

7. ANALYSIS

7.1 Introduction

In the previous chapters we have described the data of the first and second phases of our research (survey research, field research and content analysis). This has led to conclusions regarding each of the three denomination-types. It is incumbent on us to analyse and interpret these results within a broader framework.

As the research dealt with black Christians resident in a South African township, consideration must be given to the fact that our respondents are at the apex of three spheres of influence. They have a threefold identity.

In the first place they are *African* people. The background of the traditional African worldview and the traditional African religion remains. Many urbanized blacks were born in a rural area. The rural village life and the traditional worldview, to some extent, continue to influence their thinking.

Secondly they are *township* people. They do not live in isolated African small-scale societies but in a large township adjacent to Pretoria. They have been subjected to and influenced by modern Western culture. They are constantly exposed to the products of Western secularism.

Lastly they are *Christian* people. They have undergone the influence of Christianity. Their faith is moulded by both generic African township Christianity and the particular tenets of their own denomination.

Anyone with insight into a Christian's life in the African township, will be able to relate how these three influences are encountered daily.

A week in the life of an average church member - let's say her name is Mrs Chabalala - may include the following activities. On Sunday morning she attends the local church service in Soshanguve, together with her husband and children. In the afternoon she takes

her monthly membership fee to the meeting of the funeral society. From Monday to Friday she works at a government office in Pretoria but () sees to it that she arrives back home at 5:00 p.m. so that she can watch the next episode of 'The bold and the beautiful' on TV. Friday evening she takes a taxi to Stinkwater, a rural area nearby, to attend a *moletelo* (night vigil) for a deceased relative of one of her colleagues. The funeral takes place on Saturday morning. She arrives back home late Saturday afternoon.

A week in the life of her husband includes the following activities. On Sunday morning he attends the church service. On Sunday afternoon he is in front of the TV-set, watching Kaizer Chiefs, his favourite soccer team, take on Orlando Pirates. From Monday to Friday he works at the Nissan-factory in nearby Rosslyn industrial area. On Tuesday evening he attends the weekly meeting of the financial committee of the church. The other evenings he watches TV. On Saturday he travels to Atteridgeville where *magadi* (dowry)-negotiations will take place with the family of the girl whom his younger brother wants to marry.

The above examples illustrate the mingling of church, secular Western world, and traditional African background perceptions, and the influence they exercise on Christians in Soshanguve.

That the old African worldview still exerts a strong influence, even on urbanized church members in Soshanguve, is to be expected. Sociologists point out that cultural factors such as beliefs and value systems are deep-rooted and do not change quickly, not even in contact situations with another culture.

Cultures do change, but some aspects require more time before change is perceptible. A recently published UNESCO-report speaks of "slow and fast variables" (Unesco 1995:93). Under the heading 'fast variables' (things that change easily) the report classifies use of technology, economic organization, language and vocabulary. So called 'slow variables' (things that do not change easily) include traditions, beliefs, value systems, modes of life, ways of thought, customs, and historical or religious celebrations. When applied to African people in a township environment, this means that they may readily use modern Western technology while, at the same time, their thinking remains moulded by the traditional African belief and value systems.

Life becomes fraught with incongruities. A story that comes to mind was that of a lady who phoned her husband on his cellphone, to find out where he was. He told her that he was at the traditional healer's place waiting for the *ditaola* (divination bones) to be thrown. Picture the cellphone and the bones together: people apparently experience no contradiction in using both Western technology and traditional African techniques. Another example: a female member of our church was promoted to a higher position at work. She was given her own computer on which to work.. One morning she found that the computer was wet. This caused great fear among the colleagues and aroused the suspicion that some jealous person was trying to practise sorcery on her by sprinkling *muti* (traditional medicine) on her computer.

These examples – though somewhat extravagant – serve to illustrate the mix of African worldview and Western culture one encounters in the urbanized African. The worldview of church members in Soshanguve, displaying a convergence of influences, can be expected to be similar.

Durand, whose research took place in Port Elizabeth, found various groups among the black population which he classified as follows: (1) real Red Xhosa pagans, (2) real Christians, (3) a large middle group consisting of (a) traditional but non-practising pagans, (b) totally Westernized pagans, and (c) secularized, nominal Christians (1970:95).

Van Binsbergen (1998:887) has asserted that “the African townsman is not a displaced villager or tribesman but, on the contrary, ‘detribalized’ as soon as he leaves his village.” He quotes Gluckman who formulated the famous sentence: “The African townsman is a townsman” (:887). The same Van Binsbergen has shown that traditional African village life (whether it be seen in realistic terms, or cherished as a romantic ideal) is still part of the thinking of African urbanites (:890-891).

We intend to elucidate on both the African traditional worldview (par 7.2) and the effects of urbanization and Western secularism (par 7.3). We will then proceed to analyse the findings of our research against these backgrounds, taking into account the theological premises of the three denominations we studied. (par 7.4).

7.2 The traditional African worldview and religion

It is not our intention to give exhaustive treatment to African Traditional Religion (ATR) but to concentrate on the significant concepts, which have a bearing on the analysis of the research results.

In par 7.2.1 the main philosophical African concepts are discussed. In par 7.2.2 and 7.2.3 the main theological concepts will be described, focussing on African concepts of God and the African view on salvation.

7.2.1 Philosophical African concepts

There has been an on-going discussion among scholars concerning the extent to which one may generalize about African metaphysics and philosophy. Is there such a thing as ‘an African philosophy’ or should one rather speak about the philosophy of different cultural groups such as the Zulus, the Venda, etcetera? The trend among scholars seems to be that one should be aware of the danger of generalizing too easily, but that it is possible to outline “views which are alive in a fairly large part of Africa and which can serve as representative of metaphysical thinking in Africa” (Teffo & Roux, 1998:137). Scholars differ in their identification of philosophical categories. Bediako (1995:93-95) follows Turner, who proposed a six-feature framework for understanding the traditional African worldview. Turaki (1999) pursues Steyne’s outline of four philosophical foundations for the traditional African worldview. We found the exposition of Turaki / Steyne particularly helpful. The four categories they defined are the following: holism, spiritualism, dynamism and communalism.

Holism means that there is a holistic view of the world. Man sees “the human world, nature and the spirit world as an integrated whole. Man lives in harmony and in balance between the human world and the spirit world.” (Turaki 1999:110) This is echoed by many scholars, e.g. Teffo & Roux who wrote: “African metaphysics is holistic in nature.

Reality is seen as a closed system so that everything hangs together and is affected by any change in the system” (1998:138).

Spiritualism means that the whole world is seen as “replete with the dominant and pervasive presence of the impersonal powers and forces, spirit beings, many divinities and gods” (Turaki 1999:99). Though the classifications may differ – in some parts of Africa there is a belief in semi-gods, in some parts not – there is a general belief that all things in life can be influenced by the world of spirits. Therefore “the correct response to any situation is spiritual, whether the matter is a family affair, sickness, or ceremonial practice” (Steyne, quoted by Turaki, 1999:99).

Dynamism, also called power-consciousness, is man’s pursuit of power as a means of fortification against a perilous world, where fate, evil and other dangers abound. “Life’s essential quest is to secure power and use it” (:100). Power can be obtained by various means such as ritual manipulation, laying on of hands, or encountering a spirit being. It is believed that power is transferable and that it can be used to serve man’s purposes.

Communalism means that there is a communal view of man and the world and that kinship is very important. “Values such as loyalty, affinity and obligations mould and shape man’s moral responsibility and accountability in the community” (Turaki 1999:110).

Taking cognizance of these four philosophical categories, we shall move on to take a look at fundamental religious concepts in traditional African religion.

7.2.2 African concepts of God

Two issues deserve our consideration when we discuss traditional religious beliefs : firstly, traditional African concepts of God, secondly, the traditional African view on salvation (par 7.2.3).

An account of the traditional African concepts of God will prompt the question of the extent to which one can generalize. Is speaking of ‘an African concept of God’ valid? Or should we rather discuss the religious beliefs of the Zulus and the Sotho- and the Tswana-people separately? Van Rooy maintains that “it would be a fallacy to generalize about

‘the African idea of God’” (1995:12). In his book ‘Yahweh and Modimo’ he identifies six African concepts of God. Nevertheless many scholars have asserted that there is a remarkable similarity in the underlying principles (e.g. Bosch 1974:37-38). Van Rooy also mentions two common features. In the first place God is seen as part of the cosmos. “In all these models, God is the highest rung of the ladder of totality, but he does not stand outside or above the ladder. (...) Usually God may be the Creator, but then never in the sense of *Creator ex nihilo*” (1995:29). In the second place God is seen as a remote and incomprehensible God: “Being so far and high above man on earth, he cannot be expected to be involved in the doings and predicaments of man. He does not interfere. (...) The spiritual beings who are actually concerned with man and his behaviour are the ancestor spirits, the *badimo* or *mizimu*.” (:29-30)

Hierarchical structure

A recurrent principle is the hierarchical structure of the African spirit world, which is organized as follows:

- a Supreme Being / God
- (occasionally: demi-gods or divinities)
- the ancestors
- humankind
- (occasionally: nature spirits)

God is at the apex. Then, a degree lower, some tribes have demi-gods or divinities. This is followed by the ancestors, humankind, and then, in some cases, nature forces (Teffo & Roux 1998:138). Hence the basic hierarchical structure is the same, but the classifications may differ. West African people, for example, have many divinities, but for the Southern African people these are unimportant.

Edwin W. Smith, in his book ‘African Ideas of God’ (1961:118) mentions some “demi-gods” of the Tswana-Sotho: Cosa, Nape, Tintibane and others. He suspects that they may be deifications of ancient heroes. But recent writers do not mention lesser gods or divinities

(Hammond-Tooke 1993, Setiloane 1976). Divinities probably played a role in the religious world of the Tswana-Sotho long ago, but it seems that they have been forgotten. As far as the Zulu people are concerned, Berglund describes the cult of the *iNkosazana yeZulu*, the heavenly princess (1976:64-74), which appears to be important to young women in rural areas only.

