesus Christ... At ZCC services in Soshanguve and during the 1992 Easter Festival at Moria I witnessed Jesus Christ being given pre-eminence as the universal Lord, both in singing and in preaching" (:187).

My evaluation of the Christology of the ZCC is less positive than Anderson's. Although it is true that ZCC members may make statements to the effect that Jesus Christ is their Saviour from sins, one should bear in mind that their faith is inclusive in the sense that there is room for both Christ and Lekganyane. ZCC members do not see a contradiction here. What has happened, however, is that their view of Christ has faded and Lekganyane has come to the fore. There are two main reasons for this. First, Lekganyane is more visible than Christ. Second, Christ is associated with the forgiveness of sins (which is not a priority) while Lekganyane is associated with protection, healing and earthly blessings (which is). Though people would not consciously push Christ to the background, practically this is what happens.

Apart from the evidence given in the previous paragraphs, another way of testing this, is by listening to prayers of ZCC members. I have quoted a few articles in the ZCC magazine that defend the practice of praying to God "in the names of Engenas, Edward and Barnabas". Other phrases used may be the following: "All this we ask in the name of the God of the Lekganyanes" (*leineng la Modimo wa boLekganyane*) or "in the name of our father Lekganyane" (*leineng la tate wa rona Lekganyane*). There have been occurrences in the ZCC where prayers were directly addressed to "*Papa Ramarumo*", even omitting to "*the God of*". (Father Ramarumo, Ramarumo being one of Lekganyane's praise names). Although other ZCC members would say this is wrong as one should pray to God only, they do not deny that it happens in the ZCC.

With regard to Anderson's statement that he has experienced Jesus Christ being given pre-eminence in preaching and singing during ZCC-services, I can only say that my own experience is different. I have heard the name of Jesus Christ being used but I have never

heard a meaningful discourse on his work or person. I still believe that the Christology of the ZCC is weak.

Is the ZCC a messianic church then? It depends on what the criterion is. If the criterion for 'messianism' is Sundkler's question 'who stands at the gates of heaven?' it will be difficult to judge. But this question can hardly serve as a criterion for messianic classification (Daneel 1987:192). But if the criterion for 'messianism' is the question whether the leader of the church plays such a central role in the life of the church that he obscures the work and the person of Jesus Christ, then the answer with regard to Lekganyane's ZCC should be 'yes'.

5.5 Views on salvation

Christology is closely connected to soteriology. Beliefs about salvation are interwoven with those about the Saviour. It is of importance therefore, to examine ZCC- members beliefs regarding salvation. What are the views of the forgiveness of sins? How important are health and protection? What is said of a believers new life in Christ?

Forgiveness of sins

Having listened to speeches by local ZCC-leaders, and after reading many sermons by bishop Lekganyane and articles in *The ZCC Messenger*, I failed to hear an elaboration on the forgiveness of sins by the blood of Jesus Christ. Although church members and leaders would certainly confirm that Jesus Christ "has died for our sins", this belief is not explained meaningfully.

Anderson (1993b:100) has quoted a statement by J. Mukhondo⁷⁷: "The Zion Christian Church is a society of Christians who believe that Jesus Christ is the Saviour and Son of God and that He died on the cross for our sins." This led Anderson to comment: "No weak Christology there!" I believe that this evaluation is too superficial. Statements like the one by Mukhondo are incidents and they are never given profound and practical

⁷⁷ *The ZCC Messenger* 22:10, Easter 1992.

application. The same Mukhondo goes on to write about the ‘laws’ of the ZCC, namely “to respect one another, live together, love one another for prosperity and the promotion of peace in the world.” This is typical of the ZCC-view on the forgiveness of sins. It is mentioned almost in passing, whereupon far more attention is given to instructions in one’s life as a ZCC-member.

