

**African Initiatives in
Christian Mission 3**



UNISA



AFRICAN INITIATIVES IN CHRISTIAN MISSION

This monographic series aims at publishing scholarly works of high merit and wide interest on various aspects of Christian missions in Africa. Close attention will be paid to the missionary genius and methods of African Christians, as well as to African interpretations of Christianity.

Series editors

Marthinus L Daneel

Dana L Robert

Editorial board

Greg Cuthbertson

Johannes N J Kritzinger

Tinyiko S Maluleke

Isabel Phiri

Tabona Shoko

Publications in the series:

No 1: *A man with a shadow: The life and times of Professor ZK Matthews*

by Willem Saayman

No 2: *African earthkeepers. Volume 1. Interfaith mission in earth-care*

by M L Daneel

No 3: *African earthkeepers. Volume 2. Environmental mission and liberation in Christian perspective*

by M L Daneel

No 4: *Transfigured night: mission and culture in Zimbabwe's vigil movement*

by Titus Presler

No 5: *Touching the heart: Xhosa missionaries to Malawi, 1876–1888*

by T Jack Thompson

AFRICAN Earthkeepers

Volume 2

**Environmental mission and
liberation in Christian perspective**



M L Daneel

University of South Africa, Pretoria

© 1999 University of South Africa
First edition, first impression

ISBN 1 86888 135 0

Published by Unisa Press
University of South Africa
PO Box 392, Unisa, 0003

Typeset by Pretoria Setters, Pretoria
Printed by Interpak, Pietermaritzburg

House editors: Liz Stewart, Sarie Moolman
Cover design and layout: Erica de Wet

© All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form or by any means – mechanical or electronic, including recordings or tape recording and photocopying – without the prior permission of the publisher, excluding fair quotations for purposes of research or review.

The Pew Charitable Trusts, the main sponsor of this project, is a national and international philanthropy with a special commitment to Philadelphia, and they support nonprofit activities in the area of culture, education, the environment, health and human services, public policy and religion. Through their grantmaking, the Trusts seek to encourage individual development and personal achievement, cross-disciplinary problem solving and innovative, practical approaches to meeting the changing needs of a global community.

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Pew Charitable Trusts.

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	ix
Series preface	xiii
Introduction	1
1 Earthkeeper's call	1
2 Community-based contextualisation	4
3 Outline of study	13
 Part 1	
Environmental ministry and changing images of the church	
<i>Chapter 1: The church as a healing/liberating institution</i>	21
1.1 Historical perspectives	22
1.1.1 Faith-healing 'hospitals': a major attraction	22
1.1.2 The church as sociopolitical healer/liberator	27
1.1.3 The church as deliverer from poverty and agent of socioeconomic progress	31
1.1.4 The church as environmental healer/liberator	37
1.2 Emerging attributes of the earthkeeping church	48
1.2.1 An ecumenically rooted ministry	48
1.2.2 An extended mission mandate	51
1.2.3 Ecological laws and discipline	56
1.2.4 Structural and liturgical change	57

1.2.5 The church as vehicle of theological reorientation	59
<i>Chapter 2: Green rituals and liturgies</i>	66
2.1 Confession of ecological sins, conversion and baptism	67
2.2 A tree-planting eucharist	73

Part 2

Towards an African theology of the environment

<i>Chapter 3: Mwari the creator as insider</i>	93
3.1 A remote creator?	94
3.1.1 The distant One of traditional religion	94
3.1.2 Missionary traditions	96
3.1.3 African theology: inculturation and rehabilitation	101
3.2 Mwari the creator as insider	105
3.2.1 The Zionist God of the crops	106
3.2.2 The immanence of the God of the trees	111
3.3 Mwari: father and/or mother?	141
<i>Chapter 4: Christ the earthkeeper</i>	151
4.1 Christ's Lordship and the mission of the church	152
4.2 The suffering Christ	171
4.3 Christ in kinship	178
4.4 Christ the healer	193
4.4.1 Healing and cleansing	200
4.4.2 Healing and proclamation	201
4.4.3 Healing through sacramental empowerment	201
4.4.4 Healing the soil	202
4.4.5 Healing human beings	203

<i>Chapter 5: The Holy Spirit in creation</i>	207
5.1 The Holy Spirit as the 'fountain of life'	209
5.2 The Holy Spirit as <i>murapi venyika</i> (healer of the land)	213
5.3 The Holy Spirit versus the destroyer	218
5.3.1 Emerging awareness of ecological sinfulness	221
5.3.2 Pneumatic expulsion of evil	226
5.3.3 Theoretical considerations	229

Part 3 Current developments and future challenges

<i>Chapter 6: ZIRRCO's expanding organisation and environmental objectives</i>	239
6.1 Institutionalisation and specialised activities	239
6.1.1 Organisation and leadership	239
6.1.2 Departmental development	242
6.1.3 Desks	251
6.2 Environmental concerns	260
6.2.1 Afforestation	260
6.2.2 Wildlife	269
6.2.3 Water resources	272
6.3 An assessment of ZIRRCO's religio-environmental contribution	274
6.3.1 The traditional dimension	276
6.3.2 The Christian dimension	279
<i>Chapter 7: Widening horizons</i>	290
7.1 Internal growth	292
7.1.1 Eco-spirituality	292

7.1.2 Environmental commitment and vision	303
7.2 Geographic outreach: towards a united front in Africa	311
7.2.1 The South African connection	313
7.2.2 African Earthkeepers Union (AEU) – a continental perspective	320
7.2.3 African Christian theology and environmental liberation	324
7.3 Africa and beyond	329
7.3.1 The religio-philosophical and scientific task	331
7.3.2 The task of mobilising the struggle	341
<i>Chapter 8: Epilogue</i>	346
Appendix I AAEC tree-planting sermons in Spirit-type (prophetic) Independent Churches	353
Appendix II AAEC tree-planting sermons in Ethiopian-type (non-prophetic) Independent Churches	375
Abbreviations	389
Glossary of Shona terms and phrases	390
Bibliography	396
Index	401

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Financial support from various institutions enabled me to launch and actively engage in the African earthkeeping movement described in this publication. It also enabled me, during the 1980s and 1990s, to conduct extensive research into the movement's religio-ecological motivation and endeavour. In this regard I wish to thank:

- the *Human Sciences Research Council* in South Africa for substantial subsidies which allowed me to employ a regular team of fieldworkers
- the *University of South Africa*, Pretoria, for granting me the paid leave required for environmental involvement and research in Zimbabwe
- the ecological *Faith and Earthkeeping* project at Unisa (funded by the mining house Goldfields) which, during the period of its inception, supported me as co-founder, senior researcher and senior consultant
- the *Research Institute for Theology and Religion at Unisa and Boston University* for financial and other administration of The Pew Research Programme
- The *Pew Charitable Trusts*, Philadelphia, USA, for a three-year grant which enabled me, together with fellow missiologists and researchers in other academic disciplines, to launch the research project, 'African initiatives in Christian mission', in which context I could write this book
- the *African Studies Centre and School of Theology* at Boston University, Massachusetts, for providing me with office and library facilities during spells of academic work in the United States
- the *Center for the Study of World Religions*, Harvard University, for a fellowship (1995–1996) which enabled me to relate to scholars of religion from countries all over the world
- the *Evangelische Zentralstelle für Entwicklungshilfe* (EZE), Bonn, Germany, without whose generous financial and moral support the entire earthkeeping venture of ZIRRCO, and its two sister organisations AZTREC and the AAEC, would not have been possible.

Over the years representatives of all these institutions have given me loyal support. I am especially indebted to Ms Asa Maree, senior representative of the Human Sciences Research Council, for her efficient handling of funding issues and research reports. The late Prof David Bosch, former head of the Department of Missiology at Unisa, generously enabled me to proceed with project work among the Shona in Zimbabwe despite pressing academic duties in our department. I salute the memory of one of South Africa's great missiologists. The brunt of my frequent absences from Unisa, however, was borne by my colleagues, Prof Willem Saayman and Prof Klippies Kritzinger. Without their friendship, consistent backup and altruistic consideration of my work in Zimbabwe I would not have been able to meet the demands of a near nomadic existence of endless 'commuting' between the academic world in Pretoria and a religio-environmental ministry in Masvingo.

Ms Jansie Kilian, formerly of the Research Institute for Theology and Religion, Unisa, has efficiently taken care of the finances and the arrangements for several workshops and a highly successful international conference of The Pew Research Programme. The entire research team accords her high praise. Her counterpart at Boston University, Delores Markey, has also provided our research team with prompt and reliable financial service. Dr Rolf Assman, EZE representative for Zimbabwe, has been stalwart in his support of ZIRRCO's environmental programmes. His insight into African religiosity and readiness to take risks in the sponsorship of ecological innovation in African grassroots society have enhanced project implementation.

In Boston and Cambridge, USA, I could count on Prof Dana Lee Robert of the Boston University School of Theology, my wife and companion, to help me settle into a new mould of academic endeavour and to plan meaningful interaction between Boston University and Unisa in the implementation of The Pew Research Project 'African Initiatives ...', which incorporates this publication. Dr James McCann, director of Boston University's African Studies Center, and Dr Larry Sullivan, director of the Center for the Study of World Religions, Harvard, helped to publicise my religio-environmental work by way of seminars. To all these friends and colleagues, my sincere thanks.

It is with admiration and respect that I mention some of the key figures who have played a major role in our earthkeeping movement and who

were always prepared to participate in research interviews: Chief Justice Simbi Mubako, patron of ZIRRCON; Chief Murinye, patron of AZTREC; Bishop Dhlwayo Musariri, patron of the AAEC. In the first volume of *African earthkeepers* I have already mentioned the names of AZTREC stalwarts, the chiefs and spirit mediums. Here I wish to thank a few core leaders of the AAEC, which currently has 150 member churches. The ones singled out here are the pioneer earthkeepers, most of whom helped to found the AAEC and served on its first executive board: Bishops Rabson Machokoto (first president), Eriah Hore, Reuben Marinda, Kindiam Wapendama, Farao Murambiwa, Chimhangwa, Makuku, Marima, Dube, Job Kamudzi, Zacheo Chamutsa, Saul Kuudzerema, J Chabanga, Gondo Chivire, Ndamba, David Masuka, and Ms Miria Forridge, representing the late Bishop Matteo Forridge. With most of these bishops and their wives I have had close bonds of friendship for more than thirty years. We have shared dreams of a better future, the hardships of implementing joint projects in rural society, and the celebration of accomplishments in the ecumenical fellowship of Independent Churches. My deepest gratitude for an adventure shared and for lasting relationships of mutual trust.

The dedication and accountability of the senior staff of ZIRRCON, who guided our earthkeeping movement through previously uncharted territory and the ups and downs of unpredictable funding and human conflicts, have given a profound sense of meaning and accomplishment to my life. The excellent leadership of Revd Solomon Zvanaka, my successor as director, has released me from the Institute's day-to-day administration with full confidence in its future. Revd Zvanaka is ably assisted by Bishop Reuben Marinda, senior officer of the training department (and currently developing a new theological training programme for AICs), Raviro Mutonga, coordinator of the Women's Desk, Edwin Machokoto, coordinator of the ecological department, Abraham Mupuwi, senior bookkeeper and secretary, and a team of liaison officers, research workers and salaried nursery keepers. ZIRRCON, together with its sister organisations, AZTREC and AAEC, has provided me with a place of belonging, a family, in Zimbabwe. This has enriched my life and allowed me the privilege of participating at the very heart of African society. It is with humility and pride that I thank my African family.

Throughout the research period I could rely on ZIRRCON's team of loyal

and competent field assistants. Operating from our base in Masvingo town, they diligently and faithfully probed areas in which information was required. I thank Tarisai Zvokuomba and Andison Chagweda for loyal and reliable service at all times; Farai Mafanyana and Taverengwa Chiwara for diligent and inventive teamwork, which will also benefit the ongoing Pew Research Programme, 'African Initiatives ...'; and Claver Gwizhu, my mentor on domestic and related affairs and trusted guardian of our Masvingo research base.

For the preparation of the manuscript I wish to thank Michelle Ducci, Marietjie Willemse and Maddie Goodwin for their excellent typing; Andre Goetz for expert care in the basic layout of the book; and Helga Nordhoff for her professional comments on my photography and the clear prints she made of the pictures reproduced in this study. My thanks also go to Unisa Press, especially Phoebe van der Walt, Doris Hyman and Liz Stewart, for the final preparation of the manuscript prior to printing. Marcelle Manley not only gave me the benefit of her outstanding linguistic talents in editing this work, but also provided pertinent comments on the contents which stimulated critical reflection on research findings.

It is with deep gratitude that I mention the warm and unswerving support of my family. My late parents and sister, Nyasa, have left a rich legacy of missionary service in Malawi and Zimbabwe. Even though my ministry among the AICs has led me along a less conventional route in mission, our Protestant roots have remained essentially the same. My sons and daughters – Alec, Lidia, Talita and Inus – have always filled my life with laughter and joy, despite my nomadic pursuits. Dana Lee, gracious companion, and my two stepsons, Samuel and John, are gifts from God. As fellow editor of the series 'African Initiatives ...' Dana Lee has been an invaluable support to me and the entire team of contributors. Her understanding of my African roots has given me wholeness of purpose and being.

In Africa names are indicators of relationship. I thank AZTREC for calling me Muchakata and the AAEC for insisting generously on 'Bishop Moses'.

Bishop Moses Daneel
Shiri Chena
Masvingo 1998

SERIES PREFACE

Literature on Christian mission in Africa has been biased toward the activity of Western-oriented mission. White missionaries, Western mission policies and the relationship of mission to European imperialism have dominated the discussion of African missions. Little or no attention has been paid by scholars to African initiatives in Christian mission, nor have missiological studies been made from the perspective of the so-called 'recipients'. Yet the phenomenal growth of Christianity in Africa has occurred in the twentieth century, much of it after the independence of the continent from outside control. The series 'African Initiatives in Christian Mission' represents an attempt to address the reality that the spread of Christianity in Africa, its shape and character, has been the product of African Christians, both in the 'mission churches' and the 'African Initiated/Independent Churches (AICs).'¹

Mission churches and AICs are the two primary ecclesial contexts in which African initiative has occurred. Mission churches are those that have evolved directly from the outreach of Western denominations, and still represent the collegial traditions concerned. African Initiated Churches are churches begun by Africans in Africa primarily for Africans. AICs have consistently asserted their own leadership autonomy and religio-cultural contextuality free from the immediate control of influence of Western-oriented church leaders. These classificatory terms are somewhat misleading in that AICs are missionary churches par excellence, and the mission churches, by virtue of the missionary contributions of their members from the beginnings of their history, could be characterised as African Initiated Churches. Nevertheless, the distinction between the two families of churches remains important for historical and sociological reasons.

1 Nomenclature varies on the two groups of African churches. 'Mission churches' have also been called 'Historical or Established Churches'. The acronym 'AICs' originally stood for 'African Independent Churches', a term which is still preferred by many scholars. In recent years, the World Council of Churches has tended to use the term 'African Initiated Churches'. In this series, different authors are free to use any of the three they choose. But in the introduction to the series the editors generally refer to 'African Initiated Churches' because the term resonates with the title 'African Initiatives in Christian Mission'.

This series seeks to overcome some of the limitations in previous studies of missions in Africa. Mission churches have been analysed primarily as denominational institutions, with a focus on educational work, or else as participants in political processes such as nation building. Less attention has been paid to mission churches as social movements, as products of indigenous culture and leadership, or as creators of African theologies. In short, the indigenous mission dimension has been weak in many of these studies. Works on mission churches today tend to be generalised rather than based on reliable, representative information gleaned from empirical enquiries. Thus the uniqueness and witness of these churches remains obscure. A predominantly male image of church history, moreover, has resulted in a paucity of literature on the contribution of women to church life and church expansion. The roles of black women pioneers in African churches are of particular interest to the editors of the series.

As regards the African Initiated Churches, the tendency in most of the earlier studies has been to assess AICs in terms of reaction to Western missions, separatism or protest against oppressive colonialism. As a result the missionary genius, missionary methods and missiological significance of AICs have not been studied in depth. However, the contribution of the AICs to the growth and religio-cultural rootedness of Christianity in Africa is of vital importance for the development of a relevant mission theology in Africa. It is increasingly evident that in terms of growth rates, indigenised evangelisation, missionary campaigns, and ecclesiastic contextualisation, the AICs are not peripheral but belong to the mainstream of African Christianity. Their contribution therefore should be evaluated as such, alongside that of the mission churches. Critical, yet open and fair-minded field studies should overcome the bias that has frequently distorted AIC studies in the past.

The ideas behind 'African Initiatives in Christian Mission' originated in an interdisciplinary research project conceived by Professor Marthinus L Daneel. With thirty years of empirical research on AICs in Zimbabwe, Daneel gathered a team of researchers from South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Malawi and received a grant in 1994 from The Pew Charitable Trusts. Assisted by field workers, researchers set out to gather data on different facets of African initiative within various churches in southern Africa. Meeting periodically at the Department of Missiology at the University of South Africa, the researchers reported on the work in progress and received feedback from other team members. The cooperative

nature of the project was essential to its success, for the original team included members of mission churches and AICS, academics and practitioners, blacks and whites. The Research Institute for Theology and Religion at Unisa provided administrative support; and Professor Dana Robert participated as the representative of Boston University, the official host institution for the project.

Out of the project meetings emerged a decision to hold an international conference in 1997 on 'African Initiatives in Christian Mission in Southern Africa'. As well as the conference, the group decided to launch a publication series that would make the results of the project available to scholars and church people in Africa. Given the lack of research and its limitations as outlined above, the project participants decided to broaden the focus of the series beyond southern Africa and, by implication, beyond the core group of scholars. The widest possible definition of 'mission' underlies the series. The participant scholars agreed to deal essentially with Christian mission: the outreach of Christian faith and life in the extension of Christ's good news beyond the boundaries of ignorance, cultures, poverty, suffering or whatever obstacles obscure a clear Christian witness in the world. Nevertheless, not all contributors are missiologists and their research methodologies include phenomenological, socio-anthropological, historical and distinctly non-theological approaches, or a combination of these. Yet the team feels that even if the joint venture, against the background of diverse disciplines, runs the risk of controversy and overdiversity within the series, the overall outcome will be both challenging and enriching. The qualification 'African initiative', too, is not subject to narrow definition. Black and white African theologians, for instance, are contributors in this series. And despite the predominant concern with black African initiatives, a number of studies on white missionary endeavour will be included, particularly the attempts of black African scholars to interpret the legacy of white-controlled missions, their impact on African society and the attitudes and response of African communities to such endeavour. In many respects white and black participation in mission in Africa are two sides of the same coin, the implication being that study of one enhances understanding of the other.

On behalf of all participants in this joint research and publishing venture, we express our appreciation to our sponsors, the staff of Unisa's Research Institute for Theology and Religion, and Unisa Press; their support remains crucial in the realisation of the envisaged goals.

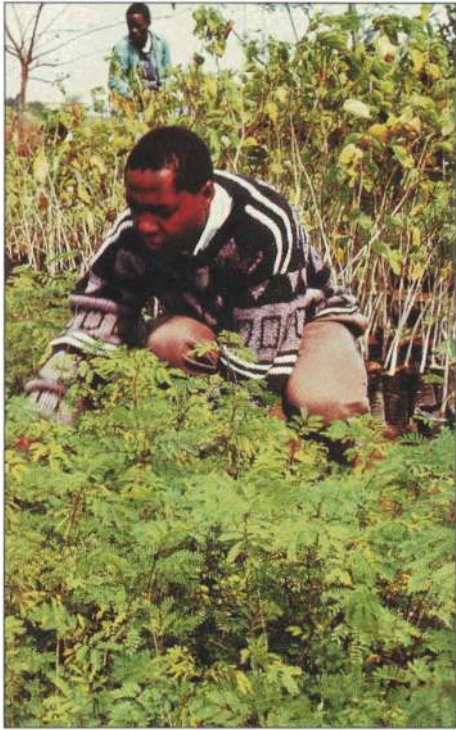
About this publication

Volume 2 of *African Earthkeepers* describes the Christian wing of ZIRRCO, the largest grassroots environmental and tree-planting movement in southern Africa. Working in tandem with traditional chiefs and spirit mediums (whose work is described in volume 1), millions of AIC members led by their bishops belong to the Association of African Earthkeeping Churches, based in Masvingo Province, Zimbabwe. As founder and participant-observer in ZIRRCO, author Inus Daneel traces the contours of an emerging Trinitarian African environmental theology. Citing sermons and ecological rituals, he argues that the earthkeeping mission of the indigenous churches represents a contextualised form of religio-cultural liberation.

Readers of this book will be drawn to the detailed descriptions of 'earth healing' (*maporesanyika*) ceremonies held by the earthkeeping churches. The ceremonies combine the classic AIC emphasis on healing with tree-planting eucharists in which communicants confess their sins against the earth. The reception of the sacrament accompanies distribution of seedlings that are planted to heal the denuded and damaged earth, often understood as the body of Christ. Since many AICs use the eucharist as the launching point for missionary campaigns, the incorporation of environmentalism into the heart of Christian sacramental life demonstrates a holistic mission model that potentially could be applied in other parts of southern Africa.

In the final section of the book, the author places the enacted theologies of the African earthkeepers into the international framework of ecotheology. Unlike many Western theories that never touch the lives of ordinary people, the work of ZIRRCO represents effective local initiative – a tangible study of environmentalism at work. This book vividly demonstrates that the creative missional vision of the African earthkeepers brings hope not only to Africa, but to the entire world.

Dana L Robert
Series editor



Tend seedlings!
the arsenal ...
for war of trees

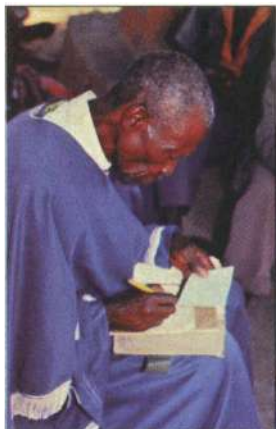
Bonded hands, new earth-community
Touch childless womb, hapless soil –
with seedlings of love





Heeding prophet's call they came
Churches of the poor
billowed swirl of garments
holy staves and cardboard crowns

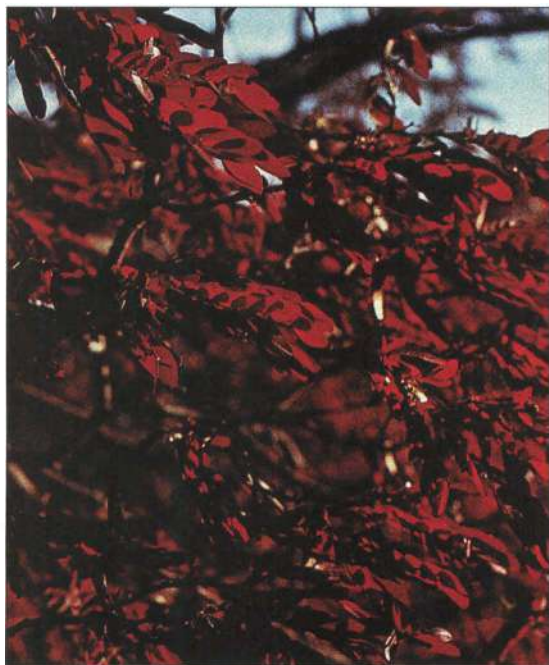
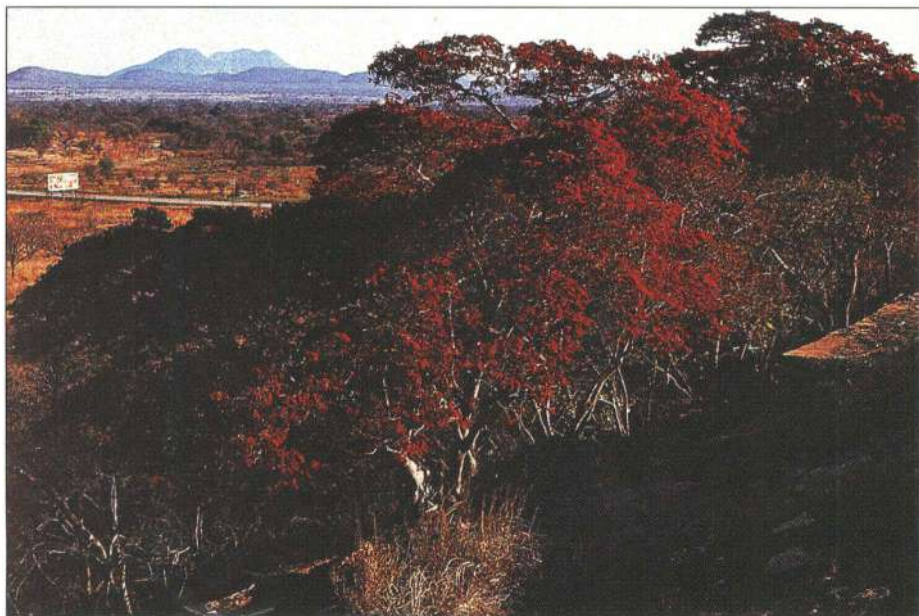




Bishop prophet Musarari Dhliwayo, first patron of the earthkeeping AICs



And the Spirit of God urged the prophet: 'Cry the empty gullies,
the dying plains – clothe naked land of forebears!'



'On each side of the river in the New Jerusalem was the tree of life, which bears fruit twelve times a year, once each month; and its leaves are for the healing of the nations' (Rev 22:2). The young leaves of *mivuzhe*, mountain acacia trees, signal the promise of healing through life-renewing rain, while the rest of the landscape still appears dry and forlorn

PART 2

Towards an African theology of the environment

Spirit-endowed beings do not save creation, but creation looks to us. The way that we cope with its suffering shows how much hope there is for creation. When we increase the suffering of creation its hope sinks. When we sharpen the conflict between human beings and nature, and also the conflict between humans, then creation lapses into resignation. When, instead, in solidarity with nature and our fellow human beings, we reduce suffering, then the hope of creation awakes into new life.

Such a solidarity between humans and nature is precisely what the AAEC hopes to achieve. Through the movement of the earthkeeping Spirit new unity is being established between formerly opposing churches and between a pluriformity of religions in society, giving rise to an ecumenism of hope. In the participating holy cities and Jerusalems, hope takes concrete shape in the form of a healing ministry that attempts to cover and nurture the afflicted land. Serious attempts to expose and discipline those who continue raping the earth embolden the green combatants to intensify the struggle. Replacing the trees in sacramental recognition of the lordship of Christ – the ultimate guardian who reigns over, yet suffers within, the stricken earth – brings life and celebration to creation.

the elements.' Because of this identification of creation with creator, Tawoneichi saw the church's earthkeeping role as healing the wounded body of Christ, that is, the barren earth.

Bishop Chimhangwa of the African Zion Apostolic Church said: 'We would not exist if all of creation was not Christ's body. God, the Father, created the earth and Christ was part of it. So Christ is in creation. He is the fulfilment of all creation and the owner of it all.'

Mrs Chimhangwa, the Bishop's wife, concurred: 'Yes, the earth is part of Christ's body, because that is the place of his footprints, the place where he dwells. The trees are his, and if they are chopped down for no good reason, he is hurt.'

Bishop Machokoto, the AAEC president, claimed in no uncertain terms: 'Indeed, the earth is Christ's body. If the environment that we destroy was not Christ's body, Mwari would not have been angered and he would not have punished us with this drought. Mwari is angry. He says: 'The people destroying the earth are destroying my body.' We people have killed the earth, we have killed the trees and the animals ... In killing the earth we are destroying the body of Christ, the life of God.'

Some of these statements reveal radical sentiments, reflecting in AIC peasant perspective the severity of the life-threatening drought which prevailed at the time that these views were aired. Implicit in these views is an acute awareness of the incarnate Christ who, despite his lordship, shares the suffering of an endangered creation. Chimhangwa's assertion that Christ's body is creation and that he is the fulfilment of all creation underlines the AAEC's predominant interpretation of the cosmological implication of Colossians 1:15-20 ('in Christ all things hold together'). Whereas Carmody (1983:91) maintains that this *logos* doctrine remained unrelated to Western science and was neglected as a theological basis for referencing nature, the AAEC depends on it as the cornerstone of its tree-planting eucharist.

In doing so there is no pretence that we earthkeepers are the saviours of creation, for that we can never be. But as believers and disciples of the one who holds all things together, we are erecting not merely symbolic but physical signposts of life-giving hope in a creation suffering while it awaits redemption. For, as Duchrow and Liedke (1987:61) correctly state:

to what Moltmann (1985:227) calls the messianic calling of human beings:

In the messianic light of the gospel the appointment (of humans) to rule over animals and the earth also appears as the 'ruling with Christ' of believers. For it is to Christ, the true and visible image of the invisible God on earth, that all authority is given to human beings at creation ... It is to 'the Lamb' that rule over the world belongs. It would be wrong to seek for the *dominium terrae*, not in the lordship of Christ, but in other principalities and powers – in the power of the state or the power of science and technology.

The AICs will agree with Moltmann that their tree-planting eucharist gives expression to their 'ruling with Christ' in his liberating and healing rule as fulfilment of the *dominium terrae*. However, the twofold interpretation of Christ's body – implying both personhood and cosmic presence – is a somewhat controversial issue amongst AAEC earth-keepers. This is illustrated by some responses to recent interviews on the subject.

As mentioned before (supra:43), Bishop Farawo, senior AAEC nursery keeper and expert forester, is critical of the interpretation that tree-planting 'heals' Christ's cosmic body, and said outright: 'Tree planting during the eucharist is not really part of Christ's body. It is like an expression of Christ's body ... for our clothing the earth pleases Christ.' Farawo's two wives held opposing views on the matter. While Miria thought that earthkeeping is unrelated to Christ's body, Sophia described tree planting as 'part of Christ's body, because it is he who inspires people to restore the earth; he is present in all earthkeeping activities.'

In the previous chapter I also mentioned that in response to the question whether the earth is part of Christ's body – a question integral to an in-depth scrutiny of views on the tree-planting eucharist – the majority of respondents answered affirmatively. An interesting array of reasons were given. I quote a few examples:

Revd Tawoneichi of the Evangelical Ministry of Christ said: 'The earth is the body of Christ, as is the church. Only we do not sufficiently acknowledge this truth because we remain ignorant of the creation story. Christ's spirit hovered over the waters and was therefore part of

And what more poignant way of doing so can there be in Africa than to own up to the particular kind of wizardry against creation in which one has indulged!

Christ emerges in the liturgy as the complete antithesis of Satan – the one who heals, protects and brings harmony. His blood effects reconciliation between humankind and the rest of nature. His salvation, through humankind, extends to all creation. The reference here is to Colossians 1:17–20. Although at this point the liturgy is not explicit about the twofold interpretation of the body of Christ (ie the body as church and the body as creation), the central concept underlying this Christological feature, much discussed in AAEC circles, is that ‘in Christ all things hold together’. The sacramental activity which unfolds around this concept apparently suggests that the view propagated by myself and fellow Independents during eucharistic ceremonies is gaining currency, namely that at the point where the believers give expression to their unity in the body of Christ as church, by partaking of the bread and wine, they accept responsibility for the repair of the cosmic body of Christ, to which they also belong and which they, too, have abused. Consequently, in partnership with Christ who, as head of the believers, is the real *muridzi venyika* (guardian of the land – in contrast to or in fulfilment of the traditional concept of ancestral guardianship), they proceed in unity as the church to heal the stricken body through tree-planting.

In the tree-planting eucharist this close identification of Christ’s body with the abused and barren soil makes sense. Traditionally the ancestral guardians of the land belonged to the soil. They are the soil! Their ecological directives issue from the soil, as expressed in the literal saying, ‘*Ivhu yataura*’ (literally ‘the soil has spoken’). In a sense Christ in this context is both guardian and the soil itself. New conceptions of Christ’s lordship and his salvation of all creation can develop from this essentially African expression of his pervading presence in the cosmos. In African peasant society at any rate Christ’s reign as *muridzi* (guardian) of the land is an essential part of the good news, for he is the one who is believed to consciously strike a balance between exploitive agricultural progress and altruistic, sacramental restoration of the land.

Here, in Christ’s lordship, the Independents give ecological expression

ment. The ritual, moreover, expresses compassion for the badly abused friends: trees, soil, water and, by implication, all of life in nature.

The *ngozi* concept has several subtle connotations in the liturgy. It reflects the ruthlessness of the supposed human stewards of the earth who attack nature with a vengeance, like that of the *ngozi*, hence the seedlings are legitimate sacrificial substitutes for the stricken tree trunks or 'corpses'. Then, in sprinkling the water over God's acre, the words 'It (the water) is a prayer to God, a symbol of rain' implicitly suggest that God him/herself turns *ngozi* against the ecological offenders by retaliating with severe drought. This interpretation tallies with the still persistent and widespread traditional belief that the creator-God punishes transgressions against nature and the guardian ancestors of the land, who are responsible for ecological equilibrium, by withholding rain. In the admission of guilt, the ritual plea for termination of divine discipline, the renewal of human resolve to heed the environment as ordained by deity and ancestors, absolution is found. God responds by sending life-giving rain. Transformed as they are in the Christian liturgy, some of these traditional notions are still in evidence.

Sprinkling holy water and soil over the barren earth earmarked for repair is a symbolic act of earth-healing. It accords entirely with prophetic faith-healing practice as described above. As such, it is further proof of the ecclesiological shift which extends healing beyond human suffering to the healing or liberation of all creation.

Both the liturgy itself and Bishop Marinda's commentary make a powerful statement about the evil forces at work in earth destruction. Having deceived humanity and having alienated men and women from God, Satan is the main perpetrator of evil against creation. A frustrated being chased from heaven, Satan is presented as destroyer and foremost ecological enemy from the very beginning (Gn 2). This focus, however, does not minimise human guilt as demon-possessed human beings cause all of creation to suffer. Such madness raises the prospect of extinguishing all life on earth. 'If the world is ultimately destroyed, it will be the doing of man,' says the liturgy. By implication the tree-planting eucharist in its entirety epitomises fighting Satan and the demonic blindness to the needs of nature which has been induced in humans. Thus, during the eucharist, all participants are given the opportunity to confess their particular ecological blindness under the sway of Satan.

Plate 20 Sacramental empowerment culminates in tree-planting. *Ruwadzano* women often plant the bulk of the seedlings in new woodlots



To the Western mind this liturgy may sound simple and fairly trivial considering the enormous, near impossible task of halting deforestation, desertification and soil degradation. In the African cultural and linguistic context, however, as part of spontaneous ecological ritual activity, it is a powerful statement of Christian commitment to the healing of all creation.

The close identification with water, soil and trees – elevating them ritually to the status of communication with human beings – reflects African religious holism. Here the intuition of the past is taken to a level where mutual dependence is eloquently and meaningfully verbalised. In this overtly declared friendship, subsequent to admissions of human guilt in the mindless destruction of nature, mutual responsibility is reaffirmed: the new trees to provide shade and unpolluted air to sustain healthy life for humans, and the earthkeepers to water and protect their budding friends in the Lord's acre. The liturgy assumes responsible aftercare by the community of believers commissioned to do so – in itself a strong incentive to the woodlot keepers not to let the green army and its monitoring agents down. This imaginative encouragement of proper aftercare – normally the Achilles' heel of most African tree-planting endeavours at the grassroots – is already proving effective at sustaining responsibility for the sometimes monotonous chores in the wake of the more exciting ritual experience of tree planting.

Impersonating the vengeful *ngozi* spirit in terms of earth destruction is as potent a way of accepting full responsibility for deforestation as the confession of ecological wizardry. The *ngozi* is an aggrieved spirit of a murdered person or someone who has been the victim of a grave injustice prior to death (Gelfand 1959:153; Daneel 1971:133–140). In customary law and traditional religion the *ngozi*, which wreaks havoc in the offender's family through illness and death, has a legitimate claim to full compensation in the form of up to ten sacrificial beasts called *mutumbu* (literally 'corpse' or 'body', since they pay for the corpse of the deceased). In some cases the offender's relatives also provide the *ngozi* with a young wife, who must sweep and tend the small hut specifically erected for her disgruntled 'spirit-husband'.

Presenting the trees to be planted as *mitumbu* compensation for the *ngozi* spirit provoked by wanton tree felling is an illustration of thoroughly contextualised appeasement between humans and environ-

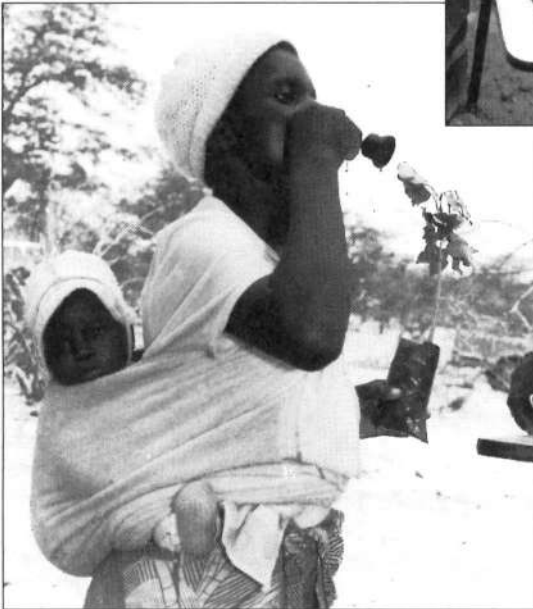


Plate 19 Bishop Chimhangwa assists women earthkeepers at the communion table (top); seedling in hand, a woman communicant partakes of the sacramental wine (below)

Plate 18 Bishop Chimhangwa, accompanied by Bishop Marinda, scatters 'holy soil' over the 'Lord's acre' before the seedlings are planted



seek forgiveness for having caused the nakedness of the land’.

Then follows the celebration of sacramental bread and wine. Holding seedlings in their hands while receiving the sacrament, the communicants then proceed to where the holes have been dug in the new acre of God (woodlot). Prior to the actual planting, the Bishop walks through the woodlot sprinkling holy water on the ground and on the seedlings, saying:

This is the water of purification and fertility.
We sprinkle it on this new acre of trees.
It is a prayer to God, a symbol of rain
so that the trees will grow,
so that the land will heal
as the *ngozi* we have caused withdraws.

‘Holy soil’ which has been prayed over is then scattered in the woodlot to the words:

You soil ...
I bless you in the name of Christ
for you to make the trees grow
and to protect them.
Provide the trees with sufficient food
for proper growth.
Love the trees and keep their roots
for they are our friends.

The Bishop then leads the green army into the Lord’s acre to do battle against the earth’s nakedness. The seedlings are addressed one after another as they are placed in the soil:

You, tree, my brother ... my sister
today I plant you in this soil.
I shall give water for your growth.
Have good roots
to keep the soil from eroding.
Have many leaves and branches
so that we can
breathe fresh air
sit in your shade
and find firewood.

In addition to the people's role of extending Christ's salvation to creation, Marinda also presented an intriguing interpretation of how Christ saves all of creation. Through the ultimate sacrifice on the cross, Christ brought all burnt offerings of Old Testament times – the destruction of sacrificial birds and animals, as well as the firewood used for this purpose – to an end. Hence 'through his death on the cross he also saved the animals, the birds and the trees' (appendix I). In the liturgy this theme is further elaborated with reference to Jesus' action against the merchants in the temple in Jerusalem. 'When Jesus heard the lowing and the bleating he knew the poor creatures were crying to be saved from the cruel merchants.' By lashing the merchants Jesus saved the birds and animals from the cruel fate of being sacrificed.

The liturgy then turns to the ecological strife caused on earth by Satan:

There was war in heaven, says the Bible.
Michael and his angels ...
He was hurled down,
that ancient serpent called Satan
he, who leads the whole world astray.

So the devil is deceiving the whole world
causing man to fight creation.
Possessed by the demon
man is destroying nature's beauty.
All living things suffer -
the trees, the animals, water
It shall continue
until man extinguishes
all life on earth.
If we continue to kill the trees
we hurt ourselves
by hastening the end of the world.
If the world is ultimately destroyed
it will be the doing of man.

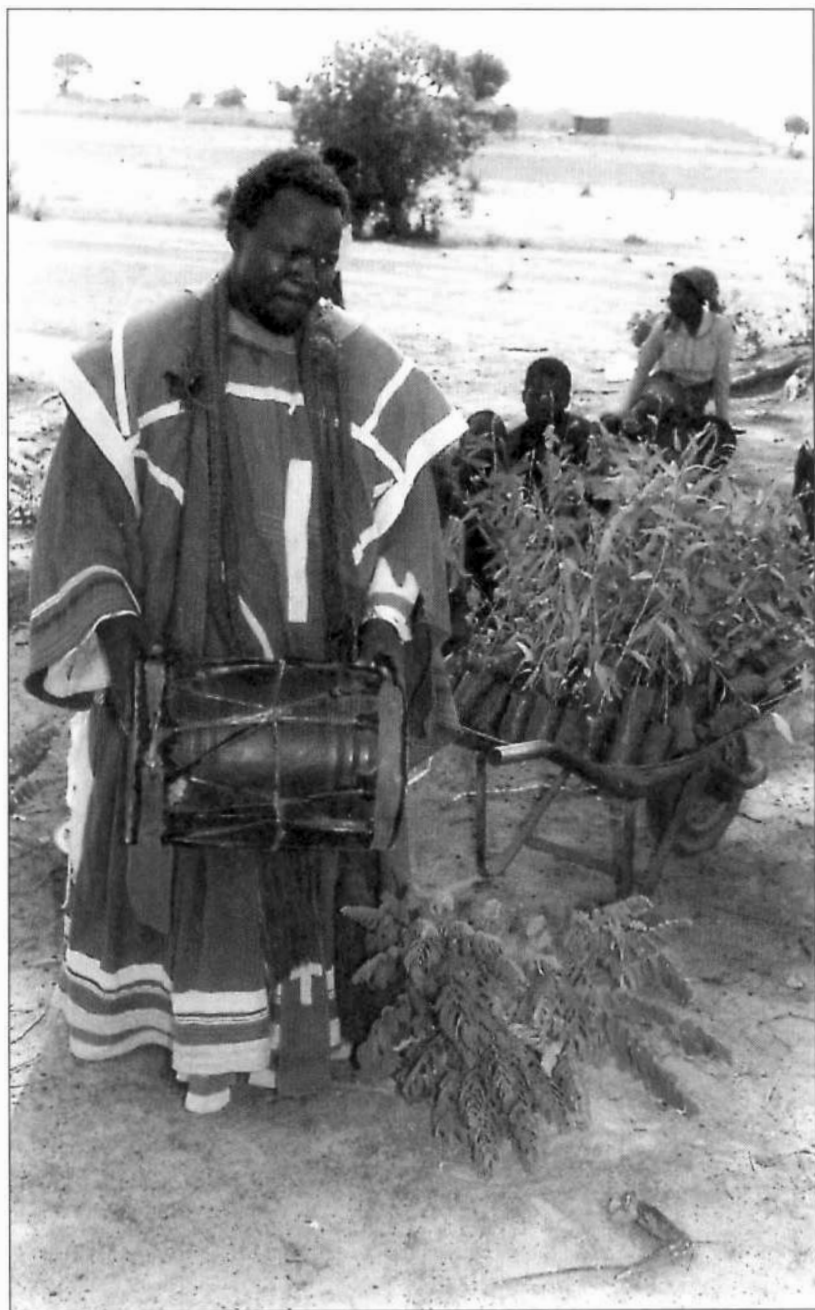
In a further elaboration of *ngozi* beliefs (appendix I) the liturgy explains the meaning of *mutumbu* payment and sacrifice. Replacing the sacrificial animals to appease the aggrieved and vengeful spirit with sacrificial trees to pacify the aggrieved land and its creator is 'the only way we can



Plate 17 Bishops Zvanaka, Marinda, Masuka and Moses, praying over sacraments and seedlings in preparation of the eucharist (top). Communicants file past Bishop Mutikizizi – with crown – and Revd Zvanaka as they partake of the sacraments



Plate 16 Drumbeat and a dance of joy around the seedlings to be planted, while the communion table is being prepared



that we will care for God's creation
so that he will grant us rain.
An oath, not in jest ...
but with all our heart
admitting our guilt,
appeasing the aggrieved spirit,
offering our trees in all earnest
to clothe the barren land.

Indeed, there were forests,
abundance of rain.
But in our ignorance and greed
we left the land naked.
Like a person in shame
our country is shy
of its nakedness.

Our planting of trees today
is a sign of harmony
between us and creation
We are reconciled with creation
through the body and blood of Jesus
which brings peace,
he who came to save
all creation (Col 1:19–20).

At this point Bishop Marinda digressed from the liturgical text by giving an exposition of Genesis 2:15–17. Corrupted by Satan, he argued, man became an enemy of God and nature by cutting down all the trees. 'As a result the weather patterns of the entire world changed. Man became the destroyer of the rain forests, the killer of the world's ecosystems.' God retaliated by sending severe droughts. 'Look, the rivers are dried up and all the fish have gone, because we cut away all the vegetation on the river banks, causing the river beds to fill up with sand.' Against this background of human sin against nature and God's judgment, an urgent appeal was made once again to confess environmental sins. Christ, the one who holds everything in creation together (Col 1:17), atones for such sins. As Lord of creation he works salvation for humanity. 'Humans, in their turn, have a duty to extend salvation to all of creation (as Christ's co-workers).'

keeping the moisture in the soil.
Look at the stagnant water
where all the trees were felled
Without trees the water holes mourn;
without trees the gullies form

for the tree roots which hold the soil ...
are gone!

These friends of ours
give us shade.
They draw the rain clouds,
breathe the moisture of rain.

I the tree ... I am your friend
I know you want wood
for fire
to cook your food,
to warm yourself against cold.
Use my branches ...
What I do not need
you can have.

I, the human being,
your closest friend
have committed a serious offence
as an *ngozi*, the vengeful spirit,
I destroyed you, our friends.
So the seedlings brought here today
are the bodies (*mitumbu*) of reparation
a sacrifice to appease
the vengeful spirit.
We plant these seedlings today
as an admission of guilt
laying the *ngozi* to rest,
strengthening our bonds with you,
our tree friends of the heart.

Let us make an oath today

acre'. General ceremonial procedure is in the hands of the principal church leader who, under supervision of the AAEC president and general secretary, assigns various functions to dignitaries in his/her own church and other participant churches.

While the communion table, covered with a neatly pressed tablecloth and bearing the bread, wine and a number of tree seedlings, is being prepared, groups of dancers dance around the bulk of the seedlings to be planted, which are stacked nearby. Dance and song bring praise to Mwari the great earthkeeper, encourage the green fighters to be vigilant in the struggle and even entreat the young trees to grow well. The service itself consists of several earthkeeping sermons by AAEC bishops and ZIRRCO staff members. It invariably also includes speeches by visiting government officials and representatives of the departments of Forestry, Education, and Parks and Wildlife, as well as the Natural Resources Board.

The sacrament starts with the public confession of ecological sins referred to above. All communicants, church leaders included, line up behind a band of prophesying prophets to confess their guilt and receive prophetic admonition as they slowly file past the prophets before picking up a seedling and moving to the communion table to partake of the sacrament.

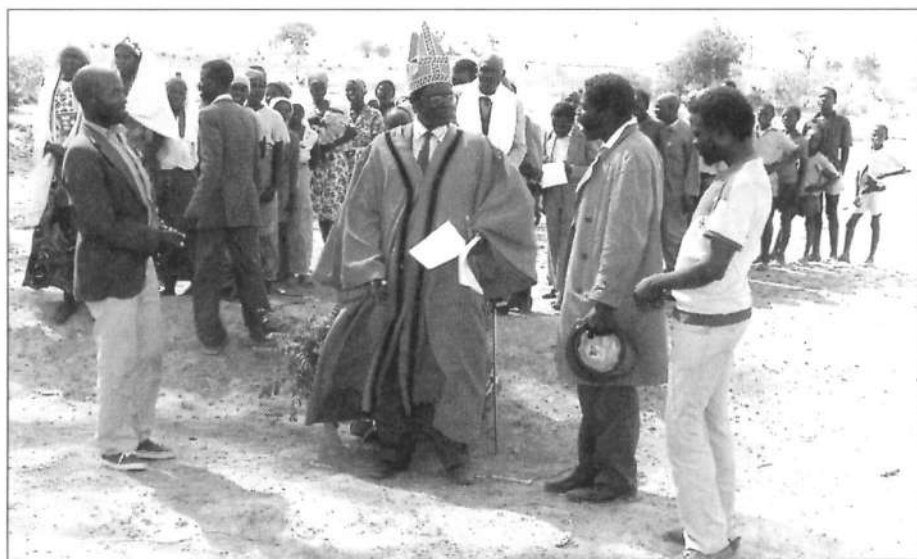
We shall now consider in some detail the contents of the eucharistic tree-planting liturgy as read (in Shona) by Bishop Marinda at a ceremony of Bishop Mupure's Zion Christian Church of St Aron on 1 February 1992.

By way of introduction all participants were welcomed to the Lord's acre, where the trees to be planted and the planters would share the same status as brothers and sisters in the Lord's presence (appendix I). Mwari is the one who declares to his church people the value of their friends the trees:

They will provide you with shade
to protect you from the heat of the sun.
They will give you fruit, for you to lead healthy lives.
These trees will clothe the barren earth,
protecting it against soil erosion,
preventing it from turning into a desert,



Plate 15 Prophets and prophetesses speak in tongues as they listen to confessions of ecological sins by tree-planting communicants. All communicants are subject to the Spirit's scrutiny. Bishop Chinhangura's wife (top left) and Bishop Marinda (centre, below) listen to Spirit promptings as they pass the prophetic 'gates'



ministry of reconciliation, which will afford exposed ecological *varoyi* the opportunity to mend their ways without undue stigmatisation.

- Finally, the militant attitudes of Bishop and son, and their use of the emerging jargon of the green struggle, leave little doubt about their commitment to what they regard as a real liberation struggle. Not only do they consider themselves the fighters of the war of the trees, but they see the church as one of its principal mobilising agencies.

2.2 A tree-planting eucharist

The best example of eco-liturgical innovation in the AAEC churches in the process of giving ritual expression to an emerging environmental ethic is the introduction of a tree-planting eucharist. According to the member churches' annual calendar, a tree-planting eucharist only takes place once during the rainy season, so it does not drastically change or supersede established liturgical procedure regarding the sacrament of holy communion, popularly known in the prophetic movements as *Paseka* (paschal) ceremonies. Nevertheless the practice of tree-planting eucharists is of great interest, for various reasons. First of all, the participation of diverse churches in each ceremony and the sharing of ritual officiant roles on an interchurch basis strengthen environmentally focused *ecumenism*. Second, the integration of eucharist and tree-planting makes *environmental stewardship*, which in Christian tradition has often been treated as peripheral, part of the very heartbeat of church life and biblical spirituality. Third, this ceremony highlights characteristic trends of an emerging *AIC theology of the environment*. And, fourth, the new liturgies introduced are imaginatively contextualised in terms of African religious holism and worldviews. Thus an earthkeeping model is developed which could well challenge AICs elsewhere in Africa to assimilate environmental stewardship through similar liturgical innovation.

Consider, for example, the tree-planting liturgy drafted by Zionist Bishop Reuben Marinda, former general secretary of the AAEC, at the request of the executive after careful consideration.

Preparation for the eucharist starts with digging holes for tree planting in the vicinity of an AIC headquarters or in a local congregation. In some instances the woodlot is fenced and referred to as 'the Lord's

Church members who disobey those laws will, with the help of the chiefs, be evicted from the wards where they reside. Once such measures are strictly applied everybody will obey the earthkeeping laws of our churches.

The views expressed here characterise the attitudes and convictions of many AAEC key figures. The most pertinent points can be summarised as follows:

- As indicated in the previous section, the earthkeeping function of the church is indisputable. Bishop Nhongo confidently claims that the church is 'the keeper of creation'.
- The church's mission includes laying down and implementing strict rules against earth destruction. Strict environmental church laws imply authorising and empowering the prophets to expose ecological wizards during public confessions.
- Prophetic exposure is but the first step in a process of church cleansing, so as to effectively mobilise the Christian green army, eliminate subversion and realise environmental goals. Paramount is an element of judgment and punishment so that – as in *chimurenga* – the enemy outside and within can be clearly discerned. Evangelist Samuel Nhongo shows awareness that the church cannot usurp the divine function of final judgment. Yet the biblical Peter's function as holder of the keys justifies expulsion of unrepentant tree-felling *varoyi* to give impetus to the earthkeeping cause.
- The Bishop's somewhat tongue-in-cheek suggestion that, if he had a say in the matter, the destroyers of nature would be barred from heaven underscores the seriousness with which ecological sins are viewed and the church's inescapable responsibility to relentlessly oppose it.
- The proposed interaction with the chiefs is not only symptomatic of the interfaith ecumenism and AZTREC-AAEC cooperation mentioned earlier, but also indicates a resolve to act resolutely against the heartless wizards by not only excommunicating them from church but also having them expelled from their wards of residence – one of the harshest penalties imaginable.
- Not all AAEC leaders will agree with the radical punitive measures proposed by Bishop Nhongo. Some 'doves' among them will plead for a

takes the form of the true prophets of God exposing environmental sins (elsewhere described by the Bishop as much more serious than adultery, as it amounts to the destruction of all life). The church should be cleansed of the wilful earth destroyers who persevere in their evil ways. *This is the law of ZIRRCO!* All churches are now earthkeepers, healing the earth. Those who obstruct this work must be expelled. Their destructive characters will cause them to attack and obstruct the fighters of the war of the trees. Expulsion is a (legitimate) means of cleansing the church and our association (AAEC) from evil. If you keep readmitting such culprits your church will not advance (in the green struggle) properly. In all this we do not want merely to assert our own will, but to promote God's liberating work.

Evangelist Samuel Nhongo:

Simon Peter was told by Jesus that on him, Peter the Rock, the church will be built ... Jesus said: 'I give you the keys to lock and unlock!' It is in this light that I see the earth destroyers whom we expel from the church. We cannot accommodate tree fellers who persist in their evil ways. They are wizards (*varoyi*) who should be locked out of the church ...

The churches, the chiefs (AZTREC) and the government should sit down together and plan a proper strategy for this war. It must be fought on all fronts and with severity. *The church's new ecological laws should be universally known and respected!* Otherwise we will merely be chasing the wind. It is also stated in the Bible that one must leave the weeds to grow with the corn. Although this means that the church cannot judge finally in this existence, the cleansing of the church (from earth-destroying *varoyi*) must proceed lest the (green) struggle stagnates ...

Bishop Nhongo:

I agree that the battle must be fought in unison with the chiefs. They were installed by Mwari. It is similar to King David of Israel's cooperation with Samuel, the man of God. Their cooperation was fruitful. Likewise, we shall cooperate with the (AZTREC) chiefs because the trees are planted on their land. The chiefs will have the tree choppers sentenced in their courts and if these trespassers oppose the court's ruling, the chief will evict them from his chieftom. The churches will also strictly apply their own laws against tree felling.

ing secret *pungwe* meetings as part of a process of identifying the wizard-traitors and singling them out for punishment. Unifying the battle ranks and cleansing the guerrilla cadres of internal subversion in terms of the idiom of wizardry indicated a relentless will to succeed and survive, for *uroyi* is an evil which brooks no compromise.

In the earthkeeping churches the nuances regarding wizardry are inevitably more varied and subtle than during the war. In contrast to the execution or torture of war traitors, wanton tree-fellers or poachers of wildlife will, upon prophetic detection, either be temporarily barred from taking the eucharist or, in the event of repeated transgression of the earthkeepers' code, be excommunicated altogether. The key figures in the AAEC are only too aware of a common guilt which, in a sense, makes all of us '*varoyi*' – earth destroyers. To this they readily admit, which in itself is a sure sign of accepting collective responsibility for environmental restoration. There is a vast difference, however, between admitting guilt prior to committed participation in conservationist programmes, and deliberate deforestation or related destructive action in the face of a protective environmental code. It is this attitude of selfish environmental exploitation, regardless of the will of the community and the destruction caused to nature, which the prophets condemn as the evil of *uroyi*, to be stamped out at all costs.

Discussions about ecological *uroyi* and how to combat it stimulate emotional expressions of views which, probably more than any other kind of discourse, outline the underlying convictions in AAEC circles about the real nature of an earthkeeping church. To illustrate this point, I quote from an interview with Bishop Darikai Nhongo and his son, evangelist Samuel Nhongo, both of the AAEC affiliated Zion Christian Church (an offshoot of the larger ZCC of Bishop Mutendi). Said the Bishop:

The church is the keeper of creation. All churches now know that they must empower their prophets to expose (through Spirit-induced confessions) the *varoyi* who kill the land. These people who wilfully defile the church through their destruction of creation should be barred from holy communion. *If I was the one who owned heaven I would have barred them from entering.* The destroyers of the earth should be warned that the blood which they cause to flow (of trees, animals, etc) will be on their own heads.

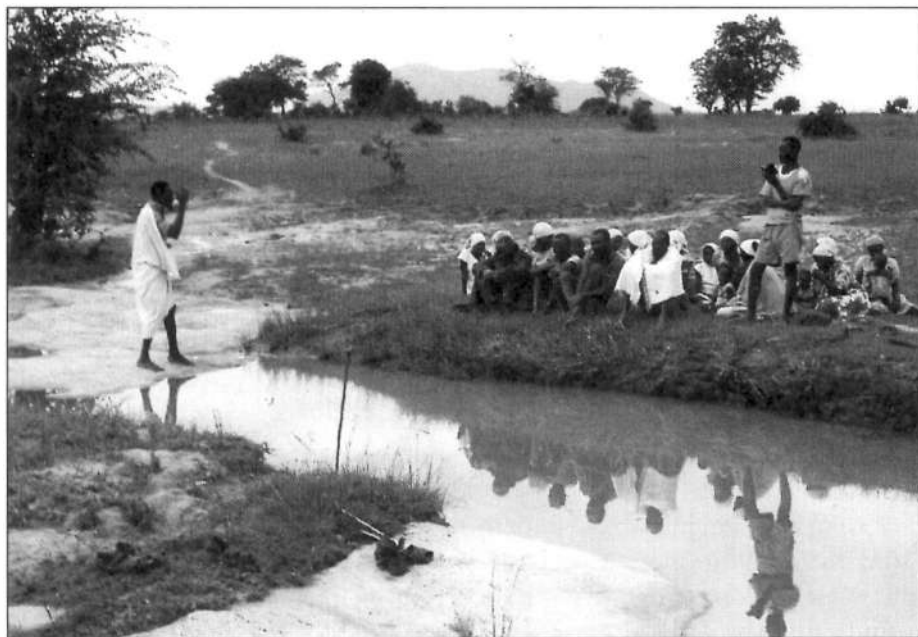
All churches should now judge with the judgment of Mwari. This

Easier to assess is the AAEC prophets' struggle against ecological sins in the context of numerous *tree-planting eucharistic ceremonies*, in which ZIRRCO staff members and I participate regularly. During the public confessions, which form part of the green liturgy preceding the taking of bread and wine, a core group of 'green prophets' from a wide range of Zionist and Apostolic churches increasingly brand offences which cause firewood shortage, soil erosion, poor crops and the absence of wildlife as a form of wizardry (*uroyi*) – the gravest of all sins, threatening not only human survival but all other forms of life. This trend has not yet developed into a practice of separating unrepentant ecological *varoyi* from the other communicants, paralleling the pre-sacramental cleansing praxis of the Maranke Apostles (Daneel 1974:293f). Nevertheless, as the resolve of the earthkeeping churches hardens and prophets become more and more convinced that the Holy Spirit rather than human beings motivates and guides the green struggle, unrepentant ecological *varoyi* in the AICs will increasingly find themselves barred from the eucharist. Discussions with prophets, who are becoming Christian 'guardians of the land' in their own right, indicate that they are increasingly convinced that the Holy Spirit is in fact inspiring the struggle against environmental evil, and that they generally have a clear perception of who the earth-destroying wizards in their society are. These *varoyi* are considered to include people in resettlement schemes who endanger the common good by indiscriminately felling as many trees as they can for a quick profit from selling firewood; who refuse to accept the principle that firewood can only be used by those who plant the trees that supply it; who resist government conservationist measures and the tribal elders' prohibition of tree felling in the traditional holy groves (*marambatemwa*) of the ancestors; and destroyers of river banks.

The identification of ecological sin with wizardry and the insistence on public confession underscore a significant new development. They enable the church in its green struggle to identify the enemy outside and within its own ranks. Identification of the wrongdoers in turn enhances and crystallises the church's *ethical code* and *control system*. This development is reminiscent of the *chimurenga* struggle, in which counter revolutionaries and collaborators with the Smith regime were branded wizards. The task of the AIC war prophets, alongside the traditionalist spirit-mediums, was to elicit confessions from suspects dur-



Plate 14 Jordan baptism: A prophet seeks guidance from the Holy Spirit as he prepares to direct the confession ceremony (top). A prophetic sermon precedes baptism (bottom). This context provides the ideal opportunity for a renewal of commitment to earth-care



2.1 Confession of ecological sins, conversion and baptism

Some AAEC-affiliated prophets are already applying their newly gained insight into ecological stewardship to their moral guardianship over their churches. In the baptismal context they are increasingly revealing that the Holy Spirit expects novices not only to confess their moral sins in a society of disturbed human relations but also their *ecological sins*: felling trees without planting any in return; overgrazing; riverbank cultivation and neglect of contour ridges, which cause soil erosion – in other words, taking the good earth for granted and exploiting it without nurturing or reverencing it.

At 'Jordan' it makes sense to the newly converted to confess ecological guilt, there where the barren, denuded plains, erosion gullies, unprotected riverbanks and clouds of wind-eroded dust are clearly in evidence. Crossing the River Jordan in baptism after such confession means more than just individual incorporation into the body of Christ and the prospect of personal salvation in heaven. It also requires the new convert's commitment to helping to restore creation as part of God's plan and as a sign of genuine conversion and repentance in recognition of the gift of God's grace.

To many Independents baptism is also a healing ceremony in which baptisands drink the life-giving water of Jordan, filled by the Holy Spirit, for individual cleansing and curative purposes. It follows that the ceremony offers a unique opportunity for interpreting the Spirit as healer of both the people and the land. Baptism, therefore, becomes yet another feature of an extended ministry of healing, a changing ecclesiology. In that case, the drinking of Jordan water symbolises a shift from the baptisand's personal benefit from the Holy Spirit's healing and salvific powers to a ritual affirmation of solidarity with all creation, a new commitment, through individual conversion, to earth-healing.

It is not clear to what extent this reinterpretation of conversion and prophetically induced confession of ecological sins at baptism has really taken root in AAEC churches. However, discussions on the subject at AAEC executive meetings and the incorporation of these views into training material used at AAEC workshops point to growing consensus on what a contextualised ethical code in terms of eco-confessions should imply.

CHAPTER 2

Green rituals and liturgies

Confession of sins has always played a prominent role in the healing and sacramental ceremonies of the prophetic AICs. During *faith-healing ceremonies* the healer-prophet urges patients to confess their sins. Not only is this a way of placing the afflicted under the care of the Holy Spirit, but revelation of the dark side of the patient's existence also enlightens the healer-prophet about the cause of affliction, the area in the patient's life which requires therapy (Daneel 1974:214f, 292f). The confessions of converts prior to baptism symbolically illustrate the neophyte's acceptance of the authority of the church, represented during the ceremony by the prophet listening to the confessions, as well as the final mystical authority of the Holy Spirit which induces such confessions.

Public confessions prior to taking the *sacrament of holy communion* are in a sense a mass demonstration of right-mindedness and obedience to God. In the Zionist and Apostolic movements such confessions form part of an intricate process of cleansing the church community so that it can appear worthily before the holy God during the most revered and intimate ritual expression of divine-human encounter. In the Apostolic movement of Maranke and Mutendi's ZCC confession ceremonies consist of nightlong vigils, during which prophets reveal the hidden sins of unrepentant hearts and *vaPostori* judges at the symbolic fires of judgment spend hours assessing whether the self-confessed or prophetically accused wizards (witches and/or sorcerers) are sufficiently prepared or repentant to take the sacrament. As *uroyi* (wizardry), with its destruction of human life and social relations, is indisputably evil, and the *muroyi* in many ways becomes the personification of the biblical Satan, one can understand the prophets' intense preoccupation with this phenomenon when it comes to cleansing the church in anticipation of union with the body of Christ (Daneel 1974, chapter 4; 1990:220f).

a revitalised creation here and now. Individual spiritual growth is directly related to, measured and fed by participation in earthkeeping programmes. Ecclesiastic unity acquires a new dimension as churches overcome isolation on account of the common cause of serving God's creation. New laws and disciplinary measures against earth destruction strengthen their resolve, which in turn finds expression in green liturgical innovation. The accompanying process of theological reflection is spontaneous and fairly straightforward, if subtle and intuitive in some respects. New theological insight crystallises in the action of church people as they trace their own response to God's inspiration to ecological figures and/or events in the Bible. Through a growing perception of human guilt in environmental destruction people's position in creation is reappraised as one of humility and complete identification with all creatures rather than of triumphalist subjection.

The uniqueness of Moses's call to liberate Israel is seen to derive from the fact that God addresses him from a burning bush and gives him a wooden staff as symbolic affirmation of his task. Great importance is attached to God's choice of a tree as a symbol of divine presence and power during Israel's exodus (Mandondo, appendix II).

In some interpretations God's presence in a tree signifies equal status between humans and the rest of creation, the implication being that both are equally dependent on divine liberation from enslavement. Said Revd Masoro (appendix I):

The Israelites complained to Moses that he alone was conversing with Mwari. They, too, wanted to communicate directly with God. So God said: 'Let them wash and prepare themselves before we converse.' But God did not speak out in the open plains. Whenever he spoke he was hidden in a *denhere* (clump of trees). And the people had to lie prostrate in his presence. This shows that the tree and the human being are one (in status and need of deliverance).

From the ecological significance of the Old Testament figures Adam, Noah and Moses, the attention often switches directly to Christ, the true source of all life and guardian of all creation. Union with Christ (Jn 15), poignantly expressed in the imagery of the vine and its shoots or the *muchakata* tree with its branches laden with fruit (suggestive of the original harmony between God and humans in the garden of Eden), provides life and, to the earthkeeper, empowerment to heal creation. Said Revd Masoro in concluding his tree-planting oration: 'We cannot bear fruit if we are not in Christ, the true vine. If we do not go and ask for trees to plant we shall not have the trees which heal and clean us' (appendix I). Pragmatic as this motive for tree planting may seem, it nevertheless flows from new life in Christ. Obedience to Christ inevitably implies Christian responsibility for all creation, especially tree stewardship (Mandondo, appendix II).

Having considered some of the characteristic features of the African earthkeeping church, one can say in *summary* that prophetic healing colonies are extending their ministry to incorporate earth-healing. In the process some church headquarters acquire the features of 'environmental hospitals' with built-in healing responsibilities for the entire church community. In its new mission the church propagates salvation for all of creation, with a clear emphasis on the realised eschatology of

misbehaviour. To the present-day earthkeeper the cardinal sin against God is disrespect for his presence in nature and mindless provocation of his protective jealousy of his forests – contemporary symbolic extensions of the Garden of Eden – as evidenced by the deforested regions of the Chivi district where Farawo himself leads the church's war of the trees. The Bishop does not judge and reject Adam's sin, moreover, but identifies with it, giving it particular poignancy in a rural context where environmental destruction reflects God's anguish and withdrawal. Absolution and deliverance, it seems, relate directly to restoring Mwari's creation, thus restoring harmony and closeness between Creator and human beings.

Adam's sin also becomes the focal point in defining the earthkeeping church's task of restoring creation. Zionist Bishop Nhongo illustrates this point as follows:

In the garden of Eden God only forbade Adam to eat from the tree of life. But the snake got into that tree and tempted Adam to transgress Mwari's law. As a result of Adam's sin the garden of Eden was destroyed. Likewise, nature was destroyed by greedy human beings over the entire earth. ZIRRCON and the church's objective is to restore the earth to what it was originally in Adam's time. The entire land is to be clad in green vegetation once again and wildlife will abound.

Somewhat naive as this view may seem in continental or global perspective, it provides a theologically understandable point of departure in the world of dispossessed peasants, where planting and nurturing a single woodlot represent a tangible, meaningful signpost of a better future. Once again the common guilt arising from Adam's transgression and subsequently compounded by the sins of all humanity is asserted. Hence the somewhat utopian ideal of restoring creation to its original unspoilt state.

Other frequently mentioned Old Testament figures are Noah and Moses, both of them liberators and 'men of God' in their own right. What virtually amounts to a new Africanised mythology is developed around Noah's ecologically salvific work. His ark, in the earthkeeper's view, contained *all* animals and seedlings of all plants. ZIRRCON or the AAEC churches are likened to Noah's ark in that they become the protectors of Mwari's creation in the deluge of environmental destruction.

Christians we are the inheritors belonging to God. If we are serious about this claim, it means that we, too, are children of God and as such have to proceed with the task of planting trees and taking care of living things. Genuine inheritors are stewards of the land.

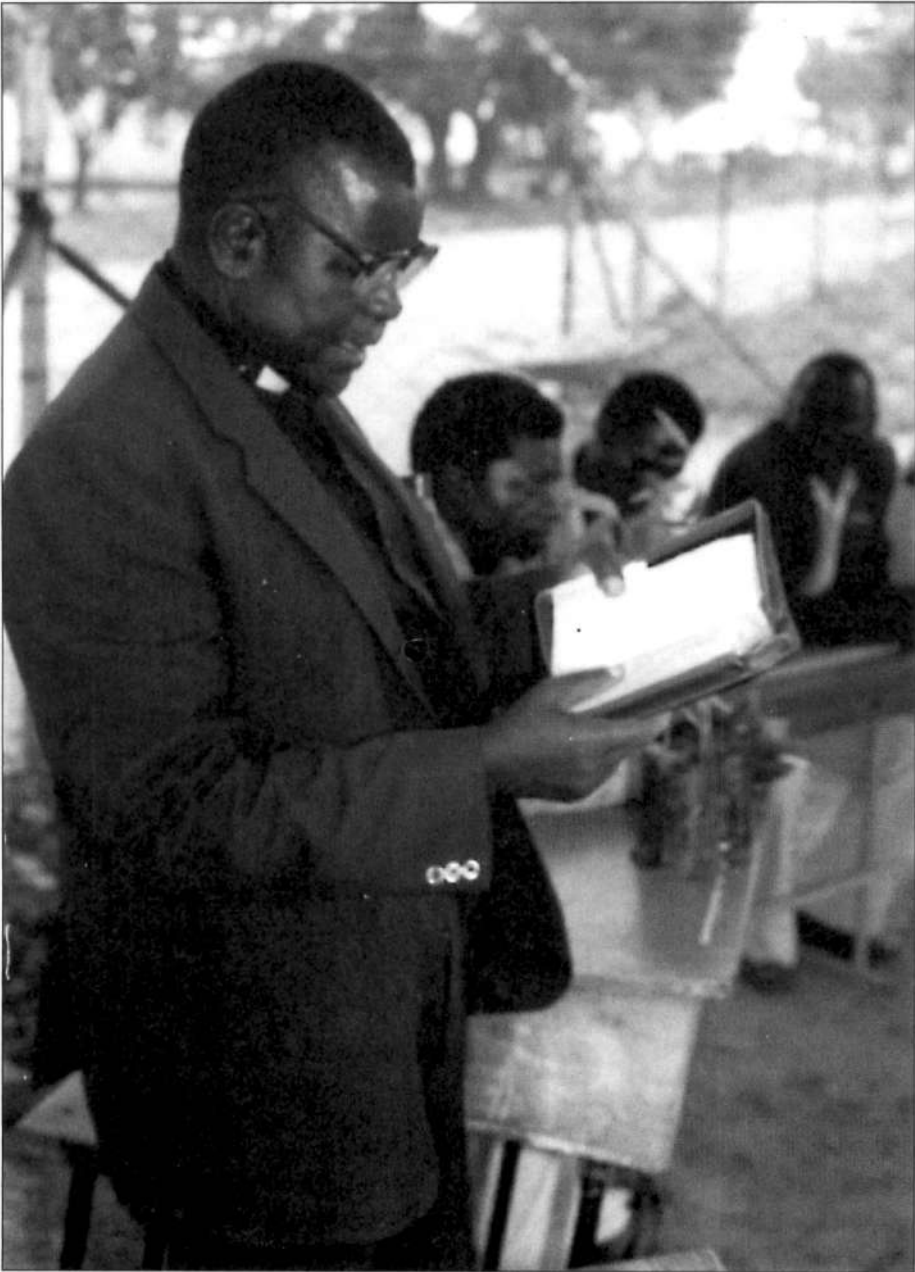
Here, once again, plant life and human beings feature as equals. In fact, the kingdom of God is portrayed as starting with the Garden of Eden in which trees and (by implication) animals are all 'God's children'. Then come humans, who happen also to be God's children. They inherit rather than reign over God's kingdom, and their very inheritance qualifies them as stewards who give, restore and protect rather than take or invade the life of God's creatures on this earth. In this earthkeeper's view the imagery of God's kingdom is not spiritualised in the inner world of individual believers, but is concretely observable in all of nature. Far from the triumphalist attitude of the technological age, which purports to conquer and reign over nature, the appropriate position of God's earthkeepers is one of humble respect for the fellow 'citizens' of God's kingdom, the trees and the animals.

Another feature of the earthkeeper's 'Garden of Eden' theology which is gaining prominence is that Adam's original sin is given contextualised African ecological connotations. Bishop Farawo suggests, for instance, that because God planted the first trees of creation, he was and remains particularly jealous and protective of all his trees. In a near pantheistic, immanentist perception of the presence of God's Spirit in trees Farawo literally considers God to be hurt and anguished whenever trees are felled. It is this love of God for his creation which Adam disregarded and offended when he first sinned against God. Said Farawo:

When there was harmony between God and Adam, God was happy to observe the wellbeing of his animals and trees. But when Adam sinned everything was spoilt. *Mwari's disappointment caused him to withdraw and become remote.* Even today we are still far away from Mwari because we sin against him much more grievously than Adam did. Take, for example, Masvingo province, especially Chivi district. The land is barren because all God's trees were felled. So God is absent. (My italics.)

In Farawo's views one is struck by the parallel with traditional African creation myths, which invariably feature the theme of the creator-God's anger and withdrawal from creation because of some mishap or human

Plate 13 Revd Mandondo of the *African Reformed Church* exhorts fellow earth-keepers to observe God’s strength and presence in creation



of Eden are virtually always given prominence in green sermons. Textual interpretation and contextual application vary considerably, yet common traits are noticeable. Revd Sauro Masoro's sermon (appendix I) was a classic example of the straightforward manner in which humanity's earliest perception of ecological stewardship as portrayed in Genesis 2 is directly linked with current AAEC preoccupation with trees. Preaching in the shade of a *muchakata* tree, the Zionist minister proclaimed that the people present and the tree under which they were sitting were one. Without the tree the people would not be able to breathe, a fact which he considered to be underscored by God's first creating the Garden of Eden as a necessary condition for living before he could create a human being to inhabit it. God's act of creation, therefore, implies total interdependence between humans and vegetation, something which was not sufficiently recognised in the past. Genesis 2:9 was given immediate relevance when he insisted that 'the *muchakata* fruit we eat from this tree you see here is medicine which heals us. The *matamba* fruit we eat is medicine which heals us. Even if we eat a mango, guava, or orange, it is still healing medicine to us.'

In this AIC 'Garden of Eden' theology Adam and Eve do not figure as the crown of creation, or as rulers over nature, but as the equals of animals and birds and fully identified with their life. In conversation, Zionist Bishop Machokoto even went so far as to say that 'human beings were created for the purpose of caring for all of creation', thus interpreting the meaning of human existence basically in terms of ecological stewardship, service to creation. Seen thus, there is a joyous relationship between humans and plant life, which Machokoto described in terms of communication and mutual respect. The trees, being addressed as brothers and sisters by tree planters during tree-planting ceremonies, now acquire a sense of dignity and value, knowing that they are no longer objects of mindless destruction by humans.

In his sermon at Shonganiso Revd Mandondo of the ARC embroidered on the same theme along slightly different lines (appendix II). God features as the first 'tree-planter':

He made the trees his children. We human beings, in our turn, are the inheritors of this garden, this *kingdom of God* consisting of trees and animals. Inheriting this kingdom means that we are responsible for the continuation of the work God started. We say that as

on, but quite unlike, those of the stereotyped prophetic faith-healing colony focusing mainly on human needs.

More significant than the outward changes in the organisation of some church headquarters is the willingness to adopt liturgical innovation, new symbols of salvation and patterns of worship that fully express the church's dedication to renewal in its neglected task of environmental stewardship. It may be too early to assess the full implications of such renewal for the processes of conversion, recruitment and baptism in the earthkeeping church. Yet significant developments in ritual procedures, such as public confessions of ecological 'sins' and the use of imaginative liturgies for tree-planting eucharists, are already in evidence. These reflect an awareness that theological redefinition should be manifested in green liturgies and worship if ecclesiastic reorganisation and successful implementation of earthkeeping ministries are to be effected. The nature of such rituals and liturgies will receive attention in the next chapter.

1.2.5 The church as vehicle of theological reorientation

Being engaged in ecumenical ecological programmes with an expanded missionary mandate, the earthkeeping church necessarily also has to monitor and assess this new activity. This is a spontaneous, reflective process relating to and emanating directly from praxis – there where tree planting and tree nurturing take place in a newly ritualised context. Instead of appointing theological committees or experts to theologise and produce written texts, as often happens in the West, the African earthkeeping church allows its key figures to relate praxis to scriptural truth, justification and inspiration at the point of action. Often the result is a kind of re-enactment and improvisation of biblical history, in which African church leadership or the Christian community identify with biblical figures and/or events.

Some of the details of an emerging environmental theology, particularly as it relates to the perceived involvement of a triune God, will be discussed in the following chapters. Here I merely sketch a few characteristic Old Testament themes as they feature in earthkeeping discussions and tree-planting sermons.

The creation story and Adam's ecological responsibility in the Garden



Plate 12 Spontaneous ecumenism; Revd Solomon Zvanaka – fourth from right (top) – represents AAEC Christianity during an AZTREC tree-planting ceremony. Revd Zvanaka and Principal Tarisai Zvokuomba – third and fourth from right (below) – attend a beer libation of chiefs. Christian earthkeepers do not drink sacrificial beer for the ancestors, but may receive the calabash and then pass it on to a participating traditionalist as a sign of respect



church and state should cooperate in bringing the earth-destroyers to book. Most AAEC key figures concurred on this point. Bishop Machokoto said: 'We need both church and civil laws to protect nature ... We shall ask ZIRRCON to tell the government about our churches' insistence on more effective legislation. Then it should be published for our people to be taught.' A variation on this theme was that AIC bishops and AZTREC chiefs should cooperate in meting out punishment to wilful tree fellers. The former had to excommunicate the culprits from their churches to give clout to the green ministry, while the latter were to expel them from their wards or chiefdoms.

The exercise of discipline by churches was most forcibly advocated by militant earthkeepers by requiring prophetic exposure of ecological sinners in various ritual contexts. This represents a contextualised reinterpretation of traditional evil, in terms of destructive wizardry perpetrated against the land – a subject to which we shall pay further attention below.

In contrast to the general consensus on the need for effective church laws and disciplinary measures against earth destruction, a few warning notes were sounded by individuals who saw the this-worldly emphasis of the green struggle as a threat to conservative other-worldly perceptions of spirituality. Said Mrs Miria, wife of Bishop Farawo: 'No! Tree-protection laws are the domain of the government. We do not go to a heaven of trees when we die. We leave the trees down here on earth. Prohibitions about trees apply only to the order of this world, the life of the flesh. If we care for the land we are merely concerned with the life of this world. Heaven has its own laws!'

1.2.4 Structural and liturgical change

Preoccupation with earthkeeping duties in some instances leads to a change in Christian group behaviour and individual lifestyles. Mention was made above of earth-healing colonies, which imply structural changes at church headquarters insofar as prophetic healers, together with their followers, become absorbed in ecological programmes. The demands of seed collection, full-time nursery care, liaising with schools and surrounding communities on issues like woodlot establishment, management and aftercare, and networking with staff members at ZIRRCON headquarters certainly introduce patterns of activity based

tence by materially improving the quality of life of all creation, protecting nature and curbing mindless ecological destruction at the behest of God him/herself. In addition identification with *chimurenga* tradition stimulates militancy, determination and pride of accomplishment. It also fosters peoples' sense of ownership of the process, in contrast to colonialist or postcolonial government programmes.

1.2.3 Ecological laws and discipline

In its application of what amounts to a new ecological ethical code, the earthkeeping church shows keen awareness of the need for well-defined church laws to prevent the wanton destruction of nature. Virtually all AAEC respondents concurred that such laws are necessary, that they should be drawn up and enforced by the church itself. Bishop Farawo proposed that ecclesiastic legislation should first of all *prohibit wanton tree felling*, because 'the trees mourn when you chop them down'. Disciplinary action, he claimed, had to assume the form of prophetic elicitation of tree-felling confessions, whereafter the church council should force wanton tree-fellers to plant and care for new trees as a form of punishment and recompense for the damage done. Tawoneichi claimed that new church laws should ensure aftercare of trees planted to secure a high survival rate. Reacting to the neglect in some AAEC woodlots, he stated: 'This law is necessary because it leads your heart in the right direction. If you ignore this law you are outside the Bible. Christ said, "without love you cannot obey my laws." So the church's tree-laws will be obeyed by those who love Christ.' Bishop Chimhangwa insisted that all church laws on earthkeeping should be written up in church books at once, thus reinforcing the gospel message of the earth's salvation. He considered many people still to be ignorant of the 'gospel of the trees' (*evangheri yemiti*). Consequently '*the threat of the destructive axe must be repelled*'. It was suggested that even earthkeepers in the AAEC league still kept special axes for tree felling hidden in their houses, which they used secretly whenever it suited them. Mrs Chimhangwa, the Bishop's wife, felt so strongly about unchecked deforestation through illegal use of the 'destructive axe' that she suggested the church should have trespassers thrown into jail until the urgency of environmental protection was fully understood.

The assumption underlying Mrs Chimhangwa's radical remarks was that

quest of *chimurenga* to recapture the lost lands, the following kind of responses were common in interviews conducted in 1995:

Bishop Farawo:

We are indeed engaged in the *chimurenga* of clothing the land. We heal the land because threatened species like the fruit-bearing *ndudwe*, which you can hardly find in our remaining forests, is being cultivated in our nurseries.

Revd Davison Tawoneichi:

We extend this second *chimurenga* to further liberation of the land. Through afforestation we fight the barren land and the gullies.

Bishop Chimhangwa:

This is truly the second *chimurenga*. We are showing our strength in this liberation struggle. Where there was nothing our trees are now growing, bringing cover and protection to the soil.

Bishop R Machokoto (first AAEC president):

There is absolutely no doubt about the connection ... I will go so far as to say that this is the most important battle, following the first *chimurenga*. We are all committed to this struggle to restore the vanquished land through afforestation. It cannot remain naked and destitute; this awful state to which we, the people, have reduced it ... In the past we did not realise how utterly important trees are for the ongoing existence of creation. But we have learnt a great deal since we started the AAEC ...

Trees draw the rain clouds and so contribute to regular rainfall. Trees provide medicine for the sick. Tree leaves clean the polluted air for us to breathe properly. *Trees are our lifeline!* They provide us with firewood for cooking, poles for building, planks for carpentry. Nothing surpasses the value of trees. Trees are our life. We say, 'a ward with dense forests knows no death'. Even President Mugabe and the government know that the earth cannot be the earth, and we cannot be people, without trees.

From these responses it is evident that the church's liberatory task is extended without hesitation from the sociopolitical to the environmental sphere. Without obscuring the futuristic dimension of people yet to be saved in the coming kingdom – as currently preached in AAEC churches – the earthkeeping mission focuses on salvation in this exis-

Plate 11 Bishop Machokoto, first president of the AAEC, addressing an audience on the need for united earthkeeping endeavour between Christians and traditionalists



you,' he said, 'to place yourselves in the hands of Mwari. He alone can give us the strength to endure in this struggle' (appendix I).

In the Ethiopian-type churches one finds similar emphases on *Mwari's* initiative, *Mwari's* care for creation and *Mwari's* earth-care commission to his church. In concluding a tree-planting ceremony at Revd Zvobgo's African Reformed Church at Shonganiso Mission, Revd Mandondo claimed:

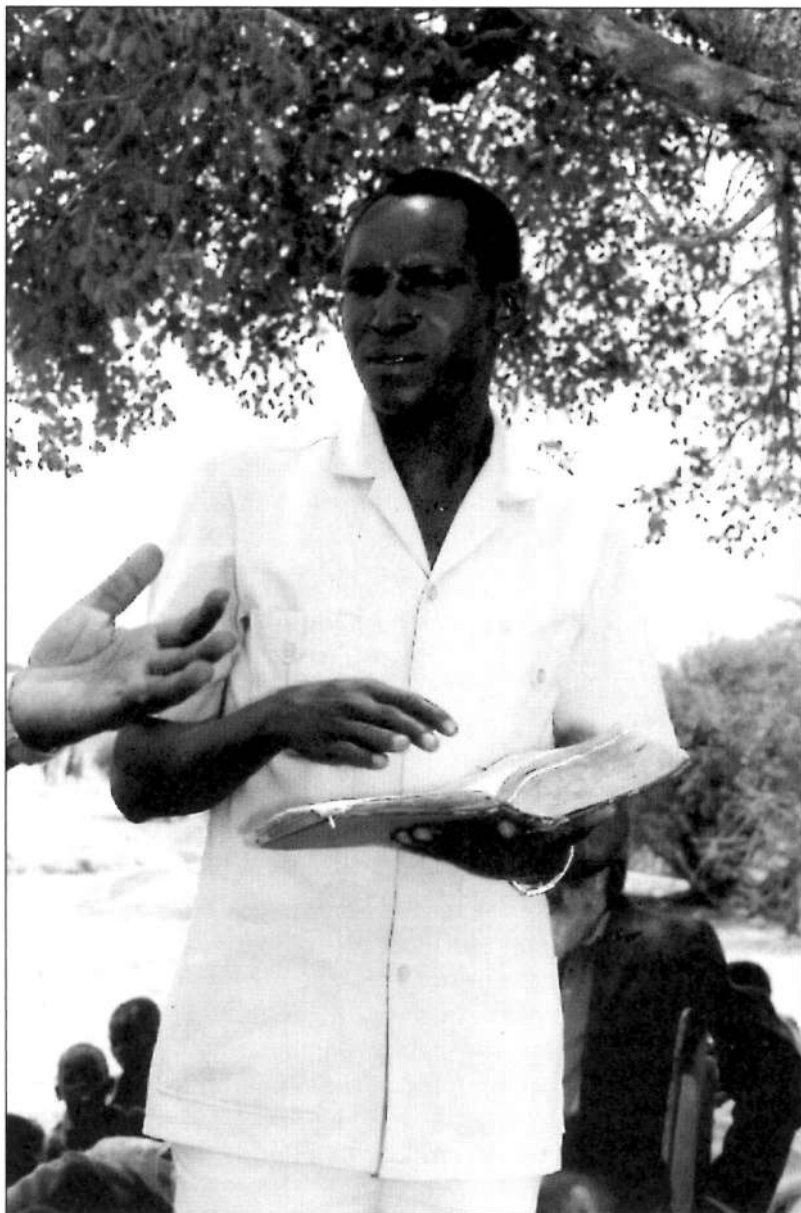
Today we have done God's work. You will see, in a short space of time the trees will grow tall. And we shall say: God surprises us. God exists. God does what pleases him. Today we have done his bidding. Today we have learnt that if we want to be God's children, we must do his work. We are the inheritors, existing by virtue of the inheritance – in this instance the fruit of trees. Today we did what God sent us and commanded us to do. It is not so much a matter of success or failure, but in the first place complying with God's will, giving him joy through our obedience (appendix II).

Here clearly the church's earthkeeping mission derives from God's commission and the obedient response of God's people to his divine promptings. It is verbalised by a church leader who shows profound awareness of divine presence in all of nature:

Up in the mountains I can see Mwari. In the rocks and the trees I see Mwari. There his strength and his works are revealed ... Whose strength do those massive trees (at Mount Selinda) reveal? Mwari's, of course ... His work is clearly seen in the things he has created. Follow the rivers and observe the running waters. Whose work do you think it is? Mwari's! (appendix II).

Historically, the church's ecologically liberating mission stands fully in the tradition of *chimurenga* and draws additional inspiration from the country's liberation struggle prior to Independence in 1980. The original motivation of the founders of the AAEC to draw on this tradition for mobilisation purposes and the natural inclination of Christian participants to do so anyway have blended to the point that it is no longer possible to trace the precise origin of the integral link between *chimurenga* and the church's extended mission. Key figures and lay members of the movement showed great unanimity in their appraisal of this fact. Asked about the church's earth-clothing mission and the erstwhile

Plate 10 Bishop Farawo of the *Zimbabwe Zion Apostolic Church* emphasises eco-stewardship with reference to Scriptures as an introduction to a *maporesanyika* tree-planting ceremony



In this kind of climate ecclesiological perceptions are bound to change, both in terms of an increased sense of belonging to, and playing a meaningful role in, the Christian household of God, and in terms of respecting the divergent faiths of all humankind so as to secure the widest possible front against environmental degradation.

1.2.2 An extended missionary mandate

The good news proclaimed and enacted by the earthkeeping church clearly extends beyond soul salvation and faith healing aimed at the wellbeing of human beings, as tended to be the case in the AICs in the past. As propounded by Wapendama (*supra*:39), the healing ministry of Christ remains focal to the church's mission but it now includes, more explicitly than before, the deliverance and salvation of Mwari's stricken land. The good news is that the barren land will be clothed, that is, be protected, by trees and plants. This form of salvation becomes manifest to the extent that the church fulfils its role as the *keeper of creation*, a mission in which its entire membership is harnessed as active agents instead of just a few specialised 'missionaries'.

Not that ecological specialisation is not appreciated in the church's environmental mission. Wapendama himself is an expert at germinating seeds of indigenous trees. His sermons (appendix I) reveal an extensive knowledge of trees: the correlation between healthy vegetation and proper living conditions for human beings, the importance of trees' 'perfume' for the breathing of all of nature, the interaction between trees and humans in seasonal change, the impact of boreholes and barren lands on underground water resources, etc. Thus, like Farawo, Wapendama is a specialist healer – both of humans and of nature – competently heading his 'environmental hospital' and mobilising his followers on the basis of knowledgeable and exemplary environmental commitment rather than empty calls to comprehensive service.

Despite the challenge to churches and believers to engage in the earth-keeping mission, a pervading sense of being mandated and sustained by God is noticeable at most AAEC tree-planting ceremonies. For all his vision and enthusiasm, Wapendama repeatedly reminded his audience that they were facing a formidable task, one which could only be accomplished in full recognition of dependence on God. 'I beseech

member, yet try to place yourself above the laws of the land, you are not a true convert. Let us fully support our (tribal) elders in this struggle of afforestation, so that the ZIRRCON-AAEC objectives may be realised in practice (Daneel 1998:109).

This plea certainly does not imply a sweeping compromise of the prophetic AICs' general confrontational approach to the ancestral religion represented by their traditionalist co-fighters in the green struggle, the chiefs and spirit-mediums. Yet the call for submission to the laws of the land and for cooperation with the chiefs reveals a growing tolerance and a preparedness to move beyond the stereotyped prophetic restraints of in-group dynamics in the interest of a stricken environment. *Instead of withdrawing from the traditionalist practitioners of ancestor veneration to demonstrate its rejection of 'heathenism', the prophetic earthkeeping church now underscores at least ecological solidarity with its traditionalist counterparts in the green struggle.* Such religio-ecumenical openness made it possible for ZIRRCON to call the first combined annual conference of AZTREC and the AAEC in May 1993, comprising contingents of some 50 chiefs, headmen and spirit-mediums on the one hand and 50 AIC Bishops and prophets on the other. An interesting feature of the conference was interfaith dialogue and the Christian witness by some of the AIC representatives during plenary sessions. The mediums responded to this by conveying their ancestors' wishes in a state of trance.

Such interfaith encounter included both heated debates on highly divergent customary and Christian approaches to environmental projects, and agreement on common ground for future cooperation. On the issue of establishing game sanctuaries in communal lands, for instance, the traditional spirit-mediums pointed out that the guardian ancestors of the land could be provoked into mystical retaliation if the holy groves (*marambatemwa*) containing their graves were game-fenced. The AIC prophets for their part supported game-fencing provided they could have their own game sanctuaries, which they intended calling the 'Lord's acre' or the 'Lord's dwelling place' in contradistinction to the traditional holy groves. A common purpose between AZTREC and AAEC representatives to escalate the struggle in unison was described by both parties after the conference as a major earth-healing and religio-ecumenical breakthrough, the first they had ever witnessed in Zimbabwe.

the love in unity to which Bishop Machokoto referred. One can say that the escalating 'battles of the trees', the development of nurseries with many thousands of seedlings, as well as the preaching and ritual celebration of tree planting and tree watering in the newly established woodlots, ameliorate interchurch conflicts. *The earthkeeping church is purged from within of isolation and self-centred ambition as it bonds with other churches in an all absorbing ministry of environmental stewardship*

Not that all the differences and conflicts of the past have suddenly been resolved. The prophetic churches tended to accuse the non-prophetic movements that they were not fully Christian because they did not heed the work of the Holy Spirit, and the Ethiopian-type churches in turn accused the Zionists and Apostles that their prophecies were products of traditional ancestral or alien spirits, not of the Holy Spirit. It is rather that these old conflicts pale into insignificance as the green revolution unfolds, at the annual conferences, executive meetings and in the joint labour and ritual celebration of earth-healing ceremonies. Thus a new comradeship transcending traditional ecclesiastic divisions has started to evolve between creator-God, earthkeeping humanity and the trees, plants and wildlife. A new myth, arising from the common subconscious of Africa, blending with Christian perceptions of a realised, observable salvation for all creation here and now – and manifested in AAEC church life – is emerging.

Apart from being drawn into closer union with other AICs, the earth-keeping church is also challenged to participate in *spontaneous ecumenism* by interacting in a common cause with traditionalists, that is, with AZTREC. Once the AIC bishops felt secure about retaining their own brand of Christian identity in the green struggle, they were eager to promote wider religious unity, or at least meaningful cooperation, with their AZTREC counterparts, the chiefs, spirit-mediums and other traditional authorities. Said Bishop Machokoto, the AAEC president, in his key address at the inception of the new ecumenical movement:

We must be fully prepared to recognise the authority of our kraal-heads and chiefs. For if we show contempt for them, where will we plant our trees? A Christian attitude is required towards the rulers of the land. Let our Bishops in their eagerness to fight the war of the trees not antagonise the keepers of the land. If you are a church

that their husband has become a leading earthkeeper, a living example of the eco-ecclesiological trend that the AAEC wishes to establish.