The same is true for nature spirits, we quote Smith. (1961:23):

“In their cosmology the Bantu appear to give a lesser place than the Sudanic Negroes to these nature spirits. The spirits of the Bantu are mostly those of human beings who continue to live in the unseen world.”

For the South African context the focus is on a hierarchical structure consisting of (1) a Supreme Being, (2) ancestor spirits, (3) humankind.

Supreme Being

The concept of the Supreme Being among the Southern African peoples is described by Hammond-Tooke as: “The concept of a Supreme Being, or High God, was not highly developed in traditional thought. All Southern Bantu believed in such a god, but he was a vague, distant figure, taking little interest in his creatures. Each main group had its own name for God, which seems to indicate that he was thought of as a tribal god, rather like the God of the Hebrews. The Lovedu *Khuzwane*, the Kgaga *Kutšhaane*, the Xhosa *Dali* or *Qamatha*, the Zulu *Nkulunkulu*, the Venda *Raluvhimba* and the Sotho *Modimo*, were all vaguely defined, with few myths relating to their doings and no regular rituals performed for them” (1993:149-150). Although small differences in their perception of the Supreme Being occurred between the groups, Hammond-Tooke asserts that “generally the idea of a High God did not elicit much interest or speculation. It was, in fact, more in the nature of a First Cause, a *deus otiosus*, who created the world and everything in it and who left it to get on with its business without further interference. It is true that illness and misfortune were sometimes said to be caused by God, but this only occurred if a more specific cause could not be determined. The idea of ‘God’, therefore,

was closer to our idea of ‘chance’ or ‘luck’ and was used to explain things otherwise unexplainable.” (:150)

God: a force and/or a being

While Hammond-Tooke generalizes with regard to the tribes of Southern Africa, Van Rooy identifies different concepts of God. The majority of Soshanguve’s people have a Sotho-Tswana background, and a substantial minority have a Zulu-Ndebele background, so we will concentrate on their concept of God.

Van Rooy, as did Setiloane, describes the Sotho-Tswana *Modimo*-concept as “the impersonal, all-pervading, cosmic energy” (1995:iv), and the Zulu *Inkosi yeZulu*-concept as “the remote, inaccessible God” (1995:iv). An important issue here is the question of whether the Supreme Being is seen primarily in impersonal or personal terms. According to Van Rooy the Sotho-Tswana originally had an impersonal concept of God, conversely the Zulu had a much more personal concept of God, although He was remote.

Van Rooy bases his description of the Sotho-Tswana concept mainly on Setiloane’s thesis ‘The Image of God among the Sotho-Tswana’ (1976). Setiloane asserts that the Sotho-Tswana word *Modimo* (God) belongs to the second noun class, a class which contains intangible objects like *mosi* (smoke), *mollo* (fire), *moya* (wind). In contrast, the word *badimo* (ancestors) is placed in the first noun class, the ‘personal’ class. This leads Setiloane to believe that the ancestral spirits are seen as personal, but God as impersonal. He therefore proposes that *Modimo* (God) should be referred to as ‘IT’ (1976:77). In his book Setiloane constantly refers to God as ‘IT’. At the same time, however, he does not deny that *Modimo* may be described by epithets in the personal class.

Van Rooy mentions that Setiloane’s ideas have been contested by “many Basotho and Batswana” (1995:14). Indeed it seems that Setiloane has gone too far. It is unlikely that the Tswana-Sotho concept of God was as radically impersonal as he suggests.

Reasons for this assertion are the following. First, there is the curious fact that the word *Modimo* has two plurals, the one being *badimo* (ancestral spirits) which is in the personal class, the other being *medimo* (gods), which is in the impersonal class (Ziervogel & Mokgokong 1985:156). This gives the word a certain ambiguity which is illustrated by the

fact that some scholars place the word *Modimo* in the impersonal noun class (Smith 1961:118), while others place it in the personal noun class (Kriel & Van Wyk 1989:143). Second, Setiloane himself does not deny that *Modimo* may be described by epithets in the personal class (1976:77).

Third, E.W. Smith claims that *modimo* is also applied to highly venerated persons, e.g. a chief or a well-loved missionary (Smith 1961:118). The chief of the Pedi-people, for example, could be called *Modimo wa lefase*: God on earth (Ziervogel & Mokgokong 1985:156). This would be difficult to explain if the word *modimo* was to be interpreted as impersonally as Setiloane does.

Fourth, *Modimo* was given personal attributes. For example: Mönnig says that the Pedi people “had no clear conception of the appearance of God, but he is definitely male” (1967:45).

Fifth, it is unlikely that the Sotho-Tswana would have a radically impersonal concept of God whilst the neighbouring people, the Zulu and Shona, had a much more personal concept.

Christianity has exerted its influence on the Sotho-Tswana religious concepts already, which makes it very difficult to determine what the original concept was. Turaki is probably right in suggesting that in the traditional African concept God assumes both personal and impersonal attributes: “Those who speak of God in traditional Africa in terms of a personal Being are correct, because the attributes of God are usually described in personal terms. Similarly, those who speak of Him in terms of an impersonal Power or in terms of anthropomorphism are also correct, because the traditional conception of power in the universe is diffused and undifferentiated” (1999:154-155). Turaki summarizes this by saying that God may be viewed both as “a Supreme Power or a Supreme Being” (:155). Many years ago Edwin W. Smith expressed his views along the same lines: “It may be granted that the godhead is generally conceived in terms of power. (...) But the unequivocal assertion that the ‘High God’ idea does not exist in Africa, that the supreme Power is always thought of as ‘It’ and not ‘He’, cannot be accepted.” (1961:21).

Our conclusion regarding the Sotho-Tswana speaking people, is that they have a traditional religious background where the Supreme Being is seen in both personal and

impersonal terms. It is difficult to say where the greater emphasis lay, whether on the personal, (Smith) or the impersonal side (Setiloane). The perception of God probably fluctuated between the two. With respect to the Zulu-speaking people, there seems to be consensus on their more personal concept of God, although this did not extend to the use of a personal name for Him.

The influence of Christianity altered the peoples belief, the concept of God gradually became more personal. Van Rooy is of the opinion that: "Modern Basotho/Batswana have undergone a process of social and religious acculturation, with the result that most Basotho and Batswana now tend to think of *Modimo* in more personal terms than before their acquaintance with Christianity" (1995:46).

A remote God

An important related aspect to the African concept of God is His remoteness. As early as 1929 Edwin W. Smith wrote of the South African tribes: "The ancestors occupy the centre of their field of vision; the Supreme Being has been thrust to the circumference, and is but little regarded." (Smith 1929:89) Hammond-Tooke asserts that God was "a distant, vague figure" (1993:149). Häselbarth claims that the extensive funeral rites of the Mamabolo do not make mention of God. (1972:132). Van Rooy asserts that God is "not expected to be involved in the doings and predicaments of man" (1995:29). McVeigh, in agreement with Smith, noted that "the Africans' conception of God is strongly influenced by the social organization of the tribe in which they live. In societies where the idea of kingship is strong and the king is remote from the people, their conception of the Supreme God follows a similar pattern" (1974:55). Generally speaking "the African God is distant and little concerned with men and their problems" (:57). He may manifest himself, but these manifestations are to be feared because they may do a lot of harm. "Sudden and violent storms are attributed to the Lord-of-the-Sky's bad temper or his anger" (Berglund 1976:38). Van Rooy concludes: Among the Zulu people it seems "that communion with him was to be avoided rather than sought, since his nearness is dangerous to man and can only result in disaster because of his overwhelming spirit power" (1995:91). One of Berglund's Zulu-informants said: "We do not love him as we love the shades. He is too far away to love. One can only love the one that is near. But we

fear him. That is what we do. We fear him. He has *amawala* (a haphazard way of acting). We do not know what next he will do to us” (1976:42). Only in the event of dire straits, such as severe drought, will He be approached. Berglund describes a ceremony where Zulu-people climb a ‘holy mountain’ in order to pray for rain (:45). Once ascended they would call on their god, saying: “Lord, we are in your presence! Lord, we have been brought here by our great need!” etcetera (:45). But in normal circumstances “the Lord-of-the-Sky is approached through the shades” (:43).

Although God remains aloof, this should not be understood “as an absolute separation in a deistic sense” (McVeigh 1974:53). God is remote, yet continues to be ‘part of the system’, and at times His proximity may be felt. God is not transcendent in the Biblical sense of a God whom even the highest heavens cannot contain (2 Chr. 6:18). The well-known African theologian Mbiti has used the term ‘transcendence of God’ to describe traditional African faith (1970:12-16). He was criticized however, for his affiliation of what is perceived to be a Western theological concept to the traditional African understanding of God. (Wiredu 1998:191,195; Turaki 1999:146). The remote God is better understood against the background of a African holistic framework, where spiritual beings have a place and in which ancestor spirits play an important role (Turaki 1999:151).

Several African myths describe the separation of God and man. Mbiti has drawn attention to the remarkable fact that “out of these many myths concerning the primeval man and the loss of his original state, there is not a single myth, to my knowledge, which even attempts to suggest a solution or reversal of this great loss. Man accepted the separation between him and God...” (Mbiti 1969:98). Mbiti feels this is “the most serious *cul-de-sac*” in African religion (:99), namely that it offers no solution for bridging the gap between man and God.

A silent God

The experience of God as aloof leads to little expectation of Him revealing Himself. Indeed, many scholars have concluded that the African God is a silent God. McVeigh writes: “The conception of God’s remoteness and absenteeism is also a factor in the

African view of revelation. An individual is addressed directly by his guardian spirit or family ancestors, and he seeks their advice and help in time of need. The village, clan and tribe in turn receive their messages from the communal and tribal divinities. Generally God interferes only in unusual circumstances, in times of national danger or disaster” (1974:74). Van Rooy writes: “In Africa, God is essentially a silent god. In most cultures he never speaks to man, since he is too far removed from man on the hierarchical ladder, and in those cultures in which he does speak to man, he speaks only sporadically and in special oracles through initiated specialists. Never in any case does his oracle have any bearing on personal fellowship with the individual.” (1995:75)

Turaki also speaks of “the apparent silence of God in African religious practice and behaviour” (1999:163).