Confession of sins exists in the ZCC. It is mentioned in the *Katekisisima ya mathomo* (First Catechism). The manner in which confession of sins is practiced within the ZCC, however, shows that it is ritualized to a large extent. A confession of sin requires a believer to go to the minister or church leaders, he confesses, and forgiveness of sins is pronounced. An article in the church magazine says⁶¹:

“In the ZCC tradition, we have always acknowledged the fact that no man is perfect, in that we are born transgressors and, hence, we must always acknowledge our wrongs to God through a Christian confession. (...) When you confess in front of *Moruti* (minister), you do not in reality talk to a carnal being (*Moruti*) as many people might think, but to God Himself in the disguise of an ordinary human being. Consequently, as you relate all your wrongdoings to *Moruti*, you become assured that you are reporting all your sins to God, in the hope that He will forgive you at that moment in time, as He listens to your confession. Normally, immediately after the confession, *Moruti* will assure you that God has heard you, and that He will never forsake you.”

As God is present ‘in the disguise’ of a minister, confession of sins seems to be something that the sinner and the minister can solve among themselves. Repentance and sincere regret are not necessary. God is relegated to a position where He silently, or even automatically, approves the forgiveness of sins. The belief that the forgiveness of sins remains an act of God, is missing here. Forgiveness of sins can be ‘done’ by the church by virtue of a prescribed ritual.

Healing and protection through instructions

It is common knowledge that the ZCC attracts people because of its healing practices and successes. “*ZCC ke kereke ya phodišo*” (the ZCC is a church of healing), the church magazine says. Outsiders sometimes say, not without disdain: “*Kereke yeo ke sepetlele*” (That church is a hospital).

The healing process is mostly initiated when help is sought in the ZCC. The church prophets expose the problem and the individual receives *ditaelo* (specific instructions). These instructions are believed to be from the Holy Spirit and need to be carried out in order to be healed.

The importance of the ZCC's *ditaelo* is stressed time and again. In an article entitled '*Ditaelo di nthušitše*' (The *ditaelo* have helped me), a man recounts how he was healed. The first part of the article (translated from Northern Sotho) goes like this:⁷⁹

"I was born in 1938. In the year 1960, in the second month, I became ill. I had a problem with my leg. I was hospitalized for six months without being healed. The doctors in the hospital told me that they were going to amputate my leg. That night, as I slept, I was shown a group of Zionists (*mokhukhu*). They were singing 'Honour the laws of your parents'. I woke up to find that I was still in hospital. When the doctor arrived, I asked permission to go home for two days. He gave his consent, and I went to the Zionists so that they could pray for me. Holy Zionists prayed for me, and the leg was healed with water and tea and coffee."

This man was instructed to drink water, tea and coffee. One of my respondents proffered the following example of *ditaelo* given to her by the ZCC prophet:

"I went to the ZCC for help and the prophet told me that I had a spirit. He gave me '*ditaelo*'. He told me to go to a well and draw water from it and use it to make tea, *Joko* tea, very weak. I also had to put three strings around my waist. Every Sunday I had to come to church with a bottle of milk so that they could pray for it and then I should drink it."

Healing and protection through ceremonies

The ZCC has some special ceremonies aimed at granting protection against misfortunes such as sorcery, and reinforcing the life of participants.

One such ceremony is the so-called *mpogo*. This is an all-night prayer-meeting held at somebody's homestead, and conducted on prescription by the church prophets. As far as I know a *mpogo* takes place only at homesteads belonging to members of the church but non-members are allowed to attend. Reasons for a *mpogo* include: the suspicion that sorcery is practised on one, illness in the family, infertility, etcetera. There are two types

⁷⁹ *The ZCC Messenger* 37:8, Easter 1997.

of *mpogo*: the large one and the small one. The large *mpogo* involves slaughtering a cow and cooking food. The whole congregation attends, and even other ZCC branches are invited to attend. They spend the night singing, dancing, preaching and choir singing. Meanwhile the prophets draw people aside in order to prophesy about their problems and to give *ditaelo* (instructions). The small *mpogo* is a minor ceremony, basically just a all-night prayer meeting.

A ceremony aimed at ensuring protection against *boloi* (witchcraft) involves church leaders placing a wire at the entrance to a homestead. This wire is attached to two poles at either side of the entrance in such a way that nobody can enter without passing underneath the wire. When it is properly fixed (which means: erected by the ministers of the church during a special ceremony), it is believed to neutralize the powers of any witch or sorcerer entering the premises. They will not be able to do any harm.