1.2 Emerging attributes of the earthkeeping church

From tree-planting sermons, interviews and new patterns of activity within the AAEC's participant churches, one gets some idea of what the leading AIC figures consider the most significant attributes of an earth-keeping church to be. I shall give only a brief profile of what in the long run could develop into a full-blown environmental ecclesiology.

1.2.1 An ecumenically rooted ministry

Against the background of *Fambidzano's* ecumenism as well as the geographically wide scope of earth-healing envisaged, it was evident from the outset that ecclesiastic endeavour was not intended for just one or a few environmentally interested churches, but for a massive Christian movement operating from a common ecumenical platform. From the outset the first AAEC president, Bishop Machokoto, propagated the need for strong ecumenical foundations in our common ecological struggle. 'What I asked of God,' he said, 'is a true sense of unity amongst us. We have to work together to avoid all forms of confusing conflict. Our unity must rest on convincing work ... The basis of our work, according to God's Word, is love, a love which reveals itself in works ... We, the (AAEC) churches will have to make sacrifices for the cause to which we have pledged ourselves. Therein lies our unity ...' My own expositions of a *divine mandate* for our work, with reference to Isaiah 43, as well as its christological basis (Daneel 1998:101–102), implied wide ecumenical interaction.

This call for united action provides a key to interpret the ecumenism developed by the AAEC. Representing a predominantly peasant society which confronts the hazards and threats to subsistence on a deforested, overgrazed and overpopulated land, the AIC bishops and their churches did not join forces to realise some abstract ecumenical ideal or for the sake of church unity as an end in itself. It was rather an ecumenism shaped by churches sharing a newly identified and common commitment – that of healing the earth. In a sense, therefore, the realisation of a common quest, the action in the field, give expression to

new recruitment of members as the church is seen to strive valiantly and concertedly in the war of the trees. There are similar indications of intensified growth in the Zionist churches of Bishops Machokoto and Marinda, former AAEC president and general secretary, as a result of their high profiles as earthkeepers in rural society, where subsistence farmers are increasingly appreciative of environmental reform.

The person whose private and church life has probably been the most drastically affected by AAEC developments is Bishop Farawo of the Zimbabwe Zion Apostolic Church. Having moved from his church headquarters in Bikita district to Chivi district's local government headquarters to take control of the AAEC's largest nursery, the Bishop and his family have turned the nursery complex with its dwellings and toolshed into a veritable little 'Zion city of the trees'. Bishop Farawo ministers to the members of his church in the district and at his new headquarters, but afforestation has become focal to his entire ministry. He collaborates with Forestry representatives and land extension officers on a regular basis. He mobilises school communities to help collect seeds for the nursery and establish woodlots at their schools. Apart from becoming expert at germinating a wide variety of indigenous tree seeds, the Bishop also oversees numerous tree-planting ventures throughout the district during the rainy season. He supplies seedlings not only to AAEC members but also to other churches, associations, clubs and even traditionalist elders associated with AZTREC. Thus a distinctly Zionist Christian ministry of afforestation serves a religiously pluralistic society, in the process contributing not only to a growing network of ecumenical ties amongst churches but also to cooperation and goodwill between Christians and African traditionalists. On one occasion the Bishop even presented President Mugabe with AAEC seedlings for special tree-planting ceremonies during the president's visit to Chivi district.

That the process of transition from a predominantly faith-healing to an earth-healing ministry is uneven and complex is highlighted by the periodic complaints of Bishop Farawo's two wives, Miria and Sophia, who complain that their husband no longer finds time to attend sufficiently to pastoral visiting and the collection of church funds. Nevertheless, they, too, are proudly and enthusiastically involved in the new earth-healing ministry, knowing that their 'tree hospital' is vitally important for the restoration of Chivi district's ruined farmlands. They also sense

tral earthkeeping nexus. This is where ecumenical church conferences take place, where ecological policy and project implementation are planned, and where AAEC officers are employed full-time to reflect and write on earthkeeping, develop training materials for conscientisation courses, and provide infrastructure for nursery development, woodlot monitoring, wildlife management, etc.

Taking their cue from this development and operating within an expanding network of earthkeeping churches, several prophetic leaders are becoming acclaimed earthkeepers in their own right. They are extending the existing healing colonies at their headquarters into '*environmental hospitals*'. The 'patient' in this instance is the denuded land and the 'dispensary' (ie the faith-healing 'medicinal' arsenal of holy cords, holy water, staffs, paper and other symbols of divine healing power) becomes the nursery where the correct 'medicine' for the patient, in the form of a wide assortment of indigenous, exotic and fruit trees, is cultivated. The entire church community – both at headquarters and in outlying congregations, residents and visiting patients – now becomes the healing agent under the guidance of the church's principal earth-healer. Consistent aftercare of budding woodlots provides proof of the church's dedication, the woodlot itself becoming the focus of testimony sermons and a source of inspiration for an expanding ministry, as the testimonies of healed human patients in the past contributed both to a reaffirmation of belief in God's healing powers and to the church's recruitment of new members in its expansionist drive.

Consider, for instance the escalation of earthkeeping activities at Bishop Wapendama's Sign of the Apostles Church. The Bishop has developed a model nursery at his headquarters, where the nucleus of his church's leadership are engrossed in pot-filling, seed-germination, and watering and nurturing the seedlings. Drawing on the resources not only of the AAEC but also of his followers, the Bishop has modernised his nursery equipment, which included the installation, at his own expense, of an expensive water pump. Having established woodlots of red mahogany and other indigenous trees in his outlying congregations the Bishop's annual itinerary now includes numerous ecologically motivated visitations to ecclesiastic outposts to monitor expanding afforestation projects. Far from interfering with the pastoral care of his flock and preaching appointments, the Bishop's earth-healing ministry appears to stimulate the spiritual lives of his followers and to trigger

Consider in addition the eucharistic liturgy (see below) for tree-planting, which consistently underscores the church's therapeutic responsibility for an over-exploited environment. When, for instance, the leading bishop sprinkles holy water over the 'Lord's acre' (the plot allocated for the establishment of a new woodlot) he says:

This is the water of purification and fertility.
We sprinkle it on this new acre of trees.
It is a prayer to God, a symbol of rain,
so that the trees may grow,

so that the land will *heal*
as the *ngozi* we have aroused withdraws.

It is no coincidence that water, the age-old symbol of purification, of healing and life itself, should feature so prominently in the ritual preparation of the acre to be 'healed'. Sprinkling holy water over infants protects them against the onslaught of evil spirits. Sprinkling cleanses the sick of contamination; liberates unwilling hosts from plaguing spirits; and generally prepares barren women for childbearing and all those suffering affliction for spiritual, physical and mental wellbeing. Holy water, prayed over by the prophet-healer, is the most potent symbol of God's reign, a divine rule capable of healing and restoring all of life. Thus the sprinkling of holy water over the seedlings and the 'Lord's acre' signals the casting out of the soil's denuded barrenness, of the vengeful spirit which provokes drought (in a sense this spirit also corresponds with the wrath of God, who punishes remissness in nature stewardship), and prepares the soil for full recovery under the cover of new trees.

In the second place, and probably the most convincing sign of an expanding and changing theological praxis, there is the *impact of an earth-healing ministry on AIC headquarters*. The shift in the focus of healing was reflected in the political and socioeconomic programmes and activities at church headquarters during the historical phases mentioned above. In the same way current earthkeeping is causing the evolution of yet another type of healing colony. In a sense the new and trend-setting model of an earthkeeping centre is the ZIRRCO-NAEC headquarters in Masvingo town. Without any pretence of representing a kind of super church headquarters which controls or dominates an extensive ecological 'strike-force' of some 150 participant churches, the ZIRRCO-NAEC administrative centre nevertheless figures as a cen-

the barren areas and gullies which have been caused by abuse.

Bishop Chimhangwa of the African Zion Apostolic Church, again, qualified the church's environmental work in a sermon at a tree-planting ceremony as *a ministry of reconciliation between human beings and all creation*. He said:

We are planting trees to redress the situation, to compensate for our wrongdoing ... All of us are guilty of the crime of deforestation ... So today we plant trees as an act of *reconciliation* between us and all creation, in Jesus Christ. We thank him for his atonement, whereby this act of reconciliation is made possible ... (appendix 1).

Here, too, we find a strong Christological basis for earthkeeping. Christ's salvific work is conditional for reconciliation between human beings and their environment. Although not specifically stated, ecological healing assumes salvific dimensions. The intuition behind these words suggests a widening perception of salvation: the realised presence of God's kingdom encompassing all creatures in this existence, rather than a narrow focus on a purely future salvation of human souls.

Diverse as AAEC views of an eco-related Christology may be, there is general agreement about the church's environmental liberatory and earth-healing mission throughout the movement. True to the AIC tradition of developing an *enacted* rather than a systematic *written* theology, this conviction finds its most consistent expression in church praxis. Two illustrations will suffice.

First, tree-planting ceremonies – as developed by member churches within certain broad AAEC guidelines which leave ample scope for improvised experimentation – all bear the stamp of a contextualised healing ministry. The theme of curing the earth's deforestation malady keeps recurring. As is evidenced in the tree-planting eucharist discussed below, environmental degradation is compared to the havoc wrought in human life by a vengeful *ngozi* spirit. The seedlings represent the modern equivalent of the *mutumbu* (literally 'corpse') offering traditionally given to the family of the *ngozi* to appease the destructive spirit. Planting the seedlings is an act of reconciliation between creator-God, humankind and creation. This, therefore, is the ecological parallel of the prophetic church's faith-healing practice, in which exorcism or appeasement of life-threatening spirits has always been prominent.

Davison Tawoneichi of Bishop Mutikizizi's Evangelical Ministry of Christ Church at a tree-planting ceremony at that church's headquarters in 1995:

Earthkeeping is part of the body of Christ. It is so because we as humans are part of his body and the trees are essential for us to breathe, to live (ie part of us). So trees are really part of Christ's body. Our destruction of nature is an offence against the body of Christ. Christ's body suffers as a result. The random felling of trees hurts the body of Christ. Therefore the church should heal the wounded body of Christ. Tree felling is only justified when there is a sound purpose aligned to God's will. Otherwise God is angered and will punish us. One of the signs of such punishment is the continuing drought. No trees, no rain! Mwari is disturbed.

Tawoneichi's comments, much like the sermon of Wapendama, illustrate an understanding of the close correlation between ecological stewardship and God's response to such stewardship. Environmental abuse is sinful. It causes Christ to suffer and Mwari to judge, in retaliation, through drought. By its very nature the church in this context is or should be both protector and healer of the environment, ministering by implication to the 'wounded' body of Christ. Closely monitored by divine power, the church, in a situation of environmental affliction, is called upon to confess its own sinful contribution to the malady (as shall be illustrated below), to recognise the unity between creator-saviour, humanity and all creation, and to heal the earth through constraints on deforestation and affirmative afforestation programmes.

Not all AIC leaders in the movement agree with a Christology which identifies Christ's body with creation and defines earthkeeping as a form of mending his body, the earth. Bishop Farawo, leader of the Zimbabwe Zion Apostolic Church and a leading light among AAEC nursery keepers, for instance, defined his views as follows:

The earth we abuse is not Christ's body, for it is the creation of Mwari. Yet creation is like a person, the image of the body of Christ. Look at the trees. They breathe like humans. So if we fell them we hurt the Spirit of God, because his Spirit is in the trees ... Earthkeeping is like an expression of Christ's body. Tree planting during the eucharist is *not really part of Christ's body* (my italics), but it pleases Christ because we are clothing his earth, remedying

You have congregated here to participate in holy communion. This is the occasion where you use bread and wine in remembrance of the death of Christ on the cross. In this commemoration the body of Christ is central. I Corinthians 11:29 emphasises the importance of recognising this truth ... Hang on to the idea that we should know the body of Christ. In Colossians 1:15–17 the body of Christ is explained in a special way. He is the image of the unseen God, the firstborn of all creation. All things were created in him and for him, the seen and the unseen. Because of this *all things hang together in Christ*. Through Christ's death and resurrection all power in heaven and on earth has, moreover, been given to him (Mt 28:18). From all this we conclude that Christ is not only Lord of creation, but that his body is all of creation. All created things are part of his body. The implication for us as stewards of creation is that if we fell trees indiscriminately we are actually 'killing' the body of Christ.

In Colossians 1:18 we read that he (Christ) is the head of the body, the church ... Two main points therefore emerge in these texts from Colossians: first, the body of Christ is the entire created world; second, his body *is* the church, the body of believers. In the past when we celebrated holy communion we tended to remember only the one aspect of this twofold truth, namely that we celebrate our unity in Christ's body as the church. We neglected the other aspect of Christ's body. So I wish to remind you here today that whenever you celebrate holy communion, be mindful that in devastating the earth we ourselves are party to destroying the body of Christ. We are *all* guilty in this respect. Both the whites and the blacks are exploiters of the environment ...

(Then follows an explanation of how, through tree-planting, the eucharist can also accommodate the abused part of Christ's body.)

What we have done in the eucharist in the past is still there. It is good and not wrong. It is just that we are reminded these days of something we have neglected. We are healing and restoring that part of Christ's body which we have unwittingly abused. That is the message I leave with you today: *Clothe the barren earth! Heal the earth! It is fully part of our lives as Christians ...* (appendix II).

This Christological interpretation of the church's earth-healing ministry is fairly widely accepted and propagated in AAEC circles. Said Revd

can change it. Because of our repairing the damage, because of our doing penance for our guilt in land destruction, God will heed our wish and give us plentiful rain ... (my italics; appendix I).

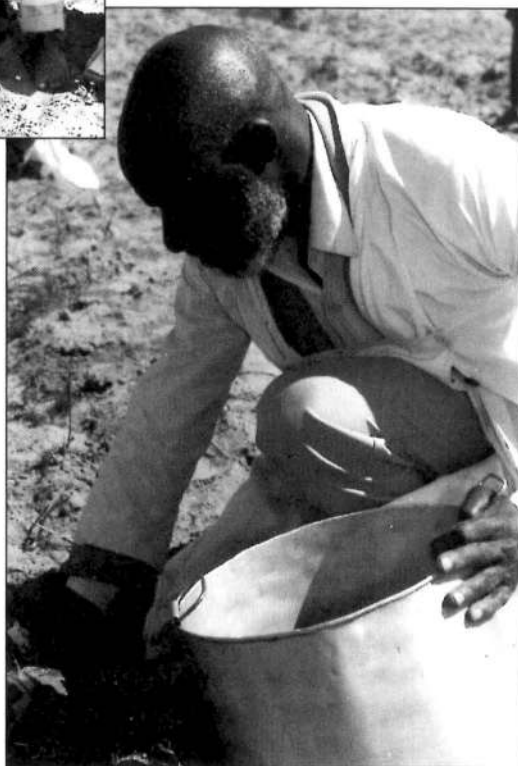
Bishop Wapendama's exposition is representative of viewpoints frequently expressed in the tree-planting services of fellow AIC earth-keepers. God takes the initiative to restore the ravaged earth, but the responsibility to deliver the stricken earth from its malady lies with the Christian body of believers, the church. The deliverance of the earth takes the form of *kufukidza nyika* (clothing the land) with trees. *This mission is clearly seen as an extension of Christ's healing ministry, which his disciples must fulfil in this existence.* That it is a communal obligation is highlighted by Wapendama's reference to the large church meetings (usually at paschal celebrations) which, in his view, should serve as a large platform, a liberating force for the deliverance of nature.

Wapendama's confidence that the army of believers can repair the damage as an act of penance, whereby God's wrath at human guilt of earth destruction will make way for renewed benevolence – to be revealed, for instance, in God's breaking of the drought – also reflects a positive attitude commonly found in the ranks of the earthkeeping churches. This attitude probably stems from both biblical notions of God responding to the actions of his people and ingrained traditional beliefs about reciprocity in the divine-human encounter (eg gifts of the right-minded complementing rain requests at the oracular shrines of Matonjeni and eliciting a positive divine response in the form of ample rains). The assumption of a new divine-human partnership is all too clear in the Bishop's understanding of nature's deliverance. True to prophetic perceptions of salvation as human wellbeing secured through healing in this existence, the earth itself is to be salvifically restored under directives from Mwari – a new order which is not unilaterally ushered in by God, but which also depends on being 'worked out', even 'brought about', by human endeavour.

As a full participant in AIC earth-healing programmes, I have used preaching opportunities at tree-planting eucharists to point out the integral link between the church's ecological healing ministry and Christ's presence in creation. In 1991, for instance, my sermon at the Topia headquarters at Norumedzo, Bikita, included the following message:



Plate 9 Bishop Kindian Wapendama, leader of the *Signs of the Apostles Church* (left on picture), and followers prepare for the planting of *makamba*, red mahogany, seedlings



praxis of faith healing, the entire healing ministry was enriched and meaningfully extended to its multiple foci.

How, then, is the earth-healing ministry of the AAEC churches interpreted by the key role players themselves? Tree-planting sermons provide illuminating clues. AIC leaders use these occasions as 'teaching sessions' to instruct and mobilise their followers. Their spontaneous expositions of what could be called an emerging theology of the environment probably provide the most accurate data for interpretation at this stage. In January 1991, for example, Bishop Kindiam Wapendama, leader of the Sign of the Apostles Church, and as an AAEC executive member one of the most ardent advocates of a Christian green movement, preached as follows at a tree-planting ceremony at his church headquarters in Zimuto district:

Mwari (God) saw the devastation of the land. So he called his envoys to shoulder the task of deliverance. Come, you messengers of Mwari (ZIRRCON/AAEC representatives), come and deliver us. Together with you, we, the Apostles, are now the *deliverers of the stricken land. Let us go forth and clothe* (ie heal) *Mwari's stricken land.* This is not a task which will enrich you. No! The deliverers were sent by Mwari on a divine mission. He said: 'You go to Africa, for the land is ravished!' Peace to you, people of Mwari!

Deliverance, Mwari says, lies in the trees, but in the first place the people have to obey. Mwari therefore sends his deliverers to continue here on earth with his own work, with all the work that Jesus Christ started here. Jesus said: 'I leave you, my followers, to complete my work.' *And that task is the one of healing! We are the followers of Jesus and have to continue his healing ministry.* You are the believers who will see his miracles in this afflicted world. *So let us all fight, clothing the earth with trees!* Let us follow the example of the deliverers who were sent by Mwari. God gave this task to a man of his choice. Because this man responded, the task is proceeding as you can see for yourselves today.

It is *our* task to strengthen this *mission* with our numbers of people. You know how numerous we are. Sometimes we count ten thousand people at our church gatherings. If we work with enthusiasm we shall clothe the entire land with trees and drive off affliction (evil) ... Just look at the dried out and lifeless land around you. *I believe that we*

in the divine-human encounter, with an overriding emphasis on Christian stewardship of nature, was taking shape. In the same way that the church's socioeconomic liberatory task had been clarified and broadened in the ecumenical context of *Fambidzano*, its earth-healing ministry – the plans and afforestation programmes – found its definition and impetus in the ecumenical context of the AAEC.

Considering the historical links between *Fambidzano* and the AAEC, one can say that the two ecclesiastic perceptions – the church liberating humankind from poverty and deprivation, and the church healing an abused earth – are integrally linked. Even at an early stage of *Fambidzano*'s socioeconomic development programmes I was already raising questions about how we could offset the exploitive dimension of improved agricultural production by ploughing back into nature what we were taking out for the advancement or progress of human beings. Christian environmental stewardship, by its very nature, should provoke such questions and seek to strike a balance between legitimate use and altruistic environmental management, or service rendered to the environment. The value of reflecting on such issues in an ecumenical context is that new insight and planned action influence a much wider cross-section of church communities than would happen otherwise.

When looking at interacting views of the church and diversification of church activities, it should be kept in mind that by presenting the four distinctions of ecclesiastic developments and/or perceptions as coinciding with phases in the country's history we are in no way suggesting compartmentalisation or exclusive substitution at the expense of earlier ecclesiological notions. In other words, during each of the historical periods mentioned above the essential characteristics of the church were retained, the new conceptions and action programmes serving to *elaborate or modify existing ecclesiologies* in direct response to changing contextual demands, rather than as sweeping reforms or radical change. At no point during the *chimurenga* years, for instance, did the prophetic churches scale down their original healing activities because of their preoccupation with the demands of a military struggle. Neither do the proliferating agroeconomic or environmental activities at church headquarters obscure the ongoing significance of healing the psychosomatic afflictions of human beings. Instead of contextualised ecclesiastic innovations gradually crowding out or obscuring the existing

To those peasants who benefited and still benefit directly from *Fambidzano's* development programmes, the church certainly appeared as a sure sign of God's reign here and now. The church was not only a protector against evil and psychosomatic affliction. It also combated poverty, enabling the deprived and the oppressed to realise for themselves something of that 'kingdom of God' which the economically privileged appeared to have already enjoyed for so long. Despite that, the image of the church as an economic liberator and facilitator of prosperity included serious flaws. For one thing, there were insufficient funds to accommodate all the needs of any particular church, let alone the needs of all member churches of the Conference. Expectations were generally much higher than the available development funds warranted. Inevitable disappointment at frustrated expectations and strained ecumenical ties caused a few churches to drop their *Fambidzano* membership. Foreign development funds, moreover, were a mixed blessing. Economic progress exacted a price: a new type of 'bondage' in the form of dependence on overseas sponsors whose requirements, European development scenarios and need for acclaim did not and could not in all respects harmonise with the world of the Independents. In some quarters the spontaneity of freedom and self-determination made way for a 'project syndrome': pressures of project writing, anxiety while waiting for a response, uncertainty about the continuation or discontinuation of newly launched development structures, dependence on the approval of foreigners – 'benefactors' who came jetting in to assess and/or 'judge' the projects ...

On the positive side, development interaction brought a new dimension of ecumenical awareness, a sense of meaningful service by the sponsoring churches abroad, and inspiration and dignity in the AICs born of the knowledge that they belong to and are recognised by the world church.

1.1.4 The church as environmental healer/liberator

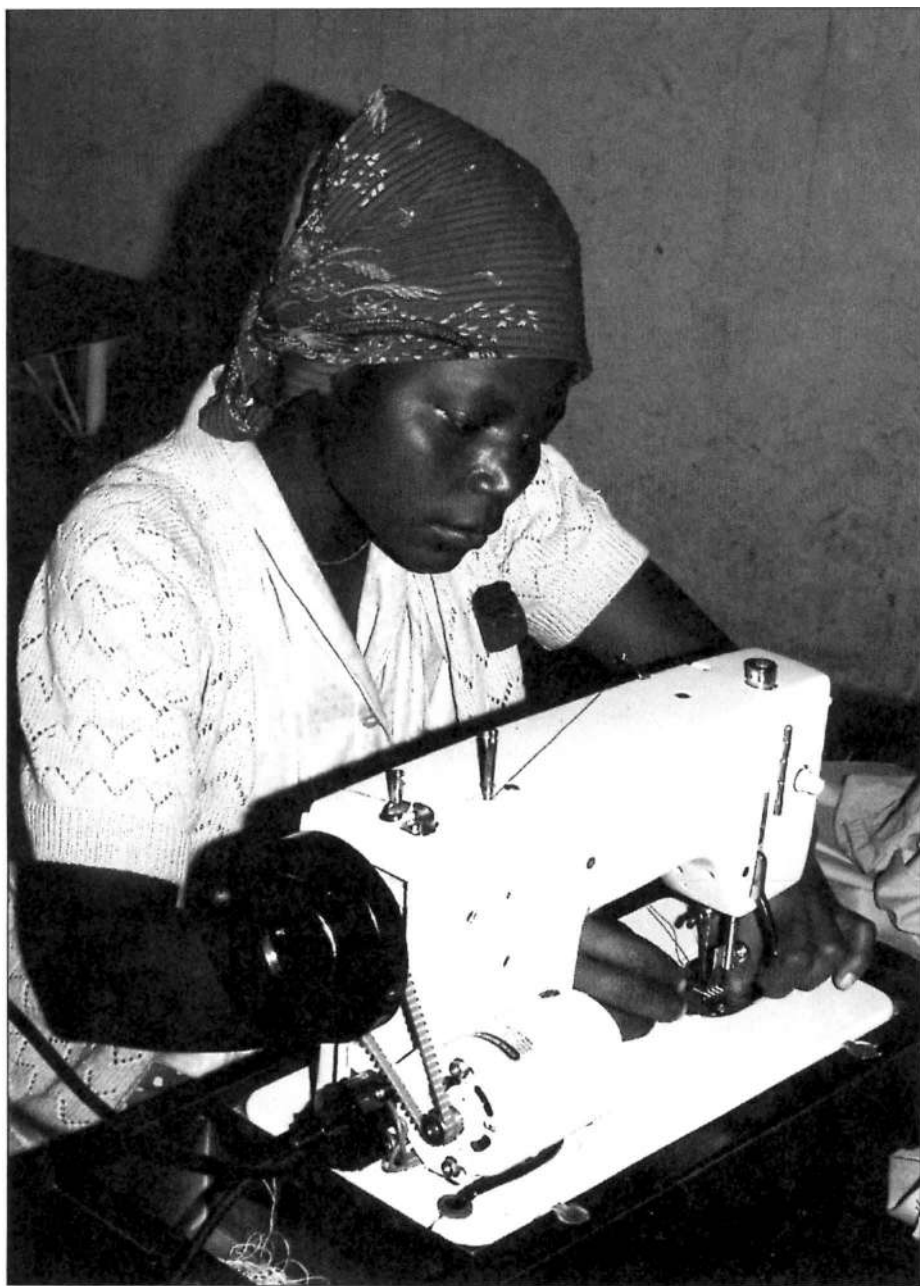
The formation of the Association of African Earthkeeping Churches (AAEC) in March 1991 brought an even deeper understanding of the church's healing ministry in the ranks of the AICs. This time the focus shifted to the healing of a suffering creation, in which God's initiative manifests itself in human care for the environment. A new partnership



Plate 8 *Ndaza* Zionist workers carrying bricks for the construction of their development centre (top). Bishop Darias Shoko, successor to the late Bishop Andreas Shoko – founder of the Zion Apostolic Faith Mission – admires the new building which is both church and community development centre



Plate 7 Zionist woman engaged in a clothing-manufacturing project



Desk *Fambidzano* advanced the process of female emancipation, particularly in rural society. Not only did talented women achieve prominence in theological training, income-generating small industries and farming, they also started running their own antenatal and postnatal care clinics and launched family planning clubs. The largest AIC headquarters in the country, Bishop Nehemiah Mutendi's Zion City in Bikita district, includes an impressive multimillion dollar complex of primary and secondary schools, hostels and a large college (Daneel 1989, chapter 8).

All these socioeconomic and educational projects were closely interwoven with church life. In a sense some of the larger AIC headquarters started resembling the mission stations of Western-oriented churches, whose mission policy makers had all along adopted *a comprehensive approach*, integrating evangelism with education, medical services, agriculture and industry. The introduction at AIC 'holy cities' of a wider range of professional workers than before, particularly in the educational field, did not, however, lead to fragmentation of purpose, as if farming, teaching and commerce belonged to a more secular realm than worship and spiritually oriented church ceremonies. On the contrary, all farming and irrigation activities were surrounded and supported by Christian ritual. School communities were drawn into the daily Bible reading and prayer sessions of the holy cities and women could preach about problems and successes in their industrial projects during the main church services. *As a result, the AICs' socioeconomic liberation programmes became integral to their healing ministries.* This reinforced the holistic outreach of the church and the characteristic notion in the prophetic movements that Christ the healer-liberator looms large in all sectors of life through his bands of black iconic leaders, both men and women, who concretely mirror his concern for all humanity. Even though not all the needs of participant church members could be met, the holy cities became beacons of progress and relative security in a struggling subsistence economy which, after Independence, suffered crisis upon crisis as a result of severe drought. Although individual salvation and eternal life in a future heaven were still being preached, the good news increasingly included economic realities and opportunities, prospects of material improvement which to many people came as a gleam of hope in their overgrazed, eroded areas with diminishing farm produce.

their ecclesiastic isolation broken and their leadership's progress through some basic theological education patently manifest, the AICs felt themselves increasingly empowered and encouraged to deal with educational and economic development issues. For the first time they were able to capitalise on a united ecumenical front in development planning, fund-raising and project implementation. Whereas *Fambidzano's* ecumenical focus during *chimurenga* was mainly on the development of TEE (theological education by extension) programmes, it shared the nation's concern for social restructuring and economic upliftment in the aftermath of the war. During the 1980s, therefore, the image of black churches as *liberators from poverty, economic stagnation and agricultural unproductivity* started to predominate.

This was not an altogether new development. Just as an established AIC tradition of anticolonial involvement in tribal politics culminated in an enacted liberation theology during the war years, so holistic immersion of AICs in the subsistence economy of peasant society (to which the bulk of AIC members under consideration belong) paved the way for a more comprehensive, all-absorbing concern with socioeconomic upliftment. In earlier years many bishops participated in government-initiated master farming schemes to encourage their followers to improve agricultural production. Mention was made of the ZCC's mutual aid schemes, based on interaction between the healing colony at church headquarters and the agricultural performance of outlying congregations. Church ceremonies, moreover, were adapted to secure 'mystical safeguards' for favourable rainy seasons and abundant crop yields (Daneel 1998:38, 1974:104–109).

But it was only in the 1980s that foreign financial assistance and some degree of systematised ecumenical control brought these trends to fruition in income-generating endeavour. Now the black Jerusalems and Zion cities expanded their healing colonies to incorporate a wide range of community development programmes. Newly built community halls became centres of vocational training and small-scale industries such as clothing manufacture and sewing, carpentry, bread-baking and soap production. In some cases such ventures were augmented by agricultural projects like irrigation schemes, piggeries, poultry farming and the like. A few AICs built modest shelters for elderly people, widows, orphans and disabled people. Through the introduction of a Women's



Plate 6 ZCC women carry water for building the community development centre at Bishop Ruben Mutendi's headquarters (top). Primary school at Bishop Nehemiah Mutendi's ZCC church headquarters at Mbungu (bottom)



Church development was certainly not a homogeneous process during the *chimurenga* years. Instances are known of Zionist church buildings being burnt down by guerrillas who considered the church leaders concerned to be uncooperative or defiant. Yet in many cases prophetic church headquarters acquired a new dimension of offering protection and relative safety in life-endangering circumstances. God's presence at the African Mount Zions and Jerusalems translated into provision of food, faith-healing services, moral support through prayer or Spirit-inspired revelatory sessions, caring for wounded or mentally disturbed fighters and the like, enabling both harassed bush fighters and suspect or threatened members of society to survive and find some meaning in life in the midst of suffering and deprivation. By identifying with people traumatised by war, the 'men and women of God' in their holy cities contributed actively to the political struggle. On the one hand, their 'war pneumatology' gave them a significant, if at times only advisory or indirect, role in military operations. In this way they often unwittingly upheld the image of the church as the church militant and the church triumphant in the midst of adversity. They became latter-day African Moses figures who defied the colonial enemy by repeatedly leading their followers, the church itself, through 'Red Sea' situations. On the other hand, they mirrored the life of a suffering Christ, giving substance to the perception of Christian discipleship in terms of a *church of the cross*, as their earnings, livestock and crop yields were consumed by ever-present bush fighters and displaced people (cf eg the impact of *chimurenga* on Bishop Musariri's Zion in Patmos, Daneel 1998:66–67), and as their participation in the struggle subjected them to the same risks, fears and sufferings as those under arms. Embattled and scarred by the ravages of war, the black 'holy cities' nevertheless stood out in the countryside – where most of the battles were waged – as signposts of hope: hope in complete deliverance from political bondage, and hope in a new dispensation where 'salvation' meant land ownership, economic progress and improved standards of living.

1.1.3 The church as deliverer from poverty and agent of socioeconomic progress

The establishment of the ecumenical AIC movement *Fambidzano* in the early 1970s brought radical changes for its member churches. With

Plate 5 The late Bishops Musariri of the Zion in Patmos Church (top) and Forridge of the ZCC (offshoot of Mutandi's church) (bottom) – two prophetic leaders of the Gutu district, known for their active support of guerrilla fighters during the *chimurenga* struggle

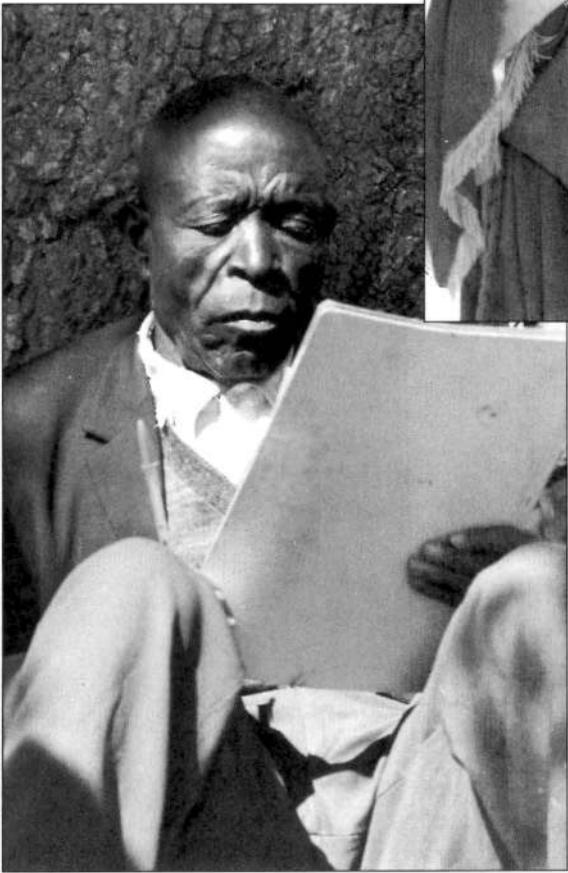
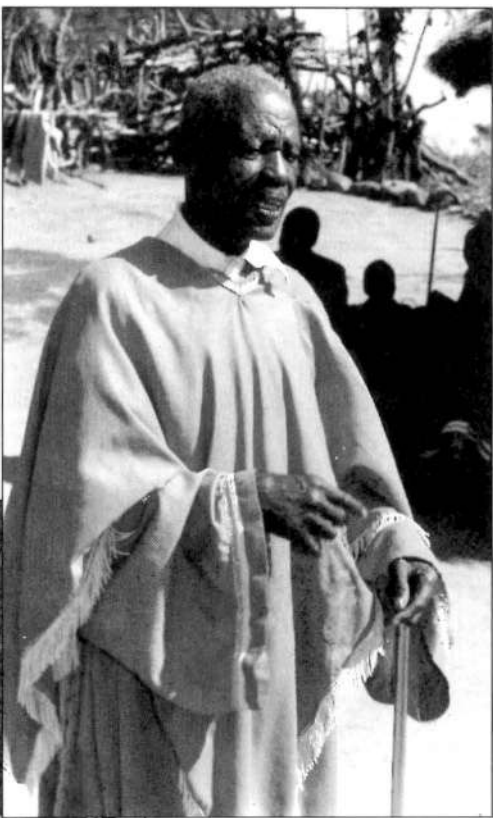
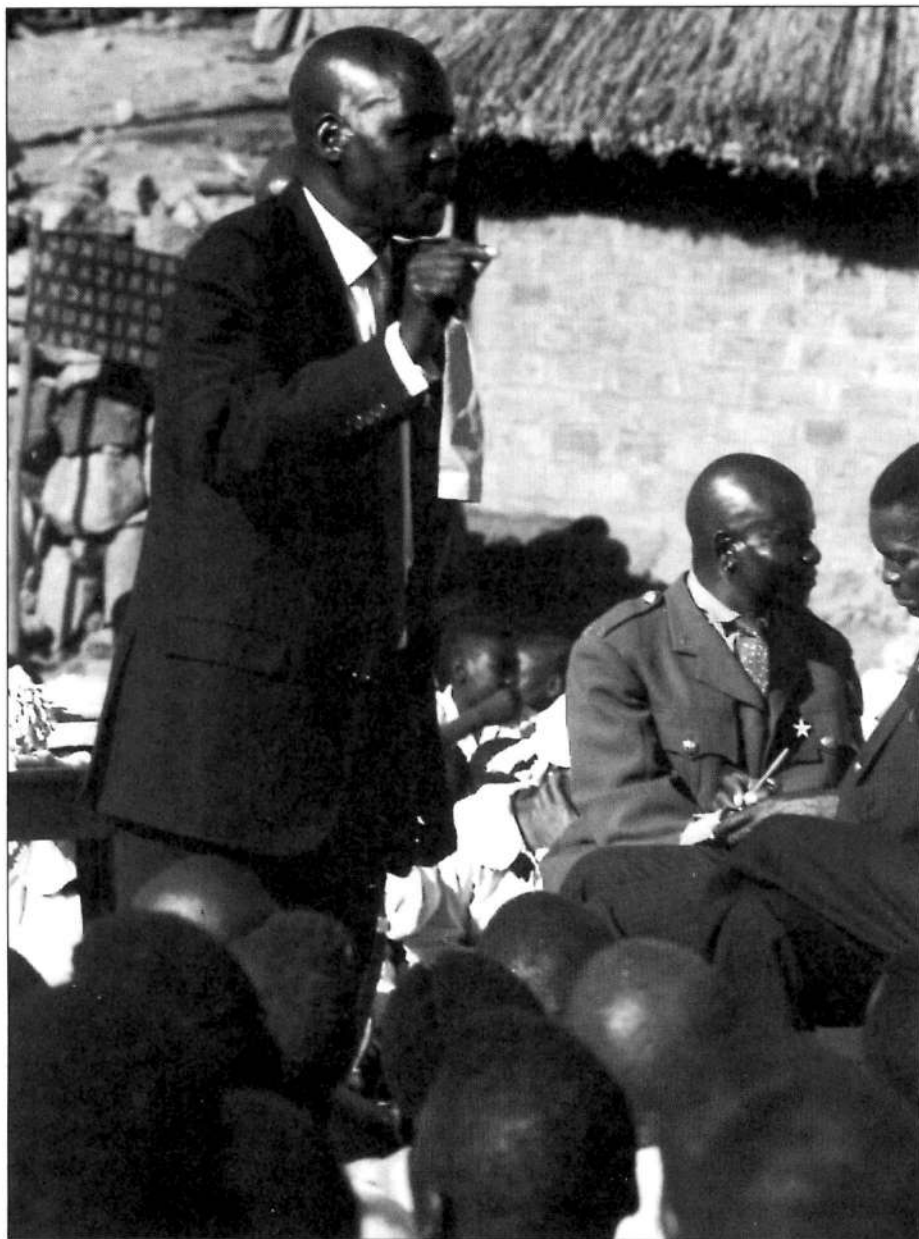


Plate 4 Bishop Mutendi addresses Zionist-affiliated chiefs during a church service at Zion City, at a time in the sixties when the Rozoi-Duma boundary dispute came to a head



prominent role in the Rozvi-Duma boundary dispute in 1965. Clashes with the colonial authorities over land issues and attempts to 'heal' related societal conflicts stimulated the enactment and verbalisation of AIC liberation theologies, in which principal prophetic leaders started featuring as Moses figures to help solve the problems caused by discriminatory land allocation, or started preaching a scripturally based legitimisation of black nationalist political aspirations (Daneel 1998:40–41).

During the *chimurenga* years (1965–1980) the latent image of the prophetic church as a sociopolitical healer/liberator came to the fore quite dramatically as the AICs were drawn into large-scale, if secret, participation in the struggle. Increasingly the prophetic healers and their followers were called upon to help 'heal' the land allocation problem by supporting the guerrilla forces in their struggle against what were perceived as alien and intruding land usurpers. Although prophets still devoted attention to threatening mystical forces in individual lives, as described above, the focus had shifted to the fight against a twofold enemy: first, the white oppressors, who had to be pressurised into surrendering land rights and political domination; and second, the enemy within – black collaborators who backed the white regime and army and therefore threatened unity of purpose and action in the rural resistance movement.

The diagnostic and therapeutic thrust of many prophets had a direct impact on guerrilla field strategy, for the Holy Spirit was felt to respond positively to black demands in the liberation struggle. As a kind of 'land guardian' the warring Holy Spirit was considered to be inspiring and directing guerrilla activity, at the same time curbing internal destructive powers to preserve life in a torn society as in the activities of Bishop-prophet Musariri (Daneel 1998:66–71). Here, too, the outstanding characteristic of the Spirit-type churches as confessing and cleansing communities acquired new significance. During secret nocturnal *pungwe* meetings prophetic elicitation of confessions from suspects became instrumental in determining both their guilt or innocence of 'wizardry' and the nature of their opposition or loyalty to the cause. Consequently the procedures for cleansing and motivating the church in spiritual and related matters were extended to a war-torn society – providing mystical sanction in the name of the Holy Spirit for cleansing the community of unwanted elements, preserving life against unwarranted penalties by the guerillas, and generally contributing to a united stand by peasants and freedom fighters against a common enemy.

decidedly on ecclesiastic mediation of tangible salvation here and now. In a very real sense salvation meant pastoral and psychological liberation from oppressive evil at African Mount Zions or Jerusalems. Here the men or women of God, the founders of churches, together with their bands of faith-healers, embodied for their followers a truly inculturated incarnation of Christ the healer – a visible and understandable manifestation of a caring divine power.

In the struggle against evil these churches developed ritual ceremonies in which the ideal of cleansing and holiness became prominent. The church community could only worship and partake of the sacraments in a state of preparedness and forgiveness in the presence of a holy God. Thus elaborate systems of *public confession of sins* for all baptisands and communicants came into being. These systems enabled prophetic healers to establish strict control over sacramental participation, all in the name of the revealing and cleansing powers of the Holy Spirit. As a result the church was envisaged as a holy community of believers in a perpetual state of being healed and cleansed by the Spirit of God, and as a holy place – be it a mountain, church building or open-air meeting place – where the pervasive presence of God the Father, Mwari the Creator and Christ the protector and healer could be felt.

1.1.2 The church as sociopolitical healer/liberator

Because of African holism the interpretation of a prophetic healing ministry was inevitably very wide. Illness was viewed not only as individual psychosomatic afflictions but also as sociopolitical conflicts and crises which had to be resolved in terms of a very real – if somewhat vague in theological definition – perception of God's expanding kingdom. Thus in AIC ecclesiology the prophetic churches' ministry of healing quite naturally came to be extended to burning social and political issues.

As indicated in chapter 2 of volume 1 (Daneel 1998:38–40), this shift of focus was already latently present in some of the prophetic movements at an early stage. Reference was made, for instance, to Bishop Mutendi's ZCC providing disgruntled chiefs with a *halfway house* between the opposing and stressful demands of the colonial local government and radical African nationalist factions (Daneel 1998:40). This kind of tribal political involvement gave rise to serious clashes between AIC leaders and colonial government, as evidenced by Bishop Mutendi's

Plate 3 Blind prophetess Mai Febi, of the African Apostolic Church of Johana Maranke, sprinkles children and new-born babies with holy water as protection against evil forces. At Mfararikwa, Maranke, 1965



Plate 2 Bishop Krinos Kuudzerema of the Zion Apostolic Church lays hands on and prays for mother and child at Ndaza 'Jerusalem', Gutu 1965



ment mechanism, an outstanding attraction which, more than any other single factor, drew thousands of people into the prophetic fold (Daneel 1974:186f).

Healing colonies were established at the 'holy cities' of the larger AICs, such as Mutendi's Zion City, Johane Maranke's Apostolic headquarters and the 'Jerusalems' of influential *Ndaza* Zionist leaders like Bishops David Masuka, Andreas Shoko and Moses Makamba. In the 1960s Mutendi's ZCC (Zion Christian Church) 'hospital' comprised some 200 huts for patients from all over the country. Here, as in the other colonies, the principal leader – the 'man of God' – was the main healer, supported by a number of subordinate prophetic healers, men and women who practised their healing ministry throughout the day.

This ministry consisted in diagnosing illness or misfortune, with the prophet representing the revelatory and protective powers of the Holy Spirit. Healers took into account the traditional causation of illness, be it wizardry, vengeful *ngozi* spirits seeking retribution, displeased ancestral spirits, afflicting demonic spirits or some other spirit agent operating in collusion with one or more living enemies of the patient. Once diagnosed, the afflicting power would be exorcised or neutralised through a host of ritual ceremonies, including water purification, tying with holy cords, laying on of hands, burning of holy papers and prodding with holy staves – all symbolically illustrating the protective and liberating powers of God. Healer-prophets operated both in the privacy of the 'hospital' and during church services.

Thus the entire church was kept constantly aware of its healing ministry, not only by the ever-present healer-prophets at services, but also by the testimony sermons of healed patients reinforcing belief in a compassionate, responsive God.

The main image of the prophetic church that arose during this period was that of a safe *refuge* in a troubled world: a place where a strong, communal sense of protection and belonging prevailed, where evil was overcome and health restored both in individual lives and in society at large. The destroyer of human life – qualified as 'satan' or 'demon', but personified by the traditionally familiar and threatening images of *muroyi* (witch or sorcerer), hating enemy, afflicting spirit, etc – was experienced as being vanquished by the superior, liberating power of God. Despite the preaching of eternal life in heaven, the emphasis was

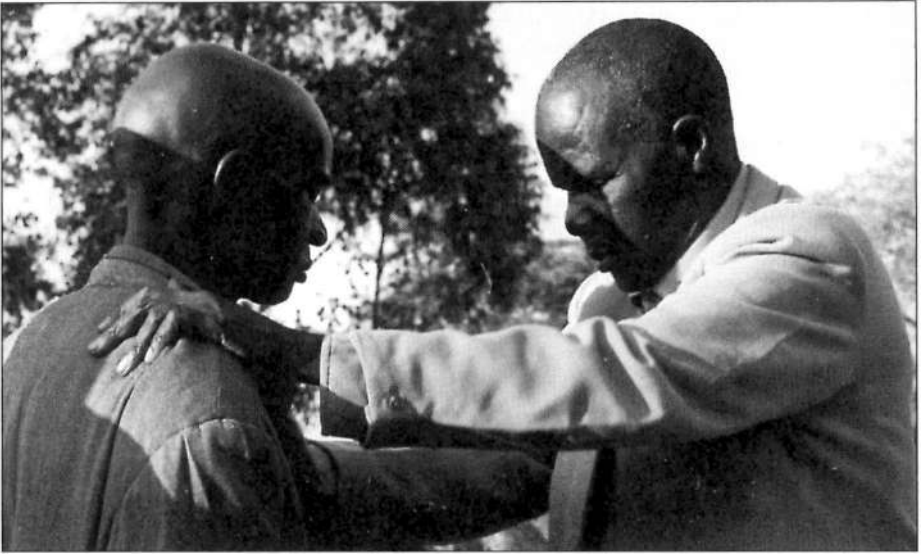


Plate 1 The late Bishop Samuel Mutendi, founder of the ZCC in Zimbabwe, laying hands on a patient in Zion City, Bikita, 1965 (bottom)



system conditions and even subtly dominates in certain important areas within the (Independent) church, but this does not justify unqualified generalisations which assume that adaptation and indigenisation (in AIC ecclesiology) imply no more than a simplistic reversion to the old order' (Daneel 1987:271).

There can be little doubt that the prophetic movements – numerically the biggest component of all southern African AICs and of AAEC membership – are popularly perceived as *healing/liberating institutions*. This perception relates closely to the holism of African religions, in which both liberation (ie expulsion of destructive and unwanted powers) and healing (ie restoring wellbeing) feature prominently. It also evolves from prophetic concern with individual and societal maladies in the African context, in the form of a distinctly African interpretation of the healing ministry of the biblical Christ – an interpretation which, as we shall see, is reflected in the establishment and periodic redefinition of healing colonies at prophetic church headquarters.

I will now trace briefly the development of healing liberation, a major theme in AIC ecclesiology, in relation to changing needs and historical contexts in Zimbabwe. This will help to clarify the subsequent discussion of the AICs' perception of the attributes of an earthkeeping church.

1.1 Historical perspectives

1.1.1 Faith-healing 'hospitals': a major attraction

The first phase of rapid AIC growth in Zimbabwe, from the 1930s to the 1960s, was characterised by a process of *religiocultural liberation*. This process (Daneel 1998:36–42) involved emancipation from the tutelage of mission churches, a re-evaluation of indigenous culture and religion in AIC worship and ceremonial life, and the introduction of faith-healing practices which offered Christian therapeutic solutions to sickness and affliction as experienced in terms of African worldviews. It was during this phase that the image of prophetic churches as 'hospitals' emerged. The AICs' replacement of both traditional African healers (*nganga*) and mission church doctors by prophetic faith-healers represented a significant breakthrough at the rural grassroots by instilling the perception of the church as a healing institution. The centrality of this image is illustrated by the fact that faith-healing became their most potent recruit-

CHAPTER 1

The church as a healing/liberating institution

To understand current ecclesiological developments in the AICs participating in the AAEC's earthkeeping programmes one needs to look at the development of AIC images of the church since the inception of these movements in Zimbabwe early this century. First, a background of *Western denominationalism* and poor *theological training* within the AICs has led to a somewhat fragmented, superficial ecclesiology, lacking in accurate, dogmatic formulation and historical perspective on the development of the church through the ages (Daneel 1987:269f). Second, African culture and social structures naturally left their mark on AIC ecclesiology. Customary law and kinship codes gave rise to legalistic trends, so that many Independents saw their churches primarily as new '*tribal*' communities with essentially modified codes of conduct. Sundkler (1961:310-323) observed a growing tendency among South African Independents to turn religious groups into new 'ecclesiastic tribes'. Oosthuizen (1968:82) in his turn judged that ethnicity had corrupted the AIC perception of the church: 'The whole tribe is the church without any idea of personal decision. Its basis is purely ethnic, ie based on blood relationship.'

I argue, however, that if tribalism dominates to the extent suggested by Sundkler and Oosthuizen, there could be no question of a Christian ecclesiology among the Zionist and 'messianic' churches, and these movements would have turned into modern versions of tribal religion. The qualifications 'family churches' and 'tribal churches' are misleading insofar as they do not adequately recognise the Independents' insistence on a *new Christian identity* for their institutions and the *transformation of traditional beliefs, social structures and customs* which marks their enacted theology. My argument against one-sided generalisations of this kind is as follows: 'We do not deny that the old tribal

PART 1

Environmental ministry and changing images of the church

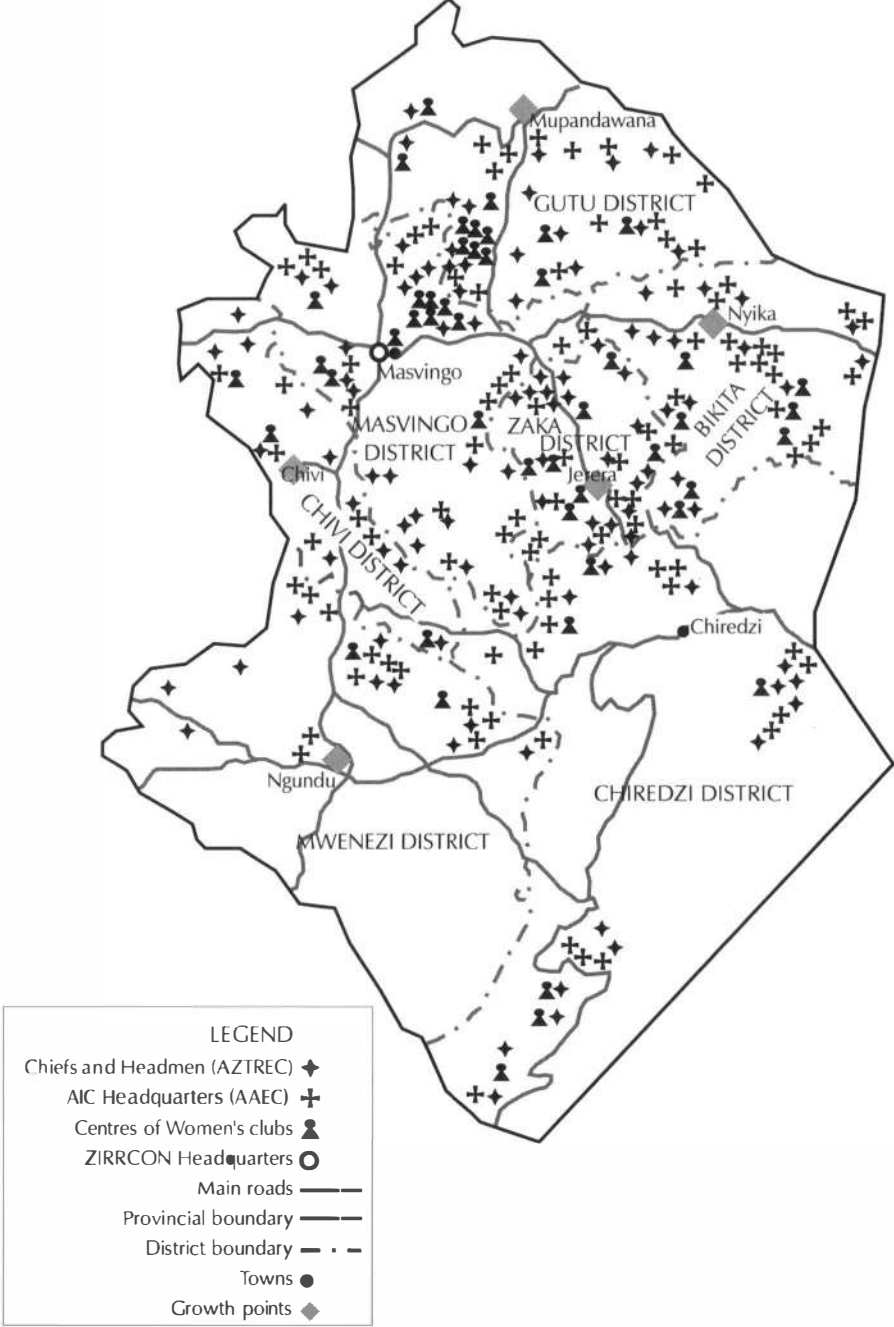
of ZIRRCO, modest and relatively unknown as it is, is fitted into the flow of green news in the global village, so that it may draw fresh inspiration and also challenge the as yet inactive earthkeepers of the world.

as *muridzi venyika* (guardian of the land). He is the guardian of all the land, all the earth, who – in keeping and restoring it all – respects yet transcends ethnic divisions and humanly made obstacles. The AAEC's missionary tree-planting eucharist marks the beginning of a new generation of AIC iconic leaders. By opting for alternative church colonies which combine the healing of both humans and nature they epitomise in the African peasant context the incarnation and comprehensive ministry of Christ – he who heals, liberates and saves all the earth.

Chapter 5 presents an ecological pneumatology: the presence of the Holy Spirit as life-giver in creation and as originator and inspirer of the Zimbabwean earthkeeping movement. The guiding presence of the Holy Spirit is recognised particularly in the earthkeepers' regular public confessions of ecological sins and the emerging conviction that such sins constitute a form of *uroyi hwenyika* (wizardry of the land). In their assessment of the struggle between life-giving Spirit and earth destroyer the AIC earthkeepers realise that all human beings are guilty of earth destruction. Hence all humans who are prepared to heed the Spirit's guidance will respond to his/her call to restore the earth. For such a ministry to have the required impact, evil has to be expelled pneumatically through exorcism.

The third and concluding section of the book outlines the latest developments in ZIRRCON and future challenges. Chapter 6 gives an overview of ZIRRCON's growth, consolidation and task distribution among a number of departments and desks. This is followed by an evaluation of the movement's religiously inspired environmental contribution, both traditional and Christian. Chapter 7 contains reflections on the practical implications and challenges flowing from expanding environmental commitments and vision. The relevance of ZIRRCON's religio-ecological model for the wider African context is illustrated by describing the launching and activities of the South African-based Faith and Earthkeeping project – a direct result of the ZIRRCON experience in Zimbabwe. In view of this, a case is made for establishing an African Earthkeeping Union to promote a people's green movement along similar lines of religiously informed empowerment. I also point out the need for African Christian theologians to develop an environmental liberation theology, in which a concept like 'eco-justice' in the African situation will signify human and environmental values and upliftment as integral and equal components of the same struggle. Finally, the story

ZIRRCON affiliated earthkeepers in Masvingo Province



sacraments of baptism and holy communion. More than anything else, tree-planting eucharists, ecumenically celebrated by clusters of AICs during the rainy season, illustrate the symbolic inclusion of all creation in the sacrament of Christ's death and resurrection. This sacrament, the heartbeat of Christianity, potently demonstrates the unity between Christ as the head of the church and his disciples as its body, and the union between the cosmic Christ, in whom all things hold together (Col 1:17), and his creation. In this sacrament, popularly referred to as the *maporesanyika* (earth-healing), the healing of human beings and of the cosmos fuse in symbolic realisation of the new heaven and the new earth and in powerful witness to faith in the coming kingdom.

Part 2 examines the trinitarian characteristics of an emerging African theology of the environment. Related theological issues – the development of a Spirit-inspired green ethic, the understanding of God's kingdom in relation to a cosmically commissioned church, and the eschatological implications of earth-bound salvation, etc – are mentioned in passing, are implicit in the descriptive data, or are not discussed at all. Nonetheless the insight derived from a vibrant earthkeeping ministry could help mould future African eco-theologies.

Chapter 3 looks at the awareness among earthkeepers of the presence of an immanent creator in a ravaged environment. In the perception of participant AICs, Mwari, the ecological deity who, as *Wokumusoro* (the one above), remained somewhat remote in traditional religion, is the insider, the biblical God of the crops and the power behind the war of the trees. The presence of an anthropomorphic, near pantheistic and compassionate God who is jealous of his dwindling forests and hurt by the felling of a tree, contrasts with – and adds new dimensions to – Protestant and Catholic missionary attempts in Africa to draw the distant and transcendent creator into the daily life and worship of common people.

A green Christology, presented in chapter 4, portrays Christ the earthkeeper. His traditional healing ministry encompasses all the earth and his lordship over creation is understood to give new impetus to the creator's call for earth stewardship in the Genesis story, and a more comprehensive mission to his church than the mere salvation of human souls. When Christ emerges as kinsman of the African earthkeeper, he fulfils and transforms the traditional role of the clan's founder ancestor

interpretation and spontaneous action often precedes theological reflection. Despite these shortcomings, the Independents' committed search for scriptural guidance and the promptings of the Holy Spirit counteracts theological deviations or inconsistencies. Thus the contextual model of the AICs, comprising the integration of both religio-cultural identity and relevance with a tradition of struggle for sociopolitical liberation, provides an ideal vehicle for a ministry of environmental stewardship.

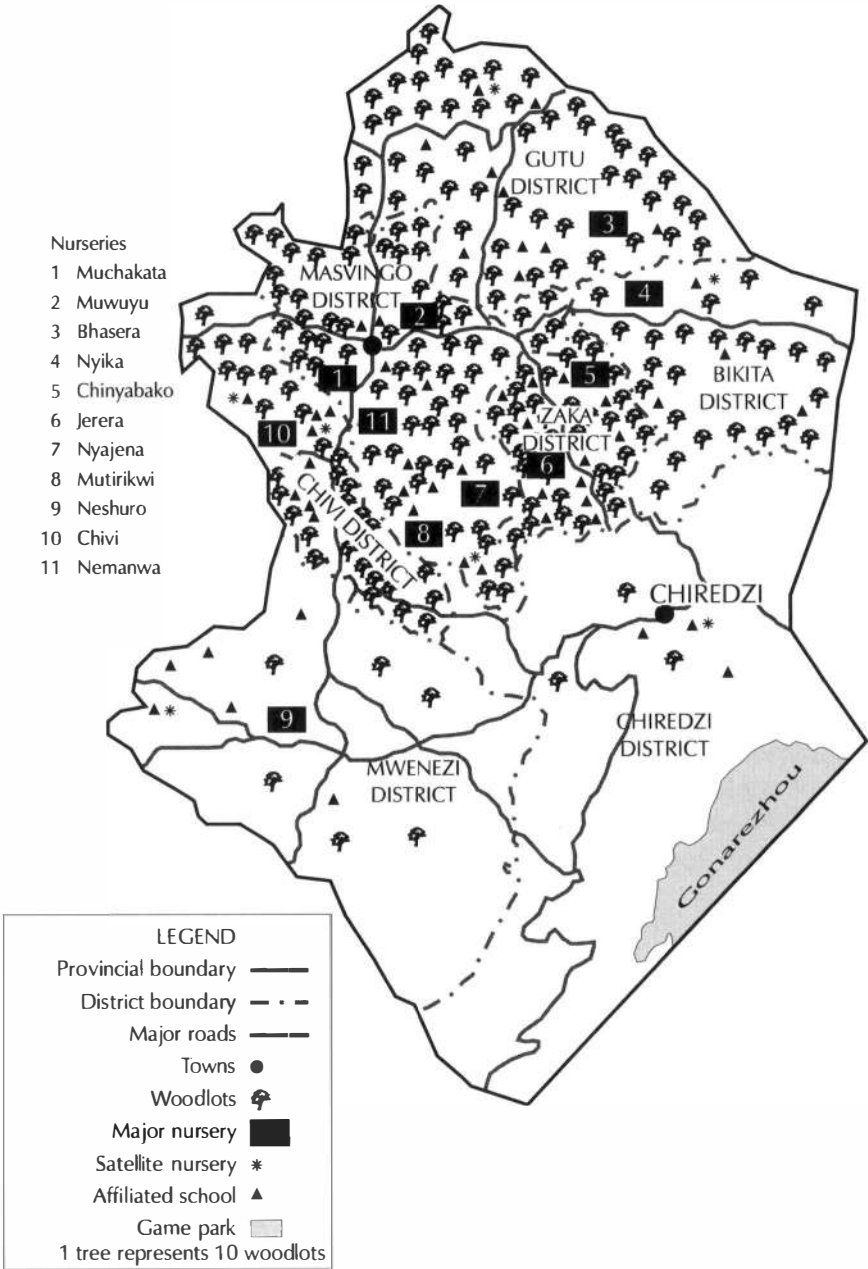
3 Outline of study

The first section of this study outlines the ecclesiological implications of an earthkeeping ministry. A brief historical survey in chapter 1 traces the emergence in AIC circles of a variety of images of the church as a healing and liberating institution in relation to the most crucial needs of peasant society in different historical phases. The original image of Zionist and Apostolic prophetic movements as 'faith-healing hospitals', for instance, evolved on sociopolitical lines to accommodate resistance against foreign colonial rule. This culminated during *chimurenga* in an understanding of Christian discipleship as active, divinely sanctioned involvement in the struggle against oppression until a new dispensation of peace and relative wellbeing could be achieved.

Thus an ecclesiological tradition of liberationist activism was already established by the time environmental commitment widened and enriched that involvement. An analysis of the outstanding attributes of an earthkeeping church shows an emphasis on ecumenism: united action, not only between Christian churches but also between Christians and African traditionalists. The outreach of tree-planting churches indicates a new understanding of the church's mission. Because of the good news of redemption in Christ, conversion, church planting and church growth remain focal in missionary proclamation. Earthkeeping, however, becomes integral to conversion and spiritual growth. The gospel is proclaimed as encompassing the entire earth community, through a ministry of earth healing which entails the salvation of all creation.

Chapter 2 describes the main ritual and liturgical innovations in AAEC churches. Public confession of ecological sins features prominently in the conversion of individual earthkeepers and their participation in the

ZIRRCON's woodlots, major & satellite nurseries and affiliated schools in Masvingo Province



Ethiopian-type AIC leaders, a few of which are included in the appendix. This gave me some idea of how leading earthkeepers relate scriptural passages to the dynamics of their green struggle. I also used interview material to gauge the attitudes and convictions of some prominent AAEC figures regarding the newly introduced eco-liturgical activities in the field. Only fourteen respondents (mainly bishops and a few *Ruwadzano* women leaders) were included in this brief survey, conducted under my supervision by Tarisai Zvokuomba. Although by no means exhaustive or fully representative of AAEC leadership, the survey does provide valuable insight into influential role-players' assessment of the environmental ministry which they are helping to initiate. At any rate, an empirically based analysis of this nature enables one to distinguish characteristic features of the theological consensus emerging from the AAEC's earthkeeping praxis.

Finally, with reference to Schreiter's *contextual models* of theologising, it should be noted that the AICs' contextualisation incorporates in its own unique way both the ethnographic and the liberationist approaches. Prophetic healing practices in particular illustrate their intense preoccupation with African culture, traditional religious beliefs and world-views (Daneel 1971). Dialogue and interaction at this level are generated by the existential need to relate the good news of God's word to the living realities of Africa and are not prompted by Western-style academic or theological motives of cultural analysis. At the same time the experience of colonial oppression, religious paternalism, poverty and lack of socioeconomic opportunities caused the AICs to develop into liberation movements with strong undercurrents of intuitive – even vehemently proclaimed, if largely unwritten – liberation theologies.

The existential nature of the AIC's *people's theology*, moreover, makes it less prone to the weaknesses which Schreiter identifies in both the ethnographic and liberationist models. Here cultural analysis or experience neither obscures the community's contribution to a local theology, nor leads to cultural romanticism. The AIC community by and large remains the creator of its own theology, and an ongoing dialectic between a strong prophetic tradition and local culture results in confrontation and transformation of those traditional practices considered to be sinful, rather than in uncritical accommodation of such practices for the sake of cultural continuity and identity. Here, too, the people's needs in the struggle for liberation tend to colour or even distort Bible

they virtually, as iconic embodiments, become the church. Given this ecclesiological trend, AIC communities expect their bishops, both in the ecumenical context of the AAEC and in their own churches, to take a strong and convincing lead in the movement's environmental struggle. The bishops do so by preaching their growing ecological convictions to the AAEC's ecumenical conference audiences, calling on their flocks during ordinary church services and newly liturgised tree-planting ceremonies to help liberate the environment, and generally guiding whatever innovation their followers may spontaneously enact during such ceremonies.

Another integral part of AAEC theological innovation is the interaction between ZIRRCO and AAEC. As a result certain key figures have been authorised to produce publications on behalf of the entire movement for a variety of purposes. Thus Bishop Marinda has been commissioned to write two handbooks in the vernacular – one on AIC environmental theology and another on an AIC theology of development – to be used as prescribed material for AAEC conscientisation courses; and Revd Solomon Zvanaka is producing a traditional 'theology' of the environment for AZTREC's ecological training programmes. My own drafts for the two volumes on *African earthkeepers* were followed with keen interest by the AAEC. When sections of these drafts were read out to bishops their critical and stimulating feedback created a theological workshop situation. This in itself is a relatively new development in the AIC context, for a large number of barely literate AIC leaders are now not only aware of the value of ZIRRCO's monitoring and ongoing research service, but are themselves increasingly joining in reflection on the interaction between Scripture and ecological warfare and in the telling on paper of their own story.

Having briefly described the AAEC's multifaceted process of theological development, I must emphasise that my account of AIC theology is purely introductory. It is quite impossible to do justice, within the limited scope of this study, to the entire tapestry of richly varied church ceremonies, the roles of all the leading figures and the theological themes in a mass movement of this nature. Nevertheless, my descriptive analysis of the emerging AAEC theology is an attempt to complement my own earthkeeping experience and observations with a probing scrutiny of the communal psyche of the movement. To this end I studied the tape-recorded tree-planting sermons of both Spirit-type and

research and participatory experience. These proposals, made at executive meetings and conferences or in tree-planting sermons, are 'experimented' with in church praxis, assessed in terms of grassroots response and then adopted or rejected through community consensus reached during tree-planting ceremonies rather than in the more theoretical executive context.

Third, at this stage I cannot assess accurately the actual impact of my influence on theological developments in the AAEC context. Other observers may be able to judge this at some future date with greater objectivity than I am capable of. I am confident, however, that sufficient safeguards are built into AAEC theologising to prevent it from becoming a one-man show.

Fourth, these safeguards consist of the following: The AICs by their very nature will not permit an adopted outsider to do their theology for them. My proposals are accepted only to the extent that they fit and help extend the existing theology of the AICs. The reward for me as a fellow AIC innovator is to see some of our new ideas being absorbed and contextualised in AIC ceremonies, there to emerge in surprising variations and shapes based entirely on the intuitive creativity and improvisation of AIC communities themselves. In other words, authentic innovation is and remains the responsibility and prerogative of AIC communities. Schreiter (1985:16–17) aptly describes 'the community as theologian': 'the Holy Spirit, working in and through the believing community, gives shape and expression to Christian experience ... (therefore) theology is certainly intended for a community and is not intended to remain the property of a theologian class.'

Fifth, the emphasis on community enactment of AIC theology does not, of course, rule out authorship by a nuclear group within the community, which gives voice to (and writes reflections on) the theology of the community (Schreiter 1985:17). A lot of discussion and planning of possible earth-healing liturgies take place at AAEC executive meetings and conferences. Thus a substantial cross-section of AIC leaders take part in reflection and help to direct the new earthkeeping ministry, the war of the trees. Leadership participation at this level of theologising is vitally important because of an AIC ecclesiology – particularly in the prophetic movements, constituting the bulk of AAEC membership – which elevates the founder and succeeding leaders to a point where

Independents not susceptible to the pitfalls of the adaptation model? Schreiter (1985:18–20) warns against the dominance of professional theologians in the development of a local theology, insofar as their role imposes a new hegemony on already oppressed communities. Nevertheless, he points out that if the professional theologians participate in the community's experience they could create bonds of accountability between local and world church.

I hope that my role among the AICs fulfils a meaningful bridging function between Independents and the wider body of Christian believers. Nonetheless, the following aspects of this function should be noted when assessing the environmental theological developments presented in this study.

First, much of my work in Zimbabwe corresponds with Tempels' immersion in and interpretation of African culture and worldviews. A significant difference, however, is that among AICs I operate as a theological freelancer, seeking to interpret and participate in their theological development as a kind of adopted insider rather than working as a missionary of a Western church. It is in that capacity that I try to construct an indigenised philosophical framework as a basis for a Christian African theology. In addition, it should be noted that as a participant observer and fellow Independent I have welcomed the role of 'theological innovator' in the AIC context. Here my pietistic evangelical roots in the Protestant Calvinistic tradition are discernible. At the same time the Independents, with their zest for religious celebration, have taught me to be dogmatically 'footloose' – to dance at the point where precise systematic reflection gets blurred by the urgency of life and action. Consequently I have been much more involved in initiating and participating in new AIC movements – focusing on ecumenical theological training, socioeconomic development and ecological endeavour – than in producing Tempels' kind of comprehensive, culturally adapted and systematised theological reflections.

Second, the prominence of my position as founder and co-architect of the AAEC inevitably reflects in the theology developed by the movement. Central features of eco-liturgical innovation (eg the trend towards environmentally related conversion, 'ecological' baptism, public confession of ecological sins and the introduction of a tree-planting eucharist) stem directly from my proposals and insight based on

causes conflicting notions in the environment to be ignored for the sake of harmony and continuity. The ethnographic approach easily falls prey to cultural romanticism and, as a result, fail to come to grips with, 'by Christian standards', sinful aspects of cultural histories. Sophisticated cultural analysis, moreover, tends to exclude the most crucial component of the theological process – the communities themselves. Yet Schreiter (1985:14) maintains that these limitations can be overcome if a lively dialectic between gospel traditions and local cultural traditions is maintained.

Whereas the ethnographic approach is concerned with cultural identity and continuity, the liberationist approach focuses on social change and discontinuity:

Put theologically, liberation models are keenly concerned with salvation. Liberation models analyze the lived experience of a people to uncover the forces of oppression, struggle, violence, and power. They concentrate on the conflictual elements oppressing a community or tearing it apart. In the midst of grinding poverty, political violence, deprivation of rights, discrimination and hunger, Christians move from social analysis to finding echoes in the biblical witness in order to understand the struggle in which they are engaged or to find direction for the future. Liberation models concentrate on the need for change (Schreiter 1985:15).

One of the most positive features of this approach is that it unleashes Christian witness and action in communities by linking their existential needs with the saving word of God. Limitations are the inclination to concentrate on the needs of people to the exclusion of biblical witness and the experiences of other churches. In addition there is a risk that reflection sometimes takes place only after action instead of forming the basis for it.

The translation and adaptation models raise the question whether my own theological reflection – couched as it is in Western categories, and aimed partly at interpreting AIC theological development to both Western and African academics – can do justice to AIC theology. Is this vibrantly celebrated theology not distorted in the process of writing, and does my attempt to verbalise and systematise realities, to which I remain in part an outsider, not overshadow community enactment of that theology? In other words, is my theologising among the Shona

Adaptation models take local cultures more seriously and often emerge at a more advanced stage of local theological development. In this kind of model expatriates and local leaders cooperate in attempts to construct local philosophies or worldviews which correspond with Western philosophical or theological systems as a basis for a local theology. Schreiter (1985:9) writes:

Placide Tempels's *Bantu philosophy*, first published in 1944 from his experience in the Belgian Congo, is an early and good example of this approach. In this book Tempels takes the then prevalent Neo-Thomistic philosophical framework and redevelops it with equivalent categories from Bantu peoples. The understanding was that this could form the basis for a sub-Saharan Christian theology much as Neo-Thomism had formed the basis for a European theology.

In its refined, more advanced form the adaptation model involves training local leaders to study their own religio-cultural heritage in Western categories and on that basis to create existentially relevant theologies. African theologians such as John Mbiti and Charles Nyamiti are examples.

A major advantage of this model is that when local theologians use Western categories and methodological frameworks in their writings it facilitates understanding and dialogue between Western and other, mainly 'Third' World, churches. The limitations, however, are obvious. This kind of theology is mostly addressed to academics who do not necessarily represent the same constituency as does the local church. Consequently the role of local communities in the theological process is neglected or remains somewhat obscure.

Contextual models differ from the first two in that reflection focuses less on the faith received but starts with the local socio-cultural context. In this category Schreiter distinguishes between an *ethnographic* and a *liberationist* approach. The former is particularly concerned with cultural identity. Here a local theology starts with the needs of the local people and not with questions asked by other Christian churches or those raised in systematic presentations of the faith. Small Christian community movements have been vehicles for this kind of theologising, resulting in enhanced identities. This theological method, however, has a number of limitations. Concern for identity and stability often

Spirit, moreover, correlated with the sharing of scriptural insight against a common, if diversified, background of *chimurenga*, which eventually converted into concerted church activity – earth healing through tree planting.

Enacted, sung and danced in direct response to African needs, AIC theology – for all its lack of books written by the actual participants – is *contextualised theology* par excellence. In his discussion of the varieties of local theology, Schreiter (1985:7–16) distinguishes between three different models: the *translation, adaptation and contextual* models. To relate AIC theology, my involvement in its interpretation, and specifically current eco-theological developments in the AAEC to other local theologies, let us briefly examine these three models.

Translation models are the theological procedures generally adopted in traditional cross-cultural missionary situations. To be properly understood, church ceremonies, worship, catechetical instruction and gospel proclamation need to be translated into the recipient culture. This translation entails a twofold procedure: freeing the Christian message as much as possible from its previous cultural association, and then translating it into the new situation. 'An underlying image directing this procedure,' says Schreiter (1985:7), 'is one of kernel and husk: the basic Christian revelation is the kernel; the previous cultural settings in which it has been incarnated constitute the husk. The kernel has to be hulled time and again, as it were, to allow it to be translated into new cultural contexts.' Variations of this model can be found in attempts to rid Western Christianity of Hellenistic categories, in the post-Vatican II liturgical adaptation of Roman Catholic rites to local customs, and in countless Protestant attempts to translate the Bible using concepts which are considered to have linguistic equivalents in local cultures.

This model has two major weaknesses. First, it stems from a positivist understanding of culture. Since it is the foreign missionary or Bible translator who is analysing the culture, the focus is not so much on the culture investigated as on finding parallels with a previously contextualised Christianity. Second, the kernel-and-husk theory tends to assume a supracultural setting in which the message is translated into a new cultural situation. Consequently the interwovenness of revelational kernel and cultural husk, also in the Bible, is not sufficiently recognised to deal with the theological complexities involved.

The background to the formation and initial growth of the AAEC was sketched in the first volume of *African earthkeepers* (Daneel 1998, chapter 3). It included an outline of the organisation of ZIRRCO, the interaction between its two religiously based branches – AZTREC and the AAEC – and the roles of traditionalist and Christian key figures in the movement. The historical section on the birth of the entire movement in volume I was followed by a descriptive analysis of the traditional rituals and beliefs developed by AZTREC in the context of the war of the trees. In this volume I attempt to amplify and complement that story by exploring the Christian dimension and theology of the earth-keeping struggle as reflected in AAEC activity.

2 Community-based contextualisation

When theologising as an ecologically motivated insider but a cultural outsider who tries nonetheless to see through African eyes and feel through the throb of dancing black feet, one needs to consider the methodological implications and limitations.

AIC theology by definition is *spontaneously enacted theology*. It is not an academically systematised theology, the preserve of ‘professional’ theologians who retreat Western-style to reflect and then record their reflections in writing. No, AIC reflection and response to life-situations in a given context primarily take the form of community events and find expression in emotionally uninhibited dance, song, vivid proclamation and social action, all based on predominantly literal interpretations and applications of Scripture. Given this outstanding characteristic of AIC theology, it is appropriate that the first section of this book should focus mainly on *church praxis*: the patterns of activity emerging in what is felt to be the church's new ministry of healing and liberating all of creation. Here, too, the basic trend of theological innovation derives from spontaneous community response to comprehensive (anthropological and ecological) needs in peasant society, instead of being imposed by written dictates from above. Admittedly, key figures like myself and fellow founders of the AAEC have helped to give some organisational direction to new developments, as will be described below. But the starting point, significantly, was that the Independents of Zimbabwe experienced the movement of God's Spirit in direct relation to both the church's task and a devastated environment. This movement of the

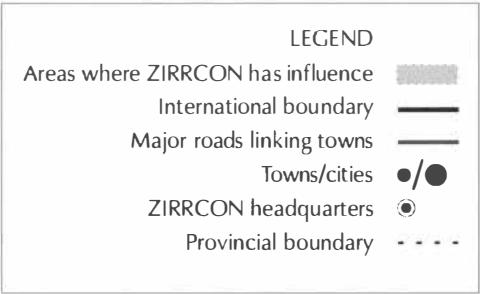
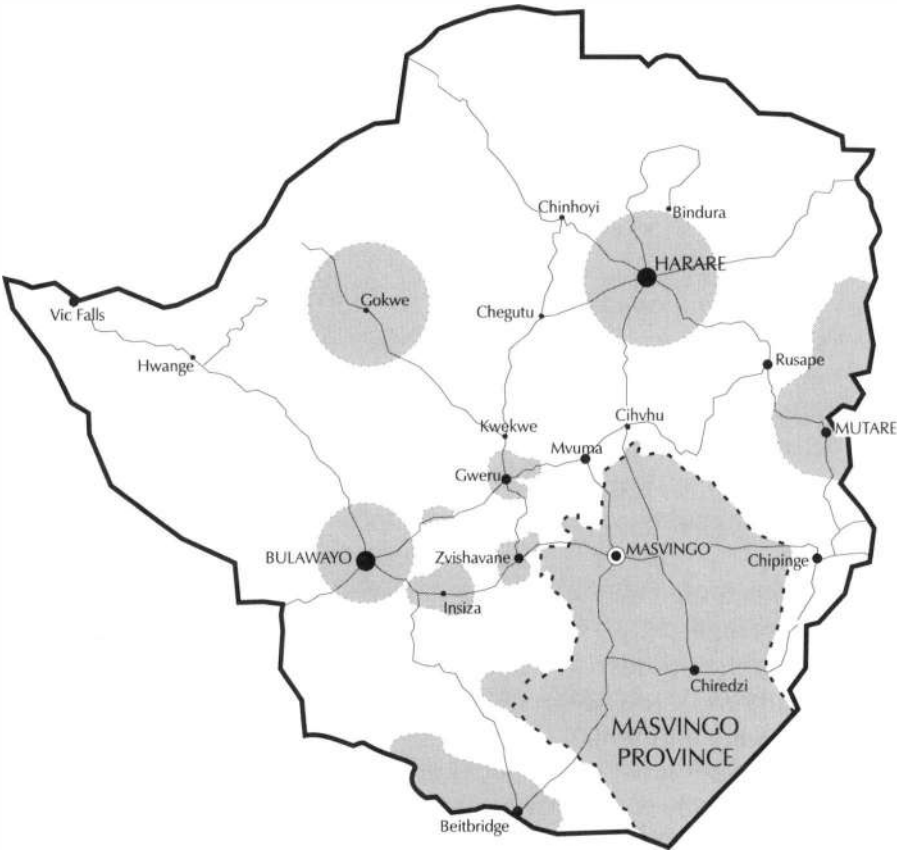
turn earth's water to trickling mire.
Confess and baptise ...
the wizards, the land!
Oust demons of neglect.
From Jordan emerge
with bonded hands, new earth community
Touch childless womb, touch hapless soil
– seedlings of love.

Proclaim new heaven,
new earth in black Jerusalem
'Come Mwari!
Come Son! Come Spirit!'
Bare feet touch sacred soil
where rhythmic bodies sweat and sway.
where weary traveller
finds cool in shade
rustle of leaves
fountains spring
clear water of life.

The African Independent Churches (AIC) in Zimbabwe indeed heeded the prophetic call to earthkeeping. They joined forces with practitioners of traditional religion – the chiefs, headmen, spirit mediums and ex-combatants of Zimbabwe's political liberation struggle – and formed their own Christian wing of the green army. This they called the AAEC – the Association of African Earthkeeping Churches. Over nearly a decade this body of churches has grown into an imposing ecumenical association, currently counting some 150 member churches and representing an estimated constituency of two million adherents. In the space of a few years they have engaged in nursery development and the planting of millions of trees. New earthkeeping rituals were introduced. There were also sermons and sacramentally related green activities, all pointing to the evolution of a grassroots eco-theology.

This book presents a profile of this emergent AIC theology within the green struggle. It is hoped that it will not merely be an exercise in self-assessment *with* and *for* the AIC communities engaged in earthkeeping, but will also challenge the church in Africa and abroad to reconsider and restructure its ministry to the environment.

ZIRRCON's main spheres of influence in Zimbabwe



INTRODUCTION

1 Earthkeeper's call

In the beginning
earth was formless and void
and the Spirit of God moved over the waters.
God said: 'Let there be light!'
And there was light.

After *chimurenga*
the earth was scorched and barren
and the Spirit of God urged prophets:
'Cry, the empty gullies, the dying plains –
clothe naked land of the forebears!'
And hope returned
Healing hands, young leaves of trees

Heeding the call
they came:
black multitudes
churches of the poor:
billowing garments ...
red, white, blue, resplendent green
bearing holy staves, cardboard crowns.
Cursed descendants of Ham
rejects of white mission
lift the fallen banner of Spirit
kingdom's cornerstone
where souls of people, tree souls meet.

Prophets shouted:
Repent! Confess!
I bare earth with axe and fire
rape forests without return
sledge-rip gullied meadows

CHAPTER 3

Mwari the creator as insider

In this and the next two chapters I attempt to trace a profile of the AIC theology undergirding and stimulating the praxis of an earthkeeping ministry as it takes shape in the AAEC context. Inasmuch as the theological discourse represents reflections on and elaborations of trends already identified in the previous two chapters, we are not dealing with a written, fully systematised theology. Instead, our sources are verbalised and enacted conceptions and convictions which emerge spontaneously during tree-planting ceremonies and are integral to AIC *theological* praxis. Through repetition by leading figures and affirmation by participant church communities these convictions become *theological guidelines* for the core activities of the entire earthkeeping movement.

I shall also endeavour to highlight the relevance of AIC environmental theology for African Christian theology generally as articulated in the world of publications and Western-oriented academia. Black African theologians have done little towards producing a comprehensive Africanised theology of the environment. Hence the earthkeeping AICs may well provide both the incentive and the basic building stones – derived from biblically intuited and envisioned praxis – for the development of such a theology. In addition some insight will be drawn from recent works by Western theologians engaged in eco-theology. Their inclusion serves only to relate the AICs' contribution meaningfully to the growing concern about a deteriorating environment among churches worldwide.

It is remarkable how some trinitarian notions or beliefs currently emphasised by Western theologians as being pertinent to a realistic theology of creation – although varying greatly in their expression – implicitly or explicitly underlie the earthkeeping ministry and sacraments of the AICs. I shall indicate how the call for God's full presence in his creation (Moltmann 1985:13; Wilkinson 1990:280) coincides with

an outstanding feature of AAEC environmental work – that of experiencing God the Creator as insider, present in and in control of creation. To fully appreciate the significance of this theological development, the undefined but very real traditions of a remote Creator God among the Shona require brief consideration.

3.1 A remote creator?

3.1.1 The distant One of traditional religion

Traditional concepts of God in Africa have contributed to a certain remoteness and transcendence of God the Father in African Christianity. Traditionally the general image of Africa's Supreme Being was that of a *creator* who, although the *foundation* of all that exists, was not considered to be directly involved in all the day-to-day details of maintaining and controlling it. The Shona concept of *Wokumusoro* (the One above) to some extent expresses Mwari the creator's remoteness from creation. The function of organising and maintaining creation was largely attributed to the ancestors, whose veneration became a dominant feature of traditional religious activity. In some instances God's remoteness was ascribed to human error which had disrupted the divine-human relationship. Western observers in particular have emphasised *silence*, perhaps *mystery* and *detachment*, as outstanding characteristics of the traditional divinity in Africa. With the exception of Mwari, the oracular deity of the Shona, and the divinities worshipped by the Dogon, Ashanti and Ambo, the God of Africa has been characterised as a *deus otiosus* or a *deus remotus*. As Taylor (1963:85) observed concerning the apotheosis of Kyala: 'Beginning in this world as part of the human hierarchy of the living and the ancestors, they (the gods) are eventually, as we might say, pushed through the sky-light and lost sight of.'

While traditional African divinities are believed to be in touch with the ancestors, they are seldom approached directly by individuals. Even in the case of the Shona high-God cult, Mwari's oracular announcements about rain and national issues were monitored by a small number of cult officials (Daneel 1970:40f). Apart from these select few, Mwari was not usually approached by ordinary people in direct acts of ritualised worship. In all fairness it should be said that the oracle's role in *chimurenga*, and more recently also in AZTREC's activities has certainly

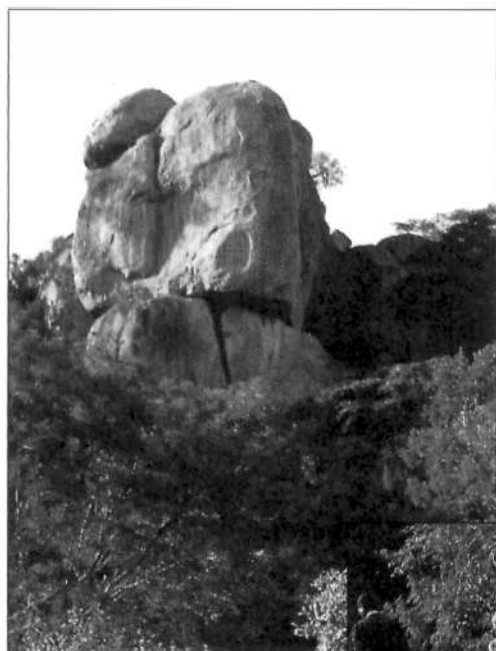


Plate 21 Mwari cult officials
approach and converse near
the Dzilo shrine in the Matopo
hills



contributed to greater emphasis on the high-God's *presence and immanence* both in African rural society and in creation generally. In the conceptual development within the cult's history it appears likely that both elements of the creator – transcendence and immanence – were present all along. The Shona intuitively felt Mwari's closeness and angered disapproval during droughts, and sometimes his involvement in the deaths of people. Nevertheless, the fact that religious ritual life in rural village society was directed largely to the more accessible spirit world, that is the ancestors, in which the Shona high-God was a pre-supposed but somewhat distant force, seems to indicate that traditionally the creator's remoteness somehow outweighed his presence.

Against this background it is understandable that Western missionaries, apart from using the traditional names of the African Supreme Being for God in their biblical translations, tended to direct their indigenising policies mainly to the accommodation or confrontation of the more dominant ancestor rituals. Thus the pertinent questions arise: Did the church in Africa succeed in drawing the remote one convincingly into the ambit of day-to-day human life? Did he/she acquire recognisable features as the insider?

3.1.2 Missionary traditions

In considering these questions we briefly look at the two most prominent missionary traditions – those of the Roman Catholic and the Reformed Protestant churches – that have played a major role in the Christianising of the Shona in Masvingo Province, where the AIC environmental theology is currently unfolding.

3.1.2.1 *Accommodation and confusion*

The Roman Catholic tradition of natural theology allows for far-reaching accommodation of, or adaptation to, the varied cultures of humankind. In contrast to the Reformed view of human nature as totally corrupted by sin, Catholicism holds that some uncorrupted seed is present in creation. As a result the Catholic Church assimilates what it considers to be good customs among people, not necessarily by way of radical transformation but by *synthesising* indigenous and Christian truth. Papal decrees have enhanced missionary strategies based on accommoda-

tion and assimilation and even assigned the church the function of guarding the positive aspects of indigenous culture.

During the 1960s and 1970s Fr Kumbirai, a Shona priest, spearheaded the introduction into the Catholic Church of adapted forms of communion with the ancestors (Daneel 1971:269f). Here the church's accommodation policy focused mainly on modifying and assimilating two important traditional rituals: the burial ceremony and the *kugadzira* (literally 'setting right'), the latter being a home-bringing ceremony which confers ancestral status on the deceased and thus provides the key to all subsequent rituals of ancestor veneration. In burial rituals one finds a strong emphasis on the mediatory function of the different groups of ancestors – paternal and maternal grandparents, aunts, uncles, fathers and mothers – who are all called upon to take the deceased to Mwari. In the adapted *kugadzira* ritual, the deceased's spirit is still incorporated by the living – no longer, however, into the old hierarchy of ancestors but into the heavenly communion of saints. Communion with the ancestors continues, but the protective function of the newly installed ancestor is given new content. Instead of symbolically guarding the door of the homestead of their living descendants, as tradition dictates, the ancestors are now required to intercede on behalf of the living so that God will protect them. Thus by making Mwari, God the Father, responsible for the daily protection of the deceased's living descendants and rendering them more readily accessible through a reinterpreted form of mediation, this accommodating Roman Catholic ritual, in its intention at least, seeks to overcome the traditional remoteness of God. Ritually, at any rate, he seems to have been drawn closer to daily living.

There can be little doubt about the salutary impact of these adapted rites. In rural areas the church appears to have come closer to the people; it has lost some of its alien Western character and has gained in popularity. One of the most convincing proofs that the Catholic Church had become inculturated in Shona society is its ability to maintain a reasonably stable membership, without great loss through schisms or individual defections to the AIC movement and other churches.

Yet considering the traditional religious preoccupation with ancestral involvement in everyday life – at the expense of a remote creator-God – there is considerable ground for controversy over the Christian nature

of the assimilated rituals (see for example the polemics between Rubio, Kuehne and Oscar Niederberger, in Daneel 1971:276) and for concern about interpretive confusion. In the liturgy of the burial rite, for instance, no clear distinction is made between Christian and non-Christian ancestors. All the deceased person's ancestors are addressed collectively and they are all accorded a mediating function on behalf of the deceased. Other disturbing features of the liturgy which place a question mark over the nature of the conceptual transformation achieved are the following:

- Christ is not mentioned at all. A good opportunity to contrast the uniqueness of his mediation with that of the ancestors appears to be squandered.
- Mwari's presence is presupposed, but the participants in the ceremony do not address him/her directly in their plea to the ancestors to accompany the deceased; hence in this part of the ceremony Mwari is portrayed as a passive party.
- By contrast the ancestors are active mediators on behalf of both the recently deceased and their living descendants. In such a configuration of projected roles in the world beyond, the uniqueness of Christ's mediatorship may conceivably be obscured. Mwari to some extent remains the traditionally perceived distant and mysterious figure – supreme ruler of the universe, yet crowded out by a host of active and humanly more comprehensible ancestors.

One should not indulge in glib generalisations about what could amount to a popular yet superficial accommodation strategy. Representative empirical evidence is necessary for a balanced assessment of the full impact of Rome's missionary policy on the Shona Catholic Church. Nevertheless, recent research into the spirituality of the liberation struggle has indicated a marked difference among Shona Protestants and Catholics as regards dependence on the guardian ancestors of the land and their spirit-mediums for mobilising resistance against the Smith regime. Protestants by and large considered such dependence a sort of spiritual backsliding, while Catholics tended to condone it as a form of traditional religious renaissance endorsed by their church. Several former guerrilla commanders who are active Roman Catholics tended to equate Christ's salvific work with the liberating activities of the Shona hero-ancestor Chaminuka during the strug-

gle. Although such religious differentiation may reflect the difference in official mission policies between the two church traditions, it is possible that in a protracted war situation the attention of thousands of members of both mission churches was thoroughly absorbed by the ancestors.

3.1.2.2 Discontinuity and negation

In the Reformed tradition, Calvinism took a more pessimistic view of human nature than Rome's natural theology. As a result, Reformed missionary theology tended to present individual conversion as a radical break with the past and treated the process of church indigenisation as a total transformation of all aspects of indigenous cultures and religions (Bavinck 1949:126, 174; 1954:234, 245). This approach tended to exclude adaptation in the form of identifying and incorporating constructive elements of traditional customs. Instead, it consistently promoted a policy of discontinuity which inhibited dialogue between representatives of Western and African cultures and led to a negation of indigenous practices by the early mission church policy makers.

Although Dutch Reformed missiology in South Africa was influenced by German theologians in its insistence on church indigenisation (Warneck 1897:22; Van der Merwe 1967:52), the early DRC missionaries among the Shona lacked the strong theological interest of German missionaries like Bruno Gutmann and Christiaan Keyser. Hence Revd A A Louw, the pioneer missionary operating from Morgenster, and his colleagues propagated a radical break with Shona culture to those who accepted the Christian faith. In the course of time, however, some leading DRC missionaries actually engaged in research to acquire deeper insight into traditional worldviews. This led to such valuable publications as *The Shona idea of God* by Prof W J van der Merwe, and the development by individual missionaries of an exorcist ministry which took the traditional spirit world seriously.

But the general trend was towards elimination and a measure of negation of Shona beliefs, rather than sympathetic interaction and dialogue. Attitudes to the ancestor cult, in particular, concentrated so exclusively on actual or imagined features of worship, idolatry and satanic perversion that little or no room was left for remoulding by assimilation, or for substituting parallel Christian rites within the church.

The implication of this policy was that the good news of the missionaries seldom addressed the full range of existentially significant issues in a rural subsistence economy. What was good news at the mission stations and at the schools and clinics erected by the missionaries was not necessarily good news in the villages. Religiously, church members tended to live in two worlds. They would attend Sunday services and prayer meetings at the mission station, where God indeed seemed to be present for the protection and advancement of his people. Back in the villages, however, the threat of wizardry, destructive forces and crippling droughts was as real as before. Here God did not always appear to be the insider. Because the Christian message insufficiently penetrated this world, many church members continued to propitiate the ancestors, to surround their homesteads with a 'stockade' of magically prepared objects to ward off evil, to participate in traditional exorcist and witchcraft-eradication activities, etc, in an attempt to secure their wellbeing.