Of course, this does not mean that African people did not have a need for revelation. In fact, they desired and sought light from the invisible world. It was obtained by the service of specialists (diviners, etcetera) or thought to be received through dreams. In most cases, however, this was thought to be a form of communication with the ‘nearer’ spirits, not with the Supreme Being.

A non-worshipped God

Can the African people’s veneration of the Supreme Being be called worship? McVeigh, following Edwin W. Smith, sums it up as follows: “Africans conceive of God as far away and remote, and this conception has its influence on their worship life. In general they do not go to God directly or make regular prayers to Him” (:109). However, in times of great need Africans make their prayers directly to God (:111).

Mbiti has stated that God was worshipped in Africa by sacrifices, offerings, prayers and invocations. He admits, however, that there is a difference between the African type of worship, which he describes as “utilitarian”, and Christian worship: “This faith is utilitarian, not purely spiritual, it is practical and not mystical. The people respond to God in and because of particular circumstances, especially in times of need. Then they seek to obtain what He gives, be that material or spiritual; they do not search for Him as the final reward or satisfaction of the human soul or spirit. Augustine’s description of man’s soul

being restless until it finds its rest in God, is something unknown in African traditional religious life” (1969:67-68).

Mbiti’s description of African religion has been contested by African scholars like Wiredu. Wiredu feels that theologians like Mbiti and Idowu have assimilated themselves too much to Western theological thinking (1998:191,195). They have tried to “Christianize the African past”. Wiredu states that the religion of the Akan people may be called “veneration of God” but that “there is nothing that can be called the worship of God in it” (:192). The fact that Akan people do not worship God, does, however, not mean that they do not believe in Him. To worship God, is a Western premise. Why should a perfect Supreme Being be interested in human praises and songs? The African way, according to Wiredu, is believing in God without worshipping Him. Africans should not try to prove that God was worshipped in Africa before the missionaries came. Instead, they should accept that Africans believed in God without worshipping Him, and be proud of this particular type of religion.

Turaki, though looking at the matter from a Christian perspective, comes to the same conclusion: “The overwhelming facts do show that, even though Africans generally have an awareness and belief in the Supreme Being, the truth is, this Supreme Being is not known to have been exclusively worshipped by traditional Africans. Instead, the African divinities and the ancestors, who are the lesser beings, have been actively involved in the everyday religious life of the traditional Africans” (1999:86). He goes on to say that, where it is stated that God is being worshipped indirectly through the intermediaries (lesser divinities, ancestor spirits), this is exactly what the Bible calls idolatry (:153). In fact, what happens is that the lesser spiritual beings are worshipped, while God is ignored.

Van Rooy draws attention to the lack of any cult among the Sotho-Tswana and the Zulu people: “The virtual absence of any cult, as in the cases of *Modimo* and *iNkosi yeZulu*, reflects the beliefs about lack of personal involvement of God in the everyday life of man on earth” (1995:145). This is a far cry from the Biblical idea of an intimate covenant-relationship between God and his chosen people. Van Rooy again: “In the African concept of God, instances of this constant, loving, joyous communion with God are totally lacking, and the examples of sporadic *communication* (*not communion!*) with him

are so few and far between that they always strike scholars as noteworthy because of their very scarcity!” (1997:316)

God: interested in morality?

It needs to be asked what consequences the African concepts of God have for the morality of African people. McVeigh enquires: “Does God require righteousness?” (1974:84) Does the African God have an ethical concern? McVeigh quotes Edwin W. Smith’s summary: “That God should take note of all doings of individual men and should reward and punish them according to their deeds is an idea quite remote from the Bantu mind. Yet in some faint way they have a notion that He makes for righteousness” (1974:93).

Mbiti asserted that, “even if God is thought to be the ultimate upholder of the moral order, people do not consider Him to be immediately involved in the keeping of it. Instead, it is the patriarchs, living-dead, elders, priests, or even divinities and spirits who are the daily guardians of police of human morality” (1969:213). In his book ‘African Concepts of God’ Mbiti devotes some space to the theme ‘God as Judge’ (1970:76-78). He asserts that some African tribes believe that God may punish societies in the form of calamities on a national scale, e.g. droughts or floods. Some tribes also believe that God may punish individuals who commit wrong deeds like stealing, murder and rudeness to elderly people. The wrongdoings Mbiti mentions are all deeds that endanger the well-being of the community. This goes together well with Turaki’s treatment of the subject. Turaki asserts that Africa’s communal view of the world is an important foundational principle for ethics and morality. “The pursuit of the kinship community is a moral law, which governs the morality and ethics of man in traditional Africa” (1999:125). Taylor has described this as follows: “The essence of sin in the primal view is that it is anti-social. The sin that offends God is the sin that is against Man in his solidarity” (1963:172). In other words, God is not easily offended by the wrongdoings of man. Nyirongo maintains: “In daily life sin is not committed against God but against the community – one’s family or tribe (which includes the ancestral spirits). Consequently, fear of disapproval from one’s family/tribe is more valid than fear of God’s wrath over sin. In fact one must even tell lies just to avoid offending one’s people” (1997:61).

Within the holistic African worldview, then, a God believed to be part of the whole system, is automatically assumed to be interested in the same moral principles to which the system adheres.

Whatever qualifies as sin according to the views of the community, is thought to be identical to God's perception of sin. This, coupled with the belief that God is quite remote, culminates in a weakened feeling of moral accountability towards Him. He may get angry about some things, but judgments that may be specifically attributed to Him, are scarce. God is assumed to be interested in righteousness, but only as an extrapolation of the interests of the community, whereas ancestor spirits who are much nearer are thought to have a more direct interest in righteousness.

7.2.3 Salvation in Africa

What is seen as salvation in traditional African religion? This question should be answered in conjunction with another: What is seen as evil in traditional African religion?

The nature of salvation

According to the traditional African worldview, salvation exists where harmony is experienced (holism-principle), with regard to both the spiritual world (spiritism-principle) and the community (communalism-principle). This state of harmony is experienced where there is an abundance of life force (dynamism-principle) in the personal and community life. Evil, then, is the opposite: that there is a breakdown in life force and in harmonious relationships.

Nyirongo (1997:72-73), following Gaba, mentions five standards in terms of which salvation is perceived: (1) in the first place salvation means being incorporated into the tribe as a full human being by way of initiation, (2) in the second place salvation means becoming an ancestor after having died, (3) in the third place salvation means approaching old age and having gained the respect of the younger people, (4) in the fourth place salvation means acquiring wealth, good health, plenty of children and food, (5) in the fifth place salvation means winning approval from the community. These

standards can be summarized into two main principles: experiencing harmonious relationships and having life-force.

This is confirmed by other writers in different ways. Kato wrote: "To be saved... is to be accepted. To be accepted is first of all in the community of the living, and then in the city of the dead." (1975:42) Adeyemo echoed Kato: "Thus, it is plain that... to be saved primarily means to be accepted. One is first accepted to the community of the living by being good to one's neighbours, and secondly accepted among the community of the dead ancestors by remembering them through libations, prayers and offerings" (1979:93). He continues: "Salvation in the thought of traditional African peoples therefore implies acceptance in the community of the living and the living-dead, deliverance from the power of the evil spirits, and possession of life force. Only in limited cases are the people really searching and seeking after God" (:94).

With regard to the importance of life-force in Africa, Bosch said: "The greatest joy is to have an abundance of life-force, the greatest disaster is to lose one's life-force" (1987:57).

Magesa, too, described salvation in Africa in terms of having "abundance of life".

Anything that enhances this abundance of life is good. The central theme of Magesa's book 'African Religion' is that the criterion of African morality is the promotion of life force (1997:x). The happy state of salvation according to the African worldview is described by Magesa in the following way: "If the family, lineage, and clan enjoy good health and relative prosperity, particularly when the birth rate is good and the children survive to adulthood, it is believed that there is a good rapport in the network of relationships. The ancestors are happy, the vital force is strong, and there is harmony in the land and in creation. Such abundance of life is a clear indication that the population is upright with regard to the ancestors. Abundance of life indicates in clear terms that the norms essential for its preservation have not been disregarded or broken" (1997:81).

The moral principle to which all must aspire in African religion is a readiness to take part in community life and to share with others. It is, however, not only man who is expected to do this. Even the ancestral spirits and the gods (God), being part of the holistic framework, are expected to promote the life force of the community and its members.

That is why, according to Magesa, not only humility but also a distinct “confidence” or boldness characterizes African prayers: “As Africans approach prayer, they find it proper to be confident even in humility, precisely because the powers addressed in prayer are God and the ancestors, who have obligations towards their ‘children’, the living. It is perfectly legitimate for the living to express their deepest emotions of frustration, confusion, and anger in prayer to these invisible, mystical powers when things are not going well in this world” (:196).

The salvation expected from the ancestors, and ultimately from God, is therefore a creational type of salvation: health, life force, enough food, reasonably peaceful relationships, etcetera. This is what the African God and Saviour is expected to offer his children.

Sin and evil

Sin, in terms of traditional African religion, occurs when harmonious relationships are threatened or where an individual’s life force is weakened through another’s interference. Many writers have pointed out that sin in Africa is primarily seen in social terms. “Sin boils down to only social ills” (Kato 1975:42, Adeyemo 1979:93). A sinner, therefore, is someone who endangers the life-force and well-being of others. The sinner par excellence in Africa is the witch. “Witches are anti-social, they are the enemies of life” (Bosch 1987:46).