Healing and protection: miracles

The ZCC church magazine contains numerous miracle-stories. A writer that specialises in writing about the miracles of the ZCC, is JL Maaga, a medical doctor by profession. According to him a true church ought to be a church of miracles because ‘deeds speak louder than words’. The ministry of Moses, Jesus, Albert Schweitzer and others came with ‘evidence’ in the form of miracles. The ministry of the Lekganyanes is the same. The ZCC has grown because of miracles occurring in its midst. He goes on to say:⁸⁰

“The conversion to the ZCC faith and the way to the river is not through the sermon, but rather through the miracles wrought by the church. (...)

I do not know of one ZCC member who has converted by hearing the minister’s sermon. All those I know and have spoken to, were converted by some deed or combination of deed in their lives or those of their next of kin by the church.”

Maaga has written several articles about miracles he claims have happened through the power of the ZCC. In one such incident he describes how two big buses were on a collision course at Church Square in the centre of Pretoria:⁸¹

“The one bus came down Church Street, moving from east to west, went through a blood red robot, entered the intersection, and turned left to circle the square. At that same instant,

⁷⁹ *The ZCC Messenger* 3:13, December 1985.

⁸⁰ *The ZCC Messenger* 5:8-9, September 1986.

another bus, came thundering down Paul Kruger Street, moving from south to north; brakes having failed at the robot, it turned right to circle the square anti-clockwise, in a desperate effort to avoid a collision. The two monsters of steel, faced each other. But, lo and behold, in the fast diminishing space between the two monsters, a lone cyclist is peddling away furiously, in a vain effort to get out of the way. But to no avail. As the two monsters meet head-on, and crunch into each other, he is caught between them. A sigh of agony and human misery escapes from many lips as his fate is sealed. (...) When the buses are eventually pulled apart, the bicycle is found sandwiched between them, but riderless. The mystery of the missing rider is eventually solved when the cyclist emerges from underneath one of the buses, scared out of his wits, but unscathed.”

Upon questioning, the mystery is solved. The man explains that he is a ZCC-member and that the bishop has given him an order (*taelo*) never to leave home without the ZCC-badge. The story continues:

“The last thing he remembered vividly was that just before the two buses ploughed into each other, the church badge came floating down as a big sheet, enveloped him, carried him off the bicycle, and deposited him under the bus. Thus he escaped unscratched. Plucked from the very jaws of death by the grace of God.”

Evaluation

Although forgiveness of sins is mentioned, it is clear that the emphasis in the ZCC is very much on life-force (*maatla*), healing and protection. With this type of salvation there is no need for a separate Christology, let alone a view on the Lordship of Christ.

5.6 Laws and instructions

Church life in the ZCC is characterized by the scrupulous keeping of laws, instructions and regulations. It is believed that these laws and regulations come from God, but are channelled to the people through bishop Lekganyane and the prophets of the church. M.J. Baloyi writes about Lekganyane as the ‘star’ that always shines⁸²:

⁸¹ *The ZCC Messenger* 14:20-21; September 1989.

⁸² *The ZCC Messenger* 37:12, Easter 1997.

“Before we could recognise this star, we were physically and spiritually dead because of our disobedience and sins. (...) Now that we have discovered this star in one way or another as the fountain of life, it is our responsibility to fully dedicate and commit ourselves to the commands of our star.”

(Important: these are the commands of Lekganyane.)

In another article J.K. Thobejane answers the question of: who is a true believer? A part of his article goes like this (translated from Northern Sotho).⁸³

This is the question: Who is a true believer of the ZCC? This is the answer: A true believer of the ZCC-church is the one who follows all the laws of this church, and who does this without being forced or threatened. If you refuse to follow the laws of this church, my friend, you should realize you are truly an adversary of the ZCC.