A particularly poignant example of the two-world paradox of DRC members living around the rural mission stations is the relationship or, to be more precise, the lack of interaction between the Gutu mission station north of Masvingo town and the traditional Mwari cult. Having rejected the ancient cult of the Supreme Being, both missionaries and African church leaders on the whole negated it. Unaware of the resilience of the traditional system, they rarely if ever confronted the old beliefs in the ancient rain-God in sermons or discussions. Conversion and spiritual growth in the pietistic sense and upliftment of the heathen through education and medical services were uppermost in their minds, the essence of their success story. But this very success, with its overwhelming burden of administrative work, created a blind spot. Nobody at the mission station paid any attention to Vondo Mukozho, who lived on their doorstep for several decades. He was just one of the local peasants, a kind man who sometimes attended church services and showed appreciation for the excellent education his children were receiving at the mission station. But to the Gutu peasants Vondo was the senior *munyai* (messenger) of the Mwari cult in the district, a position he had held for many years. He was the one who annually collected gifts all over the district, from traditionalists, Dutch Reformed members and Catholics alike. These gifts were then presented at the distant shrines of the high-God near Bulawayo with a plea for rain. Mwari in

turn would address his/her people oracularly from the cultic caves on issues of agriculture, rain and tribal politics (Daneel 1970, *passim*).

To the peasants, therefore, prayers to the Christian God at the mission station were not enough, especially not in times of drought. Those prayers, so it must have seemed to the villagers, benefited only the mission. During droughts the missionaries' salaries continued to be paid, their schools did not close down and their good, affluent life proceeded unaffected. It was in the villages that people went hungry, that the granaries stood empty and the cattle died. Somehow the God of the white man, the one of educational and medical progress, did not cut a clear figure among the peasants. Falling back on the traditional cult did not help much to phase out the idea of a remote God either. For despite his rain-giving function and tribal political concern, the traditional Supreme Being to many remained a remote presence behind the ancestors. Mwari essentially remained the outsider – mentioned more regularly in ceremonial life than ever before but still the distant, enigmatic being, because the basic rural cosmology stayed largely unchanged. The Reformed Church of Zimbabwe (RCZ) eventually had to face the additional complication that its cultural foreignness and strict discipline, experienced by many members as a repudiation of their own cultural identity, led to alienation and the defection of large numbers of adherents, some of whom flocked into the AICs where God seemed to enter the African world more vividly and visibly.

3.1.3 African theology: inculturation and rehabilitation

Over the past three decades African theology has burgeoned in an attempt to give expression to Christianity in African religio-cultural terms, to relate Christianity meaningfully to Africans' view of reality and to integrate it with their worldview. According to Ukpong (1984:510) 'the final goal (of African Theology) is to help the African live out Christianity authentically within his cultural milieu and to integrate his religious personality'. Adopting a new theological methodology, these theologian evaluated the Bible and Christian tradition with greater openness to African culture. As the latter is allowed to determine the course of theologising to a greater extent, the result is an *existentially oriented, contextualised theology* rather than a rationally *systematised, doctrinal theology* in the Western sense.

As a form of contextualised inculturation, African theology should be characterised as *religio-cultural liberation*. It presents a new approach in the face of a history of colonial subjection, Western racism and imperialism. Enforced acculturation has caused a deep, traumatic split in the African soul – ‘religious schizophrenia’, as Desmond Tutu put it – with an accompanying identity crisis. Against this background African theology forms part of Africans’ attempt to overcome alienation from their cultural heritage. Reaction against colonial conquest provides self-respect as a necessary condition for the search for a new, liberating identity. Hence there is a preoccupation with, and a re-evaluation of, indigenous traditions – not a return to the fleshpots of Egypt, as Witvliet (1984:111) puts it, but the necessary and demanding first phase of emancipation from Western religio-cultural enslavement. A characteristic feature of this form of liberation theology is the rediscovery and appreciation of those tenets of African culture which were rejected or ignored under Western domination. *Rehabilitation of culture, tradition and history* is thus the hallmark of this first phase of liberation.

How does this rehabilitation of traditional religion affect African theologians’ views of biblical and African concepts of God? Is the *deus otiosus* brought into the inner circle of humankind or does he/she remain the remote outsider? Does Scripture remain normative or is the gospel message smothered in African religion and stripped of its own liberating power? When responding to such questions one should bear it in mind, first of all, that against the background of colonialism – which all too often was mirrored in missionary policy, praxis and attitudes – African theologians, in their reflection on traditional religion, invariably tend to be passionate apologists. They are understandably concerned with their own religious roots. What they find there shows *continuity* with the Christian faith rather than the *discontinuity* which the missionaries tended to emphasise. The God of Africa and the God of the Bible are essentially one. As Kibicho (1968:235) puts it: ‘I think it would be right to conclude that the Kikuyu conception of God compares well with the Hebrew conception of the Old Testament, perhaps at the latter’s highest level of development.’ This favourable comparison, which features in numerous variations in monographs on the African understanding of God (eg Idowu’s *God in Nigerian belief*, Danquah’s *The Akan doctrine of God*, Nyamiti’s *African tradition and the Christian God*, Mbiti’s *Concepts of God in Africa*, and Setiloane’s *The image of God*

among the Sotho-Tswana) implies rejection of the idea of a *deus otiosus* or a *deus remotus* as a misleading generalisation contrived by Western observers. Such elevation of the African concept of the Supreme Being, moreover, is based on a prefiguration paradigm in which traditional religion represents a *praeparatio evangelica* in its own right, comparable to the Old Testament. Like the latter, African religion finds its fulfilment in the gospel of Christ and does not fall under the judgment of discontinuity preached by the missionaries.

Mbiti's theology clearly reflects this trend. In his *Concepts of God in Africa* (1970) he construes a uniform concept of the African Supreme Being from the widely divergent views of some 270 African tribes. In what appears to be a gross oversimplification he combines the fragmented concepts of African religions into a systematised totality, expressed in Western categories, which reads like a textbook in systematic theology. In an article on the encounter between the Christian faith and African religion Mbiti (1980:817f) states emphatically that the God of the Bible is the same as the God already known in the pre-Christian framework of African religion. The missionaries introduced Christ as an innovation, but correctly used the names of the God already present in Africa, as it is he who is the creator and father of Jesus Christ. This God revealed himself not only on the Old Testament Mount Sinai but also on Mount Fuji and Mount Kenya. Consequently Mbiti rejects the Western theological distinction between 'general' and 'special' revelation as unbiblical. God's revelation should not be restricted to the biblical account of it. 'One important task, then,' writes Mbiti (1980:818), 'is to see the nature, the method and the implication of God's revelation among African peoples, in the light of the Biblical record of the same revelation.' By implication, therefore, the historical account of God's involvement with the people of Africa is considered to be on a par with his involvement with Israel. Thus 'salvation history' should be broadened to encompass other nations along with the nation of the Old Testament covenant, Israel. Although Mbiti does not take this argument to its logical conclusion in this article, the equation of Old Testament history with the pre-Christian history of traditional Africa – hence the prefiguration paradigm – appears to be implicit in his reasoning.

Moving beyond the prefiguration paradigm, Setiloane considers the Christian concept of God as preached by the missionaries amongst the

Sotho-Tswana to be inferior to these peoples' traditional concept of Modimo. Setiloane characterises Modimo as a near-pantheistic IT-reality, a non-personal being whose mysterious presence pervades all creation. In full support of Rudolph Otto's description of human encounter with God as an irrational experience of the *mysterium tremendum*, Setiloane (1976:85) qualifies the Sotho-Tswana's existential perception of Modimo along similar lines: 'IT is "mysterium",' he contends, 'intangible, all-pervasive, at no point capable of definition. IT is "tremendum" – "selo", monstrous, whose very name is taboo to all but the few. IT is "fascinans" – "mother", concerned for the poor and the weak, and for justice among all. And precisely because IT is concerned for justice, IT has something in IT not only of the numinous, but of the holy.'

To the missionaries who equated the holy and the moral with the Christian gospel, such a perception of God was unacceptable. According to Setiloane, however, African religion should reject the Western portrayal of the Christian God, for the West has lost the experience of God as *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* and has substituted for it a *deus absconditus*, or a saviour only of individual souls. To Setiloane, therefore, the Sotho-Tswana hesitancy in the presence of the mystery, Modimo, is more acceptable than the glibness with which the Christian evangelist speaks of the 'Lord'.

Although one may appreciate Setiloane's exposure of limitations in mission theology, his appeal remains unconvincing insofar as he does not attempt a biblical appraisal of the relationship between Modimo and the Old Testament Yahweh. In this respect his theology appears to have far less of a biblical basis than Mbiti's. By carrying the argument beyond the prefiguration paradigm, African religion rather than Scripture becomes the norm for theology. The question arises whether Setiloane still operates within the parameters of a Christian theology. If Sotho-Tswana religion prescribes the actual terms of reference for theological reflection, there has been a shift to what could be termed 'African traditional theology'.

Contributions of this nature, valuable as they are in establishing an independent theological orientation by way of religio-cultural liberation from the virtual monopoly formerly exercised by Western theology, are causing some concern. Protestant evangelical theologians like Byang Kato, Adeyemu and Tienou have serious reservations about the use of

traditional religious notions as a basis for the development of an African theology. Bosch (1974:118–119) was of the opinion that 'Africa has not yet produced many scholars who are equipped to produce a truly incarnational theology emerging from a profound encounter between the Bible and the African world'. In his view francophone African theologians have been overly committed to speculative theology and anglophone theologians to apologetics. The need currently is for an African theology which takes both the biblical revelation and the African world seriously, 'an authentic theology of religions ... that moves beyond isolating certain aspects of African life and thought for which sanction from biblical revelation is then sought' (Bosch 1974:118–119). Surprisingly, this is precisely what is taking place, not in the written reflections of sophisticated African theologians, but in the spontaneously enacted theology of many AICs.

3.2 Mwari the creator as insider

In contrast to African theologians' attempts to trace a continuity between the God of Africa and the God of the Bible and to repudiate or ignore the very real dimension of God's remoteness in traditional religion, the Independents in practice appear to acknowledge both continuity and discontinuity. The Shona prophets, for example, recognise the continuing significance of the traditional high-God cult and still take seriously the remoteness of Mwari, which is also the name for God in their Bibles. Through improvised rain rituals, tradition-oriented yet radically changed, they endeavour to bring the distant God, traditionally approachable only to a few cult officials, into the ambit of daily living. This ritual attempt represents the line of continuity. For in Zionist sermons and ritual, Mwari, the distant one of the Matopo hills, is now introduced as the recognisable one, much closer to the individual than formerly.

There are several ways in which the traditional high-God was drawn close and in which his image changed the Shona prophetic communities. First of all, he was drawn close as rain giver and provider of crop and human fertility. In other words, he remained recognisable in his traditional function, the difference being that he became much more accessible than he had been through oracular pronouncements in former manifestations. In the second place, he became prominent in

adapted ancestral rituals, such as the consolation ceremony (*runyaradzo*) substituted for the traditional home-bringing (*kugadzira*) ritual. As a result of the Zionists' elimination of all addresses to the ancestors and their attempt to suppress their mediatory function, the role of Christ came to feature more prominently and was further highlighted by the iconic leadership of the Zionist bishop. This contrasts favourably with the way Christ is to some extent overshadowed by ancestral mediation, for instance in Roman Catholic rituals (above). In the third place, healer-prophets took over the position of the traditional healer (*nganga*). Their faith-healing ministry in the name of the Holy Spirit incorporates diagnostic and therapeutic activities in which traditional magic and medicine are replaced by the healing power of a manifestly present God. Fourthly, a special ministry of exorcism and witchcraft eradication brings the real African perception of evil and sin into the open and confronts it directly with the liberating and reconciliatory power of God. This prophetic ministry differs vastly from the missionaries' rejection of witchcraft and their preaching of individual immorality and sin against God, in a manner which seldom penetrated to and directly addressed the African experience of destructive evil in society.

3.2.1 The Zionist God of the crops

In the prophetic Zionist and Apostolic churches it is as the immanently present guardian and protector of crops that Mwari the creator enters peasant society most forcibly and pervasively. Prophetic intuition at this point runs parallel with what present-day Western theologians signal as significant for a theology of creation, or ecology. In his attempt to establish guidelines for such a theology Jurgen Moltmann (1985:13) stresses God's immanence in the world. 'An ecological doctrine of creation,' he says, 'implies a new kind of thinking about God. The centre of this thinking is no longer the distinction between God and the world. *The centre is the recognition of the presence of God in the world and the presence of the world in God*' (my italics).

Moltmann explains how the Old Testament presents Yahweh as a deity different from the world, to contrast his nature with the pantheistic matriarchal and fertility cults of the Canaanites. In this world 'God's context is transcendence, and the world as the work of His hands is turned into immanence. Nature is stripped of her divinity, politics

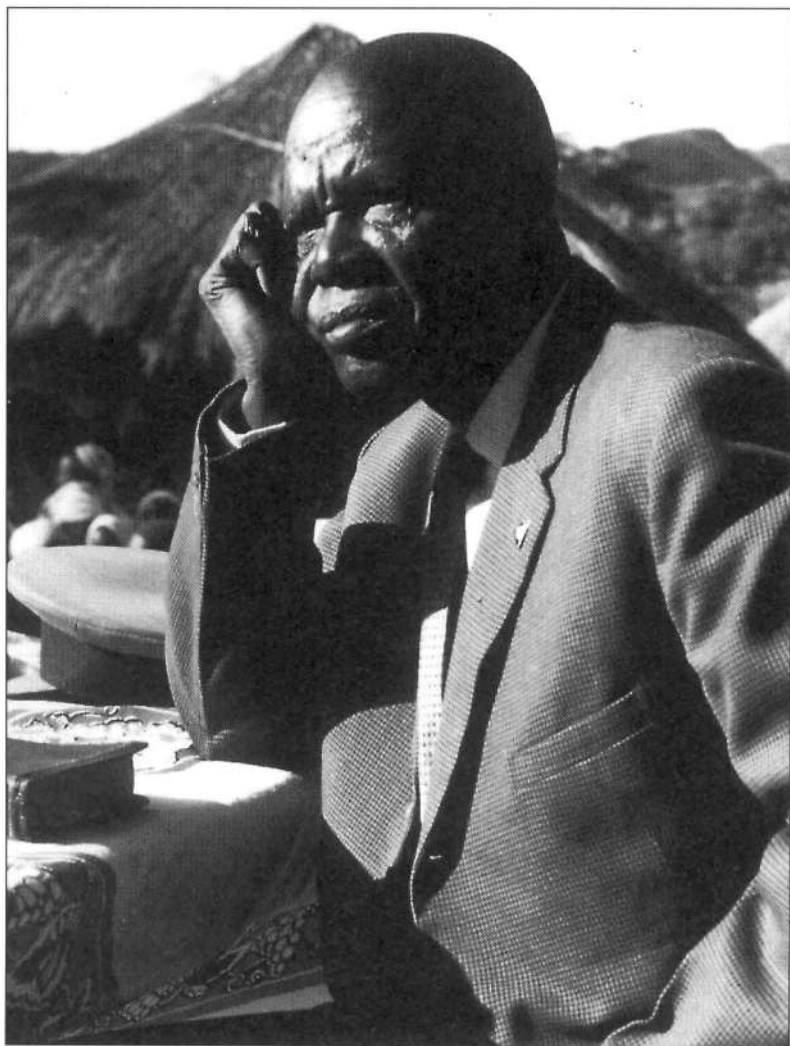
became profane, history is divested of fate. The world is turned into passive matter' (Moltmann 1985:13). This view obviously accorded with the modern processes of secularisation and seemed to justify the ruthless conquest and exploitation of nature by modern Europeans. According to Moltmann, however, a modern ecological doctrine of creation must perceive and teach God's immanence in the world: 'God is not merely the Creator of the world. He is also the Spirit of the universe. Through the powers and potentialities of the Spirit, the Creator indwells the creatures He has made, animates them, holds them in life, and leads them into the future of His kingdom' (Moltmann 1985:14).

For many years Bishop Samuel Mutendi, founder of the Zion Christian Church in Zimbabwe, expressed similar convictions at his Zion City, admittedly against a theological background very different from Moltmann's, and in ritual activity rather than in written theology. He, too, attempted to proclaim the biblical Mwari as truly present and totally involved in all of creation – in a peasant society as the God of farmers and their vitally important subsistence crops. Both Mutendi and to some extent his *Ndaza* Zionist counterparts elsewhere in the country, realised that the immanence of the ancient God of the Matopo hills was not the same as the overriding pervasive presence of the biblical God, as was increasingly manifest in the black Zion Cities and Jerusalems of the AICs. The one who traditionally had remained something of an outsider because of the predominance of tribal and family ancestors in everyday religious life had to be brought inside, into daily life! And of course in the Zionist bishop's mind nothing could be more effective than confronting and transforming the old Mwari cult.

Mention was made in volume I of how this was achieved. In contrast to the mission churches described above, Mutendi regularly preached about and even attacked the old system. Instead of relying on the cult messenger, each Zionist congregation was required to send a delegation to Zion City during the October conference to bring gifts and a special request for rain. There they could petition the Zionist 'man of God' directly for rain and agricultural prosperity. Towards the end of the proceedings Bishop Mutendi, through laying on of hands, blessed the seed to be sown by his followers and the flails to be used after reaping the crops, thus symbolically transferring the grace and life-giving power of God to the agricultural tools to be used.



Plate 22 Bishop Mutendi listens to his ministers during the 'seed conference' (*ungano yembeu*) at Zion City in 1965. Towards the end of the conference he blesses the seed to be sown by his followers with a holy staff, whereby the presence of Mwari, as God of the Crops, is emphasised



This was Mutendi's message of an immanent Christian God in creation. God as father and creator was experienced and preached as the God of ecology! In the presence of thousands of ZCC subsistence farmers the protective blessing of the divinity, traditionally called *Wokudenga* (the one in heaven), was conveyed directly to the seeds and the crops as a substitute for the generation of crop fertility by the oracular deity at Matonjeni. In a very real sense the Bishop reflected the incarnation of the biblical, ecologically active Mwari at Zion City. A subsistence farmer himself, as dependent on the agricultural economy as his followers, the Bishop identified with them totally in his petitioning of God. Unlike the white missionaries, whose livelihood at the mission station remained secure when the rains failed, the Zionist Bishop faced the same dilemma and hardships as his followers in periods of drought. When they suffered, he suffered. When they rejoiced over a bumper harvest, he led their celebration, their thanksgiving and their testimony sermons which proclaimed a caring God present in the midst of his people. Existentially, therefore, God as creator entered the lives of these Zionist peasants in the person of someone who shared their destiny, who felt what they felt, whose features they knew and who lived in their midst.

The October paschal celebration, which coincides with the onset of the rainy and planting season, is called the 'seed conference' (*ungano yembeu*). The seed to be blessed, the sermons witnessing to God's provision of rain and the members' contributions of produce from the lands of Zion City all attest and form part of concrete thanksgiving to an involved, protective God. Here the God of germinating seed, the ecological God of the crops features convincingly as the one whose body and blood redeem the entire creation. Creator and redeemer are one! The creator who gives life to the seed and guards the crops at the request of the humans he has entrusted with nature's stewardship is also the redeemer who receives the sacrifice of those very elements he has nurtured as the symbols of redemption. This integrates and sanctifies the interaction between him and all creation.

The question is whether the *ungano yembeu* should not be given a much wider ecological connotation in African theology. So far the ZCC interpretation has been limited mainly to God's providence and protection of the Zionist faithful in the coming agricultural season. The immanent creator securing life for his present flock is certainly no less concerned about the seed and crops of the future, the sustenance and

capacity of the land, the prevention of erosion and deforestation, as well as the availability of firewood for coming generations. Seen in this perspective, present ZCC leaders have ample opportunity – indeed, it is their unquestionable responsibility – to extend the *ungano yembeu* concept into a long-term ecological strategy. To be sure, recognise God as the one who blesses and germinates the seed for the coming season. But let him also be the God of the seedlings nurtured in church-initiated nurseries and the God of long-term tree crops in plantations which will one day provide investment funds, building materials and firewood for the young or as yet unborn members of humankind.

This may all sound very utilitarian, as if all church-inspired earthkeeping ultimately serves only the needs of humankind. But there is more to it than that. An image of God as the sustainer of seedlings and the gardener of as yet distant tree crops of coming generations is the true test of spiritually inspired ecological altruism. To the extent that the plantation crops not only supply the multifarious needs of a peasant society but also clothe the earth for its own sake, to that extent may we be said to respect and restore the natural and indigenous habitat entrusted to us by God.

The Zionist presentation and experience of God as insider sheds new light on the relationship between the God of Africa and the God of the Bible. It complements the written theology of black African theologians referred to above, and in some respects could even function as a corrective to the reflections of academically involved theologians. Less intent than their more Westernised fellow theologians on championing the uniqueness and legitimacy of the African religious heritage in the face of an often deprecatory missionary tradition, the AIC prophets appear to be less inhibited in presenting the uniqueness of the Christian God, who both accommodates and judges the God of Africa. In his attempts to bring God inside, the ZCC Bishop at Zion City had no hesitation in facing the conflict which his attempts at Christianising the Mwari cult and contextualising the Zionist message of God's presence had provoked (Daneel 1970:69).

The Shona prophets' attempts in this respect resemble the penetration of the Old Testament Yahweh into the Semitic world. Bosch (1974:51f) gives a striking description of the continuity and discontinuity between Yahweh and El, a prominent Semitic God. In that assimilation and inte-

gration, too, there was continuity. 'El was king, creator and judge, the holy one, the One to whom the heavens belonged and the God of the heavenly council (Psalm 82). Yahweh absorbed all these characteristics and still emerged a uniquely different deity. Without being equated with El, he penetrated the Semitic world via El.'

Likewise, in the Shona prophetic movement, Yahweh enters a world already occupied by pre-Christian concepts of Mwari and, like El, he gives fresh content to these concepts to gain access to the Shona worldview. But there is also discontinuity, because the Mwari proclaimed by the Shona prophets makes different and more comprehensive claims on the individual than Mwari vaMatonjeni ever did.

Another point of discontinuity is that Mwari, Modimo, Nkulunkulu and other African deities try, through their representatives, to maintain themselves in opposition to Yahweh. This is not to attack the African theologians' view that the traditional God of Africa is the same as the God of the Bible. The God of the Bible indeed did not leave himself unwitnessed in Africa! But the effect of his intervention in the thought world and lives of people outside the biblical revelation is, in a Christian perspective, incomplete and in need of change. Of this the Shona Independents are aware, existentially rather than doctrinally. As a result they consciously engage in transforming the old into something new. Theirs is a ritually enacted and dramatised theology of fulfilment in which the old deity is not embraced as if he has merely donned a new garment, but in which he emerges as the one whose existence was always surmised, who indeed was always present, yet who now manifests himself as the Totally Other.

3.2.2 The immanence of the God of the trees

The earthkeeping ministry developed by the AAEC is an extension of AIC (particularly Zionist) theology with its central focus on an involved, pervasively present deity in peasant society. Mwari is the power behind all activities and developments in the black Holy City and Jerusalem headquarters of the prophetic churches. He is the one who cares for his people by providing or withholding rains. He is the provider of crops, life itself – as portrayed in Bishop Mutendi's work.

That Mwari the creator has emerged more decisively and imposingly in

both the ritual and mundane life of his people in Zimbabwe is also due to far-reaching historical processes in the country. For all their limitations, as pointed out above, the Western missions did play a cardinal role, through their religious educational endeavours, in promoting perceptions in African society of a deity immanent in all of creation, all facets of life. Their numerous schools and Bible teaching created some conceptual clarity about the ever-present biblical creator, Jehovah. During the country's protracted liberation struggle, too, Mwari did emerge in the minds of the rural masses as the God of war, the God of liberation, the one who directed – through the ancestors and Spirit intervention! – action in the battlefield. To many fighters he was the one who guided *pungwe* meetings, who inspired his 'war prophets' – both ancestral mediums and AIC visionaries – to direct military action and established a degree of justice in the midst of destructive upheaval (Daneel 1998).

Against this background and through deliberate interpretation in the AAEC local green movement as an extension of *chimurenga*, Mwari once again figures as the commanding God of war, the indomitable liberator. As the initiator of the war of the trees Mwari draws close in a very special way. In the struggle for the restoration of his creation he is not the absent, withdrawn deity, but the Old Testament Jehovah of the battlefields who summons, directs and commands his emissaries in continual interaction between himself/herself, human beings and all creaturely life.

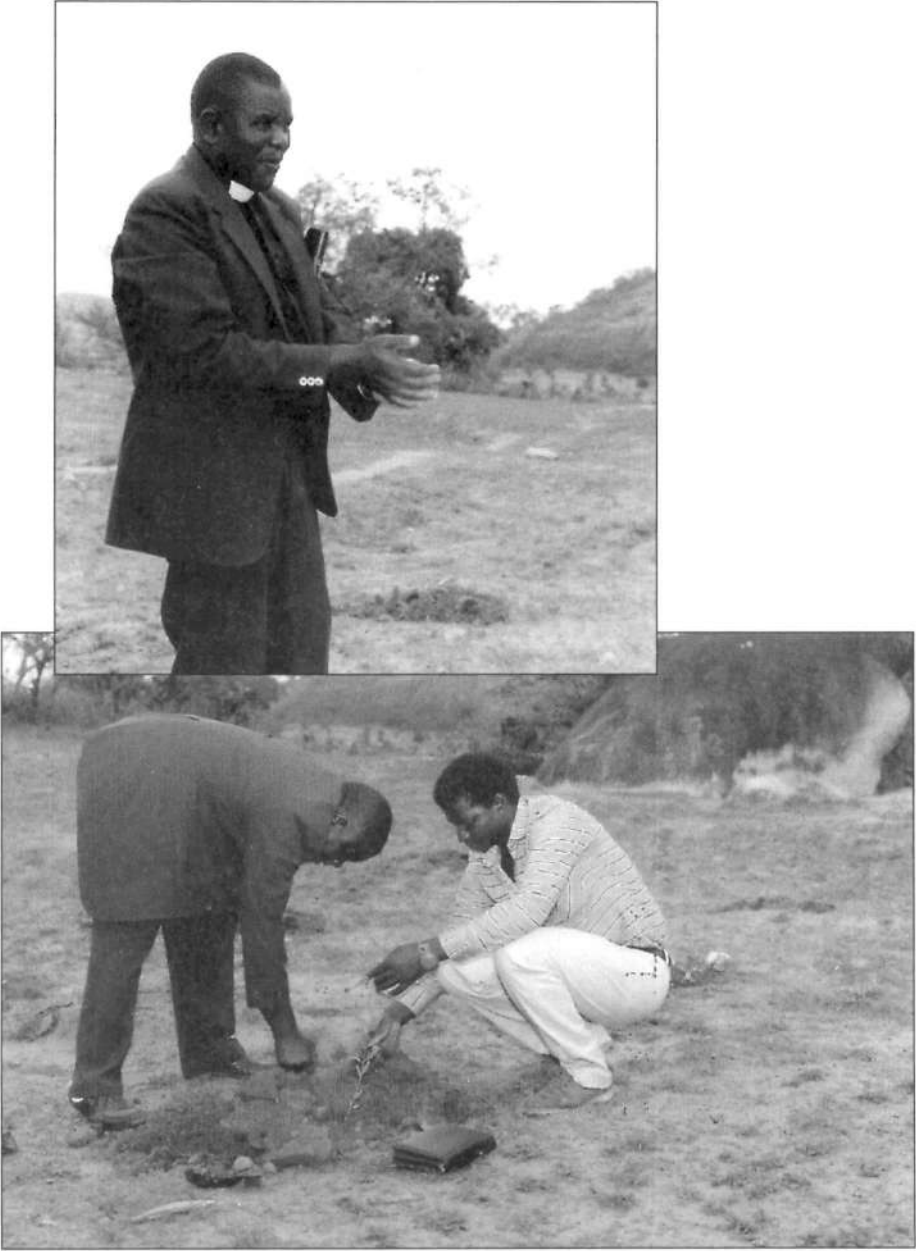
What then are the main attributes of Mwari as proclaimed or described in the AAEC's earthkeeping ministry?

3.2.2.1 A pervasively present creator

Both the Ethiopian-type and the Spirit-type member churches of the AAEC regularly refer to the consistent presence of Mwari as Musiki (Creator) in creation. At the Ethiopian-type tree-planting ceremony at Revd Zvobgo's Shonganiso Mission, mentioned previously (*supra*:53, 60), Revd Mandondo showed profound awareness of divine presence in all of nature. He said in his sermon:

You will see the miracles of Mwari if you persevere (in your earth-keeping ministry). Up in the mountains I can see Mwari. In the rocks and the trees I see Mwari. There his strength and his works are

Plate 23 Revd Mandondo of the *African Reformed Church* preaches the presence of Mwari in creation (top); then leads the congregation in tree-planting (bottom)



revealed. If you go to Mount Selinda you will be shown trees called *miti mikuru* (great trees). Whose strength do those massive trees reveal? Mwari's, of course! There you will witness God's work. His work is clearly seen in the things he has created. Follow the river and observe the running waters. Whose do you think it is? Mwari's! But the works of God are now destroyed. We do not see them any longer. We ourselves are responsible for the destruction of creation. So let us restore God's works, accepting that the task is ours. Let us replace the trees we have felled. God will rejoice when he observes this (appendix II).

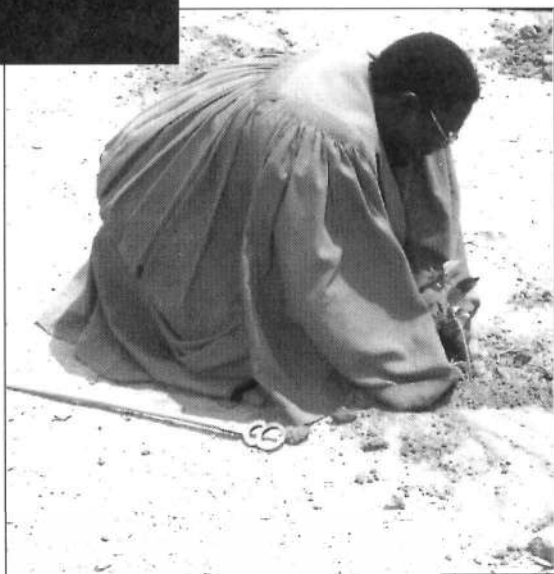
Similar convictions were expressed at numerous Spirit-type tree-planting sermons. Revd Chitapa's words at the Zionist ceremony near Bishop Marinda's homestead on 10 March 1993 is an example:

God observes whether we are true stewards of creation. If we do not obey his laws of guarding this creation, he will not bless us as he blessed Jacob with wives and livestock from his father-in-law, Laban ... If we restore the land and clothe it with trees, God will live among us. He will be near in the trees, because he does not live in a barren wasteland without trees. God lives with those people who obey his commands. He, his Son and the Holy Spirit are present in the person who does not persist with the evil of earth destruction, but who heeds God's commands regarding earth guardianship ... God dwells where the earth is restored, where there is life. Humans and trees belong together. *God is present where this is recognised (and acted upon)*. Trees and humans are one! God loves trees, God loves humans. Therefore, you from all the different churches, be united in planting trees, in restoring the earth ... Mwari speaks from trees and not from barren plains. He likes the wind and the wet places ... not deforested, desolate landscapes. And me, too, when I am up there on the thickly wooded mountain slopes where I can feel the wind and the moisture, I am happy.

Both speeches reveal a keen sense of God's pervasive presence in nature, in trees, rivers, rocks, in the wind and dampness of dense forests, of which lamentably so little is left, and in people. Although not explicitly mentioned, one finds in these speeches a recognition of the creator as mystery, the *mysterium tremendum* which Setiloane uses to qualify the Tswana's approach to Modimo (*supra*:104). The awareness



Plate 24 Bishop Marinda addresses the seedling he is planting as symbolic compensation for the evil of earth-destruction



of the creator's presence in his creation is marked by reverence, even awe. Yet despite the sense of divine mystery there is no suggestion here of pantheist-style immanence – an IT-presence as Setiloane would have it. God is indeed immanent in the trees, in the dense forests, where his majesty and power are manifest. Yet he remains a personal being with anthropomorphic attributes: the transcendent one who is not far away, yet the other in the I-Thou encounter who observes the earthkeepers, rewards them as Laban rewarded Jacob for faithful service, lives among them, calls on them to restore creation, talks to them from inside the trees (as he did when he called Moses to liberate the Israelites) and rejoices at the sight of nature's renewal.

In the mystery of Mwari's immanence, in his close association with moisture and rivers – reminiscent of his rain-giving function – and in the suggestion that he withdraws in the face of earth destruction one still finds hints of pre-Christian African notions of divinity. Yet these sermons make no attempt to proclaim an African as opposed to a biblical divinity. Mwari, in the earthkeepers' context, is basically the Old Testament Jehovah or Elohim, perceived through African eyes and understandably still interpreted against the background of African religion. As the creator portrayed in the Old Testament's Genesis narrative, Mwari revels in his creation; he rewards good stewardship and his presence becomes more pronounced and tangible in the lives of those humans who foster and preserve life. In a sense, therefore, his presence or immanence cannot be taken for granted by human beings. For despite his indissoluble bonds with creation, there is a strong suggestion that he becomes remote when faced with wanton earth destroyers and silent on deforested, barren plains.

One need only listen to the muttered dialogues with God and with seedlings as they are being planted at tree-planting eucharists to be persuaded of a general respectful awareness of Mwari's presence among participating tree planters. The following excerpts from such addresses at Bishop Chimhangwa's tree-planting ceremony in Chivi district on 8 April 1993 bear this out:

Bishop Marinda: Mwari, Father, I have come today to plant your trees. I have come with the *mutumbu* tree (see *supra*:80, 84) to pay for my transgression (of earth destruction). I place them here in your soil. You, tree, I place you in this soil. Grow! Become tall, wax

strong! Even if the hail from the heavens hits you, I want you to remain alive ... through the coming ages. My friend whom I love, I shall come to visit often to see you. Stay right here where I plant you.

Revd Solomon Zvanaka: You, tree, I plant you. Provide us with clean air to breathe and all the other benefits which Mwari has commanded. We in turn will take care of you, *because in Jesus Christ you are one with us*. He has created all things to be united in him. I shall not chop down another tree. Through you, tree, I do penance for all the trees I have felled.

Participant policeman: You, tree, are my true friend. Wherever I am I shall remember you and come and check to see if you are well. I cannot leave or forget you. *I ask God to protect you* so that you will not be eaten by the creatures of the bush or destroyed. Remember that I have felled many trees. Forgive me! That was before I was made to realise that you, tree, are my brother.

These addresses highlight significant features of both AAEC perceptions of God's immanence in creation and the development of an earth-keeping ethic. First of all, tree planting as such is qualified as a ritual of repeated and ongoing recognition of God's presence in and concern for nature. Second, the discourse with both the creator and the seedlings affirms the creator's ownership of and dominion over creation. This recognition coincides with frequent assertions in sermons and interviews of God's reign over all creation. As Revd Marinde, leading light in Bishop Hore's Zion Sabbath Church, insisted quite emphatically: 'In this war of the trees we must learn afresh that the trees and all creation *belong to Mwari*. This realisation will enable us to wage the war well.' Mwari the owner-creator is also portrayed as the one who *loves* and *cares* for creation (see Bishop Machokoto's sermon, appendix II), the compassionate being capable of protecting his creation (the policeman's words above). Third, Marinda's affirmation of God's ownership of the soil and trees implicitly assumes that Mwari constitutes the 'dialogue' between humans and seemingly inanimate entities in nature. Through trees the creator addresses and arrests the attention of the beings who resemble his image – also suggested in Mandondo's and Chitapa's pronouncements above – and in talking to the trees human beings are reciprocating, addressing God himself. When admitting eco-

logical guilt to the seedling he is about to plant, Revd Zvanaka is actually doing penance before Christ, the unifying force of all creation. And in his plea for forgiveness to brother tree the policeman acknowledges his responsibility for environmental stewardship, required from him by the protective creator. In the AAEC context friendship and mutuality between earthkeeper and tree assumes reconciliation and closeness, that is, intensified and restored encounter between earthkeeper and creator. Fourth, the establishment of a personal relationship with brother or sister tree in a sacramental context elevates the tree to a representative icon of all creation. This conscious change of attitude towards the tree gives a glimpse of the corporate will of earthkeeping churches to be reconciled with Mwari the creator and to establish wholesome, harmonious and healing ties with mother earth. The tree as *icon* represents new awareness – born of tree-planting action rather than reflection and debate – of the *interwovenness of creation, human beings and all things animate or inanimate composing the earth*. God's presence in the trees informs the tree planters of the extensiveness of creation's degradation, stimulates sensitivity to the broader picture of earth destruction, and reminds the AAEC that afforestation is but a first step in an entirely new life style. This life style comprises humankind's comprehensive interrelatedness with creation: a holistic challenge of earth stewardship which is anticipated in the AAEC constitution.

Tree symbolism, of course, is focal in ecological movements worldwide. Despite its relative isolation as a grassroots movement, the AAEC's preoccupation with trees has remarkable parallels elsewhere, particularly in eco-feminism. Says Kyung (in Hallman 1994:178) about commitment to the liberation of people and nature ...

We would share the symbol of a tree as the most inspiring symbol for the spirituality of eco-feminism ... The tree captures the life-giving thrust and power of the eco-feminist movement. Its roots go deep into the soil of mother earth, strengthening it against erosion yet sucking its life-giving moisture ... The leaves transform death-dealing, poisonous carbon dioxide into life-giving oxygen. They provide shelter and shade for the life and growth of diverse insects, plants, birds, animals and humans. Its fruit gives fruit for the body and its flower gives food for the soul. Then its leaves die and become compost to re-create the soil. This cyclic, rhythmic process of creating, nurturing, healing and re-creating life symbolises the

aspirations of cosmic spirituality of eco-feminism.

AAEC sermons, though less explicit about the cyclical processes of nature, also extol in endless variation the multiple value of trees for all creation. Invariably this imagery is used to illuminate the protection and care of an immanent creator. Kyung's quotation of Rabindranath Tagore's poem (in Hallman 1994:178) thus applies equally to the Shona earthkeepers:

I asked the tree,
Speak to me about God,
And it blossomed.

Kyung, moreover, is convinced that a combination of African and Asian indigenous spirituality with eco-feminist religiosity will 'capture a cosmic interwovenness that can become a healing and transforming experience for all of us'.

(Then nature) becomes a God-infused and God-breathed place. We begin to feel deep respect, even a sense of awe before the life-giving, yet fragile interwovenness of the earth. The earth becomes sacred ... The wind and air becomes God's life-giving breath. Then we cannot destroy earth since God is there. God is the life-giving power ... God energizes the cosmos, and the cosmos in return moves with the creator in a cosmic dance of exquisite balance and beauty. In this cosmic unfolding of ongoing creation, human beings become co-creators with God and nature (Kyung 1994:177).

What Kyung captures here in sensitive, poetic language is quite similar to what the Shona earthkeepers of the AAEC intuit, experience and verbalise, if in a somewhat more pragmatic and ideationally unsystematised manner. In both instances acute awareness of divine presence in all creation facilitates a deep understanding of the interwovenness or connectedness of all human and non-human life on earth. Without any access to the WCC's work and publications in the field of JPIC (Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation), the AAEC in its earthkeeping ministry is giving expression to the kind of insight formulated in the 1990 Kuala Lumpur report (by the subunit for Church and Society) on the relationship of God's Spirit to creation:

Because of the presence and pervasiveness of the Spirit throughout creation, we not only reject a view in which the cosmos does not

share in the sacred and in which humans are not part of nature; we also repudiate hard lines drawn between animate and inanimate, and human and non-human. All alike, and all together in the bundle of life, 'groan in travail' (Rom 8) awaiting the full redemption of all things through Jesus Christ, 'in the power of the Spirit' (Michaelson, in Hallman 1994:100–101).

Similar convictions characterise the ecological theologising of modern Western theologians. Moltmann, as we have seen, argues for an ecological doctrine of God's immanence in the world. Such immanence qualifies God not only as creator of the world but also as spirit of the universe. 'Through the powers and potentialities of the Spirit,' Moltmann (1985:14) says, 'the Creator indwells the creatures he has made, animates them, holds them in life, and leads them into the future of the kingdom.' The interconnectedness of all creation, according to Moltmann (1985:17), hinges on the interpenetration or *perichoresis* of the trinity, whereby 'God is in the world and the world in God'. Consequently there can be no such thing as solitary life. Our human bondedness with nature, through the Spirit, can therefore be described 'as a spiritual ecosystem. Through the Spirit, human societies as part-systems are bound up with the ecosystem "earth" (Gaia) ...' (Moltmann 1985:18).

The AAEC certainly has no extensively formulated ecological doctrine of creation, neither does it teach the *perichoresis* of the trinity! But the movement's biblically informed praxis of stewardship in most ways endorses Moltmann's views. Even a traditionalist headman, Mupakwa, is moved during a tree-planting eucharist at Bishop Musariri's homestead (on 17 March 1994) to call on all tree-planters: 'Come let us all move very close to Mwari, together with our land, so that our land will no longer be eroded,' and to claim that 'no human being sees all this, knows all this or controls all this (creation) ... *Mwari is the one who holds all power and controls all life on earth.*' The closeness to Mwari, which assumes human response to and ecological safety in an ever-present creator, as well as the attribution of all powers of life to this deity, rests on recognition in faith that 'God is in the world and the world in God'. And even though a well-formulated trinitarian doctrine nowhere features as a conscious goal to qualify the theological basis of the AAEC's ecological ministry, repeated references to the trinity in tree-planting sermons, songs and prayer reveal that the earthkeeping deity

is an immanent insider as Mwari-Father, Jesus Christ and Holy Spirit. Consider, for instance, the prayer of Zionist Bishop Mupure which concluded the church service and celebration of the eucharist prior to the actual tree planting at a ceremony on 14 February 1994:

Mwari of above (*Wokumusoro*), we thank you for your grace and strength. You have guided and concluded our work. Now we go to the field, the Garden of Eden, to plant your trees, together with our leaders from Masvingo. Guide us, our Lord. Bless our activities in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

To the casual observer Bishop Mupure's use of the trinitarian formula in his prayer may misleadingly appear as merely parroting something heard so often in Western-oriented mission churches. Yet the terms used here are pregnant with meaning. The concept of God as *Wokumusoro* (the one above) – quite apart from the more obvious Christian connotation of God of heaven – is still loaded with some of the traditional African connotations of a creator who distanced himself to the skies above because of his disappointment with humanity. The reference to the Garden of Eden is not only an attempt to show ecological right-mindedness and a yearning for an environment unspoilt by human greed. It also expresses understanding of the closeness of the creator, who relates as directly to African earthkeepers in his 'garden' on this continent as he originally did to Adam and Eve in the Genesis account. Bishop Mupure's sermon, prior to the prayer quoted above, actually verifies this interpretation. He said: 'Mwari the creator said to me: "The trees are your relatives, your friends." Mwari said: "Your friends (in ZIRRCON/AAEC) will help you to create a new forest with much shade against the burning sun."' So God the Father is seen as the original creator, the sustainer of all life, who is as close and accessible to humans and creation generally as he was at the dawn of creation. Indeed, this worldview allows no scope for what Moltmann calls a 'life in isolation'. Add to this the earth-healing context of Mupure's prayer: Christ was proclaimed as the vine and the AAEC churches as his shoots in a unifying struggle which spells both individual human and cosmic salvation, and the Holy Spirit was acknowledged as prime mover of the AAEC's green dream. The Spirit had actively motivated and purified the tree-planting task force via prophetically induced confessions of ecological sins during the celebration of the eucharist – and there can be little doubt that Mupure's reference to the trinity on this

occasion carries the same weight for an emerging African eco-praxis or eco-theology as Moltmann urges for appropriate formulation of an ecological doctrine of creation.

During women's tree-planting ceremonies, staged by ZIRRCO's Women's Desk, the sermons of leading figures also emphasise divine presence and close identification of female earthkeepers with Mwari. At one such ceremony conducted in Chivi district on 20 December 1993, Raviro Mutonga – chairperson of the Women's Desk – preached as follows:

You women who have come to assist our Women's Club of Doroguru, don't leave before you have eaten the goat's meat we have prepared. For it is you who were called by Mwari to come and plant and water his trees ... You of the churches (women and men) came to do Mwari's bidding, to plant and water Mwari's trees ... This is not a task to trifle with. It is the work of Mwari! God looked for assistance with his creation ... So he created human beings to look after it for him. The bush with its trees and plants is much more important than we realised at first. Today we (women), having received seedlings, are the ones honoured with this task. We plant trees in the same way as Mwari did. In doing so *we draw closer and closer to him!* What do you say to that, mothers?

Response: Oh yes, it is very good!

Then followed the praise song:

I've heard your message, Lord.
I want to live with you
in the wonderful place
of your Son.

Chorus: I come, I come

To you, where there is home
Receive me
I've done your work
Lord, receive me.

Mutonga's repeated insistence on the creator's authorship of human stewardship of nature is more than just a straightforward ecological statement. In a predominantly female setting, divine affirmation of

women's responsibility, authority and status in the upkeep and restoration of creation is certainly pertinent. As will be argued below, the creator who calls women and men to be earthkeepers is also the liberator who frees women from oppression, from the negative aspects of African patriarchy, as he opens up a new avenue of emancipation for and with them. The women's recognition of the sacredness of the relationship between God and creation (an earthkeeping task not to be trifled with!), and their drawing close to the creator as his assistants or co-workers, tacitly suggest that this is the domain particularly of women, that they represent and understand the cycles of fertility and new life, the protection and nurture of life itself – symbolised by the newly planted seedlings – in a way men cannot do. Though not spelled out, the immanence and closeness of Mwari here suggest understanding of either the feminine in Mwari (which has its antecedents in the traditional high-God cult) or at least his/her overriding care for all that concerns the fertility and life of mother earth.

The words of the praise song may still echo apocalyptic expectations of heaven as the wonderful place of Mwari's Son. Yet 'home', where God is, in the context of the restoration of the world as understood by the AAEC women, could also signify a growing awareness of this-worldly salvation; being with Mwari in the kingdom, the new heaven and earth already manifest in this existence.

Anthropomorphic attributes of an immanent creator, which seldom surface in comprehensive expositions during sermons yet represent a significant dimension in the understanding and spirit of the AAEC, are those of a suffering and jealous deity who is protective of his creation in the face of its wanton destruction. Previously (*supra*:62) I mentioned Bishop Farawo's rendering of a 'garden of Eden' theology, in which a disappointed creator withdraws from creation as a result of Adam's sin. As in traditional African creation myths, God – in the earthkeeper's view – is still remote because of people's inability to respect and protect his/her creation.

Are we then, as a result of human failure, back with the *deus remotus* of old? Not really. The distance or absence of Mwari portrayed here is really a relational distance between himself and alienated human beings, flawed as they are by their disrespect for creator and creation. Consequently suffering is universal: the creator's breath in the trees

and wind is silent because of his pain; enslaved by their greed and rebellion, human beings reach out for Mwari but do not find him because they fail to lay down their axes of destruction; and the barren plains lament in the scorching sun as the dregs of fertile soil are swept away by the wind. Absolution and deliverance, it seems, are inseparably linked with restoring Mwari's creation, which will reinstate harmony and closeness between creator and the people made in his image. Hence the repeated assertions in the sermons quoted above that in planting Mwari's trees we draw close to him.

Divine immanence in an abused world spells suffering! This truth features not only in AAEC reflection and praxis, but in most modern attempts at ecological theologising. McDonagh (1985:119) says: 'The God he (Christ) reveals to us is not some immutable, primary cause beyond the flux of the Earth and unmoved by suffering and pain. He is a God who is passionately involved in his creation and wishes to see it flowering.' Wilkinson (in De Witt 1991:42) goes to the heart of the matter when he says: 'the cost of creation is the suffering of God ... He (Christ) is the Creator, but he is also the lamb slain before the foundation of the world.' To follow him – in stewardship, in earthkeeping – is also to open oneself up to death. As Bonhoeffer (1963:99) said, 'When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.' Moltmann (1985:39), in his portrayal of the travail of nature (Rm 8:19–21), states:

Anyone who perceives 'creation' in the present condition of the world begins to suffer with that creation and also to hope for it ... It (nature in this condition) is a destiny to which creation is subjected: a continual process of annihilation, an all-embracing fellowship of suffering (my italics), and a tense and anxious openness to a different future. To understand 'nature' as creation therefore means discerning 'nature' as the enslaved creation that hopes for liberty.

In Zimbabwe, being one with the 'God of the trees', being part of the fellowship of earthkeepers, means being hurt with or in Mwari at the sound and sight of chopping axes in dwindling woodlands; it means joining the 'all-embracing fellowship of suffering'. It means hours of back-breaking work in scorching sun and a feeling of powerlessness and futility when the rains fail and thousands of seedlings – representing years of toil in nurseries – wither and die. It means pain in the face of destructive opposition from those who hold salaried posts in 'con-

servation' yet have no heart for creation. It means being judged and rejected by those of the faith who seek the kingdom only in other-worldly spiritual growth and soul salvation. It also means suffering and deprivation when periodically there are no funds for salaries for diligent and faithful earthkeepers ... when the entire future of our earthkeeping movement and endeavour hinges on Western sponsors caught up in their own neocolonialist 'benevolence' and bureaucracy.

Significantly, the image of a compassionate, jealous and suffering deity implicit in the understanding and experience of the AAEC earthkeepers qualifies both Mwari's transcendence and his/her immanence. As *Wokumusoro* he remains the sovereign, transcendent being whose reign over creation is all-powerful. At no point, however, does this 'transcendent' reign exclude or obscure his immersion in creation as compassionate guardian of the land (*muridzi venyika*), the divine fulfilment of both traditional notions of ancestral land guardianship and biblically informed conceptions of environmental stewardship. Pantheistic trends in his immanence as a power or life-force in trees and other natural phenomena are offset by the decidedly anthropomorphic attributes of the ever-present gardener who dwells among us as both spirit and personal being. In their own way the Shona earthkeepers recognise the divine-human encounter at the core of all their ecological activities. Whether as tree planters they succeed or fail, celebrate or suffer, the fundamental mutuality between Mwari, the creator-guardian, his earth-keeping churches and all creatures remains. As Moltmann (1985:14) says:

If the creator is himself present in creation by virtue of the Spirit, then his relationship to creation must rather be viewed as an intricate web of unilateral, reciprocal and many-sided relationships. In this network of relationships, 'making', 'preserving', 'maintaining' and 'perfecting' are certainly the great one-sided relationships; but 'indwelling', 'sympathising', 'participating', 'enduring', 'delighting' and 'glorifying' are the relationships of mutuality which describe a cosmic community of living between God the Spirit and all his created beings.

The Shona earthkeepers derive their understanding of the transcendental otherness of the creator, in balance with his immanent presence, from intuitive readings of the creation story in Genesis which depicts

God as distinct from creation (cf Wilkinson 1991:278–280), and the prophet Isaiah’s descriptions (mainly in chapters 40–43) of Jehovah’s involvement in nature. There is not a comprehensive consideration of the classical Old Testament texts, such as Psalms 104 and 119 and Proverbs 8 (McDonagh 1986:110; Wilkinson, in De Witt 1991:32–35), which shape the insight into God’s immanence in pre-Christian Judaism. Yet their fascination with Jehovah’s dealings with his people and their interpretation of the implications for the local situation show awareness ‘that the Old Testament continually walked the line between an affirmation of God’s holiness and transcendence and an assertion of his involvement and activity’ (Wilkinson, in De Witt 1991:35).

3.2.2.2 A summoning/empowering deity

The excerpts from sermons quoted above and the previous chapter have indicated how the immanent creator is repeatedly proclaimed as a summoning and empowering deity. Mwari calls and commissions human beings to engage in earthkeeping; he provides the mandate, the inspiration, strength and endurance for such activity. Depending on the contexts of sermons and the motives of preachers, some variations can be discerned in the conceptualisation of the sovereignty of an all-powerful creator who has not relinquished control of creation, as well as the nature of interaction between that creator and the commissioned human keepers of creation. The following quotations are fairly representative of AAEC views:

Zionist Bishop Nhongo (interview): The war of the trees is the holy war of Mwari. Mwari commands this war. So we have to fight unservedly.

Zionist Bishop Hore (interview): This is Mwari’s war. ZIRRCOON wages it in Mwari. He controls rain and drought. Without Mwari’s approval and strength this struggle of the trees will be in vain anyway.

Apostolic Bishop Wapendama (sermon, appendix I:35; *supra*:39): He (Mwari) called his envoys to shoulder the task of deliverance (of the stricken land) ... It is our task to strengthen this mission (of God and of the church) ... I beseech you to place yourselves in the hands of Mwari. He alone can give us the strength to endure in this struggle.

African Reformed Church Revd Mandondo (sermon, appendix

11:376: If you look at Luke 23:43 you find that Jesus told one man on the cross next to him: 'Today you will be with me in paradise.' This tells us something about Jesus's power over us children of God. As a messenger from heaven he came to empower us. Whatever we do as believers depends on this power from on high, the power of heaven. No work that we do can be complete without God's approval and his empowerment. About this we can be sure: God planted trees. If we too plant trees God's power from heaven will strengthen us and our efforts will succeed. Without his power our labours will be futile. No trees will be planted.

All these statements pay tribute to the sovereignty of God. As the concerned owner of creation he is the initiator of all earthkeeping endeavour, who commands, controls, guides and directs all attempts to heal the earth, in this instance his holy war of the trees. Bishop Wapendama's suggestion that the deliverance of the land is a form of *missio dei* with concrete implications for God's church – namely shouldering the responsibility of developing an earthkeeping ministry (*supra*:39) – is also implicit in the assertions of the others. For all its emphasis on God's initiative, his calling of green fighters and his guidance and empowerment of the forces in the struggle, such a *missio dei* in no uncertain terms underscores the significance of human response and action. On the basis of God's empowerment and affirmation human earthkeepers can and must 'fight unreservedly' (Nhongo), 'ZIRRCO is the human institution which is waging a green war' (Hore), the members of the AAEC are 'strengthening the earth-healing mission' and 'enduring a demanding struggle' (Wapendama), and they will successfully plant God's trees (Mandondo). Quite clearly human beings, by virtue of being creatures of God and belonging to creation, are called upon to be its stewards and, as Mwari's co-workers, to join in the struggle for its preservation and wellbeing.

Yet there is little here to suggest that humanity shares Mwari's all-powerful dominion over creation. As earthkeepers humans have a certain privilege and responsibility for other creatures, but their mission is to serve, not to reign over creation; to wage war, not to conquer nature, but to restore it obediently in full recognition of their dependence on the strength and guidance of the creator. Considering the regular confessions of ecological sins at AAEC tree-planting ceremonies, this understanding of humankind's role in keeping and restoring creation

stems from awareness of human hubris and rebellion against the creator, as evidenced overwhelmingly by all the manifestations of earth destruction wherever tree planting takes place.

On the one hand, therefore, the AAEC earthkeepers will concur with Zerbe's observations (in De Witt 1991:85) that 'while the kingdom is fundamentally God's act of redemption, Christians are co-workers in it. Thus Paul says that while the reconciliation of the cosmos is God's ministry in Christ, this same ministry has been given to Paul and his co-workers (with reference to 2 Cor 5:17-21).' In the earthkeeping context, and despite some of the participant Zionist and Apostolic groups' strong leanings towards apocalyptic expectations regarding heaven, the AAEC will also be existentially inclined to endorse Zerbe's claim (in De Witt 1991:91) that 'the final hope of Christians is not heaven, but participation in God's restoration of all things. This is the ultimate vision that informs the present task of Christians in this world.'

On the other hand, given self-knowledge and experience of how easily the peasant's axe of destruction takes over, the co-workers of Christ, according to Revd Mandondo, will always have to accept and respect Christ's power and reign from on high as a condition for participating in the restoration of creation. As he repeatedly insisted: 'No work that we do can be complete without God's approval and his empowerment.'

The question does arise whether this emphasis of God's sovereignty does not obscure human responsibility or become an excuse for not facing up fully to the harmful effects of human abuse of nature. Consider, for instance, the observations of a villager at Bishop Musariri's tree-planting ceremony (17 March 1994): 'God is the one who holds all power and controls all life on earth. All things (that happen) are done to human beings by God. These people of ZIRRCO were sent by Mwari. Our elder, Muchakata, was sent by Mwari. Consequently he founded *Fambidzano*, then lifted up (literally *kusumudza*) this earth-keeping movement.'

Although Muchakata is given some credit for starting the two movements, the focus is entirely on Mwari's power and control over all existence. Does this allow sufficient scope for critical assessment of human endeavour? Is Mwari's overriding and, by implication, orchestrating power not in reality a convenient excuse for a fatalistic attitude to an environmental situation which in many respects already appears

beyond redemption? And does this not land us back in the one-sided network of relationships in creation identified by Moltmann, in which the divine power 'makes', 'preserves' and 'maintains' instead of manifesting itself in the mutuality of the cosmic community?

These questions arising from the statements of earthkeepers may indeed cause concern. It is easy enough, in the midst of repeated recognition of Mwari's sovereignty, to praise the founder and the earthkeeping movement as genuine manifestations of the *missio dei*, without assessing critically the nature of an evolving ministry of stewardship. By politely placing Muchakata on a pedestal and blaming 'Mwari's droughts' generally for some of our tree-planting failures, insufficient attention may be paid to obvious flaws in the implementation of some of our programmes, such as poor planning of what trees to plant in particular soil types and not allowing for lowveld or highveld conditions when locating woodlots, imperfect preparation of holes prior to planting, inadequate protection of woodlots against goats and other livestock, and insufficient watering and aftercare of newly planted seedlings. There is a real danger that well-intentioned Christian earthkeepers may rejoice in the celebration of each new ceremony year after year, yet resignedly shrug their shoulders whenever tree-planting results are substandard.

Even within the earthkeeping movement there is some awareness of and reaction to fatalism. At a traditionalist ceremony in Chivi district in which a large contingent of AAEC representatives participated, an elder called Muzenda made a strong plea for self-determination:

My friends, if we want to make progress (in clothing the earth with trees) we have to push ahead ourselves. It is pointless to sit around and wait for a single liberator who will change things for us. We cannot sit with our hands folded, waiting for a Messiah, Jesus Christ. *Hakuna!* Nothing (of the kind)! Let us stand up on our own! On our own we must promote this cause of earthkeeping. Let us evaluate our own progress ... Grandfather Chaminuka (addressing spirit-medium), today you have trodden on us (ie arrested our attention) so that we may act and be recognised. Remain steadfast, *sekuru* Chaminuka! The land is yours.

Despite this elder's obvious loyalty to the ancestors as the motivating force behind environmental reform, his basic motive was not to antagonise Christian participants or reject beliefs in a messianic Christ.

Instead, he was attacking the fatalism of those Christian believers who were using messianic or apocalyptic expectations as a convenient excuse for ignoring or judgmentally rejecting earthkeeping endeavour. Against this background and by way of appealing to the senior guardian ancestors as the traditionally recognised owners of the land, Muzenda was advocating total commitment and acceptance of human responsibility for the environment. He was implying: 'No easy religious cop-out! Let us do the job and assess the results for ourselves!'

On the other hand, AAEC leaders participating either in traditionalist tree-planting ceremonies or in Christian ones with a large component of traditionalists do not hesitate to proclaim a universal divinity whose summoning and empowering outreach extends to *all humankind*. At a ceremony at his homestead on 17 March 1994 Bishop Musariri, patron of the AAEC, said in his sermon:

These two people, the chief and the priest, appear before Mwari as a pair. They are the caretakers of creation, appointed by Mwari. God chose them as guardians of creation. They lead the people according to Mwari's guidance ... (In conclusion) ... We are messengers of Mwari, guardians of his creation. Whatever criticism people level at me, this is the task I represent. We shall not waver! Not here at our dwelling place, or in the household of Mwari!

By proclaiming chief and priest God's chosen guardians of creation, Musariri was asserting divine legitimation for both earthkeeping movements: AZTREC of the chiefs and mediums, and the AAEC of the priests and prophets. By assuming that these movements are united in the ecological struggle Musariri is not only justifying current trends of mutuality and the formation of a common front in ZIRRCO's war of the trees, but is also hinting that Mwari's sovereignty overrides humanly created divisions and the conflicts of religious pluriformity. The creator is calling and empowering all his people – at any rate those who are religiously divided in the local situation – and with a kind of comprehensive ecumenism he sweeps religious animosities aside in the interest of a higher purpose: the restoration of creation. *Chief and priest, traditionalist and Christian, are equals, caretakers of creation, in the presence of Mwari!*

Musariri is not necessarily implying complete religious relativism or, with his open, reconciliatory stance, compromising the uniqueness of

his own Zionist Christian faith. He is in fact aware that he can be and has been criticised on this score, hence his insistence that he, as patron of the AAEC, and his fellow earthkeepers will not waver, either in the rural villages or in the church, the household of God. The basis for such single-mindedness and courage, it would appear, lies in accepting that he himself, the priest Musariri, is called and guided by Mwari to act as caretaker and guardian of creation. He accepts, as pointed out above, that the task involves suffering.

Yet other angles emerged when Zionist Bishop Chimhangwa preached at an AZTREC tree-planting ceremony in headman Gwenyaya's ward in Chivi district on 27 August 1993. He started off by looking for some point of contact to establish identification and rapport with a predominantly non-Christian audience. 'The apostle Paul,' he said, 'met the people while they were doing their *jukwa* dances. First he danced with them, then said: "Now listen to me while I explain to you the message of Jehovah." Likewise, we do not create conflict at a meeting like this. Each matter receives attention in its own right ...'

Having established that he was not there to condemn the traditional dances in honour of the ancestors and *shavi* spirits, Bishop Chimhangwa continued:

I am here to tell you what Jehovah says in Genesis 2:5. Jehovah, Mwari, placed a human being in the garden of Eden to look after it. In accordance with this message I tell you, headman Gwenyaya, that *I am commissioned by Mwari the creator to keep his laws for the trees*. Jehovah, Mwari, says: 'These trees planted here today are your kin (*hama*), your friends.' The creator says these trees will provide in all your needs. You will have the protection of shade against the sun and you'll have fruit to sustain you. The trees will also provide food and protection for birds and animals ... So this is a great task we are performing here. This is not a gospel (of God's earth-keeping laws) to trifle with. It requires us to persevere in tending the (creator's) trees, even if the water gets scarce.

The Bishop's introduction was aimed at establishing goodwill between himself and his audience by indicating what Paul, the apostle, would possibly have done in a Shona traditionalist context, namely participate in the traditional dances prior to presenting his own specifically Christian message. Chimhangwa, of course, does not enter into a typi-

cally Pauline discourse by dealing with traditional religious tenets in any depth. He goes straight to the heart of the matter by appropriating a biblical mandate as earthkeeper on the basis of the Genesis story. On account of the call to stewardship in Genesis he considers himself commissioned by Mwari, specifically to act as a custodian of the creator's laws governing the trees. As a divinely commissioned ecological law enforcer Chimhangwa challenges his audience to see the trees they plant in a new light – as relatives and friends. He implies that by respecting the trees they are taking the creator seriously. Such cosmic interaction can only stimulate responsible and persevering aftercare of the trees planted, thus enhancing earthkeeping results and promoting mutuality and harmony in the cosmic community.

This, then, is an attempt, through identification with non-Christian earthkeepers, to witness to the call and laws of the biblical Mwari as an active participant, a commissioned and empowered missionary and/or green law-giver in an all inclusive *missio dei*. To sum up Bishop Chimhangwa's proclamation: first, witness to the summoning creator in a pluriform religious setting; second, the assumption that divine authority bonds people of all faiths together in the earthkeeping struggle; and third, uncompromising conviction that Mwari's commission and environmental laws require total commitment from all human stewards of creation.

How do the earthkeeping women respond to Mwari's authority? At a tree-planting ceremony at Doroguru on 20 December 1993 Raviro Mutonga of the Women's Desk said:

Nobody thought that this land right here is a place where trees will be planted. I myself thought it was a field in which I'll plant groundnuts this season. But see what Mwari does. He said: 'No groundnuts will be planted here! You will plant my trees!' People confuse each other by saying: 'ZIRRCOON orders the planting of trees.' *I tell you: this is the work which Mwari commands us to do!*

We read from Isaiah 41:19 and 20:

I will put in the wilderness the cedar,
the acacia, the myrtle and the olive ...
that men may see and know,
may consider and understand together

that the hand of the Lord has done this,
the Holy One of Israel has created it.

So we women here today have a great task, in fulfilment of the prophecy in Isaiah. The trees we plant here are the ones mentioned in the Book.

Ms Mangombe, one of the leaders of the Doroguru club, had this to say in affirmation of Mutonga's views on female earthkeepers: 'We as women are the first (after the problem caused by Eve in the garden of Eden) to return to this task of tending Mwari's garden. We women are chosen by Mwari for this important task and will be honoured for it. When planting Mwari's trees as a woman, *ordained by Mwari to do so*, I have to do it dressed in my church uniform. These are not in the first place my trees, or ours. It is God who waters or kills. He causes the trees to wither and die, or he provides life through rain.'

Both speakers invoke the commissioning authority of Mwari to claim a unique responsibility for women as earthkeepers. Mutonga combines her assertion that Mwari, and not ZIRRCON, commands tree-planting by citing a biblical text which attributes prophetic expectation of environmental improvement to God's initiative and glory rather than to people's. Mangombe assigns women a unique role as God's stewards in creation by alluding both to Eve's original rebellion against Mwari – as if saying that being the first to rebel, the first to repent establishes a kind of female prerogative in earthkeeping matters! – and to Mwari's special choice and ordination. To Mutonga, identification of the trees planted with those mentioned in the Book (the verses quoted from the Bible) probably means elevating the women's land-healing contribution on that day above the assertive and sometimes self-congratulatory patriarchy of ZIRRCON's male leadership. Mangombe's insistence on planting trees in her church uniform may have similar connotations: not only to honour and respect the commissioning creator, but also to earn recognition and respect in the male-dominated earthkeepers' world for the outstanding ecological contribution women have made all along, often without any acclaim.

It is not farfetched, therefore, to suggest that in the women's world under consideration the commissioning deity is in fact a *God of empowerment and liberation*. There have been no deliberate attempts to flout ZIRRCON's male authority, and Ms Mutonga operates with great poise

and dedication within the parameters of the earthkeepers' leadership hierarchy. She is also fully aware that the movement's male leaders publicly acknowledge Mwari at all times as the prime mover and final authority of all ecological endeavour, citing the same biblical texts as she does. Nevertheless, there is a subtle difference here. For despite all their appeals to divine inspiration and guidance, the male earthkeepers have in fact been centre-stage in virtually all tree-planting ceremonies. They spend hours introducing mainly male dignitaries attending these ceremonies, extolling the achievements of male figures in building the movement, claiming impressive statistics of trees planted without always giving full recognition to the impressive work of women as caterers, nursery keepers and tree planters, and allowing women proportionally much less time than men to give speeches or sermons at gatherings.

Small wonder, therefore, that at ceremonies staged by ZIRRCO's Women's Desk Mwari *will* emerge as a liberator whose special calling validates and elevates the roles of earthkeeping women. Liberation from male domination, non-recognition and marginality, even if not yet complete, is the existential reality of women appearing proudly in their neat church uniforms at the behest of Jehovah of the Book, he who makes it possible for women to be emancipated, powerful and influential earthkeepers in their own right.

Finally, for all the women's sensitivity to and need for emancipation and justice, the image of God as one who empowers and liberates applies to the entire movement. In the understanding of the earthkeepers, the growing trees and their spreading shade are literally liberating the barren earth from the life-sapping blaze of the sun. To thousands of peasants who have no place in the halls of fame and power in the cities where national history appears to be made, taking a hand in the environment in a way that matters means liberation from obscurity and powerlessness. Pioneering an earthkeeping ministry and a new African theology in the often despised and rejected world of the AICs means being liberated to experience ecclesiastic recognition, maturity and growth. To the politically and religiously somewhat marginalised chiefs, spirit-mediums and commoner traditionalists in modern society, liberation means greater influence and meaningful service both to the devastated land and to rural society. Somehow Mwari the liberator calls and empowers the downtrodden, the poor, the oppressed, the margin-

alised and faceless masses to rise on behalf of the voiceless creatures and overexploited matter of this earth; and in so doing to find healing, wholeness and fulfilment.

3.2.2.3 *Rain-giver and judge*

Steeped in Old Testament narrations of God's dealings with his people, the AAEC leaders' sermons paint a picture of intensely rewarding and/or retributive interaction between Mwari and the people living on his land. Whenever people do not repent or follow the divine commandments, God – as in Israel – ravishes the land through war, pestilence, drought or floods. And when harmony is restored, the suffering is replaced by wellbeing and abundance. 'Once Israel has repented of its infidelity to God's commandments and returned to the right path, God will restore its fortunes. Then the land will flourish with abundant rain and bountiful harvests. The people will return from exile to its lands and restore its ancient cities. It will prevail over its enemies and reduce them to servitude, or, in a more universalist vision, the other nations will stream to Zion, be converted to its God, and peace and justice will prevail throughout the earth' (Ruether 1992:66,67; with reference to Zch 14:12–20 and Is 2:2–4).

This is the focus of the Shona earthkeepers' attention: establishing, as God's people, new forms of *eco-justice* in the already existing dispensation of his kingdom, and in so doing 'achieving' a meaningful and prosperous life, at least relatively free from Mwari's judgment. The AAEC is not unaware of the New Testament texts dealing with the passing away of heaven and earth. But caught up in the afforestation struggle with all its practical and ethical demands on the earthkeepers involved, they understandably prefer passages from John (Rv 11, 19) which reserve judgment for those who destroy the earth, interpretations which insist that those who disrupt the union (of earthkeepers) in Christ (Jn 15) – the creator and real Earthkeeper – will be punished, and Pauline texts which underscore the restoration of the present world, to passages which imply judgment and complete destruction of the earth as a condition for radical apocalyptic replacement (Zerbe, in De Witt 199:90). Eternal life in heaven for individual believers after death is certainly not a lost dimension. Yet in the earthkeepers' world salvation is already seen and felt where nurseries and woodlots symbolise reconciliation between the God of Zion and his people, whose regular

tree-planting rallies reveal the saviour's presence in his black Zion Cities and Jerusalems.

That Mwari features pre-eminently in the tree-planting context as the rain-giver, the one whose blessing and/or judgment can be gauged from seasons and harvests, is a sure sign that the traditional African concept of the oracular deity is still influencing the understanding of Mwari-Jehovah who reveals himself in the pages of Old and New Testaments. This again reminds us of the conceptual interaction between the Hebraic Yahweh and the Semitic El as the former entered the latter's world (*supra*:110–111). It is to be expected that in a peasant society, where a subsistence economy hinges entirely on good rains and harvests and where for centuries the creator-God's most convincing act of salvation – despite his/her earlier remoteness – was to provide life-giving rain, such notions of God will persist and dominate, also in indigenous Christian circles.

To some extent Mwari the rain-giver is focal because of AZTREC's pre-occupation with Mwari the high-God at the Matopo shrines and the constant contact of AAEC participants, through close cooperation with the traditionalist movement, with the roots of the African faith. Note, for instance, the introductory remarks and conclusion of Chief Chivi's tree-planting ceremony at headman Gwenyaya's village – a ritual attended by large factions of both traditionalists and AIC Christians (27 August 1993). After invoking the ancestral landowners the traditionalist elder Mazodze said: 'We have started here by addressing the ancestors, but we have not yet prayed. So I give Bishop Chimhangwa an opportunity to pray. In so doing we place our tree-planting work at both (religious) ends. *We indeed tell the ancestors but we also pray to Mwari*' (my italics).

Although Mazodze was referring to the Bishop's Mwari of the Book, the implied cooperation between Mwari and the ancestors subtly evoked the image of the traditional rain-giver. The *mafukidzanyika* (earth-clothing) beer libation resembles the traditional rain rituals (*mikwerere*) too closely for the *mudzimu*-Mwari interaction inherent in it not to remind one of the rain-giving Mwari vaMatonjeni.

Chief Chivi's closing prayer had a similar bent:

We thank you, Musikavanhu (literally 'creator of people'), you creator of all things. We your children whom you have permitted to live

in your garden, are doing this (tree-planting) here for you. This task is accomplished by your children and grandchildren. See with your own eyes. See tomorrow, as you provide rain to water your trees. This we ask of you so that you will be mindful of our efforts tomorrow (in the future).

The chief adopted the Christian mode of approaching God through prayer. But it was no coincidence that he used the traditional name for God, Musikavanhu, who in earlier years was the rain-giver in the territorial cults of eastern Zimbabwe. To Chief Chivi this is the Jehovah of the Book, the same one Bishop Chimhangwa had appealed to. Yet as Musikavanhu he emerges in African garb: a father of children and grandchildren, concerned with African community life – the living and the living dead – and the God of peasants whose delight in proper earth-care will be reflected in the coming rain.

A perusal of AAEC sermons shows the extent to which Mwari the rain-giver preoccupies the minds also of Christian earthkeepers. Causality characterises the divine-human core relationships: the rain-giver responds directly with reward or judgment to his earthkeepers' performance! 'Trees bring life ... trees bring rain,' Bishop Wapendama said. 'But since the trees have been felled in great numbers and the plains are naked, people nowadays are wondering whether floodwaters are not the water of Noah of long ago' (appendix I:356–357).

To a mind-set where deforestation and desertification provoke divine judgment of a severity comparable with the deluge of Noah's time, tree protection and tree planting appear to be the only means of appeasing the wrath of Mwari. Said Wapendama in another sermon: 'I shall take responsibility for planting many more trees. I tell you, Mwari will give us plentiful rains because we are paying for the *ngozi* (vengeful spirit) which we have provoked through tree destruction.'

And yet the problem of how to interpret and accept chastisement remains when drought brings endless suffering. Having lost most of his livestock and all his crops during one of the most severe droughts in Chivi district, Bishop Chimhangwa grappled with the Old Testament narrative of similar occurrences in Israel at a tree-planting ceremony at Bishop Machokoto's village. Having likened the plight of his wife trying to find water with that of the Israelites when their water cisterns were empty (Jr 14:1–4), he said: 'My wife asked me whether we could grind

the 50 kilograms of mealies which we had bought for planting into meal. She did this because we could not find mealie meal anywhere. That same day Minister Musika was at our village to assess the drought situation. The famine there is now so bad that the tortoises start climbing the trees.’ In his appeal to his audience to save some water for the trees they had planted, Chimhangwa suggested that there was some consolation in knowing that others (the Israelites particularly) had also suffered with empty water cisterns. However, this did not deter him from voicing frustration, even lament and defiance in the face of the relentless drought:

We ploughed our lands and planted our maize and groundnuts. But there are no crops. Is that not a painful experience? If God were a person, don't you think I would have questioned him about this? Ah! It is impossible to question God! Peace to you, people of the Lord (appendix 1:371–372).

These words echo anguish and impotence at the chastisement meted out by the rain-giver who, in his mysterious, seemingly capricious way, appears to have turned his back on his troubled people – a desperate reality underlined on the barren plains of Chivi by the shimmering sun, cloudless skies and ‘tortoises climbing the trees’.

ZIRRCO's more educated theologians – Bishop Marinda, Revd Zvanaka and myself – are contributing to this trend in an attempt to promote contextualisation of the emerging AIC earthkeeper's theology in Shona peasant society. Partly to coax our fellow earth stewards into greater effort and dedication, partly because of our own belief in a rewarding/judging deity, the causality in divine-human encounter is often proclaimed or implied. Note, for instance, Reuben Marinda's wording of the liturgy for the tree-planting eucharist:

Let us make an oath today
that we will care for God's creation
so that he will grant us rain –
an oath, not in jest
but with all our heart. (*Supra*:76–77)

The words ‘so that’ link God's rewarding rains directly with the earth-keepers' intentions and action in caring for creation. Mwari the rain-giver also features strongly in the sprinkling of holy water in new wood-

lots prior to planting. The church leader performing the ritual refers to the water of purification and fertility as a prayer to God, a symbol of rain.

The ritualised prayer to God is obviously for rain, so that the tree planters' labours may be blessed and the earth may heal. Are we dealing here with a narrow, even a manipulative perception of the deity which obscures the realisation that God's pervasive presence extends to all the richness of his creation? I do not think so. What else can an earthkeeper pray when commitment and perseverance culminate in entrusting carefully nurtured seedlings to the soil and life-giving rains are crucial for the next phase of greening God's earth?

At Bishop Mupure's tree-planting ceremony on 14 February 1994, Revd Solomon Zvanaka did not hesitate to interpret the severe droughts in Zimbabwe in the 1980s and early 1990s as acts of God's judgment. He asked his audience:

Have you not noticed that our country has turned into a desert? Where did you ever experience a drought where all the waterholes dry up and even the donkeys die? Even the wild animals of the bush die in large numbers. We have never seen anything like it. We, the caretakers of creation, have brought this on ourselves. Had we but followed Mwari's commandments to care for the earth, such devastation would not have occurred. But we failed in our duty as keepers of the land, indulging as we did in overexploitation. *Consequently Mwari brought the whip to us (Mwari hwatipa shamhu) and punished us severely ...*

However, if we gather as we have done here, if we repent and ask for God's mercy, he will heed our plea as he did with Israel (Is 41:17):

When the poor and needy seek water,
and there is none ...
I the Lord will answer them,
I the God of Israel will not forsake them.

Revd Zvanaka then went on to list some of the most important conditions in an earthkeeper's code which could help avert the retaliatory anger of the creator. First, Mwari requires a contrite heart, followed by willingness to repair the ecological damage of the past; second, God's

wisdom and guidance should be requested for all tree-planting activities; third, the church ministers and their followers have to admit that their ministry includes earth-care no less than the conversion and spiritual nurture of people – and that they are as guilty as anybody else of the deforestation which has provoked God's wrath in the form of terrible drought; and fourth, people of all religious persuasions have to unite in caring for the creation. Heeding this earthkeeper's credo undoubtedly was a condition for Mwari the rain-giver's reward in the form of seasonal balance and a return to agricultural equilibrium.

A similar note was struck in one of my sermons in 1991 at the First Ethiopian Church headquarters in Bikita district. With reference to the promise of the God of Israel that rivers and fountains will appear in the wilderness (Is 41), I applied the text literally to the local situation:

We see here at Norumedzo that what was promised by Mwari has happened right here. Is it not so that you have more plentiful pools and springs of water than at Masvingo? It seems as if sinners (earth destroyers) abound in Masvingo, for it is not raining there at all. Perhaps the people do not want to repent and confess their sins. So Mwari is disciplining them (giving them *shamhu*, the whip). There is no water. Out here you are blessed by Mwari, who has given you rain. Peace to you!

The reference to the 'sinners of Masvingo' included an element of banter and jest at my own expense and that of other members of our team who were also from drought-stricken Masvingo. Yet the undertone of causality in the divine-human encounter, the hint that humanity somehow has to 'earn' environmental salvation, is unmistakable. The entire audience knew that it always rains more in mountainous Bikita than in the flat immediate environs of Masvingo town. The ecological contrast, however, between drought-ridden Masvingo and the lush, wooded slopes of Mount Norumedzo was too stark not to tempt me to capitalise on it by portraying an involved creator who could respond with either devastating anger or rain-giving celebration to the varying humanly induced conditions on his earth.

Is this a flawed, one-sided, even heretical tree-planting theology in the face of the flux of seasons and the need to build peasant morale and motivation against heavy odds? Certainly, if one measures the inconsistencies, pragmatic motives and variations of an unwritten theology of

green action against the Reformation's neat formulae of *sola scriptura*, *sola gratia*, *sola fide* – scripture, divine grace and faith as the sole guidelines for Christian life and sound doctrine. We of the AAEC are indeed running a risk, at least at times, of losing sight of God's grace as we attempt to regiment the green forces by postulating a rewarding/judging creator.

The danger of succumbing to a kind of earthkeepers' self-righteousness, of trying to wrest from God some sort of this-worldly salvation based on human performance and merit is not illusory. In our attempts to accommodate and unite with our traditionalist fellow fighters we may also place too much emphasis on the rain-giver in his/her African garb – the oracular deity who provides or withholds rain in direct response to the annual pleas and gifts of regional constituencies at the Matopo shrines. Nevertheless, the centrality of scripture in all AAEC deliberations, and numerous landmarks of experience along the route followed by the Shona earthkeepers (eg a rebellious and suffering bishop in the midst of drought admitting humbly that it is impossible to question God) permit the conviction that, despite imperfections, the truth will be served.

3.3 Mwari: father and/or mother?

To what extent does AAEC theology display similarities with eco-feminist and other modern earth theologies in which the predominantly male deity of the Judaeo-Christian worldview is either replaced by Gaia, the ancient Greek earth goddess, or amplified by much greater emphasis on the female attributes of the Christian God? To answer this question we need to look at some of the characteristic features of such theologies.

Eco-feminism links the modern environmental crisis with male domination of women over the centuries. In Western male-dominated cultures males allegedly feared the dark, fertile, intuitive powers of the universe. This fear, it is argued, is manifested in patriarchal attempts to control both women (eg in the medieval witch hunts in Europe) and nature. Biblical religion appears to be hierarchic and patriarchal because of a history of Israelite confrontation with the female element in Canaanite fertility cults (McDonagh 1994:114). Whatever the reasons

for the proclamation of a male deity mainly by male priests and clergy, women's insight has been marginalised and their role suppressed. Thus, as Wilkinson (1991:194) says: 'Ecofeminists urge the rediscovery of an ancient alternative, which they believe to have preceded patriarchal theism: that is, a worship of the goddess, which does not exalt warfare and domination, but instead led to a nurturing culture in which men and women lived together in equal and complementary partnership.'

Eco-feminist critique has certainly sharpened the attention and sensitivity of Western theologians to both the masculine and feminine attributes of God and people. In an article entitled 'The Spirit of God's femininity' a leading figure in the Roman Catholic *Theologie Nouvelle*, Yves Congar (cf McDonagh 1994:116), traces the feminine attributes of God to the Old Testament prophets and wisdom literature. In support of this view McDonagh (1994:117) claims that the holistic view of God as Father and Mother evolves from the Old Testament wisdom literature specifically into the New Testament understanding of the Holy Spirit:

She is the principle of communion, binding all reality together. The Holy Spirit is the source of all unity. All attraction, all bonding, all intimacy and communion flows from the Spirit ... In her the whole universe is linked together in one nurturing, enveloping embrace. She is the one who inspires all fruitfulness and creativity – which are the signs of true bonding and intimacy. From her comes the great urge to heal what is broken, re-unite what is separated, and recreate the face of the Earth (McDonagh 1994:119).

In the Protestant tradition others, like Moltmann, refrain from depicting God as Mother, yet show great understanding for the holistic interrelatedness between God, humanity and the natural environment, which includes emphasis on an immanent and nurturing deity in creation and references to the earth as Gaia (Moltmann 1985:18).

Then there are theologians who are sceptical about the effectiveness of reinterpreting the divine in terms of a gender switch. Ruether (1992:4), herself an eco-feminist who agrees with much of the criticism of patriarchy and understands the reasoning behind the introduction of Gaia as a new focus of worship, warns that 'merely replacing a male transcendent deity with an immanent female one is an insufficient answer to the "god-problem"'. Instead, she convincingly insists that we need a

new vision of 'a source of life that is 'yet more' than what presently exists', a vision of 'how life should be more just and more caring' (Ruether 1992:5).

Wilkinson (1991:278, 279) cautions that, although the characterisation of God as mother highlights important biblical notions of divine nurturing and care, such a definition 'makes it easier for us to make the dangerous mistake of equating God with the earth, creation with Creator – and the Creator's immanence is not of that sort'. Arguing on the basis of the Genesis narrative that the creator is distinct from creation and not to be confused with it, he quotes extensively from Rudy Wiebe's novel, *My lovely enemy ...*:

When man speaks of 'God as Mother' her acts usually become so closely identified with nature – the physical world everywhere – that he forgets the image-ness and begins to think the words as physical actuality ... But God subsumes and is far beyond both Nature and Image. So it is better to contemplate the concept of GOD THE FATHER because no natural father brings forth any life by himself. You are then forced to contemplate the creation of the world not as an act of physical birth out of God's womb (as ecofeminists tend to imply), but rather as the act of being spoken into existence by Words coming out of God's mouth (Wilkinson 1991:279).

The AAEC's environmental theologians largely lack the sophistication and exposure to eco-feminist literature to deal explicitly with the wide range of definitions and subtle distinctions. Our earthkeepers' reading of the Old Testament seldom focuses on the wisdom literature in such a way that Mwari Musiki (God the creator) is portrayed as a female deity. We have indeed mentioned above that Mwari is immanent, the insider whose Spirit is in the trees and who therefore suffers when trees are felled. But he is also the Other, a personal being distinct from the animate and inanimate objects of creation, who is present among his people and addresses them. And in this role he is regularly referred to in sermons as Mwari Baba (God the Father), Mwari Jehovah (God Jehovah), the masculine protector, keeper and particularly father of all creation. The Apostolic, Zionist and non-prophetic preachers of the AAEC would therefore tend to concur with Wilkinson and Wiebe's understanding of a masculine creator-deity – an understanding which is so richly differentiated, however, that it does not preclude some femi-

nine allusions or comparisons when it comes to explaining Mwari's love and care for the environment.

In Shona traditionalist religious imagery the obvious parallel with Gaia, the Greek earth goddess, would be the creator as Dzivaguru (the great pool), a portrayal which has distinct connotations of femininity, fertility, potency, the mystery of life-force – in short, Mother. I have also indicated how the feminine attributes of the creator and rain-giver in the traditional cult at Matonjeni are in a sense reinforced by a female oracular voice addressing people from the shrines and by women occupying key interpretive positions during rituals (Daneel 1998:178f). Yet in the ongoing dialogue between AZTREC traditionalists and AAEC Christians the latter's insistence on proclaiming Mwari of the Bible and the conscious retention of a specifically Christian message of good news largely preclude references to Dzivaguru. Their motivation would resemble that which inspired the transformation of the Semitic divinity concept of El in the polemic between the Judaeo-Christian Jehovah and the Canaanite fertility cults.

Belief in a male deity need not, of course, exclude imaginative, inculturated reinterpretations of an earthkeeping deity, whose injunctions and care for creation derive from similar sentiments and solutions as those of the eco-feminists. Not only have the AAEC teachings of an involved creator contributed to greater awareness and acceptance of a sympathetic and nurturing dimension in divine-human stewardship; the AAEC has also launched programmes which promote women's empowerment and autonomous social organisation. Hence it is making a contribution, even if only a modest one, to overcoming oppressive patriarchy. A few examples will suffice.

At a tree-planting ceremony at Bishop Farawo's village on 7 February 1994 Bishop Marinda likened the work of the creator to the role of a *vatele* (paternal aunt):

As we have heard today Mwari built a treasure of trees and wildlife into creation, of which we as people are the guardians. We, the people, said, 'We have been given this wonderful world by our Father Mwari.' Then we promptly forgot our responsibility as the protectors of creation. We became hosts to the *shavi* (alien spirits) of destruction. We destroyed the peace between ourselves and the creation for which we had to care. We were like lost children, claiming riches

from their father, spending it all carelessly and then returning empty-handed.

This world, as created by Mwari, can be compared to a virgin. You look at a girl who wants to marry. When this change in relationships is at hand her *vatete* comes to adorn her with beautiful clothes. Her dress is decorated with beads. And when you see her, her skin glistens like that of a python. You know when you see a young woman clad like this that she is a virgin. She is a woman betrothed in an undefiled state. When she bears a child, say at Chief Ziki's homestead, the people will say: 'That one belongs to the chieftaincy.' But of the child born from the bush it will be said that the mother just arrived there with a stomach protruding like this (gesture of hand) in pregnancy.

God is the *vatete* who showed and gave us this world in all its splendour as a virgin: with its awesome, towering rocks, its densely leaved trees, laden with all kinds of fruit to feed humans, birds and animals. God provided the abundance we are now trying to restore. We have carelessly spoilt the virginity of the earth, that which Mwari, our *vatete*, gave us. What we strive for is to give the earth back its virginity. Through the destruction of nature we have spoiled our relationship with created things and with our *vatete*, thereby causing the *ngozi* spirit (of vengeance) to rise. How do we repair such a breach in relations?

Audience: We pay!

Marinda: That is what we have come to do here today. We have come to pay with trees in order to restore relations with our *madzi-baba* (fathers) and our *vatete*, Mwari.

We see the remnants of the earth's virginity in the wooded mountains. This world was ever so beautiful before we messed it up. The forests were thick. It harboured klipspringer, duiker, rabbits, rock rabbits, all of them in or near these mountain ranges. But these animals are all gone because we have destroyed their habitat. Maybe we will all end up living in the mountains when the plains are empty ...

In the context of Shona kinship ties, Marinda's use of the *vatete* analogy to clarify Mwari's intimate, protective bond with creation is apt. The paternal aunt is the guardian of the procreative powers in the patriline

of her brothers and father. By virtue of her bride price (*roora*), which assists a selected brother (the special tie is called *chipanda*) to pay *roora* for his wife, the *vatete* becomes 'owner' (*vamwene*) of that brother's offspring and has special authority over them. This authority includes safeguarding the virginity of her nieces, instructing and caring for them, and presenting them as virgins at marriage. Customary law stipulates that the *vatete*'s significant role be honoured by the inclusion of *ngombe yovutete* (the aunt's cow) in the bride prices of the nieces in her care. Even after her death the *vatete* continues her important duties. If disturbed or dissatisfied as an ancestor she can prevent pregnancy by 'grabbing the womb' of a niece, an affliction which can only be remedied if the *ngombe yovutete* is produced and properly sacrificed in honour of the *vatete*.

Against this background, Mwari the *vatete* is woven into the intimate fabric of family life. He is more than just a remote, universal source of fertility. From within family life he/she takes care of procreation as the legitimate owner (*vamwene*) and custodian of those members of the family whom she has specially taught about the beauty and sanctity of life. As *vatete* Mwari could 'grab the wombs' of the female stewards of creation so that they, together with their menfolk, will suffer until they – the entire human family – do penance through sacrifice, in this instance by clothing the barren land. When Mwari presents the virginity of creation as utterly beautiful to the family of human beings, as the custodian aunt presents her *mhandara* (virgin) to her own family and in-laws, the beauty and importance of all creation acquires new meaning: softer, warmer and perhaps more vulnerable to greedy exploitation, more in need of trustworthy custodians who understand the fragility and sanctity of the earth's virginity before the seasons of conception, birth, maturity, reproduction, death and new life, are full.

As Reuben Marinda's sermon indicates, Mwari is basically Baba, Father, but he sees with the eyes and feels with the caring being of a *vatete* – perhaps a bit more authoritatively than a mother would do to her offspring, yet with greater tenderness than the seniority, status and power of structured patriarchy tend to allow for.

The other example involves the role of women in ZIRRCON's Women's Desk. Here too, the vocabulary in women's sermons still largely reflects a masculine deity. It is not so much a matter of Mwari's gender. Instead,

the crux of the good news is what Mwari as a just deity does for an abused earth and oppressed women. The women concerned experience engagement in earthkeeping and tracing Mwari's acts of justice in much the same way, albeit more intuitively, as Ruether envisages the search for a new life which should be more just and more caring (*supra*:135).

Note, for instance, how Raviro Mutonga, chairperson of the Women's Desk, starts one of her tree-planting addresses:

We women have our own things here. I am so happy because we know these things (mobilising empowerment, the ceremony itself, the new woodlot, caring for it, etc) really are ours. How satisfying to know that no human being will be coming to interfere, to ask what it is we are doing (ie exclusion of domineering male authority). You fathers who have come here today are in support of *our* endeavours. You have come here out of genuine interest ...

These words preceded Mutonga's claim quoted previously (*supra*:132), that the original mandate for earthkeeping comes from Mwari and not from ZIRRCO. The inference clearly is that Mwari is attributing a special responsibility for earth-care to women, that the men attending the women's ceremonies recognise this, and that justice is done by empowering women to play a leading role in the healing of the earth. Mutonga's introduction confirms feelings of self-worth, dignity and a sense of destiny among the neatly uniformed female tree planters as they set an example of committed, orderly and emancipated militancy in the green struggle.

Ms Mangombe's prayer, which concluded the ceremony, sums it up:

We thank you, Lord, for mercy bestowed on us women. You have bestowed a sevenfold grace on us. We were an oppressed tribe (*rudzi*), always criticised even to the end of our days. A woman was given little space, even within her own home. A woman was not even allowed to step outside and to communicate freely with other people. A woman was not allowed to undertake a journey without her father or husband following with a *tsvimbo* (club). A woman was not allowed to attend court proceedings. A woman was never allowed to hold a high position (literally 'to sit on high seats'). But we now see with our own eyes, Lord, that you change all this; as you yourself have said: 'Let the old things go by. Set your minds on the



Plate 25 Women tree-planters accept the presence of men but assert their emancipated status as earthkeepers on the basis of their own interpretation of a divine mandate for eco-stewardship as found in Scriptures

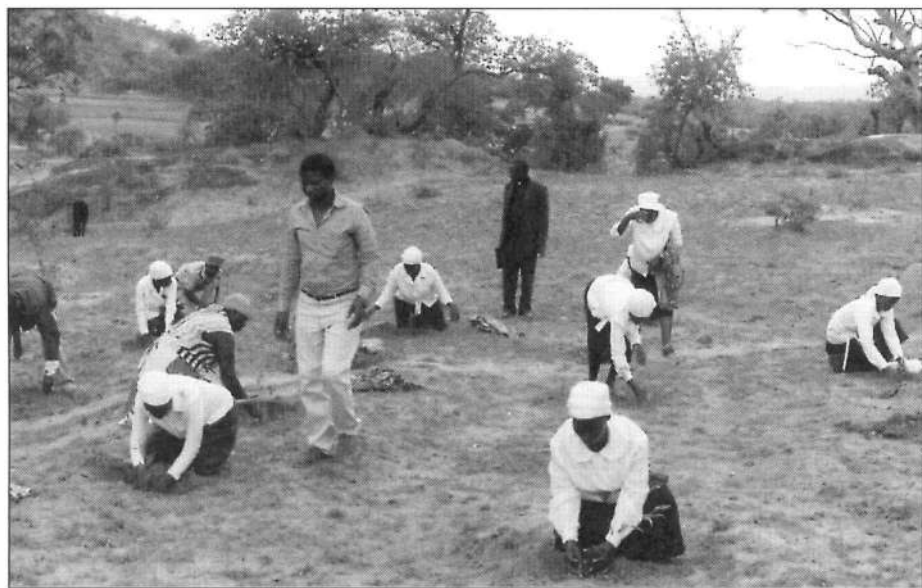




Plate 26 Women assert themselves as earth-keepers. Ms Raviro Mutonga, chairperson of ZIRRCOM's Women's Desk, reminds the members of a Women's Club of their new status and responsibilities (top). Women also take leading roles during *maporesanyika* tree-planting ceremonies (bottom)

new things that will appear these days!’ We place these new things in your hands, Lord, as we ask you to bless the Women’s Club at Wadzanai Doroguru. You have allowed us to plant trees and vegetables as you planted in your own garden, Eden, where you allowed your representatives to live. We thank you that you have reintroduced that privilege for us women, we, the stewards of your creation. We thank you for male support; for the good men who have dug the holes for our trees. Bless the people (of ZIRRCON) whom you have sent here. Bless them as they traverse all of Zimbabwe to plant trees. Mwari, let this task have your full endorsement ... Strengthen us in our earthkeeping quest and let the message in the sermons keep motivating us. Amen.