Africa traditionally has different explanations for misfortune and suffering. A possible explanation could be that the anger of the ancestral spirits has been aroused, in which case the misfortune is a *deserved* punishment, and one would not speak of ‘evil’. If, however, it is thought that the sufferings and misfortune are caused by witches and sorcerers, it would be *undeserved*. In this case we have ‘evil’ on our hands. Ray has stated: “The African concept of evil is that of perverse humanity: the human witch and sorcerer” (1976:68).

Of all the feasible explanations for suffering and misfortune, that of witchcraft is still very popular, even in modern day Africa. Teffo & Roux, describing the situation in the last decade of the 20th century, said: “We can safely say that the belief in witchcraft is

intense in most African societies and that people conduct their daily activities under tension, suspicion, and fears of bewitchment” (1998:143).

It seems that beliefs in witchcraft flourish in times of uncertainty. In the northern parts of South Africa, for example, there was a dramatic increase in so-called ‘witch hunts’ during the last years of the apartheid government’s reign. According to research done by the Human Sciences Research Council “there were very few reported cases before 1984, but in 1985 there was a sharp increase in cases involving the killing of witches, particularly in Lebowa and Gazankulu, which eventually spread to Venda in 1986. During 1987 the number of accusations of witchcraft in Venda declined but after the death of the Venda President, Patrick Mphephu, in April 1988, numerous cases of ‘witch’ burning and of medicine murder occurred. A dramatic upsurge in cases of witchcraft coincided with the release of political prisoners in 1989 and culminated in a rash of witch burning in the months immediately after the release of Nelson Mandela in February 1990” (Minnaar, Offringa & Payze 1992:xi).

This does not imply that beliefs in witchcraft are specifically African. Europe had its own period of witch-hunting during the Middle Ages.

Why are the beliefs surrounding witchcraft still so strong in Africa? The one possible reason already mentioned is that Africa still experiences times of great uncertainty. But another reason may be found in the traditional worldview and religion of African people. According to the traditional African worldview both God and man are essentially good. This leaves people with the question of why evil things happen. The witch-figure offers an attractive solution. Attractive, in the sense that it excuses both God and man. God is essentially good, and remote, so He cannot be responsible for evil. Satan is an unknown figure in traditional Africa, and thus remains innocent. This process of elimination leaves one to assume that man is responsible, but that is too difficult to imagine. The solution, then, becomes: *some* people are responsible, some that are inherently bad and evil. Bosch comments: “People’s misfortune is not due to their own incompetence, weakness or even sin, but to an enemy who is at the same time branded as enemy of the entire community. Belief in witchcraft produces self-vindication and self-justification. The witch is therefore, by definition, never I myself, but always someone else” (1987:46).

Salvation: how and by whom?

If salvation in Africa is understood primarily in terms of abundance of life and harmonious relationships, the question is: how is this salvation accomplished or achieved? A related question is: Who is doing the work of salvation here? Who is the agent of salvation?

The traditional African answer to the second question is: the saviour is man himself! Man himself tries to exercise control over his world by various practices, rituals and ceremonies. When things go wrong, he tries to restore the cosmic and spiritual harmony through sacrifices, offerings and taboos.

It is important to note that leaders play an important role here. Magesa says: "It is the people's rulers, who are also their religious leaders, who are structurally entrusted with the promotion of life. It is easy to identify who the people's rulers/leaders are. In general, they are referred to as "the elders," but they can be distinguished by the specific functions they perform in and for the community. Among the elders there are, for example, herbalists, rainmakers (or more correctly, rain-askers), diviners, mediums, prayer leaders, and prophets. They are teachers, counselors, and moral guides. They are expected to lead a visibly ethical life themselves so their leadership will be both credible and acceptable to the people. In the final analysis, people turn to them to learn what is wrong with a suffering individual or society, and what ought to be done in the given circumstances to set things right with the vital forces. The most important obligation of every leader is to do whatever is in his or her power to protect and prolong the life of the family and the community, following the order of the universe established by the ancestors and transmitted by tradition." (1997:67)

The type of leader may vary. At the family level it may be the father or a close relative (e.g. the *rakgadi*, the father's sister) who plays an important role. At the community level it may be the village headman or a powerful medicine man. Ray, in his book 'African Religions', discerns four types of (what he calls) religious authorities: diviners, prophetic leaders, priests and sacred kings (1976:102-130). Often a leader may perform several functions at the same time: a king, for example, may perform priestly functions as well.

One thing is constant: in all of traditional Africa man looked toward his leaders for salvation. The initiative is not with God, nor is it with the ancestral spirits. The initiative is with man himself. He diagnoses evil. He decides to take action in order to establish salvation. And he looks up to his human leaders to accomplish it.

What Mbiti has said about man in traditional Africa, seems to be true: Man may not be the master of the universe, but he is definitely at the center of it (Mbiti 1975:39).

We can now go back to the first question: how is salvation achieved?

Bediako has quoted Turner in saying that there is no dichotomy between the physical and the spiritual realms in Africa. Accordingly “the physical acts as vehicle for spiritual power” (1995:95). In this context it is not surprising that human actions and rituals are thought to have the power to influence the course of events.

Ray puts it very strongly: “Ritual is the foundation of African religions” (1976:66). He continues by saying: “The ritual sphere is the sphere in which the everyday world and the spiritual world communicate with each other and blend into one reality” (:66). To concur with Ray we may add that the ritual sphere is also the sphere where the community can take part and play an active role. In doing so, the communal aspect of the African worldview is honoured and combined with the spiritual aspect.

Ritual is believed to have amazing potential. “Rituals are performed to cure illness, increase fertility, defeat enemies, change people’s social status, remove impurity, and reveal the future” (Ray 1976:78). The two most important forms of African ritual, according to Ray, are animal sacrifice and rites of passage.

For our purposes it is not important to describe sacrifices and rites of passage as such. What is significant is that the African people believed that, by performing rituals, they were somehow able to influence their situation, to control it and to change it for the better.

7.2.4 Evaluation

Having given a short overview of important aspects of the traditional African worldview and religion, we would like to point out that the Biblical message of the Lordship of

Christ is something totally alien to this worldview. A heavenly Person, both God and man, who desires to establish a close and warm Master/servant-relationship with people, is an incomprehensible figure to the African worldview, not only because of His proximity, but also because of the type of salvation He offers. *He* offers reconciliation with God and guides his people on the way of salvation by his Word and Spirit. *Africa* wants abundance of life-force and integration of the community, and makes use of its own leaders to acquire this.

7.3 Urbanization and Secularism

Soshanguve is a typical South African township. It is not an inner-city environment nor is it a rural area. In terms of social geography it may be called a peri-urban area. In one way Soshanguve is focused on the city (Pretoria), while in another there remain many ties with the rural background. The amazing growth of Soshanguve, from a population of nil in 1974 to more than 500 000 in the year 2000, is a telling illustration of the rate of urbanization in Africa as a whole and South Africa in particular. According to the latest available data, about 54 % of the South African population was urbanized in 1996 (SAIRR 1999:15). In Gauteng, the province where Soshanguve is situated, the figure is extremely high. No less than 97 % of the population is urbanized (SAIRR 1999:15). Many Soshanguve residents are second or third generation urban dwellers. Recent research in a new extension of Soshanguve showed eight out of ten respondents had been living elsewhere in Gauteng prior to their move to this area (Stevens & Rule 1998:11). Almost all respondents (95 %) had lived in Gauteng for 4 years or more.

Participants in the same research were generally in favour of urban life. A quote from the report: "Points in its favour that were mentioned were the presence of "firms and shopping complexes which make job searching easier", rapid transport ("when you are working in Pretoria you can leave home at 07:40 and at 08:00 you will be at work", crèches, entertainment, telephones, clinics, proximity to town and the 'fast' life. However, several disadvantages of city life were mentioned. These were crime,

expensive lifestyles that include electricity and home loan repayments and disobedient children” (Stevens & Rule 1998:12).

Poverty is a major problem in Soshanguve. The ‘Poverty and Inequality Report’, published in 1998, says: “In *per capita* terms South Africa is an upper-middle-income country, but most South African households experience outright poverty or vulnerability to being poor. In addition, the distribution of income and wealth in South Africa is among the most unequal in the world, and many households still have unsatisfactory access to clean water, energy, health care and education.” (May 1998:1) According to the same report Gauteng is relatively well off: only 17.3 % of its population is poor, whereas neighbouring North West Province has a figure of 62.3 % (May 1998:28). Within Gauteng Province Soshanguve has the highest level of poverty (HSRC 1998:25). Compared to rural parts of the country, however, Soshanguve is better off. This, no doubt, partly explains the positive feelings Soshanguve inhabitants have about life in their township.

Feelings of well-being received a further boost by the political changes in the country. Valery Möller, who has done research on quality of life in South Africa, found that there was a marked increase in subjective well-being among blacks in South Africa after the 1994 elections (1998:27). “Post-election euphoria among blacks erased the inequalities in subjective well-being in South Africa for a short period. The percentages of happy and satisfied blacks in 1994 were slightly higher than those of whites” (:43). In 1995 the ‘black’ figure dropped again below the ‘white’ figure, but with a flatter gradient than previously.

In her consideration of township life Möller refers to a biennial consumer survey of urban black housewives, conducted in 1995, which shows that they were reasonably satisfied with their circumstances. Home ownership had doubled in 10 years (from 35 % to 65 %), electricity had replaced candles and paraffin for lighting, and they were able to spend much more time visiting friends or watching television (:33-34).

Research conducted among church members in Soweto during 1997, showed that respondents had mixed feelings about the post-apartheid situation. The majority believed

that education had improved since the 1994 elections, but they agreed that unemployment had gone from bad to worse and that crime had become more of a problem (Stevens & Rule 1998:v-vi). Whereas many respondents reported reduced political tension in the township, there were complaints of a loss of community spirit, a rise of status consciousness (snobbery), selfishness, a decline in *ubuntu* and mutual respect (:ix). There has also been a distinct migration of upper income households from Soweto townships to the suburbs of Johannesburg. Reasons for this include access to larger houses and higher social status and to be less vulnerable to crime (:ix). A study in Soshanguve would probably have shown comparable results.