The Word of God and the instructions of the ZCC

The ZCC makes a distinction between laws and instructions. Laws (*melao*) are general and apply to everybody. Instructions (*ditaelo*) are specific and are issued to an individual member or a homestead. JL Maaga explains:⁸⁴

“The law, as set out, is always explicit, and needs no belabouring. The law applies to everybody, in that particular situation, all the time; whereas the *taelo*, on the other hand, applies to a select group, at a specific time, and under certain circumstances to meet the demands of the circumstances.”

The same writer explains that the strength of the ZCC is that it has more to offer than just the Bible (the law). Many churches have the Bible, but only the ZCC has the *ditaelo* (instructions) which proceed from the Spirit. In an interesting paragraph Maaga gives an explanation of hymn 79 in the ‘Difela tsa Sione’ hymn book. The 5th verse of this hymn says⁸⁵:

Moea o latele Lentsoe

Naheng tsohle moo le rongoang

Ha le setse le jaliloe,

E be oona o nosetsang.

May the Spirit follow the Word

Wherever the Word is being sent

When it (the Word) is sown

May it be (the Spirit) that waters

⁸³ *The ZCC Messenger* 34:22, Easter 1996.

⁸⁴ *The ZCC Messenger* 7:15, Easter 1987.

⁸⁵ *Lifela tsa Sione* :66.

While this is basically a prayer for the Spirit to accompany the Word wherever it is sown, in Maaga's exegesis the Spirit is disconnected from the Word and connected to the *ditaelo* of the ZCC. He writes⁸⁶:

"Hymn 79, in Lifela tsa Sione, vers 5 says "Moea o latele lentsoe, Naheng tsohle moo le rongoang: Ha le setse le jadlooe, E be oona o nosetsang." The law is embodied in the *lentsoe*, because, *lentsoe* brings the message of the bible, i.e., the instruction from GOD, the law. Thus the law comes first, and *moea*, the very essence of *ditaelo*, the stuff that *ditaelo* is made of, shall follow the law wherever the law goes, and shall thus be governed by the law (*molao*).

The other churches have *molao*, without *moea*, to wit *ditaelo*, and yet I am not aware of a church that has only *ditaelo* and no *molao*."

The law is (in) the Bible. But the *ditaelo* (instructions) are from the Spirit. Other churches have the Bible without the Spirit. The ZCC has both the Bible and the Spirit because it has the *ditaelo*.

Although it is maintained that the 'instructions' shall be governed by the 'law', this reasoning may easily lead to a serious undervaluing of the Word of God, which in turn has a detrimental effect on the Lordship of Christ, Who governs the church through his Word and Spirit.

A few more quotes to illustrate the importance attached to instructions given by ZCC prophets, are the following. A writer in the church magazine says:⁸⁷

"People who are not part of the ZCC in-group have always wondered at the power behind *ditaelo*, which continue to be integral to our lives, as we continue to live in this world of chaos and dangerous illnesses. They can't understand why "household necessities" (such as tea, salt, water, etc.) can manage to heal both the sickness of the mind and the sickness of the body. The blunder of it all lies in their initial failure to realise that these "household necessities" are made holy before they qualify to be called *ditaelo*."

Another writer asserts that using medicine is in fact trusting 'earthly vanities'. The *ditaelo* of the ZCC are God-given and, therefore, they guarantee healing and protection.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ *The ZCC Messenger* 7:16, Easter 1987.

⁸⁷ *The ZCC Messenger* 37:10, Easter 1997.

⁸⁸ *The ZCC Messenger* 11:6, September 1988.

“Do we underestimate the power of God? The ditaelo are prescribed by the voice of Christ Jesus in God through Angels and the Holy Spirit as unifying unit to the Two. I am circumstantially compelled to proclaim that the so-called disease remedies are unclean.”

Old Testament Laws

With respect to its laws the ZCC is commonly known to adhere to some of the Old Testament laws. Some examples are the following:

It is forbidden to eat pork. Deut. 14:8 is cited as proof of this⁸⁹.

“The pig is also unclean; although it has a split hoof, it does not chew the cud. You are not to eat their meat or touch their carcasses.”