In this prayer Mwari is not explicitly called ‘Mother’, but in the thought world of the women tree planters he/she certainly is the God of mothers, the one who liberates women from bondage and sets them free to serve ‘Eden’, the earth, from a position of dignity and equality with males. There is no overt militancy, as if all existing patriarchal structures should be destroyed before women can come into their own. Instead there is assertive, courageous activity born of the conviction that Mwari is near and that he/she guides the struggle of restoring the earth in a new era of equality and justice. The prayer includes a vision of earthkeeping throughout the country and suggests gender harmony in a cause which ideally should transcend oppressive hierarchical authority in a new communion of all-important yet humble service.

I have highlighted only one or two features of what could be termed a contextualised form of African eco-feminism. For now the story of women earthkeepers is being enacted at the grassroots by the growing membership of some 80 rural women’s clubs. Hopefully the creative theology implicit in such development will yet be documented by these women themselves to enrich and give impetus to the labours of healing mothers of Eden worldwide.

CHAPTER 4

Christ the earthkeeper

In the 1970s Fashole Luke (1976:148), referring to Mbiti's statement that all theology is essentially christology, commented that he found hardly any evidence of African theologians really wrestling with christological ideas. As a result he called for this subject to be given top priority in African theology. In recent years the situation has changed to such an extent that Nyamiti (1991:3) claims without hesitation that 'christology is the subject which has been most developed in today's African theology'.

One of Mbiti's early attempts to highlight christological features in African Christianity focused on the West African Independent Churches (Aladura). He showed that these churches' main interest was in Christ's birth, healing miracles, triumphal entry into Jerusalem, death and resurrection. From this he concluded that a Christus Victor was being propagated (Mbiti, in Schreiter 1991:20) – a tendency he attributed to the traditional myths of Africa which lacked a future dimension and held out no hope of human immortality.

There is nothing in traditional concepts promising or hoping for a reversal of the experiences described in myths of the past. There is nothing to redeem man from the loss of immortality, resurrection and rejuvenation. This never dawned on the thinking of our peoples nor did they ever conceive of a supra-human conqueror of evil among men (Mbiti 1968:55).

In view of this lacuna, the AIC portrayal of a Christus Victor, despite obvious doctrinal limitations and one-sidedness, conveys an extremely important message. The traditional void is filled by victory over the destructive powers that had prevailed in the past. The concepts of hope, victory and salvation introduce new and enriching dimensions into the mythology and time concepts of Africa.

Other theologians, too, have noted the tendency to see Christ as the

victor. A number of them claim that the AICs, particularly those known as messianic movements, accept a *theologia gloriae* at the expense of a *theologia crucis* (Daneel 1982). Bosch (1974:24), for instance, notes that Christ's incarnation and atoning death feature less conspicuously in African than in Western theology. He considers this to be an obstructive *theologia gloriae*, which could render Paul's claim of 'My power is made perfect in weakness' (2 Cor 12:9) even more incomprehensible and unacceptable in Africa than in Europe.

From our discussion of African christologies below it will be obvious that there is far greater awareness of the suffering and crucified Christ nowadays. A broader spectrum of christological theologising – including inculturated portrayals of Christ as ancestor, chief, master of initiation rites, healer, and so forth – makes it impossible and inappropriate to apply an either-or evaluative scheme in the sense of *theologia gloria* versus *theologia crucis*. Nevertheless, Nyamiti (1991:18,19) correctly observes that the existing written African christologies have had little appreciable influence on the life of African churches. They are mainly systematic academic reflections on the mystery of Christ in the midst of African realities and need to be complemented with christologies that really function in the life of the African church. In this respect I consider the unwritten yet very real and distinct christological 'models' in the enacted theology of the AICs to be of great significance. The subject is too big and diversified for detailed consideration in this chapter. At most one could attempt to outline a few outstanding characteristics of an emerging AIC christology – that of Christ the earthkeeper, which is presupposed or manifest in our earthkeeping ministry. The importance of this exercise is, first of all, that it highlights an aspect of African christology which has received little attention from black African theologians so far. Secondly, it illustrates the extent to which AIC praxis complements and enriches not only African Christianity generally but written African christologies in particular.

4.1 Christ's Lordship and the mission of the church

Christology and ecclesiology are as inseparable as Christ, the head of the church, is from the communities of believers who constitute his body, the church (Nyamiti 1991:16). It is surprising, therefore, how often this integral link is overlooked or obscured in African theology.

African christology generally, and Christ's lordship in particular, have been insufficiently related to the missionary nature of the church – a deficiency pointed out by Mbiti (1986:176–227). He maintains that although African theologians have written a great deal about the role of foreign missions in Africa – their evangelising, educational and medical work – there is almost nothing about active missionary participation by the African church (Mbiti 1986:177). In a brief review of recent missiological literature he indicates that Ofori (*Christianity in tropical Africa*, 1977) mentions only ten out of a total of 2 859 items in which African theologians deal with this subject; that Verkuyl's *Contemporary missiology: an introduction* (1978) contains not a single contribution by an African theologian; and that none of the contributions by African theologians in Horst Burkler's *Missionstheologie* (1979) approach missiology from the angle of the African church.

This theological omission is particularly serious in view of the fact that the church in Africa is probably expanding faster than anywhere else in the world, which suggests that there has been and still is an intense response to Christ's missionary/evangelising commission in African church praxis without a corresponding, supportive development in written theology. This again underscores the great value of the still largely unrecorded missionary traditions which the AICs have developed on the basis of their own understanding and experience of the biblical Christ figure – traditions which should be focal in future theological reflection on African christology and ecclesiology.

Let us briefly consider one such tradition, as it antedates and influences current AAEC developments in this field. In the Shona Spirit-type churches paschal celebrations culminate in the celebration of the eucharist. This is the context in which the church as a group concerns itself, directly or indirectly, with its outreach into the world. Christ's classic missionary commandment (Mt 28:18–19) often features prominently. Bishop Samuel Mutendi of the Zion Christian Church in particular used to challenge thousands of his followers, as they prepared for the climax of their festivities, with Christ's command to his disciples: 'I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples' (Daneel 1980:107f). The programme of the daily church council sessions included detailed planning of the countrywide missionary campaign which followed each Paseka. Regular prayer meetings focused on the Zionist church's out-

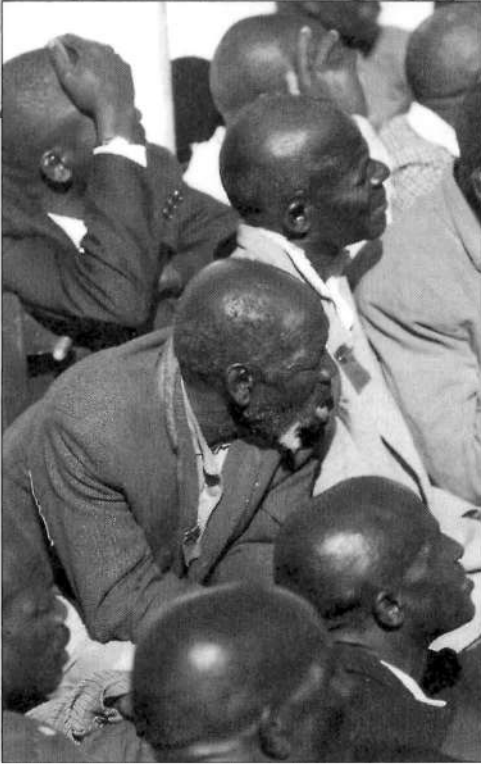
reach into the world. And Mutendi's mission-oriented sermons would culminate, immediately after the eucharist, in a send-off sermon aimed at inspiring a united and courageous Zionist response to the Lord's command.

In the ensuing campaign, teams of Zionists went on two-week or one-month missionary tours. These included pastoral care, faith-healing services, mass conversion ceremonies, baptisms, the establishment of new congregations and the expansion of existing ones and, at the end, a report-back to the parent congregation at Zion City. Meanwhile at ZCC headquarters the people kept up a vigil of intensive intercession for Zion's mission to the world. There are many variations of these campaigns, also in the related *Ndaza* Zionist movements (the most strongly represented group of churches in the AAEC), but generally speaking the massive Zionist response to Christ's commission, triggered by sacramental celebration of his crucifixion and resurrection, derives from recognition of his kingship. This recognition is reflected in acceptance of the iconic leadership of the church's founder.

In his treatment of Matthew 28:18–19, the late Bishop Mutendi seldom dwelt on the actual meaning of the words 'all the nations' and he rarely specified the objective of missionary endeavour. Yet he assigned conversion, baptism and church growth paramount importance. He gave the text a specifically Zionist connotation by relating it to such texts as Isaiah 62:1 ('For Zion's sake I will not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest'). He also protested against some of his followers' halfhearted response to the church's mission, citing Romans 11:25 which refers to the hardening of the Israelites' hearts. Ecclesiologically, the Bishop interpreted his movement as an extension of the pre-Reformation universal Catholic church and his leadership as rightfully continuing the apostolic succession. His missiology may not have been precisely defined. But his preoccupation with the great commission and his success in regularly mobilising his entire movement into a missionary force suggest acute awareness of the fact that *all believers* – not just a select group of zealous followers – are missionaries, at the cutting edge of the church's movement in and into the world. Judging by the Bishop's own insight and experience as a missionary, he would have concurred with a definition of *missio dei* which included both a *sending*, inspiring and guiding deity and a sent body of believers – the church, in which humans share responsibility with God for



Plate 27 Bishop Samuel Mutwodi preaches about Christ's mission command during a *Paseka* at Zion City, in preparation for a countrywide missionary campaign (top). ZCC elders listen intently to the man of God's sermon (bottom)



establishing the good news of *shalom* as a tangible manifestation of God's kingdom in a torn world.

In 1965 Bishop Mutendi sent off his missionary task force in a rather militant mood. He likened their task to that of an Israelite battle force: 'When you go out to fight against your enemies ... do not be afraid of them, for the Lord your God, who rescued you from Egypt, will be with you' (Dt 20:1). The Zionists, too, had to advance like soldiers: 'Now that we say, "Fire!" after *Paseka*, you must go out like one man to preach God's word ... You are going to fight Satan because you are the soldiers of God.' The Bishop also did not hesitate to contextualise his call in an oppressive colonial situation, in which he himself had suffered. He said: 'Let the cowards who cringe when they see a white man sit down, because they will not make good soldiers anyway. In the old days when I met with opposition (from the government) all the elders backslided and left me out of fear. Only John Shoko remained at my side and the two of us kept going. As Jacob freed Israel, so a deliverer comes from Zion and the preachers are sent forth in the world. The followers brought in (to Zion City) will be like the sand of the sea.'

Against the background of his own resistance to white rule and periodic detention by the white government, Mutendi was implying that the good news to be proclaimed during the campaign included liberation from the colonial yoke. His identification with Israel's struggles suggested that he accepted being cast by his followers in a Moses-like liberator role in the then only anticipated *chimurenga* struggle. His reference to a 'deliverer from Zion' also reflected a form of self-interpretation of his own leadership in Zion City, modelled on Christ. The growth of the black Zion of Africa undoubtedly was integral to the expansion of God's kingdom on earth.

Although Mutendi himself never presumed, as a black Messiah, to usurp Christ's position, some of his followers tended to see him as a Christ-like deliverer – a 'man of God', as he was popularly known among ZCC members. He preached, and lived, much more than just a purely spiritual message. To a large extent he was to his followers the creator of a new order, free from oppression and white control. In this sense he was an *iconic leader* (Sundkler 1976:309–310; Daneel 1988:109f) – *the epitome of the Christ figure in rural peasant society*. To the ZCC Zion, the church, and God's kingdom were parts of a totality. Response to Christ's

missionary command, as voiced by the black icon in Zion, therefore, meant the expansion of Zion and the building of Zion City as a divinely authorised activity within the kingdom of God. Limited as this interpretation of the great commission may be, it accords with the characteristic realised eschatology of African Zionism. The new heaven and the new earth have to be experienced here and now, and the contribution of humans, in partnership with Christ, plays a key role.

This theology does not necessarily rule out individual salvation in Christ and faith in some form of eternal life in heaven. Bishop Mutendi in his posthumous state is believed to stand at the gates of heaven, where he mediates admission for deceased ZCC members as a kind of preliminary introduction, pending Christ's mediation and God's judgment. Many ZCC mission sermons, moreover, contain appeals for conversion based on texts such as Hebrews 13:14 which view the sufferings of this life almost exclusively in terms of a search for the 'city yet to come'. Emphasis on the future nature of God's kingdom thus maintains the eschatological not-yet as a necessary counterbalance to preoccupation with the enactment of salvation here and now (Daneel 1980:112-113).

The AAEC's tree-planting eucharists are extensions of Zionist paschal traditions in that they, too, provide a platform for a specific christological and ecclesio-missiological thrust. Significant parallels are noticeable. The lordship of Christ, for instance, remains the basis for whatever missionary work is attempted. The difference, however, is that another set of biblical texts is used, either in conjunction with or independently of the classic missionary command, to highlight Christ's incarnated presence as earthkeeper or protector of all creation. Instead of triggering the expansionist soul-saving drive of a particular church such as the ZCC, the eucharist, now an ecumenical sacrament – without losing sight of the soteriological implications for humans – culminates in another form of divinely and ecclesiologically inspired mission, namely earth-care. In other words the church, as a united force, is called to accomplish a neglected part of its missionary task through a broadened perception of the gospel *as salvation for all creation!* Whereas the ZCC campaign described above leads to individual change, spiritual growth and church expansion, the AAEC aims at recruiting churches to expand Christ's earthkeeping mission. The ministry of earth healing itself, it is realised, has its own salutary dynamic of facilitating the spiritual change and growth of individual tree planters.

Whereas most member churches of the AAEC conduct several paschal celebrations annually, over and above their tree-planting eucharists, it should be noted that the two strands of ecclesio-missiological action triggered by this sacrament complement and enrich rather than exclude or replace each other. Both human and cosmic salvation is at stake!

Probably the single most significant difference between the ZCC and the AAEC missionary eucharists is the emergence in the AAEC context of a *whole new generation of iconic leaders*. Whereas Bishop Mutendi mirrored Christ by sending his followers to preach, teach, convert and baptise, the AAEC icons add yet another face or type of presence to the incarnate Christ: that of healer, saviour or liberator of *all the earth*. Instead of a single leader embodying the presence of the Messiah in African rural society by way of mediating rain and good crops for peasants, faith-healing, education and sociopolitical involvement, all concentrated in or emanating from a single holy city, the focus is broadened: it now encompasses a whole group of icons, united and moving out from their respective Jerusalems, Moriahs and holy cities to establish the grace and salvation implicit in Christ's presence in the creator's neglected and abused 'garden', thus declaring the entire *oikos* God's holy city. Through these iconic leaders Christ reveals a disturbing truth in the African context, namely that all agro-economic progress is meaningless unless it is accompanied by a message of environmental sanctification, of nature's restoration, of an ecological economy which, under the reign of Christ, consciously strikes a balance between exploitive agricultural advancement and altruistic restoration. This is the true purpose of an expanded missionary message proclaimed by the new breed of iconic leaders as they respond to their messianic calling. Moltmann (1985:227f) describes such a calling for all humanity as follows:

In the messianic light of the gospel, the appointment (of humans) to rule over animals and the earth also appears as the 'ruling with Christ' of believers. For it is to Christ, the true and visible image of the invisible God on earth, that 'all authority is given in heaven and on earth' (Matt 28:18). His liberating and healing rule also embraces the *dominium terrae* – the promise given to human beings at creation. Under the conditions of history and in the circumstances of sin and death, the sovereignty of the crucified and risen Messiah Jesus is the only true *dominium terrae*. It is to 'the Lamb' that rule over the

world belongs. It would be wrong to seek for the *dominium terrae*, not in the lordship of Christ, but in other principalities and powers – in the power of the state or the power of science and technology.

As a group of dedicated Christians, the core of AAEC leadership is giving expression in the African context to the messianic *dominium terrae*, not so much in conference debates, not primarily through constant references in sermons to Christ's lordship in creation, but by mediating the power of Christ (Mt 28: 18) and through their day-to-day presence in village life where commoners – the masses of the people, anyone who wants to join in – are empowered to share in a new *dominium* of service. In tree planting the attitude shifts from fatalistic, helpless enslavement in the face of a deteriorating environment to meaningful sharing in the divine rule of restoring the earth, in actively establishing new hope for the earth for its own sake, and in the process gaining a constructive sense of destiny. Hence the mediation facilitated by the earth-keeping icons does not obscure Christ's lordship or saviourhood, but unveils and illuminates dimensions of it which have gone unnoticed by many, believers and unbelievers alike. For the church and its outreach in the world, the implications of 'ruling with Christ' crystallise in the church's action of earth-care and in the living examples of the iconic leaders at the centre of that action.

Aware of their limitations and the relative sense in which they can be the saviours or healers of creation (Duchrow & Liedke 1987, *supra*:90), all the AAEC's iconic leaders – bishops, prophets and women leaders – belong to peasant society, rely on the land for sustenance, and therefore are ideally placed to demonstrate convincingly their own and their churches' solidarity with nature. Their identification with Christ's lordship is reminiscent of the Old Testament prophets who related Israel's salvation to the history of their holy land. Just as Amos prophesied the fall of the kingdom of Judah because of Israel's weakening faith, over-exploitation of the land and disregard of the poor, so the iconic prophets are increasingly attributing wanton destruction of the earth and the related droughts, floods, famine and the like to human hubris and defiance of the universal reign of Christ. Just as Hosea warned against the loss of the covenant and the land (Hs 2:3; Carmody 1983:87) by using environmental and fertility images, so the AAEC icons are relating environmental instability, diminishing crops and the accompanying threat to quality of life to the ecological sins of humans,

spiritual stagnation and the church's insensitivity to the cosmic implications of Christ's headship. Hence, as in Old Testament times, salvation, peace and well-being correlate with land husbandry and agricultural efficiency.

Carmody (1983:88) rightly maintains:

... the land was too central to the covenantal promise not to reflect Israel's overall fortunes in faith. Nonetheless, we note that neither the historians nor the prophets made much of the land or nature as a positive creation in its own right. By and large their biblical perspective was ethno-centric. The land was a wonderful gift from God, and so should have been used well, but the land had few rights over against its human stewards ... the biblical authors were not positioned to see that abuse of the land struck at the heart of a creation larger in its purpose than Israel's prosperity.

In this respect the AAEC represents a remarkable breakthrough. Although pragmatic motives are noticeable in the importance assigned to human progress and prosperity deriving from a restored environment, the earthkeeping icons' emphasis on altruistic stewardship, for the sake of God's kingdom and for the salvation of all of creation in its own right, is unquestionable.

Who, then, are the prominent icons in the AAEC context, and how do they collectively proclaim or enact their respective messages regarding Christ's lordship and the mission of the church in tree-planting eucharists? I mention only a few. Both Bishops Farawo and Wapendama are living examples of church leaders who have accepted the earth-keeping lordship of Christ as the condition for an alternative life style. Consequently, as mentioned already (*supra*:46–47), they have changed and remodelled their church headquarters to become earth-healing institutions. To the extent that they devote their lives to an environmental ministry, which includes the mobilisation of their church communities and of schools in tree-planting ventures, they epitomise the Christ figure's concern for all creation and establish a vivid understanding in peasant society of a truth which has long remained hidden in African Christianity, namely that in Christ 'all things hold together' (CI I:15f). Not only are they living examples of what Christ's presence and incarnation in African society as earthkeeper would entail; they also propagate the implications of that presence for the church. We have

seen that Wapendama preaches about the war of the trees as an extension of Christ's healing ministry, and hence focal in the church's mission (supra, p ...). Bishop Farawo, perhaps less eloquent than Wapendama, concurs in that he uses the nursery at his headquarters in Chivi district as a means of witnessing and strengthening interfaith ties. He says:

The nursery with its trees is part of the church. Because of Christ's attitude the church cannot manipulate this tool of healing and say: 'I give trees only to you the (Christian) believers because you qualify.' No! The trees from our church nurseries are given to all people, regardless of their faith. You cannot tell non-Christians: 'Go away, because you don't believe!' ... Besides, we don't do this for money. The churches mobilised by the AAEC will do this out of conviction, even if we should die empty-handed, without any compensation.

Considering the tendency among Zionists to emphasise the exclusiveness of the body of believers and its holiness, purity and separateness from the world during the celebration of the sacraments, Bishop Farawo's words show a remarkable flexibility. The church in its earth-keeping endeavour is envisaged as an *open-ended institution*, moving into an abused world and serving it courageously and at the risk of being misunderstood. The church nursery itself opens up a new dimension of the good news in the context of a ravished land, in that it empowers both Christians and non-Christians to develop a fellowship of compassion for the earth. Moreover, the ecumenically open tree-planting eucharist, where traditionalist chiefs and spirit-mediums can observe their fellow fighters in the war of the trees participating as icons of Christ in an otherwise highly exclusive church ceremony, underscores the witness character of the church-linked yet hope-giving service to the entire world.

Raviro Mutonga of the Women's Desk and Farai Mafanyana, a ZIRRCO research worker, in their turn represent a *theology of abundance and compassion*. At ceremonies their regular use of the slogan: 'Zvose, Zvose, Women's Desk!' (Everything, Everything, Women's Desk) illustrates their conviction that Christ's lordship implies a comprehensive ministry, encompassing all of life. The Women's Desk they are involved in combines socioeconomic upliftment of people with earth-healing action. Their own personal liberation, in the form of social status and

influence, is expressed not so much in abrasive leadership as in dedicated service. This is evident at ceremonies when they prepare food together with the local women, assist at all levels of ceremonial procedure, notably in song and dance, and generally show a compassionate concern for humans and the environment from a position of devout Christian discipleship. In their support of female initiatives in community development and ecological programmes they live a message of opportunity and wellbeing for all women. Add to this their spontaneous promotion of networking between traditionalist and Christian Women's Desks, and it is apparent that their vocation represents the *antithesis of gender and religious discrimination*. Their willingness to serve both people and the environment with unselfish care and joy indicates an understanding and acceptance of Christ's lordship manifested in servanthood and loving humility. In their understanding Christ requires a comprehensive mission of compassionate outreach, unfettered by a strictly defined mission policy.

Then there are the regulars, Bishops Machokoto, Chimhangwa, Hore, Nhongo and others, who turn up with some of their followers at most AAEC tree-planting ceremonies. Each of them applies his own insight into the Christ figure and his mandate for the church to the proceedings. Their regular attendance at executive and conference meetings, as well as their perseverance at tree planting in the field, give credibility to their roles as black icons of Christ: teachers, philosophers, green activists, liberation theologians, etc. Bishop Chimhangwa, for instance, keeps referring in his sermons to the centrality of Christ in the green struggle. 'Today we are planting trees as an act of reconciliation, in Jesus Christ, between us and all creation,' he said one occasion. 'We thank Christ for his atonement, which has made this act of reconciliation possible' (appendix 1:370). In Chimhangwa's understanding, Christ's salvific work is clearly the basis of and incentive for the church's mission of holistic reconciliation on earth. At a tree-planting ceremony at his village (4 August 1993) Bishop Chimhangwa qualified tree-planting as an *inheritance from Christ*:

We are here at a *kugara nhaka* (inheritance distribution) ceremony. This means that we did not go and fetch this earthkeeping responsibility from another country, but inherited it directly from our Lord Jesus, the one who generates such activity. Let us consider this inheritance where it starts in the Book. According to Genesis 2:15

Mwari set the example by placing humans in the Garden of Eden. They had to look after the trees and animals. Then God followed this up by sending his son, the son of Joseph. This son, Jesus, went right into his father's carpentry shop *to work there with his hands*, doing carpentry. Thus God affirmed that working with one's hands is good!

So if we do this work, we know it was instituted by Jehovah, and affirmed by his son. Tied to this is another aspect of our inheritance: we as humans shall eat by the sweat of our brow. Is that not what is happening right now? Are we not sweating out here in the heat, doing God's work?

This is no small matter! Observe distant South Africa, Germany, Holland and other countries. We receive visitors from all these countries. Some come to study. Others support us with funds. They also inform their people back home about what we are doing. Likewise we want our children and coming generations (future inheritors) to know and follow what we are doing ...

To Chimhangwa the inheritance of ecological stewardship is as imperative as the inherited human struggle for survival. He has no hesitation in identifying, with a few deft strokes, drawing on both Old and New Testaments, the source of that struggle: Jesus Christ who, as saviour and earthkeeper, affirms the work of his father, the creator. Christ's incarnate presence in peasant society gains existential validity when he is portrayed as a carpenter working with his hands, a vocation endorsed by Mwari. In a subsistence economy reliant on manual, agricultural labour, it makes sense to present the church's earthkeeping task as a duty inherited from the carpenter of Nazareth. After all, for all his love for creation, he also needed trees for his trade.

Although Chimhangwa did not specify tree planting as a mission of the church, the tenor of his sermon clearly implies an inherited task for the ecumenical body of Christian believers – in other words, the local and universal church. His reference to visitors from South Africa and abroad reflects both pride of achievement and the realisation that Christ's commission has global significance. The sense of belonging to a universal Christian fellowship engaged in a common mission or struggle is all the more remarkable in view of the relative isolation of numerous rural AICs for many years. Chimhangwa has no illusions about the sacrifice,

in terms of time and effort, exacted by environmental renewal. To spend days upon days in ritualised afforestation, sweating under tropical skies in bishop's regalia, is no joke. Yet in the African context an inherited duty means both privilege and obligation; it is more imperative – against a backdrop of white colonialism – than a command or a commission. In Chimhangwa's view, Christ has, in a very real sense, established a blood line between himself and his church. His inheritance therefore perpetuates the earthkeeping task from one generation or 'family' of believers to the next. Seen thus, holistic mission in Christ becomes the inalienable right, duty and privilege of the local and the world church.

Three of the movement's most influential iconic leaders operate from ZIRRCO's administrative centre. First, Bishop Reuben Marinda, the former 'scribe' of the movement, is known in the ritual context as *Mutiusinazita* ('the tree without a name'). This nickname was deliberately chosen as a reminder that our preoccupation with *chimurenga* names could lead to such emphasis on individual performance and honour that Christ himself, the Lord and guardian of creation, would be eclipsed in our earthkeeping worship. To further counteract any such tendency Bishop Marinda built a strong christological focus into the liturgy of our tree-planting eucharist (appendix 1:365–366). He also elaborates on Christ's role as saviour earthkeeper in all his sermons. At Bishop Mupure's tree-planting ceremony (February 1992), for example, he said:

In Jesus Christ all things hold together, it says in Colossians 1:17. He is the head of the body, the church. *He* is the beginning of all creation and he reigns supreme. God reconciled all things in heaven and on earth with himself through Christ. Christ is Lord over all creation. He works salvation for humankind because humans are the crown of creation. *Humans, in turn, have the duty to extend salvation to all of creation.*

If we look at the history of sin offerings in the Old Testament, we are told that each person had to bring an animal or bird to be offered at the Tent of Meeting before the Lord. The priest had to burn these sacrificial animals on a wood fire on the altar of burnt offerings. This was in fact a cruel practice, because many animals and birds had to die for the iniquities of humankind. Trees were



Plate 28 Three of the AAEC's most influential iconic leaders: Bishops Ruben Marinda (top), Muzambiringa Zvamaka (middle) and Moses Daneel (bottom)



felled in great numbers to provide firewood for the burnt offerings. Christ came as the last offering, to forgive the sins of the entire world. Through his death on the cross he saved the animals, the birds and the trees. *So he saves his entire creation!* The plan of God's salvation of humankind through Jesus Christ included the salvation of all creation (appendix I:365).

Here is the AAEC's ecological christology in a nutshell. The movement's focal credo – 'in Christ all things hold together' (Cl I:17) – confesses Christ's lordship over creation. The salvation thus available to human beings is to be extended by them to the entire earth. As Christ's disciples and co-workers, therefore, human beings have an obligation to liberate creation from exploitation. This, to Bishop Marinda, is an undisputed component of the church's mission. To him salvation experienced by believers within the church can only be real to the extent that it is made manifest to all creation. His own ministry as caretaker of the environment at his church headquarters and home village in Gutu south bears witness to this. Yet there is no human merit in such an undertaking. In his own way, the Bishop relates Christ's cross to the animals, the birds and the trees. In this theology the cross is decisive for salvation. Through Christ's final sacrifice the sacrificial destruction of nature ceases. New life and hope is given to all the earth.

One seeks in vain for a full exposition of the missiological implications for the church of the earthkeeper's *theologia crucis*. Perhaps it is enough that the AICs enact their growing ministry of earth-care so consistently as a united front. One is reminded of Hoekendijk's (1950) statement that the church on the move in its apostolic missionary outreach to the world should not get bogged down in inhibiting introspection. Bishop Marinda would agree with this. Nevertheless, his personal identification with, and commitment to, Christ in all afforestation rituals is evident in sermons reminiscent of the biblical rendering of Christ's own words. At a tree-planting ceremony at his own village in 1993, for instance, the Bishop said in his sermon: 'There is nothing that I want in this world. I only want to complete God's work. My time to go is at hand. But I first have to fulfil my calling. I am not seeking honour in this world but to do the work of him who sent me ... I told you I am not seeking leadership in the church.' These words do not signal black messianic aspirations or presumption. Instead, they reflect the vocational conviction of an iconic leader whose holistic ministry is entirely Christ-centred.

Second, Revd Solomon Zvanaka's nickname in the green struggle is *Muzambiringa* (the vine), a name aptly chosen as a reminder of ecumenical unity in Christ the vine (Jn 15). More than any other leader in the movement, Revd Zvanaka promotes a spirit of reconciliation and positive cooperation in a religiously pluriform situation. Burdened with heavy responsibility as my successor to the ZIRRCO directorship, Zvanaka remains an unruffled and fair negotiator and peacemaker in any disputes or conflict within the movement. In a very demanding position the man's wise, irenic spirit reflects the image of Christ the vine providing life and sustenance for his disciples, the shoots. But Zvanaka's ecumenical vision stretches beyond unity among AICs. To him the shoots of the vine, at least in the earthkeeping context, represent all people. In both attitude and teaching he at all times promotes close ties between AZTREC and the AAEC, traditionalists and Christians. The ZIRRCO director's theological stance is illustrated by the following summons to concerted action in a sermon at a tree-planting eucharist at Bishop Mupure's village in February 1994:

The bishops, ministers and dignitaries of the church are not only called to preach and convert people. They also have a great responsibility for guarding creation, for without trees there can be no human life. We recognise differences in religious persuasion, as we know full well that those of the traditional faith are not with us during our Sunday services. The spirit-mediums, likewise, have their own ceremonies which the bishops (ie church people) do not attend. *But when we plant trees it does not matter who attends.*

Do we say the oxygen of this or that tree goes to a bishop or a spirit-medium? Certainly not! Whoever you are, you simply breathe the fresh air produced by that particular tree...

Remember the saying: '*Rimwe ... rimwe, harikombi chinhu*' (a single endeavour does not achieve anything). Therefore this is not a task for a solitary individual or for the church alone, but for many, for all of us! We unite our efforts: the women, the nursery keepers, the chiefs, the churches, each of us doing his or her duty. Once the task is completed you of the churches can then rest, go to heaven, knowing you have fulfilled your task of guarding creation. And you *vanhu venyika* (literally 'people of the earth', traditionalists) will be seen as proper descendants of those ancestors who have left you the task of keeping the land.

For a Spirit-type leader, fully aware of Zionist and Apostolic leaders' exclusivist if not judgmental attitudes to traditional religion, this is a bold statement. It was made in the realisation that, however important Christian identity and witness remain in Christian discipleship, Christ's lordship mysteriously levels human religious divisions, shattering the presumption and self-righteousness inherent in the distancing of the so-called elect from fellow human beings. In a perception of God's kingdom which embraces all creation environmental concern in a sense acts as a great equaliser of all human beings. A dedicated Zionist, Zvanaka intuitively grasps this truth. His words are not just the empty verbiage of an ecumenical tactician. At all AAEC ceremonies this iconic leader invites traditionalists to participate, and at traditionalist tree-planting rituals he respectfully and attentively sits next to the chief or medium conducting the beer libation on behalf of the ancestors. Greatly interested in the old high-God cult, he also seizes every opportunity to visit the Matopo shrines as part of the annual AZTREC delegation. His accepting friendship with traditionalists increasingly opens up new prospects of uninhibited interfaith dialogue and united action. Thus he paves the way for an AIC reappraisal of its *theology of religions*, a vitally important component of an emerging earthkeeper's 'missiology'. All humankind, the living and the living dead, and not just a select group of Jesus disciples, are challenged to be the shoots of the vine. For the earthkeeping good news is that Christ's limitless grace is open to all humans and creatures without exception, and remains so as long as consciousness or life itself enables them to respond to the giver of life.

In the third place, I include myself in this category of leadership because of the role in which the AAEC has cast me. During the past few years (1992–1997) the AIC leaders have insisted that the nickname *Muchakata* (Daneel 1998:206) refers to my 'traditionalist' identity and that AZTREC should continue using it, but that in the AAEC context I should be called Bishop Moses. Somewhat embarrassed by this name, I have so far tended to joke about it at ceremonies, as I make no pretence of being a Moses figure. Nevertheless it has become common practice for me to don a bishop's robe at AAEC tree-planting eucharists and to be addressed or referred to in sermons as Bishop Moses. Despite my own misgivings about the negative implications for the movement if I were to become a patriarchal cult figure, it is understandable that after 35 years of close association with the AICs some

people will be inclined to single out the liberationist impact of my work. The AIC movements I have founded and helped to build did in fact bring a degree of liberation from erstwhile ecclesiastic isolation, lack of theological training, lack of community development opportunities and non-involvement in environmental reform.

It is from this position that I tend at afforestation rituals to speak about Christ the earthkeeper, the ultimate guardian of the land who, as creator and ancestor, fulfils and expands the ancestral guardianship of the holy groves and the land generally, which Africa has known all along. With reference to Matthew 28:18,19 I emphasise Christ's reign as a form of empowerment which keeps vitalising and mandating the church's missionary task through the ages. As humans already living in God's kingdom, we are freed to proclaim and spread a gospel which focuses on conversion and church planting, but which is not complete if this process of Christian discipleship does not consciously reach out and embrace the full richness the earth. In other words, I attempt not to dilute the evangelical thrust of the church's outreach but to liberate it from its overly spiritualised, pietistic insulation and to widen the perception of Christian mission through an inculturated, missionary conception of earth-care. Texts like Colossians 1:17 and Ephesians 1:10 are brought to bear on this broadened interpretation of the church's mission, an interpretation which always acquires immediacy and urgency because of the signs of environmental abuse and degradation where our ceremonies are held. In qualifying the church's mission, the interwovenness of witness and unity on the basis of such seminal texts as John 17:21,23 is frequently mentioned as a reminder of the biblical basis for the existence of the AAEC. And insofar as human endeavour features prominently in the church's holistic mission, texts like Isaiah 41:19,20 ('I'll set in the desert the cypress, the plane and the pine together; that man may see and know ... that the hand of the Lord has done this') serve as warnings against the pitfalls of human hubris in what essentially remains *missio dei*.

This picture of AAEC christology and its bearing on ecclesiology remains somewhat fragmentary. However, pinpointing some characteristic features of iconic leaders' individual contributions provides some questions and clues for future theological reflection. How, for instance, can the image of Christ as the liberator of women through their ecological activities, as an expression of a theology of abundance, oppor-

tunity and compassion, be given greater substance in the church's drive to help establish justice in this world? What are the prospects of developing the ecological care-taking function of the church as an inherited mission within the framework of African inheritance and related kinship obligations? How does the biblical lordship of Christ, in our context of unity and fellowship between traditionalist and Christian earthkeepers, inform a praxis-oriented theology of religions? Is our emphasis on ecumenism and interfaith unity in the green struggle moving in the direction of assumed religious universalism and relativism at the expense of the uniqueness and 'offensive' (*skandalon*) witness character of the Christian message? Are the roles of those Christians who somehow cross the divide as part-participants, part-observers at traditionalist rituals justified on account of what Rahner would call 'anonymous Christianity', an unwitting acceptance of Christ's lordship which extends well beyond the boundaries of the visible church?

What both the ZCC tradition and the AAEC tree-planting eucharist convincingly demonstrate is that to the AICs the sacrament of holy communion is the key to constant renewal of missionary awareness and inspiration of the church's outreach to the world. In a sense the AAEC's tree-planting eucharist is the earthkeeping church's mission. This crossing of frontiers between humans and the rest of creation is the most meaningful ritual expression of acceptance of Christ the earthkeeper's lordship. At present this mission takes ecological shape mainly in tree planting and the protection of water resources. It is bound to expand further into the creation of wildlife sanctuaries and related activities. Can all this be theologically validated as a legitimate ministry of the church? And if so, does the image of Christ the earthkeeper not only affirm the development of a new environmental ethic but also require the church to incorporate in its mission an ecologically legislative and disciplinary function, as some AIC leaders are requesting? In the previous chapter I cited Bishop Nhongo and his son's convictions that the church as the keeper of creation should introduce strict environmental laws and the means of exercising discipline accordingly, an ecclesiastic function which assumes that Christ as head of the church is, amongst other things, environmental law-giver and judge (*supra*:70–72). Seeking to express and plumb the implications of Christ's law of love for all the earth in human society promises to be an exciting, if daunting, undertaking.

4.2 The suffering Christ

African theologians in South Africa have understandably related their interpretation of the suffering Christ to the sociopolitical dilemma of their country during the apartheid era. The central theme in both Setiloane's poem 'I am an African' (Setiloane 1976:128–131) and Buthelezi's article 'Daring to live for Christ' (Buthelezi 1976:176–180) is black South Africans' identification with Christ on the cross from their own existential experience of oppression and dehumanisation. Setiloane depicts the irresistible attraction of the suffering figure on the cross:

And yet for us it is when He is on the Cross
This Jesus of Nazareth, with holed hands and open side,
like a beast of sacrifice:
When He is stripped naked like us,
Browed and sweating water and blood in the heat of the sun
Yet silent
That we cannot resist Him.

Setiloane's poem is embedded in the African context: a proud affirmation of the black self, aware of a close bond with the ancestors. By directly identifying Yahweh of the Bible with such African deities as Umvelingqangi, Unkulunkulu, Modimo and others, he is introduced into the world of African religion as the great God in whose presence the ancestors dwell, mediating between the living and God. At this point it seems as if Yahweh is assimilated into the God of Africa to the extent that he cedes his Old Testament role of interacting directly with humanity to the mediating ancestors, the 'little gods, bearing up the prayers and supplications' (Setiloane 1976:129).

Even so, the traditional concept of God transcends and transforms this indigenised, somewhat attenuated African God. The cleansing blood of the suffering, dying, sacrificed Christ, the son of Yahweh, Modimo, and Nukulunkulu, breaks down the barriers of skin colour, race and tribe, the confines of ancient Israel and of African tribes:

His blood cleanses
not only us,
not only the tribe
But all, all mankind:

Black and White and Brown and Red
All mankind.

Thus, while Setiloane clings to the traditional portrayal of the God of Africa by identifying him with Yahweh, the breakthrough from a locally confined tribe to a universal concept of 'all mankind' in the atoning death of Christ introduces a completely new dimension – the 'totally other' – which by implication also transforms the old conception of Modimo, Unkulunkulu and Umvelinqqangi (Setiloane 1975:24–38). Setiloane admits that because of blacks' experience of slavery, colonialism and exploitation, some black Christians are calling for a rejection of the pale white God and the worship of a 'God as black as black as we!' (Setiloane 1975:37). Despite this, he believes that the majority of black Christians still consider God to be one: 'He gathers into one herd friend and foe, exploiter and exploited, oppressor and oppressed, apartheid-ist and those he sets "apart"' (Setiloane 1975:37). This poignantly expresses the universal dimension and the essential liberation (salvation) effected by the suffering Christ: it is valid for all people, oppressor and oppressed.

In 'Daring to live for Christ' Manas Buthelezi (1976) refers to the false dichotomy between *human life* and *Christian life*, which led to blind spots in the pre-1994 South African situation. It allowed some Christians to call for an encounter at the foot of Calvary without realising that this meant that Christian human beings must meet at the foot of Table Mountain to make laws for the body which is the temple of the Holy Spirit. To the extent that Christian behaviour ceases to float in a vacuum and becomes incarnated in social, economic and political structures, Christian life becomes an ordinary, everyday human phenomenon:

To dare to live for Christ means to have a Christian impact on these structures. It is a daring act because it involves the risk of suffering just as Christ suffered as he made concrete his love for humanity (Buthelezi 1976:178).

Buthelezi distinguishes between 'oppressive suffering' and 'redemptive suffering'. The former stifles all initiative to a point where suffering becomes fatalistic, a way of life that destroys God's purpose for the victim. As an example Buthelezi cites the inadequate educational facilities in the old South Africa (a situation which is likely to continue for some

time even in the new post-1994 political dispensation), which create a culture of ignorance that holds the victims in its oppressive grip. By contrast there is redemptive suffering, modelled on Christ, which is not an end in itself and which issues in love for the other so that the other may be freed. This is self-sacrificing suffering which relinquishes personal security and interest for the sake of the other. Articulation of personal suffering and that of others is the beginning of the redemptive phase of suffering. Buthelezi (1976:180) concludes as follows:

At this moment in South African history the suffering of black people is becoming redemptive. The black people are now regarding their suffering as a step towards liberation instead of a pool of fate and self-pity. Black consciousness is an instance of how the black people have transmuted their present suffering into the medium of liberation towards self-esteem. This is redemptive suffering.

Despite Buthelezi's reminder that human redemptive suffering should be modelled on Christ's suffering and his emphasis on the sacrificial motive for love, he appears to ascribe an inherently self-determined quality to blacks' suffering which suggests personal merit and is therefore theologically suspect. Can human suffering be redemptive? It seems to me that human suffering, insofar as it is consciously *identified* with the suffering of Christ, can only take on a character of witnessing to the saving and liberating power of Christ. Christ alone can suffer redemptively, and human suffering is only 'redemptive' when fully identified with the source and author of redemption.

Other black South African theologians have also placed the image of the suffering Christ in the context of their people's sociopolitical plight and need for liberation. Hence Bonganjalo Goba's (1980:27) assertion: 'Christ opens the path of liberation as he shares our common humanity and with God in his forsakenness suffers with us as the one who is crucified.' Siggibo Dwane urges a 'detheologising' of the Christian message so that the person of Christ, identified in Western society with the middle and upper classes, can emerge in its full humanity as one of the poor and humble. This means 'to discover the man who died on a city dump outside Jerusalem' (Dwane 1977:8-9).

AAEC theology adds a new dimension to this focus of South African theologians on the cross of Christ in humanly oppressive socioeconomic and political circumstances. Christ's suffering relates not only to the

plight of humanity but to that of all creation. The tree-planting eucharist illustrates this point in several ways. First, the symbolism of earthkeepers partaking of Christ's blood and body while holding seedlings to be planted as part of the sacrament is a powerful statement that Christ's cross has relevance for all the earth. In this symbolism Christ's suffering and death connote a *new message of hope*. Death is not the end of the line. In Africa it is a communal event which does not negate individual self-expression or sever ties between deceased and living. Christ's death holds the promise of new life. In the tree-planting eucharist the perception of community is widened to encompass all the denizens of the earth: humans, all living creatures, all forms of vegetation, trees, grass, shrubs, etc. The seedling in the earthkeeper's hands at the communion table and the seedling addressed as brother or sister are a recognition of the entire earth community as partakers or recipients of holy communion, a way of extending the hope of reconciliation and new life, emanating from the cross, to all creation.

In a sense the tree-planter's eucharist gives expression in the widest sense of the word to an African theology of the cross as proposed by Kwesi Dickson (1984:185–199). In an attempt to overcome the negative and pessimistic features associated with Christ's death on the cross in Western theology, Dickson proposes an approach more compatible with African perceptions of death. The cross, he says, should be presented in 'glorious affirmation of it as that which is the *basis of Christian hope*' in that it 'demonstrates human degradation and evil, but it also *demonstrates triumph*' (Nyamiti, in Schreiter 1991:8). In the eucharist believers share both the death of Christ on the cross and life with one another. The seedling going into the soil expresses human sharing of life with each other and the denizens, animate or inanimate, of all the earth, not in naive triumphalism but in a humble act of proclaiming the good news of the cross, which at no point loses sight of resurrection and salvation.

Second, the liturgy of the tree-planting eucharist relates Christ's body and blood directly to all creation (appendix 1:365). Christ's sacrificial surrender, according to Bishop Marinda, has nothing to do with fatalistic helplessness. His liturgy portrays Christ's expulsion of the merchants from the temple in Jerusalem as a deliberate show of strength 'to save the animals and the birds from the cruel fate (of sacrificial offering) that awaited them'. This demonstration of power and authority

Plate 29 The message of the cross is symbolically present while a Zionist communicant plants and addresses the seedling he had held at the communion table



is integral to the crucifixion event, a prophecy of the kingship which is to come about after Christ's resurrection as the foundation of mission to, and deliverance of, the whole world.

In the third place, the tree-planting eucharist provides the context for considering the twofold nature of the body of Christ as *church* and as *creation* (*supra*:42, 43): the body of believers sacramentally mobilised for holistic mission, and the cosmic body of the saviour-earthkeeper present in creation. It is this latter image, taken from the AAEC's core text (CI 1:17, 'in Christ all things hold together'), which adds a new dimension to the understanding of the suffering Christ. In ceremonies which repeatedly refer to the abuse of nature and its restoration at the behest of an ever-present earthkeeper, Christ emerges and is sensed, by preachers and listeners alike, as *the wounded healer*, the one who feels and is saddened by the destruction of his own body, creation.

Discussions with some of the AAEC's leading figures about the suffering body of Christ within the earth and in relation to tree planting indicate that this is a matter of growing consensus and not just the pet subject of a few preachers, including myself. Said Revd Tawoneichi: 'Our destruction of nature is an offence against the body of Christ (which) suffers as a result. The random felling of trees hurts the body of Christ. The church has to heal this wounded body ... (That Christ's body is part of the earth) follows from the biblical creation story, because Christ's spirit hovered over the waters.' And Bishop Mupure responded: 'Yes, the earth is Christ's body. It is his dwelling place which holds his footprints. It is part of him and everybody relies on it, whether they are Christians or not. Now that Mwari is withholding rain because of people's abuse of this body you can observe their dependence. Everybody, believers and unbelievers alike, is looking at the heavens, seeking help. They say: "Oh God, what have we done?"'

These remarks reveal close identification of Christ with a suffering earth. Christ himself suffers because, as Mwari's co-creator, his spirit once hovered over the primordial mass of waters, as a result of which he feels the destruction of his body, the earth. Yet as a person he also dwells in creation where his footprints are symbols of intimate interaction with the earth community, and he is grieved by all forms of desecration of his wonderful world. When the rains fail because of God's anger and/or Christ's suffering, human beings are overcome by their

guilt of earth-destruction and start seeking means of repair. Hence being in Christ as individual parts of the body of believers means sharing in his suffering. In the AAEC such suffering ceases to be fatalistic acceptance of the earth's demise, and in the planting of trees it proclaims hope of renewal. It witnesses to the redemptive suffering of Christ which is liberating creation from oppressive exploitation.

The tree-planting eucharist highlights the bond between the suffering earthkeeper and his fellow earthkeepers. In taking the sacrament, a legion of Christ's co-workers share the earth's wounded state and show their willingness to transform that burden into dedicated environmental action as a message of redemption. That is the upshot of the communicants' partaking of the crucified body of Christ as members of the church and in the communion of his cosmic body, the wonderful yet broken earth.

Inasmuch as the tree-planting eucharist strengthens the earthkeepers' identification with the wounded healer and their resolve to wage war against the forces of environmental destruction, the image of a suffering Christ is inevitably also reflected in the lives of the movement's iconic leaders. It has been pointed out that engagement in the green struggle sometimes takes a heavy toll. Here I merely mention the late Leonard Gono, the movement's field operations manager, who exemplified in a powerful if unpretentious manner the presence and acute agony of Christ the suffering earthkeeper in the context of our struggle (Daneel 1998:204, 259). Fired by a vision from beyond and with a great love for trees, wildlife and rivers, Leonard in the space of a few years spent himself in a cause where the need of the earth was always greater than his own. As *Mabvamaropa* (literally 'which brings forth blood', the kiaat tree) he established, organised and maintained nurseries; mobilised entire communities to plant and nurture trees in new woodlots; gave direction to earthkeeping planning, policies and project implementation; and inspired both traditionalist and Christian earthkeepers by example. Leonard Gono had his fair share of ordinary human failings but these never interfered with his environmental mission. To us he was the epitome of the earthy missionary, his soul attuned to creation and its maker. He rarely spoke about Christ, but he drove himself uncomplainingly in testimony to the one who is suffering in the barren earth. He left us a legacy of the meaning of the earthkeeper's mission in Africa, a legacy not recorded in books but living on

in the hearts and activities of thousands who know the agony of withering crops under a scorching sky and who find promise and hope in a greening countryside.

4.3 Christ in kinship

One of the commonest analogies which African theologians draw between the African religious world and the dispensation of Christ is that of his humanity in relation to the traditional kinship structure. Pobee – who outlines an African christology against the background of the West African Akan tribe – states that, in contrast to Descartes's *cogito ergo sum*, the Akan maintain a position of *cognatus ergo sum* – 'I belong through kinship therefore I am.' In other words, among the Akan one becomes fully human by belonging to society. The goal and sense of existence is determined by belonging to a family, clan and tribe. 'Since belonging to a kinship group is a mark of a man,' says Pobee (1979:88), 'our attempt at constructing an African christology would emphasise the kinship of Jesus.' Jesus' membership of a family underlines the fact that fullness of life consists largely in community, in breaking down individual isolation. To the Akan it is a pain and a curse to be alone. 'The fullness of a man's humanity is underscored by the relationships he has, a point which is well made by the extended family system in Africa' (Pobee 1979:89). To the Akan Jesus' circumcision illustrates this bond with a kinship group, and his baptism is a rite of solidarity with the rest of humankind.

Mbiti points out that in African society one is not fully human until one has been officially incorporated into the community by the rites of passage. Against this background the African is particularly interested in the birth, baptism and death of Jesus, which make him a complete person via the necessary rites of passage (Mbiti 1968:56). With regard to the cross, he says that Africans do not think primarily of the atonement (not that they deny the salvific significance of the cross) but see it as symbolising Jesus's complete humanity (Mbiti 1968:57). Mbiti also shows how *kinship* dominates all of traditional African life. It operates vertically by uniting the living with the dead, and horizontally by declaring the individual in his village and neighbourhood a relative of every other person. In such a context an individual's self-awareness is experienced only in terms of community and tribal solidarity. Mbiti then



Plate 30 As an extended family of earthkeepers in Christ, the AAEC states its unity of purpose and action at the communion table (top) and in prayer for the healing of Mother Earth (bottom)



suggests that the church, as the body of Christ, can transform this traditional self-awareness into ecclesiastic solidarity rooted in Christ. A black Christian experiences the new community by saying: 'I exist because the body of Christ exists.' 'At the individual level,' says Mbiti, 'this is what the *new kinship in Christ* should mean: a discovery of one's true being as hidden in the *Man par excellence*, and a discovery of one's existence as externalised in the Body of Christ' (Mbiti 1968:62). Mbiti quite rightly infers that it is by discovering kinship in Christ that the church in Africa can have a meaningful and deep impact on life.

It is true to say that to a large extent the AICs had already in their own right – before the formation of the AAEC – discovered what the new community, the new kinship in Christ, signifies in their own diverse contexts. It is equally true that within the framework of AAEC activities this unfathomable yet very real kinship in Christ is acquiring ever wider and more enriching connotations. By perceiving Christ as earthkeeper, the new family or tribe – the extended family of churches who accept earth-keeping kinship and give expression to it by constantly proclaiming the unity of the shoots (churches) in Christ, the vine – receives a new leit-motif: a ministry of earth-care.

In the extended family of earthkeepers Christ is portrayed by some of our green bishops as an elder brother. Said Bishop Farawo: 'Christ is our *mukoma* (elder brother). He is happy when we plant trees, because it shows that we are his family and that we care for all of his creation. Christ is particularly happy if we preach the gospel of tree planting.' The image of Christ as *mukoma* in Shona society is apt, in that the elder brother has authority over his younger siblings and is therefore in a position to determine the direction of the family's activities. As name bearer of the family head the elder brother inherits, at his father's death, ritual responsibility for the family. In the ritual context he then acts as the deceased family head. Applied to Christ, the Shona analogy of relations between elder brother, father and family is quite striking. This analogy is fulfilled and transformed in its biblical qualification. As Penoukou (in Schreiter 1991:45) puts it:

What Christ has in common with God the Father, he expresses in terms of *communion of being* but in a *relation of filiation*: 'That they may be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you' (John 17:11,

21). Furthermore, what Christ has in common with the human being is also expressed in terms of *communion of being*, but in a relation of *union of siblingship*: 'That they too may be one in us ... as we are one, I in them as you in me ...' (John 17:21–23). And: 'Whoever does the will of my Father is a brother to me ...' (Mark 3:32–35) ... It is this communion which is experienced and confirmed in the sacraments.

Where the 'elder brother' is recognised as keeper of the earth, the union in siblingship is manifest in the new family. As siblings, the member churches of the AAEC accept new ecological codes of conduct. These are based, first of all, on identification with the destructive sins of the first Adam, evidenced in the AAEC's ecological confessions which form part of the tree-planting eucharist; and, secondly, on a comprehensive response to the second Adam, Christ, who effects the undoing of the first Adam's disobedience – in this instance by involving his siblings in the liberation of creation. We have already described how this family concern promotes a new understanding of the church and how it proliferates in a wide range of earthkeeping activities, including the development of a green ethic. Thus the AAEC's earthkeeping ministry signals understanding of and identification with the comprehensive nature of Christ the Earthkeeper's kingdom and care. In the words of C de Witt (1991:112):

... the reach of Christ's work extends everywhere (Eph 1:19–23; Col 1:15–20). The work of the last Adam, Jesus Christ, is as broad as the reach of the damage wrought by the first Adam. The work of Christ impacts all human relationships – those with God, with others and with the cosmos ... redemption is our calling to all of them, and not one to the exclusion of others.

Here we see a unique feature of the AAEC: the establishment of an extended family of earthkeepers, whose activities in siblingship recognise and affirm particularly the ecclesiastically much neglected dimension of the elder brother's redemptive work on behalf of the cosmos. In networking across the boundaries of ecclesiastic diversity, the will to establish a just order in all of society, especially on behalf of inanimate members of the kin group (trees, grass, birds, animals, water), is apparent. The communal will in the new family to erect convincing signposts of Christ's social justice for all humankind and eco-justice for mother

earth emerges daily in the ZIRRCO team's search, through Bible study and prayer, for the 'elder brother's' green guidance and strategy. In this endeavour the boundaries of gender, class, authority and socio-economic privilege between team members pale significantly ... so that all the earth, in our small corner of the world, may live and breathe.

In African society, as Mbiti has indicated, kinship inevitably links the living and the dead. Without the ancestors the African kin group is incomplete! Hence the image of Christ as a kinsman necessarily raises the question of his relationship with the living dead, the *midzimu* (ancestors), who in all Shona belief systems – both traditional and Christian – keep influencing the lives of their living relatives. On the whole the Shona AICs, and the Spirit-type churches in particular, have refrained from calling Jesus a *mudzimu*, probably because they reject ancestral demands for veneration as contrary to the Christian message. In the AAEC context church leaders may be even more hesitant to portray Christ as an ancestor because of their awareness that many of their traditionalist counterparts in AZTREC tend to view Christ merely as a white *mhondoro* (tribal spirit), equal in standing to such national hero-spirits as Chaminuka. To my knowledge only the Apostles of Johane Maranke use the term *mudzimu* with reference to the Christian Godhead. They refer to the Holy Spirit as *Mudzimu Unoyera* (literally 'holy ancestral spirit'), but the revelations of the Holy Spirit in their church are so starkly opposed to traditional ancestral demands that the name causes little if any conceptual confusion in the Apostles' understanding of the Spirit's Christian nature and work.

Nevertheless, several African theologians have depicted Christ as ancestor in their attempts to develop a contextualised christology. Nthamburi (in Schreiter 1991:67) discusses Pobee's (1979) attempt in this regard. 'Pobee,' he says, 'maintains that Jesus has a heavy *Kra* (Akan, 'soul') which links him to God. The superiority of the ancestorship of Christ is demonstrated by the fact that since Christ has authority over all cosmic powers he has authority over other ancestors as well.' According to Ambrose Moyo (1983:97) the Shona traditionally referred to God as *Mudzimu Mukuru* (great ancestor). Jesus, being his direct offspring, is therefore *Mudzimu*, with powers of intercession. As the 'heavenly one' Jesus is also the 'supreme universal ancestral spirit' who links all of humankind (Nthamburi, in Schreiter 1991:67). Nyamiti, again, emphasises the importance of death in the making of

an ancestor: 'Through his death, therefore, Christ becomes our brother-ancestor in fullness. By being linked with Adam, Christ's ancestorship acquires a transcendental quality since he is able to transcend family, clan, tribal and racial limitations in a way that our own ancestors cannot' (Nthamburi, in Schreiter 1991:67, with reference to Nyamiti 1984).

Although the AAEC earthkeepers refrain from calling Christ an ancestor, the tendency to proclaim his lordship over all creation and to envisage him as the controller of all cosmic and life-giving forces strengthens the perception of an earthkeeper who, as part of the human family, necessarily relates to the ancestral world as well. And the analogy to this interrelationship which immediately comes to mind is that of Christ as the universal *muridzi venyika* (guardian of the land). In a number of tree-planting sermons I have myself compared Christ's earth-care with the Shona tribal guardian ancestors' concern for the environment. The theological assumption in this portrayal is that through the ages the traditional guardian ancestors have, by virtue of their closeness to Mwari the creator, sensed and accepted their responsibility for the land under their political jurisdiction. Thus they were prototypes prefiguring Christianity among the Shona. Christ's role as *muridzi venyika*, therefore, both fulfils and transforms this ancient guardianship. Through his Spirit, Christ, the earthkeeping *muridzi*, somehow inspires and holds sway over generations of Shona *varidzi*. Through them he appeals to all their living descendants of whatever religious persuasion to share and extend their responsibility for the earth. As Pobee would say, Christ shares ancestorhood with the living dead on account of his *Kra* (soul) linking him with God. However, he also transcends the regional and tribal confinement of the African senior ancestors by linking the local Shona environment and kin group with the universal cosmos and the universal family of humankind (as inferred by Moyo and Nyamiti). The same theological extension to an increasingly continental and global perspective is, of course, also evident in AAEC praxis in the form of widening ecumenical horizons and financial and moral support from the Christian earthkeeping community worldwide.

Irrespective of whether Christ is actually depicted by the AICs as ancestor or not, the earthkeeping fellowship can deepen and enrich his link with the ancestral world by paying attention to the biblically based doctrine of Christ's descent into the underworld (referred to in Western

theology as the *descensio* (or *descensus*) *ad inferno*, 'descent into hell'). J V Taylor (1963:164) accentuates the triumphal aspect of Christ's descent – a familiar trend in Anglican theology – for African theology. Christ's death and resurrection, he says, offer Africa two tremendous innovations: the fact that there is life for the dead because Christ has conquered that realm, and the fact that the present state of the dead is not the end of the story. Similar triumphalist trends are also noticeable in Roman Catholic and Lutheran theology. In the *Catechismus Romanum*, for instance, the purpose of the *descensus Christi* is to announce his triumph to the demons and to release the deceased fathers from the *limbus patrum* (Berkouwer 1953:190). In Reformed theology, on the other hand, the *descensus* is usually interpreted as 'indicative of the humbling of Christ, in which the power of his exaltation and resurrection was already active' (Berkouwer 1953:195).

Sundkler (1960:292) maintains that modern Africans interpret the *descensio* soteriologically: 'It is also mainly from the point of death and *descensio Christi* that the African pastor verbalises the sense of the Holy ...' The essence of the gospel, he says, is experienced by many Africans as forgiveness of sins by Christ alone, a truth revealed by Christ to both the dead and the living. Mbiti (1971:175) develops the soteriological theme in Christ's interaction with the ancestors in an intriguing if speculative interpretation of I Peter 3:19. The text deals with Jesus's preaching to the deceased spirits in prison. Mbiti claims that such proclamation offers the dead a choice and the possibility of change. Spiritual transformation after death therefore has to be a real possibility. Mbiti argues that the Bible does not rule out the possibility of salvation for those who have died 'without Christ'. Hence 'the opportunity to hear or assimilate the effects of the Gospel is continued in the life beyond the grave (cf I Peter 3:19f), and death is not a barrier to incorporation into Christ, since nothing can separate "us" from the love of God (cf Rom 8:38f)'. Although he does not explicitly say so, Mbiti does at this point offer a theological answer to the often-anxious question of first-generation African Christians about the salvation of ancestors who have died 'without Christ'.

Mbiti's views leave little scope for any final eternal punishment. He says quite plainly that it is virtually impossible to accept that punishment or rejection of the dead will last forever. It is impossible for the soul to flee indefinitely from the Spirit of God. God's persistence must ultimately

be more powerful than the soul's resistance to repentance. Thus redemption is ultimately granted even to the soul undergoing 'eternal punishment' (Mbiti 1971:180).

The question does, of course, arise whether Mbiti's somewhat speculative universal salvation – which all people ultimately inherit – sufficiently acknowledges the eschatological summons to the living to repent, and the finality of divine judgment about which the New Testament is quite explicit. In terms of purely human considerations, such as the strong desire for meaningful life after death, Mbiti's projections are very tempting. He runs the risk, however, of missing the intention of the gospel, which apparently does not exclude the radical nature of divine outreach and judgment in relation to humanity. This objection, to my mind, does not necessarily imply that universal salvation is excluded in the final victory of God's kingdom over all evil forces. But one *can* – indeed, *must* – hope for it only in full recognition of, and faith in, the risen Christ's sovereignty over heaven and earth, a realm which as yet remains shrouded in the mystery of the divine dispensation and is not as readily accessible to doctrinal definition as Mbiti's reference to 'the historical plane of human existence' may suggest.

Nonetheless, having noted the risks of speculation, it remains a matter of urgency that the *descensio Christi* and Christ's relatedness to the ancestors be developed to give greater christological depth and clarity to the AAEC's earthkeeping ministry. If Christ is indeed the 'elder brother' whose mission includes revealing himself to and instructing the deceased members of his family, does his message to the ancestors encompass more than the salvation of human beings? The image of Christ as guardian of the land, the one who fulfils the traditional intuition that salvation encompasses divine, human and cosmic wellbeing, already implies that he instructs the ancestors about a holistic salvation. If the entire family of humankind as perceived in Africa is similarly drawn into recognition of Christ's lordship over heaven and earth and into sharing a new responsibility for the liberation of an abused earth, the ancestors' traditionally conceived hold on the living and the debate about heathen and Christian ancestors can – at least in the minds of Christian participants – be defused and 'in Christ' be given new content. If the AAEC interpretation of the inspiration still provided by the ancestral guardians of the land for the chiefs and mediums in our green

struggle were informed by such an understanding of the *descensio Christi*, the prospects of even greater unity of purpose between traditionalist and Christian earthkeepers are improved and judgmentalism may well give way to intensified interfaith dialogue and action.

The need for a well-developed christology which clarifies Christ's relationship with the ancestors is evident, particularly in those tree-planting ceremonies which are attended by large contingents of both traditionalists and Christians. By way of example, here are a few excerpts of speeches delivered at the AZTREC ceremony in Chief Chivi's district on 27 August 1993. Following Bishop Chimhangwa's sermon, which included a plea for environmental stewardship on the basis of the garden of Eden story (Gn 2), a traditionalist, Muzenda, responded as follows:

We do not forget your message, Bishop Chimhangwa. When *sekuru* Chaminuka (a spirit-medium) knelt over there, it was in honour of all our ancestors. He said: 'You, our forefathers, are ahead of us. So talk to those you find there (in the world of the dead), those we do not know. Talk also to Mwari.' We surely do not forget Mwari. The ancestors, if they are determined, will emerge in the life of Mwari.

King Solomon asked only one thing from God, namely wisdom to rule Israel well. As chiefs we need the same wisdom. For things were complicated by these different religions all worshipping Mwari. If we want to succeed, let us worship Mwari. But right now, let us first call on spirit-medium Chaminuka to address us.

As spirit-medium Chaminuka rose to his feet the people cheered, saying: 'Forward with one family in Zimbabwe!' Chaminuka then proceeded to speak:

Down with hatred! Forward with tree planting! Forward with the protection of trees! Down with tree felling! ... *We are united here like one big Shumba family.* When you think of it, to be united is not such a difficult thing, but if you refuse to think it through you will not cooperate with each other.

When the comrades (freedom fighters) were in the bush they cooperated because of one purpose and one family. They were all *the children of one mother*. But nowadays they compare the sizes of their houses (are diverted by individualistic ambitions of luxury and

improved lifestyles). The decisive issue (for united action) is the soil (ie the ancestors identified with the soil). If the soil refuses, you have gathered here for no purpose whatsoever. In your union here today you fulfil the laws of the soil. For this occasion the *mutezo* (believer) who has come here is not the child of this father or that mother, or this church or that church but is simply of the forefathers, a descendant of the land. The driving force for this event is the soil (*vhu*) ... the council of (deceased) elders is right here. All the *madziteteguru* (senior ancestors) are congregated here. So you who are here are fulfilling the laws of those who have gone before, those who trod this earth. We are all of one heart!

We thank all the elders who have come here to Gwenyaya. You strengthen this ward of Nyanyingwe, which is situated in the chiefdom of chief Chivi. It is chief Chivi who has called *sekuru* Chaminuka (the Shona hero-spirit) to raise this matter. We of the soil (at this point the medium identifies with and talks as Chaminuka) only want love, that which inspires the youth when they observe tomorrow that our love has clothed the land. *In this we follow our forebears whose task was to build the family of humankind, to live in harmony.*

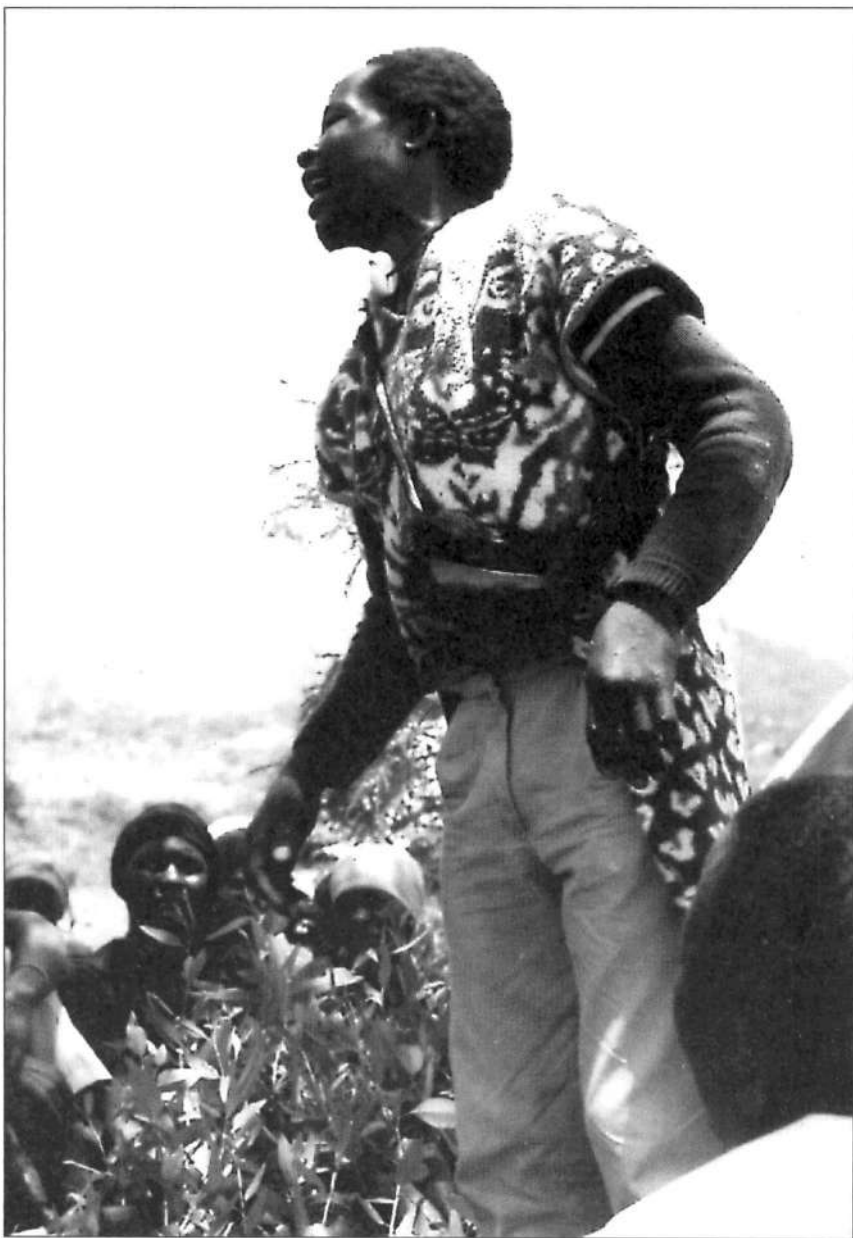
You must cooperate with Gwenyaya and with the grandmothers (older women) here, as well as the grandmothers where you all come from. Let us ululate in honour of this land so that *all of Zimbabwe can be one*, from those who worship according to the books (*vanonamata mumabhuku*) to those who worship according to the soil and the snuff horns (*muvhvu nezvibako*)! In these laws of earthkeeping Zimbabwe unites. *Sekuru* (Chaminuka) affirms all this.

After much ululation the song '*Chaminuka ndiMambo*' (Chaminuka is king) was sung.

Towards the end of the ceremony medium Chaminuka once more addressed the crowd: 'We thank you for gathering the people of the lineage of the vaMhari (dominant tribal group in Chivi district) to plant trees. The soil (ancestors) will *unfasten the heavens* so that the rain will sprinkle the trees and ripen the fruit of tomorrow ... Chief Chivi, this work is of great magnitude. *It is the work of salvation (ruponeso).*'

The strength of the traditional worldview and faith in the ancestors is

Plate 31 Spirit medium Chaminuka (referred to as Tovera in previous volume) addresses fellow tree-planters



overwhelmingly evident in these speeches. Muzenda pays tribute to a Zionist bishop's sermon and acknowledges the connection between the ancestors and Mwari. He even complains about the confusion caused by different religions worshipping Mwari and calls for increased ardour in the worship of this divinity. But it is quite evident that for the present occasion the important matters are the soil, the ancestors. This is clearly borne out by spirit-medium Chaminuka's speech. Unity of purpose and action in the environmental struggle, in the whole nation of Zimbabwe and in the earlier struggle for political independence, emanates entirely from the soil, the ancestors. Moreover, the Shona hero-ancestor, Chaminuka, is considered to be present at the ceremony in the living person of the medium. Consequently those attending the ceremony and engaged in tree planting are seen as obeying and fulfilling the laws of the ancestors. The ancestors get credit for building the family of humankind and it is implied that they also instil religious unity by bringing together the worshippers who read books (Christians) and those who venerate the soil with sacrificial snuff (traditionalists). It seems that even the important work of environmental 'salvation', to which Chief Chivi referred, is somehow attributable to the ancestors.

When one considers the centrality of the ancestors in this ceremony, some cardinal reasons that the AAEC requires a clear-cut and convincing christology in relation to the spirit world are the following. First, some of the claims made by traditionalists conflict with AIC convictions. Tree planting in a pluriform religious context does not mean that everybody present is intentionally complying with ancestral directives, as Chaminuka implied. It could become quite confusing to well-intentioned AIC members, who are urged to fight the war of the trees in concert with traditionalists, if they lack a strong, clear-cut christology in the face of this kind of assertiveness about the ancestors. Christian participants could well feel that the witness-character of their faith should be repressed in these circumstances for the sake of ecumenical unity. It should be made clear that religious tolerance and ecumenical interaction do not exclude Christian witness. And the AAEC should give clear guidance about the meaning of Christ's lordship and his role as supreme earthkeeper amongst the Shona *midzimu*, the guardians of the land in particular. Christ's cross and resurrection need to be made manifest in the domain of the soil.

Second, there are many points of contact in the presentation given

above which could be fruitful for a contextualised christology. References to love and harmony in family life, religious interaction and unity, as well as environmental salvation reflect interaction between Christian and traditionalist values. These notions can be spelled out in greater detail if the soteriological nature of the *descensio Christi* can be convincingly applied in this context. For instance, the chief's interpretation of salvation probably relates to Chaminuka's claim that the ancestors 'unfasten the heavens' for the life-giving rain to fall. This interpretation could be the starting point for a more comprehensive teaching of salvation (*ruponeso*) – applied to both the human family and the cosmos – in Christ's communication with the ancestors.

Third, the numerous references to the importance of kinship and a united family as basic to success in the environmental struggle further illustrate the appropriateness of our theme of 'Christ in kinship', if Christ's incarnation is to achieve real meaning in the African setting. Due to Chaminuka's seniority as a national ancestor in the 'family of Zimbabwe', and his prominence in the spirit war council concerned with all forms of liberation struggle in the country, the universal position of Christ as Chaminuka's 'elder brother' and as chief 'councillor' relating to Mwari on all matters of salvation and liberation throughout Zimbabwe and all creation, requires explanation in AAEC circles – at least, if biblical criteria are to remain definitive in the development of a contextual christology.

An ancestor-oriented christology would be incomplete if it does not include the subject of the communion of saints, the *communio sanctorum*. Taylor (1963:166) writes that 'when the gaze of the living and the dead is focused on Christ they have less compulsive need for each other'. But need is not the only basis for relationships, and since Christ, the second Adam, promotes the corporateness of the community as a whole, Taylor believes that the time has come for the church to give the doctrine of the communion of saints the prominence that Africa wants to assign to it.

Taylor (1963:168) calls the intimate bond between the living and the dead in Christ 'the tender bridge'. The substance of this bond is prayer, reciprocal intercession, even to the extent that the prayers of the dead are solicited. In this Taylor assumes two things: first, that the Christian faith implies direct dealings and communication with the dead; and

second, that addressing the ancestors in traditional African religion is sufficiently devoid of worship not to pose a dilemma for the church in Africa.

The more conservative Christian traditions in Africa, such as the Reformed Protestants, evangelicals and pentecostally oriented AICs, will tend to reject Taylor's implicit synthesis of the Christian communion of saints with traditionalist ancestor veneration. Christians from these traditions may indeed feel compelled to pray for their non-Christian dead, but would be inclined to focus less on the realm of the living dead in deference to the centrality of Christ. Acceptance of the incompleteness of the present eschatological dispensation, as well as the unfathomable mystery of death, may give rise to the belief that it is sufficient for the moment to accept that the living dead are 'with Christ'.

It should be noted that the ancestor cult is often replaced by memorial rites in the African church, in which traditional elements are given Christian content. With reference to the Xhosa, Pauw (1960:210) writes: 'Christian services of thanksgiving or commemoration of the dead are held, usually accompanied by a feast, mainly for kinsmen and the local church members, for which something is slaughtered. This is then done *without calling on the ancestors*.' The omission of any direct address of the ancestors indicates that the traditional dependence on their mystical protective powers is being consciously replaced or transformed.

Black African theologians have also pondered this subject. Mosothoane (1973:87), for example, rightly observes that 'the ancestor cult's refusal to die has proved itself to be an asset to Christian theology, for there has in recent years been a rediscovery of the *Communio Sanctorum* by Christian theologians (Protestant and Catholic alike) and the 'problem' of the ancestor cult seemed to have contributed appreciably to this.' At the very point where the Western approach, with its strong emphasis on individualism and secularism, comes up against a conception of death which is most unbiblically reduced to an individualistic fringe phenomenon, the African death concept underlying the ancestor cult offers a new perspective. According to Mosothoane (1973:89), a positive approach to death and recognition of the closeness of the spirit world reduce the fear of death and help Christians to

grasp anew the biblical tenet that humans were created to transcend their earthly limitations.

In Africa the ancient Christian concept of the communion of saints acquires existential reality. It has greater immediacy and significance as a communion between the living and the dead and an implied union of the church militant and church triumphant than among Western Christians (Verkuyl 1975:384). The Christian confession of 'communion in Christ' and encouragement by a 'cloud of witnesses' (Hb 12:1, 2) acquires new meaning in terms of the African tendency to live with the dead.

How does the *communio sanctorum* relate to the member churches of the AAEC, the majority of whom radically reject the claims of ancestors and ongoing dependence on ancestral protection? The answer to this question revolves around the fact that the churches in question have replaced virtually all ancestral rites with adapted, imaginatively Christianised ceremonies which effectively accommodate traditional needs for communion between the living and the dead. A striking example is the replacement of the key rite, the *kugadzira* (when a deceased person is elevated to the status of ancestorhood), with the *runyaradzo* (consolation ceremony).

In the latter ceremony, instead of bringing the deceased home and inducting him or her into the realm of *midzimu*, the late believer is 'accompanied' (*kuperekedza*) to heaven and more or less presented to the Lord by the church (Daneel 1974:131). Instead of addressing the dead, as is customary in the *kugadzira*, *runyaradzo* sermons focus on positive and exemplary features which were evident in the life of the deceased believer. This emendation is one of the most significant aspects of the process of reshaping. In this way the rite is stripped of the old *kupira* (veneration or 'worship') connotation and becomes more of a positive commemoration of the departed. Hence the traditional custom of 'living with the ancestors' receives a Christian focus by awareness that it is inspired by the dedication and Christian discipleship of those who are believed to have died 'in Christ' (Daneel 1973:71).

In the *runyaradzo* context an earthkeeper's *communio sanctorum* makes sense. The AAEC has admittedly not paid much attention to this subject, possibly because there is as yet no consensus on a convincing

christology relating specifically to the ancestral world. In addition, the movement is still too young for commemoration of its pioneer leaders to have become a direct concern. However, once a number of leading earthkeepers have passed the divide between the living and the dead, yet another tradition in AIC ritual life is bound to be established. For *runyaradzo* ceremonies on behalf of deceased earthkeepers will no doubt entail lengthy narratives of their contributions as tree planters, nursery keepers, instructors and mobilisers of the people. Their exemplary lives, even their failings, will highlight the relationship they had, and continue to have, with Christ the earthkeeper, their elder brother, fellow ancestor, healer of creation and saviour. I anticipate that only during this phase of development will the inspirational impact of the Christian dead on the still living family of earthkeepers become existentially manifest. Only then can one expect a more comprehensive and definitive christology of the soil (ancestors) to take shape. For in the AICs it is only from the ritual enactment of experience that new tenets of theology are born.

The *runyaradzo* on behalf of the late Leonard Gono, ZIRRCO's former field operations manager, was in the nature of an earthkeeper's *communio sanctorum*. At that ceremony Leonard was presented as belonging to the 'cloud of witnesses' (Hb 12:1,2), as one who, through his love for the wilderness and dedication to full stewardship of creation, keeps reminding us of our union in Christ the earthkeeper – a union which somehow both accepts and defies the valley of death. As a man of the earth Leonard had no claims to holiness. Nevertheless, in his earth-keeping mission he served people of all religious persuasions without any judgment, thereby giving us all a glimpse of God's grace. Ongoing union with him could mean that the AAEC's interpretation of *communio sanctorum* and the cloud of witnesses will eventually extend beyond a mere focus on the departed Christian earthkeepers to reflect not only AIC participation but also Christ the earthkeeper's outreach in a religiously pluriform community. Leonard's untimely death could also inspire the inclusion of a commemorative ceremony in the AAEC's tree-planting eucharist, something which will deepen the union in Christ of living and deceased saints of the earth.

4.4 Christ the healer

The traditional healer, the *nganga*, has provided the primary paradigm for

an indigenous christology since the inception of African Christianity. Setiloane (1979:64) believes that an authentic African christology should be sought in the healing practices of the *bongaka*. Pobee, again, considers the parallel between the Akan healer and Jesus a suitable illustration of the divinity, and especially the power and authority, of Christ. The similarity is that both are 'ensouled' by God during the process of healing. According to Pobee (1979:93) the difference, however, would lie in the intensity of such ensouling by God: 'Jesus was in a perpetual state of holiness, perpetually ensouled by God, so much so that the divine power was like a continuously flowing electric power in him, unlike the traditional healer, who has the occasional experience of it.'

Buana Kibongi (1969:52–54) gives the following description of the *nganga's* relationship with the Christian church in the former Zaire:

For good or ill, Christianity has not always escaped the heritage of *nganga*. The Christian missionary drew part of his authority, without knowing it, from the psychological state which *nganga* had created. The missionary was called *nganga Nzambi* (God's priest), as distinct from *nganga nunkisi* (the fetish priest). It goes without saying that the missionary benefited from the respect which was formerly due to the *nganga vankisi* ... The Congolese priest or minister is also called *nganga Nzambi*. He profits from the situation created by *nganga* and the missionary. *Nganga* has not only assured to some extent the social status of Church workers; he has also left them the legacy of religious and conceptual moral tools: it is undoubtedly *nganga* who created words such as *Nzambi* (God), *munuka* (to define oneself; hence *masumu*, sin) ... *Nganga's* work partly enabled the Bible to be translated into Congolese languages. The Christian preacher consciously or unconsciously uses part of the vocabulary left by *nganga*. This is where Congolese priesthood confronts Biblical revelation.

Kibongi also shows that the Congolese *nganga* was never a mediator between *muntu* (humans) and *Nzambi* (God), but only between human beings and the departed spirits. The *nganga's* activities evoked the concepts of liberation and redemption: '*Nganga* is certainly the saviour or the liberator of *Muntu*' (Kibongi 1969:54). Buana Kibongi evidently regards the *nganga* as the precursor of the priest and the minister – not only as a healer but especially as a religious leader. After all, the *nganga* is Christ's

precursor in Africa: he, as the new *nganga*, is the fulfilment of the traditional one. '*Ngangas* willed to save man, but did not succeed in doing so; Christ did so fully once for all. Christ has therefore accomplished the work of *Nganga*' (Kibongi 1969:55).

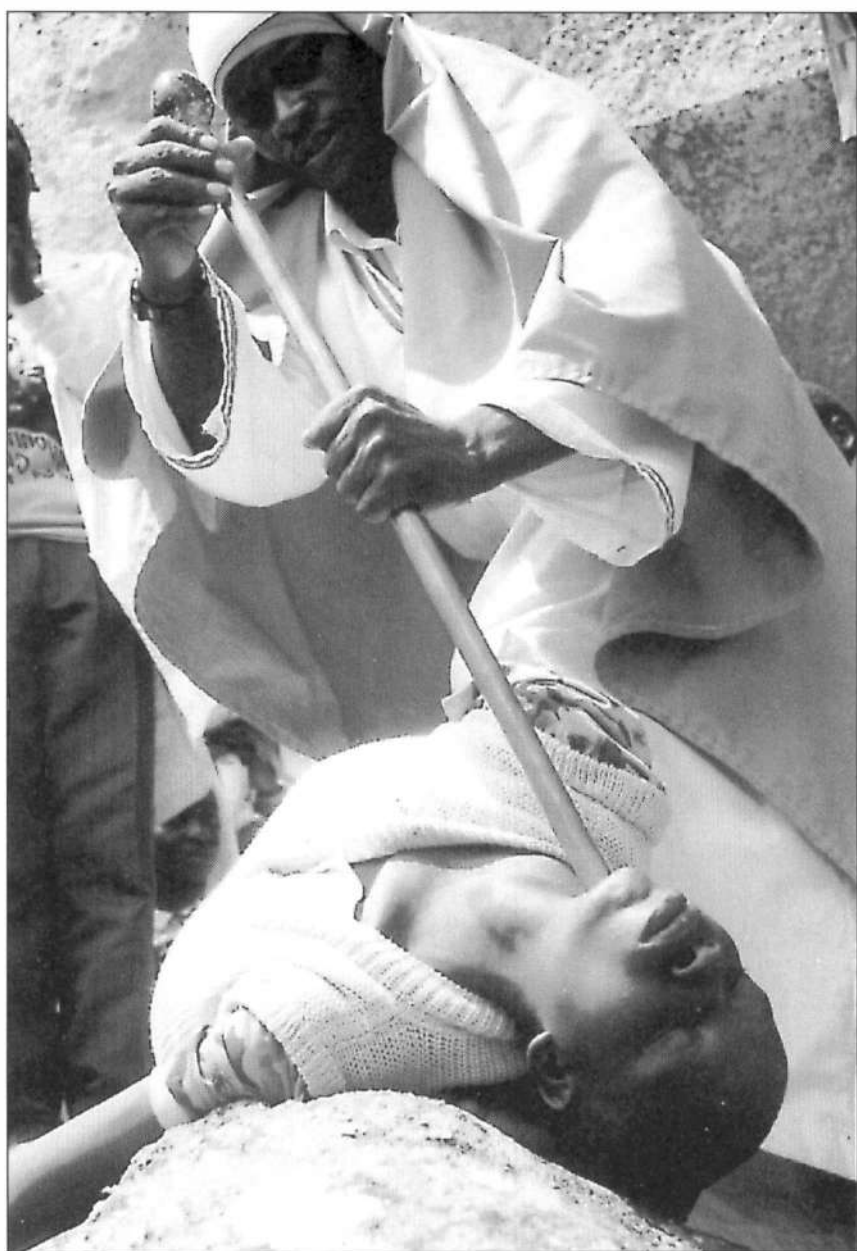
The prophetic Independent Churches illustrate the paradigm of Christ as the 'healing *nganga*' more vividly than any other churches in Africa. In this respect they are making a decided contribution to an African christology, one which African theologians would be well advised to note. In the Shona prophetic movements the prophetic healers naturally see their faith-healing activities as a substitute for, and in opposition to, traditional *nganga* practices (Daneel 1974:186f). Nonetheless, their diagnostic and therapeutic work – the focal point of these movements and certainly their most dynamic recruiting technique – is largely based on the ideas and techniques of the *nganga*. The chief similarity is that the prophet, like the *nganga*, ascribes disease, misfortune or lack of success to spirits, evil powers, magic and the like. However, the prophets explicitly state that their extrasensory perception comes from the Holy Spirit and not from the divinatory means used by the *nganga*. The prophets insist that the spirits in question have no legitimate claim on the beleaguered patient. Therapy therefore does not consist in traditional sacrificial rites or the use of medicine, but in the exorcism of threatening spirits and symbolic actions representing the healing power of the Christian God. In their dealings with patients prophets emphasise mainly the work of the Holy Spirit. This does not mean that there is no christology, but rather that it is *presupposed* as the basis of all healing practices. In fact the prophets themselves personify the liberating and healing ministry of Christ. In them the *nganga* tradition is partly continued, even fulfilled, but it is also radically Christianised.

Through the activities of the AAEC the Shona prophetic movements are widening their perceptions and ministry of healing. Instead of being presupposed in the prophets' Spirit-filled outreach to afflicted humanity, Christ now emerges more decisively than before as the *healer of all creation*, as the one who deals consistently with both human and environmental illness. This is manifest in the AAEC's tree-planting eucharists which, in contrast to AZTREC's *mafukidzanyika* (earth-clothing) events, are called *maporesanyika* (earth-healing) ceremonies. The name places the main emphasis on healing. '*Maporesanyika* ceremonies,' says Revd Solomon Zvanaka (in ZIRRCOON Annual Report 1994:10), 'combine with

Plate 32 The traditional African healer, *nganga*, provided the primary paradigm for an indigenous christology



Plate 33 Apostolic prophet-healer exorcises afflicting spirits from a patient



the eucharist, where Christians experience the newness of life in a novel way, where relationships are expressed, between God and man, and between man and all of creation. There is new theologising where celebrants express new perceptions of sins, salvation and reconciliation, the lordship of Christ and the unity of creation. Relevant biblical texts are read and interpreted to the people. What a novelty! What an impetus that drives people to exercise Christian stewardship over the earth!' Zvanaka here captures something of the breadth and richness of the ritual context in which Christ emerges as *healer* and *saviour*.

Keen group awareness of Christ's presence as healer marks most *maporesanyika* ceremonies. Bishop Wapendama's sermons (*supra*:39, 41) illustrate the common interpretation of AAEC earthkeeping as Christ's work, an extension of Christ's healing mission. Other sermons confirm this trend. At Bishop Marinda's *maporesanyika* ceremony in 1993, Revd Machingura combined the themes of sacrament and healing as follows:

They (our friends from ZIRRCO) came here today because of the presence of Jesus Christ. This is a holy occasion, our Paseka, ordained by Jesus Christ, who gathered his disciples for the use of the sacrament ...

In I Corinthians 5 Paul says that we are the temple of God and therefore should become holy people. It must be seen that Jesus is drinking his cup (*mukombe*: gourd) among us. That is our covenant with him. We must make sure that there is nothing which prevents us from meeting the blood of Christ. Drive out the wicked among you (1 Cor 5:13)! You believers, do not allow Christ's blood to be polluted. Remove the evildoers! I have told you: remove the *varoyi* (wizards)! Will we look at one of the big trees and think of felling it? NO! Even if you are inquisitive, leave it as it is!

We are all sinners. We have to confess fully so that we can be cleansed. We confess because of the blood of Jesus Christ. His blood is *mushonga* (medicine) inside the body of a human being. Jesus's blood therefore has great *simba* (power) to heal.

In the past there were no hospitals. People ate fruit: *nhunguru*, *matunduru*, *mishuku* ... sweet and sour fruit. The fruit itself contained Mwari's medicine and was adequate to keep people healthy.

Likewise, if we follow Christ's directives today in our paschal celebrations, he will protect and keep us.

As is characteristic in the AICs, cleansing or purification of the communicants receives great attention in this sermon. The occasion is holy and therefore participants must prepare themselves to be worthy of communion with the body and blood of Christ. Significantly, the wicked who should be excluded from sacramental participation are not only the moral transgressors, but specifically also the wizards who destroy nature through wanton tree felling. The implication is that Christ's blood – that is, his person – addresses, cleanses and heals both people in the conventional sense and creation, through the body of sacramentally united earthkeepers. In the eucharist Christ features quite dramatically as healer in that his blood is perceived as medicine or 'life force' in the bodies of the celebrants – perhaps a combination of African symbolism, residual beliefs in the *nganga's* magical healing praxis and an indigenised version of Roman Catholic transubstantiation as regards the elements of the sacraments? Whatever the answer to this question, the preacher introduces the 'medicinal presence' of Christ in the communicants in the context of Mwari's natural provision for human healing in nature, a further indication of the interconnectedness of ecological wholeness and a healing christology.

Insofar as the Shona Spirit-type churches consider Christ's salvific work to be integral to healing, the preacher cited above is actually expressing, at the African grassroots, christological convictions very similar to those propounded by Shorter (1985:51–58), albeit less systematised. All healing, he contends, is directed to eternal life and wholeness: 'In the church this is realized through the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, which is the renewal of the mystery of Christ's cross and resurrection.' The sacraments are the works of the divine Spirit, whom Shorter calls 'medicine of life', since it continues Christ's healing mission (in Schreiter 1991:10).

The christological significance of the AAEC's tree-planting eucharist lies in its ritualised blending of the wide-ranging tenets of Christ's healing ministry. Observations by commoners participating in the *maporesanyika* ceremonies reflect a growing awareness of the comprehensive nature of this ministry; thus illustrating its conscientising impact. Said one of the villagers in a *maporesanyika* speech: 'The protection of trees

is a holy matter. The land is barren. The blanket of vegetation which should cover it has been torn away. In its nakedness the land is ill. We, too, the people of Mupakwa, are ill. *We have come to be healed, together with the land.* In Jesus' time you only needed to touch his garment to be healed. In clothing the land with trees we, too, are being healed.'

These words show a simple yet profound understanding that Christ came to heal the sickness of the entire world. Human and environmental illness are interlinked and the earthkeepers' care for the environment is part of the therapy for their own malady. Once again the AAEC's ritualised earthkeeping experience, verbalised by an unsophisticated peasant, corroborates Shorter's observation about an African healing christology when he says that 'healing becomes a possibility to establish and maintain harmony with the natural environment. Environmental wholeness is fundamental to human well-being' (in Schreiter 1991:10). Indeed, the villager quoted above realised that the disruption of nature's equilibrium was also distorting and threatening human life. Both shared a need for healing and salvation. Both were present at the tree-planting eucharist to seek and share in the deliverance wrought by the 'wounded healer' of Nazareth. For this AAEC earthkeeper healing and wellbeing lie in restoring harmony in creation, a function which requires sacrifice on the part of Christ's present-day fellow wounded healers.

Finally we consider the healing christology implicit in the various phases of the tree-planting eucharist.

4.4.1 Healing and cleansing

In anticipation of Christ's healing presence in the sacrament, the communicants prepare themselves by publicly confessing their moral and ecological sins. The cleansing and spiritual self-renewal are necessary if Christ is to be 'seen' breaking the bread and drinking the cup of wine in the midst of his present-day disciples. Destructive attitudes of communicants, it is believed, should be prevented from polluting Christ's blood which heals the communicants and enables them to fulfil their own environmental healing task. So Christ is already actively present in the cleansing of communicants prior to the actual taking of the sacramental elements, confronting through his Spirit the unrepentant wizards who spoil the earth.

Here, too, the healing effected by Christ differs from that of the *nganga*. The prophets in charge of confessions do not as a rule impose ostracism on an exposed *muroyi venyika* (wizard of the earth), as the *nganga* would have recommended. Prophetic disapproval is expressed in public exposure of the wizard and, in the event of an unrepentant spirit, exclusion from the eucharist. But the prophet leaves the door of reconciliation open by keeping the *muroyi* in the church community. Hence there is still a prospect of Christ's forgiveness and healing (enacted in the *muroyi's* eventual change of heart), reinstatement in the community of believing earthkeepers and full participation in *mapore-sanyika* ceremonies. Strict as the conditions for confession and cleansing may be, Christ emerges at this juncture as a forgiving healer, whose mercy entreats wizards to change their ways from environmental destruction to earth-care. Healing thus entails reconciliation and harmony between humans and all creatures; it seeks to establish respect for life and mercifully defers final judgment of the as-yet heartless exploiters of creation.