7.3.1 Effects of Urbanization

Following these introductory remarks on urban life in South Africa, and specifically Soshanguve, we need to take into account the effects urbanization has on its people. Due to the particular way in which urbanization and the spread of the gospel have gone hand in hand in Africa, it is often difficult to separate these two processes. Urbanization has in many ways made things easier for christianity. On the other hand, it has opened the door to secularizing influences as well.

Monica Wilson, in her famous lectures published under the title 'Religion and the Transformation of Society' (1971), has called attention to the enormous effect urbanization has on societies. She says: "It is argued that the most general change going on in society is a change in scale, i.e. a change in the number of people interacting and the closeness of their interaction" (1971:7). The effects of this change are many.

The first Wilson enumerates is the view which people have of history: "In the small isolated societies the golden age is always in the past, and conservatism which, after all, is a condition of survival in a preliterate society, is highly valued" (:8). "A large-scale society is quite different. In it the Kingdom of Heaven, or a secular utopia, lies in the future" (:9).

Another effect Wilson mentions is specialization, which in turn partly explains secularization. In very small societies people combine different roles: a man can be both priest and chief. But in large societies there is specialization. Priests and laymen are

distinguished. Wilson concludes: "Secularization in the modern world is in part specialization" (:13).

Wilson noted another effect of the change of scale in a society, "as societies increase in scale, impersonal relations grow more important (...). But at the same time those personal relationships that exist may grow deeper" (:23). Parallel to this is another trend: in small-scale societies the group is very important: "In small pagan societies, such as existed in Africa, rituals were primarily directed towards the well-being of the group" (:21). In large-scale societies the individual becomes more important. Large-scale societies have more room for the Christian message which stresses the worth of every individual, freedom of individual conscience, and individual responsibility.

As a result of these and other influences the pagan worldview has changed, although some pagan ideas have been shown to be tenaciously resistant. One of these, according to Wilson, is the idea of personal causation of misfortune (:41). Divination is still used to discover the cause of misfortune and to settle choices (:51). Wilson identified another as the idea of the shades, the belief that the ancestors are interested in people and are a source of help in trouble (:41). Therefore the shades are still invoked by many people; they are thought of as intermediaries between man and God (:51).

But other aspects of the pagan worldview have changed under the influence of Christianity and the expanding scale of society.

In the first place the idea of God has become clearer. In the past God was scarcely distinguished from the shades but now He has a clear identity and for some people there has been a shift to monotheism.

In the second place, connected to this, God has become more approachable. In pagan society He was thought of as being a dangerous power. It was better to stay away from Him. Now however, people are seeking communion with God.

Thirdly Wilson mentions a change in the general view of life and all that it entails. Instead of being preoccupied with survival, people are now preoccupied with quality of life.

In the fourth place the concept of suffering has changed. In small-scale societies suffering was directly linked to sin, e.g. neglect of taboos or insult to elder people. In large-scale

societies, and under the influence of Christianity, people have started to accept the idea that suffering somehow may be creative.

In the fifth place there is a change in the views on rituals. "In the rituals of small-scale societies, the particular and material is dominant. A celebration must be carried out in a particular manner, at a particular time, in a particular place, or it is thought to be ineffective" (:49). In a large-scale society, and especially under the influence of Christianity, "inward and spiritual attitudes are asserted to be dominant, and the particular forms no more than symbolic" (:50).

The transformation of small-scale societies to large-scale societies also has an impact on morality. In small-scale societies morality functions within the small group of kinsmen and neighbours. Within this type of society 'sin' is all that threatens peace within the group, e.g. anger, quarrelling, disrespect to senior kinsmen, and greed (:77-78). As societies grew in scale, moral obligations were expanded to include strangers as well. Further, individual responsibility and independence became more important, the obligations to more distant kin were slackened and the elementary family operated as a more independent economic unit than previously (:94).

In recent years many researchers have described the effects of urbanization and globalization on African urban dwellers. What has become clear generally speaking, is that African townsmen are indeed *townsmen* (Gluckman) but that they are still *African* townsmen.

Van Binsbergen has described this 'double-rootedness' in a recent article (1998). On the one hand, he says, a common substratum of elements from traditional village life can be detected among urbanized Africans. such as a patrilineal kinship system, similarities in the marital system, the cult of the land and the ancestors, patterns of divination and sacrifice, ideas about causation including witchcraft beliefs, converging ideas about conflict resolution and morality (:888). On the other hand there are modern cosmopolitan systems that have a huge influence on the worldview of the urbanized African. He mentions four areas, (1) the post-colonial state, with its bureaucracy, its law-and-order institutions (police, judiciary), the media, and ideals of nation-building; (2) the economy, comprising industrialization, its capitalist mode of production, employers-employee-

relationships, its battles for economic power, trade unions; (3) the influence of world religions, including Christianity, and (4) cosmopolitan consumer culture, motivated by the dream of a middle-class lifestyle and materialist prosperity (:889).

7.3.2 Secularization

“Secularization is the process by which religious ideas and institutions lose their significance and influence in modern society” (Schmidt 1980:27). The supernatural dimension is removed from life in general, and as such it can affect both Christianity and the African traditional religion. Secularization leads to ‘secularism’, the situation in which the secular is observed to dominate or, even replace, the sacred.

The process of secularization in Africa has been helped along enormously by the television and video industry. One of the warning voices in this respect has been Pope John Paul II. In his post-synodal exhortation ‘Ecclesia in Africa’ he expressed his “deep concern about the moral content of very many programs with which the media flood the African continent”. In particular he warned against “the pornography and violence which are inundating poor countries” (par. 124, AFJN 1996:270).

The Pope warned against other pitfalls of secularism, such as individualism and materialism. In paragraph 76 of his exhortation he enlarged on the phenomena of “family uprooting, urbanization, unemployment, materialistic seductions of all kinds, a certain secularization and an intellectual upheaval caused by the avalanche of insufficiently critical ideas spread by the media.”

Shorter & Onyancha, who researched secularism in Nairobi City (1997), came to the conclusion that the dominant type of secularism in urban African is not outright unbelief, but rather a form of religious indifferentism caused by consumer materialism (:22). As their description of secularism in Nairobi in many ways reflects the situation in South African townships, it is worth noting.

Shorter & Onyancha assert: “Consumerism is a form of materialism that implies a preoccupation with the acquisition of material things in the shape of consumer products. This preoccupation leads to religious indifferentism and amounts, as Leslie Newbigin has written, to the worship of what is not God. This is the form of secularism most prevalent

in the contemporary world and the form which is rapidly appearing in Africa, especially urban Africa" (:22). They found that both the poor and the affluent are very much preoccupied with the material aspects of life (:40, 47). This is one of the reasons for the great attraction that new religious movements have, preaching a health and wealth gospel, for urban African people.

One of the major secularizing forces in urban Africa is the impact of the mass media. The three most important forms of communication media are print media, television and videos. Of the three, the last two exercise considerably more power. Television sets are no longer a luxury item owned exclusively by affluent residents, they are common in both high- and low-income areas. Even video-players are found everywhere in African townships. Shorter & Onyancha point out that most of the television- and video-culture is Euro-American, as African countries are too poor to set up culturally homogenous TV channels or produce their own films (:74). The effect() of this television- and video-culture is twofold.

In the first place television promotes consumer materialism. Shorter & Onyancha: "The most unchanging element in television is the advertising. Commercial sponsorship introduces, interrupts and concludes every programme, offering an endless variety of material goods (...). As a result, people are taught to crave for products which they do not need and cannot afford" (:75). Sociologists claim that "television has adopted that society-forming role that Christianity formerly enjoyed and that it now offers its own capitalist, materialist culture as a substitute for religion – "the worship of what is not God," as Newbiggin succinctly put it" (:76).

In the second place television and video promote violence and pornography. A high percentage of films may be classified as 'violent films' (the same applies to South African television). These aggravate violent tendencies in people. Violence becomes something interesting to watch and the media, by showing the public what it wants to see, become agents of violence themselves.

What is true for the media's contribution to the violent state of society in Africa, also holds for their contribution to immorality. "The films and shows from Europe and America, which occupy so much prime time television in Africa, reflect the mores of the societies from which they come. In these cultures sex is a major public preoccupation"

(:78). The same applies to the African music world which is characterized to a large extent by 'dirty dancing'. "The African music world of today is characterized by displays of obscenity and exhibitionist vulgarity. Dances that imitate the sex act, sexy dressing, and near nakedness on the stage are an incitement to debauchery" (:78). Love, romance and sex are the favourite topics of entertainment and casual sex is depicted as acceptable. What Shorter & Onyancha observe regarding the media in Kenya, can without qualification be applied to the situation in South Africa. In fact it is amazing that in a country where violent crimes such as rape, robbery and murder afflict the community, the media promote violence and pornography.

7.3.3 Evaluation

Urbanization and secularization have an effect on the worldview of Christians in townships such as Soshanguve. There may be positive effects. The change from a small-scale to a large-scale society results in more individual freedom and a greater individual sense of responsibility. The Lordship of Christ fits more easily into such a context. On the negative side Western secularism places the emphasis on material affluence and freedom of morality, leaving no room for total commitment to a divine Lord.

7.4 Comparative Analysis

We have described the results of our research in the previous chapters as well as the two backgrounds of this chapter, and now proceed to analyse the results by comparing the three groups with each other, interpreting them in the light of the given backgrounds as well as the various theological premises of the three groups.

The following aspects will be analysed: the concept of God (par. 7.4.1), the concept of salvation (par. 7.4.2), Christology (par. 7.4.3), and the Lordship of Christ (par. 7.4.4-7).

7.4.1 Concept of God

With respect to the concept of God the results of this research confirm what has been found by other researchers: The concept of God has become more clearly defined than it was in the traditional faith (Daneel 1987:256, Wilson 1971:47).