It is anathema to drink beer. Many OT-texts are used here, e.g. Lev. 10:8-11.⁹⁰

“Then the Lord said to Aaron, you and your sons are not to drink wine or other fermented drink whenever you go into the Tent of Meeting, or you will die.”

The three festivals (Good Friday, Pulo ya ngwaga, and Christmas) are defended by referring to Deut. 16:16.⁹¹

“Three times a year all your men must appear before the Lord your God at the place he will choose.”

Substantiation for wearing ZCC-badges is found in Numbers 15:37-40.⁹²

“Throughout the generations to come you are to make tassels on the corners of your garments. You will have these tassels to look at and so you will remember all the commands of the LORD, that you may obey them.”

It is forbidden to eat ‘mopani’ worms according to their interpretation of Deut. 14:19.⁹³

“All flying insects that swarm are unclean to you, do not eat them.”

A menstruating woman is unclean for a period of seven days. This is defended by a reference to Leviticus 15:19.

“When a woman has her regular flow of blood, the impurity of her monthly period will last seven days, and anyone who touches her will be unclean till evening.”

For the same reason ZCC-men do not allow a woman, not even their own wife, to touch their church uniforms. A woman in her monthly period may defile you.

⁸⁹ Zion Christian Church, *Katekisma ya mathomo ya ZCC*

⁹⁰ *The ZCC Messenger* 22:18, Easter 1992.

⁹¹ *The ZCC Messenger* 23:26, September 1992.

⁹² *The ZCC Messenger* 23:26, September 1992.

⁹³ *The ZCC Messenger* 23:26, September 1992.

Even polygamy is defended by referring to the Old Testament. Therefore, it is not surprising that a survey done among ZCC-members showed that 62,2 % of the men had one wife, 29,26 % had two wives, and 5,93 % had three or more wives.⁹⁴

One of my respondents, a lady of about 35 years of age, who had been a member of the ZCC previously, told me that one of the local ZCC-leaders, a married man, had tried to seduce her. As this was inexcusable behaviour she complained to another minister, who defended his colleague by referring to Isaiah 4:1...

“In that day seven women will take hold of one man...”

Regulations

General instructions or regulations are also issued by the headquarters at Moria. A few examples appeared in the September 1989 church magazine (translated from Northern Sotho).⁹⁵

(15) When a man or a woman has lost his wife or husband to death, he/she will stay home for two months and two weeks without attending church, but he/she will be given prayers and *ditaelo* while being at home. When it is a man who is a minister, he should stay at home for two months and two weeks. After that he can come to church, but he should not sit with the ministers and he should not pray for the people or take part in any activity of a minister, until three months and two weeks have passed. When he has completed this period, the ministers will sprinkle him with water so that he can resume praying for the people.

(24) Instruction with regard to the water of a well (*meetse a sediba*). All wells are the same. People coming from afar say they have instructions (*ditaelo*) for the well of ga-Mamabolo⁹⁶. Wherever you are you can draw water from a well, it can be prayed for and you can carry out the instruction with it. The main thing is the well and the prayer.

(25) Coffee is meant for drinking, not for sprinkling people. There is no instruction for sprinkling people with coffee.

⁹⁴ *The ZCC Messenger* 20:31, September 1991.

⁹⁵ *The ZCC Messenger* 14:12-13, September 1989.

⁹⁶ Ga-Mamabolo is the region where the ZCC headquarters are located. Apparently church members, believing that the water of the bishop's well is more powerful than the water from other wells, came in large numbers to ask for water from the his well. Apparently this caused problems (not enough water?).

Evaluation

There is an elaborate and ever growing system of laws and instructions in the ZCC. The careful observance of these laws and instructions requires a lot of attention and energy. The aim of these laws and instructions is to heal from illnesses and to protect against misfortunes such as uncleanness, illness and death. Salvation is seen in terms of providence and protection. The effect on Christology is twofold: (1) As salvation is understood in terms of providence and protection, there is no need for a separate Christology. (2) The church has assumed the effectuation of this salvation by issuing laws and instructions and performing the necessary rituals.