4.4.2 Healing and proclamation

In eucharistic sermons Christ emerges, as was shown above, as the Lord of creation who mandates his church to conduct an extended mission, which includes spreading environmental good news; as the earthkeeper who suffers because of the destruction of creation; and so forth. In all these images, however, Christ remains essentially the healer/saviour who fulfils the Old Testament prophecies of Isaiah 40–43, in that he brings life – water, trees and wildlife – to the wastelands. Through ZIRRCO's iconic leaders he provides the means for restoring and holding together (Col 1:17) the things of nature which are falling apart. The presence of numerous prophetic healers, moreover, who are living representatives of Christ's New Testament healing ministry, rekindles hope of harmony and wholeness in a better future. And the repeated messages about Christ's body and blood as 'medicine' for his disciples inspire commitment, in renewed health and vigour, to an otherwise all but impossible, daunting task of earth healing.

4.4.3 Healing through sacramental empowerment

The earthkeeper's holding a tree seedling while partaking of the bread and wine symbolises identification with and dependence on the healing

powers of Christ. The queues of communicants from many and diverse denominations become a united army of healers at the communion table. In the sacrament their divisions are overcome as their union in the body of the great healer empowers them for their environmentally therapeutic task. As if touching the garment of the historical Christ, the communicants themselves are being healed in Christ, and their healing motive or task – both for the ‘soil’ and for humans – is somehow divinely affirmed. Hope is rekindled in the ranks of the earthkeepers, and they draw encouragement from the cleansing, ‘medicinal’ blood of Christ. Knowledge of the universality of Christ’s healing powers also makes the communicants aware of the global dimension of their regionally expressed service of stewardship.

4.4.4 Healing the soil

Through the procession of communicants going into the new woodlot to plant their seedlings Christ the wounded earthkeeper addresses the eroded soil. It is he who, in the tree planters’ dialogue with nature, implores the seedlings to grow strong roots to prevent further soil erosion by water and wind. It is his healing hands which plant the seedlings in the soil, and with them the promise of protection and a new cycle of life. Some tree planters, on the other hand, consider the act of planting to be healing the soil, the abused cosmic body of Christ. Thus they witness to their union in the body of Christ, which has just been sacramentally affirmed, and their responsibility for it.

There is also a spiritual dimension to Christ’s healing of the soil. For the duration of *maporesanyika* ceremonies at least, concern for the traditional spirit provinces of the guardian ancestors and the old conflicts and rivalries associated with past conquests of the land are pushed into the background. The presence and participation of chiefs, headmen and a wide range of AIC members – all of them from the surrounding territories and all of them representing different, often inimical histories, myths and ancestral bonds with the soil – are conducive to mutuality and reconciliation rather than rivalry. It is at this juncture that the AICs involved in the ceremony could ritually develop this interaction between Christ and the *varidzi venyika* by intimating that the former’s lordship over all creation breaks down territorial divisions and mobilises spirit unity in the interest of concerted action for environmental restoration.

4.4.5 Healing human beings

Finally, as the tired tree planters return to the meeting place where the sacrament was administered, the healing cycle comes full circle. Women with sick children, elderly people with ailments, young people with problems – all the *maporesanyika* fighters who seek help – flock to where the prophetic healers are getting ready to tend to the needy. Once again the drums of Zion, of the AAEC, can be heard beating rhythmically; rattles are shaken and the women start swaying in song and dance. The healers shake and speak in tongues to confirm the presence of the Holy Spirit. The spirit of Christ the healer moves in our midst. The late afternoon sun rays beaming through the flimsy leaves of seedlings in the new woodlot and in the expectant eyes of afflicted people tell their own story: *Christ's healing of the land and his healing of people join hands, are one!*

I stand among the healers, praying and laying on hands, sprinkling people with holy water, blessing newly filled bottles of water, healing and being healed. I have never claimed any healing vocation or powers, but I participate nevertheless, having learnt about diagnosis of illness in terms of African worldviews and about the value of the AIC symbols of Christ's healing and protective power. I am no longer surprised at hearing patients answer affirmatively when I ask questions about vengeful spirits, spoilt relations or *uroyi* (wizardry). Feeling the straining body in a state of possession or the heat of witchcraft medicine in a victim's system no longer disturbs me. Every time I am thus engaged the nagging questions of my rational mind recede and I find quiet and peace in the doing. Indeed, as the villager above observed: *'We have come to be healed, together with the land.'*

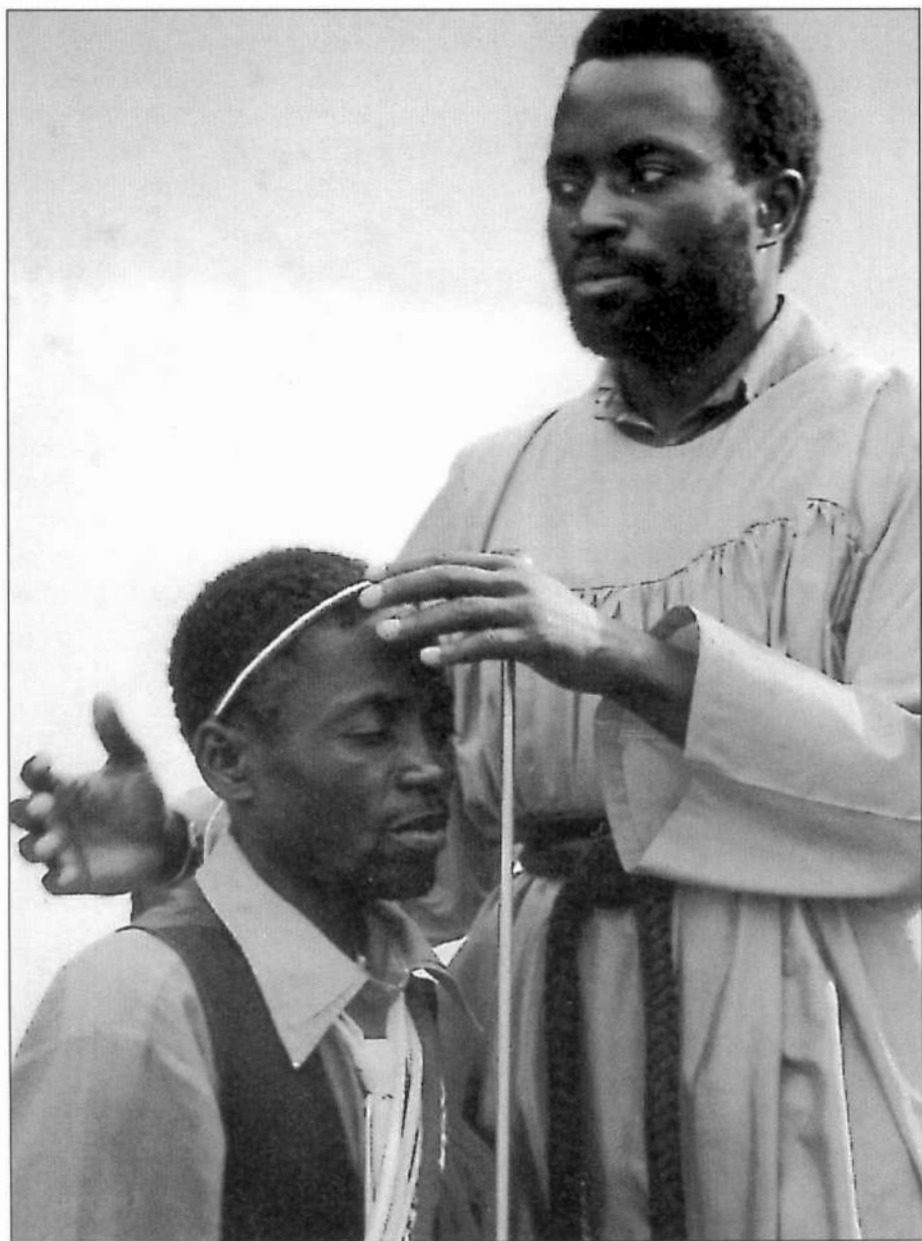
In front of us is a sea of black heads, faces with hopeful eyes, eyes full of pain, fear, rejection or joy. Hands, black and white, are laid on those heads in prayer, conveying a message of reconciliation and wholeness. They are the hands of icons, illuminating the presence, empathy, love of Jesus. They are wounded hands, suffering hands, still dusty from planting seedlings in the soil. In the dying sun they are the reassuring hands of the Lord himself, holding a promise of new life, resurrection ... where all evil ceases.

Cécé Kolié (1991:141–142) after surveying the emerging christologies in the Roman Catholic and established mission churches in Africa,

Plate 34 Final phase of the tree-planting exercise. Tired tree planter Bishop Marinda prays for a sick child



Plate 35 At sunset healing the land and healing people come full circle as Revd Solomon Zvanaka lays hands on a fellow earthkeeper – hands which still carry the dust of tree-planting



concludes that Christ the healer does not function convincingly in the existential reality of individual believers. This, he claims, is because the established churches are still foreign to the fundamental problematics of black people. 'Our liturgies,' he maintains, 'do not celebrate human beings fighting disease, or struggling so hard to get up on their feet, or striving to be free.' Consequently, he states, 'to give Christ the face of the healer in Africa (even though this was his principal activity in Israel) will not be feasible until the manifold gifts of healing possessed by all of our Christian communities have begun to manifest themselves.'

Kolié's criticism correctly identifies a serious limitation in Western-oriented Christianity in Africa. To many believers the face of Christ remains alien and masked when it comes to their existential problems. However, the AAEC's blending of a ministry of human and environmental healing clearly shows that both in liturgy and individual experience the healing features of Christ are being unmasked and revealed. The 'manifold gifts of healing' are emerging forcefully and understandably in the African context where Christ meets his fellow wounded healers. He does so in the prophetic diagnosis of all ills, cleansing confessionals, tree-planting hands, exorcising hands ... all to the rhythm of dancing feet in which the inner struggle for life, dignity and wholeness is fierce and relentless.

CHAPTER 5

The Holy Spirit in creation

According to Moltmann (1985:9) the trinitarian interpretation of creation in theological tradition has tended to emphasise God the Father as creator, in contradistinction to his creation, in a monotheistic way. Consequently attempts were made to develop a specifically christological doctrine of creation. Moltmann, however, deliberately chooses to focus on the third person of the trinity: creation in the Spirit. He argues that all divine activity is pneumatic in its manifestation. It is always the Spirit who brings the activity of the Son to its goal. Everything that exists does so through the inflow of the cosmic Spirit's energy and potency. 'This means,' says Moltmann, 'that we have to understand every created reality in terms of energy, grasping it as the realized potentiality of the divine Spirit.'

Moltmann (1985:11–12) notes a similar interpretation in Calvin's work. To Calvin the Holy Spirit, the 'giver of life' of the Nicene Creed, is the fountain of life (*fons vitae*). Just as the Holy Spirit is poured out on all created beings, so Calvin's 'fountain of life' is present in everything that exists and lives:

If the Holy Spirit is 'poured out' on the whole creation, then he creates the community of all created things with God and with each other, making it that fellowship of creation in which all created things communicate with one another and with God, each in its own way. The existence, the life, the warp and the weft of interrelationships subsist in the Spirit. 'In Him we live and move and have our being' (Acts 17:28).

The cosmic Spirit referred to by Moltmann and Calvin has no relation to Stoic pantheist notions. It remains God's Spirit acting in this world in the differentiated modes of *creating, preserving, renewing and consummating* life. In view of this I fully agree with Moltmann's (1985:112) basic assertion:

Creation in the Spirit is the theological concept which corresponds

best to the ecological doctrine of creation which we are looking for and need today. With this concept we are cutting loose the theological doctrine of creation from the age of subjectivity and the mechanistic domination of the world, and are leading it in the direction in which we have to look for the future of an ecological world-community ...

Faced with ... (the progressive destruction of nature and the pile-up of nuclear armaments) we have only one realistic alternative to universal annihilation: the non-violent, peaceful, ecological world-wide community in solidarity (my italics).

Moltmann introduces several distinctions to explain the position in creation that he assigns to the Spirit. We shall not dwell on these, but merely note that an integral part of his view is that of God's immanence in creation. He also refers to the interpenetration (*perichoresis*) of the trinity – the social doctrine of the mutual indwelling of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In this interactive principle (God in the world and the world in God; heaven and earth in the kingdom of God; soul and body united in the life-giving Spirit into a human whole; etc) *there is no such thing as a solitary life*. All living things, each in its own distinctive way, live in, with, from and for one another. This trinitarian interpenetration – which shows a distinct parallel with African religious holism in which nothing is solitary or self-existing – is the key to Moltmann's envisaged ecological doctrine of creation. *Inasmuch as the cosmic spirit is also the* organising principle of human consciousness, it is important to remember that through the Spirit we are bound together with other people socially and culturally (an interlocking association which can be described as the common spirit of humanity) and

... through the Spirit we are bound together with the natural environment. This association is a system comprising human beings and nature. *We might describe it as a spiritual ecosystem*. Through the Spirit, human societies as part-systems are bound up with the ecosystem 'earth' (*Gaia*) ... So human beings are participants and subsystems of the cosmic life-system, and of the divine Spirit that lives in it (Moltmann 1985:18) (my italics).

Why this lengthy discourse on Moltmann's views? I include it because I subscribe to the main tenets of his ecological doctrine and because of its relevance to the AICs. Moltmann's idiom may be alien and the con-

text of his appeal may be mainly the academic West and the threat of modern industrialisation to our planet. He observes, however, that *our only realistic alternative to annihilation lies in the solidarity of a world-wide ecological community*. This is where, for Africa, traditionalist ecological concerns and the enacted theology of the AICs enter into it. The latter's vision of creation in the Spirit can help to mobilise and inspire the desperately needed ecological mass movement. Besides, Moltmann's views on the cosmic spirit in creation poignantly express a central concern of AICs of the prophetic type.

5.1 The Holy Spirit as the 'fountain of life'

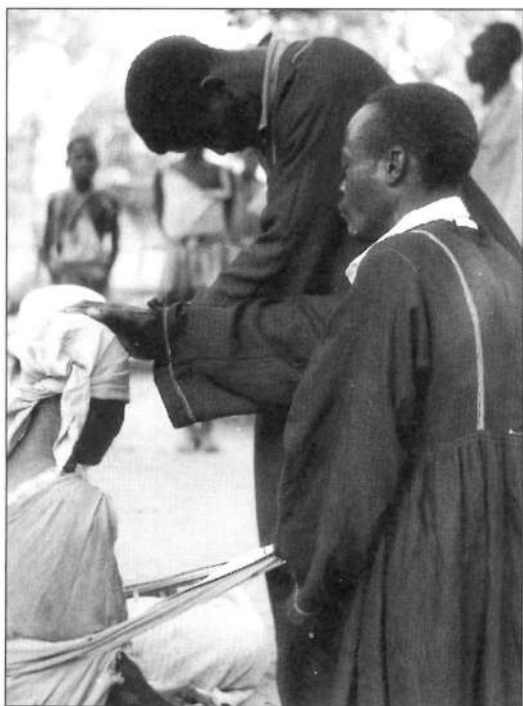
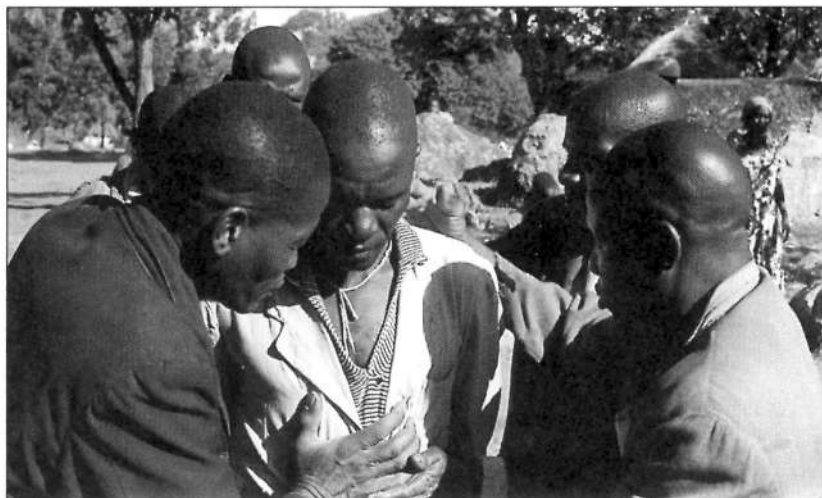
In some respects the AIC prophets of Africa probably understand and experience the life-giving power of the outpoured Spirit better than either Calvin or Moltmann does. Their knowledge is shaped by their non-Christian forefathers, who sensed as well as any Old Testament sage that the *mweya* (spirit) imparted by God the *musiki* (creator) was the source of all life. This intuition ultimately blossomed into an all-pervading testimony to the life-giving power of the *Mweya Mutsvene* (Holy Spirit) in the Spirit-type churches, especially in their healing colonies.

Observe, for instance, a Zionist 'maternity clinic' in which the ritual and worship revolve entirely around new human lives. The expectant mothers wear holy cords around their bodies to ward off the attack of evil powers such as witches. Special prayer meetings and dances invoke the presence of a protective Holy Spirit. In the early morning the prophetesses prepare holy water and take all the newborn babies outside into the rays of the morning sun where they are stripped naked and sprinkled liberally with the life-preserving water of the Spirit.

Witness, too, the healing ceremonies of the sick, where the Holy Spirit's power is symbolised by smoke to repel harmful spirits. There are hours of sympathetic pastoral counselling between prophet and patient; laying on of hands, touch of the leader's holy staff, sprinkling of holy water and the use of a host of symbolic objects to cure or preserve life. In a sense, too, the blessing of the seed for the crops and the pegging of maize fields with prophetically blessed stakes symbolise the healing and protective power of the Holy Spirit over inanimate things.

All these symbols testify to the outpouring of the Spirit, the fountain of

Plate 36 Healing activities through laying on of hands in the ZCC (top) and the First Ethiopian Church (*Topia*) (bottom) witness to the basic belief of AICs in the healing and life-giving power of the Holy Spirit



life in creation. It is a chorus of supplication. It takes place in the midst of suffering. But in the final analysis it is a massive celebration of faith to honour the only true source of life, the Holy Spirit.

This massive testimony to the Spirit's life-giving powers undoubtedly shows certain flaws. To some participants the holy cord or water which is believed to ward off evil forces is little more than, or equivalent to, a traditional amulet. The cord may be seen as a power in itself, without faith in the triune God playing a significant role. Here the magical belief system still holds sway. In this respect Beyerhaus (1969:75) and Oosthuizen (1968:119–142) have indicated a misinterpretation of the work of the Holy Spirit in the AICs. In my experience among the Shona, however, such misinterpretations are the exception rather than the rule. They resemble our own Western Christian misconceptions when we seek merit rather than evidence of grace in the good works we perform, or when we try to manipulate God to favour us by producing yet another 'truthful' theological statement, even if born of a loveless heart.

Most AIC prophets experience the Holy Spirit as the indwelling Spirit of God, whom they do not control or manipulate. Interviews with prophetic church dignitaries show that the initiative for inspiration or revelation through the Holy Spirit is ascribed overwhelmingly to God and not to any human being. Prophets often declare that they only receive guidance from the Holy Spirit after fasting, Bible study, prayer and seclusion. They also readily acknowledge that these actions are not causal or manipulative, but that the Holy Spirit retains the initiative. Few prophets claim that they can 'give' the fullness of the Spirit to a lay member of the church. It remains an *act of faith*. In addition, the spiritual state of the recipient and the ultimate will of God determine whether there will be new life, preservation of life, healing or special gifts such as prophecy and speaking in tongues (Daneel 1987:262).

In the Spirit-type churches the *fons vitae* flows freely, uninhibited by written dogma. Here no one speaks about 'trinitarian perichoresis'. It simply exists: God *in* the world, and the world in God. In the AIC prophetic community there is no such thing as a *solitary* life, unless of course the presence of a *muroyi* (wizard) necessitates cleansing, sanctification and reconciliation. Through this holistic interpenetration of God, people and things, where the fountain of life is manifest in

unquestioned action, the Spirit has prepared fertile soil for an ecological theology.

The AAEC bears testimony to this. The reflections of leading figures about the origins of their movement show an awareness of the pneumatic action of God both in and since the creation of the universe. Consider the following statements:

Bishop Farawo: The Holy Spirit is the founder of this movement, because he first of all created Adam and Eve and gave them the task of keeping the trees and the animals. Today the AAEC is there to continue this tradition, this task of keeping all created things.

Revd Tawoneichi: The Holy Spirit is the founder of this movement, in the same way as he was the creator in Genesis, the source of all things. In creating human beings he gave them the task of stewardship, that is, to keep all of creation. We were created specifically for the task of earthkeeping.

Bishop Machokoto: Without the inspiration of the Holy Spirit the thoughts for this tree-planting task would not have arisen. Bishop Moses's (Daneel's) conviction to unite the churches in earthkeeping endeavour therefore came from the Holy Spirit.

Much like Moltmann's emphasis on *creation in the Spirit* and the *Spirit in creation*, leading AIC earthkeepers associate the third person of the trinity directly with creation. In the same way as the Holy Spirit was active in the original and ongoing creation of all life he (or she) is also the initiator of all earthkeeping endeavour, including that of our movement. It is only the divine source of life which can inspire the kind of concern for creation in human beings which leads to genuine, altruistic stewardship. Thus any lasting environmental contribution of the AAEC is attributable to the inspiration and promptings of the Spirit. Through this divine agency the destiny of humankind, according to Tawoneichi, is irrevocably bound up with the upkeep of creation. The presence of the Spirit in fellow human beings, in trees, rivers and mountains (Mandondo's sermon, appendix II:375–380) – in other words, the ongoing evidence of divinely given life – is what constitutes human awareness of the *immanence of the creator God* in creation (*supra*:60, 117). This is the source of this holistic interpenetration between Creator-Spirit, humans and all other living or inanimate things in creation.

That the AAEC understanding of the Holy Spirit in creation is informed by more than an awareness of Spirit presence in nature, and that this understanding is not associated exclusively with the original act of creation – the distant past – is evident in Bishop Mupure’s sermon at a ceremony at his homestead in February 1994. He said:

God’s Word revealed quite clearly today that our relation to the environment and our survival are totally interlinked. The Word feeds us with the message of the Spirit. *Heaven starts here!* It pleases the Holy Spirit if we sort out matters of the earth right here and now! This task of healing the land gives us a good chance of entering heaven, because in keeping trees we have removed the stumbling block (guilt) which could prevent entry into heaven ... In practice all this means that we need to replace the *axe* of destruction with the *hoe*, which is more friendly to the soil. A correct balance between the axe and the hoe should be found.

These words reflect, first of all, acceptance that guidelines for interpretation of the Spirit’s manifestations in this life are to be found in Scripture. The word of God remains the criterion for assessing Spirit-filled activity, despite varied and often conflicting interpretations of the Bible in AIC circles. In the second place, Bishop Mupure does not doubt that the Spirit urges earthkeeping and that such activity has a direct bearing on entering heaven. *Heaven starts now*, if the Spirit’s call to heal the land is heeded. One could question the notion of human merit which appears to be conditional for salvation, as opposed to God’s free grace. But the Spirit’s presence nevertheless seems to focus and telescope the time of salvation: the origins of life in the past, the nurture of new life here and now, and the assumed prospect of eternal life in heaven, rooted in the present yet reaching out to the future. In the balance between axe and hoe a new dispensation takes shape. Holistically, in the Spirit of creation, the life of trees and the life of humans (current and/or eternal) interrelate, become one. For, as the AAEC earthkeepers believe, wherever the Holy Spirit takes hold of people and their environment, new life starts.

5.2 The Holy Spirit as *murapi venyika* (healer of the land)

On the whole the AIC prophets do not refer to the Holy Spirit as *murapi venyika*, even though the Spirit is central to all their healing activities.

Plate 37 Earthkeeper's exposition of Scriptures in tree-planting context. The word of God is generally recognised as the criterion for Spirit-filled activity

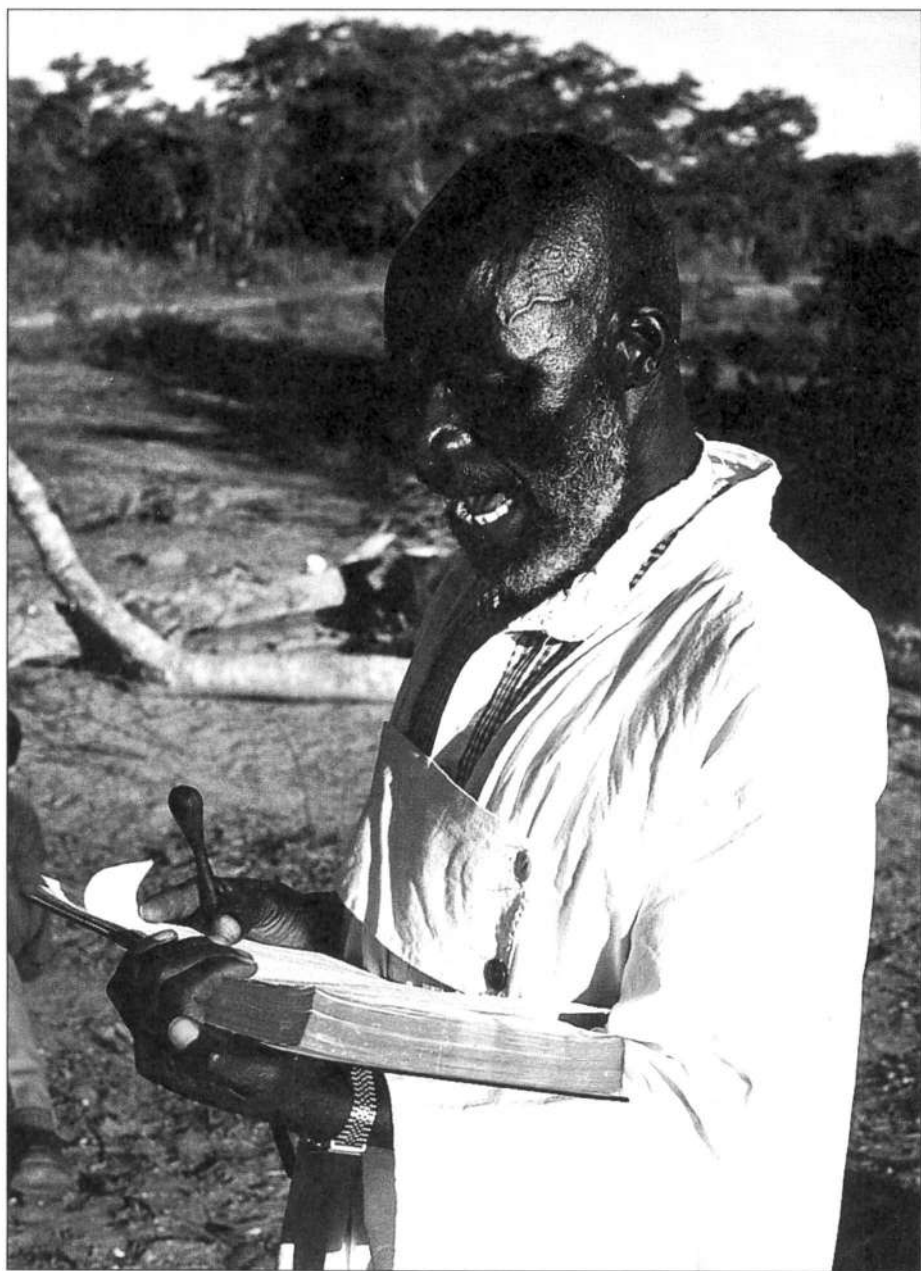
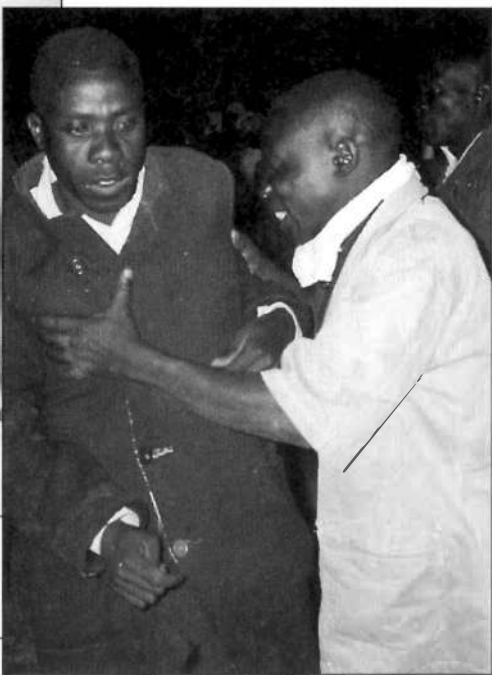
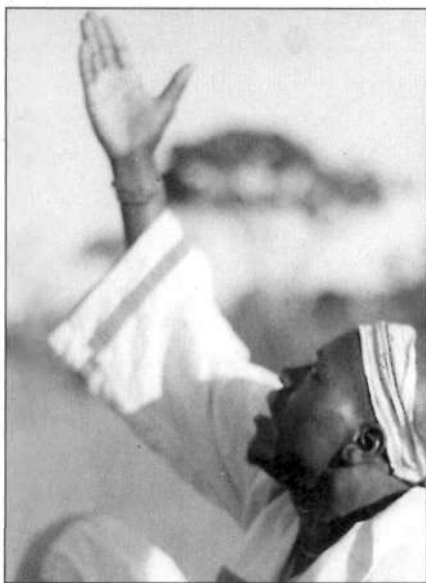


Plate 38 The Holy Spirit is believed to detect, fight and conquer evil. Apostolic and Zionist prophets appeal to the Spirit as they guide purificating sessions of confession prior to baptism (top left), eucharists (top right) and tree-planting (below)



This reflects the tendency in these churches, established prior to their AAEC involvement, to conceive of the life-giving Spirit first and foremost as the healer of humankind. Yet we have noticed that in the tree-planting eucharist healing of people and healing of the land blend into a single totality, as do the functions of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. The assumed and professed interpenetration of Son and Spirit is evident in the comprehensive *maporesanyika* healing described in the previous chapter (supra:202–206). *Ritually christology and pneumatology become one* as Africans enact the conviction that ‘the Spirit always brings the activity of the Son to its goal’ (Moltmann). In the promptings of the Spirit, Christ the king (*mambo*), guardian (*muridzi*), saviour (*muponesi*) and healer (*murapi*) of all creation keeps entering life here and now as an incarnate being.

Having said this, it would be repetitive to reconsider all the pneumatic features of healing already mentioned in the previous chapter. Nevertheless, the role of the Holy Spirit as life-giver and healer is so prominent in all the Zionist and Apostolic churches (the vast majority in the AAEC) that some observations about their sacraments in relation to the development of a ‘green pneumatology’ are called for.

In the AIC’s pentecostal tradition the Holy Spirit features pre-eminently as purifier and healer of people in the build-up to both baptism and the eucharist. Prior to the baptism of novices the sermons of church leaders focus increasingly on their experiences of healing through the Spirit. The entire congregation is transformed into a body of witnesses to healing, and the group of believers receiving the baptisands on the far side of ‘Jordan’ stand there as disciples of Christ, healed of sin, brokenness, isolation from meaningful communion, illness and a host of human problems.

Then, when the baptiser enters Jordan, he actually blesses the water by diving into it with a loud splash, or stirring it repeatedly with his holy staff and/or cord. In a sense he or she is transmitting the life-giving force of the Holy Spirit to the water, so that it literally cleanses the baptisands of sin and pollution, totally renewing and healing them. Baptism is therefore also a *healing ceremony*! During the ceremony many members of the congregation will enter Jordan to drink the Spirit-filled water to obtain healing or add meaning to their lives.

At first I was inclined to interpret this feature mainly as a relic of the tra-

ditional magical philosophy – in other words, an attempt by people to lay hold of whatever life force or power could aid them. This may be true of some believers. The question that arises, however, is whether the practice does not present a golden opportunity to widen the interpretation of baptism. Can it not be said that the Spirit's presence in Jordan is a sign of God's creation being redemptively healed? Can we not say that the Holy Spirit manifests him/herself at Jordan as the healer of the land? This would obviously include the converts, who are healed and changed by moving into the body of Christ. But the Jordan river and its often barren environment are likewise changed and taken, symbolically, into the body of Christ the king, so that his redemption is sacramentally proclaimed over the whole of creation.

In that case the drinking of Jordan water symbolises not just the person's healing or salvation, but his or her participation in cosmic healing. The focus shifts from private and personal benefit by the Holy Spirit's healing powers to a statement of human solidarity with all creation and an affirmation of new commitment, through individual conversion, to the healing and restoration of nature. What happens, then, in the sacramental context is that human beings' knowledge about creation through domination is replaced by knowledge gained through communication between them and nature. In a sense one could call it a *baptismal naturalisation of the human being* (Altner, in Moltmann 1985:50): 'It assumes that, fundamentally speaking, the human being does not confront nature: he himself is nothing other than one of nature's products.'

The image of the Holy Spirit as *murapi venyika* is thrown into even sharper relief in the paschal celebration leading up to the eucharist. First, there is the 'seed conference' (*ungano yembeu*), an integral part of Paseka which, as we have seen in the case of the ZCC (*supra*:109, 110), replaces the traditional rain requests at the Matopo oracular shrines. Here the concept of an immanent creator as *muridzi* (guardian) is fused with that of the Spirit as *murapi* (healer). For when drought and pests threaten, the seasons and crops that are guarded are also healed to bear a life-sustaining harvest. Second, there is the need for confessing ecological sins. Here, too, it is the Spirit who heals by laying bare those abuses and violence against nature which obstruct its redemption and life-sustaining fertility. This theme will be considered in the next subsection. Third, it should be noted that, as when the Jordan

water is drunk by believers for its medicinal value, the elements of bread and wine have the same extended or post-symbolic significance to many participants. Mothers with sick babies, for instance, take extra pieces of sacramental bread home for their stricken little ones. We have also noted how at tree-planting eucharists some preachers emphasise the life-giving and/or medicinal value of the bread and wine in the bloodstream of the communicant, the implication being a Spirit-empowered and committed earthkeeping vocation. In the fourth place, the Spirit's healing potency is symbolically transferred to the new woodlot prior to tree planting by sprinkling holy water and pouring holy oil over the area to be restored. In such symbolic action, repeated in numerous variations, the Spirit is seen to overpower the destroyer of creation and to establish the new dispensation of God's kingdom.

To sacramental purists the 'magical-pneumatic' dimension in the ecologically inclusive baptism and eucharist may sound blasphemous. But is this not just another indication that the healing *charis* of Christ's sacrament, combined with the unfathomable movement of the Spirit, mysteriously extends far beyond our theories and conceptions? And does this not mean that we can celebrate the eucharist in a manner which emphasises our corporate identity with nature in Christ, making us as dependent on the Holy Spirit's healing activity as all other natural beings? In these contextualised sacraments of Africa, whether interpreted magically or symbolically, we earthkeepers declare ourselves, under the kingship of our elder brother Christ, his fellow guardians of creation. Likewise, in the therapeutic sweep of the Holy Spirit over all the world we are fellow healers without pretending that we ourselves are the saviours of creation.

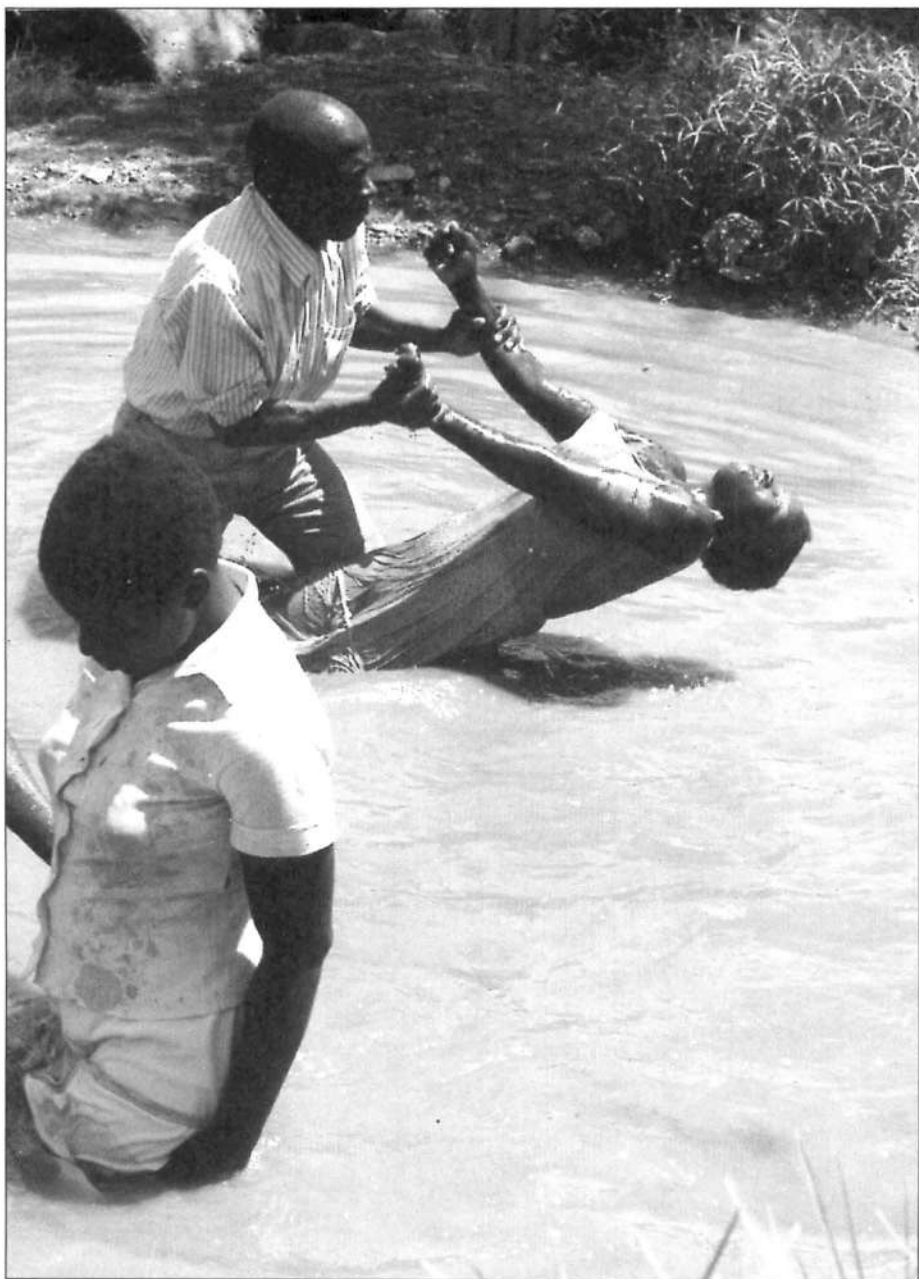
5.3 The Holy Spirit versus the destroyer

The basic theme in all African prophetic healing is the struggle between light and darkness, between the almighty Holy Spirit and the evil perpetrated by Satan. Throughout this ministry there are continuous interaction and confrontation between African traditional cosmology and contextualised Christianity. Prophetic diagnosis, attributed to the revelatory presence of the Spirit, invariably identifies afflicting ancestral or alien spirits with demonic powers. Wizardry (*uroyî*) in particular is considered to be the embodiment of evil, Satan himself who epitomises

Plate 39 Relentless combat between Holy Spirit and the destroyer evident in
Apostolic exorcism of evil spirits



Plate 40 Zionist exorcism of demonic spirits during Jordan baptism illustrates vividly the cleansing power of the Holy Spirit



the destruction of life. Whether diagnosed as demons or *uroyi*, the destructive forces considered to be the cause of any tragedy or malady are driven off through exorcism in the name of the triune Christian deity. In addition a host of symbolic rituals are performed to fortify and protect the threatened party against future demonic attacks. Hence, in a broken world, the lordship of Christ is repeatedly enacted in what is believed to be and experienced as the Holy Spirit's vanquishment and subjugation of the destroyer. The main features of this struggle in the spirit world as it relates to earthkeeping are the following.

5.3.1 Emerging awareness of ecological sinfulness

The growing consensus about the near-unpardonable evil of environmental destruction stems from ZIRRCO's conscientisation programmes via workshops, conferences and executive meetings. But above all, the special focus on ecological sins in *maporesanyika* sermons and in the confession ceremony prior to tree planting highlights the presence of the Spirit in the ranks of the earthkeepers. The Holy Spirit, the originator of the movement, is regarded as the primary conscientising agent responsible for the growing awareness of human guilt in the deterioration of nature. Even if this is not always mentioned in sermons, most preachers, if asked, will unhesitatingly attribute the gist of their message to the inspiration of the Spirit. Couched in the idiom of fighting *uroyi* – evil in its vilest and most ruthless form – the struggle between the Spirit and the destroyer is drawn palpably into the existential world of the congregated earthkeepers. The following excerpts from sermons illustrate this point clearly:

Zionist Bishop Mutikizizi (at Bishop Mupure's ceremony; Zaka, February 1994):

There is a type of wizardry which destroys the land. It is the wizardry of deforestation. It is a terrible *uroyi*, more destructive than the evil of those who rise at night to hurt people. Some people just fell all the trees to burn bricks or sell firewood and then, to make matters worse, they squander the money on liquor. These people have no insight into the destructive effects of their deeds. They refuse to see! Such is the wizardry of land destruction. This violates the responsibility God gave people when he created the earth. Environmental wizardry (*uroyi hwenyika*) is a grave sin because it

denies the custodianship over creation which Mwari requires of human beings.

Zionist Revd Chitapa (at Bishop Marinda's ceremony; Gutu, March 1993):

In Genesis 1:11 it says that God commanded the land to be covered with grass and trees. Now some people hate grass, not knowing its purpose. They simply burn it. Consequently the grazing of our cattle is destroyed. Grass serves as food for cattle, as material for building, as cover to protect the soil against erosion. Land is our inheritance and grass keeps it in good condition. A person who plays with fire and burns the grass will be punished severely. Such a destroyer is a real *muroyi*! There are *varoyi* who use *zvidoma* (psychic creatures, witch familiars). Others are *varoyi* who kill through gossip. They can devastate an entire village. Then there are those who burn the grass. The mother of so and so knows she is a witch. Likewise, you who hate grass and trees know you are a *muroyi*.

God gave us trees for many purposes: fruit trees for our survival, blue gum trees for building, wild trees that simply belong to the soil. But we people are rebels. We ask: why are we created? What is the purpose of our lives? We do not want to see the plans of Mwari, the meaning of life. If we do not heed Mwari's laws of respecting his creation, he will not bless us with abundance as he blessed Jacob. The original rebel was Lucifer, Mwari's son who was chased from heaven. He is Satan the destroyer, who propagates revolt against Mwari's laws.

We elders have taught our children to follow the laws of Jesus, to dance to the drumbeat and horn blast. We also revealed to them that we ourselves are the *varoyi*, the rebels who felled trees in defiance of our forefathers' warnings. They taught us about the *marambatemwa* (holy groves) where the ancestors and Mwari live among the trees.

Come then, let us confess our sins today, our destruction of the land. Some of us have already bought matches to burn the grass. See what Bishop Marinda does here. His prophets expose the sin we indulge in, that of burning grass. *It is the uroyi of heat, of the burnt soil!* Let us all get rid of this *uroyi*: the type which strikes at you with

zvidoma, the type which fells the trees and burns the veld. It is because of this wizardry that the Paseka of Jesus was changed. The Paseka (tree-planting eucharist) we celebrate today aims at restoring the land.

Zionist Bishop Marinda (at his ceremony; Gutu, March 1993):

All of us must confess our sins as we pass under the scrutiny of the Holy Spirit at the gates (consisting of pairs of prophets). In this way the *sins of tree felling* will be revealed. They kill the land, because where the sledges strip the land the gullies start forming. Consequently people have little land left to cultivate and there is no grazing for their cattle. *I have never seen such wizards!* This differs from the witchcraft which kills an individual at home, for it wipes out an entire tribe (*rudzi*). This environmental *uroyi* destroys everybody. So we queue for confession to be searched by the Spirit. Whoever gets caught out gets caught out. The prophets are here. Stand at the gates, you prophets! Stand at the gates! Reveal to us the wizards who still pull their sledges.

The disquiet of all these preachers about the *wrong relationship* between humans and their environment is very evident. Their call to all participants to confess their rebellion against God through mindless destruction of the ecosystems which sustain life reveal an awareness of the holistic nature of sin as depicted in the Bible, in that it 'not only distorts inter-human relations and human-divine relations, it also affects the life-sustaining harmony between human beings and the Earth' (McDonagh 1985:125). Here the critical consciousness of African peasant society voices insight similar to that of the Western theologian Emil Brunner, who notes that estrangement between humans and creatures coincides with human withdrawal from God: 'The more man distinguishes himself from the rest of creation, the more he becomes conscious of himself as the subject, as an "I" to whom the world is an object, the more does he tend to confuse himself with God, to confuse his spirit with the spirit of God, and to regard his reason as Divine Reason' (in McDonagh 1985:125). What the AAEC earthkeepers are in fact saying is that humans in the local setting arrogantly set themselves up as God in false dominion over the earth, in opposition to God's intentions for creation. Like Lucifer or Satan, they become earth destroyers. In their exploitation of the earth hubris prevents them from

seeing and admitting the life-destroying implications of their actions.

An intriguing aspect of the AAEC perception of ecological sin is that there is no attempt to avoid communal guilt by setting up Satan or evil as a kind of objective force outside humankind, the real source of destruction which exonerates humans from guilt. Instead, the overriding concern with environmental wizardry reflects recognition of a serious flaw in humans, in their relations to both the creator, the life-giving Spirit, and creation. Rosemary Ruether (1992:256) aptly describes such a 'wrong relationship':

... the reality of evil does not lie in some 'thing' out there. It cannot be escaped, and indeed is exacerbated by efforts to avoid it by cutting ourselves off from that 'thing'. Rather evil lies in '*wrong relationship*'. All beings live in community, both with members of their own species and with others on which they depend for food, breath, materials for construction, and affective feedback. Yet there is a tendency in the life-drive itself in each species to maximize its own existence and hence to proliferate in a cancerous way that destroys its own biotic support (my italics).

The 'cancerous way' is described for the African rural situation by Bishop Mutikizizi in terms of random tree felling for short-term gain, without a policy for the future; by Revd Chitapa in terms of grass burning at the expense of humanity's precious inheritance, the earth itself; by Bishop Marinda in terms of sledges still being pulled in defiance of land husbandry codes, causing erosion gullies. The seriousness of these offences is expressed in the idiom of destruction best understood in Africa: *uroyi*, wizardry. Wizards, with their persistent antisocial behaviour, personify evil; the wizard is the destroyer. 'Wrong relationship' lies in not considering the conservationist laws of the creator, in blindly and arrogantly ignoring the impact of environmental destruction on human society and asserting a false dominion which does not respect nature. The result is a form of *uroyi* much worse than the traditional perception of attacks against single individuals. In the words of Chitapa this is the ultimate rebellion against God, the heat of the burnt soil, the heat of mass destruction which opposes and seeks to obliterate the life-giving coolness (*tonhodzo*) of Mwari's Spirit; the heat which in African Christian terms anticipates the apocalyptic pit of fire. Marinda likewise finds this form of *uroyi* life-threatening and much more

dangerous than the traditional practice, for it ultimately wipes out everybody, the entire tribe.

Rosemary Ruether (1992:141) divorces human sin from the issue of finitude. Instead, she relates it to the sphere of human freedom, where people have the option of either enhancing or stifling life. According to her the central issue of sin as distinct from finitude is the following:

... the misuse of freedom to exploit other humans and the earth and thus to violate the basic relations that sustain life. Life is sustained by biotic relationality in which the whole attains a plentitude through mutual limits in interdependency. When one part of the life community exalts itself at the expense of the other parts, life is diminished for the exploited. Ultimately exploiters subvert the bases of their own lives as well. An expanding cycle of poisonous hostility and violence is generated.

Those who abuse their freedom in African rural peasant society are people who disregard the land husbandry laws – both the old *marambatemwa* restrictions of the forefathers mentioned by Revd Chitapa, and modern agro-forestry requirements for sustainable agricultural produce. Unrestricted tree felling and practices promoting soil erosion diminish both arable land and pasturage. Ultimately all of society suffers: the human exploiters who continue sinning against the life-giving Spirit despite the obviously dwindling resources, together with the responsible caretakers of the land and the voiceless denizens of the earth, the animals, birds, grass and trees.

Does the characterisation of the abuse of human freedom in terms of *uroyi* not distort the perception of ecological sinfulness? Does it not reintroduce the traditional practice of branding one or a few individuals scapegoats for causing inexplicable deaths or social ills? And is the fate of environmental wizards not the same as that of the *varoyi* of old – stigmatisation, ostracism, even death?

There is a real danger that the more arrogant tree fellers, grass burners and sledge owners will be stigmatised and identified with the destroyer of life more readily than 'minor' sinners, who may confess to some environmental abuse but conveniently forget that they contribute equally to overpopulation and other less commonly mentioned 'sins' which are also earth-destructive. Pharisaic bigotry, it seems, is not necessarily

absent from the AAEC's concern with environmental *uroyi*. Nevertheless, there are two clear trends indicating that we are not dealing with direct assimilation of an ancient practice with all its negative implications. First, the AAEC preachers' intention when identifying environmental destruction with *uroyi* is to drive home in the collective mind of the audience the tremendous seriousness of the issues at stake. *Uroyi* is evil and heartless. It creates the heat of destruction and spells death, without mercy or compromise. It is the ultimate in exploitation, the antithesis of life-giving forgiveness and redemption; hence, *sin* against God and creation which cannot be countenanced. Second, the sermons quoted above tend not merely to accuse others as *varoyi* but to identify with them, to detect the evil of destructive exploitation in oneself, in *our* ranks. Thus communal guilt is established, the shadow-side of each and every participant. As Revd Chitapa said: 'We also revealed to them (our children) that we ourselves are the *varoyi*, the rebels who felled the trees in defiance of our forefathers' warnings.' In this context, therefore, catharsis within a beleaguered society lies not in identifying and punishing a single *muroyi*, but in admitting all of human society's allegiance to the destroyer and giving everyone the opportunity to make amends.

5.3.2 Pneumatic expulsion of evil

Maporesanyika sermons reflect more than just awareness of ecological sinfulness. Implicit, too, is a summons to admit common guilt of earth destruction. Such admissions or confessions can only be elicited from individual communicants through the powerful work of the Holy Spirit, manifested in prophetic activity. Thus the preachers also propagate their convictions about the revelatory and protective role of the Holy Spirit via earthkeeping prophets. Said Zionist Revd Chamakaita at Bishop Marinda's ceremony: 'Did Jehovah not make use of his *svikiro* (spirit-medium), the prophet Isaiah? And are our prophets here not speaking as the mouthpieces of Jehovah, of Mweya Mutsvene? Our prophets reveal our sins of killing the land. They act as protectors! Thus, if any of you should come here and fell the trees in this woodlot, the *ngozi* (vengeful spirit) you'll provoke will finish off all your kinsfolk. Then our prophets will no longer prophesy on your behalf. They will refuse because you have felled their friends ...'

The earthkeeping prophet's ministry highlights the relentless combat between Holy Spirit and destroyer. As the people file through the 'gates'

to celebrate the eucharist, the intensity of the prophet's emotive glosolalia and body tremors reveals the Spirit's disapproval of the evil which they have perpetrated against creation. Attitudes of arrogance or unconcern for God's creation especially provoke prophetic disapproval, evinced in displays of vehement emotion. These near-frenzied outbursts indicate that grievous sins have been committed against the life-giving Spirit. As in all African healing ceremonies, identification of the cause of the malady is of the utmost importance. Thus the Spirit reveals to the prophet the unconfessed and still hidden sins of each communicant, preventing the mass confession from deteriorating into a generalised, face-saving exercise. When tempers flare and people remonstrate with the prophets, this is considered evidence of the destroyer's resistance. It is in the detection of specific environmental evils committed by each individual and the public admission of guilt that the Holy Spirit's victory over the destroyer is convincingly demonstrated. Such confession, elicited by the Spirit-filled prophet and willingly submitted to by the communicant, represents a kind of purificatory exorcism, a renouncement or expulsion of environmental wizardry.

The sins confessed are numerous: from unwise use of the destructive axe, riverbank cultivation, use of sledges, excessive consumption of firewood, grass burning, neglect of contour ridges and over-cultivation to pollution of water resources, over-fishing, hunting rare game species, hunting out of season, hunting in out-of-bounds areas such as the *marambatemwa* or game sanctuaries, and so forth. Still known by the nickname *Mafuranhunzi* (literally 'the one who shoots the fly', sharp-shooter), I often get tripped up by the prophets for my hunting sins in earlier life. In addition I confess to the sin of air pollution through endless use of a vehicle over many years. Maybe through these confessions the Spirit is also pointing to something else – the unequal distribution of means, resources and privileges in Africa, the gap between rich and poor. Taking a vehicle for granted as a privileged white African while working among the poorest of the poor is certainly as bad a form of wizardry as snaring the few remaining rock-rabbits – the sentinels of the ancestors – in the protected zone of a holy grove.

In contrast to the African Apostolic Church of Johane Maranke with its nightlong vigils of confession and purification prior to the celebration of holy communion, the AAEC's tree-planting eucharist does not allow time for the prophets to deal extensively with offending wizards. The *vaPostori*,

for instance, place unrepentant *varoyi* in a special enclosure called *musasa yevaroyi* (windbreak of the wizards). Here a group of *vatongi* (judges) put serious cases on trial throughout the night to determine whether they will be allowed to take communion, or what form of discipline (at worst excommunication) should be applied. If some of the AAEC bishops were to have their way, a similar judgment of unrepentant environmental *varoyi* will be introduced. For the time being, however, those communicants who show signs of resisting or belittling prophetic scrutiny are merely severely rebuked as a sign of the Spirit's disapproval.

To the serious earthkeeper spiritual cleansing ensues after the Holy Spirit's expulsion of evil in the process of confession. This process is characterised not only by the prophets' emotional outbursts but also by a mixture of gravity and laughter, since sins are sometimes confessed in highly original ways, or a prophet may use swear words learnt from a white farmer to rebuke an earth-destroying demon. Humour in such instances seldom reflects irreverence. It is rather a lightness of comic relief in an atmosphere heavily charged with divine significance. In the spontaneous bursts of laughter one feels that God is smiling at the antics of his people.

In traditional rituals to exorcise *uroyi* spirits from their hosts the latter have to physically distance themselves from the destructive agent by leading a black goat off into the bush and leaving it there, or by destroying witchcraft medicines on the bank of a river and then swimming across, away from evil. In the Spirit-type AICs *uroyi* exorcisms also include public burning of all medicines and symbolic objects associated with wizardry, such as witch familiars. In the AAEC's battle against environmental evil the prophets have not yet insisted on the burning of destructive axes, sledges or the bows and arrows of poachers. Yet the expulsion of evil through Spirit-induced confession culminates in the communicant picking up of a seedling and moving to the sacramental table for communion in the body of Christ. This act affirms the individual's rejection of earth destruction and signifies a deliberate choice for life itself, acceptance of the Spirit's life-giving directives. Together with the prophets, the communicants now demonstrate their bondedness and friendship with the trees, their acceptance of the responsibility of tree protection.

The actual tree planting subsequent to holy communion puts the seal on the choice for life and light as opposed to death and darkness. Once

again the Holy Spirit's liberating power is evinced in a bishop sprinkling holy water and soil in the new woodlot to rid the land of any contamination. The final act of addressing the trees as brothers and sisters as they are being planted epitomises the message of salvation to all creation. The *ngozi* (vengeful spirit) of the neglected soil is appeased by the *mutumbu* payment (*supra*:44) of trees, and the *muroyi*'s attitude of ruthless exploitation is replaced by genuine service and stewardship. The good news is that the Spirit of life overcomes the destroyer.

5.3.3 Theoretical considerations

When assessing the Spirit-based ministry of exorcism in the church of Africa, a distinction can be made between those church leaders and academic observers who either practise or theoretically support such a ministry, and those who oppose it or are highly critical of its seemingly negative implications. The former (eg Ingenoza 1985:179; Hebga, in Lagerwerf 1985:67; Milingo 1984:103; Taylor 1963:211; Daneel 1974:343–347) emphasise the *liberating value* of a ministry which appears to confront the existential needs and fears of people in a ritually understandable and therefore psychologically and religiously satisfying manner. The latter, whose views I outline below, are sceptical of the long-term impact of a practice which is considered counterproductive, in that it reinforces the traditional cosmology and therefore *enslaves people* to the world of demons, wizardry beliefs and fears without providing a realistic Christian solution. The obvious question is: does the AAEC prophets' concern with environmental *uroyi* fall into this trap?

Shorter's (1985:95) reservations about exorcism as a pastoral tool in the church of Africa are closely linked with his views on the destructive impact of witchcraft theory and practice on African society:

Witchcraft is a kind of penumbra of human wickedness, an inborn preternatural power to harm and kill enjoyed for its own sake. To see all the misfortune, especially the more dramatic disasters, as traceable to human causes is intellectually satisfying. It also creates an illusion of control over evil forces, but ultimately it is not credible ... It entails unjust judgements.

Shorter (1985:96) is particularly concerned about the illusory control over evil, the injustice of witchcraft accusations and the witch-finder's

pretence of finally judging the witch. Witchcraft accusation, in his view, is a form of self-salvation or self-justification, a mechanism for evading personal responsibility for misfortune and sinful acts, at the expense of whoever is branded the common enemy of the community. Witch-finders usurp the position of God by acting as both judges and executioners. Their accusations destroy the social personality of the accused. By implication all witchcraft-eradication movements, through their very inclusion of witch-finding and accusation practices, only strengthen people's fear of witches and their acceptance of the underlying theory. They provide no viable solution or true liberation from an oppressive belief system.

Exorcism, in its popularised form in the church of Africa, can include traditional aspects of witch-finding and accusations and may lead to indiscriminate attribution of misfortunes to evil forces, and hence to intensified exorcism procedures. Consequently it can lead to horrors similar to the European witch hunts. Shorter's misgivings on this score are therefore understandable. He reminds us that although Christ practised exorcism in the case of epileptics, he did not attribute every affliction to diabolic possession. Likewise, it would be wrong for the priest-exorcist to try and win over fellow believers to his views of demon possession – a terrible prospect, considering the historical background of European demonology. Instead, Shorter (in Lagerwerf 1987:58) feels that the church should develop a more original and enduring ministry:

We should discourage interest in the spectacle of exorcism and dissociated personality in the normal context of healing and prayer over the sick. For the Christian African the world must be alive in a new sense, not with the self-orientated, depersonalizing theories of African tradition, but with the knowledge that 'the world is charged with the grandeur of God' and that all natural human realities are communications of divine love and salvation in Jesus Christ.

Without totally rejecting exorcism, Shorter suggests that the solution to wizardry should be sought in alternative measures: first, refusal to enter into discussion about the objectivity of wizardry beliefs; second, conscious relinquishment of the dualistic philosophy underlying wizardry beliefs; and third, transformation of the social world through socio-economic development and Christian community building – that is, the creation of a setting which will dispel wizardry-related fears.

David Bosch distinguishes between two different approaches to the combating of wizardry. The first essentially accepts the African traditional interpretive framework, while the second insists on changing this framework, in other words, on switching to a new paradigm. Like Shorter and Singleton (1980:23), Bosch (1987:52–60) opts for the second approach. He also refers to Andrew Wall's (1982:97–99) distinction: the first approach is based on the *indigenisation principle*, in which the Christian faith is incarnated in a particular culture; the second rests on the *pilgrim principle*, through which God in Christ transforms culture. Of course, one might ask whether these principles should be interpreted as mutually exclusive. Incarnation as envisaged by the indigenisation principle in fact includes Christ's transformation of culture. In practice at least, indigenisation seldom involves a straightforward and passive adaptation of the Christian faith to the indigenous culture. It seems to me, therefore, that we have here two principles displaying different emphases rather than an absolute antithesis.

This point is not sufficiently recognised in the categorical theoretical distinctions between the two. Bosch, for instance, classifies both the confession of witchcraft practices (described with reference to the *Shinga Postora* movement, Daneel 1974:xx) and exorcism (mainly with reference to Milingo's ministry) as belonging to the first approach. Thus the impression is created that these practices merely accept and strengthen the traditional cosmology and make no real contribution to a final solution, a paradigm shift. What is not sufficiently considered is the possibility that exorcism – and not only Milingo's kind of exorcism along European demonological lines, but also the AIC ministry – may change the traditional worldview; that exorcism in its varied manifestations in Africa may be instrumental in bringing about a paradigm shift.

What, according to Bosch, are the requirements for a paradigm shift? Firstly, Christians should help their community rid itself of the *scapegoat theory* by invoking the message of Christ, the one true 'scapegoat' who carried away the sins of this world once and for all. Secondly, Christian teaching should emphasise the *co-responsibility* of all individuals for what goes wrong in society, lest the tendency to blame a wizard for misfortune encourages a superficial understanding of conversion. Thirdly, a new understanding of *human suffering* should be fostered in order to change the philosophy which links suffering with evil and consequently imputes the practice of wizardry to the misdeeds of

others. Fourth, a fundamental *change in attitude towards magic* is required. Healing, reconciliation and mutual service should replace the tracing and elimination of alleged human causes of misfortune. Fifth, the Christian message should be proclaimed to the effect that *evil has no future*. The future lies with God. Satan and all manifestations of evil can therefore only be seen as conquered in advance by God. In this respect Bosch (1987:58–59) indicates that the church in Africa has not always managed to communicate the message of an ever-present God. The more remote God appears to be, the greater the need for magic to counteract the destructive forces of evil.

Although I agree with these requirements for a paradigm shift, the question remains how one is to convey this message effectively to a society which still by and large applies the scapegoat theory, where the belief in magic is still rife and where one is constantly confronted with outcasts, misfits and marginal figures – those already accused and stigmatised, in search of a cure or a lasting solution. What do you do with the afflicted members of families who for many generations have had a tradition of inherited wizardry? When such individuals fall ill and have dreams which are interpreted by society as call-dreams to perpetrate wizardry, they are at once stigmatised in their neighbourhood. In their appeal to the church for a solution, do we avoid talking about the objective reality of wizardry as it features in their lives for fear of giving credence to such beliefs, as Shorter would have it? Or do we confront those beliefs with the message of the one Scapegoat, Christ, and exorcise the invading spirits as part of the solution to a tradition-based problem, despite the risk of misinterpretation in certain quarters?

As regards the prophetic exorcist activities of the AICs, I have pointed out that to many adherents of the Spirit-type churches exorcism symbolises the liberating and protective function of the church, the victory of the Holy Spirit over Satan. The built-in safeguards against possible misinterpretation of this ministry were described as follows:

The ritual context within which exorcism takes place is quite different from that within which the *nganga* (the traditional 'doctor' or 'exorcist') operates. Here we have a group of people professing to be Christians who dance and sing Christian songs in the expectation of a manifestation of the Christian God's delivering power. The act of driving out the inhabiting and unwanted spirit is usually per-

formed in the name of the triune Christian God, with special emphasis on the presence of the Holy Spirit evinced in emotionalism and speaking-in-tongues. Prophets generally recognise that the act of expulsion does not imply a self-willed manipulation of divine power and that God himself is the final authority who decides whether their dramatised and symbolic action will be successful. Some of them admit failure, often with reference to God who willed otherwise. Then there is also the accompanying pastoral care and the insistence of prophets that afflicted persons themselves should pray perseveringly to be rid of troubling spirits. Thus we have a group-integrated technique with interaction between participant congregation, exorcising prophet and praying patient – all of them in action before and depending on the great Deliverer of evil powers. This is a far cry from manipulative magic, had such ministry evolved from a non-transformatory application of the *indigenisation principle* (Daneel 1974:342).

Because of these decidedly positive features of a contextualised pneumatology integral to prophetic exorcism, as well as a continual need for pastoral care in the face of the high incidence of spirit possession observed among the Shona, I support J V Taylor's (1963:211) call for 'the development of some properly safeguarded ministry of exorcism' in the church of Africa.

In the field of wizardry I have pointed out weaknesses of the prophetic ministry of medicine-finding, wizard-detection and the exorcism of *uroyi* spirits. Some prophets, for instance, concentrate on the recruitment value of these services to such an extent that they neglect pastoral care of their flock. Others exploit the fears of people who feel threatened by the powers of wizardry. In some cases the discrimination and stigmatisation caused by exposure of potential or practising witches override the Christian spirit of love and sympathetic understanding, with detrimental effects for the social status particularly of the women concerned. It was felt, however, that the positive features of the prophetic campaign against wizardry practices preponderate, in that the message of God's protection and liberation is convincingly carried into a realm frequently dominated by stark terror. The Christian message of reconciliation, moreover, is conveyed to the wizards – the outcasts and misfits of society – in a manner which provides, through the church, new hope of social rehabilitation. This is in direct opposition to traditional

belief: once a wizard always a wizard – which assumes the incontrovertibly evil nature of whoever is branded a witch or sorcerer in African society (Daneel 1974:343–347).

If we finally evaluate the significance of the AAEC's concern with environmental wizardry with due regard to Shorter's and Bosch's reservations about witchcraft beliefs and accusations and their insistence on a paradigm shift, the following observations appear relevant.

First, the AAEC prophets do not deliberately avoid discussing the objectivity of witchcraft beliefs, nor do they refute the dualistic cosmology underlying wizardry beliefs (Shorter). Most of them adhere to a culture and cosmology which experience wizardry as an existential reality, an evil to be dealt with from within Christianity. In this respect they represent the *indigenisation principle* (Bosch, Walls) but not in a manner that excludes Christian transformation.

Second, the earthkeeping prophets do in fact transform the social world through a type of Christian community building (Shorter), which provides reconciliation for the stigmatised wizard in the midst of a body of believers who know about understanding and forgiveness. In addition, accusations of earth destruction are followed by an entirely new and innovative ritual in which exorcism means an opportunity for the guilty to engage meaningfully in earth-care, the antithesis of *uroyi* against the soil. Hence, the *indigenisation principle* is augmented with the pilgrim principle, for it is through the power of the Holy Spirit, illuminating the lordship of Christ the saviour and earthkeeper, that the hold of self-seeking *uroyi* is broken.

Third, prophetic detection of environmental *uroyi* during the public confession of sins is not accompanied by an 'illusion of control over evil' (Shorter). The prophets know only too well that human sinfulness and greed will persist in this existence, that they will continue detecting ecological sins at *maporesanyika* ceremonies. This does not detract, however, from their proclamation of the message that 'evil has no future, the future lies with God' (Bosch).

Fourth, in the context of tree planting, *uroyi* accusations take the form of prophetic detection of a common evil rather than putting all the blame on one or a couple of scapegoats. Thus *uroyi* beliefs become a platform for convincingly proclaiming the seriousness of environmental

offences without the 'witch-finders' professing to pass final judgment on ecological wizards or of establishing a form of self-salvation (Shorter). Instead of creating a convenient escape from personal guilt and environmental sinfulness, both preachers and prophets tend to identify with the *uroyi*, thereby teaching co-responsibility of all individuals (Bosch) for the abuse of God's earth and arriving at a more biblical view of sin than traditional witchcraft allegations allowed.

Fifth, Bosch's requirements for a paradigm shift in terms of a new understanding of human suffering (as not necessarily linked to evil perpetrated by humans) and a breakthrough in attitudes to magic, are not entirely fulfilled in the AAEC. Yet by affirming the cross and salvific blood of Christ and accepting common guilt for earth destruction, the scapegoat theory appears to be effectively overcome. The communal 'exorcism' of evil through confession and tree planting in itself signifies transformation of the old belief system and rituals, as well as the beginnings of a paradigm shift.

Sixth, the work of the Holy Spirit is focal in the struggle against environmental evil. Does the African magical mind-set in this instance lead to a distorted pneumatology in the AICs, as some observers have suggested? Martin (1964:161) is a case in point:

In prophetic and messianic movements the prophets and messiahs 'possess the Spirit' like an impersonal power, they get hold of it in their own way, and the 'Spirit' must give utterance in a visible and audible way (glossolaly, trembling, leaps), and not in the hidden manner of the new life in Christ which is the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22f). In the same way as the black messiah must be visible here and now and deliver from suffering, so the Spirit must manifest its power in visible and audible phenomena.

With reference to the Ngunza-Khaki Church, Oosthuizen (1968:124, 133) states:

The Spirit has here become the monopoly of the leader ... One of the main tasks of the prophets in this movement is to 'give' the Spirit to its members. Just as in animism the spirit is invoked by those entrusted with the task; the spirit is 'given' by man's initiative and not by God's. The central doctrine of the Holy Spirit is obscured and distorted here beyond recognition. The position of the doctrine

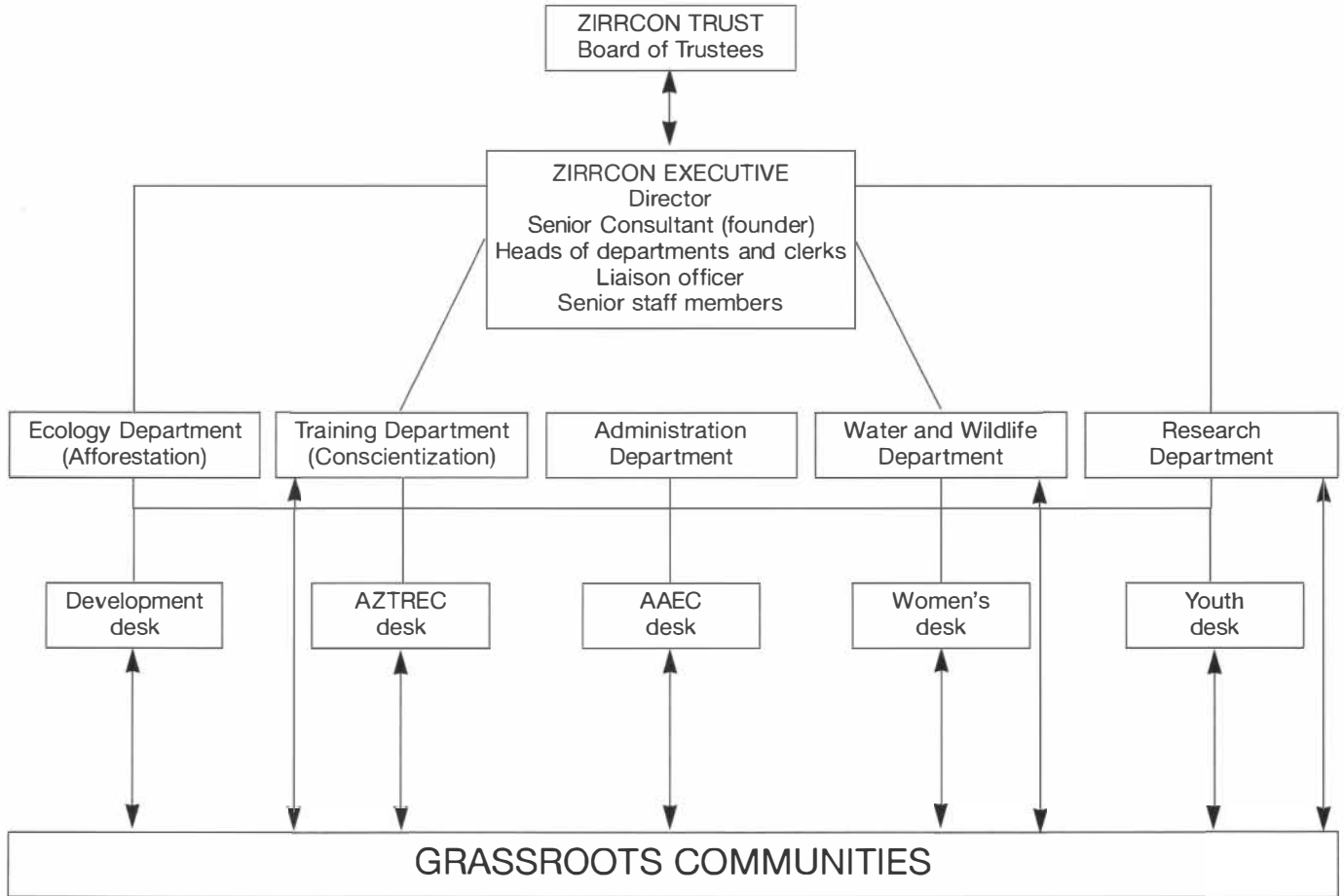
of the Holy Spirit in a Church indicates whether that Church is standing or falling. In a utilistic religion, such as that of the nativistic movements, 'the Spirit' is at man's disposal.

As the Shona Zionists and Apostles (the majority in the AAEC) belong to the group of movements generally characterised by Oosthuizen as nativistic and by Martin as prophetic, these criticisms also apply to the Shona Spirit-type churches. If so, I would like to point out, as stated above, that there are quite a number of built-in safeguards in AIC prophetic praxis which invalidate or counterbalance charges of an impersonal force, and therefore a false pneumatology. Terms like 'possess', 'at the disposal of' and 'giving the Spirit to others' are quite misleading and cannot generally be applied to the pneumatology of the Shona Independent Churches. Despite inconsistencies in their understanding of the nature and work of the Holy Spirit, many prophets have gained sufficient insight into the work of the Holy Spirit, according to biblical norms, to be aware of the danger of misinterpretation.

Judging by the scriptural references to the presence and work of the triune God – particularly the role of Christ as healer and saviour – in *maporesanyika* ceremonies, it appears that the manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the AAEC have definite, healthy Christian connotations, as opposed to animistic and magical ones. The dangers are unmistakable in view of limitations in AIC pneumatology. Yet the Spirit is believed to be the agent casting out environmental evil, sensitising the conscience of all human beings as stewards of the earth, and mobilising the mass action of earthkeeping which originates from Scripture. Does it really matter that our Independent Churches lack formal doctrines? Do any of us Christians fully comprehend the work of the Holy Spirit? Maybe it is better to feel inspired by the Spirit and engage in earth-healing praxis than to formulate a perfect pneumatology and shout the odds from the sidelines while passively allowing the environment to deteriorate. The Holy Spirit moves where it wills!

PART 3

Current developments and future challenges



ZIRRCON's expanding organisation and environmental objectives

Over the past few years ZIRRCON has developed from the loosely knit movement described in volume I (Daneel 1998) to a stable institution with its headquarters and administrative centre in Masvingo town and its grassroots constituency spread widely throughout Masvingo province and some adjacent provinces. Its environmental vision and activities have expanded, partly as a result of developmental projects, youth work and women's clubs, and partly by linking environmental endeavour with income-generating projects. Having focused thus far on the ritualisation of earthkeeping and the concomitant theological developments, I shall now outline ZIRRCON's institutionalisation and expanding objectives.

6.1 Institutionalisation and specialised activities

6.1.1 Organisation and leadership

ZIRRCON's basic team of about fifteen officers operates from the administrative headquarters in Masvingo town. They are supported by some 30 nursery keepers stationed at nurseries located in the various districts of Masvingo Province. Thus the movement has a nucleus of more than 40 salaried employees. The main organs through which it operates are AZTREC (the majority of chiefs, headmen and spirit-mediums in Masvingo Province), the AAEC (150 affiliated AICs with an estimated total membership of 2 million people), the Women's Desk (80 women's clubs) and some 30 youth clubs at rural and urban schools.

One of the most important changes in ZIRRCON's leadership hierarchy in the course of 1994 was the election of Revd Solomon Zvanaka to

succeed me as director. This was necessary, partly because I could not do justice to all the responsibilities of the directorship on top of my academic duties at the University of South Africa, and partly because I believe – on the basis of missiological principles of church planting – that a black African movement of this nature should become self-supporting, self-propagating, self-governing and should generate its own theology while still accommodating a privileged white African participant. The fact that Revd Zvanaka was elected unanimously by the ZIRRCO executive – which includes AZTREC and AAEC representatives – indicates the status and respect he had already gained among his colleagues at that time.

Revd Zvanaka's leadership qualities, management skills and integrity are beyond doubt. He has set a solid example of financial accountability, which augurs well not only for the internal control of funds at various levels but also for satisfactory and lasting ties with donor agencies. In addition he has proved to be a wise conciliator, capable of defusing conflict and inspiring group solidarity in the face of adversity. This talent is essential in a movement representing such a diversity of aspirations, expectations and religious convictions as is the case in ZIRRCO.

The change in leadership does not mean that I have withdrawn from the movement. On the contrary! Now that I am relieved of administrative duties I am in a position to pay more attention to other aspects of our work. Having established the initial ties with donor agencies as founder of the movement and chief fundraiser, I hope to continue for some time to chair ZIRRCO Trust, the board of trustees. This will enable me to explore new sources of sponsorship for ZIRRCO and to support the director in consolidating the existing system of financial control and accounting. As the movement's senior consultant I hope to continue serving its key figures with the insight and experience I have gained from earthkeeping at the grassroots over the years. In particular I hope to guide the establishment of the envisaged wildlife projects in the form of game sanctuaries at the old holy groves (*marambatemwa*) in the communal lands, the planning and propagation of which I have personally initiated in recent years. For the foreseeable future I shall also continue as head of the research department.

In 1995 we appointed a bookkeeper-secretary, Mr Abraham Mupuwi. His presence in the administrative department has taken a lot of pressure

off Revd Zvanaka, who is now able to devote more attention to public relations, policy, interdepartmental coordination, overseeing field project implementation, publications and so forth.

Over the years ZIRRCO has benefited from the assistance of part-time personnel from abroad.¹ On the whole the participation of these volunteers has been both challenging and enriching. In some instances cultural differences and divergent approaches to organisation, individual schedules and project implementation did give rise to minor conflicts among staff members. The extent of their participation in both office work and field programmes, moreover, varied in accordance with the interests, talents and character of each individual 'migrant worker'. However, the pros in all instances far outweighed the cons. As staff members, our friends from abroad perform the invaluable function of building bridges between our movement and their development or donor agencies abroad. This enhances unity of purpose and action between us and our sponsors.

An area of potential conflict in the movement is the changing relationships between ZIRRCO and its sister organisations, AZTREC and the AAEC. To the extent that institutionalisation and specialisation in the ZIRRCO office have brought salary increases, discrepancies between the remuneration of salaried staff members and grassroots labourers (eg nursery keepers) are becoming more pronounced. Some key figures in AZTREC and the AAEC are inclined to regard this as unfair discrimination which creates divisions between haves and have-nots, despite their recognition of very real differences between fully employed staff members and members of peasant society who participate sporadically in tree planting and woodlot maintenance. Such dissatisfaction has given rise to one or two attempts to subvert a sister organisation, in much the same way as Gonesse caused a rift in the ranks of AZTREC (see Daneel 1998). Ironically, these attempts, aimed at the advancement of a few individuals rather than improved performance of the movement as a whole, have run counter to the main trend of consolidating the unity in ideology and action of the bodies integrated in ZIRRCO's green army. One of the most convincing signs of consensus about unity among our sister organisations is the insistence of the majority of chiefs and AIC bishops that, despite religious differences, the immensity of our task requires a united front under one banner and umbrella organisation, ZIRRCO.

It goes without saying that ZIRRCO's ability to maintain its innovativeness, its appeal to the imagination of the predominantly peasant society it serves, its fulfilment of the people's existential needs and its will to empower rather than direct the green forces in the field will determine its future effectiveness in extending the green front and maintaining the disciplined unity needed for the struggle to continue. Among other things, its constitution will have to be revised to reflect the growing unity of purpose and action throughout the movement. To avoid confusion and dissent the separate constitutions of ZIRRCO bodies need to be combined without jeopardising the distinct identity and rights of any particular group or association.

6.1.2 Departmental development

ZIRRCO's original headquarters was my house in Masvingo town, where executive meetings and consultations with key figures in the movement are still held. Recently constructed outbuildings provide office space for research workers and contain a veritable archives of field research data which I have collected over the past 30 years. The combination of my library and ZIRRCO's research centre should provide a resource base for AIC theologians interested in studying and developing the theologies and general concerns of their churches.

But the administrative demands of our growing movement far exceed the space I can provide. Hence ZIRRCO has recently purchased a house in the centre of town to provide office space for its expanding departments and desks. Several additional offices will be constructed behind the main house to meet the growing need for space. Ideally, if funds can be raised, a new centre with administrative, library, teaching, conference and accommodation facilities should be erected.

The diagram of ZIRRCO as an institute (on page 238 above) reflects the changes and expansion which have occurred since the establishment of the original organisational structure depicted in volume 1 (Daneel 1998:114). ZIRRCO Trust still acts as financial watchdog, while the ZIRRCO executive – with its comprehensive representation of the entire movement: director, founder and senior consultant, heads of departments and desks, liaison officers of our grassroots associations (AZTREC, AAEC, women's and youth clubs) and senior

Plate 41 Young children (top) and large numbers of students from (mainly rural) schools (bottom) were recruited from the outset of the 'war of the trees' to participate in tree-planting ceremonies

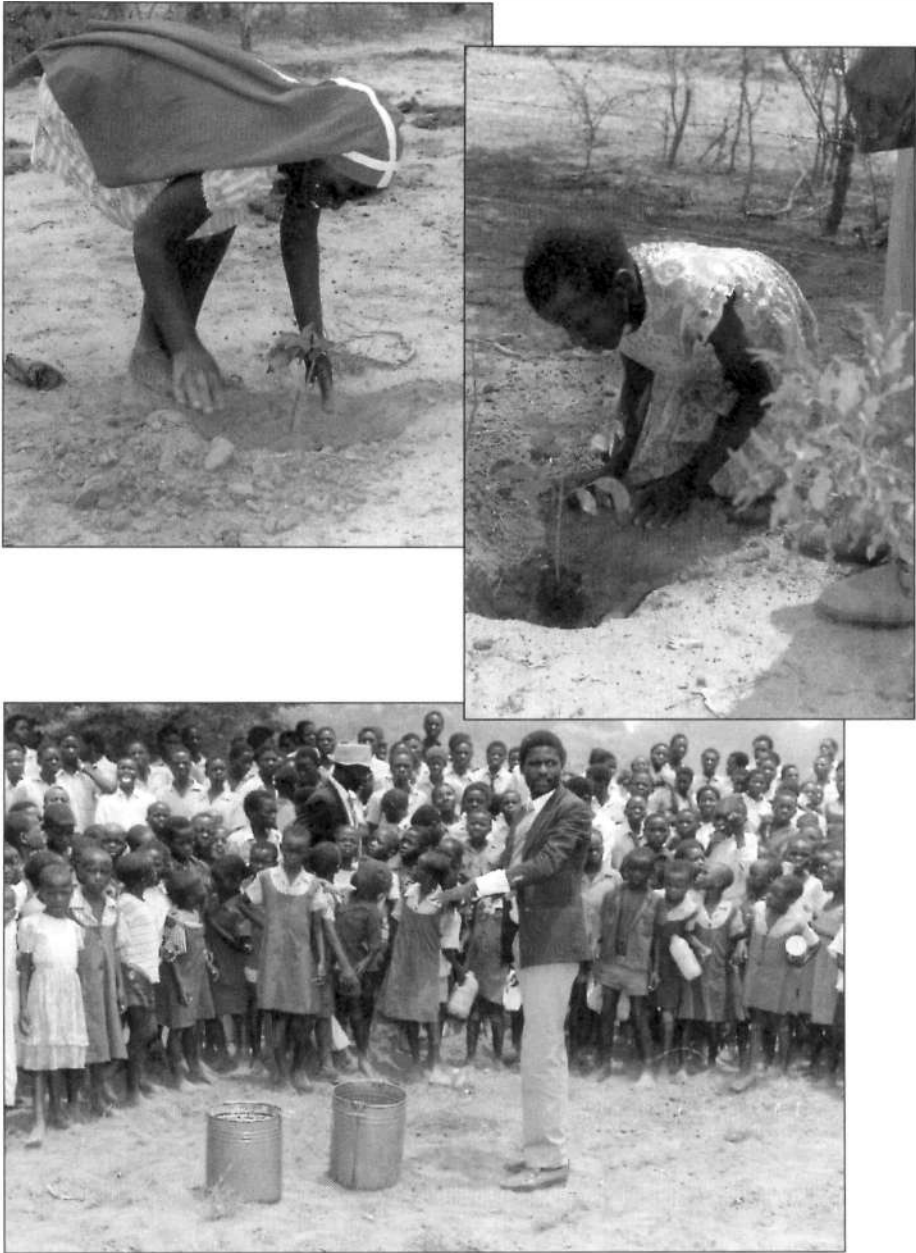
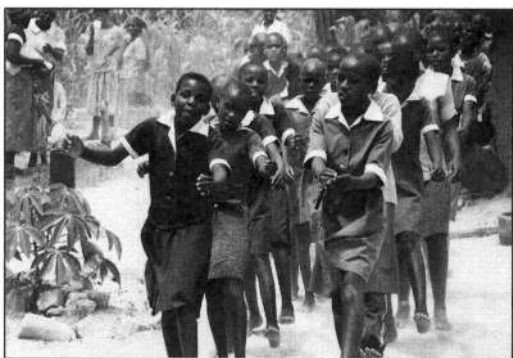


Plate 42 Uniformed school children provide theatrical entertainment during tree-planting ceremonies. Illustrated in this sequence: gender interaction in tree-planting (top), destructive male reaction (middle) and reconciliation in joint ecological endeavour (bottom)



staff members – has become the undisputed governing body. Even though the constitution has not yet been redrafted, it was accepted at the 1995 annual general conferences of both AZTREC and AAEC that these associations will become desks within ZIRRCON. This means that their annually elected executives will be headed by chairpersons instead of by presidents, positions which still afford considerable executive powers but without the former emphasis on group autonomy. This change will in no way undermine the identity, growth, ecological contribution or grassroots status of these associations. Their leadership has agreed that they function primarily as integral parts of the ZIRRCON 'army', represented continuously at headquarters by their respective salaried liaison officers or coordinators.

There are no rigid distinctions between ZIRRCON's departments and desks, and several staff members serve in more than one of these bodies. The working situation, therefore, is fairly fluid without watertight compartmentalisation. However, the general perception of our departments is that they have a greater degree of professionalism because of their qualified members, in the Western sense, than the desks, the latter dealing more directly and regularly with grassroots communities in the field. For instance, the administrative department, via the director and bookkeeper/secretary, takes care of funding, salaries, auditing and reporting; the research department, under my jurisdiction, creates databases and produces reports and publications based on empirical research; and the training department produces literature for workshops, etc. All these functions are performed or overseen by staff members with the necessary expertise. By contrast, the desk coordinators spend much of their time in the field, initiating and facilitating projects in their respective grassroots constituencies. Here they develop another kind of expertise, derived from field training and growing experience of the activities and needs of rural society. Such experience keeps ZIRRCON headquarters, particularly the more office-bound staff, in touch with rural developments. It permits, for instance, realistic fund-raising drives which increasingly become a joint venture between representatives of administration, departments and desks.

It would be misleading, however, to present ZIRRCON's desks as the institution's main or sole links with grassroots society. The departments by their very nature also have direct access to peasant communities. Quite apart from the professional input of agro-foresters in our ecological

department, for instance, the field operations manager, operating from within this department, is, by virtue of his responsibility for ZIRRCO's nurseries and woodlots, in regular touch with environmentalist peasants throughout Masvingo Province. Likewise, the field assistants of the research department, whether monitoring afforestation programmes or acting as participant observers at ritualised ecological ceremonies, also represent a regular link with rural society. Hence at virtually all levels of ZIRRCO's institutional structure, interaction with grassroots society is maintained and emphasised. As such interaction has different objectives (research, dissemination of information, conscientisation, mobilisation, facilitation of projects, etc), the resultant feedback to the various departments and desks at ZIRRCO headquarters is complementary in nature. Insofar as ZIRRCO lays down strategy for the different forces and coordinates their efforts in the environmental liberation struggle, its bonds with grassroots communities, despite some degree of isolation caused by specialisation and bureaucratisation at headquarters, make for an excellent 'intelligence service'.

A brief survey of the activities of the respective departments and desks should clarify the composite picture.

6.1.2.1 Administration and finance

At present the administration is run by the director, Revd Zvanaka, assisted by the newly appointed bookkeeper/secretary and a secretary/typist. Senior staff members also play a role in this department. For the sake of financial accountability, safeguards have been built into the handling of funds. Along with the director, several signatories are required for the withdrawal of funds from the main bank account; this system keeps key figures informed about expenditure in relation to budgetary constraints. Regular reporting to our local auditors and subsequent discussions with them at executive meetings further enhance transparency and awareness of the financial state of the institution at all levels.

In addition to fund-raising, maintaining contact through correspondence and telephonically with donor agencies and providing annual audited reports, the administrative department is also responsible for setting up schedules for visiting representatives of donor agencies and other interested parties, putting them in touch with both the ZIRRCO

team at headquarters and participant grassroots communities, and familiarising them with our programmes.

Fund-raising and networking with donor agencies are the administrative department's most crucial functions.² Having guided these activities all along, I am greatly encouraged by the consolidation and continuity of overseas support for our institution. The director, moreover, is establishing new donor contacts on his own initiative.

Successful fund-raising does not, however, detract from acute awareness of the need for some measure of self-support. In one particularly successful year we earned Z\$55 000 from the sale of tree seedlings. This is but a drop in the ocean, considering ZIRRCO's annual overheads in excess of Z\$5 million. But it is a move in the right direction, using the local resources at our disposal. Market research and ongoing sales of tree seedlings are receiving attention.

6.1.2.2 Research and publications

ZIRRCO's research department has always played a pivotal role in the movement. In fact, the earthkeeping movement grew out of the network of contacts established in the course of my study of the spirituality of *chimurenga*, the liberation struggle. Prominent earthkeepers such as the late Leonard Gono, Bishop Marinda and Revd Zvanaka were all empirical research assistants at one time or another. These close links between researchers and peasant society forged earlier on have facilitated the building of a grassroots organisation.

Through the research department I have been able to further and supervise several academic field studies for degree purposes.³ Although ZIRRCO is not officially affiliated to any university, the kind of inter-university research service it renders is highlighted by my own participation in conferences and seminars at various universities in Southern Africa and abroad.⁴ ZIRRCO's field assistants have enabled me to consistently monitor religio-ecological developments in our movement, as a result of which quite a lot of praxis-related insight was gained and developed into articles for academic journals.⁵ This study of *African earthkeepers* benefits directly from research assistants' regular interviews at both traditional and Christian ecological ceremonies, which are tape-recorded and transcribed.

ZIRRCO's research department also promotes the development of a

local AIC theology. Both Revd Zvanaka and Bishop Marinda are currently engaged in a major research project called 'African Initiatives in Christian Mission', sponsored by The Pew Charitable Trusts in Philadelphia, USA, and aimed at producing a comprehensive series on the roles of African Christians in the propagation, growth and interpretation of Christianity in Africa. As initiator and coordinator of the project I am supported by Prof Dana Robert, missiologist and church historian at Boston University School of Theology (the host institution of the project), who, among other things, act as fellow senior editor of the envisaged series. Academics from various disciplines – mainly missiologists, scholars of religion and historians – from Boston University, the University of South Africa, ZIRRCON and the Universities of Zimbabwe and Malawi, are participating in the project. As the AIC members of the project team, Zvanaka and Marinda face the challenge of writing the missionary theology of their own Zionist churches, focusing on such themes as missionary strategies, proclamation of the good news, healing, perceptions of salvation and the like. Their work will be based on full-blown empirical surveys within their own churches, for which purpose they have employed temporary field assistants.

Apart from specific academic objectives, the research department also serves ZIRRCON's more immediate environmental needs. Thus it collects data on the interaction between religious beliefs and traditional conservationist customs and laws. This provides raw material for the production of goal-oriented manuals by the training department. A survey of holy groves (*marambatemwa*) in Masvingo Province formed part of a feasibility study conducted by ZIRRCON, with the assistance of members of the Department of Parks and Wildlife and WWF (World-wide Fund), with a view to establishing wildlife sanctuaries in the communal lands. As this is a contentious issue in view of the shortage of land, regular monitoring of community response will be required, particularly during the first phase of project implementation.

A woodlot and seed-collection directory is currently being compiled. Some ten per cent of the more than 2 000 woodlots planted over the past nine years have been surveyed with regard to soil types, tree species, survival rates of trees planted, aftercare, attitudes of committees and communities responsible for woodlots, and so on. This information will be used for policy making, afforestation planning and the publication of articles by a qualified forester.

To sum up: ZIRRCON's academic goals lead to international exposure at university conferences, lectures and seminars, as well as regular publications on its activities. Its eco-theological goals promote the monitoring of innovations in this field and the development of a written local AIC theology which should eventually enrich more sophisticated, Western-style African theologies. And its praxis-oriented environmental goals facilitate operational planning, training and implementation of its conservationist projects.

6.1.2.3 *Training and conscientisation*

All ZIRRCON's afforestation activities, and its tree-planting ceremonies in particular, involve conscientisation and mobilisation to transform the attitudes and behaviour of grassroots communities towards the environment. The training department, formerly the responsibility of Bishop Marinda, promotes ecological awareness building by way of workshops or seminars. This is a form of non-certificated environmental education aimed at imparting the requisite skills to enable communities to identify, analyse and solve their own problems. The starting point is to make communities fully aware of their environmental situation, the extent of the crisis (deforestation, wind and water erosion, gully formation, water pollution, siltation of river beds and dams, dwindling wildlife resources, etc), the causes (unfair land distribution, over-exploitation of natural resources, random bush clearing, poor land husbandry, etc), and then teach skills to resolve the crisis.

The first two training manuals, which Bishop Marinda wrote in the vernacular, target mainly the AICs and reflect ZIRRCON's religio-ecological interactive emphasis. In his newly published *Theology of the environment* Marinda combines his own interpretation, in Zionist perspective, of biblical injunctions for earth-care with an exposition of AAEC innovations in environmental liturgies and ethics. His second work, *A theology of development*, analyses and assesses environmental exploitation in relation to so-called socioeconomic progress, as well as the implications for grassroots society.

In workshops the teaching blends eco-theological insight with practical instruction, such as the planting of various tree varieties for commercial, fuelwood, carpentry and other purposes, the use of *vetiver* grass

as a substitute for contour ridges and for gully reclamation, and so forth. Workshops tend to integrate ZIRRCO's liberationist ideologies and mobilisation strategies with the environmental practicalities propagated by the departments of Forestry, Natural Resources, Parks and Wildlife and Agritex. Representatives of these bodies participate in workshops, so that ecological experts encounter traditionalist and Christian commitment. Workshops sometimes differentiate between and at other times combine AZTREC and the AAEC. Thus they also help to promote solidarity between chiefs and church leaders in the war of the trees. The two groups participate together enthusiastically and are themselves increasingly emphasising their unity of purpose and earth-keeping commitment at all levels. Once the women's clubs become more active in environmental education, as requested and planned, a broad spectrum of rural African society will receive regular instruction.