In the first place it is a personal and monotheistic concept. In the traditional faith one could doubt whether God was seen in personal or impersonal terms (see par 7.2.2), but in present day African Christianity God is seen as a Person and He is believed to be one. In the second place people have a concept of God as being more approachable (Wilson 1971:48). Whereas in the traditional faith the supreme god was an unpredictable being that had better be kept at a distance, people now have a more friendly concept of God. He is less dangerous.

In the third place it appears that the 'remote God' concept has changed to a certain extent. God has become nearer. However, this proximity still lacks the Biblical notion of intimate covenant fellowship. No significant differences between Lutheran, ZCC- and Pentecostal Christians were found in this respect.

This is in agreement with findings of other researchers. Möller found that God is not seen as having a direct significance for everyday life (1976:57) and that He is still irrelevant to a large extent (:10). There is a gap between man and God which is filled with magical means and church ceremonies. People's expectations are focused on the church itself rather than on God (:10). Möller also found that church members do not easily pray individually. Prayer is mostly done in groups (:10). Daneel, though more cautious than Möller, also believes that "in a sense God the Father has remained the remote God who, although the ultimate origin of all things, has little direct contact with individuals. Consequently fellowship with him is an implicit fact rather than a prominent feature of worship"(1987:255).

Countless times I have heard people in Soshanguve say: "*Modimo o teng*" (God is there). These three words sum up both the strength and the weakness of their faith.

7.4.2 Concept of salvation

Critics of African traditional religion have often said that its view on salvation is this-worldly (aimed at life-force and prosperity in the present life). In turn critics of Western missionaries have often said that their view on salvation was other-worldly (aimed at the salvation of the soul and the life hereafter). The popular solution, of course, would be to steer a middle course by advocating a 'holistic' or a 'balanced' view on salvation.

Leaving academic discussions aside, the question is what has happened in the churches. What is the prevailing view on salvation? This research has shown that there are differences between various church types in this regard.

In the Lutheran church salvation is primarily understood in terms of receiving life-force, prosperity and healing, being protected against misfortunes and, to a lesser extent, receiving forgiveness of sins.

In the Zion Christian Church salvation is primarily understood in terms of receiving life-force, prosperity and healing, and being protected against misfortunes and witchcraft. Forgiveness of sins is mentioned in passing only.

In the older Pentecostal churches salvation is understood in terms of having received forgiveness of sins and having a powerful Spirit-filled life (which is believed to imply victory over sin, sickness and demonic forces). In the younger Pentecostal churches it is generally the same, but there is less emphasis on forgiveness of sins and more emphasis on a prosperous life.

This evaluation differs from Anderson's evaluation of the Pentecostal and the African Independent Churches. Anderson said that there are no major theological differences between these two groups, only different emphases (Anderson & Otwang 1993:70). This difference in emphasis he formulated as follows: "Whereas Pentecostals generally saw salvation as being primarily the salvation of the soul from sin, members of Pentecostal-type churches saw salvation in more inclusive terms" (:71).

I believe that the concept of salvation in Pentecostal churches is broader than 'salvation of the soul from sin' and that their view on salvation might in reality be more inclusive than the view on salvation of African Independent Churches. I believe that Daneel was more to the point when he described the eschatology of AIC's as showing an "accent on material affluence" (1987:265), an "emphasis on a kingdom of God here and now" (:267).

The views on salvation in the three church types can be partly explained against the background of African traditional beliefs, partly against the background of different theological premises.

The views on salvation in the Lutheran church (ELCSA) reflect the strong influence of traditional views on salvation. The importance of life-force, prosperity, healing and protection against misfortunes fits well into the traditional African worldview.

Forgiveness of sins is mentioned by Lutheran Christians, but it sounds as if it is taken for granted, something received implicitly: “*Of course* our sins are forgiven: God is love and Christ has died for our sins...” The realization of man’s sinfulness and the deeply felt need for reconciliation with God, which were so characteristic of original Lutheran theology, have to a large extent been lost in African Lutheranism.

There is still another element of Lutheran faith that may have been either forgotten or interpreted wrongly by ELCSA-members. It appears that the Lutheran *simul iustus et peccator* doctrine, which originally conveyed the message that sinners are saved through faith in Christ’s substitutionary atonement, has sometimes been misunderstood to deny the need for a radical change in the Christian’s life.

An illustration in this respect is an article by Modisane. He mentions that “Lutherans are often accused of not taking sanctification very seriously” (1996:14). He then criticises “born-againism” and “perfectionism” of the Pentecostal churches. He stresses the fact that nobody can be perfect and illustrates this by describing the disciples of Jesus as being full of the Spirit and still being “villains” (1996:15). The fact that ‘villains’ will change their life-style because of the work of the Holy Spirit, is not mentioned at all. While stressing the reality of Christians still being sinners, this pastor almost denies the reality of sanctification by the work of the Holy Spirit.

In this article and in answers of Lutheran respondents one senses an easy acceptance of the imperfection of the Christian life. The desire for a new life is not an important part of the view on salvation.

The influence of liberal Lutheran theology will do little to address these flaws. Those who feel attracted to Black (or liberation) theology define salvation in terms of the

alleviation of poverty and the construction of a just society. Those who feel attracted to African theology define salvation in terms of fullness of life and experiencing harmonious relationships. In both cases the classical Lutheran theme of the reconciliation of the sinner with God is ignored. As long as ELCSA's theological students are influenced by contextual theology as proposed by Tillich and others, it is to be expected that Lutheran theology will move closer and closer to either traditional African religion or Western secularism.

A recent example of what Tillich 'does' to young African theologians, is a dissertation on the work of Christ by Joseph Ngah which has been presented to the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (1994). Though Ngah is a Cameroonian, the results will no doubt show similar trends regarding South African students.

Ngah expresses his intentions as follows: "This dissertation intends to afford a more balanced view of salvation. () My thesis is that there is in the gospel a provision for the African quest for salvation from witchcraft/sorcery, purification, ancestors' wrath, and other life-threatening happenings, and that this provision can be expressed in images, symbols, and concepts familiar to Africans" (:9). Ngah concurs with Waruta who once said: "Africans want a leader who shows them the way to liberation now – liberation from disease, oppression, hunger, fear, and death" (:10). It is significant that salvation from sin and guilt before God are ignored. Evil is defined as "whatever threatens life in all its dimensions" (:201).

Ngah defends a contextual approach of salvation by referring to the work of Tillich, which Ngah believes to be in agreement with the Biblical approach. Eighteen pages (:41-59) are devoted to an exposition of Tillich's theology. Ngah concludes: "The biblical precedents, together with Tillich's arguments, justify the contextual approach and validate *ipso facto* (Ngah's emphasis) the African context" (:59).

Ngah then proceeds to describe the many similarities between African religion and the Biblical message. Differences are ignored, because the context has to define the outcome of salvation. As in traditional African religion "the here-and-now aspect of salvation is very pronounced" (:201), salvation is, *inter alia*, protection against threats of ancestors, witches/sorcerers, and bad words (:202). As the context defines salvation, the salvific work of Christ is "to give and preserve life" (:203).

This, then, is the result: salvation is narrowed down to solving the problems African people traditionally struggle with.

The views on salvation in the Zion Christian Church also show strong influence of the traditional views on salvation. Life-force, prosperity, healing and protection are as important as in the Lutheran church. There are some minor differences with ELCSA. Protection against witchcraft is more prominent than in ELCSA. Forgiveness of sins is even less important, though mentioned in passing. This places the ZCC even closer to the traditional African faith than ELCSA.

Among ZCC-members salvation is definitely seen as a change in life-style. It is indeed seen as to be saved from a pagan way of living. However, this is worked out in a legalistic way by developing an extensive set of laws, regulations and instructions. It is forbidden to eat pork. It is forbidden to drink beer. There are prescriptions for wearing a church uniform and a church badge. There are instructions for personal life as given by prophets in the local ZCC-branches. Etcetera.

Salvation is thus experienced as having parted from the old laws of pagan life and adhering to the new laws as prescribed by the ZCC. This type of legalism can be traced back to the legalism of the traditional African small-scale societies in which it was believed that there is salvation in conservatism and in upholding the laws and customs of the ancestors (Wilson 1971:8-9).

The view on salvation in the Pentecostal churches is more complex. Forgiveness of sins is part of it, especially in the older Pentecostal churches (in the younger groups forgiveness of sins does not seem to be an important issue), but again one feels there is something superficial in it. The realization of sinfulness and the need for reconciliation with God are not as deeply felt as might be expected Biblically. Forgiveness of sins is seen as something that has been received *already*, and the emphasis is now on its effectuation in a Spirit-filled new life. It must be experienced in gaining the victory over sin in the actual life. To put this in theological terms: the emphasis is more on the regeneration of the new man than on the justification of the sinner.

To explain these views on salvation is not easy. It is plausible that both the background of traditional African faith and the theological premises of the Pentecostal movement play a role. Two illustrations:

One: The shallow view on forgiveness of sins can be explained against the background of traditional African faith, in which case there is a similarity between the Pentecostal churches and the two other denominations. It can also be explained against the background of Pentecostal/Anabaptist theology which has always understood salvation more in terms of walking in newness of life than certitude of being saved from damnation (Loewen 1988:18).

Two: The tendency to stress healing as part of salvation can be traced back to the Pentecostal emphasis on divine healing (Ward 1988:502-503). The tendency in younger Pentecostal groups to include also prosperity can be explained as influence of the Faith movement. At the same time it is plausible that the traditional African view of salvation has played a role in the acceptance of some Pentecostal tenets and the non-acceptance of others. Healing and prosperity fit well into the traditional African view of salvation, while speaking in tongues – traditionally the principal sign of being baptized in the Spirit (Ward 1988:504) - has proved to be not that important to African Christians.