An additional aspect of importance, is the fact that the *ditaelo* originate not from the Bible, but () from the Holy Spirit. This is seen as the trade mark of the ZCC: all churches have the Bible, but the ZCC has more: it has the Bible and the Spirit-given instructions. It is clear that this may easily lead to a separation of Word and Spirit and an undervaluing of the Word of God. This in turn has a detrimental effect on the Lordship of Christ who, Biblically seen, governs the church and its members through his Word and Spirit (not separated).

5.7 Traditional beliefs and practices

The official position of the ZCC with regard to traditional beliefs and practices is not entirely clear. In the church magazine one finds conflicting statements. L.J. Mathopa states that “go phasa badimo” (to venerate the ancestor spirits) is “an unchristian act”.⁹⁷ And in the same issue there is an article entitled ‘Turn away from Sangoma beliefs’.⁹⁸ However, there is an article by P.M. Khubayi in which he asserts that bishop Lekganyane is the present day Mediator “between the Zionists and gods and God”⁹⁹. He is unequivocal in his opinion that Lekganyane “is the only person who can communicate with our gods”.

⁹⁷ *The ZCC Messenger* 37:8, Easter 1997.

⁹⁸ *The ZCC Messenger* 37:36, Easter 1997.

⁹⁹ *The ZCC Messenger* 16:26, Easter 1990.

Though obscurity shrouds the official position of the ZCC, the practical position is:
The ZCC condones, and may even encourage, ancestor veneration.

A theological student reported the following to me. He was at a *moletelo* (night vigil), the night before the burial of one of our church members. A few ZCC-ministers were also present. One of them spoke a few words of comfort and encouragement and then closed by saying: "*Ke lebogile sebaka se ke se filwego. Ka Modimo le badimo ba ba phelago, Amen*" (I thank you for the time that I have been given. In the name of God and the living ancestors, Amen.) Afterwards, during a break, the man was criticized by some ministers of the St Engenas ZCC (the one with the dove emblem) who said he was wrong in mixing God and the ancestors. After some discussion the ZCC-ministers admitted that there was a *mistake nyane* (a small mistake).

This story illustrates an assertion that is often heard, namely that ZCC-people will not easily talk about the ancestral spirits when other people are present, but that they surely do it in their own meetings.

People may also include the ancestors in their prayers. A man might end his prayer like this: I ask this "in the name of the God of the Lekganyanes and Lekganyane himself and the ancestors of the homestead of (surname)" (*leineng la Modimo wa boLekganyane le Lekganyane ka boyena le badimo ba ga*).

In par. 5.2 I have related the story of the ZCC-prophet who told me that Lekganyane's ancestors had been in contact with my own ancestors. After that experience I asked many ZCC-members whether it is indeed possible for Lekganyane's ancestors to meet mine, even though my ancestors are all buried in The Netherlands. They assured me that this is perfectly feasible. "*Ba ka kopana godimo*" (they can meet up there), one man said.

"*Badimo ba Lekganyane ga ba palelwe ke selo*" (nothing is impossible for Lekganyane's ancestors) another one assured me. All these respondents took for granted that communication occurs between Lekganyane's and other people's ancestors.

Neither are they restricted to just meeting. It is also believed that they can make 'things happen'. People who ask the ZCC for help, are often told to see to it that "*badimo ba geno ba kopane le badimo ba Lekganyane*" (your ancestors should come together with

the ancestors of Lekganyane). I was told the story of a businessman who wanted his business to flourish. He was given an instruction (*taelo*) to go to Moria for three months. When he finished there,

“ba re a fete kua mabilleng a batswadi ba hae le bokoko ba hae (they told him to go past the graves of his parents and his grandparents).

Ge a se no boa mabilleng, o tlo etsa mpogo mo gae, gore ba ile ba rapediše motse (After his return from the cemetery, he had to hold a ‘mpogo’ at home so that they could pray for his homestead).

Ba mmošša ba re: rapela badimo ba geno le ba Lekganyane, ba kopane e be ntho e tee”

(They told him: pray to your ancestors and the ancestors of Lekganyane, request that they meet and that it may become ‘one thing’ – a joint project).