6.1.2.4 Ecology

ZIRRCO's ecological department is in charge of the main thrust of the entire movement, namely earthkeeping, so far primarily by way of afforestation programmes. In a sense, therefore, the ecological department encompasses the whole of ZIRRCO, since all its activities – from funding and administration to research, training and religious innovation – basically focus on healing and conserving the earth. Everybody works towards this end: researchers monitoring the survival rate of trees; liaison officers recruiting chiefs for AZTREC or new member churches for the AAEC to extend the green army; the coordinator of the Women's Desk teaching nature conservation to women as part of their income-generating projects; temporary workers from abroad involved in nursery keeping, nursery expansion and the cultivation of new tree species; the executive director and senior consultant planning new fund-raising strategies, drafting budgets and promoting public relations or media exposure.

At present the core of the ecological department consists of the field operations manager – the position held and developed so ably by the late Leonard Gono, currently filled with great enthusiasm by Mr Edwin Machokoto (brother of Bishop Machokoto, first president of the AAEC) – who oversees the work of some 30 regular, salaried nursery keepers.

As we branch out into the field of wildlife through the establishment of

game sanctuaries, the positions and specialisation within the ecological department will naturally become more differentiated. It is conceivable that subdivisions with appropriate staff for afforestation, wildlife and water resources will become necessary.

6.1.3 Desks

6.1.3.1 *Women's Desk*

Appreciative of the significant role which women were playing as earth-keepers and aware that they constitute the majority of participants at virtually all earthkeeping ceremonies (up to 80% of all adult AIC members are women!), the ZIRRCON executive – in consultation with leading women in African society – decided to promote their cause, not only in earth healing but also with a view to improving their general socio-economic status. In September 1993 ZIRRCON's Women's Desk was officially established. Raviro Mutonga, former research assistant, was appointed as its coordinator. As with AZTREC and the AAEC, a constitution was drafted for the WD, an executive committee was put in charge of its programmes and regular annual general conferences are held.

Under the able leadership of Ms Mutonga and a number of enterprising women leaders some 40 women's clubs were formed in the course of 1994. By the end of 1997 more than 70 clubs had officially registered with the WD and the numbers keep escalating, despite the fact that the facility ZIRRCON offers can barely cope with the needs and drive of its current members. On average a women's club consists of 30 to 40 members. Affiliation is less strictly determined by religious identity than in the case of AZTREC and the AAEC. Nevertheless, a kind of natural ecumenism emerges in some clubs where *Ruwadzano* (Mothers' Union) leaders from one or several churches – either AIC or mainline mission or a combination of both – decide on the religious nature of ecological ceremonies. In clubs where the wives of kraalheads or headmen play a prominent role, traditionalist *mafukidzanyika* (earth-clothing) ceremonies are held, with ritual offerings of beer and ancestral addresses.

As ecological performance is a condition for any club to receive financial aid from the WD, a considerable amount of work has been generated in this field since the inception of the new desk. During the first

two years several full-fledged and satellite nurseries were established; 22 woodlots were developed and, because of the pride the women take in their aftercare, they generally have a far higher survival rate of trees than ZIRRCO has achieved so far. In addition to stepping up the war of the trees by setting an example and taking on challenges themselves, the women's clubs have taken the initiative in approaching schools and activating school communities to engage in new environmental ventures. Having composed their own slogans and songs, the women also emerged as an increasingly well organised component at AZTREC and the AAEC tree-planting ceremonies. Their slogan 'Zvose, zvose, *Women's Desk!*' (All! All! Women's Desk) not only suggests that united action will produce abundance but that where there is a will, anything and everything is possible.

Far from signalling wishful thinking, these slogans reflect actual accomplishment in a variety of self-help income-generating projects. To date quite a number of sewing, bakery, soap-making, gardening, poultry-keeping, goat-keeping, bee-keeping and nursery (or satellite nursery) projects have been launched by various clubs. Significantly, these clubs have raised considerable sums of money themselves to initiate or forge ahead with their own projects, independent of outside support. Funds for larger projects will, of course, be raised in the future. In cooperation with the ZIRRCO executive, Ms Mutonga has completed several project funding applications for the consideration of Plan International, the German Development Service, the Japanese Embassy and other donor agencies. But the women are setting a trend of independent endeavour, inspiring ZIRRCO generally to strive for greater self-support than in the past.

In its conscientisation programme the WD collaborates with the training department through joint workshops for both genders. Ms Mutonga also conducts regional workshops, in which clubs in particular districts participate. She has been focusing on subjects like development and women's leadership, institution building, environmental rehabilitation and income-generating activities such as poultry, bee-keeping and clothing manufacture.

Performance statistics give an incomplete picture of the WD's impact. Only when the women start telling their own stories and the feats of outstanding personalities come to light will it be possible to assess the real

significance of what promises to become a dynamic new development in ZIRRCO. A few success stories will illustrate this point.

Ms Gwamure of Chivi district, during a severe drought, formed the *Nzara imhandu* (Hunger is the Enemy) committee to help women contend with the serious problem of dwindling food resources. She insisted that members contribute their own money to establish the *Takabatana* ('We are united') bakery. Simultaneously she encouraged her club friends to start their own nursery, where they cultivated 5 000 seedlings to start with. From the proceeds of both nursery and bakery the club members managed to supply their families with food and to expand their club work. Subsequently Ms Gwamure introduced ZIRRCO's activities to the Zunga school. As a result, pupils and teachers, together with the women's club, embarked on tree planting and related conservationist work. This escalated as surrounding village communities started planting orchards and small woodlots with seedlings purchased from the women's club. Thus Ms Gwamure's inspired leadership, supported by ZIRRCO, has launched a new cycle of environmental rehabilitation in her own locality, as well as providing a mechanism for women to cope with poverty and famine.

Ms Emily Ndahwi, wife of headman Ndahwi in Gutu district, is noted for her originality and progressive spirit, which benefit WD activities both at local district level and at annual general conferences. She formed the *Wasara-Wasara* club ('Those who stay behind stay behind') to promote ZIRRCO's conservationist work. Early in 1994 her club planted 1 600 eucalyptus trees. Through conscientious aftercare the club established a model woodlot in which virtually all seedlings survived. Two more woodlots of eucalyptus and two of indigenous trees were subsequently planted by the same club, all of which are cared for with great commitment. This club has a traditionalist slant because most of its members are wives of traditionalist headmen and kraalheads. Procedure at tree-planting ceremonies follows the AZTREC pattern. Aware of the religious significance of the *muchakata* tree, which symbolises the interdependence of humans and trees as well as the living and the living dead, the women of *Wasara-Wasara* use this tree as their icon: a rallying point for their ancestrally directed conservation work and a traditional metaphor in their own myth about women preserving the fertility and wellbeing of all the earth. They gather under *muchakata* trees when they meet to show their respect for the old customs and commune

effectively with the ancestors, and they refer to the shade of this tree to illustrate the protective nature of their own environmental endeavour. Ms Ndahwi's enthusiasm and dedication have inspired the formation of six additional women's clubs in her district, each with its own project. She herself envisages the planting of numerous orchards to supply fruit for household and commercial purposes.

Ms Mazero is chairperson of the *Tasungana* ('We are bonded') club. She spends much of her time on project work and inspires her followers to run a self-help poultry project, making regular donations from her own savings. The unity expressed by the name of this club is between Roman Catholic and Reformed Church women, who refuse to be divided by the traditional rivalry and doctrinal differences between the two churches. Ms Mazero's leadership has earned her club the respect of the Ministries of Health and Forestry, which have provided them respectively with rabbits and trees for their projects. In response to ZIRRCON's challenge both blue gum and indigenous tree woodlots were established. To combat the attacks of white ants on saplings in these woodlots the club has successfully used natural pesticides, which will no doubt be adopted in other ZIRRCON woodlots which face similar problems.

Despite the freedom and autonomy enjoyed by the WD within the broad framework of ZIRRCON, the leading figures of the clubs have thus far shown remarkable loyalty to the movement. The development of a distinct identity, coupled with pride of achievement, has not led to exclusivist, isolationist or secessionist excesses. The maintenance of unity in the midst of diversity suggests balanced and tactful leadership within the clubs, as well as at committee and executive levels in ZIRRCON. Raviro Mutonga expressed what she considers the real value of the Women's Desk as follows:

African women have not had sufficient opportunities in the field of development since Independence. They still constitute the bulk of marginalised and oppressed people in rural society. In traditional society they were allowed only a humble and subordinate social status. They were deprived of the basic rights of self-determination, co-responsibility and shared authority. But modern development has allowed the quest for self-determination to find practical expression among women in ZIRRCON. Here the women are redefining their

status. Consequently they play a more meaningful role in society. In ZIRRCON they are treated as equals by the men and they have equal opportunities. They organise themselves and share their insight and plans in the movement without interference or domination from the side of men. Economically, too, they are making progress.

Asked to single out a few key objectives of the Women's Desk for the future, Mutonga responded:

- skills training for environmental and other development activities
- conscientising communities to start self-help income-generating projects with their own funds
- developing factories, using local resources such as guava and marula fruit for the production of jams, fruit juices, beverages and so on
- introducing agricultural projects such as sunflower and castor bean crops for processing oil and as stock feeds.

It is not surprising that economic advancement features prominently in a society dependent on subsistence farming and plagued by poverty as a result of the poor crop yields and dwindling numbers of livestock caused by land pressure and frequent droughts. The ZIRRCON women are expressing their conviction that earthkeeping and commercial enterprise are integral to progress in the holistic rural lifestyle they envisage. As ZIRRCON requires environmental input in order to provide infrastructure and financial support for economic advancement, the women seek professional advice and funds for their income-generating projects in return for their contribution to the green struggle.

6.1.3.2 Youth Desk

Over the years ZIRRCON has consistently striven to relate to school communities and activate them to engage in earthkeeping. Schools have been supplied with seedlings to plant their own orchards and/or woodlots; some have been assisted to establish of their own nurseries; interschool competitions have been held in the field of progressive conservationist work; school children collect seeds for ZIRRCON's nurseries; and they usually take an active part in ZIRRCON's traditionalist *mafukidzanyika* and Christian *maporesanyika* ceremonies, providing conscientising entertainment in the form of choir singing, recitals of

poetry, theatrical presentations and the like, all on green themes and produced by the pupils themselves.

Against this background ZIRRCO has decided to seek funding for the establishment of a Youth Desk with a full-time coordinator and one or two assistants, on the same lines as the WD. Thus far ZIRRCO's youth work has been run by staff members such as the field operations manager and AZTREC and AAEC liaison officers. Because of their workload these staff members have been unable to provide the continuity and follow-up work necessary to ensure optimum and enduring results. In view of the long-term importance of environmental awareness and commitment among the youth and the comparatively extensive relations which ZIRRCO has already established with schools, a more structured, institutionalised approach seems indicated.

The following objectives will be paramount once the Youth Desk is in place:

- the formation of environmental youth clubs and/or cooperatives at schools
- regional meetings of the youth clubs of several schools with a view to competitive debates on environmental issues, sharing information, joint planning of projects, nature study outings, etc
- curriculum development in cooperation with the Ministry of Education to make ZIRRCO's wealth of information on the environment in relation to culture, religion and the economy available for regular instruction at schools.
- motivating teachers and pupils to use environmental themes for compositions and poems, theatre productions and art; large-scale projects for clubs to survey tree species or wildlife in the vicinity of schools can also be encouraged
- afforestation: youth clubs will be encouraged to develop their own nurseries, woodlots, orchards, agro-forestry (permaculture) schemes and to enter ZIRRCO's seed-collection competitions to promote the upkeep and expansion of ZIRRCO nurseries. Clubs should become more prominent in the programming, entertainment and work for ZIRRCO's annual tree-planting ceremonies in their districts. Tree identification outings will broaden pupils' practical knowledge of trees and familiarise them with problems created by deforestation

- **wildlife:** youth clubs could form part of the work force deployed in fencing, establishing watering points, constructing living quarters and modest conference centres, etc, for the envisaged game sanctuaries in communal lands. Pupils are likely to develop a lasting interest in wildlife if they take some responsibility for the establishment and maintenance of game sanctuaries located within reach of their schools. Club members with a special interest in wildlife would be involved in planning, stocking procedures, game counts, courses in tracking and bushcraft, anti-poaching measures, culling, conscientisation through media exposure, and so forth. Wilderness trips to the Zambezi valley or the ranching conservancies in the lowveld – especially rural children who have never had such opportunities to see big game out in the open – could form part of ZIRRCON's wildlife programme
- **water resources:** youth clubs at schools situated near large rivers could be encouraged to study the problems of riverbank cultivation, siltation of river beds, pollution, aquatic life, changing weather patterns and their impact on the flow of rivers. They could then develop their own plans of action to deal with these problems.

6.1.3.3 Development Desk

Since the inception of ZIRRCON and its sister organisations, the chiefs and bishops have requested support for income-generating development projects to improve their standard of living. They associate me, the founder of the *Fambidzano* ecumenical movement, with the community development, sewing, clothing manufacture, carpentry, agricultural, water development and other schemes for AICs which I supervised and raised funds for in the past (Daneel 1989). Having seen the detrimental impact of *Fambidzano's* development work on its originally focal theological training programme, I was aware of the risk of being distracted from ZIRRCON's basic environmental drive. Consequently I tended to resist this trend, although I understood and sympathised with the economic hardships many of the AZTREC and AAEC members were enduring. For nearly a decade I kept insisting that environmental rehabilitation was, first and foremost, our overriding concern and I confined ZIRRCON fund-raising to this task. In addition, it was always clearly stipulated that a convincing record of solid involvement in ZIRRCON's war

of the trees would be a condition for development aid once we had created the institutional framework to provide it. In other words, ZIRRCO was not prepared to introduce economic development programmes independently of earthkeeping as an end in itself.

The Women's Desk has turned out to be a trend setter in this respect. In the affiliated clubs ecology and commercial enterprise clearly interrelate on the lines indicated above. Now that this example has been set and the ecological identity of the movement has been safely and solidly established over nearly a decade, the creation of a development desk appears appropriate. For some time, Mr Mabheba – formerly employed as senior development officer at *Fambidzani* – was appointed by ZIRRCO for a trial period to establish the envisaged desk. His mandate included the identification of AZTREC and AAEC development projects, conducting feasibility studies on site, writing up project proposals and, together with our managing director, engaging in fundraising. It was agreed that Mabheba's success in this last task would determine the viability of the development desk and the continuity of his own salary. The current three-year EZE (Evangelical Centre for Development Aid, Bonn) budget for ZIRRCO staffing does not cater for this venture. In view of ZIRRCO's track record of clear-cut project goals, successful project implementation and financial accountability I have little doubt, however, that in the course of time the envisaged desk will be established as a permanent part of the institute.

It is to be expected that there will be some overlap between the activities of the new desk and those of the WD. This need not cause conflict or unhealthy competition. Through regular liaison and cooperation the two desks should be able to complement and support each other in a field which offers many more challenges than can actually be met.

6.1.3.4 AZTREC and the AAEC

The reasons for organising ZIRRCO's major sister organisations as integral desks rather than loosely affiliated associations with the emphasis on autonomy from ZIRRCO were explained above.

Change is a gradual process rather than an imposed restructuring. It appeared at the two annual general conferences of 1995 that the newly elected AZTREC and AAEC executives and their chairpersons both had strong majority support. The catharsis following the expulsion of a

couple of secessionist malcontents came as a great relief to the stalwart chiefs and mediums as well as the bishops and prophets. Both groups repeatedly expressed the view that divisive issues should be dealt with jointly by the executives of the two bodies despite religious diversity. This augurs well for ZIRRCON's future, as it reflects commitment to united action and understanding of the reality that environmental ills require a common will and steadfastness transcending any ambition and greed which could lead to group fragmentation or religiously inspired exclusiveness.

Organisational restructuring is unlikely to disturb the ritualised environmental praxis already developed by AZTREC and the AAEC. If anything, it should facilitate expansion and progress in our struggle.

Additional desks may be established in the future to meet growing needs. Public relations, for instance, is a field that has been neglected in the past despite attempts by me, Revd Zvanaka and other ZIRRCON officers to give our movement the necessary exposure in the media. During fund-raising and lecturing tours I have sometimes managed to promote our cause through television appearances, radio discussions and newspaper articles. Both in Zimbabwe and South Africa several TV programmes in recent years have publicised ZIRRCON's activities. This was complemented by popular and academic articles in Southern Africa, the USA and Europe. But the input has been too sporadic and the human resources too limited to follow up and capitalise on such exposure. Through the valiant efforts of Farai Mfanyana of the research department a quarterly newsletter has finally been launched. As our literary efforts become more professional and our circulation expands it may become necessary to develop a separate public relations and publicity desk.

6.1.3.5 Internal capacity building

From the foregoing description it is clear that despite organisational diversification and ongoing institutionalisation some departments and desks are run by little more than a skeleton staff. ZIRRCON, in addition to lacking certain skills, has a much bigger constituency than it can effectively serve. The answer lies not only in funding and the appointment of more staff, but also in technical capacity building. This process is already under way.

Areas which require urgent attention include the following:

- forestry skills (nursery keepers and woodlot committees)
- project implementation management (ecological department and WD)
- project planning and appraisal (ecological department, administration, WD and YD)
- research methodologies and empirical data analysis for feedback on conscientisation (research and training departments)
- personnel management (administration)
- training for all instructors (training and ecology departments, WD and YD)
- typing and electronic word processing (all departments and desks)
- marketing and public relations (administration and ecology departments, WD and Development Desk)

Capacity can be built by sending staff members on courses at training centres, employing temporary consultants, technicians and forestry or wildlife professionals to provide in-service training, and gaining experience through the reinterpretation and application of traditional ecological praxis and worldviews as well as ZIRRCON's Christianised style of earthkeeping. In its dependence on funds from abroad ZIRRCON will have to be wary of being steamrolled into patterns which Western donor agencies may consider efficient and successful, but which may not fit the needs or suit the framework of rural African society. The objective must be local environmental effectiveness which, while inevitably involving Western technology, remains fully in touch with and motivated by the African religio-cultural disposition and mind-set.

6.2 Environmental concerns

6.2.1 Afforestation

The hub of ZIRRCON's war of the trees has all along has been its ten nurseries: Nemanwa, Chivi, Mtirikwe, Nyika, Nyajena, Chinyabako, Muuyu, Muchakata, Nyamakondo and Zimuto (the last two being WD

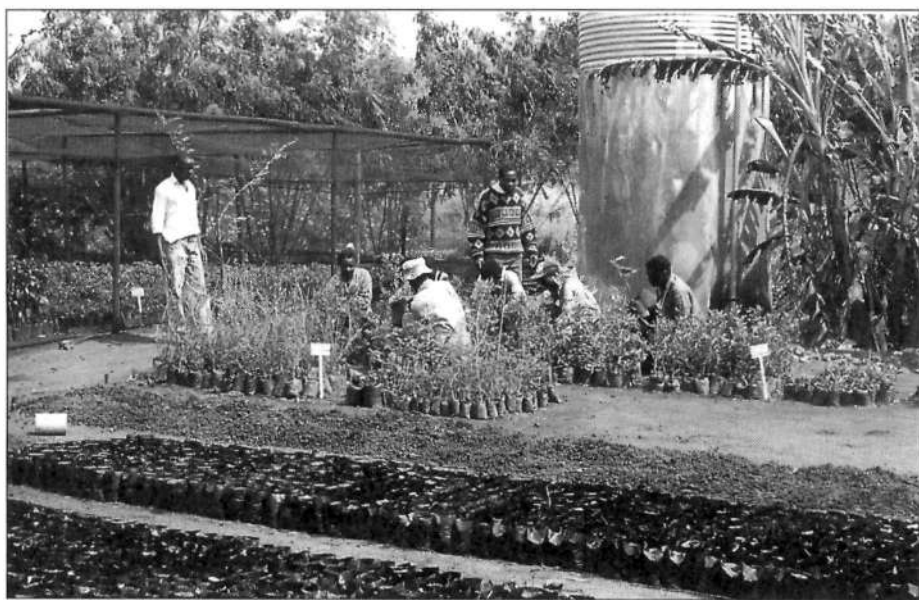
projects). Despite the black frost which wiped out hundreds of thousands of seedlings in our nurseries in the course of 1994 and 1995, more than three million tree seedlings have been successfully cultivated and distributed for planting over the past nine years. Each nursery, run by two regular nursery keepers and occasional casual labour, aims at cultivating at least 50 000 seedlings annually; some of them achieve a total of up to 70 000 seedlings when seed collection, water supply and other conditions are favourable. New nurseries are being developed in Gutu, Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts so as to cover the whole of Masvingo Province. Within the next few years we hope to run some 20 nurseries. A much-discussed goal in the war of the trees is to cultivate a minimum of one million tree seedlings annually. We will need to produce even larger numbers if we want to actually plant a million trees each year. Experience has taught us that some indigenous species like red mahogany need to stay in the nurseries for two or more years to secure reasonable survival rates in woodlots. In other words, there is a discrepancy between the number of seedlings cultivated and the trees planted in any particular year.

Overseeing nurseries spread over a wide geographical area can be problematic when vehicles break down, water pumps malfunction, water resources dry up or nursery keepers are remiss. We have managed to make some nurseries less dependent on ZIRRCON transport by obtaining scotch carts and donkeys for nursery keepers to fetch humus on their own. In addition, compost is now made at the actual nurseries to cut down on transport, which was a major problem in the past.

Recent planning and budgeting include the rehabilitation of existing nurseries, apart from developing new ones. Leaking water tanks, worn pipes and outdated pumps need to be replaced. Small buildings will be erected to store tools and accommodate nursery keepers. The physical structures at some nurseries require attention, such as extending fences for greater capacity, improving seedbeds, and providing better shading and frost protection for seedlings. Gardening tools and workers' overalls also need replacing. In addition to upgrading facilities, periodic workshops for nursery keepers aim at upgrading nursery procedures: pot-filling, compost mixtures, seed germination and collection, trimming surface growth and roots of fast-growing seedlings, proper record keeping of seedling sales, species cultivated, requests for new woodlots, the condition of woodlots near nurseries, and so forth.



Plate 43 Field operations officers and nursery keepers converse at Muchakata nursery (top). Senior ecologists keep a close check on the nursery routine of pot-filling, planting and tending to seedlings (bottom)



The television programme 'Wild Geese' at Hilversum in the Netherlands has provided funds for ZIRRCON's model nursery just outside Masvingo town on the main road to Beitbridge. A well-wisher and supporter of ZIRRCON's work, Chris Diedericks, leased us enough land for a nursery and an experimental woodlot right next to a trucking centre, filling station and restaurant. This position on the main road offers excellent exposure to remedy our relatively low profile in urban society caused by ZIRRCON's basically rural orientation. Called by my nickname, Muchakata, in honour of my role in the movement, the nursery's sign-board boldly proclaims our holistic aims: to promote the greening of Africa, human relations and interfaith dialogue.

Muchakata nursery has capacity for 100 000 seedlings and can be expanded. Willem van Harderwijk, Roland Teufel and Fieke Vermeulen supervised the layout of both nursery and woodlot. A double rondavel, thatched African-style, was built as an office. A strong borehole, tank and pipe system supply all the nursery's water needs, including limited irrigation for the trees and grass in the adjacent woodlot. Nursery keepers are experimenting with the germination of a wider variety of seeds than in outlying nurseries, different types of grass, and woodlot development which includes innovative permaculture and agro-forestry techniques. Muchakata is probably the largest indigenous tree nursery in Masvingo Province, if not in the whole of Zimbabwe. Because of its location it attracts many visitors. Many of them are not regular callers at ZIRRCON but want advice on tree planting and nurture, or purchase species they require. During the rainy season there is a marked upswing in the sale of seedlings. In the course of a weekend, sales sometimes exceed Z\$500. In terms of environmental awareness-building in all layers of provincial society Muchakata nursery is fast becoming ZIRRCON's most consistent, effective and convincing platform.

ZIRRCON has planted more than five million trees in well over 2 000 woodlots spread throughout Masvingo Province, as well as in the provinces of Manicaland and Matabeleland where there are respectively ten and twenty member churches of the AAEC. There is no accurate count of woodlots at this stage, since nursery keepers have not kept records of orchards and small woodlots comprising only a cluster of blue gum or indigenous trees belonging to individuals or families. Even some of the larger woodlots planted during the late 1980s were not recorded, a situation which will hopefully be remedied by our monitor-

ing team. It is unlikely that we will be able to keep track of all the small orchards and individual woodlots consisting of ten to 100 trees from our nurseries, but eventually all the larger woodlots containing several hundred or a few thousand trees should be accounted for. To my knowledge, the largest ZIRRCO woodlot, in the Gutu communal lands, contains 8 000 trees. The unavailability of large tracts of land in the communal lands and the problems which are bound to arise over maintenance and ownership have deterred us from seriously considering the establishment of large plantations.

ZIRRCO woodlots are owned either by individuals together with members of their extended households, or by larger communities such as the inhabitants of one or a cluster of villages (usually under the leadership of a chief, headman, spirit-medium or a prominent traditionalist, if the tree planting was initiated by AZTREC), a congregation or church (AAEC), a school or a women's club. In most cases ownership is collective. Special committees are sometimes appointed by the group concerned to undertake aftercare such as watering trees and pest control, maintaining fences and preventing tree felling when the trees mature. In areas where goats or cattle are a threat, committee members are known to have drawn up a rota to ensure round-the-clock protection of the woodlot. Some traditionalist male elders engaged in night duty claim to rely on the guidance and protective powers of the guardian ancestors of their region. Representatives of collaborating agencies such as the departments of Forestry, Agritex and Natural Resources pay the owners of woodlots field visits to help them with post-planting care and other technical advice.

Collective ownership normally makes for fair play and equal distribution within the community when blue gum woodlots are harvested for building and carpentry materials or for commercial purposes. ZIRRCO's executive acts mainly in an advisory capacity concerning the use of trees from its nurseries. It will most likely involve itself directly in the use of woodlot trees only in cases of obvious environmental abuse or unfair commercial exploitation by individuals at the expense of the community.

ZIRRCO's influence has also activated non-affiliated groups to establish their own woodlots or to plant trees for a variety of purposes. For several years running our nurseries have provided the bulk of seedlings

for national tree-planting day proceedings in the province. Of late the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) has been using our services to establish woodlots at various police stations. Many school communities are involved, as mentioned above. The Masvingo golf club has planted numerous trees from our nurseries to beautify its grounds. Local newspapers have written up this event under such captions as 'golfers turned tree planters'. Commercial farmers are increasingly calling on us with orders for blue gum, leucaena, pod mahogany, kiasat and a variety of fruit trees. Recently requests were received for large numbers of salt bush, which some farmers plant to augment the diet of their livestock.

Survival rates of trees have always caused ZIRRCON headaches. On the whole, blue gum trees have a survival rate of 80 to 90 per cent even during droughts. Yet we have deliberately held back on blue gum production to keep it to an estimated 20 per cent of our total nursery yield, since blue gums are known to have a negative impact on underground water resources. Besides, the concern about dwindling forests of indigenous trees, coupled with ZIRRCON's religiously inspired motivation to restore something of the old order in nature, caused a conscious preference for the cultivation of indigenous trees. This choice, however, entails numerous problems because indigenous trees either are slow growers or require special conditions (soil types, altitude, frost or heat, state of seedlings in terms of the size of stems, taproot development, etc) to achieve a reasonable survival rate.

It was possible, for example, to successfully cultivate such species as the *msasa* and *mutondo* acacia, *mudziavashe* ('toilet paper tree', for firewood), *mukamba* (red mahogany), *mukurumbira* (kiasat) and virtually all types of wild fruit trees in our nurseries. Yet the results of planting these trees in woodlots or existing forests proved much less predictable and the survival rate much lower than was the case with blue gum, tipuana tip, leucaena and other exotic species. Part of the problem has always been that we have to proceed by way of trial and error as there are relatively few experts in the growing of indigenous trees in the country, even in the Forestry Commission. It was found, for instance, that *msasa* and *mutondo* stood little chance of survival if planted in the open, however favourable the soil and water conditions. Apparently these seedlings stand a better chance of maturing when planted on the fringes of existing *msasa* and *mutondo* forests. But even this hypothesis has not yet been fully proved by our tree planters. The *mubvumira* (wild seringa)

grows well in woodlots but has hardly any commercial value. In deference to the ancestors, traditionalists nevertheless take pride in caring for these trees. The *mudziavashe* presents its own mystery. Since they are easy to cultivate in nurseries, we initially planted hundreds of these trees in several woodlots in varying conditions and took special care to water them. Yet the survival rate of this tree, highly rated as excellent firewood, was so poor that we stopped cultivating it in our nurseries. We found the *mukamba* (red mahogany) an excellent, if slow, grower. Yet it is so vulnerable to frost that it is preferable to plant this species, like the mopane tree, in the lowveld and not in the higher regions surrounding Masvingo. Both red mahogany and kiaat are slow growers but, being the country's finest hardwood, they have increasing commercial value. It is therefore gratifying to see village elders plant them as an investment for coming generations.

Of the indigenous fruit trees the *mupfura* (marula) and *mushuku* (wild loquat) prove to be good growers. Women's clubs are being encouraged to plant orchards of these trees because of the commercial value of their fruit. Little factories could well be developed if sufficient fruit can be harvested for the production of jams, soft drinks and liqueurs. Other popular fruit trees are the *mutobwe* ('chewing gum'), *munhunguru* (batoka plum), *munhengeni* (sour plum), *mutamba* (monkey orange), *muchechete* (red milkwood), *munyii* (bird plum) and *mukute* (water berry). These trees are planted for household use and in some instances specifically to show respect to senior lineage and/or regional guardian ancestors.

As exotic fruit trees are in great demand, the cultivation of mango, paw-paw, avocado, guava, orange, tangerine, peach, Mexican apple, granadilla and cashew nut has increased considerably in the past few years. In urban areas these fruit trees are in constant demand, thus providing a regular if modest cash income at our two Masvingo town nurseries, Muuyu and Muchakata. We anticipate that we shall start grafting citrus fruit trees in the latter two nurseries in the near future. If successful, such specialisation will further boost sales of fruit trees.

As regards multipurpose exotic trees, the blue gum or *eucalyptus* is the best known, the most popular and most resilient grower in the communal lands. *Leucaena*, which provides excellent fodder for livestock and is a nitrogen-fixing species, is also sought after but one of the most

difficult trees to grow in the communal lands. We have planted several woodlots of leucaena, all of which were virtually wiped out by goats and cattle despite good fencing barricaded with thorn branches. In areas with limited grazing for livestock it seems impossible to protect these trees successfully, particularly against goats. We therefore sell leucaena seedlings to farmers who can provide the necessary protection on farms where livestock are more effectively controlled. ZIRRCO itself, however, will only attempt establishing new leucaena woodlots in the communal lands if these can be fenced with heavy pig wire, which is prohibitively expensive. Through the enthusiasm and support of Mr John Toft we are also experimenting with nihi and scarab trees. The seeds of the former can be processed for oil and the pods of the latter are ground into cattle fodder. In addition pigeon pea, tipuana tip, flamboyant, jacaranda, cypress and bougainvillea are cultivated in small quantities to meet the demand mainly of townspeople. Of late a large number of *jatropha* seedlings have been germinated in the Muchakata nursery. This drought-resistant tree is a fast grower, can be used for hedges and produces sufficient seedpods for harvesting within four to five years. The oil processed from *jatropha* seed is in great demand and has a ready market. Some of the farmers in the Chipinge district are currently replacing their coffee plantations with *jatropha*. ZIRRCO needs to do market research to determine the viability of establishing large-scale commercial woodlots of these trees.

ZIRRCO increasingly applies a dual policy in disposing of its trees. It provides rural communities with large quantities of trees free of charge so as to promote the war of the trees. This is usually the case when AZTREC or the AAEC conducts major tree-planting ceremonies. To remain true to its liberationist and religio-ecological philosophy ZIRRCO is in duty bound to extend this supply of 'arms' to the green forces in the field. On the other hand, the marketing of trees is becoming increasingly important in view of our determination to render all our nurseries self-supporting in terms of salaries, equipment and general running costs (pump fuel and repairs, the cost of water, polythene tubes for pot-filling, humus transport, etc).

At present ZIRRCO's main clientele are in the rural areas, where the buying power is so low that it has little impact on profitability. In our rural nurseries trees are mostly sold at nominal rates, well below cost price. At growth-point settlements seedling sales are more profitable, as

our experience at Nyika Halt in the Bikita district has shown. Consequently some of our new nurseries will be established near growth-points, for example in Gutu and Mwenezi districts. Nevertheless bulk sales to companies or commercial farmers, such as the sale of 20 000 red mahogany seedlings for Z\$40 000 to a Harare company a few years ago, will be necessary if our marketing programme is to succeed. Proper market research and intensive advertising campaigns will have to be conducted in Zimbabwe's urban communities and among commercial farmers if our commercial objectives are to be realised. It may even be necessary to find foreign markets for ZIRRCON's trees in addition to the local one.

It appears that purchased seedlings are better looked after and therefore have a better chance of reaching maturity in the communal lands than those obtained without charge. However, a straight comparison between small family-owned woodlots of primarily fruit trees and larger communal woodlots containing indigenous trees (whose growth patterns are still unclear) is not fair. AZTREC's and the AAEC's communally and religiously inspired aftercare – whether with reference to the protective powers of guardian ancestors or the Holy Spirit – on the whole still appears to secure a higher survival rate than that of some tree-planting campaigns elsewhere in Africa (see Timberlake's estimates, 1985). Nevertheless, price considerations (relatively expensive exotic fruit trees as opposed to cheaper indigenous trees) seem to stimulate the sale of indigenous trees in the communal lands. This places indigenous fruit and other species within the reach of low income subsistence farmers. In urban and growth-point areas people are willing to pay more for fruit trees yielding short-term economic benefits, such as citrus, avocado and guava.

Another new trend is that donor agencies and NGOs of all kinds are increasingly showing an interest in environmental issues. As a result project implementation institutions require seedlings and grass for their programmes – from catchment rehabilitation, water-point protection and gully reclamation to multipurpose woodlot development as part of community dam-building schemes. Thus another potential market is opening up for ZIRRCON. Among other things this development has caused our nursery keepers to pay greater attention to the growing of grass, especially *vetiver*, which is well known for its use against soil erosion, and *bana*. We are currently collecting and cultivating much

more grass than before, so that we can demonstrate its soil conservation qualities in our experimental woodlot next to Muchakata, and have enough in stock to cater for the needs of ZIRRCON's constituency.

6.2.2 Wildlife

Elsewhere I have discussed the prospect of ZIRRCON converting some of the existing holy groves (*marambatemwa*) in the communal lands into game sanctuaries (Daneel 1998:xx). I argued that, in view of the traditional religious sanction underlying all customary conservation laws and the continuing significance of holy groves as geographical symbols of abundant wildlife which these laws were designed to preserve, the *marambatemwa* provide ideal launching pads for the reintroduction of game in the communal lands. The scheme has great appeal for tribal elders, as discussions out in the communal lands during feasibility studies and at annual general conferences have disclosed. These game sanctuaries will differ from commercial game farms in that less land is available, implying smaller game populations. Yet through the empowerment of traditional elders and rural council members via the initiating agency, ZIRRCON, such a game restocking exercise will be an essentially African community enterprise, based on reconsideration, adaptation and implementation of traditional conservationist codes. It is conceivable, for instance, that anti-poaching and anti-snaring measures could be effectively applied in sacred game sanctuaries because of the persistent belief in the mystical protection of the ancestors. The chiefs and mediums of AZTREC are bound to declare imported game the 'property' of the *midzimu*. If initial experiments with small game such as rabbits, steenbok, duiker, reedbuck and impala prove successful, one could consider the reintroduction of threatened species such as pangolin and klipspringer. The latter is a small buck which should thrive in the mountainous terrain of holy groves, especially Mount Rasa (see Daneel 1998:224). One could also consider introducing bird species like guineafowl, pheasant, duck and geese, which in some areas are becoming increasingly rare. Controlled bird hunting by tribespeople in the immediate vicinity of game sanctuaries will enable them to benefit directly from ZIRRCON's wildlife projects and give new flocks of birds a chance to establish themselves and breed regularly in protected zones.

It was also argued (Daneel 1998:221) that ZIRRCON game sanctuaries would complement the wildlife management programme of CAMPFIRE. This organisation has successfully introduced the principle of making rural district councils and the grassroots communities they represent responsible for game conservation. Once the advantages of wildlife management in terms of improved living conditions became apparent to rural communities, peasant attitudes shifted markedly towards public opposition to poaching and the protection of game as a marketable resource. Much of CAMPFIRE's success, however, has been achieved in areas where the survival of sufficient numbers of big game has permitted the application of their policy. Restocking game, as ZIRRCON envisages, in game-fenced sanctuaries where human overpopulation has crowded out most game species – in other words, creating from scratch the conditions for game conservation, management and eventually also marketing – would be a totally different ball-game, one which is bound to be more complex and costly to initiate and maintain.

I have advanced several arguments in favour of establishing game sanctuaries in communal lands (Daneel 1998:220). Here I need merely point out that communal responsibility for game and bird life could change attitudes in rural society from the poaching-snaring mentality caused by deprivation to positive conservationism and controlled commercial enterprise. Conscious reinterpretation of traditional ecology and hunting laws and building on those foundations will, moreover, give such a wildlife enterprise recognisable cultural roots. This will have the advantage of promoting authentic popular concern about wildlife and in the process enhance the status of the chiefs, mediums, councillors and others responsible for project implementation. Probably the single biggest advantage of the proposed game sanctuaries is that they could become conscientisation centres for the youth at surrounding schools.

The link between youth work and wildlife management has already been mentioned in passing (Daneel 1998:225–227; *supra*:256–257). Modest African-style conference centres at ZIRRCON's game sanctuaries could accommodate youth clubs from rural schools, where weekend programmes could include environmental training: bushcraft instruction, anti-poaching exercises, tree and wildlife identification hikes and visits to places of cultural and historical significance in the sanctuaries (bushman paintings, ancestral shrines, caves used as hide-outs during Ndebele/Shona clashes and during the more recent freedom

struggle). In this way the earthkeepers and wildlife custodians of tomorrow, who are currently deprived of such opportunities in the denuded communal lands, can face the challenge of preserving and rebuilding their environmental heritage within the religio-cultural context of their forefathers.

The fact that I have discussed wildlife conservation mainly in terms of traditional customs and religion does not detract from the interest which AAEC leaders have shown in this subject. Although the chances are that AZTREC and the AAEC will be jointly involved in the realisation of our wildlife schemes, we have already discussed the possibility of running at least two sanctuaries along distinct religious lines, one traditionalist and the other Christian. This will enable adherents of the two religious traditions to develop and experiment with the ritualisation of their wildlife concerns and to establish new wildlife identities without external interference, in the same way that they developed religiously distinct tree-planting rituals and liturgies (ancestral *mafukidzanyika* and eucharistic *maporesanyika* ceremonies). Thus I can imagine that, because of historical ancestral requirements, AZTREC elders may prefer to stock the Rasa sanctuary with different species of game from those selected by AAEC bishops in another area, where their '*marambatemwa*' may in fact be a holy mountain on which a famous prophet experienced a call to the ministry, or a mountain with a tradition of Christian fasts, prayer and confessions in preparation for rains and the planting season. I can also imagine that the AZTREC elders will want to develop variations of beer libations, ancestral addresses, songs and dances for the launch of a new game camp, establish water-points, 'show' the game to the ancestors during stocking exercises or game counts, sanction a culling operation and remember the ancestors when distributing the meat, as well as consult the ancestral war council (*dare rechimurenga*) in the fight against poaching and snaring. For similar occasions the AAEC bishops may want to develop wildlife dedication liturgies, wildlife protection dances and songs, confessions and fasting services at holy places within a sanctuary, even a wildlife-related eucharist to symbolically illustrate in yet another way that in Christ all things hold together (Col 1:17).

At this stage ZIRRCO's wildlife programme is still in the planning phase. I have personally broached the subject of reintroducing game into the communal lands via the *marambatemwa* at various levels in

ZIRRCON: in one-to-one discussions with the director and other staff members, in executive meetings of ZIRRCON, AZTREC and the AAEC, and at general conferences. The consensus in the movement is that we should press ahead with the establishment of game sanctuaries as soon as funds are available. A positive response has also been forthcoming from the Department of Parks and Wildlife (discussions with Norman Monks, a well-known visionary game conservationist and expert on rhinos in the Kyle National Park, and his senior colleagues in Masvingo Province), the Worldwide Fund (whose representatives are currently assisting ZIRRCON to draft proposals for fundraising) and CAMPFIRE (Prof Marshall Murphree and others).

ZIRRCON's current staffing situation certainly does not allow for much more than its afforestation and related income-generating projects. It is hoped, however, that support for our wildlife proposals will enable us to make a few permanent appointments in the ecological department and to procure additional vehicles to undertake the new venture. Meanwhile, with the means at our disposal and the assistance of wildlife experts (John Toft, a freelancer; Norman Monks and Tizai of Parks and Wildlife; Messrs Cummings and Chafota of WWF), feasibility studies have been conducted at Mount Rasa and a few other holy groves to determine game fencing needs, water-points, game species to be stocked, community response and so on.

6.2.3 Water resources

ZIRRCON has not yet launched into concerted action in the field of water resources to the same extent that it has done in afforestation. Nevertheless the importance of water as the substance of life, and hence of good rains as a prerequisite for successful tree planting, has made rural people at both *mafukidzanyika* and *maporesanyika* ceremonies more aware of the actual state of the water resources they depend on in their immediate vicinity and the vital need to protect these resources. AZTREC's annual pilgrimage to the oracular shrine at Matonjeni has also served to motivate chiefs and mediums to take greater responsibility in this regard back in their home districts. Consequently these tribal elders are increasingly introducing control systems to combat riverbank cultivation, while the mediums police the remaining fountains, pools and rivulets, still considered to be inhabited

by the environment-friendly *njuzu* spirits, to stop pollution. These activities reflect an emerging ethic which stigmatises water pollution, like wanton tree felling, as a form of wizardry (*uroyi*), punishable by fines or withdrawal of land holding rights. Such accusations – similar to those directed against collaborators with the Rhodesian administration during *chimurenga* – are a sure sign that the traditional custodians of the land are existentially committed to the green struggle.

ZIRRCON's other awareness-building activities relating to water include teaching (by both the training department and Women's Desk) on subjects such as the causes of river and dam siltation, water pollution, water conservation, use of underground water resources and possible causes of changing weather patterns, as well as the provision of seedlings and grass for gully reclamation and new water schemes. I have, moreover, made several proposals, both orally and in writing, for future water projects.

ZIRRCON could render a similar service to its constituency as *Fambidzano*, which was and still is involved in water development work (digging and reinforcement of water-holes, installation and repair of hand-driven pumps, providing boreholes and diesel pumps at schools or church centres). Specialised work of this nature can, however, only be attempted if there is a well-informed policy on the use of underground water and fluctuating water tables to prevent overexploitation of a limited resource.

Another new activity is the protection of wetlands. Nursery development and tree planting will be ZIRRCON's contribution to the World Conservation Union's (IUCN) recently launched Zimuto-Msagashe Wetlands Rehabilitation project north of Masvingo town. Participation in agro-forestry schemes designed to suit and preserve wetland conditions will provide ZIRRCON with the know-how and experience to assist other communities farming under similar conditions.

Because of its primary concern with afforestation ZIRRCON's involvement in the protection of water resources in the foreseeable future is bound to focus on the organic link between vegetation and water. When it comes to strategy the question is: how can ZIRRCON use the environmental tools at its disposal – trees and grass – to help create a situation conducive to sound water usage, water conservation and the stability of unpolluted water resources? As ZIRRCON's commitment in this

field grows the ecological department may have to be expanded to provide the required expertise.

6.3 Assessment of ZIRRCO's religio-environmental contribution

Compared to the immensity of environmental problems facing humankind all over the world, ZIRRCO's contribution is but a drop in the ocean. Even if it achieves its current goals of planting one million trees annually, reclaiming numerous gullies, establishing a few wildlife sanctuaries in the communal lands and successfully protecting some water resources, it will still have done relatively little about the situation in Africa. One should, therefore, be careful not to overrate ZIRRCO's achievements.

However, in the local perspective of rural Masvingo Province, where there was hardly any earthkeeping endeavour prior to the formation of ZIRRCO, its impact has been dramatic. Through institutionalisation ZIRRCO has become a relatively stable organisation which has actually managed to activate and empower grassroots participation in environmental reform. The scale of this participation, its persistence and the wide range of opportunities created under the umbrella of earthkeeping are unprecedented in our part of the world. It is no mean achievement for an institution to fire the imagination of scores of chiefs, headmen and mediums and, having empowered them, to take part in their earthkeeping activities over more than a decade. There is also the accomplishment of ecumenically uniting a large number of African Independent Churches and participating in that union, constructed around a new ecological ethic and theology in the face of many humanly understandable pitfalls of ambition, opposition and possible defections. All that has been achieved despite shoestring budgets, desperate financial straits and uncertainty which hit ZIRRCO staff from time to time. To some extent these were teething problems, for ZIRRCO's sponsorship has stabilised and improved over the years. The point is that it needed the courage and commitment of all ZIRRCO's members to persevere during periods of adversity. Its survival and tenacious sense of purpose under adverse conditions are the measure of ZIRRCO's significance.

ZIRRCOON did manage to place environmental concerns fairly and squarely in the liberationist tradition of peasant society. In declaring a war of trees the sentiments and unifying forces of *chimurenga* were resuscitated to give special historical meaning to the struggle of further liberating the agriculturally overtaxed, tired soil. Propagating earth healing by paying tribute to the old heroes who fought white rule and simultaneously creating opportunities for new heroic exploits in the post-Independence struggle largely explains the fascination and staying power of ZIRRCOON's cadres of green fighters. There are, no doubt, some pragmatic and exploitive motives in the ranks of ZIRRCOON earthkeepers. After all, who in peasant society would not like to capitalise on the availability of firewood or building and carpentry materials in accessible woodlots? But it takes much more than mere pragmatism for the same people to persist with afforestation year after year, despite black frost wiping out their seedlings, entire woodlots being ravaged by livestock desperate for grazing, and any number of obstacles. Our movement has indeed applied cool-headed agro-economic reasoning in waging its war of afforestation. But its long-term durability and success lie in harnessing the people's love of the land and their willingness to sacrifice and suffer so as to restore what essentially spells home to them.

Psychologically, I consider ZIRRCOON's major breakthrough so far to be the switch of rural peasants' attitudes from fatalism and lethargy to new hope and conviction that something can be done to stem the destructive tide of environmental deterioration. By motivating and empowering people to implement their own conservationist projects, ZIRRCOON has enabled large numbers of peasant families in the communal lands to get a new grip on their destiny and to build a movement of which they can be proud. Through large-scale mobilisation and the creation of regular rallying points where earthkeepers can meet and plan together it is instilling a sense of unity, dignity, strength and competition in the struggle against the common enemy of earth destruction. Constant reminders at meetings and earthkeeping events that the struggle has just begun are effective deterrents against complacency.

Despite the limited scale of ZIRRCOON's earthkeeping contribution and its relative lack of Western ecological expertise, it has managed to strike a healthy balance between instructive conscientisation and earth-healing action. Far from satisfying itself with rousing meetings, conferences and workshops – valuable and indispensable as these may be –

the movement went into concerted action from its inception. Thus it has created its own very real myth, embodied in nurseries and woodlots, on which to build and which in itself provides the example and motivation for continued earth-healing action. ZIRRCO's durability and future growth hinge to a large extent on this combination of convincing action and inspired teaching.

To try and separate ZIRRCO's environmental work from the religio-cultural mould in which all its activities are cast would be to misunderstand the entire movement. The one cannot be assessed without the other. AZTREC and the AAEC have been vehicles of contextualisation, shaping the idiom in which earthkeeping concern is couched. Have these two arms of ZIRRCO really succeeded in setting rural environmental endeavour on a new course, or have they merely devised ephemeral gimmicks to attract the masses, the *povo*?

6.3.1 The traditional dimension

AZTREC's revitalisation of traditional religion in its quest for responsible earth-care was assessed in volume I (Daneel 1998, chapter 5). But in view of the close ecumenical cooperation between this movement and the AAEC in the war of the trees, the parallel ritual and conceptual developments in both and the broad overview attempted in this chapter, AZTREC's achievements are outlined here as well.

Significantly, neither of ZIRRCO's religiously inspired green armies has adopted a conquest mentality in regard to the other. Despite minor frictions over project implementation, retention of religious identity and mutual respect have always been the rule. Shared ecological commitment and willingness to seek new ways of jointly combating a common enemy have led to meaningful interfaith exchange and parallel internal innovation in each group, notably the traditionalist earth-clothing (*mafukidzanyika*) and the Christian earth-healing (*maporesanyika*) ceremonies. In both instances communion with the spirit world and/or divinity strengthens spiritual, communal and ecological resolve.

The most outstanding feature of AZTREC's work is the ability of the traditional custodians of the land to appropriate and revitalise Africa's age-old religio-ecological values in a modern programme of environmental reform. AZTREC has demonstrated convincingly that where the authority

of the traditional leaders, the chiefs and the mediums, is still relatively intact they are capable, once motivated and empowered, of mobilising rural society in large-scale environmental programmes. Appropriation and revitalisation of traditional values amount to much more than mere reversion to or revival of an old religious and cultural order. As a result of AZTREC's ecological engagement the spirit guardians of the land are now conceived of as insisting not only on customary ecological laws to preserve the holy groves, but also on a much more aggressive and geographically extensive process of healing and clothing the barren land through reafforestation and related programmes.

How does this traditionalist appropriation of the old religious order, the building on old foundations, introduce innovative change? I mention a few of the most significant examples. First, the *mafukidzanyika* tree-planting ceremonies resemble traditional *mukwerere* rain rituals in their invocation of the guardian ancestors of the land. Yet ancestral demands have changed considerably in that the right-mindedness required for their mediation of abundant rains and good crops involves more than just respect and veneration symbolised by libations and ritual addresses. In the new ritual context the senior ancestors in fact require the living earthkeepers to create the conditions for good rainy seasons, namely ample vegetation, through reafforestation. This is entirely different from the traditional requirement of merely conserving the abundance which nature itself could keep regenerating before overpopulation, land pressure and deforestation got out of hand. The viability and environmental success of AZTREC lies in 'modernising' this ancestral sanction in an earthkeeping praxis which in some respects transcends traditional conservationist customs without alienating people from their roots.

Second, even the spirit world appears to be regrouping in AZTREC's rendition of the war of the trees. As in the war years, the senior guardian ancestors of chiefdoms and districts are collaborating in the spirit war council (*dare rechimurenga*) presided over by Mwari. This is evident in the geographically more comprehensive representation of spirit hierarchies at tree-planting ceremonies. The involvement of Mwari, the oracular deity, in particular underscores this trend. AZTREC visits to Matonjeni strengthen our traditionalist constituency's awareness that their struggle has national, even universal implications.

Here too, as in the AICs, the creator God draws close as an insider.

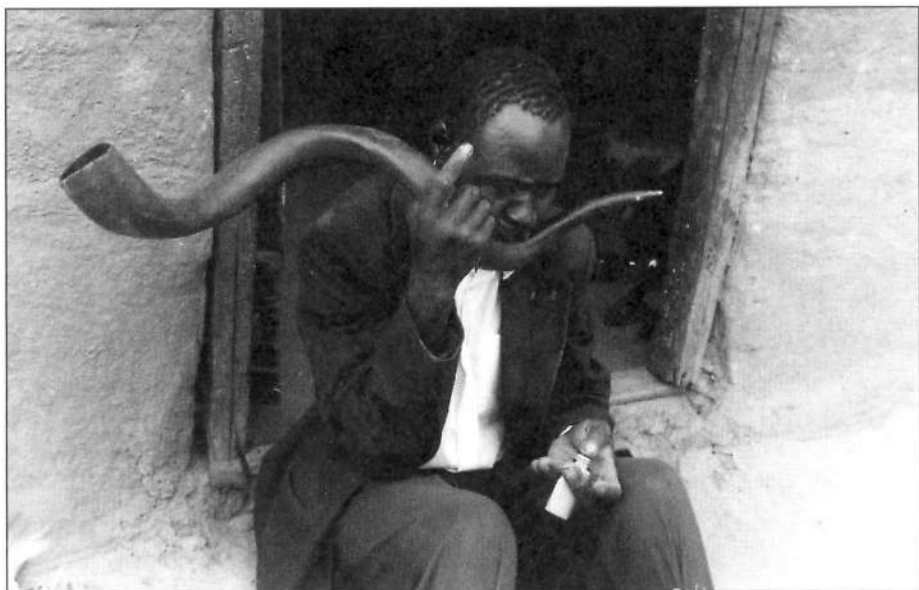


Plate 44 The husband of high-priestess Intombiyamazulu signals the start of oracular proceedings at the Vembe shrine (top). Cult officials drum and dance in honour of Mwari at the Vembe shrine, Matonjeni, in preparation for the late-night oracular session requested by an AZTREC delegation (bottom)



His/her immanent presence in nature is emphasised. The dimension of an elite of cult officials mediating on behalf of the entire population and the perception of the traditional Mwari as *Wokumusoro*, the remote one in the skies, are transcended through regular visitations by tree planters – commoners rather than privileged cult messengers (*vanyai*) – who draw Mwari into the fray of afforestation.

In the third place, traditional perceptions of evil are imaginatively applied to environmental destruction in an indigenous ethos aimed at ecological repair. The will of traditional authorities in AZTREC to take drastic measures against environmental trespassers – as also happens in the AAEC – surfaces in the stigmatising of such offenders as *varoyi venyika* ('wizards of the land'). Customary law has always allowed for punishment of *varoyi* because of the threat they pose to the wellbeing of people and thus of society. Branding wanton tree fellers and cultivators of riverbanks *varoyi* is creating a situation in which transgressors of the emerging green ethos can be effectively disciplined.

AZTREC's traditionalist model of earthkeeping is certainly worth considering for the development of inculturated environmental strategies elsewhere in Africa. It enables traditional authorities to harness African cosmologies and worldviews for lasting ecological action. In terms of mobilising grassroots communities in afforestation programmes, AZTREC has achieved what the Forestry Commission of Zimbabwe, by its own admission, has not been able to do, despite its greater financial stability, salaried staff and other resources. In my view AZTREC convincingly illustrates that the institution of chieftainship, including spirit-mediumship, is capable of orchestrating comprehensive environmental reform in Africa. For the chiefs and mediums to contribute their own ecological creativity, they need a platform, organisationally and financially independent of government and environmental institutions.

6.3.2 The Christian dimension

In the formation and expansion of the AAEC the AICs have amply demonstrated their commitment to ecumenical interaction, their willingness to form a united front so as to give clout to their earthkeeping mission. The ecclesiastic union existing today reflects a communal understanding that unity in Christ is not an end in itself but acquires meaning and purpose when it manifests in specific witness to the world

(Jn 17:21, 23) – in this instance that Christ's salvific work includes the liberation and wellbeing of *all* creation. Christian unity becomes meaningful in the AAEC where service is rendered to fellow human beings and to the environment, where members of many churches sense that when they act together as co-workers of God the creator, Christ the saviour and earthkeeper, and the Holy Spirit, the source of life and architect of all earth-healing activity, the boundaries of church-ism are transcended. Ecumenism is evident in joint confessions of ecological abuse, in prophets of different churches prophesying in the Spirit on behalf of one creation, in healing hands of all denominations placing new life and hope in the soil of the one creator, in dancing feet below billowing garments in the colours of diverse church orders obeying one rhythm of celebration in the Lord. That is when denominationalism, that 'scandal to the world and a sin before God' (Messer 1992:23), is overcome.

In the planning stage AAEC ecumenism may have been intended as ecclesiastic unity for the sake of earthkeeping. In practice, however, the process is two-way. AIC unity indeed facilitates wide-reaching and effective afforestation, but earthkeeping programmes in the field in their turn feed and reinforce AIC ecumenism and spirituality. To the extent that earthkeeping in nurseries and woodlots requires sustained commitment – often across boundaries of religious differentiation – there is a constant challenge to unity of purpose and action, one which goes way beyond the more fashionable, and probably more easily achieved, religious unity at occasional ceremonies. In the earthkeeping process of communal living – *in* the nurseries, *in* the woodlots, *in* the ZIRRCO offices, *in* conference halls, etc – new and exacting patterns of day-to-day interaction emerge. In such interaction the role players, representing both religious pluriformity and unity, become icons of a twofold ecumenism within the green struggle: that between Christian churches and, more broadly, between all participant religions, Christian and non-Christian.

As an ecumenical body the AAEC is distinguished by three remarkable achievements. First, it empowers its member churches to develop an earthkeeping ministry, with practical implications both for environmental reform and for theological growth. Second, the AAEC as an institution which stimulates regular and intensive interaction breaks through the kind of isolation which some of these churches experience as a result of their geographic remoteness from the country's highways and their

limited financial resources. In this respect the AAEC follows and augments the AIC ecumenical tradition already established by *Fambidzano*. Third, the existence of the AAEC as the Christian counterpart of AZTREC provides a valuable platform for interfaith dialogue. Despite a degree of understandable conflict between AIC prophets and traditionalist spirit-mediums, the bishops through their earthkeeping institution have formed close ties with many of the AZTREC chiefs. They have found that the latter, many of whom are Christians as well as active ex officio traditionalists, contribute to the removal of religious bias and the promotion of tolerance whenever the green struggle requires interreligious planning and/or action. At tree-planting ceremonies in particular, where contingents of AIC and traditional leaders interact, friendships, acceptance and respect for each other's dignity and convictions are established. Hence it is *in* the green struggle, in striving and working for a common cause, that spontaneous dialogue about God, the ancestors, church life and the earth takes place. This is the more remarkable because of the fairly rigid and doctrinaire orientation of Zionists and Apostles – the vast majority in AAEC circles – towards traditional beliefs and rituals. In a prophetic tradition which brands ancestors 'demons' and forbids any form of participation in traditional rituals, religious interaction is invariably characterised by radical confrontation and deliberate transformation of the old in the context of the church, rather than by reconciliatory and constructive dialogue. This tradition obviously prevails to a large extent, but in the AAEC's earthkeeping context it acquires a humane face, becomes more tolerant and sheds much of the judgmentalism which so often bedevils interfaith relations and attitudes.

Not only are the ecumenically interconnected AICs a green force to be reckoned with; individually, too, as grassroots organisations with considerable influence in African society, they are proving to be effective vehicles of earthkeeping. One of the main reasons for this is their composition. On the whole their membership comprises rural peasant families whose very existence hinges on subsistence farming and, therefore, on an agriculturally healthy environment. So when the church itself actively empowers afforestation and related conservationist projects, its constituency, by virtue of its nature and existential need, is bound to respond positively. In addition, the holistic, seamless theology of the AICs – less fettered by ages of doctrinal history than their counterparts in the West – is forged in the hard school of nature, agricultural praxis

and survival in the face of changing seasons. This dialectic between biblical text and church praxis lends itself to the kind of innovation and improvisation required for the introduction of earth-care in worship and sacrament. Such integration inspires hope of institutional continuity of this ministry beyond the lifespan of present-day iconic church leaders. This, to my mind, is the major and, I trust, lasting contribution of the AAEC – not only to the environment of Zimbabwe but also by way of a challenge to world Christianity.

What is the core of the AAEC's eco-theology, the salient features of a green experience which could arrest the attention of other members of the Christian family worldwide? The richness and diversity apparent in earlier chapters preclude straightforward answers to this question. Nonetheless, even at the risk of caricaturing or being one-sided, I highlight a few noteworthy themes.

Earthkeeping has undoubtedly broadened the AIC perception of *the nature of the Christian church and its mission in this world*. The notion of the church as a healing institution was already well developed in the Spirit-type churches prior to the advent of the AAEC. This made it possible to extend the image of the church to that of keeper of creation and environmental hospital once the new ministry started taking shape. Salvation, which in the black Zion Cities and Jerusalems already had a strong this-worldly emphasis, now broadened its predominantly human orientation – Christ's death and resurrection on behalf of a wayward human race – to include all of creation. Conversion and discipleship, it was realised, could not be restricted to change and wellbeing for individuals and communities if the *missio dei* was to be fulfilled in this existence. *All the earth had to be included in the good news* and the change it brings if the new dispensation of God's kingdom, the new heaven and earth is to take shape and make sense here and now. Conversion and spiritual growth, it now appeared, are interwoven with and not separate from earthkeeping, the latter being integral to God and his church's mission to this world. The earthy dimension to the church and its missionary mandate in no way lessens the challenge of individual spiritual growth, scriptural knowledge and the sanctity of life. On the contrary, it interacts with and enriches these personal and interpersonal concerns.

In discovering its earthkeeping mission and ministry the church has experienced a phase of renewal. Placed squarely in the *chimurenga*

tradition through the direct link between the liberation of both politically and ecologically lost lands, it has become more visible, especially in rural society. Christ appears to have been rediscovered as saviour-healer and as earthkeeper par excellence. *His* new laws of love and freedom, justice and peace are reinterpreted as applying to the entire created community – humans, animals, birds, plants, all animate and inanimate beings. These laws permeate the very being of his church. Hence the church assumes both responsibility for an emerging environmental ethic and custodianship of the earth.

Although this extended and enriched image of the Christian church may not be fully evident to all the AAEC earthkeepers involved in the green struggle, the symbols of change and growth are there for all to see. The AIC leaders are the green icons, whose headquarters and schedules indicate ecological commitment, whose newly improvised sacraments and liturgies proclaim an earthbound spirituality. The ecclesiastic instruments of afforestation, the industrious nurseries and budding woodlots, reflect obedience to an age-old yet previously neglected divine commission, and a growing common will to practise earth custodianship and help enforce its laws in a way that will make a difference. To the Christian community the church now provides the religious incentive for, and legitimation of, the green struggle. In an ongoing dialectic, the green struggle in its turn informs and stimulates the church's internal growth and external missionary outreach. Hence, the process of contextualising Christianity, originally set in motion by the AICs as they emancipated themselves from Western missionary tutelage, acquires new impetus and concrete meaning as it starts to address more seriously the immediate needs of peasant society within the confines of its environment.

In the development of its image as an earthkeeping institution the church has become the vehicle of what I have called an 'existential people's theology' – expressed mainly in imaginative earth-oriented ritual, song and dance but also, increasingly, in written reflection as the need grows for local instruction and self-interpretation in relation to global Christianity. Judged in terms of Henry Venn's tree-selves principle, the AICs – which, since their inception, have, in part unwittingly, been *self-governing*, *self-propagating* and *self-supporting* institutions – have now added a 'fourth self' principle more consciously than before: that of self-theologising (Messer 1992). Significantly, local theologising

Plate 45 ZIRRCOON established a new tradition of earth-care, in which growing attitudes of love and respect for nature are noticeable. Mr Ziki, chief keeper of trees at the Muchakata nursery, lives in kinship with the quiet members of the earth-community



suggests that the war of the trees is not just a passing fad but a penetrative ministry and soul-searching experience, reaching into the inner recesses of human conscience where neglect and abuse of God's creation have long festered as one of the most serious signs of humankind's rebellion against, even betrayal of, the creator. By imposing the embarrassment of publicly confessing ecological sins and doing penance through sacrificial planting of trees, the AIC's environmental theology unmasks hidden guilt and qualifies its religiously driven earth-keeping as an inescapable way of life; the objective of which is to overcome the 'wizardry of the earth' and restore harmony and hope to creation.

I have outlined how the AIC's grassroots theology 'defines' the creator God as insider and the traits characterising its christology and pneumatology in the dialectic between scriptural texts and earth-care, between AIC prophetic tradition and the customs associated with traditional rituals and ecology. Because of the AIC leadership's lack of scholarship one cannot expect their theology to be fully informed by in-depth scriptural studies. Nevertheless, as I have indicated, certain biblical texts and truths have been discerned and, through constant proclamation and consideration in a group context, are starting to function as signposts of the green passage which the movement is prepared to follow. In the AAEC movement as such the conviction predominates that scriptural norms and the guidance of the Holy Spirit sanction and inform its beliefs and programmed activity. Hence, despite considerable freedom and variation in religious expression and spontaneity in liturgical improvisation from one tree-planting ceremony to the next, the basic convictions discernible in group consciousness reveal a remarkable consistency. This has made possible the kind of theological distinctions and generalisations that I have made in the previous three chapters.

Thus there is no question in AAEC circles about the immanence and presence of Mwari the creator, both as an inherent force in nature and as a personal being with anthropomorphic attributes who communicates with human beings. Neither is there any doubt about Mwari being the prime mover, the one who activates, inspires and empowers all earthkeeping endeavour, or about the realisation that God's call to such a ministry leads not only to some legitimate satisfaction at a service rendered but also to the hurt of suffering with God in an abused and par-

tially destroyed creation. The perception, too, of a Christ figure who brings atonement to all the world is unmistakable. He is the earth-keeper who, through his church, extends his healing mission to mend and bring wholeness to the entire cosmos. He relates to Africa's ancestors as an elder brother who, in human dignity and humility as well as in divine sovereignty, appropriates and fulfils the age-old task of guardianship of the land.

Equally strong and uncompromising is the belief in the Holy Spirit who is the source of all life and who inspires and calls all human beings to conversion which, by its very nature, encompasses the vocation of earthkeeping. The Spirit is the one who confronts and combats the earth-destroyer. The Spirit writes the daily script of the strategy adopted in the green struggle. And the Spirit exposes, through the army of prophet-guardians, the perpetrators of *uroyi hwenyika*, so that evil may be expelled and all the relationships of the earth community be reconciled anew.

These, then, are the main traits of the AAEC's earthkeepers' understanding of divinity, the main traits of a theology informing environmental reform while simultaneously being moulded by the green struggle itself. When all the strands of motivation, belief and action are woven together a powerful statement takes shape – a clarion call to Africa and the world to heed the divine charge to care for the earth.

NOTES

- 1 Mr Willem van Harderwyk, a water engineer formerly of a Dutch development agency (SNV), and Mr Ronald Teufel, of the German Development Society (GDS), were most helpful with the planning and development of the *Muchakata* nursery on the Beitbridge road near Masvingo. As an agro-forester, Teufel helped to set up an experimental woodlot next to this nursery. GDS subsequently agreed to appoint an agro-forester early in 1997 for a lengthy period of service with ZIRRCON. This enables us to add a professional dimension to our afforestation programme, particularly in the monitoring of woodlots, survival rates of trees in relation to soil types, climatic factors, religious and social dynamics in after-care, etc. Ms Fieke Vermeulen has been assisting ZIRRCON for several years in public relations work, the development of women's clubs and institution building. Her presence and insistence of the regular formulation and revision of clear goals and assessment of performance each week by all staff members have contributed towards improved

planning, systematised fieldwork, self-critical awareness among staff, and an improved overview for the director at any particular time of the individual schedules of staff members. Vermeulen also promoted a fund-raising drive launched by ZIRRCO and the IUCN – the World Conservation Union – and aimed at support from the Development Cooperation Ministry of the Netherlands Government. For a while the services were obtained of Ms Eva Holmbach, a volunteer from the Africa Groups of Sweden (Afrikagrupperna). She worked closely with Ms Raviro Mutonga, coordinator of ZIRRCO's Women's Desk, and rendered a valuable service in assessing and facilitating the funding of women's development programmes.

- 2 As already indicated in *African earthkeepers*, volume 1:117, ZIRRCO's initial activities were sponsored first of all by myself and then by the European Community (EEC). Subsequently the Evangelische Zentralstelle für Entwicklungshilfe (EZE), stationed in Bonn, Germany, became our main sponsor. Recently EZE committed itself to extending its support of our institution for another three years. Smaller grants for particular projects were received from the Netherlands Embassy (for tree-planting ceremonies and woodlot fencing), the Wild Geese TV programme at Hilversum (which provided for our main nursery, Muchakata, on the outskirts of Masvingo town), the Haella Foundation of Utrecht (water schemes and afforestation) and the Zimbabwe Project (afforestation). Considering that we have just received a multi-million grant for three years from the Development Cooperation Ministry of the Netherlands Government via the IUCN (World Conservation Union) Regional Office of Southern Africa, it is apparent that Dutch development funds, next to those received from the EZE, increasingly become of pivotal significance for our work. In addition, the German Development Society (GDS), subsequent to allowing one of their foresters, Mr Teufel, to assist with our nursery development programme, has seconded a full-time agro-forester, Mr Antar Spiong, for several years' service in ZIRRCO's ecological department. This society has also recently donated funds for the development of our Women's Desk. After lengthy discussions between ZIRRCO and WWF, followed by feasibility studies in the field, the latter is prepared to assist with the drafting of funding proposals for ZIRRCO's establishment of two game sanctuaries which, if realised, will amount to a novel experiment in the communal lands.
- 3 Ms Irma Aarsman, for instance, made several documentary films and produced an extensive report on 'The role of Shona Traditional Religion in ecology' in part fulfilment of a doctorate in anthropology at the University of Utrecht, The Netherlands. Ms Marcelle Manley has completed an outstanding master's dissertation at Unisa, South Africa, entitled 'Blood and soil: Shona Traditional Religion in twentieth-century Zimbabwe' – a study which focuses

largely on the changing religion-political roles of chiefs in recent years. Dr Tinus Benade is scheduled to do research on the TEE (theological education by extension) programmes for Zimbabwean AICs, with ZIRRCO's assistance, for his doctoral thesis at Unisa.

4 My attendance of conferences and seminars focusing on ecology or including eco-theological themes included the following:

- 1990 July, Nermic Symposium on AICs, Wits University, Johannesburg; September, Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) Theological Conference at Stellenbosch University
- 1991 January, South Africa Mission Society (SAMS) Conference on 'Mission and Ecology' at the University of Pretoria; July, International Conference on World Evangelization, in Brighton, UK
September, Anthropological Conference on 'Healing, Wholeness and Resistance in Southern Africa, at the University of Utrecht, The Netherlands
- 1992 Ecumenical Foundations of South Africa (EFSA) Conference on 'Church and Development in Southern Africa' in Stellenbosch; August – October, lecture tour: US universities, including conference on 'The Africanization of Christianity' at Claremont University, Scripps College
- 1993 ZIRRCO's first interfaith conference, in Zimbabwe, on 'Earthkeeping: Future Strategies'; June: Faculty lecture of the year on 'Environmental Theology' at Unisa, Pretoria; Nermic Symposium on AICs at Wits University, Johannesburg; December: HSRC conference on 'Church and Development in Africa' in Malawi
- 1994 February, conference on 'Theology and Environment' at the University of Botswana, Gaborone; June, conference on 'Interaction between Christian Religion and African Traditional Religion' at the University of Zimbabwe; September, conference on 'Strategies for Africa: the Contribution of Traditional Authorities to Development Democracy, Human Rights and Environmental Protection' at Accra University, Ghana
- 1995 March, presented the Director's Seminar ('Traditional Religion and Earthkeeping in Zimbabwe') at Centre for the Study of World Religions, Harvard; March, presented the Walter Rodney Seminar (video lecture) on 'The Role of Religion in Environmental Reform in Zimbabwe' at the African Studies Center, Boston University; April, attended the International Association of Mission Studies (IAMS) conference in Buenos Aires, Argentina; chaired the workshop: 'Healing the Earth'

1997 January, organised the international conference on 'African Initiatives in Christian Mission' at Unisa, Pretoria.

- 5 The most important of these articles, most of them originally drafted as conference papers, are the following:

'Towards a sacramental theology of the environment in African Independent Churches', *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft*, 1991.

'The liberation of creation: African Traditional Religious and Independent Church perspectives', *Missionalia*, 19(2), 1991.

'African Christian Theology and the challenge of earthkeeping', *Neue Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft*, Luzern, 1991.

'African Independent Church pneumatology and the salvation of creation', *Theologica Evangelica*, 1992; *International Review of Missions*, 1993.

'Healing the earth: traditional and Christian initiatives in Southern Africa' *Journal for the Study of Religion* 6(1), March 1993.

'African Independent Churches face the challenge of environmental ethics', *Missionalia* 21/1, November 1993; also WCC publication: D Hallman (ed), *Ecotheology – voices from South and North*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY, 1994

'Contextualizing environmental theology at Unisa', *Religion & Theology*, 2/1, 1995.

'Mwari the Liberator – oracular intervention and Zimbabwe's quest for the 'lost lands', *Missionalia*, 23(2), August 1995.

'Environmental reform – a new venture of Zimbabwe's traditional custodians of the land', *Journal of Legal Pluralism and Unofficial Law*, Birmingham, UK, 1996

'Earthkeeping in missiological perspective: an African challenge,' in *Mission Studies*, XIII (25–26): 130–188; 1996

'African traditional religion and earthkeeping,' in *Discussion Papers in African Humanities*, African Studies Center, Boston University, 1999

'AIC designs for a relevant African theology of missions', forthcoming in *African Christian Outreach*, Conference Proceedings Unisa (eds) M L Daneel & D Robert

CHAPTER 7

Widening horizons

There is growing awareness of the global environmental crisis in world Christianity today. An expanding body of eco-theological literature, examples of which have been quoted in this study, confronts us with the urgent need for environmental stewardship. Significant church or church-related developments, such as the World Council of Churches' JPIC (Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation) programmes, the Reformed initiative at the Au Sable Institute, church participation in the Rio Earth Summit and Orbis Books' introduction of a new series of publications entitled 'Ecology and justice' (Burrows 1995:173) all point to a growing will within the Christian church to face up to environmental issues consistently and realistically. Yet despite these positive signs one cannot deny that on the whole the Christian church as a community has been slow to respond to the environmental crisis by means of prophetic witness and telling action.

McDonagh (1994:103f) highlights the failure of twentieth-century church leaders to grasp the full implications of the destruction of nature and the urgent need for all human institutions to contribute towards its remedy. For all its significance to the Catholic Church, the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s, for instance, had no underlying ecological vision of reality. It subscribed to a 'dominion theology' and the standard view of the subjection of nature to human rule, human beings featuring as the crown of creation (McDonagh 1994:104–105). Recent papal encyclicals mention the ecological crisis only in passing and even the Holy See's submission to the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 appears to endorse human domination of nature when it states that 'the ultimate purpose of environmental and developmental programs is to enhance the quality of human life to place creation in the fullest possible way at the service of the human family' (McDonagh 1994:107; *italics in original*). Similar anthropocentric trends prevail in the churches of the Reformation. Here the message of salvation tends to focus on the individual human being, thus reinforcing the dualism between spirit and

body, spiritual and worldly kingdom. McDonagh (1994:110) quotes the Methodist theologian Johnston McMaster's verdict that 'the location of God's Kingdom in the soul eliminated God from the ecological as well as the political arena'. In such a spiritualised kingdom, only to be realised fully in a future parousia, there is little scope for the protection and/or redemption of all the earth here and now.

To remedy its poor environmental track record so far, McDonagh (1994:114–115) calls on the church to adopt a prophetic stance. According to him this entails, first, criticism of unjust economic, political and social systems which impoverish people and destroy the environment; and second, an attempt to empower people to formulate a new vision of a more equitable and sustainable world order. In the struggle for justice and ecological reform the common culture of contentment needs to be confronted and a 'prophetic liberation of the imagination' (McDonagh 1994:119, with reference to Walter Brueggeman's book with that title) should be propagated, resulting in new and creative action.

It is against this background that ZIRRCO's prophetic ministry of earth-keeping should be evaluated. The new vision and environmental missionary activity in the ranks of the AAEC – largely in spontaneous and spiritually informed response to local conditions, without much exposure to modern eco-theological literature – present a challenge to the world church. This is not because the AICs involved at any point intended their earthkeeping ministry to counteract or correct the limitations of Christian churches elsewhere, but because their earthkeeping unfolds as an authentic act of faith. It is a conscious response to the movement of the life-giving Spirit, and manifests itself in a culturally relevant form. The appeal and inspiration of the AAEC lie in its humble environmental creativity and in a 'prophetic liberation of the imagination' which sets it on an exciting, unprecedented course of Christian mission in earth stewardship. As in all new Christian missionary ventures, activity entails widening horizons, both visionary and geographical. This will be the focus of our concluding chapter. But there are other reasons that the AAEC's earthkeeping experience should be taken seriously elsewhere. As Burrows (1995:172–173) – in keeping with emerging missiological consensus – observes: 'Although Third World Christianity – in its concreteness, as opposed to an idealised image of it – is not taken seriously in the North, *it is today the living center of the*

Christian tradition' (my italics). The AAEC's attempt to develop an environmental mission which addresses the local manifestation of a global phenomenon – one which threatens all of life on planet earth – underscores Burrow's assertion that 'First' and 'Third' World Christianity face essentially similar missionary situations, as a result of which Northern and Southern Christianity 'stand at a crossroad *where collaboration as equals in a world mission* is possible, and, quite probably, essential' (Burrows 1995:172f) (my italics).

If churches on all continents are moving towards 'collaboration as equals' in a world mission which incorporates earthkeeping as part of God's specific plan for all creation – as indeed they should – it is important to identify the deepening spirituality and broadening vision which are part of, and have evolved from, specific experiences of earth-care. We shall consider both the internal dimension of growth in spirituality and ecological commitment within the Zimbabwean movement, and the external one of geographical outreach in networking and project implementation.

7.1 Internal growth

7.1.1 Eco-spirituality

In my description of the AAEC's environmental ministry I have used terms such as 'commitment', 'dedication', 'determination', 'bondedness', and 'care'. All these terms refer to participant earthkeepers' changing attitudes towards each other, God and the earth. At the core of this phenomenon lies conversion – a change of heart, more in the sense of a gradually developing relationship with nature through ritual communion and deepening respect for God's creation born of nurturing it, than the radical, abrupt change that sometimes characterises the initial act of turning to Christ and the Christian church. Difficult as it is to gauge the extent of attitudinal change in a broad movement, I think it is fair to say that conversion to earth stewardship, as observed in ZIR-CON, is basically a move from exploitive, *eros*-type love to biblically informed and Spirit-inspired *agape* love for nature.

To clarify this statement we need to look at Susan Bratton's paper entitled 'Loving nature: eros or agape?' (1992). Citing Old Testament texts such as Hosea 1:18 (which illustrates that a divine covenant between

Plate 46 Conversion: a deepening respect for God's creation. African earth-keepers' hands: black hands, white hands, men's hands, women's hands, sensitive and caring hands that nurture human families and earth-community

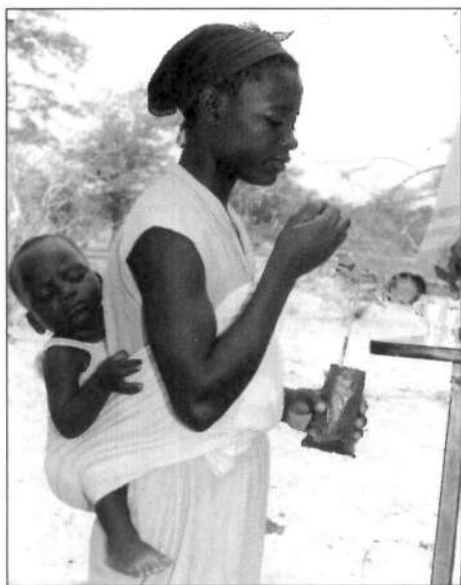


Plate 47 Under the cross of Christ in Zion a new lifestyle of tree-nurturing takes shape



God and Israel includes creation as a participating and benefiting party) and New Testament texts like John 3:16 ('For God so loved the world (*kosmos*) ...'), John 1:10 ('He (Christ) was in the world (*kosmos*) ...') and Romans 8:19–21 (which distinguishes between the material world and humankind without, however, restricting Christ's redemption to the latter), Bratton argues that God's love for nature is not 'second-hand' but has the same form and characteristics as God's love for human beings. Because agape love is self-giving, it is preferable to eros when it comes to relationships with the environment. Eros, being the physical form of human love, has severe limitations because it 'has been modified by separation from God, competition, and shortage – its tendency to desire and possess denies the flow of God's providence and blessing'. Consequently 'eros has always been a limited form of love, inviting finite beings who must of necessity draw some of their sustenance ... from each other' (Bratton 1992:12). Agape, being love given from beyond humanity, is capable of transforming human need eros and aesthetic eros, delivering these forms of 'love' from acquisitiveness and self-orientation (Bratton 1992:13).

In her discussion of agape as a 'value-creating principle', Bratton (1992:15) says 'this characteristic implies that it is God's love directed toward nature in blessing, covenant, and other forms that gives nature worth. Because agape love for nature must come from God, humans who purposefully ignore or avoid divine influence cannot perceive nature as truly valuable.'

As the 'initiator of fellowship with God', agape defines meaningful relations between humans, God and nature. Bratton (1992:15) writes:

Without agape human love for nature will always be dominated by unrestrained eros, and will always be distorted by extreme self-interest and material valuation (which results in acquisitiveness). Not only can agape transform eros, but it can also provide an eschatological vision of nature, quite independent of our day-to-day needs. If agape is characterised by divine fellowship, it brings humans and creation together (and considers the needs of both simultaneously).

Some outstanding features of Christian agape love for nature, as described by Bratton, are: a shift from dominion as 'taking control over' towards 'taking loving responsibility for' nature; the pursuit of Christian virtues such as simplicity, compassion and humility which – as in the

case of Francis of Assisi – can lead to a comprehensive ministry in nature, one which includes even the most elementary forms of life; the replacement of human will with divine insight, which includes attention to the values expressed in Christ's teaching and the concerns of God's kingdom; the will to be self-giving to the point of sacrifice and suffering; and interaction with nature in the knowledge that God's love and grace can be received through nature in common expectation of God's kingdom of peace.

The distinction between eros and agape love for nature, based on the interpretation of biblical texts, Platonic philosophy and/or Western theology, does not feature explicitly in AZTREC and AAEC speeches or sermons. The Shona word for love (*rudo*) is seldom used to describe the relationship between humans and nature. Nevertheless, the common qualification of earthkeeping endeavour as '*kuchengetedza zvisi-kwa zva Mwari*' (to care for or protect God's creation) reveals an altruistic self-sacrificing attitude towards nature, implying a spiritually inspired love or care similar to that described by Bratton. The radical distinction between *varoyi venyika* (wizards of the earth), who exploit the earth without concern for the future, and earthkeepers, who attempt to clothe and heal the earth, suggests awareness of the eros-agape conflict in the human psyche, and implies that individual and ritual development will be from an exploitive eros orientation to a caring agape attitude which benefits both nature and fellow human beings. Admittedly the green struggle itself is imperfect, with occasional cross-currents of self-serving individualism as opposed to sacrificial service. Yet the dominant trend discernible in a deepening eco-spirituality is one of growth, as signposts of hope and love for all creation are joyfully erected along the consciously chosen path of earthkeeping. This observation needs to be substantiated with some telling illustrations from our AAEC experience.

Before doing so, however, it should be noted that a similar development towards an agape relation with nature is also apparent in the traditionalist eco-spirituality of AZTREC. Although one cannot discount Christian influence in this association, intense interaction with the guardian ancestors at *mafukidzanyika* earth-clothing ceremonies and the direct involvement of the oracular deity at Matonjeni undoubtedly foster greater care for the environment and a more personal identification with the plight of nature in traditionalist circles. This is evident in

the full-time involvement of AZTREC spirit-mediums with land issues and their willingness to risk hardship and suffering incurred by prophetic criticism of land ownership and land distribution as administered by the ruling African elite. There are also the chiefs' intensified efforts to revive the customary conservation laws on holy groves, to curb river-bank cultivation in their chiefdoms and their 'love affair' with trees. All this is revealed in changed lifestyles as new patterns of eco-spirituality take shape. Hence the traditional holistic worldview, which tends to become obscured in the struggle for survival in an agro-economic situation of depleted land resources, resurfaces and is rejuvenated by intensified communication between the living and the living dead on behalf of abused members of the earth community who reach out silently for care and justice. In a Christian perspective I am inclined to attribute this development in traditional religion to the flowering of the inclusive grace and general revelation of the universal God, which have been operative in African traditional religions through the ages. It parallels the development from eros exploitation to an agape relationship with nature observed in AIC circles.

As for the AAEC, the following aspects of eco-spirituality illustrate the shift to agape concern for nature.

- The conceptualisation of God in the AAEC's emerging environmental theology reveals the realisation that authentic *earthkeeping is a divine initiative*. The new agape relationship with nature stems from the pervasive presence and the summons of Mwari the creator that his people should engage in responsible earth stewardship. It is rooted in Christ's sacrificial death and resurrection for the entire cosmos which, among other things, answers the call of the guardian ancestors to heal the barren land. Agape attitudes are also inspired by the Holy Spirit, who reveals the sinfulness of people's overexploitation of nature as a condition for genuine ecological conversion. All this surfaces in the sermons, discussions and actions of the fighters in the war of the trees. Such awareness evokes humility, which expresses itself in opposition to the triumphalist certitude of human dominion over nature. Instead, it proclaims the interwovenness of humans and nature in the presence of God, causing earthkeepers spontaneously to declare their union with the trees on whom they rely for the breath of life itself. Trees as the 'property' of a jealous God also acquire intrinsic value. They are to be respected as beings and

equals who are given a voice in the AAEC's tree-planting liturgy. Thus trees – trees spoken to, trees protected, trees nurtured and treasured – symbolise our freedom fighters' changing attitudes to creation.

- The *individual lives* of fighting cadres in our green resistance movement, key figures and villagers alike, attest an all-absorbing spirituality which informs and directs their new-found, diverse vocations. Mention was made of iconic leaders, most of whom have taken up earth healing as a life task. Self-interest is bound to play some role in the case of salaried workers. Yet several of our best paid staff are in a position to choose other, and in some cases more lucrative, careers. Apparently the call to mission, based on growing concern for God's creation, imposes a decisive mystical constraint on their lives, somehow overriding other considerations. Then there are the unsalaried church leaders and many of their followers who spend much of their time tending seedlings, nurturing trees, travelling on earthkeeping errands, attending meetings for days on end with little or no prospect of remuneration. Add to this long and exhausting weekends of tree-planting ceremonies which tax the energies of all concerned, and the stamina and enthusiasm of key figures at the centre of events, who are seldom absent, and one must conclude that only passion and sacrificial love from beyond can trigger and sustain such activity, such lives.
- The *incorporation of nature into church rituals* affirms the common will of believers to draw all the members of the earth community – animate and inanimate – into the circle of worship of Mwari and caring for each other. The tree-planting eucharist is an obvious case in point. It not only constitutes a new dimension of missionary outreach but declares publicly that the representatives of nature, the trees, have the value and status that God attributes to them, that they are worthy of love and care. Unlike the ZCC missionary strategy where the eucharist is the springboard of missionary mobilisation within the church (*supra*:153–157), the AAEC tree-planting eucharist is a witness event in its own right, a vehicle of mission proclaiming the good news to all creation. Not that the classic missionary command in Matthew 28:19 is eclipsed by ecological endeavour, allowing it to supersede the call for repentance, conversion, human salvation and church formation – these remain the essential missionary dynamics of all prophetic AICs. But the missionary mandate here is

derived from the healing ministry of Christ, related to the believer's stewardship of all creation as required by Mwari in the creation story of Genesis, and highlighted repeatedly with reference to Christ's involvement in creation (Col 1:17). What Christ literally holds together in this eucharist is the healing and wholeness of both nature and people. His blood was spilt to atone for all creation. The celebrating earthkeepers recognise this by allowing the empowering blessing of the sacrament to translate into an act of earth healing. They then kneel down in recognition of the human need for healing. The sacrament thus conveys a powerful message of Mwari/Christ's love for the entire cosmos and of human attempts to give expression to the implications for themselves and their environment.

- *Patriarchy* often characterises AIC leadership. This is attributable to the influence of male authoritarianism in patrilineal kinship, the 'inheritance' of church leadership by the eldest son of a deceased bishop and the fascination of AIC bishops with some of the Old Testament patriarchs as role models. Even in the course of an individual AIC leader's lifetime one can discern a gradual change from direct and regular interaction with followers as prophetic healers to greater remoteness as bishops, burdened with administrative and organisational duties. Women, moreover, despite their numeric preponderance in the AICs and despite outlets for their leadership in the healing vocation or in the Mothers' Unions (*Ruwadzano*), are seldom found at the apex of AIC leadership hierarchies. *AAEC eco-spirituality has an impact on AIC patriarchy!* It opens up new opportunities for women and prompts a compassionate ministry of earth-care in which celebratory forms of interaction between the genders, particularly at tree-planting ceremonies, bridge the divide which sometimes characterises leader-follower relations. Here, too, there are signs of the emergence of agape love between earthkeepers as they relate to each other and to nature.
- This breakdown of patriarchal relations and isolating authority patterns is aptly described by the imagery adopted by Matthew Fox in his *A spirituality named compassion* (1992). Fox complains about the exile of compassion in Western Christianity, dominated as it is by the quest for perfection and success. He maintains that the lack of compassion 'has left us with a sexually one-sided spirituality in which the prevailing patriarchal presumptions exclude nurturing, caring

and earthiness' (Fox 1992:37). For an analysis of spiritual experience in such a context he distinguishes between two contrasting symbols: climbing Jacob's ladder and dancing Sarah's circle.

Christian mystics, says Fox, tended to use the ladder in Jacob's dream as a symbol of fleeing the earth in order to experience a transcendent, an 'up-like' God. According to Gregory of Nyssa we climb the ladder away from earthly concerns to the heavenly majesty of God. Augustine insisted that up-ness is divine and down-ness demonic. In such a scheme contemplation is won at the expense of compassion. 'Thus,' says Fox (1992:40), 'compassion is descent; it is also an afterthought, a luxury that one can afford after a very long life-time of contemplative ascending.'

By contrast, the dancing of Sarah's circle implies a spirituality of laughter and celebration, as Sarah is filled with wonder and surprise at giving birth to Isaac (the name means 'God has smiled') in her old age. Sarah is a symbol of birth-giving, creating and fruitfulness. She laughed because human wisdom said pregnancy was impossible. But divine wisdom said nothing was impossible. In contrasting the two symbols it appears that the ladder dynamics is restrictive and elitist, whilst the circle motif is welcoming and compassionate. When the hierarchy becomes normative for spiritual progress the ladder's rungs are divinised and advanced individuals turn into remote 'deities'. In the circle dance, on the other hand, you relate eye to eye: you can see the tears in your neighbour's eyes; you share a built-in equaliser which is lacking when exalted persons operate from on high. Instead of the distance and abstractness of ladder-climbing, the circle dance creates physical nearness, empathy and earthiness. Insisting that the two symbols are irreconcilable, Fox argues for participation in Sarah's circle if a compassionate spirituality is to be developed in our global village – the only kind of spirituality which will turn around the forces of global destruction.

The lives of some outstanding AIC leaders in Zimbabwe did undoubtedly contain an element of Jacob's ladder dynamics. During the period of his call to Christian ministry the late Johane Maranke (AACJM) was considered to have dwelt with Christ in the heavens above, an experience which required isolation, religious contemplation and fasting up in the mountains. Similar experiences in dreams and

visions during periods of seclusion characterise the histories of many AIC male leaders and senior clergy. During his lifetime the late bishop Samuel Mutendi of the ZCC was considered by his followers to be closer to Mwari than they were. He was the one who 'lifted their prayers' to God in heaven. Thus one can speak of a certain elevation of the leader, a mystique of occasional remoteness integral to the kind of iconic leadership which, sometimes, includes black messianic trends.

Both Maranke and Mutendi, however, like the majority of bishops involved in the AAEC, were not meditating mystics in the Western and Eastern sense of the word at all. Their presence in the midst of their followers was real and not an afterthought, as Fox claims for medieval Christian mystics. As indicated above, compassionate interaction between prophetic healer and followers tends to be the norm before the 'dignified distance' of an ageing leader – similar to that of a traditional chief, who delegates considerable responsibility to councillors and elders – sets in.

For men like Maranke and Mutendi, the 'distance' of Jacob's ladder was overcome in their sharing of Christ's great commission with their followers during the paschal celebration. At the point of handing the sacrament to their followers, they drew them into the celebration of dancing Sarah's circle, challenging them as it were to carry the gospel to the wider family of humankind. Distance was overcome and mutuality in compassion became manifest when Christ incarnate, the black icon, handed his black disciples the earth-bound symbols of inner union and boundary-transcending outreach. Compassion became manifest as each ZCC and Apostolic communicant received the bread and wine from the hands and looked into the eyes of either the 'man of God' in Zion City or the African Apostle.

Something similar, but possibly an even more radical departure from AIC patriarchy in its alienating form, is noticeable in the AAEC tree-planting eucharist. First of all, the ecumenical setting is marked by the presence of several bishops. Dignified and revered as they are in their splendid robes, they themselves set an example of servanthood in the earthkeeping ministry. Their sermons reflect compassion for nature and for people as they blend into, rather than stand apart from, the proceedings. It is as if their concern about the plight of

nature overrides leadership considerations, at least for the occasion, as action in the struggle unleashes the motivation for unity, equality and humility.

Second, the bishops and all senior clergy make the same public confession of ecological sins as everybody else. *Earth stewardship offers no privileges!* Apparently the Spirit is equally relentless in revealing the shortcomings of respected church dignitaries and those of their followers. Mystical sanctification and empowerment erase human pretence and hierarchical privilege in anticipation of earth-care in sacramental union.

Third, the bishops file past the communion table, tree in hand, and later plant their own trees like everybody else. Then they celebrate the good news of new life in the form of trees placed in the earth by dancing the Zionist circle dance – Sarah’s circle – together with all the other earthkeepers, and they lay on hands or kneel to receive hands in the closing healing ceremony. *Ndaza* Zionist bishops in fact participate regularly in the circle dances of their churches, but there is a marked difference in the ecumenical *maporesanyika* context. Here they are less in charge of proceedings, deliberately closer to the soil and therefore also more spontaneously included in Sarah’s circle, where unity with the earth’s family derives from giving comfort to the stricken land.

Apart from the ritual manifestation of patriarchal remoteness being transcended by agape love for nature, female ascendancy and emancipation from male authority are also apparent in the organisation and project implementation of ZIRRCO-NAEC. To the extent that women in their ZIRRCO clubs are contributing to earthkeeping and progress by improving the income and nurture of their families, they are respected and assisted by many of their male partners in the movement. In her public speeches, Raviro Mutonga, coordinator of the Women’s Desk, always acknowledges the assistance received from men in preparing their woodlots for tree planting and the willingness of males in leadership positions not to interfere in the income-generating and other projects launched by women (supra:47). This is a far cry from the resistance, even suspicion, encountered from the side of AIC bishops some twenty years ago when the first attempts were made to launch a Women’s Desk in *Fambidzano*

(Daneel 1989:476f, 491f). The process of achieving gender equality and overcoming ingrained trends of male domination in church leadership hierarchies is, of course, far from complete. Change, however, is in the air and significantly so when male earthkeeping bishops start discovering and admitting that the lead dancers in Sarah's circle can and should be women, that without the compassion, creativity and leadership of women the entire environmental struggle will flounder.

- Other signs of changing attitudes towards nature prompted by eco-spirituality are the following: the determination of our earthkeepers to devise and implement *an environmental ethic* which clearly distinguishes between earth exploitation and nurturing earth stewardship; the move *from religious exclusiveness to religious inclusiveness* and tolerance as meaningful dialogue in joint ecological action takes shape; and the *breakdown of isolationist church-ism* as the AAEC increasingly takes note and feels part of the Christian fellowship worldwide, involved in the same struggle in the global village and its environs.