We have also found that salvation is seen in much broader terms than victory over sin only. It is seen as being empowered by the Holy Spirit to gain the victory over illness and demonic forces. Sometimes, especially in the younger Pentecostal churches, salvation also includes being freed from poverty and suffering. We have suggested that there is a 'love of power', or even an obsession with power, which should probably be explained against the twofold background of (1) Pentecostal theology and (2) traditional African religion. We will now attempt to do this.

(1) The phrase 'the love of power' has been used to describe a tendency of Pentecostal and charismatic theology (Smail, Walker & Wright 1995:1). Smail is convinced that Pentecostalist talk about the power of the Holy Spirit comes dangerously close to triumphalist theology. He asserts that Pentecostal theology suffers from compartmentalism: there is a forgiveness or a 'pardon' department and there is a 'power' department. The cross (and Jesus) is located in the first department. The Spirit presides over the second department. These departments at the same time constitute two phases in a christian's life of renewal: "First we are converted to Christ and are pardoned at the cross, and then later we are baptized in the Spirit and begin to manifest his power by

speaking in tongues or by the exercise of some other spiritual gift" (:56). The result is a downgrading of the first phase, the 'pardon phase', and an emphasis on the second phase, the 'power phase', as this is believed to be the present phase. This sets alarms bells ringing. Smail again: "It sounds far too much like that cross-evading *theologia gloriae*, against which Luther warned so sternly, and it is very far from faithful to what the New Testament has to say about God's power and the way it is exercised in Christ" (:62).

(2) African traditional religion also has its love of power. Turaki, following Steyne, identifies four concepts which are basic to the African worldview. One of these concepts is dynamism or power-consciousness. Turaki: "This is a dynamic/ power-conscious view of the world governed by the **law of power**. The dominance of the impersonal, the unseen and the unpredictable spirit powers and forces in the world, make man to search and look for **power** which can help secure him in this dangerous world, where fate, evil, contingency, mortality and death abound. Steyne describes this power-consciousness in the following words: "Life's essential quest is to secure power and use it. Not to have power or access to it produces great anxiety in the face of spirit caprice and the rigors of life" (1999:100, emphases by Turaki). Coupled with this concept of power there is the belief that power can be obtained by a variety of means such as ritual manipulation. It is believed that "power can be handled" (:101). This has serious consequences for the expectations of religion people have. Turaki quotes a statement by Steyne which he considers very important: "Since man's needs cannot be met without it (power), a powerless religion is valueless" (:101).

Summarizing these observations: salvation is in Pentecostal churches in Africa primarily understood in terms of power and victory over evil forces. Power tends to become something that can be handled by the church leaders in cooperation with the Spirit. There is a link between traditional African concept of power and the Pentecostal concept of 'the power of the Spirit' in this respect.

The consequences for Christology are serious. Christ is seen as a Victor who has gained the victory over sin and evil. By doing so he has set free an enormous power that should be used by the church members (the 'power of faith') and the church leaders in

cooperation with the Spirit. Christ Himself, however, may easily become a *Christus otiosus*.

An additional remark with regard to the character of salvation in Pentecostal township christianity is appropriate. In some groups, especially those influenced by the Faith movement, one encounters a strange combination: The holy war against demonic forces in the supernatural realm goes hand in hand with a materialistic and secularized drive for prosperity here and now. In this case it appears that there is a blend of three influences: African traditional religion, modern Western materialism, and the Faith movement.

7.4.3 Christology

A characteristic of township christianity in Soshanguve is the belief that Jesus Christ has died for our sins on the cross. This belief seems to be shared by Christians of all churches, be it mainline churches, African independent churches or Pentecostal churches. This does not mean, however, that it is a very important aspect of their faith. Möller's findings are still valid: When asked specifically about the work of Christ, a large majority of respondents will say that He has come to die for the sins of the people. But when asked what is the most important thing about christian faith, only a small minority will mention forgiveness of sins (Möller 1972:21). The reason for this weakness is to be found in the prevalent views on salvation as sketched above.

We have found that a majority of ELCSA- and ZCC-members saw Jesus Christ primarily as a Provider and a Protector. When asked about the work of Jesus Christ they depicted Him as a Provider of daily needs, healing, well-being and a Protector against all sorts of dangers and misfortune. It is clear that this view on the work of Christ concurs with the views on salvation as described above, and that the traditional African faith is an important background here.

What Jesus is believed to do, we have earlier described as giving us a creational type of blessings, the blessings that are normally expected from God the Father. It is plausible

that this is the main reason for ELCSA- en ZCC-members having difficulty in differentiating between God the Father and God the Son. Turner's observation of West African christianity applies equally here: "It is not so much that Jesus Christ is ignored, as that his divinity is taken for granted, and his humanity overlooked, so that he is readily absorbed in the term God..." (quoted by Daneel 1987:258).

When the work of God the Son became absorbed in the work of God the Father, the same happened to Himself as a person. There was no need for a separate Christology anymore. Jesus' death and resurrection are clearly understood but these are historical facts. After his ascension to heaven He has somehow faded away into God as the divine Being. What He is doing presently is not clear. In the faith of many ELCSA- and ZCC-members He became a *Christus otiosus*.

We have found that members of Pentecostal churches believed Jesus to be a victorious Messiah who has conquered sin, death and Satan by his death, and who after his resurrection was given ultimate authority by the Father. As a result Pentecostal christians were generally much more able to differentiate between the Father and the Son than members of the previous two groups. They were also much more able to see Him as a present, living Lord and many of them indeed spontaneously confessed that Jesus was their Lord and Saviour. The dominating idea in their Christology, however, was the one of Christ as a *Christus Victor*.

In these views one encounters a great deal of Pentecostal, and indeed Biblical, theology. This is to be appreciated. At the same time there is a certain bias towards a *theologia gloriae* that is concurrent with a tendency towards a one-sided *realized eschatology*. Daneel has used these terms in evaluating the theology of African Independent Churches generally (1987:258, 264). I believe that they apply to African Pentecostal churches as well. The stress on the 'victory-here-and-now' makes it difficult to accommodate sufferings, illness, and problems such as poverty and poor quality of life of which there is so much in African townships.

It is plausible that the traditional African religion and the theological premises of the Pentecostalist movement both play a role here. In the African traditional worldview there was a longing to have life-force and harmony here and now (this-worldly salvation). In

Pentecostalist theology there is also a tendency to anticipate the consummation of the kingdom of God and to draw the eventual triumph into the present era. This leads to a “realized kingdom which is not merely *in* but also *of* the world”. “Christian salvation and redemption are narrowed down to healing, success, security and prosperity in this life” (Daneel 1987:265).

7.4.4 The Lordship of Christ

The findings of this research have shown that the notion of the Lordship of Christ, understood as his divine power and authority to rule us by his Word and Spirit, functions differently in various churches.

In ELCSA it was found that the Lordship of Christ was not much of a reality in the faith and lives of believers. In the ZCC it was even weaker. In Pentecostal churches, however, especially the older groups, the Lordship of Christ is much more of a reality in the faith and lives of believers.

When we attempt to interpret these results, it will be necessary to reckon with the two backgrounds that have been described earlier in this chapter. Neither in the African traditional worldview nor in the secularized worldview was or is there any room for the figure of a heavenly Master who rules his followers on earth through an intimate relationship, guiding them in the process by a holy book and by a divine Spirit who is believed to dwell in them. This is such a strange idea to both the traditional African religion and the modern secularized non-religion that indeed a miracle is needed for people to believe in this and become servants of this Master. Even more miracles are needed for people to persevere in believing this and living under the Lordship of Christ in a lifelong relationship.

One additional general remark must be made here. It is important to take note of the fact that Lutheran and ZCC-believers are more open to traditional beliefs and practices than Pentecostal believers. Among members of the Lutheran church it was found that those who adhere to traditional beliefs and practices have a weaker conviction about the

Lordship of Christ than those who reject these beliefs and practices. In Pentecostal churches, where there is a radical rejection of traditional beliefs and practices, it was found that the Lordship of Christ functions better than in the other two denominations. I'm strongly inclined to interpret this as an illustration of the Biblical truth that it is impossible to serve two masters (Mt 6,24).

The Lordship of Christ will not be a reality in the lives of church members unless there is a radical break with ancestor veneration.

7.4.5 The Lordship of Christ: ELCSA

With regard to ELCSA it was found that the Lutheran confessions of faith do have a clear teaching on the Lordship of Christ. In the faith life of its members, however, it was found that there is a weak functioning of the Lordship of Christ.

Several aspects have to be taken into account in the explanation of this state of affairs.

First, there is openness in ELCSA towards traditional beliefs and practices. We have found that those who accept traditional beliefs and practices generally have a weaker conviction about the Lordship of Christ than those who reject these beliefs and practices. Those ELCSA-members who have rejected the traditional beliefs radically, are a minority. The majority has accepted them or is unsure about it.

Second, the views on salvation among ELCSA-members have been influenced by traditional African views on salvation. There is a one-sided longing for life-force, healing, well-being and protection against misfortune. When this is the type of need people feel, there is more need for a Provider/Protector-type of Saviour than a Master/Guider-type.

Third, though the concept of God is not as remote as it was in traditional African religion, there is still a certain distance. The notion of an intimate covenant fellowship with God is

still to a large extent missing. This is another stumbling block for experiencing the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Fourth, in the experience of many members the church itself fills the gap between God and man. In the traditional worldview the community itself, under the guidance of its leadership, had to perform the necessary rituals to ensure salvation. This is reflected in the importance that is attached to the performing of church ceremonies such as the sacraments of baptism and holy communion. The church is believed to effectuate salvation somehow by performing the necessary rituals correctly.

Fifth, there is a strong legalistic tendency in ELCSA. Next to the Bible there is an extensive body of church laws, church regulations and ethical and disciplinary guidelines. There is a tendency to give more attention to the laws and the regulations of the church than to the heavenly Master himself. This would be detrimental to the functioning of the Lordship of Christ, of course.