Another lady told me that a ‘mpogo’ (all night prayermeeting for the homestead) is not done without the veneration of ancestors, but the ceremonies will not be mixed:

“The Zionists usually arrive at 8:00 p.m. They will first ask whether the ancestors spirits have been venerated. This should have taken place early in the morning. If the ancestors have been venerated, they proceed with the ‘mpogo’.”

Consulting traditional healers (diviners), is rejected by the ZCC. The church wants its members to come to see the prophets. They, in turn, give you *ditaelo* (instructions) which are believed to come from the Holy Spirit. Should this not resolve the matter, the church may allow its members to consult the diviners.

One respondent, an ex-member of the ZCC, told me:

“Go ya ngakeng, ba re o se ke ya.

(About consulting a diviner, they say you should not go).

Fela, ge ba bona gore ba a palelwa, ba ka go botša gore o ye ngakeng.

(But, if they see they are unable to help, they may tell you to go to the diviner).

Kereke ye e fenywa ke mademone

(This church is controlled by demons).”

During the course of my interviews I have heard stories about the practice of magic in the ZCC, stories about a snake being venerated at Moria, about secret places and about people disappearing at Moria.

During the time of my research there was a tape in circulation in Soshanguve. This tape, entitled *Moetapele* (Leader), contained a message by a man claiming to be a former ZCC-prophet. This man claimed that there is a dam or water reservoir at Moria, with a sort of snake or dragon living in it, called *Mmamokebe*, which controls Lekganyane's life and through him the whole ZCC. He interpreted this as fulfilling the prophecy of Revelation 13:11-17 concerning the Beast out of the earth.

Sometimes one reads similar allegations in newspaper reports.

The *Sowetan* of September 22, 1997, reported about a case of five ZCC pastors having been arrested in connection with the death of a traditional chief who had died at Moria during the Easter weekend. The chief's wife had also been arrested. In an alleged confession to the police she had claimed that "three of the suspects wanted to abduct and kill the chief for body parts to strengthen their ailing businesses".

I have not tried to investigate whether there is truth in allegations like these.

Evaluation

Traditional beliefs and practices include an open regard for the veneration of ancestors. The bishop is believed to be in contact with his ancestors. It is also believed that his ancestors can meet members' ancestors and that blessings can be arranged in this way. Whether this is official church policy is not clear, but the church leadership does condone these beliefs and the accompanying practices.

The effect on the functioning of the Lordship of Christ is that it may push Jesus even more into the background. Jesus is associated with God only. Lekganyane, however, is seen as the mediator with God as well as the ancestral spirits. What Jesus can do for us, is not clear. Lekganyane, however, is able to give prosperity and protection through his contacts with the ancestral spirits. This causes Lekganyane to be seen as a very important mediator and Jesus to be experienced as quite irrelevant.

5.8 Conclusions

1. The Christology of the Zion Christian Church is weak. Perceptions of Jesus Christ are vague. Members find it difficult to differentiate between Him and God the Father.

The person of the Son has been drawn into the person of the Father. One of the main reasons for this is that salvation is understood in terms of creation and providence (healing, prosperity, protection against misfortune). As the church plays an important role in the performance of rituals and ceremonies aimed at securing this type of salvation, there is a tendency towards ritualism.

2. Bishop Lekganyane is king, priest and prophet to his people. He leads his people, protects, blesses and prays for them. They receive laws and instructions from him. He is a man like Moses. As he is such a central figure in the church, he overshadows Jesus Christ.
3. The ZCC rules the lives of its members through an elaborate system of laws and instructions. The instructions (*ditaelo*) are given by prophets and believed to come from the Holy Spirit. As the Bible is not involved, there is little room for an understanding of the authority of Christ, whereby He rules the lives of believers through His Word and Spirit.
4. With respect to traditional beliefs and practices, it appears that the veneration of ancestral spirits is accepted. Even the bishop is believed to communicate with them. This makes his position in the faith of his followers even more important and it causes Jesus to be even more irrelevant to them.