Difficult as it is to assess human motives and attitudes, I consider the trends outlined above sufficient evidence of a wide-reaching and profound spiritual phenomenon of inner growth. We observe eco-spirituality spiralling out, stimulating increased and varied responsibility for the environment, and stimulated in its turn by the very action it has generated to gain spiritual depth and enrichment by overcoming the inner enemy of self-seeking eros love and embracing the earth community in agape love.

7.1.2 Environmental commitment and vision

Inner eco-spiritual growth, as a condition for and byproduct of environmental endeavour, inevitably includes growing environmental understanding and commitment, resulting in broader horizons. The descriptions in this book of ZIRRCO's involvement in its primary objectives (afforestation, wildlife conservation and the protection of water resources, and the mobilisation not only of religious groups but also of the youth and women) reflect an expansion of programmes and responsibility for nature. This in turn feeds a shared vision among our earthkeepers for outreach, interaction and joint enterprise beyond the bor-

ders of our country. My participation in international eco-theological conferences, the regular visits of sponsors, environmentalists and other interested parties from abroad, the study of environmental themes by ZIRRCO staff members and the teaching of elementary earth-care in peasant society contribute to this development. To feel part of a global resistance movement, to learn about the green struggle in other countries and to plan ecological action with due regard to both the local religio-cultural context and the more universal perspective – all this helps to mature vision, however slowly, and inspires the day's task in local mission, despite setbacks. It also instils growing realism when soaring idealism comes up against sobering achievements.

Growing, too, is an understanding of the interconnectedness of all that exists in the cosmos. This awareness naturally highlights the limitations of ZIRRCO's threefold ecological goals. The question arises, for instance, how one should evaluate ZIRRCO's apparent afforestation successes in relation to escalating land degradation, caused in part by unjust *land distribution* and insufficiently controlled *population growth*. Can one successfully curb deforestation through afforestation projects without dealing with the basic causes more vigorously? It would be easy to argue on behalf of ZIRRCO that available funds and salaried staff set the limits of our endeavour and that too wide a scope of activity could jeopardise the quality of our current ecological work. However, this is the kind of question ZIRRCO will have to face in the future. As its auxiliary forces grow it should be possible for ZIRRCO to extend the scope of its work to match the broader vision and convictions that have emerged.

A few examples of extended responsibility will suffice.

7.1.2.1 Population growth

This subject is so important for the future of our planet that no earth-keeper worthy of the name can ignore it. In his informative and challenging book, *Earth in the balance*, Al Gore (1992:305f) lists the 'stabilizing of world population' as the first of five strategic goals in his proposed Global Marshall Plan, which should direct and inform all attempts to save the global environment. He discusses the population explosion of the past 45 years (an increase from 2 billion to 5,5 billion) and the expectation that this alarming trend will repeat itself during the next 45

years. An estimated 94 per cent of the expected increase 'will occur in the developing world, where poverty and environmental degradation are already the most severe' (Gore 1992:308).

On the basis of projections made by the United Nations Fund for Population Activities, Gore (1992:309) outlines the future plight of a few African countries:

Kenya, which now has 27 million people, will have within thirty years an estimated 50 million people. Egypt's population, 55 million today, is increasing by an amount equal to the entire population of Israel every four years; within thirty years it will be at least 100 million people; Nigeria, which already has 100 million people, will have within thirty years at least 300 million people. All three countries are already putting great strains on their natural resources and threatening the integrity of their ecological systems, so it is truly frightening to imagine the impact of doubling or tripling their members – not to mention the pitiful quality of life these extra scores of millions can expect ... The social and political tensions associated with growth rates like these threaten to cause the breakdown of social order in many of the fastest-growing countries, which in turn raises the prospects of wars being fought over scarce natural resources (eg water) where expanding populations must share the same supplies.

The factors that help to stabilise population growth are well known. They include rising per capita incomes; high literacy rates for both men and women which improve the prospects of effective family planning; low infant mortality rates which help build the confidence of parents that the basic family unit will survive; and access to affordable birth control techniques (Gore 1992:311).

Zimbabwe has one of the fastest growing populations in Africa. It will therefore be faced increasingly with the same kind of environmental scenario as that sketched for the countries mentioned above. The fact that some of the constraints which will slow down population growth in the long run are already at work in Zimbabwe does not relieve ZIRRCON of the obligation to consider and start making some kind of contribution in this field. This subject has already been raised at executive meetings, but the sheer weight of other ecological priorities relative to human resources has so far prevented the development and implementation of effective programmes. My own view is that ZIRRCON com-

mands such a wide sphere of influence at the grassroots that additional funding and expertise are warranted to take on population issues as a new but integral part of our earthkeeping concern. At some future stage I hope to be making proposals such as the following:

- Our conscientisation workshops in rural society should provide informative courses on population growth and its impact on the environment, in African and global perspective, to give participants an overview so that they can face up to their own responsibilities in this matter.
- An upbeat programme of research, publications and media exposure on the interaction of population and environmental issues, especially natural resources, should be launched.
- ZIRRCO's women's clubs could be instrumental in establishing rural clinics for family planning and antenatal and postnatal care, similar to those started some years ago in *Fambidzano's* community development projects. These clubs are ideally placed to combine tree planting with education on birth control for the women, as Wangari Matthai's Greenbelt Movement in Kenya tended to do (Gore 1992:324).
- For a number of years I have been sounding out politicians and ZIRRCO key figures about their views on curbing population growth by means of legislation and law enforcement. Politicians tend to shy away from this contentious subject, referring to the negative implications of such measures in China and the religio-cultural resistance they would provoke in Zimbabwe. Some prefer to believe that modern technology will provide the solution to global overpopulation. Others hope that family planning will eventually turn the tide. Some of ZIRRCO's leading women show interest in the idea of testing the notion of population legislation in local study and discussion groups so as to gauge the prospects of forming advocacy groups from the bottom up – groups that will make representations to government about the kind of legislation required.

My suggestions have all along been based on the argument that the rate of environmental destruction far exceeds the current prospects of controlled population growth and that education, birth control and related factors should be augmented by legislation if the tide is to be reversed

in time. To stimulate discussion I have made tentative suggestions about the number of children a nuclear family in either a rural or an urban context can be expected to raise. Communities engaged in environmental care could well reach consensus about the maximum number of children an adult woman can reasonably be allowed to have in terms of socioeconomic and environmental constraints. In addition, restrictive legislative measures (eg additional tax or forfeiture of educational subsidies for those who exceed the maximum number of children) could be proposed. Promoting population control advocacy groups at the grassroots has the advantage that they will create a favourable climate for politicians to tackle this highly controversial and therefore politically risky issue.

This may be a highly unpopular, complex and culturally incorrect line of action. I am not an expert in this field and cannot foresee all the repercussions. Yet as ZIRRCOON matures into a comprehensive resistance movement it may well feel compelled to do the groundwork of testing these ideas in society, lest the voiceless members of our earth community be further abused and betrayed.

7.1.2.2 Land distribution

By the very nature of their work, earthkeepers in Zimbabwe's communal lands are confronted with land distribution problems and the non-availability of land as part of the colonial legacy – no less formidable a dilemma than population pressure on the land. ZIRRCOON has essentially adopted the policy of empowering the poor and restricted subsistence farmers in the communal lands (most of whom can barely eke out a living on the land available to them) to tackle with immediate effect the environmental problems they are facing every day. This has always been a realistic ecological option. It does not imply ignoring or acquiescing in pre-Independence land tenure legislation, which historically is largely to blame for the deprivation of African peasant society. But it recognises that nature itself in the communal lands requires urgent remedial attention, irrespective of future land reform measures which will inevitably be preceded by lengthy political and legislative processes. If anything, the difficulty of finding suitable patches of land for woodlots when there is a desperate shortage of arable land has sharpened our earthkeepers' awareness that major land legislation will

be required to redress the inequitable situation in our country. Even though ZIRRCON has no official strategy or political agenda in this regard, critical and prophetic voices are regularly heard from both traditionalist and Christian quarters at meetings and in private conversations.

This is to be expected in a situation where, as Bakare (1993:74) observes, 'the landless peasants who had hoped for more land after Independence, as promised during the liberation struggle, saw the very land disappear into the pockets of the chefs (the ruling elite). The land reform programme which is intended to correct the past inequitable land distribution, remains mere political rhetoric twelve years after Independence. Access to land is no longer a birthright, but a right for those who have the influence, money and power.'

In his attempt to develop a theology of the land which will prophetically remedy the ills of Zimbabwean land apportionment, Bakare (1993:72) uses the apposite metaphor of the 'land as mother' to describe the sacred relationship between African people and the soil. Like a human mother, the land has a very personal relationship with her children and therefore cannot be seen as a saleable commodity. Personal bonds with the land are further strengthened by the traditional practice of burying the umbilical cord which links mother and child in the soil after birth. This ritual symbolises mother-child and earth-human interwovenness. Moreover, as a mother belongs not only to one child but to the entire family, the land belongs to an entire community and not to individuals who secure entitlement to portions of it through their buying power. In view of this deeply ingrained African perception of land, the violation of it by Western notions of individual land ownership and the trauma inflicted on people through colonial land alienation are glaring.

Bakare criticises the mission churches in particular for not opposing the injustice perpetrated on Africans by the land tenure act, and for accepting land 'stolen from Africans' to establish their mission stations. Thus he considers the critical comments in recent years of the Roman Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace on the Land Acquisition Bill, which empowers the government to acquire land, to be inadequate. 'If the director of the Commission of Justice and Peace was serious about this piece of legislation,' he says, 'the starting point for him

should be to ask all the churches who own so much land given to them by Rhodes to give it back to the poor and follow Jesus (Mt 19:21)' (Bakare 1993:75). In conclusion Bakare (1993:80, 81) calls on the church to raise its prophetic voice and help redress the land distribution ills of the past from a position of unwavering identification and involvement with the landless poor and those peripheralised by a system that fosters injustice.

I fully agree with Bakare's call for the church's ongoing prophetic involvement in land distribution. The AAEC bishops to a large extent represent the landless poor, as do the chiefs and mediums of AZTREC. Hence ZIRRCON is well placed to encourage debate on land issues so as to channel the prophetic voice which is already heard in the ranks of the movement, and then to communicate its message to government and the nation via the media and direct dialogue between delegates of our movement and senior government officials.

Land issues remain complex. There is simply not enough land in the country to accommodate the needs of all people in the traditional sense. Moreover, economic viability cannot be disregarded when it comes to redistributing commercial land. To slice up the commercial lands into agriculturally uneconomic units could have dire economic consequences for the entire nation. There is also the question of the future of the wilderness areas, including the Zambezi valley and the large game parks, Hwange and Gona-re-Zhou. To produce informed policy and prophecy ZIRRCON will have to study and keep abreast of developments in this field.

7.1.2.3 Education

ZIRRCON has already done much to instil environmental awareness and commitment among the youth. Seed collection, the development of school nurseries and woodlots, ecological competitions and participation in ZIRRCON's tree-planting rituals have all contributed to this end. This spadework is currently being systematised, consolidated and expanded by a Youth Desk. In a global perspective, the work of the Youth Desk will become part of what Gore (1992:355f) calls 'Mission to Planet Earth': the gathering of information about what precisely is happening to the global environment and making such information available for public education so that the green revolution worldwide can forge ahead.

Gore's suggestions for the involvement of the youth require urgent attention:

The Mission to Planet Earth should be a Mission by the people of Planet Earth. Specifically, I propose a programme involving as many countries as possible that will use school teachers and their students to monitor the entire earth daily ... Even relatively simple measurements – surface temperature, wind speed and direction, relative humidity, barometric pressures, and rainfall – could, if routinely available on a more nearly global basis, produce dramatic improvements in our understanding of climate patterns ... The virtue of involving children from all over the world in a truly global Mission to Planet Earth is, then, threefold: first, the information is greatly needed (and the quality of the data can be assured by regular sampling). Second, the goals of environmental education could hardly be better served than by actually involving students in the process of collecting the data. And, third, the programme might build a commitment to rescue the global environment among the young people involved (Gore 1992:356, 357).

ZIRRCO's inclusion of the youth in earthkeeping has already stimulated awareness and commitment to earth-care among both school teachers and their pupils. Follow-up requires curriculum development to introduce regular environmental education in all schools, drawing students into nature research and monitoring projects of the kind proposed by Al Gore, launching wilderness, game park and related activities for youth clubs (as suggested on p 257), and extending such work through networking at national, continental and international levels. All this is easier said than done. One hopes that the spirit of our resistance fighters engaged in the war of the trees will help fire the imagination and concern of today's youth so that the coming generation of earthkeepers will continue building and improvising on what as yet are mere foundations and visions for the future.

The brief discussion of these three subjects – population growth, land distribution and education – illustrates an uneven process of intensifying awareness, commitment, aspirations and plans based on growing eco-spirituality and insight born of increasing earthkeeping experience. Despite limited funding, staff and action, a holistic approach is apparent throughout. The interrelatedness of all beings, ecosystems, coun-

tries and continents and the immense need for local and global change if planet earth is to survive, are a tremendous challenge. Widened horizons also present a chilling scenario of seemingly uncontrollable forces destroying natural resources worldwide in the name of so-called progress – a scenario which could fill any earthkeeper who weighs the significance of local action relative to global ecological needs with a sense of futility and despair. One might well ask whether the environmental point of no return for our planet has not already been reached. Fortunately light overcomes darkness and God-given love for this cosmos can overcome greed. Despite our anguish at the little we achieve, the struggle continues.

7.2 Geographic outreach: towards a united front in Africa

The dynamics of mission to the earth – understood in religious and, more specifically, Christian, terms – implies outreach, crossing frontiers; in this instance, overcoming internal obstacles to personal commitment and crossing the geographical boundaries of countries and continents so as to proclaim, enact and share the good news of liberation or salvation for all creation. As pockets of resistance to earth destruction form all over the world, some of them extend their activities to engage in geographically wide-ranging operations to help liberate the environment. Here the Greenpeace movement comes to mind. Others draw encouragement for their local struggle by sharing information in a growing network of communication and interaction worldwide. Green political parties, environmental departments of governments and a host of institutions concerned with forestry, natural resources, agriculture, wildlife and the like seek to awaken the collective conscience of nations, governments, financial and business concerns. In a sense, therefore, a global green revolution has already started.

Much of what is being done for the environment, however, is of purely symbolic significance or for the sake of 'political correctness' in the public eye. Generally earth-care falls woefully short of what is really required for a revolutionary reversal of those trends which seem to be propelling our planet to the precipice of total destruction. The 'first' world still exploits the 'two-thirds' world at the expense of its natural resources. Entire economies still feed military expansion and armaments rather than environmental reform. Rain forests are still being

decimated by multinational companies at the expense of healthy conditions for all in the global village, besides extinguishing species of animal and plant life as yet hardly known. Norwegians still continue whaling operations despite international treaties aimed at protecting threatened species of whales, and Japanese fishing fleets continue harvesting certain species of fish illegally despite the irreparable damage already done. In Africa the few remaining black rhino are still being threatened by ruthless profiteers, wilderness areas dwindle as ever growing numbers of people crowd out wildlife, and the processes of deforestation and desertification continue unabated.

In the face of a global environmental malaise which eludes the control of even the most powerful international organisations, how does a small ecological institution with its limited sphere of influence envisage its mission to planet earth? A few simple guidelines were adopted. First, ZIRRCO's resistance fighters refused to be daunted by a global situation which in many respects seemed to be beyond redemption or repair. A growing passion for the earth derived from a spiritual mandate impels it to reach out in mission regardless of the disheartening realities of the global situation.

Second, ZIRRCO decided that the gist of its message elsewhere should initially be restricted to the field in which it had gained local recognition and insight based on experience, namely religiously inspired afforestation. It was confident that the nature of its struggle and the tree-planting model it had developed were relevant not only to Zimbabwe but to other African countries as well. Third, ZIRRCO felt that in the continued development of its religio-ecological ministry, exposed to an extended network of communication and interaction in Africa, it could achieve goals like the following:

- help escalate the green revolution in Africa's grassroots communities
- contribute to the organisational structure required for continent-wide coordination of the green struggle
- challenge African religions generally and African Christianity in particular to develop eco-theologies and eco-ministries relevant to their local situations

Fourth, it envisioned that deepening local earthkeeping commitment, coupled with continental outreach, will eventually send out a noticeable

message to the global village – one which will contribute, however modestly, to the kind of change that will draw entire nations into the green revolution.

7.2.1 The South African connection

Because of my dual position for many years as ZIRRCON director in Masvingo and professor of missiology at the University of South Africa in Pretoria, a natural link was forged between the two institutions. Through regular visits to Masvingo, publications in Unisa's journals on ZIRRCON's activities, lectures to the university's theological faculty at annual seminars (once, rather unconventionally, accompanied by visiting spirit-medium vaZarira Marambatemwa, then president of AZTREC), I managed to keep my colleagues in the south informed about earth-keeping endeavours in Zimbabwe and opened up prospects of establishing a similar project in South Africa. Aware of the importance of Unisa as one of the largest distance-education universities in the world, I proposed the establishment of an endowed chair and a religio-environmental institute with similar objectives to those of ZIRRCON. These proposals were made in a lecture to faculty in 1993 and later published in the journal *Religion and Theology* (1995) under the title 'Contextualising environmental theology at Unisa'. The proper locus for such an institute, I suggested, would be the theological faculty and its objectives would include research, conscientisation and mobilisation for earthkeeping projects, all based on the ZIRRCON experience yet with sufficient scope for improvisation and adaptation to the Unisa context. Unisa welcomed the proposals, provided the necessary funds could be raised.

Over the next few years I negotiated with representatives of the Gold Fields Foundation and the South African Nature Foundation (now WWF-South Africa). Delegations were sent to Zimbabwe to observe ZIRRCON's earthkeeping programmes, particularly the ecologically inculturated dimension which formed the cornerstone of my grant application. This eventually culminated in the finetuning of proposals, in which the proposed chair was shelved for the time being because of the cost involved. In the course of 1994 it became obvious to me that a research project on African initiatives in Christian mission would keep me out of South Africa for extended periods, rendering my ecological

workload unmanageable. As a result I suggested that David Olivier, an eco-theologian and ethicist at Unisa, be appointed to take charge of the envisaged environmental venture. Dr Olivier drafted the final proposal to the Gold Fields Foundation, participated with me in the final rounds of negotiation and, once we had been awarded R2,3 million for the new project at Unisa, was appointed executive director.

Flying under the banner 'Faith and Earthkeeping' (F&E) and operating from within Unisa's Research Institute for Theology and Religion, the project was launched early in 1995. Its original staff was Dr Olivier (director), whose primary assignment was conscientisation and mobilisation for ecological projects; Michel Clasquin (senior researcher), an authority on oriental religion, who was responsible for creating a resources database, the preparation of new courses and the publication of a newsletter; and Victor Mohlobi (junior researcher), who was involved in establishing environmentally aware religious organisations, especially among the AICs in Gauteng province. A full-time field operations manager for project implementation still had to be appointed. At the request of our sponsor, Gold Fields, and with a view to continuous interaction between ZIRRCON and F&E, I was appointed F&E consultant for the first few years, as well as chairperson of both its executive and advisory boards.

A brief survey of the F&E project's performance during the first year of its existence reveals some remarkable achievements.

7.2.1.1 Research

A resource database (3 468 entries) and mailing list (2 085 entries) were established. Three specialised bibliographies (on AICs, the Gaia hypothesis and eco-feminism) were compiled for research purposes. Several articles and conference papers on religio-ecological subjects by Olivier, Clasquin and myself were published in journals and progress was made with long-term publication projects. Substantial research went into the preparation of three new courses on the Christian, Buddhist and Hindu faiths as they relate to earthkeeping. Courses on Islam, the Bahàì faith and Judaism were also drafted. A new team was formed, comprising Unisa and external academics interested in researching the field of religion and conservation. All research undertaken by F&E focuses primarily on the ecological value and impact of various African belief systems and their ritual activities.

7.2.1.2 Conscientisation

F&E's environmental education aims at building awareness of environmental problems, their causes and remedies. Information is presented in a manner which highlights the urgency of environmental reform and fosters a sense of responsibility for remedial action. The distinctive ethical codes and ecological values of different religions are taught with a view to inspiring creative reflection and active stewardship. A series of degree, certificate and personal development courses are being prepared, with anticipated annual enrolment reaching up to one thousand by the year 1999. Some of the materials are being adapted to African worldviews and religion for teaching by underqualified members of grassroots society, including AIC members. Dr Olivier has introduced a new degree course in environmental ethics in the department of systematic theology. This means that F&E will offer the widest possible range of environmental studies – from simplified contextual courses to doctorates – to accommodate the diverse needs of African society.

Part of the educational exercise consisted in establishing contact and determining prospects of meaningful interaction with other institutions working in this field, notably the Environmental Education Association of South Africa (EEASA), Unisa's interdisciplinary body for environmental education and the Human Sciences Research Council's (HSRC) Community Outreach Programme. The results have been most encouraging. In addition, Dr Olivier has laid the groundwork for extensive cooperation between F&E and the Universities of Zululand, Medunsa, Transkei, North West University and the University of the North. This includes the presentation of F&E courses and annual lectures by Dr Olivier on eco-theology in the theological faculties of some of these universities as an integral component of their curricula. This is an impressive achievement during the initial phase of the F&E project's existence and has launched a geographically wide-reaching 'missionary' outreach and challenge through ecological awareness-building.

The F&E quarterly newsletter is also proving to be an effective conscientising tool. In addition, workshops are used for conscientisation and project implementation. In 1995 an F&E workshop was held in collaboration with the Pretoria Branch of the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP) to investigate interfaith cooperation in environmental projects. Another was arranged with some 60 members of the

Uniting Reformed Church near Ellisras, where Dr Olivier and representatives of the Department of Agriculture (Pietersburg) spoke on identification of the causes of environmental problems in rural communities in relation to agricultural production, food gardens and water systems. The outcome of this workshop was the appointment of a committee to identify local needs and to promote socioeconomic and environmental upliftment. After establishing links between the newly formed committee and the Food Garden Foundation, food gardening projects were launched. Follow-up F&E workshops will focus on empowering the church community concerned to assess and proceed with its projects.

7.2.1.3 Mobilisation

Specific areas throughout South Africa targeted for earthkeeping service include the former homelands, ethno-communal lands, informal settlements, townships and new housing areas. Where community needs within the ambit of F&E's interests are identified, the aim is to mobilise people via existing religious institutions and their networks in society so as to meet the particular needs in an environmentally responsible manner. In the ensuing interaction F&E seeks to establish a balance between earth-care and exploitation of nature's resources.

Dr Olivier has established numerous contacts with interested institutions and communities throughout South Africa, many of them already engaged in basic forms of community development. In some instances F&E was asked to endorse and help promote existing ventures, in others new joint projects were planned. I mention two examples, the one involving a Christian and the other a Bahàì community:

The Didache Institute of the Reformed Church (*Hervormde Kerk*) at Hammanskraal offers a training programme for AIC leaders at its theological seminary. It also runs the Iphedise Centre on its farm, where it provides training in such skills as dressmaking, building and carpentry. Following regular visits and negotiations between Didache and F&E, the latter was asked 'to help with the establishment of a nursery for indigenous trees and shrubs as well as vegetable plants and that the F&E project would contribute towards the training of AIC church leaders through a module on environmental theology and ethics' (Olivier 1995:35). Subsequently, Olivier involved experts from both the Irene Agricultural Research Institute and the Ecological Research Unit at

Roodeplaat Dam to advise on Didache's proposed nursery. F&E thus fulfils a valuable function in relating ecological expertise to lay earth-keeping endeavour.

The second example is F&E's involvement in the activities of the Onverwacht farming community, at the request of Gilbert Thombisa, a member of the Bahàì religious community in Pretoria. Here, too, F&E was instrumental in introducing the requested expertise for the projects envisaged. The HSRC's Community Outreach Programme will provide a capacity-building programme to teach basic skills in project planning, implementation and administration to the village committee of Onverwacht. The Animal Improvement Institute at Irene will assist with breeding cattle herds. Trees for Africa will supervise a project to plant indigenous and fruit trees. The Food Garden Foundation will provide training in gardening techniques. The Agricultural Research Council (Roodeplaat Dam) will assist with the establishment of tree nurseries, and the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry has made a substantial grant for the community to develop its water resources.

Thus the Onverwacht community is receiving input from a wide range of professionals in a holistic agro-economic enterprise. Tree planting and the protection of water resources will be integral to improved farming and community-controlled administrative methods. It is not clear at this point what impact the Bahàì faith and its ritual expression will have on the earthkeeping dimension of community development activities. F&E certainly operates in a religiously more pluriform setting than ZIR-RCO. It does not, as yet, have movements like AZTREC and the AAEC, which from the start were religiously motivated in their environmental work and were prepared, therefore, to consider ritual innovation to activate and strengthen ecological commitment. Placed in a university context with limited financial resources for project implementation, F&E had little option in the initial period but to act as a link between African communities and supportive environmental organisations who could provide the required expertise. Consequently it may take some time for the religious input of activated communities to crystallise, but when it does, it may well in the long run yield greater religio-ecological diversity and surprises than ZIRRCO has done. Somehow a balance will have to be struck between religious spontaneity in the activated community, the supervisory authority of ecological experts from outside and F&E's facilitating role, lest the impetus that could be derived from African eco-

spirituality be crowded out, even unwittingly, by the pragmatism and performance orientation of Western culture.

7.2.1.4 Networking and project propagation

During their first year in office F&E staff made contact with a large number of institutions to advertise the project's existence and potential, to determine opportunities for collaboration and fundraising and to establish a network for future reference and planning.

At government level discussions were held with the ministers or deputy ministers of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Education and Culture Services and Water Affairs and Forestry. Newsletters were sent regularly to the president, relevant ministries and all the provincial premiers. Overt support was also given to the activities of South Africa's Reconstruction and Development Programme.

As regards the inducement of churches to commit themselves to, and expand, their earthkeeping ministries, F&E policy differs from that of ZIRRCO, in that both 'mainline' churches and AICs were targeted from the outset. This includes discussions with the National Council of Churches of the WCC, the Catholic Theological Society, ministers' fraternals and environmental committees of the Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, Dutch Reformed and other Protestant denominations. One hopes that the positive initial response from these quarters will eventually translate into a telling ecumenical ministry of earth-care.

Mr Mohlobi, who was involved in a religious survey conducted by Unisa's Department of Religious Studies in the environs of Pretoria, was in a position to stimulate the interest of quite a number of AIC leaders in Mamelodi and Atteridgeville. As a result F&E managed to conduct several meetings with these leaders. This gave me an opportunity to inform them about the AAEC's earthkeeping mission in Zimbabwe and to make suggestions about the formation of a similar earthkeeping organisation in South Africa. The response was heartening and it appears that regular follow-up will produce concrete results. In view of the different circumstances it may take the AICs in Gauteng longer to develop an ecological 'strike force' similar to the AAEC. On the other hand, the South African AICs collectively represent approximately 40 per cent of the black population – a tremendous potential for eco-mission that cannot be overlooked.

7.2.1.5 ZIRRCON-F&E relations

There are fairly close links between ZIRRCON and F&E. The latter's origination as a result of the activities of the former is generally recognised at Unisa and among donor agencies, even if publicly the connection is somewhat obscure. As founder and co-founder of both institutions I continue to be a meaningful link between them. Members of both organisations realise that they can learn from each other and that mutual participation in activities is conducive to greater knowledge, vision and commitment in the earthkeeping struggle.

At the same time, the two institutions are fully autonomous in relation to each other. There is no attempt to duplicate ZIRRCON's inculturated model of earth-care in the South African context. F&E does in fact follow some guidelines which have grown out of the ZIRRCON experience, such as the emphasis on traditional religion and AICs as motivating forces in environmental reform. But it is entirely free to empower communities to develop their own earth-care techniques in accordance with local insight and religious creativity.

In February 1995 two F&E staff members, Dr Olivier and Mr Mohlobi, accompanied a delegation of the new project's supporters to Masvingo for a week to study and participate in ZIRRCON activities.¹ The party included Revd Elias Ngodela, Baptist minister and head of the government's Religious Desk in Mpumalanga, Mr Gilbert Tombisa of the Bahàì faith, Pretoria, Mr Lucky Ngale, chairperson of the Atteridgeville Community Development Programme, Revd Paf Mengwae of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, Mr Tony Abbott, prominent environmentalist in KwaZulu-Natal and member of the African Traditional Medicine and Herbalist Association, Ms Lesley Richardson of the WWF-SA; and Mr Paul Sochacqewski, head of Creative Development at WWF in Switzerland

The visitors travelled to several ZIRRCON nurseries and woodlots in Masvingo Province, interviewed members of participant communities and joined in day-long tree-planting ceremonies of both AZTREC and the AAEC, at Great Zimbabwe and in the Chikwanda areas in southern Masvingo. On the whole, the South African delegates were much impressed by the afforestation programmes they witnessed. They took part enthusiastically in tree-planting celebrations, dancing with abandon and planting their own trees. In their speeches they encouraged the

Zimbabwean earthkeepers to remain steadfast in their labours. Some publicly stated their intention of initiating similar activities back in South Africa. Mr Ngale actually started a new nursery in Atteridgeville after the tour and Mr Abbott has involved members of the traditional Medicine and Herbalist Association in Natal in a tree-planting project.

In meetings between the F&E delegation and the ZIRRCON executive (which included AZTREC and AAEC representation) the need for continuing interaction was discussed. It was agreed that the exposure of larger contingents of South African AIC leaders to ZIRRCON's tree-planting programmes could help trigger AIC involvement in the green struggle in the south. In return ZIRRCON was eager to send delegates to participate in F&E activities in South Africa. I was given an opportunity to float ideas for the formation of an African Earthkeepers' Union, some details of which are presented below. Both groups accepted the basic concept and approved the appointment of a working committee to assist me with the groundwork for a movement for which I have been canvassing support for several years. Thus a tentative start was made towards charting the course of a common earthkeeping agenda, even if it was not clear at the time how the proposed collaboration would be financed. Nevertheless a sense of *partnership in mission* characterised our joint field activities, evaluative discussions and future planning – a spirit which I hope will pervade the green revolution as it gains strength and momentum throughout Southern Africa.

7.2.2 African Earthkeepers' Union (AEU): a continental perspective

In Gore's discussion of the need for a world body to coordinate individual nation states' attempts to save the environment he dismisses the notion of a 'world government' as politically impossible and impracticable (Gore 1992:301). Although sceptical about the ability of the United Nations, the world's most important supranational organisation, to do very much, he suggests the formation of a UN Stewardship Council to deal with global environmental issues, as the Security Council deals with matters of war and peace (Gore 1992:302). In addition, he advocates the establishment of a tradition of environmental summit meetings, similar to economic summits, where heads of state can meet annually to consider international agreements, criteria and action plans for global environmental reform.

Considering the urgent need to tackle environmental issues on a massive scale, these proposals make sense. However, the extent to which a world body will be able to operate effectively will hinge partly on the ability of *regional bodies* – representing clusters of nation states, such as Southern, Eastern and West Africa – or continent-wide movements committed to the green revolution to provide the information required, to help mould a vision and strategy for the various regions and to assist with the mobilisation of grassroots endeavour in local religio-cultural contexts. Regional councils will also have to establish a tradition of regular summits to keep abreast of and help direct earthkeeping activities in their own regions or continents. They certainly should facilitate two-way communication between governments and professional environmental organisations on the one hand and grassroots society in their regions on the other, as well as between a world organisation and the societies (earth community) they represent. With a view to this kind of organisational configuration as an essential framework for a global green revolution, I started to canvass for the formation of an AEU with representation from as many African countries as possible.

Given the ZIRRCON experience, I am inclined to envisage the AEU as a *people's movement* which, while seeking government support in the countries of operation and enlisting the services of environmental experts and organisations, derives legitimacy and motivation from grassroots society and basic communities in both rural and urban settings. In other words, the fighters in the trenches – the peasants who suffer most from soil degradation and deforestation, the workers in the cities responsible for cleaning up operations and recycling, the key figures among the masses who command religious and political power (church leaders, traditional custodians of the land, chiefs and mediums, etc) and the communities already engaged in earth-care – should play a leading role in the envisaged union. The voice of the peasants, who 'live with' the barren earth, the plains without firewood, the sparse forests without game, the silted up rivers without fish – in other words the voice of the poor who struggle to survive and who have no option but to engage in earthkeeping – should be heard. These are the people who are not seen or heard at environmental conferences where the professional researchers, field experts, sponsors and government agencies gather. Not that these professionals are unimportant – their expertise is vitally necessary. But in a people's movement, as is the case with ZIRRCON, it

is the key representatives of the masses, the basic communities in the green struggle, who should be empowered to arrange *their* conferences, set the agenda in terms of *their* needs and experience of environmental care, and invite professionals and government officials whom *they* consider relevant for the issues *they* face. In this way the green struggle would be expanded and strengthened. While the experts can assist with monitoring, evaluating and upgrading ecological methods, it is the green fighters at the grassroots – those to whom the struggle is fast becoming a matter of life or death – who can capture the imagination of the masses and thus extend the battle front, expand the numbers of the green forces and instil commitment in the face of inevitable setbacks.

Affiliation to the AEU should be on a regional and institutional basis. A predetermined number of representatives from member states – be they chiefs, headmen, commoners, religious leaders, government officials, environmentalists, etc, or a combination of these – should have voting power in the AEU plenum. Institutions like the following should be granted full membership with voting powers:

- environmental agencies/movements: ZIRRCO, F&E, the Greenbelt movement (Kenya), WWF-SA, environmental NGOs and similar organisations known for an emphasis on people's empowerment
- traditional authorities: chiefs' councils, traditional healers' associations, spirit-medium guilds, traditionalist environmental organisations, etc
- churches and other religious movements: AICs, 'mainline' churches, ecumenical bodies such as national Christian councils, the All Africa Church Conference (AACC) and environmentally active non-Christian religions

Representatives of environmental ministries, or government commissions (eg Forestry, Wildlife, Water and Natural Resources) could be invited as observers and advisors at conferences. Heads of state, distinguished citizens and environmental VIPs could be patrons and honorary or ordinary members of the movement. Whatever the eventual patterns of AEU affiliation, the principle of a people's union, run by the people for the people and for the environment of Africa, should not be compromised and should be reflected in the plenum's voting powers and in the composition of its executive.

Ideally regional offices, representing clusters of countries, should pro-

mote the union's ecological aims and provide administrative continuity. Steering committees could liaise with movements in the field and arrange interim regional meetings to augment regionally rotating conventions or summits held every third or fourth year. It seems reasonable to expect ZIRRCON, in whose context the AEU was first conceived, to act as host institution and provide the platform for organisation and fundraising during the initial phase of launching and developing the union. On behalf of the first AEU working committee (consisting of two AZTREC, two AAEC and two ZIRRCON office representatives) I have already drafted a provisional constitution for the union, and have circulated it among members of both ZIRRCON and F&E as a starting point for the next round of discussions between these two institutions.

Obvious and important objectives of the envisaged Union could be the following:

- to found a people's movement of earthkeepers with the *widest possible representation* in African society throughout the continent
- to act as a *people's forum*, and from such a platform to *launch and give cohesion to the people's green revolution* on behalf of the abused land and natural resources of Africa
- to form a *research unit* to do environmental surveys in member countries, follow-up on research already done for the Earthscan series (Timberlake and others) by the World Resources Institute, by universities, governments and individual environmentalists, as well as feasibility studies for new ecological projects and monitoring research for existing ones. This will create a *comprehensive database* for purposes of policy making, mass conscientisation and assessment and direction of the unfolding green struggle in all its diversified manifestations
- to publicise and promote *community-based earthkeeping projects* such as those of ZIRRCON and F&E (afforestation, grass cultivation, gully reclamation, wildlife conservation, protection of water resources, recycling and antipollution measures) by exposing interested parties to projects in progress
- to attempt to *launch a few large-scale environmental operations* such as the preservation of large sections of the Zambezi valley as wilderness areas as a joint venture of the Zimbabwean, Zambian and Mozambican governments; and the rehabilitation of denuded and

eroded land bordering on the Kruger National Park in South Africa, with a view to African communities in those areas benefiting from the game population along lines similar to those of CAMPFIRE projects in Zimbabwe

- to promote *networking and meaningful interaction* between government agencies, environmental experts, development agencies, NGOs, donor agencies and African communities with an emphasis on the environmental contribution of the latter
- to communicate and negotiate with *heads of state*, key figures in governments and relevant ministries about the protection and sustainable use of natural resources
- to seek where possible to have *earthkeeping activities based on African people's religious beliefs and worldviews* and to encourage the religio-cultural reflection and reinterpretation which accompany such endeavour

These are only a few tentative guidelines which will have to be debated and defined more accurately once the union is officially and constitutionally launched and starts charting its own course. Apart from discussions with members of ZIRRCO and F&E, I have also put out feelers among chiefs in Ghana at a conference entitled 'Strategies for Africa: the contribution of traditional authorities to development, democracy, human rights and environmental protection' (Accra University, 1994) and among representatives of the All Africa Church Conference during deliberations at the International Association of Mission Studies Conference (Buenos Aires, 1996). Generally the response has been enthusiastic. However, much more groundwork – orientation visits to various African countries, establishing contacts with environmental institutions and movements, initiating and activating a think-tank, and fundraising – will be required before the envisaged union can be officially launched. The task is a daunting one, but the urgency of the challenge to appeal to and help mobilise African people in the most compelling of all struggles does not allow evasion or procrastination.

7.2.3 African Christian theology and environmental liberation

Inasmuch as the churches in Africa are bound to play an increasingly significant role in socioeconomic and environmental development and

liberationist work, it is important that theologising from within these churches should keep track of developments and provide the necessary guidance. This applies not only to the enacted theology of the AICs, although their innovative liturgical and pastoral response to an abused creation – as indicated in this study – certainly warrants attention, but also to written theology based on academic and spiritual reflection.

In the latter field three basic trends can be distinguished (Ukpong 1984:501):

- *African inculturation theology*, popularly known as African theology, refers to the dialogue between European Christian and African religious thought, aimed at conveying the Christian message in a contextually relevant form and integrating Christianity with African life and culture.
- *South African black theology*, following American black theology, spreads the good news as a message of political and socio-economic liberation in a situation of oppression and segregation.
- *African liberation theology*, moulded on either the indigenous socioeconomic structure or Latin American liberation theology or both, preaches the gospel as a message of liberation in the African context of poverty, hunger and political powerlessness.

Ukpong treats African liberation theology as a development of the 1970s, to be found mainly in postcolonial East and West Africa and aimed predominantly at socioeconomic development and upliftment. This theology is significant for its focus on the very dimension which South African exponents of black theology have always found lacking in African theology (cf Tutu 1975). Ela (1986, chapter 6), one of the most eloquent African liberation theologians, for example, outlines the continuing dependence of African states on Western capital and their enslavement to the manipulation of multinational corporations (eg the cocoa dictatorship of Cameroon) despite political independence. He demonstrates very clearly that liberation in postcolonial Africa is an ongoing mandate in view of economically enslaving conditions, declining agrarian economies, misgovernment and juvenile unemployment. Active concern with socioeconomic development and the fair distribution of the proceeds of production and trade presents the church with

an ineluctable challenge to introduce structural reforms. Typical of Ela's realistic approach is the following comment:

The world is not given to us as a ready made reality, but as a *construction project*, and this construction project includes political and social tasks. We must therefore move from a religion of nature to *faith that lives in history and confrontation* (Ela 1986:100) (my italics).

Ukpong's classification is certainly helpful to distinguish major trends in African Christian theology. However, it tends to obscure the fact that there are liberationist dimensions, admittedly in different applications and varying degrees, in virtually all forms of African theology. Black African theologians' interpretation and translation of the Christian message in and for the African context (Ukpong's first category) are in themselves forms of religio-cultural liberation from the dominance of Western theology. The entire history of AIC growth, moreover, has liberationist features, be it liberation from white missionary tutelage, resistance to oppressive colonial rule, freedom fighting or liberation from poverty through community development programmes (Daneel 1989, chapter 3). African liberation theology is therefore a much older and richer tradition, as an existential reality of the African church, than the literature on the subject would have us believe.

One dimension which has been hidden or lacking in Africa's liberation theology is that of the environment. A preoccupation with *human* liberation, *human* dignity, *human* progress, *human* upliftment and so forth is understandable and justifiable, given the erstwhile colonial situation of *human* oppression, *human* impoverishment and *human* suffering. Hence a plea for an ecological focus in African theology should not be interpreted as denigrating its current anthropocentric and humanitarian emphases. These undoubtedly will remain! But the concern for human liberation should be consciously extended to encompass *all* members of the earth community. The former cannot be complete and meaningful if the latter are not included. Our human dignity derives in part from the respect and care we show for the earth. In other words, our claim to dignity and equality in a racial and interpersonal sense rings hollow if we keep living in an abused environment and contribute to its destruction, without any attempt to establish the justice there that we seek for ourselves.

A more comprehensive liberation theology, in the light of Ela's observations, would deal with *all* impediments to justice and sustainable wellbeing for the entire earth community. The struggle against 'First' World exploitation of the Two-thirds World will have to be intensified, not only because of its debilitating impact on these economies and therefore on people's living conditions, but also and particularly because of the unaffordable price these countries are paying in loss of natural resources. Ela's view of the world as a 'construction project' will only make real sense if environmental reconstruction is given the same priority as the political and social tasks he refers to. Instead of 'moving away from a religion of nature' we need confrontation, dialogue and reinterpretation in that very sphere, in our quest for a contextual *theology of nature* which will meet the current requirements for environmental liberation.

This task requires comprehensive and ongoing interaction between Christian earthkeepers – peasants, villagers, urban workers – and academic theologians. Those who design new eco-theologies because of their dedication to the struggle in the field and those who reach the outside world through their publications should join forces if the green revolution in Africa, in its Christian manifestation, is to escalate to a point where the earth is truly valued, healed and sustained. *Enacted and written eco-theologies have to meet and bond!* When this happens, new fellowships in mission, in earthkeeping ministries of compassion, will emerge. It will call for sacrifice. Mention has been made of the price paid by AIC earthkeepers, the grassroots theologians of peasant society. To professional theologians turned eco-prophets, and resistance fighters turned tree planters, the price may be even heavier. Some may well forfeit academic careers at universities or seminaries; others may have to interrupt their traditional teaching and research programmes periodically so as to become 'intermittent earthkeepers' themselves, more than participant observers in the earth community: mouthpieces and authors, who have experienced at first hand what the good news to a ravished earth really signifies and requires.

It should be possible for African eco-theologians to spend part of their time, if not all of it, rethinking, propagating, directing and assisting with the organisation of this liberation struggle. A passion for the earth will cause them to give prominence to earthkeeping, the neglected dimension in African liberation theologies, in the very forums where these

theologies thrive: the conferences of the WCC's African national Christian councils, the All Africa Church Conference, the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) and the like. African eco-theologians could, for instance, find EATWOT's aims and objectives sufficiently flexible to accommodate their concerns. These aims are formulated as follows: 'The continuing development of Third World Christian theologies which will serve the church's mission in the world and witness to the new humanity in Christ, expressed in the struggle for a just society' (Torres & Fabella 1978:273). Conceivably eco-theological influence will enrich the definition of 'the church's mission to the world' and the 'struggle for a just society' will be interpreted as seeking equal justice for all members of the earth community! EATWOT's fourth objective reads: 'keeping close contacts as well as being involved with action-oriented movements for social change' (Torres & Fabella 1978:273). As the green struggle escalates the intention of this phrase, if not the wording, could be extended to include involvement in movements for *socio-environmental* change.

A number of themes that have emerged in this study will require the attention of African eco-theologians. I mention only a few:

- *biblical foundations* for ecological stewardship, land use, environmental liberation and justice for all the earth in African terms
- *the nature of ecumenical interaction* between earthkeeping churches, as well as between Christian churches, African traditional religions and other religions. This is a broad theme which includes encounter and dialogue between African Christianity and African traditional religion in earthkeeping praxis, and the implications for an *African theology of religions*
- *ecclesiological perspectives*: What are the implications of an earthkeeping ministry for the *liturgies* and *pastoral programmes* of the African church? How does earthkeeping fit into the missionary nature of the church and its propagation of the good news of Christ?
- *conversion* and *sanctification* of individuals and Christian communities in relation to earth-care
- *healing* and *salvation* in holistic African and biblical eschatological perspectives
- *sin, evil wizardry and church discipline* in relation to the earth com-

munity and an *environmental ethic* designed both from the 'under-side' of the green struggle and from contextual Bible reading

- *African eco-feminism*: the contribution of African women to community development, environmental reform and the like
- *state and church interaction* in earthkeeping; particularly land distribution, land husbandry and the protection of natural resources
- *African liberation theology*: the integration and balance between its religio-cultural, political, socioeconomic and environmental tenets
- *earthkeeping at the behest of a trinitarian deity*: a protective creator Father/Mother, a healing/saving Christ and a life-giving/guiding Holy Spirit

I am not suggesting that these themes have been entirely neglected by African theologians. I have cited, for instance, Bakare's study of land distribution in Zimbabwe. Nevertheless, full-blown eco-theological studies by African theologians are few and far between. As our experience and insight grow in Africa's escalating green revolution, themes of this nature will require probing scrutiny and committed theologising.

7.3 Africa and beyond

Zimbabwe's war of the trees is, as we have seen, not an isolated struggle. As a liberation movement which seeks the improvement and well-being of the entire earth community it has a ripple effect at the local grassroots, extending and blending with similar movements regionally, throughout Southern Africa, and in the future, it is hoped, across the African continent. In this sense our struggle resembles grassroots endeavour all over the world:

In Brazil many Christian based communities, with a total of three million members (in the 1980s), work with the poor and oppressed environment that makes them poorer. In Indonesia, six hundred independent development groups work on environmental protection alone. In India there are similarly some twelve thousand groups working for more appropriate development. Whether these scattered beginnings rise in a global groundswell depends on how many more individuals commit their creativity and energy to the chal-

lenge, to new vision and responsible action (Birch, Eakin & McDaniel 1990:5; with reference to Alan Durning).

Whether a 'global groundswell' or a global green revolution ensues – one which can help stem the tide of earth destruction and facilitate the historical transition from an industrial epoch to the 'ecozoic age' (Mary Evelyn Tucker, in Grim 1994:13) – also hinges on meaningful communication and enriching interaction between existing green movements, action groups and institutions worldwide. To reach consensus in the global village on the common good of all members of the earth community the local and global dimensions of earthkeeping will have to be kept in balance. Earthkeepers will have to 'think globally' but 'act locally'. Noel Brown (1994:15), director of the United Nations Environment Programme, endorses this view: 'At a time when the future viability of the planet hangs in the balance, local/global must be seen as a premise for a new kind of responsibility for the earth.' Callicott (1994:38), in his suggestions for the development of a global environmental ethic, adds the following rider: 'Let us by all means think globally and act locally. But let us also think locally as well as globally and try to time our global and local thinking as the several notes of a single, yet common chord.'

The proposed task is too great for individuals operating in isolation. Teamwork – the mobilisation of entire societies, nations – is of the essence. As Gore (1992:277) observes: 'By themselves, well motivated individuals cannot hope to win this struggle (of saving the world's environment), but as soon as enough people agree to make it our central organising principle, success will come within our grasp and we can begin to make rapid progress.' This is not to denigrate the contributions of individuals. Alongside the green fighters in all walks of life, those who have little option but to concentrate primarily on their local earthkeeping responsibilities, we indeed need the individual specialists: academics, visionaries, prophets, bridge-builders between communities, 'intercultural nomads' – in other words, the mobile units of the global battlefield.

These are women and men who identify fully with their local struggle, yet act as link figures between communities, cultures, nations and continents; those whose task it is to think both locally and globally, to interpret the local struggle and render its contribution fruitful in the family

of nations, at the same time feeding information and inspiration from similar struggles in other parts of the world back to the local situation. These are the storytellers who contribute to the myths people need to motivate them for their struggle. These too are the ideologues, philosophers, scientists and representatives of an amazing variety of faiths, who periodically team up to assess the green struggle in global/local perspective, to consider ideologies, worldviews, political and scientific developments pertinent to the revision of earthkeeping strategies, and to attempt to articulate what is yet to become a global environmental ethic.

In the final analysis the green revolution will have to have an impact on all life on planet earth if creation in its rich pluriformity, or what is left of it, is to survive with a reasonable measure of wellbeing – a future. Even if we are to strike only a shaky balance between homo sapiens and other forms of life and life-support systems, a new world order is necessary. Militarism in its current form will become unaffordable. Only sustainable development should be acceptable. Systems of government, economics and industry will require drastic adjustment and restructuring. Religions and cultures will alter course and change as they embrace and join the earth-keeping mission. Affluent lifestyles will perforce become more frugal, and so forth.

These remarks are obviously flimsy generalisations, which some will interpret as idealistic and utopian in the midst of the harsh, pragmatic realities of capitalist society. They are at this point mere reminders of where we should be heading if the green revolution is to succeed. I do not presume at this juncture to attempt a more specific or comprehensive scenario in a field so vast and complex.

However, operating as a lay earthkeeper within the Shona culture of Zimbabwe, and in consideration of the local/global premise underlying attempts to define our current responsibilities for the earth, I wish finally to comment more specifically on two types of environmental tasks that need to be undertaken.

7.3.1 The religio-philosophical and scientific task

Religions, philosophies and science captivate the minds of people and motivate their activities. It is becoming critically significant to examine

their underlying assumptions, worldviews and cosmologies. This provides new insight into the motives, attitudes and values that have qualified relations between humans, nature and the supernatural in the past, and suggests possible solutions that could be proposed and implemented in the future. The present study joins up with others in its attempt to probe some of the cosmological roots and belief systems of two religions in Africa and to highlight the significance of religious motivation in the mobilisation of inculturated earthkeeping. The local/global premise is in evidence, albeit modestly, in this attempt to share local African insight and experience from the war of the trees, through the written word, with fellow fighters in the global village.

Anthologies comprising theological and interdisciplinary contributions from all parts of the world reveal acute awareness in academic circles of the task referred to above, as well as a common conviction that there is a need to radically rethink the anthropocentric ethic which has prevailed in many religions and in exploitive industrial societies. I mention a few examples that illustrate this trend. In a collection of eco-theological essays entitled *Liberating life: contemporary approaches to ecological theology*, Birch, Eakin and McDaniel (1990:1) observe a new, emerging consensus among Christian theologians:

The consensus is that an anthropocentric ethic, understood as an emphasis on human wellbeing at the expense of the earth and other living beings, must be replaced by an ethic of respect for life and environment. We think it quite significant that theologians from different perspectives and backgrounds are moved by this common concern ... It is as if life itself has cried out for freedom from human exploitation, and they, in different contexts have heard it.

In *Ecotheology: voices from South and North* David Hallman (1994) observes that the contributors tend to emphasise the interconnectedness of ecological destruction and economic injustice, and the need to address these issues concurrently. As for a new theological agenda, he states:

We are in the early stages of a profound conceptual shift in theology that will move us far beyond stewardship theology as a response to human exploitation of God's creation ... Even if we now talk more in terms of responsibility than domination, our approach is still a management model in which we humans think we know best. By

breaking open that conceptual prison, feminist theology and insights from the traditions of indigenous peoples are both critically important groundings for the emerging eco-theology, as the articles in those chapters demonstrate (Hallman 1994:6).

By contrast, the collection of essays compiled by Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim entitled *Worldviews and ecology: religion, philosophy and the environment* (1994) presents a wider spectrum of religio-ecological worldviews (Christian, Native North American, Jewish, Muslim, Bahàì, Hindu, Buddhist, Jainist, Taoist and Confucian), as well as contemporary ecological views based on evolutionary cosmology. Characteristic of this book is the recognition of plurality, the premise that 'no one religious tradition or philosophical perspective has the ideal solution to the environmental crisis' (Tucker & Grim 1994:11), and the editors' thesis – endorsed by some of the contributors – that 'a new global environmental ethic will be needed to solve some of the critical issues that face us in the late twentieth century' (Tucker & Grim 1994:12).

A valuable aspect of this anthology is the plea for an inclusive, holistic approach which integrates religio-ecological concerns with modern scientific development in the interest of the entire earth-community. Callicott (1994:35–37), for instance, argues for solidarity of both the evolving postmodern scientific worldview and religiously based traditional environmental ethics in the development of an 'international eco-centric environmental ethic'. Traditional environmental ethics can be revived and validated on the strength of 'the affinity of their foundational ideas with the most exciting new ideas in contemporary science'. Likewise, 'the abstract and arcane concepts of nature, human nature and the relationship between people and nature implied in ecology and the new physics can be expressed and articulated in the rich vocabulary of metaphor, simile, and analogy developed in the traditional sacred and philosophical literature of the world's many and diverse cultures' (Callicott 1994:37).

Thomas Berry maintains that little progress can be made with global environmental ethics prior to the development of a new science which deals with the integral functioning of the earth itself, a field to which we are as yet newcomers. In anticipation of a creative period which he calls the 'ecozoic era', Berry (1994:230) outlines a new biological and planetary situation:

While we generally use the terms 'environmental' and 'ecological', it might be more appropriate to deal with the situation in terms of a planet which has become dysfunctional because we do not have an integral sense of the earth or how it functions. We need a new study that might be designated, in the terms of Robert Muller, as a 'Total Earth Science', a science which has so far never been properly identified as a special field of study.

One of the mechanisms to this end, Berry suggests, could be a new discipline which he calls 'ecological geography', which will focus less on detached, academic understanding as it relates more purposefully and directly to political decision making, economics and the dynamics of human culture: 'If economic geography serving the purposes of human exploitation of the planet were to be altered into ecological geography for the purpose of identifying the proper niche of the human within the larger purposes of the earth community, then a great advance may be made toward achieving a viable planetary system' (Berry 1994:235).

Regarding the role of religions in safeguarding the future of the earth, particular prominence is given to what are called 'primal' or indigenous religions. Tu Wei-ming calls for a rethinking of the Enlightenment heritage, its positive contribution to humanity and the negative consequences it has engendered for the world's life-support system. According to him, the Enlightenment emphasis on individualism, reason and progress has undermined the idea of community. In the joint spiritual venture of moving beyond the Enlightenment mentality and creating a new world order the priority is 'to articulate a universal intent for the formation of a global community' (Wei-ming 1994:25) (my italics). To this end three kinds of spiritual resources need to be mobilised:

- the ethico-religious traditions of the modern West (Greek philosophy, Judaism and Christianity) with a view to re-evaluating their relationship with the rise of the modern West
- the religions of the non-Western axial-age civilisations (Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism in South and South East Asia, Confucianism and Taoism in Asia, and Islam) in recognition of the fact that Confucian culture, for example, has given rise to a less adversarial, less individualistic and less exploitive modern civilisation
- the primal traditions (Native American, Hawaiian, Maori and others)

whose imbeddedness in specific localities has enhanced the development of life styles and worldviews which have important implications for the quest for a global community (Wei-ming 1994:25–28)

Tu Wei-ming singles out some features of primal societies. Their intimate knowledge of, and close identification with, the environment could help to cultivate new attitudes and worldviews. Their rituals of bonding in interpersonal relations and consequent sense of community make for participation in creation and respect for the transcendent, instead of dominion and exploitive manipulation. Hence, in contrast to anthropocentric manipulation and exploitation of nature, 'primal consciousness emerges as a source of inspiration' (Wei-ming 1994:28).

In conclusion, Tu Wei-ming (1994:28) quotes Ewert Cousin's remark about how we should face the ecological crisis – with 'the earth as our prophet and the indigenous peoples as our teachers'. The ongoing hermeneutic responsibility of interpreting both prophecy and message remains. Dialogue is essential if the modern West is to fully perceive the significance of such interpretation.

This positive evaluation of primal traditions is also apparent in John Grim's essay on 'North American worldviews and ecology' (1994). Towards the end of his probing and thought-provoking survey, he concludes that 'the religious values within the lifeways (ie the functional interaction between cosmology and culture) of Native American Peoples, which have extensive similarities with other global indigenous peoples, serve to enrich the ecological dialogue in assessing the importance of functional cosmologies, environmental ethics, and appropriate rituals for renewing human-earth relations' (Grim 1994:52).

The agenda for Christianity appears to be more complex, as it has to include self-critical confession of complicity in today's rampant exploitation of natural resources by human beings if the biblical impulses for responsible stewardship are to be convincingly extolled and practised. Jay McDaniel arrests attention when he sums up his inspiring 'Christian approach to ecology'. Life in Christ, the new life for ecology, says McDaniel (1994:80), involves '(1) an acceptance of lost innocence; (2) a recognition of the limitless love of God; and (3) an openness to the healing powers of this God as they well up from within the very depths of our existence'. To accept our lost innocence we have to recognise our alienation from fellow human beings and our inclination

to evaluate other creatures only or mainly in terms of their usefulness to us. From within our urban-industrial contexts, says McDaniel (1994:81), 'we must confess that we partake of "anthropocentric consciousness". This is part of our sinful existence.' To the extent that we become vessels of God's limitless love and experience the living Christ at the core of our beings 'our own "dominion" will be tempered by a deeper recognition of the sheer goodness, the sheer lovability, of each and every living being whom we influence. As Paul puts it, we will have put on the mind of Christ' (Phil 2:5).

These brief citations from only a few essays reveal some similarities of intent. For instance, the conviction is prevalent that to deal effectively with the ecological crisis worldwide there will have to be substantial change in attitudes, values, the religio-cultural dispositions of entire societies, scientific developments, philosophies, etc, in the global village. There is also an assumption that reinterpretations and rediscovery of ethical codes in the world's cultures, religions and philosophies are possible and could provide the motivation and impetus for the changes envisaged. The agendas for action, however, vary considerably. Depending on the subject matter of the essay, they vary from relatively clear-cut guidelines for specific traditions – such as the new eco-spirituality required in Christianity, proposed by McDaniel – to more generalised profiles of what is required, as in Tu Wei-ming's plea for a world order beyond the Enlightenment mentality and Callicott's suggestions for a global environmental ethic. Not that the second approach is less significant. On the contrary, the challenge to think globally is of the essence! It takes courage to expose oneself to the broad sweep of a global vision, a position which inevitably evokes critical enquiry about the practical implications for local contexts but also challenges earth-keepers far and wide to apply their own ingenuity and creativity to what they consider meaningful in the implicit or explicit proposals made.

Practical implementation of the proposed agendas remains problematic and we have to continue grappling with the difficulties. What, for instance, will be the design of Berry's total 'earth science'? Where is it to be developed and at what levels of education should it function to have the desired impact on political, economic and legislative decision making? How can the sense of community in primal societies be conveyed to consumerist, industrialised and overly individualistic societies in the modern West? Is it at all possible to orchestrate the kind of dia-

logue between faiths and power establishments or economic interest groups which will lead to more altruistic and environmentally friendly policies worldwide? At what levels will Callicott's envisaged global environmental ethic – based on science and articulated in a multiplicity of revived traditional cultural environmental ethics – be worked out, and which institution(s) will oversee the application of such a code?

Finding answers to these questions is bound to require teamwork at interdisciplinary academic, inter-institutional, interreligious and intercultural, political and grassroots levels. This will have to happen wherever new communities of concerned earthkeepers take shape, so as to confront the problems, formulate strategies and develop a new solidarity in action – in lieu of isolating individualism – aimed at the liberation of a beleaguered creation. Practical solutions will be found to the extent that love, compassion and commitment to the earth community enable these emerging fellowships to transcend the boundaries of ethnicity, culture, race, class, nationality and geographical distance, without violating the pluriform historical and cultural heritages of local societies. In terms of my own Southern African earthkeeping context, I attempt but a brief, provisional response to some of the questions raised.

First, ZIRRCON could propagate the introduction of '*earth science*' courses in Zimbabwean schools. These would be much more rudimentary than what Berry has in mind but, along with the nature-related practical activities already suggested above, they will help to give the youth an environmental focus and a global view of the ecological crisis at an early stage of their education. The courses should be developed by interdisciplinary teams to combine ecological expertise with the kind of religio-cultural input which ZIRRCON has gained in the field. One could experiment with educational ways of exposing the youth to the elders of AZTREC and the AAEC bishops. Such instruction will put scholars in touch with the roots of their own environmental ethics, both in the traditional, ancestrally informed and in the indigenised Christian sense. F&E, in turn, is well placed not only to introduce the local/global dimension into its more advanced environmental courses in South Africa, but also to arrange interdisciplinary conferences where attention can be given to the scientific and religio-cultural issues mentioned above.

Second, the eco-theological task of developing an African creation or

environmental theology, both at the grassroots and at the more sophisticated academic level, should be pursued with vigour. AIC theologians operating in rural and urban societies and African theologians attached to academic institutions should be encouraged to collaborate regularly in such an enterprise. To the same extent that academics would benefit from exposure to the earthkeeping rituals of village or urban communities, AIC earthkeepers could benefit from recognition and participation in events arranged by EATWOT and the WCC's JPIC committees. Empowerment of AIC earthkeepers to relate to Western eco-theological literature and to make their own contribution at the highest level in Western academic institutions will extend North-South dialogue and enrich the local/global dimension in eco-theology. This process is already under way, as evidenced by the participation of Revd Zvanaka and Bishop Marinda, both *Ndaza* Zionist leaders, along with black and white academics in Southern Africa, in The Pew-sponsored Research Project on African Christianity (supra:313). Revd Zvanaka is increasingly often invited to address academic and/or environmentally concerned audiences throughout Southern Africa and abroad about the religio-cultural tenets undergirding the war of the trees. In this way local African impulses are finding their way into the modern West, where it is hoped they will add momentum to the green revolution. In 1996 the focus of Revd Zvanaka's address to the ASM (American Society of Missiology) in Chicago, and of my papers read at IAMS (International Association of Mission Studies) at the Harvard Centre for the Study of World Religions and the Rodney Seminar Series at the African Studies Centre at Boston University, was the theology of Africa's earthkeeping mission. These are modest beginnings, along with many other scattered attempts throughout the global village, but little building stones nonetheless which could help to build and inform the 'global environmental ethic'.

Third, the ecological contribution of African 'primal traditions' or world-views needs to be more closely defined and publicised. The earth-keeping activities of AZTREC described in volume I (Daneel 1998) provide valuable clues to customary conservationist laws and praxis as they relate to an indigenous yet modern earthkeeping movement. In the *mafukidzanyika* ceremonies the interconnectedness of the entire earth community – living, deceased and unborn humans, soil, water, trees, wildlife, etc – is ritually enacted over and over again, like the life

cycles and seasonal cycles of nature. Even here exploitive anthropocentrism is not entirely absent. But altruistic and caring attitudes towards nature are culturally and spiritually ingrained, and are significantly in evidence and readily available to motivate responsible ecological stewardship in a society where the 'trees of consent' (*mubvumira*) still affirm ancestral approval of human behaviour, the 'trees of exorcism' (*muzeze*) provide symbolic power for demon expulsion, the 'trees of protection' (*muchakata*) still symbolise the closeness of the apical ancestors and the creator, Mwari, who provide all creation with life-giving rain, and the 'trees of royalty' (*mudziavashe*) are still vested with tribal political authority and environmental responsibility.

These religio-ecological realities, which are integral to a holistic Shona cosmology, underscore Grim's (1994:52) findings on Native American worldviews:

The ecological dimensions of Native North American lifeways are not held back in some evolutionary backwardness or in a stereotyped ahistorical paradise. Nor can the spiritual insights of the First Peoples of the North American continent be described as lacking profundity. Moreover, the private and experiential nature of indigenous traditions do not lead to a muddled spiritual life but rather one in which individual values are embedded in a lifeway community which extends into the natural world. In an investigation of these issues, striking insights emerge which can complement, correct, and enrich the very traditions which often dominate these indigenous traditions.

The same applies to African primal traditions, even though the earth-keeping message from this quarter has been muted or underrated in the mechanistic and technologically oriented cultures of the West. The future challenge to institutions like ZIRRCO, the F&E project and the envisaged AEU will be to investigate African cosmologies and the indigenous roots of their environmental ethics, as well as empower basic African communities to become fully active in the green resistance struggle. Then the prophecy of the African earth and the message of the African people will be heard and heeded in the global village, just as modern science and the technology developed to serve creation will inform and assist the struggle in Africa.

Fourth, *thematic studies* of worldviews, spirituality, traditional knowl-

edge and environmental ethics in primal societies, the perception and functioning of ecologically related community life, the nature and impact of liberation struggles throughout the world, etc will promote the articulation of a global environmental ethic and the development of global strategies for earthkeeping action. ZIRRCO's war of the trees, for instance, suggests two themes which could be fruitfully studied for their significance elsewhere: *the experience of community and of sinfulness* which characterises the body of earthkeepers and the communities they serve. The sense of belonging, destiny and purpose which the Shona earthkeepers share as they fight poverty and earth destruction has its roots in Zimbabwean history, in the ancestors, in customary kinship patterns, in a holistic philosophy of life which refuses to contradistinguish between human and environmental interests, and in Christian tradition. Hence the family of earthkeepers has both old indigenous and new contextualised roots. These can be studied together or in terms of religious studies and Christian theology. The fact that the earthkeepers themselves are forging a new kind of religious ecumenism in the interest of harmony in the earth community – one which transcends the neat categories of rationalism – is in itself a challenge to develop a form of 'earth science' in the humanities, a flexible interdisciplinary approach suited to studying the intricacies of human-nature relations. Mention was also made of an emerging sense of ecological sinfulness among earthkeepers, expressed in the traditional idiom of wizardry. Here, too, both traditional African and Christian traditions are at work. The confession of ecological sins apparently motivates earthcare, improves human-nature relations and opens up new perspectives on the salvation of all creation, rather than signifying a pessimistic and fatalistic appraisal of humanity. In a particular culture it reflects openness to the healing power of God and vanquishment of selfish dominion over nature as we 'put on the mind of Christ' (cf McDaniel, *supra*:336). A study of how this process actually takes place in a mass movement could powerfully inspire the green revolutionaries.

In the fifth place, the intellectual activity of research and publication underlying much of what is outlined above should be augmented by *actual exposure to and participation in African earthkeeping projects*. Institutions like ZIRRCO and F&E could be instrumental in such networking. Just as message and prophecy have to be carried from the grassroots to the institutions of academic knowledge and political

power, the representatives of academia, capital and power need to be exposed to earthkeeping experience at the grassroots. Although the mass media help in carrying the earthkeeping story to the furthest corners of global society, it is only when the wealthy, the power brokers, the representatives of multinational interest groups and the intellectuals are wrested from their safe havens and reintegrated with the earth community – where they can feel the scorching sun on denuded plains, the urgent call for justice and healing in dancing feet and the forgiving benediction in the shade of carefully nurtured trees – that the global groundswell of earthkeeping will get underway.

This brings us to the second task: the praxis of the green struggle.

7.3.2 The task of mobilising the struggle

The intellectual task of studying cultures, religions, human values and behavioural patterns in relation to the environment, and of formulating views and information which could further the quest for a global environmental ethic, is never complete – or at least it shouldn't be. There can never be an abstract or a purely theoretical ecology! Ecology entails passion, action, the struggle for the life of the earth community. The struggle requires reflection, evaluation, publication and policy making, all activities which require periodic retirement from the battle front. But intellectual endeavour does not mean isolated or elitist academic privilege which entitles one to stay out of the fray. Whether we are actively mobilising political consensus, our own families in recycling ventures, or entire movements in earthkeeping projects; whether we raise or donate funds for earthkeeping, whether we proclaim the good news of earth healing by refraining from using polluting chemicals, fighting for responsible disposal of atomic waste, or risking possible ridicule by publicly identifying with the controversial activities of green movements – the fact remains that private reflection and public action are both integral to earth stewardship if we are genuinely concerned about the future of planet earth. For, as Gore (1992:269) insists, 'we must take bold and unequivocal action: we must make the rescue of the environment the central organising principle for civilisation'.

Gore (1992:273) spells out the implications of such challenge as follows. First of all, widespread consensus about the new environmental principle should be achieved while there is still time for remedial

action. Second, the central principle implies 'an all-out effort to use every policy and programme, every law and institution, every treaty and alliance, every tactic and strategy, every plan and course of action – to use, in short, every means to halt the destruction of the environment and to preserve and nurture our ecological system' (Gore 1992:274). Here, obviously global ecological action is envisaged as part of the international political spectrum. Third, the morally bankrupt approach of postponement and delay adopted by world leaders at the outbreak of World War II should be avoided at all costs. The real enemy is the one within, namely a dysfunctional way of thinking. We are up against *totalitarianism* which 'collapses individuals into the state', and the ideology of *consumption* which 'collapses individuals into desire for what they consume, even as it fosters the assumption that we are separate from the earth' (Gore 1992:275).

At this point Gore qualifies our battle for the environment as an extension of the struggles against Nazism and communism, as 'a crucial new phase of the long battle for true freedom and human dignity'. He continues by listing vital issues, threats to the new principle, which need to be faced and corrected: the balance between rights and responsibilities, which is impaired because of the alienation of individuals from community and from the earth; corruption in both the developing and developed worlds, which obstructs our ability to share environmental stewardship on a global scale; mistaken assumptions about development and a mismatch between projects funded by the industrial world and the real needs of the Third World, resulting in ecological destruction and social instability.

In the fourth place, Gore emphasises both the importance of numerical strength worldwide of those who accept the environmental principle, and the profound influence of courageous individuals who are opposing the destruction inflicted on nature by industrial civilisation: 'standing bravely against this new juggernaut, a new kind of *resistance fighter* has appeared: men and women who have recognized the brutal nature of the force now grinding away at the forests and oceans, the atmosphere and fresh water, the wind and the rain, and the rich diversity of life itself' (Gore 1992:282) (my italics). Gore mentions a few examples of people who faced grave risks or sacrificed much in their opposition to earth destruction. He points out that they were ordinary people, yet uncompromising campaigners in the cause of justice for the

earth community. One was Tos Barnett, who narrowly escaped assassination by writing a report exposing the rape of forests in Papua New Guinea by Japanese corporations; another was Chico Mendes, who was martyred for leading rubber trappers in the rain forests of Brazil in their resistance to the landowners and corporations responsible for massive deforestation; a third was Wangari Matthai, who mobilised the women of Kenya in the Greenbelt movement to plant millions of trees (Gore 1992:283–294). All these people in their different ways were and still are engaged in the global war of the trees. These green icons have captured the imagination both of eco-sensitive people in their own cultures and of the emerging earthkeeping community in the global village. Likewise, the Shona icons mentioned in this book – even if their activities seldom reach the news headlines in their own country – appeal to the conscience of large segments of African society. This promotes the steady recruitment of new fighters, the encouragement of the ‘pioneers’ of the struggle who are already becoming ‘veterans’, and the escalation, geographically, of afforestation and related projects.

In his final chapter Gore outlines five strategic goals which should inform and guide the environmental struggle; goals that are integral to his proposed Global Marshall Plan. This valuable overview of action plans is well worth reading, for its practical suggestions and inspired vision. Although the proposals merit detailed consideration, I can only make a few observations in passing.

One of the most pressing issues, that of financing a global recovery programme, remains an open question. Gore (1992:303) points out that the United States cannot possibly be the principal financier, and that sponsorship will also be the responsibility of Japan, Europe and wealthy oil-producing states. A fair distribution of financial responsibility amongst the industrialised nations will undoubtedly be required. But if one considers the USA’s annual rate of consumption of the world’s fossil fuels and other natural resources, and the contribution of its industries to global pollution, then the least that can be expected is that the USA’s financial responsibility for global ecology should be balanced proportionately with that of other contributing nations. Besides, it appears to be something of a contradiction when Gore, explicitly and implicitly, assigns the USA a leading role in the implementation of the proposed Global Marshall Plan (for example his insistence that the USA take the lead in the proposed stabilisation of the world population;

Gore 1992:314), without accepting a similar responsibility for financial sponsorship. Here, particularly, the enemy within, the one that causes evasion and delay, should be recognised and confronted.

Gore's observations about the need for accountable use of development funds in the developing world are fair enough. However, once accountability has been established – both in the intentions of the sponsoring countries and in the control of project expenditure in the Two-thirds World – it is essential that a *balanced partnership relationship* between donors and recipients be observed, lest a neocolonialist pattern of interaction takes over, with all the negative implications of funding manipulation, alien control over natural resources in the developing world, and subtle forms of continued 'First' World enslavement of poor people in the Two-thirds World.

Another trend that needs to be dealt with is the counterproductive establishment of bureaucracies by development agencies in the sponsoring and sponsored countries. Some of these are proliferating institutions of the development elite, little 'kingdoms' whose upkeep absorbs an unwarranted percentage of the funds voted by governments for use in the developing world. Although such institutions are needed as monitoring links between governments and projects on the ground, they, too, need to be monitored and trimmed if the scarce funds are to benefit the earth community as intended.

Aware of the risk that sustained technological development will exacerbate environmental degradation still further, Gore nevertheless proposes the development and sharing of new technologies favourable to environmental recovery. To this end he suggests the establishment of a Strategic Environment Initiative (SEI), which will include tax incentives and research and development funding for new technologies, as well as appropriate assessment procedures for the replacement of old technologies by better ones. He also proposes 'the establishment of a network of training centers around the world, thus creating a core of environmentally educated planners and technicians and ensuring that the developing nations will be ready to accept environmentally attractive technologies and practices' (Gore 1992:320).

The idea of a global network of technological training centres is sound, provided the training programmes in the various regions are holistic. Subjects such as local environmental traditions, local cosmologies and

local spirituality should be developed and taught alongside technological courses and skills. For technologists to operate effectively as earth-keepers among the people, they will have to be conversant with and sympathetic to their deeper motivations and beliefs. If not, they could well be alienated from the people's liberation movements, however great their environmental and technological expertise. Technology is often a product of a mechanistic worldview which strengthens rather than reduces the illusion of human dominion over and separation from the earth. To prevent this aberration from being perpetuated at the envisaged technological training centres, integration or regular interaction with institutions such as ZIRRCON, F&E and other local religious institutions known for their ecological commitment should be encouraged.

NOTE

- 1 The party included Revd Elias Ngodela, Baptist minister and head of the government's Religious Desk in Mpumalanga Province (formerly Eastern Transvaal), Mr Gilbert Tombisa of the Bahàì Faith, Pretoria, Mr Lucky Ngale, chairperson of the Atteridgeville Community Development Programme, Revd Paf Mengwae of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, Mr Tony Abbott, prominent environmentalist in KwaZulu-Natal and member of the African Traditional Medicine and Herbalist Association, Ms Lesley Richardson of the WWF (SA) and Mr Paul Sochacqewski, head of Creative Development at WWF in Switzerland.

Epilogue

A strategic initiative to plant billions of trees throughout the world, especially on degraded lands, is one of the most easily understandable, potentially popular, and ecologically intelligent efforts on which the Global Marshall Plan should concentrate. The symbolism – and the substantive significance – of planting a tree has universal power in every culture and every society on earth, and it is a way for individual men, women and children to participate in creating solutions for the environmental crisis (Gore 1992:323).

ZIRRCO's war of the trees endorses Gore's vision for tree-planting. The message, conveyed by the written word and illustrated by the healing hands of African earthkeepers, is so deceptively simple that it is easy to miss but one which we cannot afford to ignore. The world needs billions of trees, not as a one-off achievement of the heroes of the green revolution but as an ongoing greening life style of all inhabitants of the global village: trees for their own sake, trees as a lifeline for living creatures on earth, trees as symbols of hope for a better future, trees as the embodiment of God's salvation, trees in whose rustling leaves and shade we perceive something of the peace of a new heaven and a new earth.

Africa alone needs billions of trees. It seems an unattainable goal considering the funds, time and effort it took ZIRRCO to plant and nurture only a few million trees – not to mention harsh weather conditions which often frustrate the most valiant attempts to nurture young trees in the soil. Nevertheless, every tree that grows and survives is a symbol of liberation, healing and achievement for the African poor.

The unfolding story of ZIRRCO provides a key to the mobilisation and empowerment of the peoples of Africa! Will this key be used to unlock the vast potential for human action in the healing of both the land and the people? Will the African Earthkeepers' Union take off and trigger sufficient momentum among African communities to escalate the green

revolution like a raging fire across the continent? I believe it is possible for this to happen, provided key figures in every African country and region enact the prophetic message of God's earthbound mission with unflinching commitment. It must happen, whatever obstacles are encountered, particularly the opposition of those who prioritise and isolate human progress, human survival, human development at the expense of the environment and claim that this is where all or the bulk of global development funds should be spent. After all, humans cannot survive without a healthy environment. We really have no alternative but to prioritise for immediate attention the entire earth community, worthy in its entirety of funding for purposes of nurture, healing and upliftment.

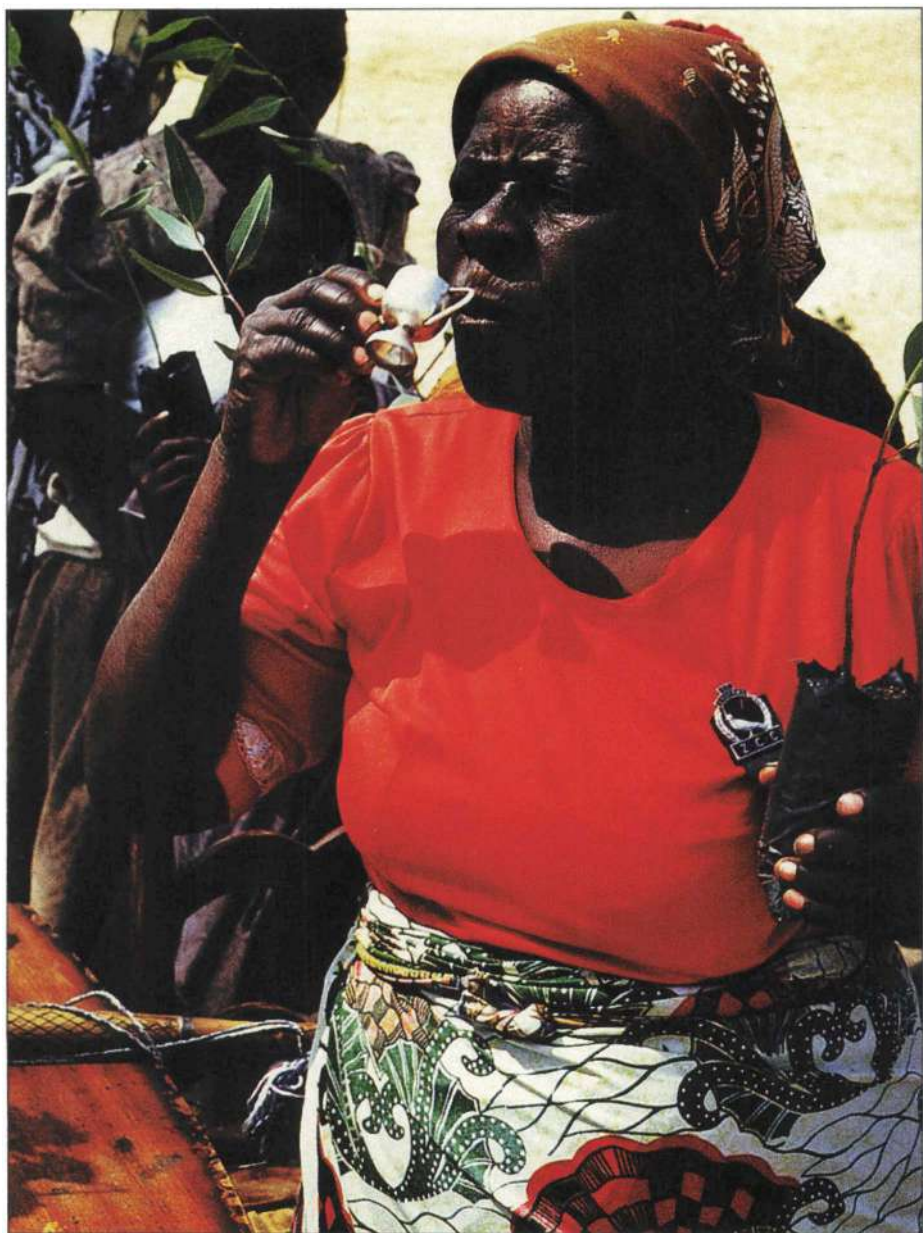
Our widened horizons start at home. Only if we Africans feel the agony of creation in our particular part of the world, and respond with new life styles of sacrificial earth stewardship, will we help to spread the good news of the greening of planet earth in the global village. This is part of God's mission to the world, for in Christ all things hold together.

Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God ...



Partake of this wine
the blood of Christ ...
And in sacramental union
find strength for earth-care

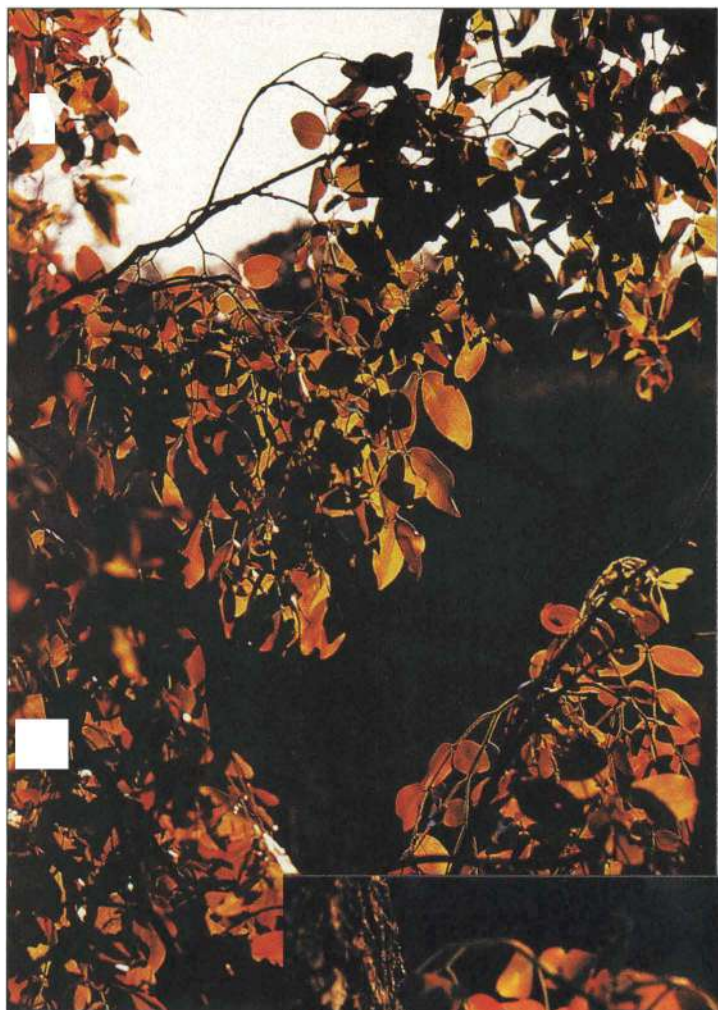




... For, in Christ
The head of our church
all things hold together



You, tree, my brother ... my sister
 today I plant you in this soil
 I shall give water for your growth
 Have good roots
 to keep the soil from eroding
 Have many leaves and branches
 so that we can breathe fresh air
 sit in your shade



At sunset
young *msasa* leaves
hesitate ...
as Spirit of life touch
even-breeze



AAEC tree-planting sermons in Spirit-type (prophetic) Independent Churches

1.1 Apostolic sermons

Tree-planting ceremony at the headquarters of the Chiratidzo ChavaPostori (Sign of the Apostles) Church, Zimuto district, 11 January 1991

Bishop Kindiam Wapendama: Peace to the believers! Let us pay attention to our book (the Bible). To those of us who want to follow the instructions contained in it, the book is our aunt (*vatete*). The book teaches clearly about good and evil deeds. Pay attention all of you, so that you can fully understand the message it conveys.

Reader: The heading of Hebrews 11 says: What is faith? People can succeed through faith.

Wapendama: It says people can conquer through faith. Peace to you, people of Mwari! There is a kind of faith which does not manifest itself in good works because it is overcome by sin. I often tell you that sin abounds in this world. This is so because there are people who reveal a spirit of evil and cruelty. Wherever they go they need to kill living things. That is truly sinful! You find people without any compassion for others. They scheme against others so as to place them in jeopardy through hatred. That too is sin! Someone thinks: 'Let me chop down as many trees as possible. When they have dried out I shall have plenty of firewood.' Now that is a terrible sin! Peace to you, people of God!

Reader: Hebrews 11:1: Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

Wapendama: People of Mwari, it says that faith concerns the things not

seen. Yet faith is strengthened by the signs we observe. We observe many signs in this world. In some areas where we have been we observed good and fertile lands. But now there are gullies which have devastated the land, gullies so deep that you cannot even enter them safely. That is truly a sign, a warning against evil. We have learnt that we have to avoid the sin of destroying the land. Peace to you, people of Mwari.

Reader: Hebrews 11:2: For by it the men of old received divine approval.

Wapendama: The people of old were commended for their good deeds. If they did not protect this land of ours, where do you think we would have been today? We would not have been here at all, because our forebears would have stripped the land completely, so that there would have been no soil for agriculture, no minerals left to mine. But because they thought of the children of tomorrow they protected the land, the environment. They did this so that we can live. So let us follow their example and heed the laws concerning good works. Then our young ones can preach and live according to the word of God. They, too, will avoid being cruel and destructive, for they will recognise that without faith nothing good can be built. The deeds of a person can always be observed. As I have told you, some people only destroy. Even if you have taken the trouble to plant trees you may find that someone has come in the night and chopped down all the trees.

You know that long ago there were not so many illnesses. Illness was prevented from taking hold because this land of ours was fully clad with grass and trees. The vegetation produced clean, healthy air which we could breathe freely and survive. Peace to those who believe! Nowadays the air is polluted. Fresh air no longer abounds. Even the trees are wondering how they can continue breathing. The result of this unhealthy situation is that we are all exposed to many diseases, such as TB, Aids and scabies. You find your body suddenly full of sores without knowing the cause. This situation arises because of the lack of trees covering the land. In the past there were many trees producing a perfume (he used this term) which you could smell. This was a sign of fresh air. But nowadays we no longer smell the perfume of those trees, or see them at all. It is a situation which causes us to be fearful. How are we going to succeed in clothing all the barren patches of earth which we have stripped bare?

Increasingly people have difficulty finding firewood. At Chiworesse, for instance, I have notice people burning thorn bushes for lack of proper firewood. Bearing this in mind, we face a great challenge to restore the earth. Our offspring will one day read in history books that we had no trees left, but that we did everything possible in our time to remedy the situation. You see, we shall pass away and others will follow us. They will want to know what works we did, whether we merely destroyed or built something valuable.

Reader: Hebrews 11:3: By faith we understand that the world was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was made out of things that do not appear.

Wapendama: The whole world was created and given order by Mwari through his laws. All people heard the commandments: Don't kill! Don't sin! Avoid evil and follow the righteous way! As I have said: avoid all cruelty! Someone arrives at another's house and out of sheer malice burns it down, together with the trees standing near it. The trees wither away and there is no peace. How can there be peace if such a thing happens?

The things we observe are made out of unseen things (v 3). Look at that large tree over there. Which of you know its age or saw it grow? There it stands. Our forefathers left it to serve as a sign (of the unseen) in this world. So today you still have its shade in which to rest. Peace to you, children of Mwari! Such trees hold a lesson. In some regions people recognise this and declare the trees holy. It is the same as that age-old tree over there on that plain. We call it *muti vehova* (the tree of the river, of water, ie a symbol of life). That tree is not to be felled or to be used as fuelwood. It is a sign to the young of something that has endured for ages. (It is a link with the past and represents respect for the history of the forebears.) It is a matter of joy to see these old trees. Likewise our offspring will remember us in the times to come when they observe the trees we have planted.

These old trees also remind us of the forests of the past. Nowadays the land is naked. The lightning strikes all over because there is no protective cover to avert it. The rains no longer fall regularly because the winds bringing the rain clouds have nowhere to come to a standstill. It blows and blows until all the clouds are gone, because there are no trees to hold it. Consequently the clouds yield rain elsewhere.

It is the same with you, a living person in this world. As the world dries up for lack of trees, you will eventually fail to breathe and then drop down ...

Reader: Hebrews 11:4: By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he received approval as righteous, God bearing witness by accepting his gifts; he died but through his faith he is still speaking.

Wapendama: It says that you Christians should do what is pleasing to God, that you should give back to this world what has been destroyed in it. Do not follow those (Cain) who strayed from Jehovah, but bring him a pleasing sacrifice! How pleasing will it be if you could all follow this teaching. We keep considering that our lives greatly depend on trees. Without trees we cannot breathe. The perfume (oxygen, air) of the trees enters our nostrils, so that we can breathe. We are so concerned with many things in this life which we consider necessary for our survival. But do we really notice the trees, there where they stand breathing in the bush? Is it not so that when the leaves of the indigenous trees start budding some of us feel it in our stomachs? What causes this? It is a matter of us feeling together with the trees and the budding leaves that the seasons are changing. A new kind of breathing, both for the leaves of the trees and for us, has arrived. Those leaves, through which we breathe, tell us through our stomachs of the arrival of another season. When their stomachs are upset, people wrongly think that it is caused by eating *mushamba* (leaf tips of cattle-melon plants, cooked like spinach). No! The real reason is changed breathing. We of the Spirit, we who work through the (Holy) Spirit, can distinguish this change. Even the cattle undergo this change.

In those areas where there are many trees this change is more pronounced. It is really a sign of good health, for in such areas the perfume of the trees is constantly in people's nostrils. Those who live in barren areas are less healthy; they tend to be thin, as their breathing process is affected.

Keep considering this message of the trees, all of you! First of all, trees provide us with fresh air to breathe. Trees therefore bring life. Second, trees bring rain. Third, trees prevent the formation of gullies, as they check the flow of water. But since the trees have been felled in great numbers and the plains are naked, people nowadays are wondering

whether the floodwaters are not the water of Noah of long ago (ie the waters of judgment).

In earlier years we did not see all these boreholes. Although the facility is very convenient, it seems as if the earth is being drained of water at the expense of the trees. The water drains away into the earth beyond reach. There is nothing to prevent its passage into the earth, for there are now insufficient tree roots to hold the underground water.

The situation all round will only improve as we restore the land with numerous trees. As the forests become plentiful once again, the people and all of creation will breathe properly. The wind will settle as before and bring enough rain. Sickness will subside in our communities. You will all see the change. Yet this is a formidable task. I *beseech you to place yourselves in the hands of Mwari. He alone can give us the strength to endure in this struggle.* He will strengthen us, together with his messengers (the ZIRRCON-AAEC team).

Mwari saw the devastation of the land. So he called his envoys to shoulder the task of deliverance. Come, you messengers of Mwari, come and deliver us! Together with you (the team of tree planters) we are now *the deliverers of the stricken land. Let us go forth and clothe, heal Mwari's stricken land.* This is not a task through which you can enrich yourselves. No! The deliverers were sent by God on a divine mission. He said: You, go to Africa, for the land is ravaged! Peace to you, people of Mwari. Deliverance, Mwari says, lies in trees, but in the first place the people have to obey. Mwari therefore sends his deliverers to continue here on earth with his own work, with all the work Jesus Christ started here. Jesus said: I leave you, my followers, to complete my work. And that task is the one of healing (all of creation – human beings and the environment)!

We are the followers of Jesus and have to continue his healing ministry. You are the believers who will see his miracles in this afflicted world. *So let us all fight, clothing the earth with trees!* Let us follow the example of the deliverers who were sent by Mwari. God gave this task to a man of his choice. Because this man responded, the task is proceeding as you can see for yourselves today.

It is *our* task to strengthen this *mission* with our numbers of people. You know how numerous we are. Sometimes we count ten thousand

people at our church meetings. If we work with enthusiasm we shall clothe the entire land with trees and drive off affliction (evil). We shall strengthen the hands of the deliverers because they were called to consider the whole of Zimbabwe. As we plant they will visit us and see the growing number of trees. They will bring the visitors from overseas who support this work. When they see the trees they will take heart and persevere.

In doing all this we still praise Mwari, for it is he who inspires and empowers us to accomplish this task. In whom do we do all this? In Mwari! May Jehovah bless you. Amen.

1.2 Tree-planting eucharist of the Chiratidzo ChavaPostori Church (Sign of the Apostles Church), Chivi district, 13 March 1992

Bishop Kindiam Wapendama: Peace to you, people of Mwari! I was not aware of the destruction caused by ground-nesting ants in Chivi. But I know now that if we do not heed the spirit of the adversary in our midst we shall be afflicted by illness. In the first place, we are here to attend tree-planting ceremonies in order to heal the barrenness plaguing our land. The young ones do not really know the different tree species any more. Neither do they know which species are threatened or extinct in their own areas. So we have a great task of promoting *afforestation* and protecting God's creation. I want to make you fully aware of the drastic nature of the environmental situation we are facing. We simply have no right to destroy God's creation, or to neglect that (the trees) which we have taken the trouble to cultivate. Things grow in nature because of God. But we cannot take it for granted. Mwari says: 'I have given trees in your midst. If you fail to plant and take care of the trees, I shall not create new ones any more.' Don't think that if you just fell trees (randomly) Mwari will simply create similar trees in their place. There will be no more trees!

You have no option but to plant trees, as we are doing today. There is no other way. Peace to those who believe in him! Let us heed this message today; each one of us, let us spread the word in our families, namely that uncontrolled tree felling must stop, that trees are sacred.

We have gone to a great deal of trouble over this issue. Since 1985 I

have hardly smelt the perfume of flowers, those purple and yellow ones. Which of you have seen any wild flowers around here? There are none! Why? Because we have destroyed them all. Our children do not even know such flowers. They only know the colour green, the colour of trees. But the purple, pink, yellow and red flowers they do not recognise. We have destroyed the colours ... Now read from our book!

Reader: The heading of Acts 20 says that Paul is instructing the elders of Ephesus.

Wapendama: Likewise I instruct you, the elders of Zimbabwe, and the elders of this district.

Reader: Acts 20:22: And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

Wapendama: I thank Jehovah that he sent his Spirit to enter Prof Muchakata Daneel, causing him to dream and receive power to mobilise the struggle against environmental destruction. You, Prof Daneel, have received the Holy Spirit who works in you the love for this task. Mwari tells you: 'Proceed! I'll give you strength!' Truly, I have seen that all people will be drawn into this struggle, for Jehovah gives you strength. He has given you and all of us present these hands to work with. So let us work! Our labour will be a sign in this world which will induce our children to follow suit in the years to come. They will praise their parents as wise people and they will not have to travel to other countries to see forests. Right now you cannot afford a red mahogany (*mukamba*) door, even if you wanted one. There are hardly any left in this district. You have felled them all. Besides, you cannot afford one nowadays, for they cost \$1 000 dollars each.

Reader: Acts 20:33: I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel.