The plausible explanation of this tendency is the traditional African background. Traditionally in Africa it was difficult to imagine that a divine being would be interested in guiding its followers personally. Moral conscience was not directed towards the supreme being as this being was thought to be remote. The law and its keeping were thus matters that were dealt with within the community. There was safety and strength in having laws and keeping them. Much energy was devoted to this. Hence the tendency in many churches in Africa, including ELCSA, to have a broad set of laws and regulations. A second explanation may be suggested, but I do this hesitantly: It may be that the characteristic emphasis on the Word in Lutheran theology (that the Spirit works *per verbum*) has been distorted in such a way that the Spirit is thought to work automatically when the Word is spoken or read by church leaders. What happens in reality, then, is that the Word takes precedence over the Spirit and, by implication, over Christ.

Sixth, Liberal Lutheran theology, imported from Europe and the USA, has gained influence in ELCSA, especially in academic circles. The result is a shallow view on sin, forgiveness of sin and repentance. The concept of evil has been 'secularized' to include

poverty, injustice and oppression. In this context, and because of his victory over evil and death accomplished long ago, Christ is viewed as a source of hope and inspiration for the fight against injustice and poverty in this world. Not much attention is given to his present work. As a living person He is rather irrelevant.

7.4.6 The Lordship of Christ: ZCC

With regard to the ZCC it was found that this church has no teaching on the Lordship of Christ and that the Lordship of Christ has almost no significance in the faith of its members.

When we attempt to explain this state of affairs, several aspects have to be taken into account, the first three of which are parallel with aspects mentioned in the evaluation of ELCSA.

First, there is openness in the ZCC towards traditional beliefs and practices. Though the consulting of diviners is rejected (officially at least), it appears that the veneration of ancestor spirits is condoned. Even the bishop himself is believed to communicate with them. He is seen as a mediator with both God and the ancestor spirits. As a result he is more relevant than Jesus Christ. Jesus is associated with God only and it is not clear what type of salvation He provides. Lekganyane is associated with God and with the ancestor spirits, and in the process he is able to provide protection and prosperity. This causes Jesus to be pushed into the background of the practical faith of ZCC-members.

Second, the views on salvation of ZCC-members are still to a large extent characterized by the traditional African views. Well-being, life-force, prosperity, harmonious relationships, protection against misfortune and protection against witchcraft are important aspects of salvation. As in the case of the Lutheran church, the need is to have a Provider/Protector-type of Saviour.

Third, as in the case of ELCSA, though the concept of God is not as remote as it was in the traditional faith, there is still a certain distance. The notion of an intimate covenant fellowship with God is still to a large extent missing. This is another stumbling block for experiencing the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Fourth, the gap between God and man is filled by the church itself and especially by its leader, bishop Lekganyane. In the traditional African worldview the community itself, under the guidance of its leadership, had to perform the necessary rituals to ensure salvation. This is reflected in the importance that is attached to the performing of a variety of ceremonies and rituals, such as baptism in the river, all-night prayers (*mpogo*) at the homestead, and festivals at the headquarters at Moria.

Fifth, the all-important position of bishop Lekganyane also reflects the influence of the traditional worldview. In traditional society the leaders (diviners, prophets, priests, headmen, chiefs, kings) were entrusted with the task of promoting the life-force of the people. This is exactly what is expected from the *Mookamedi*, the Overseer. He is king, priest and prophet to his people. He leads his people, protects them, blesses them, prays for them, gives them laws and instructions. He is a man like Moses. As he is such a central figure in the church, leading and guiding his people, Jesus Christ is very much pushed into the background. There is no room for the Lordship of Christ.

Sixth, there is a strong legalistic tendency in the ZCC. The Bible is used in a biased way as attention is given primarily to the laws in the Old Testament (e.g. prohibition of eating pork and drinking beer). Next to this there is an extensive body of church laws and regulations for all sorts of situations and occasions. Next to this enormous importance is attached to the *ditaelo* (instructions) given by the prophets to individuals and for special occasions. This whole system of laws, regulations and instructions reflects the African traditional worldview. Traditionally it was difficult to imagine that a divine being would be interested in guiding his church or his followers personally. Laws and customs were very important and much energy was devoted to keeping them as this gave direction, security and strength. The effect on church life is that all attention is directed towards the

laws and the regulations of the church, not to the heavenly Master Himself. Christ is irrelevant.

Seventh, with regard to the *ditaelo* of the ZCC-prophets it is important to note that it is believed that these instructions are from the Holy Spirit. As these instructions are valued higher than the Bible itself, there is no way of testing these prophecies. Many Christians from other churches say that these instructions originate from evil spirits. Whatever the case may be, it is clear that the Lordship of Christ cannot function in this context, as Christ rules us by his Spirit *and Word*. It is not easy to explain the background of this kind of prophecy. I would suggest a double-rootedness. On the one hand these prophets reflect the position of the diviners in traditional society. On the other hand there is a spiritual explanation: According to the Bible “every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus, is not from God” (1 Jn 4:2-3). I have not heard even one example of a ZCC-prophet mentioning the name of Jesus in his prophecy. This makes it very difficult to accept their claim that their instructions are from the Holy Spirit. The alternative is mentioned in 1 John 4:3.

7.4.7 The Lordship of Christ: Pentecostal churches

With regard to the Pentecostal churches it was found that these churches have a clear teaching on the Lordship of Christ. The Lordship of Christ is a reality in the life and faith of many members of Pentecostal churches but it stands in danger of being overshadowed by a *Christus Victor*-Christology.

When we attempt to explain this state of affairs, several aspects have to be taken into account.

First, there is a radical rejection of traditional beliefs and practices among Pentecostal believers. There is a strong conviction among them that one cannot serve two masters and, consequently, that one cannot serve Christ and at the same time continue to venerate

the ancestor spirits. This is an important explanation of the fact that the Christology in Pentecostal churches is so much stronger than in the other two denominations. There is room for the Lordship of Christ.

Second, the views on salvation focus on living a new life in the power of the Holy Spirit, in which victory is gained over sin, over sickness and over evil forces. These views reflect the typical emphases of Pentecostal theology. In some cases there is a tendency towards including prosperity as something to be expected as part of salvation. In this case the background may be both the African traditional worldview and the Faith movement as they both emphasize a type of salvation obtainable in the present world.

Third, there is a tendency towards a one-sided *theologia gloriae*. Power and victory are emphasized. Christ is seen as the victorious Messiah who has given his followers the victory over dangers in the natural realm (e.g. accidents, sickness) as well as the supernatural realm (e.g. demons). There is a tendency towards perfectionism (victory over sin here and now). There is not much stress on the fact that sanctification is an ongoing process and that we need a Lord to protect us in our salvation. There are two dangers here: firstly, the *Christus Kyrios* may be overshadowed by the *Christus Victor*, secondly, that the power of the Spirit is emphasized so much that Christ Himself becomes rather irrelevant, a *Christus otiosus*.

The plausible explanation for this love of power and victory is twofold. First, it should be interpreted against the background of Pentecostal theological premises. The Pentecostal doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit as a second blessing has always entailed the danger of separating Christ and the Spirit and focusing more on the Spirit than on Christ (Jonker 1981:216). Further, there is a tendency to emphasize the power of the Spirit to the detriment of the work of Christ, a tendency towards a triumphalist power-theology. Second, it should be interpreted against the background of African traditional concept of power. Traditionally it was very important to have power to control the impersonal, the unseen and the unpredictable spirit powers. It was believed that man can handle and exercise power in various ways by, inter alia, ritual manipulation.

Fourth, though God has come nearer than He was in traditional faith, in a sense He is still a remote God. This gap is filled by the church and especially its charismatic leaders, the Spirit-filled 'men of God'. In some cases this leads to these leaders being elevated to such high positions that the Lordship of Christ is obscured and Christ becomes a remote Christ.

The explanation of this phenomenon is probably twofold: on the one hand it reflects the important position of the leaders in traditional Africa in effectuating salvation (see par. 7.2.3), on the other hand it reflects the Pentecostal inclination to follow the charismatic leader, the one who shows or claims to have the Holy Spirit (Van 't Spijker 1986:85).

Fifth, although the Bible is held in high honour, there is a tendency to focus more on the visible and special work of the Holy Spirit. This is illustrated by a love for 'powerful' preaching rather than expository preaching. Sometimes a naïveness is noticed in the way Pentecostal believers accept prophecies and visions and claims that the Holy Spirit is at work in certain manifestations of spiritual power. This tendency to separate Word and Spirit is to be understood against the background of Pentecostal theology (Van Genderen & Velema 1992:694). Since the days of the Anabaptists there has been a tendency to be "Spirit-led apart from and in disregard of Scripture" (Packer 1988a:319). Where this happens, it can be detrimental to the functioning of the Lordship of Christ.

7.5 Final Evaluation

With regard to the three denominations that have been the focus of our attention, the final evaluation is that in the faith of many members Jesus Christ still is a *Christus remotus* and a *Christus otiosus*. With regard to the functioning of the Lordship of Christ the best results were encountered among members of the older Pentecostal churches. Generally speaking, however, the Person of the living Lord still seems to be a remote figure in the faith of the majority of church members.

The gap between the *Kyrios* and the believers is filled in various ways: the laws of the church, the leadership of the church, or ceremonies performed by the church. It had to be

concluded that in many instances the church itself stands in the way of an unhindered view on and communion with the living Lord.

The explanation of this state of affairs is complex. In many respects it appears to be a combination of mainly two influences, namely (1) traditional African religion and (2) specific theological concepts (or misconceptions) which vary between different denominations.

In the next chapter we intend to provide suggestions, based on the Biblical perspective on the Lordship of Christ, that may hopefully serve to address the weaknesses in African township Christianity that have been pointed out in this research.

Finally, it needs to be stated that I do not wish to convey the impression that weaknesses in African Christianity that were detected by this research, imply that Western Christianity is any better or stronger.

I fear that the Lord Jesus Christ may be just as remote a person in a large section of Western Christianity, albeit that the explanation would probably have to include some aspects that differ from the ones mentioned here.