Wapendama: Sure, he (Paul) did not covet other people's silver or gold, he only wanted all people to lead good lives. Just look at the dried and lifeless land around you. *I believe that we can change it.* Because we are repairing the damage and are doing penance for our guilt of land destruction, God will heed our wish and give us plentiful rain. Yet we still confront the problem of unchecked winds because of treeless plains. Without cover the winds simply flatten our houses. Read on!

Reader: Acts 20:34: You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities, and to those who were with me.

Wapendama: You all know that these hands of ours have contributed to rectifying a situation of deprivation. Hopefully our work will cause these (*mukamba*, red mahogany) trees to grow to maturity. Let our hands bring about a valuable inheritance for our children, so that they can teach the people of other countries. I am sure some of them will in time become doctors (specialists) of trees. But if we don't plant the trees, with what will they heal? These trees indeed have many purposes. We Christians know that we find the comfort of shade under the trees. The birds find safe places in the branches to build their nests. The hospitals find medicines for all kinds of ailments. Now, with these trees, the hospitals will not fail. We can breathe fresh air because of the trees. In the absence of trees there can only be polluted air, because the trees filter the air. Those tree flowers which cleanse the winds will no longer function if all the trees are felled. Therefore our exercise here today is one of instruction, as well as strengthening our visitors here today, encouraging them to remain steadfast in their striving for a better environment.

In addition I am resolved that in this area with its dams I shall take the responsibility for planting many more trees. I tell you, Mwari will give us plentiful rains because we are paying for that vengeful spirit (*ngozi*) which we have provoked through tree destruction. As we pay to appease the *ngozi*, the damage is repaired. As yet we have merely started the struggle. Let us proceed by creating forests right round all the dams in this area and so protect our water resources and prevent soil erosion. Don't turn a blind eye to this serious problem. God has given us hands to mend the earth. Look for yourselves, use your eyes and then respond to God's command. Let there be obedience from our side, harmony between eyes and hands. Having planted the trees, let us also provide the aftercare lest the trees die. Go and teach your children far and wide that trees must be planted all over: at schools, around dams and in gullies. I myself do not want to see a single patch of barren soil, because the water simply comes and carries it away. Even if you dig for water in barren areas, you will find nothing because all the shade has gone and the soil is dried out. In all this let us recognise the prompting of our eternal saviour! Amen.

1.3 Administering the tree-planting eucharist

Wapendama: Now we thank the son of man who has given us all this through the Holy Spirit, for us to accomplish this task. Let us start by considering his word.

Reader: The heading of Matthew 26 says that the message concerns the *paseka* and eucharist. Matthew 26:17–18: Now on the first day of the unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying: ‘Where will you have us prepare for you to eat the passover?’ He said: ‘Go into the city to a certain one and say to him, “The teacher says, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at your house with my disciples.”’

Wapendama: It says that we here today have a similar arrangement to the one Jesus had. We arranged that we should come here with the Christian disciples so that in remembrance (of Christ) we can conduct our tree-planting ceremony.

Reader: Matthew 26:19: And the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the passover.

Wapendama: They prepared the *paseka*. Likewise you here have prepared the *paseka* and we have seen it prepared. Our visitors, too, have seen your preparations.

Reader: Matthew 26:20-26 (v 26): Now as they were eating Jesus took bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to the disciples and said, ‘Take, eat; this is my body.’

Wapendama: He gave the bread to his followers, reminding them: ‘This is my body.’

Reader: Matthew 26:27–28: And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them saying, ‘Drink of it all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.’

Wapendama: This blood of mine was poured for you so that all your sins of felling trees and killing God’s living creatures can be forgiven.

Reader: Matthew 26:29: ‘I tell you I shall not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew with you in my father’s kingdom.’

Wapendama: It says that he did not proceed but left matters as they were, having given instructions to his disciples how *they* should proceed until they met him again. Likewise we leave you here today to complete the tasks you are given. If you neglect this responsibility of yours and allow things (the trees planted) to waste away, you will really be in trouble, as you have been given clear instructions what to do. And what are the instructions in this case? To guard over the world and all the created things of God. Peace to those who believe in him!

Reader: The heading of prophet Ezekiel 36:25 says that the Israelites are blessed. The verse reads as follows: 'I will sprinkle clean water upon you and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness, and from all your idols I will cleanse you.'

Wapendama (prays over holy water in a container, then sprinkles the water over the land and seedlings as he moves around): I sprinkle this cleansed water, over which I have prayed, over the soil. You, Jehovah, God of righteousness, I believe that you will bless this water and this entire place. I sprinkle this blessed water so that Jehovah can be seen in this place where he will guide his work. I also sprinkle this holy soil in the knowledge that it will be fed by rain and that the soil will thus receive the trees properly.

Reader: Ezekiel 36:26–29: A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

And I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses; and I will summon the grain and make it abundant and lay no famine upon you.

Wapendama: Indeed, I shall summon the maize harvest in your lands and I shall not burden you with drought and famine. (This was a powerful statement of faith in a period of severe drought early in 1992.)

Reader: Ezekiel 36:30: I will make the fruit of the tree and the increase of the field abundant, that you may never again suffer the disgrace of famine among the nations.

Wapendama: I shall give you an abundant harvest of grain from your fields and fruit from your trees, so that you shall not be put to shame among the nations because of your neglect of your land, and that of Jesus. Amen.

Participants take bread and wine, each holding a tree in his/her hands; afterwards the trees are planted in God's acre.

1.4 Zionist ceremonies

1.4.1 Tree-planting eucharist at Bishop Mupure's Zion Christian Church of St Aaron, Zaka district, 1 February 1992

Bishop Reuben Marinda (combining spontaneous preaching and tree-planting liturgy): Peace to the holy ones of Mwari! We are happy today with our tree-planting eucharist. This ceremony starts off with our confessing our sins of destruction, as we have deforested this entire region. Here at the village of Mazhambe in the ward of headman Murerekwa, the leader of St Aaron's church has committed himself to a work of restitution: replacing the trees which have been felled by the members of this community. The people here say: 'Indeed, we have no trees left. As a result our water supplies have diminished.'

Now I shall read *our tree-planting liturgy* which reminds us of the evil of uncontrolled tree felling.

I have been given the duty by the creator to keep the Lord's acre where God planted his trees. The creator said: 'These trees in the Lord's acre will be your brothers, your sisters, your friends. Mwari said: 'Your friends the trees will sustain you and provide all the things you need.'

They will provide you with shade
to protect you from the heat of the sun.
They will give you fruit for you to lead healthy lives.
These trees will clothe the barren earth
(*For full text of liturgy see p 365.*)

Before we proceed with our liturgy let us read and consider Genesis 2:15-17.

Reader: It says in our book: 'Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, 'You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.''

Marinda: Peace to you! It says that God placed man in the garden to

work it and take care of it. But man did not obey God's commandment. Instead, he violated God's law. The devil used man to rebel against God and creation. Man became an enemy by cutting down all the trees. As a result the weather patterns of the entire world changed. Man became the destroyer of the rain forests, the killer of the world's ecosystems.

So today we confess to you, our God, our sins of wantonly chopping down trees. We confess our abuse of creation; sins which have caused us to lose good pasture for our cattle and fertile topsoil for our crops. Bad farming methods brought this about. Today the cattle are feeding on soil, oh Lord, because there is no grass. God, you are punishing us with severe drought because we have denuded the land. Look, the rivers are dried up and all the fish have gone, because we cut away all the vegetation on the riverbanks, causing the riverbeds to fill up with sand. People are dying every day because they breathe polluted air. There are no trees to clear the air polluted by smoke from our factories. The trees are our friends who eat the poisoned air and give us fresh air to breathe in return. The clean air gives us life!

Reader: Colossians 1:16–17: For in him (Christ) all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities, all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things and in him all things hold together.

Marinda: There are millions of creatures which we cannot even see with our naked eyes. We only observe them with the aid of microscopes. All these beings were created by God. Because we need order everyone must submit to the governing authority, such as those we see here today. Here we have the village headman Mr Mazhambe, and the headman Mr Murerekwa. These people were given authority by God, for there is no authority other than that established by God. Those who disobey such authority are rebelling against God and will bring judgment on themselves. We rebel against God by not keeping the environment as God instructed us. The devil is at war with God and the devil is using people to destroy all of creation. This drought which has brought untold suffering to our people, to the animals, the fish in the water and the birds in the air, is God's judgment on the environmental sins we have committed. Let us all confess our sins, so that our sins through the love of God in Christ may be forgiven.

In Jesus Christ all things hold together, it says in Colossians 1:17. He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning of all creation and he reigns supreme. God reconciled all things in heaven and on earth with himself through Christ. Christ is Lord over all creation. He works salvation for humankind because humans are the crown of creation. *Humans in turn have the duty to extend salvation to all of creation* (as Christ's co-workers) .

If we look at the history of sin offerings in the Old Testament, we are told that each person had to bring an animal or bird to be offered at the Tent of Meeting before the Lord. The priest had to burn these sacrificial animals on a wood fire on the altar of burnt offerings. This was in fact a cruel practice, because many animals and birds had to die for the iniquities of humankind. Trees were felled in great numbers to provide firewood for the burnt offerings. Christ came as the last offering, to forgive the sins of the entire world. Through his death on the cross he saved the animals, the birds and the trees. So he saves his entire creation! The plan of God's salvation of humankind through Jesus Christ included the salvation of all creation.

1.4.2 Liturgy

The holy communion of which we partake today introduces us to the new eucharist of tree planting.

On the night Jesus was betrayed he took bread, broke it, and said: 'This is my body, which is for you. Eat it in remembrance of me.'

Then he took the cup of wine, saying:

'This is the new covenant in my blood; whenever you drink it, remember me.' For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Jesus one day went down to Capernaum with his mother, brothers and disciples.

It was about time for the Jewish passover.

In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves. These were to be used as sin offerings.

When Jesus heard the lowing and bleating he knew the poor creatures were crying to be saved from the cruel merchants – they who had turned God's holy dwelling into a marketplace of debauchery.

So Jesus made a whip out of cords and lashed the corrupt merchants until they fled.

He saved the animals and birds from the cruel fate that awaited them. Christ came to save all creation.

Through his blood, the animals, the birds, the trees were saved.

Since then, in the new covenant, people no longer bring live sin offerings to have their sins forgiven.

Our eucharist of tree planting symbolises Christ's salvation of all creation, for in him all things hold together.

Let us celebrate this eucharist with humble hearts, confessing our wanton tree felling without replacing any in return.

There was war in heaven, says the Bible.

Michael and his angels fought the devil and his angels.

The devil lost his position in heaven.

He was hurled down,

that ancient serpent called Satan,

he who leads the whole world astray

Rejoice, you who dwell in heaven,

but woe to the earth and the sea

for the devil has gone down to you.

He is filled with fury

for his time is short.

So the devil is deceiving the whole world causing man to fight creation.

Possessed by the demon

man is destroying nature's beauty.

All living things suffer –

the trees, the animals, water.

It shall continue until man erases all life on earth.

If we continue to kill the trees we hurt ourselves.

At the end of the world,

when the world is ultimately destroyed

it will be the doing of man

You all know our African custom.

If a person kills another the deceased rises as *ngozi*

against the murderer and his family to settle the matter.

Restitution is needed.

Mutumbu (literally 'body') of cattle must be paid for the body of the deceased.

Relatives of the one turned *ngozi* receive the *mutumbu* cattle.

Their sacrifice causes the spirit to rest

and the two families to be united in peace.

So today we have brought these trees

as *mutumbu* payment for the trees we have destroyed.

This is the only way we can seek forgiveness for having caused the nakedness of the land

(Then follows the blessing of the Lord's acre with holy water and soil.)

1.4.3 Tree-planting ceremony at Bishop Machokoto's Zion Apostolic Church in Masvingo district, 15 March 1992

Bishop Machokoto (AAEC president): Peace to all of you! All things that you see here today were created by God. He knows why he created them. We have no right to kill anything created by God, not even an ant. Let me give you an example, that of a dung beetle. It is a very good creature. God placed it in a world where there were no toilets. This beetle is not lazy at all. It collects the faeces of human beings and the droppings of animals, then buries them in the soil. So God created it for a specific purpose, that of clearing the filth and making the soil fertile.

Today we have gathered to fight the war of the trees. We are confessing to God, saying: 'We have cut down your trees in ignorance. Today we are replacing that which we have destroyed.' When we consider a tree, we know that first of all it represents fuelwood. Trees are of the first order. They are the whip (that cracks to draw instant attention). They are medicine. Do you understand what I say? It means: *the tree is life!* If we build a house with poles we know that the entire family has shelter, has life. Without trees there is no life, for the air we breathe comes from trees. We in this area are fortunate to enjoy good health. That is because trees abound and we breathe clean air. People who live in the territories of chiefs Murinye, Chikwanda and Nyakunuwa do not suffer many illnesses. They breathe the clean air of forests which are still plentiful.

Both God and the government encourage us to plant trees. We are pro-

hibited from felling trees, unless there is a justifiable purpose for doing so. We, the churches, are now united in action in this war of the trees – ourselves preventing tree felling. We operate together under the name of the AAEC, which means that we are the protectors of all created things. Prof Daneel started this organisation. Under the name of Muchakata (wild cork tree) he worked out a battle strategy, based on the unity of our black churches. See for yourselves the unity we share. Here we have Mr Chinovuriri of the Dutch Reformed Church. There is a representative of the Roman Catholic Church, and over there a minister of the African Methodist Church. Add to that all our Zionist churches congregated here today. We are bound in battle to plant and not to fell trees. Peace to you all!

In the Bible we are told to *love* one another. It says that love manifests itself in deeds. It originates in God. If you love a person created by God you know God. Love means to respond positively when your help is requested. Love requires *holiness* if we are to really care for each other. Peace to you! Without holiness no love will last. We have to heed Colossians 3:1, where it says that if we have been raised with Christ we should seek the things that are above where Christ is ...

When the Apostle Paul arrived at Corinth he found conflict among the believers. It is the same with us. We bicker saying: I am not of bishop Machokoto, not of bishop Makamba, neither Madekwana nor Mageza. Today Paul says: 'Was Mageza crucified on the cross for you, was Machokoto?' In I Corinthians 1:10 Paul appeals to the believers to stop their squabbling and become fully united. Was Machokoto crucified for you? No. The Bible talks of only one saviour who died on the cross, so that there can be salvation for all creation, freedom in the world. The Bible tells us that the council of heaven assembled to decide who was going to die for the sins of the world. First the council thought of Abraham. They said: 'It is good for Abraham's son to die for the sins of the world. After all we gave him the promised son Isaac, who could be sacrificed at Mount Sinai.' But then they thought better of it, realising that flesh cannot die for flesh (an ordinary human being cannot atone for others). I, Machokoto, cannot die for the people. The heavenly council therefore decided that spirit should die for flesh. They decided to send their son, Jesus Christ, to come and die for our sins.

Because of this decision we are new people. The old things have

passed. In 2 Corinthians 5:17 we read that if we are in Christ we are made new. Once we have passed through Jordan (been baptised) the old things are left behind. We used to hate, bewitch and be jealous of each other. But all these things are no longer known among true believers.

Gone, too, is the attitude which says: 'I cannot worship with so-and-so, because I belong to so-and-so.' For Christ who was crucified for us, was one person. In him we are united. All of you who are here did not come to worship Machokoto or Mageza. Together we worship one Christ, he who forgave the sins of the Jews, the Greeks, the black people and the white people. He is the king of kings, the one who reconciles all people and nations. Blessed therefore are the conciliators, the peacemakers for they shall be called the sons of God (Mt 5:9). Peace to you!

Reader: Colossians 3:1: Set your hearts on things above.

Machokoto: If you have been raised with Christ, do not set your hearts on the things of this world. Set your hearts on the things of heaven. The son of God is sitting on the right hand of God. It is this attitude which finds expression in our meeting today.

Where do you think we would have found food for all our guests? (SATV crew was present; hence more whites than at other AAEC gatherings.) But they don't mind, because they were drawn here by the love of God. These white people mix with us without constraint, as if we are their own people. I thank all of you congregated here that you received our white guests like you own family; like *vazukuru* (sister's sons), fathers and grandmothers.

In the Bible it says we are all one, because we are now new creatures. There is no more Jew, Greek, black or white. We are all one house, one family! I am happy that they (the whites) came and ate with us in our houses. Peace be with you!

1.4.4 Bishop Chimhangwa's sermon at tree-planting eucharist at Machokoto's ZAC headquarters, Masvingo district, 15 March 1992

Bishop Chimhangwa: Peace to you all! We are all very happy to be united here today with fellow believers and townspeople. I fully endorse

what bishop Machokoto has said: if you say that you love God but hate your brother, you are a liar. How can you know God if you still hate others? Your pride and conceit will not save you from the wrath of God. Keep watch, because you do not know the time when the son of man comes. He may be coming at night.

Fathers and mothers, we should all consider the reason for our presence here. We are here because of Christ. If a person does not know that he or she is in Christ, the full reason for that person's presence here is not understood. Hatred and gossip must go!

Reader: Colossians 3:1: Since, then, you were raised with Christ ...

Chimhangwa: Peace to you all! Because we were buried and raised with Christ, we seek to do the will of God. It means that we unite in love, because Bishop Machokoto is father to all of us! Bishop Mageza is our father – to all of us! Bishop Andreas Shoko (a pioneer of Zionism in Zimbabwe) is our father – to all of us! Peace to all of you!

Let us together consider our task of tree planting. I am talking about the trees we plant here today. Two days ago we conducted a tree-planting eucharist in Chivi district (near Bishop Chimhangwa's headquarters). We are indeed faced with a very serious situation (both drought and deforestation). Revd Marinda told us that we are planting trees to appease the avenging *ngozi* spirit, the evil spirit which has risen against us (causing drought) because of our mindless felling of trees. We are planting these trees to remedy the situation, to compensate for our wrongdoing. We committed a crime before God, one which requires confession. We all know that each of us has a special axe at our homesteads, sharpened and kept for tree felling only. So all of us are guilty of the crime of deforestation. Many of us simply fell trees without considering the consequences.

So, today we plant trees as an *act of reconciliation* between us and all creation, in Jesus Christ. We thank him for his atonement, which makes this act of reconciliation possible.

You heard that there is conflict and hatred among the churches, which caused our hearts not to meet. But Jesus said: 'No! There is no Jew or Greek. There is no bondage or slavery left. All people are free.' Because of this we are free to call on all people to be involved in tree planting. We of the churches must cooperate with the VIDCOs, the WADCOs

(local government structures), the chiefs and the headmen. As God is the source of the chiefs' authority, they must be informed of all our (earthkeeping) activities.

I address you on the subject of trees as the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah did.

Reader: Jeremiah 14:1-2: The word of the Lord which came to Jeremiah during the drought: Judah mourns and her gates languish; her people lament on the ground, and the cry of Jerusalem goes up.

Chimhangwa: In this country of ours the president and all the MPs are desperate for rain. They say: 'What shall we do?'

Reader: Jeremiah 14:3: Her nobles send their servants for water; they come to the cisterns, they find no water, they return with their vessels empty; they are ashamed and confounded and cover their heads.

Chimhangwa: Last night I woke up and asked my wife, 'Why are you making such a noise?' She said, 'I want to go to the cistern to see if there is any water. Perhaps I shall find a little.'

In some places people rise at four o'clock in the morning, sometimes without finding a drop of water. So wherever and whoever we are, we have to pray for rain. Do not say: 'Oh well, I am too young' or 'I am a woman'. No! We never know which prayer God is going to answer. Let us kneel down and pray for rain, for the people go to the cisterns and return with empty containers.

Reader: Jeremiah 14:4: Because the land is cracked because of lack of rain the farmers are ashamed; they cover their heads.

Chimhangwa: My wife asked me whether we could grind the 50 kilograms of mealies which we had bought for planting into meal. She did this because we could not find mealie meal anywhere. That same day minister Musika was at our village to assess the drought situation. The famine is now so bad that the tortoises have started climbing the trees (idiomatic expression, a desperate situation).

I want to advise you who have planted trees here today to save some water for the trees, our friends. In times gone by people also had to face droughts. Others also went to the cisterns to find them empty. We ploughed our lands and planted our maize and groundnuts. But there are no crops. Is that not a painful experience? If God was a person,

don't you think I was going to question him about this? Ah! It is impossible to question God! Peace to you, people of the Lord.

I believe the trees planted today will be well cared for. When we come here again in the future we shall be given fruit to eat. (Several fruit trees were planted in Bishop Machokoto's orchard.)

Reader: Romans 1:9: I mention you always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God's will I may now at least succeed in coming to you ...

Chimhangwa: There you are, my friends. The AAEC president, Bishop Machokoto, and the general secretary, Bishop Marinda, visited us in Chivi and asked us to come. Now I respond as the apostle did to the Romans. We shall keep visiting you and pray for you so that you can have courage to persevere in the war of the trees. Let us continue planting more and more trees, also taking care of them through regular watering. I thank you all.

1.4.5 Revd Sauro Masoro's sermon at Bishop Machokoto's tree-planting eucharist, 15 March 1993

Revd Masoro: Peace to all of you! The gospel we preach here today belongs to Mwari because he is the creator of all things. First he created the earth, then he created the trees and animals. Thereafter he created human beings, placing them amongst the trees. Human beings had the task of looking after all the vegetation. Peace to you all! We shall first of all consider the message of Genesis 2:8. We have to be quite clear on the issue of trees. Without them we cannot survive. Here, while we worship under this *muchakata* tree, it provides air for us to breathe. The same tree absorbs the polluted air that we breathe out. It means that we and the *muchakata* tree are one! This we did not heed before. We took the creation story for granted without realising the interdependence of humans and plant growth. Yet if we ponder creation, it is significant that God made a garden before he created humankind.

Reader: Genesis 2:8: And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed.

Masoro: Peace to all of you! Listen carefully to God's word. Mwari planted trees in a garden in the east, then placed the humans he had created

in the garden so that they could breathe fresh air deriving from the trees. They in turn had to look after the garden. It is God who made man from the soil, forming him in his own image, then breathing *mweya* (life-giving spirit) into him. Today it is still like that. When I die people can still see my body, but they say the person, *munhu*, has gone. It is the spirit placed in the body by Mwari which departs when death sets in.

Reader: Genesis 2:9: And out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden ...

Masoro: Peace to you. The *muchakata* fruit that we eat from this tree you see here is medicine which heals us. The *mutamba* fruit we eat is medicine to us which heals us. Even if we eat a mango, guava or orange, it is still healing medicine to us. In the distant past when we did not yet have all these (exotic) species of fruit the illness of scabies abounded. There was no proper cure. But nowadays we are healed by mangoes, pawpaws, oranges and bananas.

Reader: Ezekiel 31:8: The heading says that God likens Egypt to a cedar tree. Verse 8 reads: 'The cedars in the garden of God could not rival it, nor the fir trees equal its boughs ... no tree in the garden of God was like it in beauty.'

Masoro: It says that the splendour of Egypt is compared to cedar trees. A country with many trees prospers. If it is treeless it becomes a barren landscape of little value. Progress is seen in forests or in marshlands with many copses of trees (*matenhere*).

The Israelites complained to Moses that he alone was conversing with Mwari. They, too, wanted to communicate directly with God. So God said: 'Let them wash and prepare themselves before we converse.' But God did not speak out on the open plains. Whenever he spoke he was hidden in a copse of trees (*denhere*). And the people had to lie prostrate in his presence. This shows that the tree and the human being are one!

The tree of God (Egypt) described in Ezekiel 31:8 was not an ordinary tree. Likewise, we here today are the trees of God. We are not really trees but we are likened to trees.

Reader: Ezekiel 31:9: I made it beautiful in the mass of its branches;

and all the trees of Eden envied it, that were in the garden of God.

Masoro: Yes, the human being is like a wonderful tree with huge branches. It reminds us that we are the branches in Christ, as described in John 15.

Reader: John 15:1: Jesus says: I am the true vine.

Masoro: Yes, Jesus says I am the true vine and my Father is the gardener who has made the garden of Eden. He made the tree of life, meaning Jesus, so that we, too, can have life by being in Jesus.

Reader: John 15:2: Every branch of mine that bears no fruit, he takes away, and every branch that bears fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

Masoro: Are these green branches of the *muchakata* tree not bearing fruit? Are we not like these green branches right here where we are congregated? Through Jesus we are green branches bearing fruit, not dead wood to be removed.

Reader: John 15:3: You are already made clean by the word I have spoken to you.

Masoro: We cannot bear fruit if we are not in Christ, the true vine. If we do not go and ask for tree seedlings to plant we shall not have the trees which heal and clean us. For our well-being as believers and for our physical health, let us fetch the trees and plant them at our homesteads, ridding ourselves in the process of scabies.

God help us. Amen.

AAEC tree-planting sermons in Ethiopian-type (non-prophetic) Independent Churches

1.1 Shonganiso mission (African Reformed Church) sermon

1.1.1 Tree-planting ceremony at Revd Zvobgo's Shonganiso Mission in Masvingo district, 13 December 1990

Revd Mandondo (senior minister of the ARC) directed the proceedings:

Prayer: Our Father, we thank you today that we can appear here in your presence. We are thankful that you have given us the strength on this good day to come and perform this wonderful task, the task which you yourself performed with your own hands. Now, our Father, please place your hands on these trees of yours which we are about to plant. Guide us so that it will be as if our hands are your hands, the hands (signs) that you left us here on earth. You left us the mountains, the trees, the rivers, the fountains from which to drink water. Up to this day they are all still there. We, too, are encouraged to plant trees today which we hope will grow and last forever, and that under your guidance. You are the one who will water these trees (with rain) and who will make them grow. Strengthen those who teach us about tree planting and teach us all to do your work. Forever, amen.

Sermon: Let us start by considering how trees came into existence. If we look at Genesis I we learn that Mwari created all things. And among the things he created were the trees. According to Genesis 1:11 God said, 'Let the earth put forth vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its own kind upon the earth.' So, it is clear that at the beginning God produced the trees, grass and all kinds of vegetation. Subsequently human beings became involved in planting trees in many different ways. Even the government nowadays is planting trees, sending out its ministers and mem-

bers of parliament to encourage people to direct such activity.

The trees contain (produce) fresh air, which we require for breathing. Of this the government is aware. Hence its attempt to restore the land, so that it can be as good and healthy as it was originally. Over the past ten years the government has made some attempts. Today we have Prof Daneel and his supporters here on a similar mission. Once I attended a ZINHATA meeting where the importance of trees – mainly for the medicines of *nganga* practitioners – was emphasised. Long ago, they said, it was possible for some *nganga* to cure barrenness with medicines from plants. Many diseases were in fact effectively treated, witchcraft attacks were properly counteracted and the people survived. It was Mwari who created all plants with a purpose, namely to aid human beings to overcome their tribulations.

According to our Christian faith Mwari created and ordered all creation. He told the waters to move aside, thus causing dry land and the oceans to come into existence. To cover the barren land God created vegetation and trees. So he is the one who first planted trees. He is the one who gave the trees life and strength to grow. He made the trees his children. We human beings, in our turn, are the inheritors of this garden, this *kingdom of God* consisting of trees and animals. Inheriting this kingdom means that we are responsible for the continuation of the work God started. We say that as Christians we are the inheritors, belonging to God. If we are serious about this claim, it means that we, too, are children of God and as such have to proceed with the task of planting trees and taking care of living things. Genuine inheritors are stewards of the land.

If you look at Luke 23:43 you find that Jesus told the one man next to him on the cross: 'Today you will be with me in paradise.' This tells us something about Jesus's power over us children of God. As a messenger from heaven he came to empower us. Whatever we do as believers depends on this power from on high, the power of heaven. No work that we do can be complete without God's *approval* and his *empowerment*. About this we can be sure: God planted trees. If we, too, plant trees God's power from heaven will strengthen us and our efforts will succeed. Without his power our labours will be futile. No trees will be planted.

How can we determine whether we are doing all this as the will of God

and that we can count on his supportive strength? We read in Exodus 2:3 that God wanted to speak to Moses. So he sent an angel who addressed Moses from a bush. That means the angel was in a tree while communicating with Moses. After God had made an agreement with Moses, he broke a branch off the tree and carved Moses a staff. This staff was the sign of the agreement God had made with Moses. It represents God's power. In the wars that were to come Moses always held this staff – which God had prepared from a tree – in his hands. There were actually two staffs. One was for Aaron. With these staffs all the wars were won.

The first war Moses faced was the crossing of the Red Sea, when the Israelites were desperate to escape from the Egyptians. The trumpets of the Egyptian army could be heard and the Israelites were trapped. They were caught on the banks of the Red Sea. But Moses held out his staff over the waters, and the waters feared the staff made of a tree and separated this way and that, leaving a dry road in between. That is where Moses and the Israelites entered and passed through. God saw that Moses needed something (concrete, visible) to work with – a sign of their agreement. So God chose a tree. First he spoke to Moses from a tree, then he gave Moses a staff from a tree. This indeed emphasises the significance of trees.

There was also the time when Zacchaeus (Lk 19), out of sheer eagerness to see Jesus, climbed a wild fig tree. In that way he succeeded. If there had been no fig tree, Zacchaeus would not have seen Jesus and their meeting would not have taken place. Once again we notice the significance of trees in the relationship between God and human beings. Thus, as God is the creator of trees, you children of God (as inheritors of God's kingdom) should also take on the task of planting trees. Do this in order to restore the damage done by the enemies of creation!

If we really think about Scripture, the importance of trees is only too apparent. It is on the wood of a tree that Jesus was crucified. He had two convicts on crosses next to him, one on each side. The one rebuked the other when he was scoffing at Jesus and said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom' (Lk 23:42). And Jesus said to him, 'Today you will be with me in paradise.' We know that paradise is a garden of fruit trees, a place of many trees. It says in the Bible that when God created man, he did not build him a house.

Does it say there that houses were built in the garden of Eden? No, the Bible says only that the first human beings were placed in the garden. God said: 'Live there among the trees. Eat the fruit of trees.' What did they eat to survive? The fruit of trees, of course! Were they worried about the rising prices of fruit? No! They simply picked fruit from the trees and ate. Then they went to the river and drank water until they had their fill. Mwari saw that people could stay alive because of trees.

When Jesus conducted holy communion for his disciples he used wine made from grapes. We know that in the kingdom of heaven we shall partake of wine made of grapes. Where does the food of heaven come from? It is picked off the grapevine! And what will you do if you hear that the *mupfura* (marula tree) also stands in the new garden? You will not fell it or allow anybody else to do so. So what do we do about people chopping down mango trees and *mishuku* (wild loquat)? What does the Bible say? Jesus said, we eat the fruit of trees. Yet we fell the fruit trees. Ultimately, however, we will not be able to escape our responsibility for the trees. It is simply that we are not used to this stewardship. When confronted with the responsibility our consciences will accuse us and we will have to obey. It is a matter of adapting to the things done and ordered by the Lord. We must simply get used to tree stewardship.

The correct thing for us to do, therefore, is to go out and plant different species of trees: fruit trees and trees for the forests. When we want to plant fruit trees, we don't plant teak. How can you expect to pick mangoes or guavas off teak trees? So we have to be clear about our objectives whenever we plant trees.

If we want to be the children of Mwari, let us shoulder the task we have been given. God wanted to build a good relationship with Adam. So he said: 'This man must live without undue suffering. Let him live in peace. If he suffers hunger he will be in trouble.' So God placed him in a garden of fruit trees where he could find fruit at all times and rejoice in abundance. Those were God's plans. Eventually man also ate the meat of animals, but the fruit came first. Therefore, people of God, let us plant trees!

Let us consider the situation we are now facing. Whenever someone is given a site for a homestead and new gardens he starts sharpening his axe, saying: 'Let me chop out all those trees.' As a result the entire countryside has become barren. The trees are all gone. There is no

shelter left for poultry. The hawks simply swoop down and take them as if there were no people around. Among the homesteads there are no shade trees any longer. This situation is not acceptable at all. There is no protection against strong winds. How can you hold back the force of the wind if there are no trees to restrain it? But meanwhile those with new sites where there are still forests do not heed the threat of deforestation. They simply sharpen their axes and commence felling trees.

We have to remedy the situation ourselves. From today on each adult should consider making every one of their children plant two, three or more trees annually. They will soon be proud, saying to each other: 'Look, I have a wonderful plantation of trees. I had no trouble finding poles for my cattle kraal.' You Christians, we are confronted with this serious task of God. Let us be united in our efforts, not shirking our responsibility. For if we don't heed God's command we shall be judged. He will say: 'You have destroyed the earth. You have refused to consider my wishes. Consequently my land is now barren and ashamed.'

So the task is ahead of us. We accept it. If we dedicate ourselves we shall succeed and accomplish this task, just as Mwari did himself. You will see the miracles of Mwari if you persevere. Up in the mountains I can see Mwari. In the rocks and the trees I see Mwari. There his strength and his works are revealed. If you go to Mount Selinda you will be shown trees called *miti mikuru* (tall trees). Whose strength do those massive trees reveal? Mwari's, of course. There you will witness God's work. His work is clearly seen in the things he has created. Follow the rivers and observe the running waters. Whose work do you think it is? Mwari's! But the works of God are now destroyed. We do not see them any longer. We ourselves are responsible for the destruction of creation. So let us restore God's works, accepting that the task is ours. Let us replace the trees we have felled. God will rejoice when he observes this.

Who makes the trees grow? It is God himself, according to his own wishes. Those trees we have planted, we do not actually control or see their growth. God is the one who does all that. You will see eventually: some trees mature, others don't. And the explanation for this variation? The control behind it? It is the power of Mwari. But somehow Mwari's work is no longer seen on these barren, treeless plains. You only see the many tracks of human beings in the sand. What are they? Shoe prints in the sand of those who exploit the earth, leaving it barren. It

seems as if the works of God are replaced by the fruitless works of humankind.

But today we have done God's work. You will see, in a short space of time the trees will grow tall. And we shall say: 'God surprises us. God exists. God does what pleases him.' Today we have done his bidding. Today we have learnt that if we want to be God's children, we must do *his* work. We are the inheritors, existing by virtue of the inheritance – in this instance the fruit of trees. Today we did what God sent us and commanded us to do. It is not so much a matter of success or failure, but in the first place, complying with God's will, giving him joy through our obedience.

I wish to thank Prof Daneel for giving us the trees and Mr Dhewa for helping us and instructing us about tree planting. Let them not tire of this work, or become dispirited. Let them continue providing us with trees, so that we can do God's work and please God.

That work of felling trees, what does it imply? Rebellion against Mwari! What are you, brothers and sisters, going to do? Continue felling trees at random, even up in the mountains, on the pretext that you need timber for roofing? And are you going to complain about the scarcity of trees by suggesting that the wrath of God is upon you? That would be the behaviour of a fool! What does God do to you for just taking from creation, just felling trees? Does he swallow you? No! He loves you and he reveals his love to you through trees, because he spoke to Moses from a tree and he gave Moses a staff from a tree. Likewise he placed Adam in a garden so that he could be a friend of the trees. God has great love for us human beings. If we realise this we will spread this message wherever we go. All of you, persevere in this task. Don't forget the God-given importance of trees! Amen.

1.2 First Ethiopian Church (*Topia*) ceremony

1.2.1 Holy communion conference, followed by tree-planting ceremony at the Topia headquarters of Bishop Ishmael Gavhure, Norumedzo, Bikita district, 12–13 January 1991

Prof Muchakata Daneel: Thank you, Bishop Gavhure, for your kind words of introduction. It is a great pleasure to be here with you this

afternoon. Peace to all of you! In addition I say: Forward with the war of the trees! Down with the ones who oppose tree planting!

I know that there are many confusing rumours in the villages about our work, so I shall use this opportunity to explain to you what we are doing

Years ago I visited Bishop Nheya Gavhure here at the *Topia* headquarters. It was in the period 1965 to 1967, when I was doing research and preparing to write the history of the Zimbabwean Independent Churches. I was given that task by Mwari. Having completed part of the task, I returned in 1972 to start an ecumenical body to unite the African churches. So *Fambidzano* came into being, a very significant development in the existence of the black churches in which I was privileged to participate. So the research we all did together to start with resulted in a great work of unifying black churches in our country. Part of the ecumenical programme was development. And the tree planting I shall be talking about this afternoon is part of that development already started some years ago.

In recent years I started another research project on the history of the liberation struggle. You all are only too familiar with that history. It was hot out here at Norumedzo. You were caught between two fires, the guerrilla fighters and the army. While writing this history it was clear to me that the old religion of your forefathers played an important role for many people. The spirit-mediums in particular were at the forefront, representing the wishes of the guardian ancestors of the land and national ancestors such as Chaminuka, Nehanda and Kaguwi. Here in this region the senior guardian ancestors of the Duma people are Pfupajena, Dumbukunyuka and others.

Currently it appears, however, that the spirit-mediums are pushed aside (by the government) and told to go to rest. Yet they wanted to continue playing a meaningful role in the country and needed assistance. So I decided to help them, despite the fact that their religion differs from mine. I myself am a Christian and I was born at Morgenster mission. My clan name is Gumbo Madyirapazhe, as you know. Peace to you all!

So the *masvikiro* started coming to my house where we arranged funding and drafted a constitution. At our meetings I prayed Christian prayers. Thereafter they poured snuff on the floor in honour of their

ancestors – doing their old religion. We did not question each others' religious identity. Together we have decided to plant trees, conserve wildlife and protect water resources. Hence the *masvikiro*, together with the chiefs and a number of ex-combatants, are mobilising many people in the communal lands to plant trees and look after the woodlots.

This activity has confused the people, who have become used to my working mainly among the Independent Churches. Some of them asked: 'Has Daneel become a backslider, rejoining the world?' I told them, 'No, it is simply that everybody must be involved in tree planting. The traditionalists should do so and the churches should do so.' Therefore we formed three departments. The top one is ZIRRCO. It takes care of research, funding and organisation. Then on the one side you have the traditionalists, working in terms of their convictions, and on the other side the churches, arranging their own tree-planting ceremonies. I have been hoping that *Fambidzano* will take up the challenge.

So I implore all of you not to be disturbed by all those rumours, as if traditional religion is going to be forced on the churches, or as if religions are to be mixed without respect for each other. This rumour that the *masvikiro* and the churches are to be placed in one basket is totally unfounded. ZIRRCO arranges for the churches to make their own contribution on their own terms. Remember this message! Counter the false rumours by telling the people: 'The churches are not imposed upon; we plant trees in accordance with our own church regulations.' It is up to you church people whether you allow spirit-mediums to attend your ceremonies as observers. But they cannot interfere with your arrangements. Neither will you interfere with theirs if you should be invited to attend traditionalist tree-planting ceremonies.

The churches, therefore, are in a position to have their own nurseries and woodlots. This is a great challenge. It is the work of God. It should be done by the churches; it can also be done by others.

In Isaiah 41:17 and 18 we read: 'When the poor and the needy seek water, and there is none ... I, the Lord will answer them ... I will open rivers on the bare heights and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.'

We see here at Norumedzo that what was promised by Mwari was done

right here. Is it not so that you have pools and springs of water in greater abundance than at Masvingo? It seems as if the sinners abound in Masvingo, for it is not raining there at all. Perhaps the people do not want to repent and confess their sins. So Mwari is disciplining them ('giving them *shamhu*', literally 'whipping them'). There is no water. Out here you are blessed by Mwari who has given you rain. Peace to you!

In Isaiah 41:19 we read: 'I will put in the wilderness the cedar, the acacia, the myrtle and the olive; I will set in the desert the cypress, the plane and the pine together.' Here in our land it means that Mwari will put in our acacia trees: the *mutondo*, *msasa* and *muvuzhe*. Instead of olives, he will put in *nhengeni* (sour plum), *mutunduru* (*garcinia huilensis*) and *musvazva* (*securinaga virosa*) trees. In addition he will give us *howa* and *mafirifiti* (popular mushroom species). And in the place of pines and cypress trees, he shall give us *mukurumbira* (teak) and *makamba* (red mahogany). All this Mwari will do, as he says in verse 20, 'so that man may see and know ... that the hand of the Lord has done this, the holy one of Israel has created it'.

We from our side plant the trees because the entire land has become barren and eroded. We want the land to be clothed with vegetation. But in doing so we realise that it is the hand of the Lord doing this, so that the world can observe and give praise to God. There is no way that we can boast and be vain about our tree-planting accomplishments, because Jehovah is telling us right here that it is all *his* doing. See the hand of God moving in our work and give praise to him! To me, the one claiming to have been inspired to do this work, the temptation is to claim that all the ideas and plans derived from my research work. No! How else did my research start but through the moving of the Holy Spirit? Even this Bible here is a book of research, for the authors arranged the contents according to their observations and insight. But in reality the book was inspired (*rakafemerwa*, 'breathed into', ensouled) by the Holy Spirit. Likewise I have been shown by Mwari to do this work of the trees. That leaves no room for boasting. Because of Mwari's hand moving we are, nevertheless, faced with a huge task of earthkeeping.

You have congregated here to participate in holy communion. This is the occasion when you take bread and wine in remembrance of the death of Christ on the cross. In this commemoration the body of Christ

is central. 1 Corinthians 11:29 emphasises the importance of recognising this truth. It says there that 'anyone who eats and drinks without discerning Christ's body, eats and drinks judgment upon him or herself'. Hang on to this idea that we should *know* the body of Christ. In Colossians 1:15–17 the body of Christ is explained in a special way. He is the image of the unseen God, the firstborn of all creation. All things were created in him and for him, the seen and the unseen. Because of this *all things hang together in Christ*. Through Christ's death and resurrection all power in heaven and earth has, moreover, been given to him (Mt 28:18). From all this we conclude that Christ is not only Lord of creation, but that his body *is* all of creation. All created things are part of his body. The implication for us as stewards of creation is that if we fell trees indiscriminately, we are actually killing the body of Christ.

In Colossians 1:18 we read that 'he (Christ) is the head of the body, the church'. Two main points emerge in these texts from Colossians: first, the body of Christ is the entire created world; second, his body is the church, the body of believers. In the past when we celebrated holy communion we tended to remember the one aspect of this twofold truth, namely that we celebrate our unity in Christ's body as the church. We neglected the other aspect of Christ's body. So I wish to remind you here today that whenever you celebrate holy communion, be mindful that in devastating the earth we ourselves are party to destroying the body of Christ. We are *all* guilty in this respect. Both the whites and the blacks are exploiters of the environment.

We will have to start afresh, confessing our sins. You know yourselves how we come to the 'gates' and confess publicly our sins of adultery, jealousy and hatred to the prophets. You prophets, you know what I am talking about. People seldom confess that they are wizards (*varoyi*). But when they say that they have brought their owls and *zvidoma* (witch familiars) to be burnt, we know they are confessing to wizardry.

Today I am telling you of a form of *uroyi* that is even worse than hereditary (*kamutsa mapfiwa*, 'lifting the cooking stones') or deliberately acquired (*kutemerwa*, to join the profession by rubbing medicine into incisions so that the bloodstream absorbs it) wizardry. Peace to you! But there is no peace in a matter of this nature. I am referring to the third type of *uroyi*: that of killing the earth. It is more serious even than

the old *uroyi* where a destroyer targets only one or a few individuals. For in destroying our environment we are endangering all of life! Remember when you confess your sins before the eucharist that you have sinned against the body of Christ, Christ himself, the earth. Say: 'I have killed the earth; I have felled twenty trees this year without planting any in return; I have caused soil erosion by neglecting the contour ridges; I have destroyed the vegetation on riverbanks.' The prophet listening to your confession will only be convinced if your willingness to rectify the situation is evident. That is why, after confession and taking the sacrament, we take seedlings and plant them straight away. Can you see that in this way tree planting becomes part of the eucharist? What we have done in the eucharist in the past is still there. It is good, and not wrong. It is just that we are reminded these days of something we have neglected. We are healing and restoring that part of Christ's body which we have unwittingly abused. That is the message I leave with you today: *Clothe the barren earth! Heal the earth! It is fully part of our lives as Christians ...*

(Then followed an exposition of tree species: the need to focus less on blue gum trees than on indigenous trees, as well as the use of chimurenga tree names to show identification with the environmental liberation struggle. Having referred to spirit-medium vaZarira's use of the name Marambatemwa and my own Muchakata, I concluded as follows:)

Possibly your own bishop here will eventually have a special name for his involvement in the green struggle. He may choose *Mushuku* (wild loquat) because it is a popular fruit tree. But I would choose him another: *Murwiti* (black ebony), because the ebony's wood is exceedingly tough. We need tough fighters. So let your bishop be strong and tough in the struggle. When you see him appear at a tree-planting ceremony, greet him, saying: 'Oh, Murwiti, you have come!' Forward the war of the trees! Peace to you! Amen.

1.2.2 Bishop Ishmael Ghavure, principal leader of the First Ethiopian Church (eldest son and successor of the late Bishop Nheya Ghavure)

Peace be to you all! We thank you for the teaching on environmental conservation this afternoon. We still have to digest this message.

We were disturbed and confused about Prof Daneel working with the *masvikiro*, thinking that maybe he is introducing them into the churches. I told him: 'You were a friend of my father and many *Topia* members know you. They all remember how you came to help bury my late father.' But I told him: 'We do not want you to bring spirit-mediums here to mix with the church people.' (Note: no request of this kind had actually been made, neither had Bishop Ghavure and I discussed the *Topia* tree-planting ceremony beforehand. The bishop was therefore reacting to rumours about the alleged mixing of religions to allay the fears which may at that time, when the AAEC was only starting to come into its own, have troubled some *Topia* members.) So, if you people of the church see *masvikiro* coming here, know that they do not have the permission of the church elders to do so. We don't allow them to be among us! Peace to you all!

What we are really interested in and need to know more about is this new approach to environmental conservation. You know, each person has a gift from God. Prof Daneel's gift for writing and teaching is from God. You cannot imagine the books he has written. Long ago he did work with the chiefs (traditional religion). But then he worked for many years with our black churches, until he became the founder of *Fambidzano*, which taught us to understand the kingdom of God. Peace to you all!

Trees are of the greatest importance. Even in the Bible we are told about their significance. When God created the earth he produced vegetation and ordained that it be respected. A married woman is respected when she is well dressed. The same applies to boys and girls. Those addressing you here this afternoon are all well dressed. But what if we appeared here before you, naked? What then? No! It is impossible for such a thing to happen. But that is exactly the state of the land these days. It is naked. That is why the government is no longer allowing people to fell trees whenever they wish. The land will die. So the land must be clothed.

Do you know why we no longer have regular rainfall? It is because of the lack of trees. Where do the rain clouds come from? They are drawn by the trees. God's way to improve the situation is to send us wise people so that we can rebuild our country. Therefore I do not see any problem in our receiving these trees from ZIRRCO to plant. We do not really mind what rumours people will be spreading about us, as long as we are building the country. Peace to you!

Prof Daneel has been studying our indigenous trees. When the trees arrived here, you could hear people gossiping, asking among themselves: 'Are these trees going to be used for the medicines of traditional doctors (*nganga*)?' As if there is something the matter with that ... After all, we have the medicines of African people. We have white cultures and black cultures. In our black culture we obtain medicines from a *nganga*. Are we all *ngangas*? Some practise *unganga*; others are Christians. Likewise, among the whites some are spirit-mediums and others are Christians.

That is why I say, God does as he pleases. If people are encouraged to plant trees, is it not a good thing that they are clothing the barren earth? Why should anyone be negative about it?

Peace be with you! We thank Jesus Christ this afternoon, for he does good things to us.

Our scripture reading is from Genesis 1:11. God created all things before he created humans. He saw that the earth should not remain a mass of water.

Reader: Genesis 1:11: Let the land produce vegetation ...

Gavhure: Peace to you all! God created all the plants and trees, in great variety. He commanded it to happen, as he has power over everything. Why should it surprise you then if someone comes along to teach us about the different tree species? Do you think that because he (Daneel) talks about *matunduru* and *nengeni* trees – species which I myself have not even heard of before – he is some alien being, created differently from the way we are created as human beings? Is it I who taught him all those tree names, so that he can come and teach you? Ah! God creates different kinds of people. The same applies the other way around. There are blacks with gifts who go and do missionary work in white cultures. There, in their turn, the whites will be surprised at what the blacks are doing among them. God indeed uses people as he wills ...

Reader: Genesis 1:12: The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit ...

Gavhure: If people want to make ropes they use the bark of trees. If we want to build huts we get poles from trees. But these days, where can you find poles for hut building? I don't know; because to destroy trees has become a sin. You, Prof Daneel, have today convinced me that to chop down trees without purpose is a sin. Ah, what is sin? Who knows the full

depth of it? But this afternoon Jehovah shakes us out of complacency with the question: Have you confessed your sins of tree felling? Do you openly confess how many trees you have felled? Do you all confess?

Nobody here has ever thought of confessing the sins of tree felling and environmental destruction. But today God has revealed to us a new way: that of confessing those (ecological) sins. God shows us that to fell trees indiscriminately is the same as a *muroyi* killing a human being. From today on we shall consider all people who do not confess in this way and who do not repent through planting trees themselves, to be *varoyi* (wizards).

We are all inclined to ask: does the government then place a ban on house building? No! The government is correctly restricting tree felling because of the nakedness of the land. Peace to you all.

Today we all thank you, Prof Daneel. I think we all understand what you have taught us today. Tree planting is not really a novelty. Our chiefs and headmen have tried to introduce it in the past. But we responded by saying, 'These troublesome people.' Today, however, God is addressing us about tree planting in a different way and through other people.

Today, ah, I have been converted to the new gospel of tree planting. My only objection is to plant trees together with *masvikiro*. That I oppose! Traditional religion does not go together with Christianity. Although we are all God's people, these religions are different and they oppose each other. Nevertheless we can encourage each other to fight deforestation. If the *masvikiro* plant trees we shall encourage them. But they don't interfere with our work, as we don't interfere with theirs.

Once the trees we have planted mature, we shall allow people to cut poles from these plantations for their buildings. In that way we shall prevent them from denuding the surrounding mountain slopes by chopping down indigenous trees.

Once again we say thank you for providing trees. If you can help us, Prof Daneel, to start a nursery here at church headquarters, we shall be in a position to provide all our congregations in outlying districts with seedlings. Now, let us go out to plant some trees before the sun goes down. Amen.

ABBREVIATIONS

AACC	All African Church Conference
AACJM	African Apostolic Church of Johane Maranke
AAEC	Association of African Earthkeeping Churches
AEU	African Earthkeepers' Union
AIC	African Independent Church
ASM	American Society of Missiology
AZTREC	Association of Zimbabwean Traditional Ecologists
EATWOT	Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians
EEASA	Environmental Education Association of South Africa
F&E	Faith and Earthkeeping (project at University of South Africa)
GDS	German Development Society
HSRC	Human Science Research Council
IAMS	International Association of Mission Studies
JPIC	Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
RCZ	Reformed Church of Zimbabwe
TEE	Theological Education by Extension
WCC	World Council of Churches
WCRP	World Conference on Religion and Peace
WD	Women's Desk
WWF	World-Wide Fund
YD	Youth Desk
ZCC	Zion Christian Church
ZIRRCON	Zimbabwean Institute of Religious Research and Ecological Conservation
ZRP	Zimbabwe Republic Police

GLOSSARY OF SHONA TERMS AND PHRASES

<i>chidoma</i>	witch's familiar; animal of psychic nature, conceived of as smaller than a polecat
<i>chimurenga</i>	Zimbabwe's liberation struggle
<i>chipanda</i>	literally 'forked stick'; the sister to whom a man is linked for the provision of his marriage cattle
<i>chisi</i>	ancestral rest day
<i>dare</i>	council
<i>dare rechimurenga</i>	ancestral war council
<i>denhere</i>	cluster of trees
<i>Dzivaguru</i>	Great Pool; praise name of the Shona high-God, Mwari, which connotes female attributes
<i>evangheri yemiti</i>	gospel of the trees
<i>Fambidzano</i>	cooperation or union; popular designation of ecumenical association of Shona Independent Churches, founded in 1972
<i>hama</i>	kin
<i>ivhu yataura</i>	the soil has spoken
<i>jukwa</i>	<i>shavi</i> spirit, closely associated with the traditional high-god and his/her rainmaking powers
<i>kuchengetedza - zvisvikwa zvaMwari</i>	to care for or protect the creation of God; popular description of the AAEC's basic objective
<i>kufukidza nyika</i>	to clothe the earth (by planting trees); (see <i>mafukidzanyika</i>)
<i>kugadzira</i>	to settle the spirit of a deceased person; this term connotes the induction rite through which the spirit of a deceased relative is 'brought back home' and simultaneously elevated to the status of ancestorhood

<i>kugara nhaka</i>	to inherit a deceased person's estate, and/or to succeed to his/her position in the kin-group and society; <i>kugova nhaka</i> , to distribute a deceased's estate
<i>kuperekedza</i>	to escort, accompany
<i>Mabweadziva</i>	literally 'rocks of the pool'; Mwari's shrine in the Matopo hills
<i>madzibaba</i>	fathers, pl for <i>baba</i> , father
<i>mafukidzanyika</i>	'clothing the land' tree-planting ceremony; the term is used mainly to indicate AZTREC's traditionalist tree-planting ceremonies
<i>maporesanyika</i>	land-healing ceremony; term used by member churches of the AAEC to emphasise the healing nature of tree-planting eucharists
<i>marambatemwa</i>	literally 'refusal to have the trees felled'; popular designation of traditional holy groves, the implication being that the ancestors buried there sanction the prohibition of tree-felling and related customary, conservationist laws
<i>mambo</i>	king, chief; in the past this term was used for the Rozvi rulers
<i>mhandara</i>	virgin, girl of marriageable age
<i>mhondoro</i>	literally 'lion'; tribal spirit of repute, considered to be involved in land issues and tribal politics
<i>miti echivanhu</i>	literally 'trees of the people'; indigenous trees
<i>miti mikuru</i>	tall trees
<i>msasa or musasa</i>	indigenous hardwood tree; <i>brachestygia spiciformis</i>
<i>mubvamaropa</i>	literally 'that from which blood flows'; bloodwood or kiaat tree; see <i>mukurumbira</i>
<i>mubvumira</i>	literally 'to approve'; wild syringa tree; <i>kirkia akuminata</i>
<i>muchakata</i>	wild cork tree; <i>parinari curatellifolia</i>

<i>muchechete</i>	red milkwood tree
<i>mudziavashe</i>	literally 'heat of the chief'; fuel-wood tree reserved for tribal dignitaries; <i>combretum molle</i> ; also called <i>mupembere</i>
<i>mudzimu</i>	pl <i>mi</i> or <i>vadzimu</i> , ancestral spirit
<i>Mudzimu Mukuru</i>	Great Ancestor, God
<i>Mudzimu Unoyera</i>	literally 'Holy Ancestral Spirit', referring to biblical Holy Spirit
<i>mukamba</i>	red mahogany tree; <i>afzelia quanzensis</i>
<i>mukoma</i>	elder brother
<i>mukombe</i>	calabash, gourd
<i>mukute</i>	waterberry tree
<i>mukurumbira</i>	kiaat, <i>mukwa</i> tree; <i>pterocarpus angolensis</i>
<i>mukwerere</i>	rain ritual during which senior tribal spirits are propitiated at their graves and/or at a pole enclosure (<i>rushanga</i>) under a <i>muchakata</i> tree; these rituals are conducted at the commencement of each rainy season or if rains have failed; it is also called <i>mutoro</i>
<i>munhengeni</i>	sour plum
<i>munhunguru</i>	batoka plum
<i>munjii</i>	bird plum
<i>munyai</i>	messenger, go-between; a <i>munyai</i> in the Mwari cult is the person who maintains contact between the local district he represents and the priest colony at the cult centre; he annually visits the cult centre in the Matopo hills to request rain for his district and to discuss local (often political) matters of general significance
<i>mupani</i>	indigenous hardwood tree; <i>colophospermum mupane</i>
<i>mupfura</i>	indigenous fruit tree bearing edible fruit; <i>sclerocarya caffra</i>

<i>muponesi</i>	saviour
<i>muPostori</i>	pl <i>vaPostori</i> ; Apostle, popular Shona term for Johane Maranke's African Apostolic Church followers
<i>murapi</i>	healer
<i>Murapi Venyika</i>	'Healer of the Land'; function attributed to the Holy Spirit
<i>muridzi</i>	(pl <i>varidzi</i>) <i>venyika</i> ; guardian of the land
<i>muroyi</i>	(pl <i>varoyi</i>); wizard; witch or sorcerer
<i>musasa yevaroyi</i>	wind-break or encampment of the wizards
<i>mushonga</i>	medicine
<i>Musiki</i>	Creator
<i>mushuku</i>	wild loquat tree; <i>uapaca kirkiana</i>
<i>mutamba</i>	monkey orange tree
<i>mutezvo</i>	believer, church member
<i>mutobge</i>	indigenous fruit tree with edible fruit, which in the holy groves is reserved for ancestors; <i>figus sonderi</i>
<i>mutondo</i>	indigenous hardwood tree; <i>julbernardia globiflora</i>
<i>mutongi</i>	(pl <i>vatongi</i>) judge
<i>mutumbu</i>	literally 'corpse'; sacrificial offering of cattle to appease the vengeful <i>ngozi</i> spirit
<i>mutunduru</i>	yellow sour plum
<i>muzambiringa</i>	grape vine
<i>muzeze</i>	indigenous tree with yellow flowers; branches used for purification after burial rites; <i>peltoforum africanum</i>
<i>Mwari</i>	God; most common name for the Shona high-God
<i>mweya</i>	spirit
<i>Mweya Mutsvene</i>	Holy Spirit

<i>Ndaza Zionist</i>	Zionist of the holy cord; popular classificatory term to distinguish the robed Zionists from the uniformed members of Mutendi's Zion Christian Church
<i>nganga</i>	traditional doctor; diviner-herbalist
<i>ngombe yovutete</i>	'cow or heifer of the aunt'; payable by a deceased male's namebearer or other descendant to the deceased's sister, who acts as ritual officiant during the 'home bringing' (<i>kugadzira</i>) ceremony on behalf of the deceased
<i>ngozi</i>	avenging spirit; harmful or dangerous influence which threatens life
<i>Paseka</i>	Paschal ('Passover') celebrations; popular name of annual festivals, which include the celebration of the holy communion, and are conducted at the main or regional headquarters of the Spirit-type Churches
<i>pungwe</i>	guerrilla-organised night-vigil during the liberation struggle, for political instruction and/or disciplinary measures
<i>roora</i>	bridewealth
<i>rudo</i>	love
<i>rudzi</i>	tribe
<i>runyaradzo</i>	consolation ceremony conducted on behalf of the relatives of the recently deceased
<i>ruponeso</i>	salvation
<i>Ruwadzano</i>	Mothers' Union
<i>sekuru</i>	grandfather or mother's brother
<i>shamhu</i>	whip or cane; to be given <i>shamhu</i> means to be disciplined by the church and/or by God
<i>shavi</i>	alien spirit which does not belong to the lineage of the host whom it possesses; various types of <i>shavi</i> spirits bestow a variety of skills, for example

	healing, hunting, dancing or blacksmithing to their hosts
<i>Shinga Postora</i>	‘Courageous Apostles’; schismatic group with its roots in Johane Masowe’s Apostolic movement; <i>Shinga</i> derived from <i>kushinga</i> ; to be diligent or brave
<i>svikiro</i>	pl <i>masvikiro</i> ; spirit-medium
<i>tonhodzo</i>	coolness
<i>Topia</i>	popular designation of First Ethiopian Church
<i>tsvimbo</i>	<i>knobkierie</i> , club
<i>ungano yembeu</i>	seed conference, during which the seed to be sown by peasant families is blessed and prayed over by church leader to ensure good crops
<i>uroyi</i>	wizardry; <i>uroyi hwenyika</i> ; land wizardry, that is, wanton destruction of the environment
<i>vamwene</i>	husband’s sister who is the ‘owner’ of his wife
<i>vanhu venyika</i>	people of the world; non-believers
<i>vanonamata</i>	those who worship according to the books;
<i>mumabhuku</i>	christians
<i>vanonamata muvhu</i>	those who worship according to the soil
<i>nezvibako</i>	(ancestors) and the snuff containers
<i>vanyai</i>	see <i>munyai</i>
<i>vatete</i>	paternal aunt
<i>vatongi</i>	see <i>mutongi</i>
<i>Wokudenga</i>	the One in heaven, God
<i>Wokumusoro</i>	the One above, God
<i>zvidoma</i>	see <i>chidoma</i>

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bakare, S 1993. *My right to land – in the Bible and in Zimbabwe: a theology of land in Zimbabwe*. Harare: Zimbabwe Council of Churches.
- Barrett, D B 1968. *Schism and Renewal in Africa: an analysis of six thousand contemporary religious movements*. Nairobi: Oxford University Press.
- Bavinck, J H 1949. *Religieus Besef en Christelijk Geloof*. Kampen: Kok.
- Bavinck, J H 1954. *Inleiding in de Zendingswetenschap*. Kampen: Kok.
- Berkouwer, G C 1953. *Het werk van Christus*. Kampen: Kok.
- Berry, T 1994. 'Ecological geography'. In Tucker M E & Grim T A (eds) *Worldviews and ecology – religion, philosophy and the environment*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.
- Beyerhaus, P 1969. An approach to the African Independent Church Movement. *Ministry*, 9.
- Birch, C, Eakin, W. & McDaniel, J (eds) 1990. *Liberating life: contemporary approaches to ecological theology*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.
- Bonhoeffer, D 1963. *The cost of discipleship*. New York: Macmillan.
- Bosch, D B 1974. *Het evangelie in Afrikaans gewaad*. Kampen: Kok.
- Bosch, D B 1987. 'The problem of evil in Africa: a survey of African views on witchcraft and of the response of the Christian Church'. In De Villiers, P G R (ed) *Like a roaring lion: essays on the Bible, the church and demonic powers*. Pretoria, University of South Africa.
- Bratton, S P 1992. 'Loving nature: eros or agape?' *Environmental Ethics*, Journal of the Center for Environmental Philosophy, University of North Texas, 14(1).
- Brown, N J 1994. 'Foreword'. In Tucker, M E & Grim, J A (eds) *Worldviews and ecology*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.
- Burrows, W R 1995. 'Need and opportunities in studies of mission and world Christianity', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 19(4).
- Buthelesi, M 1976. 'Daring to live for Christ'. In Anderson, G H & Stransky, T F (eds) *Mission Trends No 3, Third World Theologies*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Callicott, J B 1994. 'Toward a global environmental ethic'. In Tucker & Grim (eds) *Worldviews and ecology ...* Maryknoll: Orbis Books.
- Carmody, J 1983. *Ecology and religion – towards a new Christian theology of nature*. New York/Ramsey: Paulist Press.
- Daneel, M L 1970. *The God of the Matopo hills*. The Hague: Mouton.
- Daneel, M L 1971. *Old and new in Southern Shona Independent Churches*, vol 1: *Background and rise of the major movements*. The Hague: Mouton.
- Daneel, M L 1973. 'The Christian Gospel and the ancestor cult', *Missionalia*, 1(2).
- Daneel, M L 1974. *Old and new in Southern Shona Independent Churches*, Vol 2; *Church growth; causative factors and recruitment techniques*. The Hague: Mouton.
- Daneel, M L 1980. 'Missionary outreach in African Independent Churches', *Missionalia*, 8(3).
- Daneel, M L 1982. 'Black messianism: corruption or contextualization?' Inaugural lecture, Unisa.
- Daneel, M L 1987. *Quest for belonging – introduction to a study of African Independent*

- Churches. Gweru: Mambo Press.
- Daneel, M L 1988. *Old and new in Southern Shona Churches*, vol 3: Church leadership and fission dynamics. Gweru: Mambo Press.
- Daneel, M L 1989. *Fambidzano – ecumenical movement of Zimbabwean Independent Churches*. Gweru: Mambo Press.
- Daneel, M L 1989. 'The encounter between Christianity and traditional African culture: accommodation or transformation?' *Theologia Evangelica*, xxii(3).
- Daneel, M L 1990. 'Exorcism as a means of combating wizardry: liberation or enslavement?' *Missionalia* 18(1).
- Daneel, M L 1996 (as Mafuranhunzi Gumbo). *Guerrilla Snuff*. Harare: Baobab Books.
- De Witt, C B 1991. *The environment and the Christian – What can we learn from the New Testament?* Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.
- Dickson, K 1984. *Theology in Africa*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.
- Duchrow, U & Liedke, G 1987. *Shalom – biblical perspectives on creation, justice and peace*. Geneva: WCC Publications.
- Ela, J M 1986. *African Cry*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books
- Fashole-Luke, E W 1976. 'The quest for African Christian theologies'. In Anderson, G H & Stransky, T F (eds) *Mission Trends No 3: Third World theologies*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Fox, M 1992. *A spirituality named compassion*. San Francisco: Harper Collins.
- Goba, B 1980. 'Doing theology in South Africa: a black Christian perspective'. *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 31, June.
- Gore, A 1992. *Earth in the balance*. New York: Penguin.
- Granberg-Michaelson, W 1994. 'Creation in ecumenical theology'. In Hallman, D G (eds) *Ecotheology*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books
- Grim, J A 1994. 'Native American worldviews and ecology'. In Tucker, M E & Tucker, J A (eds) *Worldviews and Ecology*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.
- Hallman, D G 1994. *Ecotheology – voices from south and north*. Geneva: WCC; and Maryknoll: Orbis Books.
- Hoekendijk, J C 1950. 'The call to evangelism'. *International Review of Missions*, xxxix.
- Idowu, E B 1962. *Olodumare: God in Yoruba belief*, London/New York.
- Ingenozza, A O 1985. 'African Weltanschauung and exorcism: the quest for the contextualization of the Kerygma'. *African Theological Journal*, 14.
- Kibicho, S G 1968. 'The interaction of the traditional Kikuyu concept of God with the biblical concept'. *Cahiers des religions Africaines*, 4(2).
- Kibongi, R B 1969. 'Priesthood'. In Dickson, K A & Ellingworth, P (eds) *Biblical revelation and African beliefs*. London: Lutterworth.
- Kolié, C 1991. 'Jesus as Healer?' In Schreiter, R J (ed) *Faces of Jesus in Africa*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.
- Kyung, C H 1994. 'Ecology, feminism and African and Asian spirituality of eco-feminism'. In Hallman, D G (ed) *Ecotheology*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.
- Lagerwerf, L 1987. *Witchcraft, sorcery and spirit-possession: pastoral responses in Africa*. Gweru: Mambo Press.
- Martin, M L 1964. *The biblical concept of messianism and messianism in Southern Africa*. Morija: Mission Press.
- Mbiti, J S 1969. *African religions and philosophy*. London: Heineman.
- Mbiti, J S 1970. *Concepts of God in Africa*. London, SPCK.

- Mbiti, J S 1971. *New Testament eschatology in an African background*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Mbiti, J S 1980. 'The encounter of Christian faith and African Religion'. *The Christian Encounter* (August).
- Mbiti, J S 1986. *Bible and theology in African Christianity*. Nairobi: Oxford University Press.
- McDaniel, J 1994. 'The Garden of Eden, the Fall, and life in Christ'. In Tucker, M E & Grim, J A (eds) *Worldviews and ecology*. Maryknoll: Orbis.
- McDaniel, J 1995. *With roots and wings: Christianity in an age of ecology and dialogue*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.
- McDonagh, S 1986. *To care for the earth – a call to a new theology*. Santa Fe: Bear & Co.
- McDonagh, S 1994. *Passion for the earth – the Christian vocation to promote justice, peace, and the integrity of creation*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.
- Messer, D E 1992. *A conspiracy of goodness – contemporary images of Christian mission*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.
- Milingo, E 1984. *The world in between – Christian healing and the struggle for spiritual survival*. Maryknoll, Orbis Books.
- Moltmann, J 1985. *God in creation – an ecological doctrine of creation*. London: SCM Press.
- Mosotheoane, E K 1973. 'Communio Sanctorum in Africa'. *Missionalia*, 1(2).
- Nthamburi, Z 1991. 'Christ as seen by an African: a christological quest'. In Schreiter, R J (ed) *Faces of Jesus in Africa*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.
- Nyamiti, C 1984. *Christ as our ancestor*. Gweru: Mambo Press
- Nyamiti, C 1991. 'African christologies today'. In Schreiter, R J (ed) *Faces of Jesus in Africa*, Maryknoll: Orbis Books.
- Oosthuizen, G C 1968. *Post Christianity in Africa – a theological and anthropological study*, London.
- Pauw, B A 1960. *Religion in Tswana chieftdom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Pobee, J S 1979. *Towards an African theology*. Nashville: Abingdon Press
- Ruether, R R 1992. *Gaira and God – an ecofeminist theology of earth healing*. San Francisco: Harper Collins.
- Schreiter, R J 1985. *Constructing local theologies*. London: SCM Press.
- Schreiter, R J (ed) 1991. *Faces of Jesus in Africa*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.
- Setiloane, G M 1975. 'Confessing Christ today'. *Journal of Theology of Southern Africa*, 12 (September).
- Setiloane, G M 1976. 'I am an African'. In Anderson & Stransky (eds) *Mission Trends*, No 3, *Third World Theologies*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Setiloane, G M 1976. *The image of God among the Sotho-Tswana*. Rotterdam: Balkema.
- Setiloane, G M 1979. 'Where are we in African theology? In Appiah-Kubi, K, & Torres, S (eds) *African theology en route*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.
- Shorter, A 1985. *Jesus and the witchdoctor – an approach to healing and wholeness*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.
- Singleton, M 1980. 'Who's who in African witchcraft?' In *Pro Mundi Vita: Dossiers, African Dossier* 12: 1–41.
- Sundkler, B G M 1960. *The Christian ministry in Africa*. London: SCM Press.
- Sundkler, B G M 1961. *Bantu prophets of South Africa*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Sundkler, B G M 1976. *Zulu Zion and some Swazi zionists*. London: Oxford University Press.

- Taylor, J V 1963. *The primal vision – Christian presence amid African religion*. London: SCM Press.
- Timberlake, L 1995. *Africa in crisis: the causes, the cures of environmental bankruptcy*. London: Earthscan Series.
- Torres, S & Fabella, V (eds) 1978. *The emergent gospel*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.
- Tucker, M E & Grim, J A (eds) 1994. *Worldviews and ecology – religion, philosophy and the environment*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.
- Tutu, D 1975. 'Black theology – African theology: soulmates or antagonists?' *Journal of Religious Thoughts*, 32(2).
- Tu Wei-ming 1994. 'Beyond Enlightenment mentality'. In Tucker, M E & Grim, J A (eds) 1994. *Worldviews and ecology – religion, philosophy and the environment*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.
- Ukpong, J S 1984. 'Current theology: the emergence of African theologies'. *Theological Studies*, 45.
- Van der Merwe, W J 1957. *Shona idea of God*. Morgenster: Mission Press.
- Verkuyt, J 1975. *Inleiding in de nieuwere Zendingswetenschap*. Kampen: Kok.
- Walls, A F 1982. 'The Gospel as the prisoner and liberator of culture'. *Missionalia*, 10.
- Wilkinson, L 1991. *Earthkeeping in the '90s – stewardship of creation*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Witvliet, T 1984. *Een plaats onder de zon: bevrijdingstheologie in de Derde Wereld*. Baarn: Ten Have.
- Zerbe, G 1991. 'The Kingdom of God and stewardship of creation'. In De Witt, C B (ed) *The environment and the Christian*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

INDEX

- AAEC (Association of African Earth-keeping Churches), 3, 4, 8–11, 13, 16, 21, 22, 37–39, 44, 46–51, 55, 56, 63, 67, 70, 72, 73, 88–90, 93, 111, 112, 117–120, 123, 129–131, 137, 141, 144, 153, 160, 225, 226, 239, 241, 245, 250–252, 267, 291, 296; AAEC and author, 168, 169; biblical basis for, 169; AAEC/AZTREC ecumenism 167, 276; and environmental wizards 229, 236; organisation of 258, 259; and new kinship in Christ 180, 182, 185; widens perception of healing 195, 206; and wildlife, 270–272
- accommodation (mission policy), 96–98
- adaptation (mission model), 6, 21, 99
- afforestation, 47, 248–251, 256, 260, 272, 273, 275, 279–283, 303, 304, 312, 319, 323, 343
- African Earthkeepers Union (AEU), 16, 320–324, 339, 346,
- African Reformed Church, 53, 126
- African theology, *see* theology
- African Zion Apostolic Church, 44
- agape* (selfless love for nature), 295–297, 299, 302, 303
- Agritex, 250, 264
- agro-foresters/forestry, 245, 256, 263, 273
- All Africa Church Conference (AACC), 322, 324, 328
- ancestors, 99, 131, 182, 281; afflicting, 24; and Christ 190, 193; communion with, 97, 276; and environmental reform, 129, 136, 167, 168, 187, 254, 266, 269, 286, 340; founder ancestors, 14, 16, 50, 98, 185, 189; and God, 171, 189, 222; mediation of, 98; and soil, 187
- ancestral, guardians of the land, 69, 86, 87, 189, 202, 268, 277, 286, 296; war council, 271, 277; propitiation, rituals, veneration, 50, 94, 100, 106, 187–191, 251, 271, 277;
- anonymous Christianity, 170
- anthropocentric ethic/consciousness, 332, 336; anthropocentrism, 339
- assimilation, 97, 110
- Au Sable Institute, 290
- AZTREC (Association of Zimbabwean Traditional Ecologists), 4, 47, 49, 50, 57, 71, 72, 94, 130, 131, 136, 144, 167, 168, 182, 186, 195, 239, 241, 245, 250–253, 258, 259, 267, 272, 276, 279, 296, 297, 338
- Bakare, S, 308, 309, 329
- baptism, ecological, 8, 14, 59, 67; of earth destroyers, 3; Spirit-type church/Zionist, 154, 216, 217
- Barnett, Tos, 343
- Bavinck, J H, 99
- beer libation, 136, 168, 251, 271, 277
- Berkouwer, G C, 184
- Berry, T, 333, 334, 336, 337
- Beyerhaus, P, 211
- Bible/Scripture, in African theology, 102, 104, 105, 285; and ecological warfare, 10, 11, 13, 285, 328; evaluation of, 101; reading, teaching, study, 34, 112, 182, 211; translation, 5, 194
- biblical, foundation for earth-care, 328; guide-lines and Holy Spirit manifestations, 213; revelation, 105, 111, 194
- Bikita, 34, 41, 47, 140, 268
- Birch, Eakin and McDaniel, 330, 332
- Bonhoeffer, D, 124
- Bosch, D, 105, 110, 152, 231, 232, 234, 235
- Bratton, S, 292, 295
- Brown, N, 330
- Brunner, E, 223
- Burkle, H, 153

- Burrows, W R, 290–292
 Buthelezi, M, 171–173
 Callicot, J B, 330, 333, 336, 337
 Calvinism, 99; Calvin's view on Holy Spirit in creation, 207, 209
 CAMPFIRE, 270, 272, 324
 capacity building, 259, 260
 Carmody, J, 89, 159, 160
 Catholicism, Roman, accommodation, 96; contextualisation, 5; rituals, 106
 Chaminuka, hero-ancestor of Shona, 98, 182, 187, 189, 190; spirit medium, 129, 186, 187, 189, 190
chidoma, pl *zvidoma*, 222, 223
 chief(s), 3, 27, 49, 50, 57, 71, 130, 134, 136, 137, 168, 185, 186, 241, 250, 257, 259, 269, 274, 281, 282; in Ghana, 324; as participants in tree-planting eucharist, 202
 Chimhangwa, Bishop, 44, 55, 56, 89, 116, 131, 132, 136–138, 162–164, 186
chimurenga, 1, 5, 13, 28, 31, 33, 38, 53, 55, 56, 69, 72, 94, 112, 156, 164, 247, 273, 275, 282
 Chitapa, Revd, 114, 117, 222, 224–226
 Chivi, chief, 136, 137, 186, 187, 189, 253; district, 47, 63, 122, 129, 131, 137, 138, 187, 253
 Christ, African messiah and, 156, 300; and ancestors, 98, 106, 184, 185, 190, 191; as Ancestor, 182, 183; blood of (as healing power), 198, 199, 201; body of, 66, 87, 176, 180, 217, 228; body of, as created world, 42, 43, 88, 89; cosmic body of 14, 42, 87–89, 176, 177; cross, suffering, death of, 31, 43, 80, 124, 152, 166, 171–174, 176, 178, 189, 199, 235, 282, 297; *descensio Christi*, 184–186, 190; the Earthkeeper, 14, 135, 151, 157, 163, 164, 169, 170, 181, 183, 280, 283, 286; and ecumenism, 167, 169; as elder brother/in kinship, 178, 180–185, 190; great commission of, 154, 157, 163, 301; as guardian of all creation, 64, 87, 129, 183, 185, 216, 299; the healer/healing ministry of, 27, 34, 39, 41–43, 127, 193–206, 216, 236, 286, 299, 329, 335, 336; incarnation of, 16, 27, 89, 152, 157, 160, 163, 231, 301; Lordship/kingship of, 87–90, 152–154, 157–161, 164, 166, 168–170, 183, 185, 189, 198, 201, 216, 221, 234; in missionary proclamation, 103; resurrection of, 176, 184, 189, 1999, 282, 297; salvific work of/as Saviour, 44, 77, 87, 120, 163, 199, 216, 235, 236, 280, 329; and trees, 56, 81, 117, 118, 162; *Christus Victor*, 151; and wildlife, 271; as 'wounded healer', 176, 177, 200, 202, 206
 Christology, AAEC's ecological Christology, 165, 166, 169, 186, 189, 195; of AICs, 152, 164, 285; in African theology, 151–153, 178, 182, 195, 199, 200; contextual, 190; and earth-healing, 42–44; green, 14, 189, 285; healing, 199, 200; and pneumatology, 216; of the 'soil' (ancestors), 193; and spirit-world, 193
 church, see Christ, healing, liberation, mission; as body of Christ, 180; buildings, 31; church-ism, 280, 303; of the cross, 31; growth, 154; as 'keeper of creation', 51, 70, 72, 282, 298; mission of, 160, 282; planting, 240; protective function of, 232
 cleansing, 27, 28, 69, 72, 199–201, 216, 228
 Commission of Justice and Peace, 308
communio sanctorum, 190–193
 compassion, in earth-care, 299–301, 327, 337
 confession(s), re earthkeeping/ecological sins, 3, 8, 56, 59, 67, 70, 72, 75–77, 181, 198, 200, 201, 221–223, 225, 228, 235, 280, 302, 340; of lost innocence, 335, 336; of sins (generally), 27, 66; re wildlife, 271
 Congar, Y, 142

- consolation ceremony, see *runyaradzo*
- contextualisation, 4–6, 9, 11, 13, 38, 44, 60, 138, 150, 156, 182, 327; contextual environmental theology at Unisa, 313
- conversion, 140, 231, 286; earth-related/environmental, 8, 59, 67, 99, 282, 292, 297, 298, 328; Zionist conversions, 154, 157
- cosmology, 332, 339; and culture, 335; evolutionary, 333; local, 344
- cosmos, 128, 181, 286, 299, 304
- cosmic, see (cosmic) Christ; community, 125, 129; spirituality, 119
- creation, agony of, 347; care for/restoration of, 63, 64, 67, 70, 77, 84, 86, 90, 116, 123, 124, 127–130, 135, 139, 144, 158, 159, 177, 180, 201, 202, 212, 217, 296, 298, 332; and Christ, 14, 42, 43, 80, 118, 124, 164, 177, 201; God's dominion over, 117, 127, 168; and God's kingdom, 168; God's presence in, 95, 96, 109, 112, 114, 117, 119, 120, 123, 124; good news to all creation (see salvation), 298; Holy Spirit in, 207, 208; myth of, 123; story of, 59, 60, 88; theology of, 106, 198
- creator, see God; Creator-Spirit, 212
- culture, African, 84, 99, 101, 102; Christ transforms, 231; Christian message and, 5–8, 21, 99; and cosmology, 335; rehabilitation of, 102
- cultural, identity, 101; resistance, 306; romanticism, 7, 11
- dare rechimurenga*, 271, 277
- deforestation, 44, 63, 70, 84, 110, 137, 140, 221, 249, 256, 277, 312, 321, 343
- demon(s), 24, 80, 218, 221, 228–230
- denhere* (clump of trees), 64
- desert, 139
- desertification 137, 312
- Destroyer, see earth destruction, Satan; of creation/earth, 218, 225–227, 229, 286
- deus, absconditus* 104; *otiosus, remotus*, 94, 96, 101–103, 105, 232, 279
- development, aid/funds, 258, 344, 347; community development, 306, 326; desk, 257, 258, 260; in global perspective, 329, 342; projects (of AICs), 32–37, 257, 258
- De Witt, C, 124, 126, 128, 135, 181
- dialogue, between, AAEC and AZTREC, 144; Christians and non-Christians, 99, 303; government and ZIRRCO, 309; humans and trees, 117, 202; Western and Third World churches, 6; interfaith dialogue, 168, 186, 263, 276, 281, 337
- Dickson, K, 174
- dominion, see, God; earthkeeper's dominion of service, 159; human dominion over earth, 223, 224, 295, 297, 332, 336, 340, 345; dominion theology, 290
- DRC, 199, 100
- drought(s), 77, 86, 89, 100, 129, 135, 137, 139, 253, 255
- Duchrow and Liedke, 89, 159
- Dwane, S, 173
- Dzivaguru, 144
- earth, -keepers/keeping *passim*; see creation, healing; -care, 53, 140, 147, 157, 169, 180, 183, 234, 282, 299, 302, 304, 311, 319, 321, 328; -clothing (see *mafukidzanyika*), 53, 88, 129, 136, 195, 200, 251, 296; community, 3, 13, 283, 284, 298, 327–330, 333, 334, 337, 338, 340, 341, 343, 344, 347; destroyers/destruction, 57, 70, 71, 84, 89, 114, 118, 128, 177, 218, 221, 223, 225, 226, 228, 235, 279, 340, 342; goddess, 141, 143, 144; -keeper's *communio sanctorum*, 192, 193; -keeper's extended family, 181; -keeping church, 50, 59, 63, 64, 70, 93, 111, 112, 117, 118, 127, 213, 280, 301; -keeping, urged by Holy Spirit, 213; -keeping laws, 131, 170; -keeping women, 134; mother earth,

- 118, 179, 181; 'Total Earth Science', 334, 336, 340
- ecclesiology, of AICs, 9, 10, 21, 22, 27, 157; and earthkeeping, 13, 38, 48, 51, 328
- eco-, feminism, 118, 119, 141–144, 150, 314, 329; justice, 16, 181; liturgy, 8, 11; mission, 318; spirituality, 292, 296, 297, 299, 303, 336; system, 120, 208, 310; theology, 3, 5, 14, 93, 122, 249, 282, 304, 312, 314, 315, 327, 328, 338
- ecology/ecological, codes, laws, ethics, 56, 120, 132, 170, 181, 270, 274, 277, 279; crisis (global), 336, 337; doctrine of creation, 208; 'geography' (Berry), 333, theology, 212; 'ecozoic era' (Berry), 333
- Ecumenical Association of Third Theologians (EATWOT), 328, 338
- ecumenicity/ecumenism, of AICs and world church, 37; and Christian witness, 189; between Christianity and traditional religion (AAEC and AZTREC), 13, 14, 49, 50, 58, 130, 167, 276, 280; earth-related ecumenism of AICs/AAEC, 10, 46, 48, 73, 161, 170, 274, 280, 281, 301, 328, 340; of Fambidzano, 31, 33, 38, 48; Scriptural basis for, 169; in women's clubs, 251; Zvanaka's views on, 167, 168
- ecumenical, ministry of earth-care in South Africa, 318; theological training, 8
- Ela, J M, 325–327
- Elohim I, 16
- environment, *passim*; see earth, ecology
- environmental, Education Association of South Africa (EEASA), 315; ethic/law, 170, 283, 297, 303, 315, 329, 331, 333, 337, 339, 340; ministry, 11; reform/restoration, 129, 169, 202, 274, 276, 280, 286, 311, 315, 319, 320, 327, 342; technology, 344
- eschatology, 14, 64, 157
- eucalyptus/blue gum trees, 265, 266
- eucharist, see tree-planting
- Evangelical Ministry of Christ Church, 43, 88
- exorcism, 16, 24, 106, 195, 220, 221, 227–233, 235
- EZE, 258
- Faith and Earthkeeping (F&E), project in South Africa, 16, 314–318, 322–324, 337, 339, 340, 345; F&E/ZIRRCOM relations, 319, 320
- Fambidzano, 31, 33, 34, 37, 38, 128, 257, 258, 273, 281, 302, 306
- Farawo, Bishop, 43, 47, 51, 55–57, 62, 123, 144, 160, 161, 180, 212
- Faskole Luke, 151
- female emancipation/gender equality, 34, 123, 133, 134, 254, 255, 303
- feminism, see, eco-feminism, theology
- firewood, 69, 81, 110, 221, 227, 275, 321
- First Ethiopian Church, 140
- forestry, 75, 250, 254, 264, 279, 311, 322
- Fox, M, 299–301
- Francis of Assisi, 296
- fund-raising, 245, 247, 250, 257, 259, 323, 324, 341
- Gaia, 141, 142, 144, 208, 314
- Garden of Eden (theology/story), 60, 62–64, 121, 123, 131, 163, 186
- Gelfand, M, 84
- German Development Service (GDS), 252
- global, change, 311; development, 329, 347; environment, 310, 320; environmental ethic, 331, 333, 337, 338, 340, 341; green revolution, 311, 330, 342; local/global premise for earth-keeping, 331, 332, 337, 338, 341; Global Marshall Plan, 304, 343, 346; network of technological training centres, 344, 345; pollution 343; resistance movement/battle for environment, 304, 342; village, 17, 300, 303, 312, 313, 330, 332, 334, 336, 338, 339, 343, 346, 347
- Goba, B, 173

- God, see Mwari, *deus otiosus*; of Africa, 102, 103, 105, 110, 111, 116, 171, 172; of Bible 102, 103, 105, 110, 111, 116, 144; the Creator, 103, 109, 111, 112, 119–123, 126, 127, 131, 132, 136, 140, 141, 209, 212, 217, 277, 280, 285; dominion of God over creation, 127, 158, 159; the Father, 97, 103, 109, 116, 121, 143, 180; as Father and/or Mother, 141–144, 150, 329; feminine attributes, of 142; goddess, 142; immanence/presence of, 106, 107, 111, 112, 114, 116, 117, 119–123, 125, 126, 143, 208, 217, 279, 285; of liberation, 112, 133, 134; pneumatic action of, 212; of seedlings/trees, 110, 111, 124; suffering in creation, 124; transcendence of, 106, 107, 111, 116, 125, 142, 143, 279; as *vatete* (paternal aunt), 145, 146; of war 112
- Goldfields Foundation (in South Africa), 313, 314
- Gono, Leonard, 193, 247, 250; the suffering earthkeeper, 177
- Gore, Al, 304, 305, 309, 310, 320, 330, 341–344, 346
- grass, *vetiver* and *bana*, 268; cultivation of, 323
- Greenbelt Movement (in Kenya), 306, 322, 343
- Greenpeace, 311
- green, icons, 343; life-style, 346; revolution, 312, 313, 327–330, 338, 343, 346
- Grim, J, 330, 333, 335, 339
- guardian(s) of the land, see ancestors; Christ as, 169; Christians as, 69, 125, 286
- guerrilla fighters 28, 31, 70, 98
- gully/gullies, 76, 224, 249; reclamation of, 268, 273, 274, 323
- Gutmann, B, 99
- Gutu district, 166, 222, 264, 268
- Gwamure, Ms (women's club leader), 253
- Hallman, D, 118, 120, 332, 333
- healing/healer, 37, 94, 195, 230, 232; Christ as healer, 27, 39, 193–195, 216; church as 'hospital', 22, 24, 46, 51, 282; of earth, 1, 4, 9, 11, 13, 14, 38–42, 44, 45, 48, 64, 67, 71, 81, 84, 86, 90, 118, 119, 139, 147, 160, 161, 217, 227, 236, 250, 275–277, 280, 298, 299, 328, 341; healing church/colony, 21, 22, 24, 31, 33, 34, 41, 50, 64, 84, 227, 282; Holy Spirit as healer of the earth/land, 213–218; of humans and earth, 195, 199, 200, 202–206, 216, 346; of the land, 28, 39, 133
- Hoekendijk, J C, 166
- holism, 84, 328, 339; holistic, mission in Christ, 164; philosophy/worldview, 297, 340
- holy, cords, 209, 211, 216; grove (see *marambatemwa*), 69, 169, 222, 227, 240, 248, 269, 277, 297; soil, 81, 86, 229; staff, 209, 216; water, 81, 86, 138, 211, 218, 229
- Holy Spirit, and biblical norms, 213; cleansing powers of, 27; in creation, 207, 212, 223; versus Destroyer, 218–229, 232, 233; and earth-care, 13, 16, 69, 114, 121, 203, 213, 223, 268, 285, 297; as fountain/source of life, 207, 209–218, 286, 329 guidance/revelations of, 182, 211, 213, 223; as healer of land/earth, 213–218; and healing, 24, 66, 67, 106, 195; human body as temple of, 172; and liberation struggle, 28; misinterpretation of, 211, 236; as *Mudzimu Unoyera*, 182; and theology, 9, 213; and unity in creation, 142; and witchcraft, 232–235
- Hore, Bishop, 117, 126, 127, 162
- Human Sciences Research Council, 315, 317
- icon, green icons, 343; tree as icon, 118; iconic leadership, 10, 16, 34, 106, 156–162, 164, 166, 168, 169, 177, 201, 203, 282, 283, 298, 301
- Idowu, E B, 102

- inculturation 101, 102, 325; inculturated environmental strategies, 279
- International Association of Mission Studies (IAMS), 324, 338
- IUCN (World Conservation Union), 273
- jatropha trees, 267
- Jehovah, see Elohim, Jahweh; 112, 116, 126, 131, 134, 137, 143, 163, 226
- Jerusalem, biblical, 80, 173; Black Jerusalem, 3, 33, 80, 107, 158; Zionist Jerusalem, 24, 27, 31, 107, 111, 136, 282
- Jordan baptism, 3, 67, 216, 217
- JPIC (Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation), 119, 290, 338
- jukwa* dance, 131
- Keyser, C, 99
- Kibicho, S G, 102
- Kibongi, B, 194, 195
- kiaat, 265
- kingdom of God, and earth-care, 14, 44, 55, 60, 62, 160, 168, 169, 181, 282, 291, 296, 347; and economy, 37; as new heaven and new earth, 123, 125, 135, 185, 282; spiritualised, 291; Zionist interpretation of, 291
- Kolić, C, 203, 206
- Kruger National Park, 324
- Kuala Lumpur report, 119
- kufukidza nyika*, see 'clothing the earth'; 41
- kugadzira* (home-bringing ceremony), 97, 106, 192
- kugara nhaka* (to inherit), 162
- Kumbirai, Fr, 97
- kuperekedza* (to accompany), 191
- kupira* (to venerate), 191
- Kyung, C H, 118, 119
- Lagerwerf L, 229, 230
- land, allocation/apportionment/distribution, 28, 304, 307–309, 329; exploitation, 159, 304; husbandry, 224, 225, 329; landless peasants/poor, 308, 309; legislation, 307; theology of the land, 308
- leucaena, 265–267
- liberation, African liberation theology, 325–327, 329; from colonialism, 156; and contextualisation, 6, 7, 194; of creation/environment, 4, 10, 13, 16, 37, 64, 118, 166, 177, 246, 275, 311, 324, 327, 328, 337, 345, 346; Latin American liberation theology, 325; of lost lands, 283; prophetic 291; religious-cultural, 22, 102, 326; socio-economic, 34, 37; socio-political, 27; struggle, 98, 190, 247, 308; theology/theologians, 11, 16, 28, 33, 162, 327; from fears of witchcraft, 230, 233; of women, 123, 134, 150, 161, 169
- liberating, church, 21, 22, 28, 33, 37; ideology, 250
- liberator, of environment, 129
- liturgy, green liturgy 66, 69, 328; of tree-planting eucharist, 45, 75–81, 84, 86, 164, 206, 298; for wildlife activities, 271; liturgical innovation, 13, 57, 59
- Lord's Acre (AAEC woodlot), 45, 81, 84
- Louw, A A, 99
- Mabvamaropa, 177
- Machingura, Revd, 198
- Machokoto, R Bishop, 47–49, 55, 57, 60, 89, 117, 137, 162, 212; Edwin (bishop's younger brother), 250
- mafukidzanyika* ceremonies, 136, 195, 251, 255, 271, 276, 277, 296, 338
- magic, 232, 233, 235
- Makamba, Moses, Bishop, 24
- Mandondo, Revd, 53, 60, 117, 126–128
- Mangombe, Ms (leader of women's club), 133, 147
- maporesanyika* ceremonies, 14, 52, 195, 198, 199, 201–203, 216, 221, 226, 234, 236, 255, 271, 276, 302
- marambatemwa*, 169, 222, 225, 227, 240, 248, 269, 271; spirit medium Marambatemwa (vaZarira), 313
- Maranke, Apostles, 66, 69, 227; Johane (founder leader), 24, 227, 300, 301
- Marinda, R Bishop, 10, 47, 73, 75, 77, 80, 114, 116, 117, 138, 144–146, 174, 198, 222–226, 247, 248, 338

Marinde, Revd, 117
 Martin, M L, 235, 236
 Masoro, S Revd, 60, 64
 Masuka, D, Bishop, 24
 Matonjeni, annual pilgrimage to, 272,
 277; Mwari of/shrines of, 41, 109, 144
 Matthai, W, 306, 343
 Mazero, Ms (women's club leader), 254
 Mbiti, J, 6, 103, 104, 151, 153, 178,
 180, 182, 184, 185
 McDaniel, J, 335, 336, 340
 McDonagh, S, 124, 126, 141, 142, 223,
 290
 McMastewr, J, 291
 Mendes, Chico, 243
 Messer, D E, 293
 Messianism, Messiah (African church
 leader), 156, 158, 301; messianic
 aspirations, 166; movements, 152
 Mfanyana, F, 161, 259
mhandara (virgin), 146
mhondoro (senior ancestor), 182
 Milingo, E, 229, 231
 mission(s), AIC/Zionist missions, 153,
 154, 156–158, 248, 298; earthkeep-
 ing/earthbound, 13, 39, 41, 51, 53,
 55, 59, 72, 126, 127, 132, 152, 158,
 160–163, 166, 170, 174, 177, 201,
 282, 283, 291, 292, 298, 310, 311,
 318, 327, 347; earthy missionary,
 177; holistic, 162, 164, 292; and land
 issues, 308; *missio dei*, 127, 129,
 132, 154, 169, 282; missionary nature
 of the church, 153, 169; missionaries
 and African religion, 96, 103, 154,
 194; partnership in mission, 320; to
 planet earth, 309, 312; policies, com-
 prehensive approach, 34; DRC
 99–102; RCC 96–99; mission
 station(s), 100, 101, 109, 308; theolo-
 gy, 104, 248
 missiology, earthkeeper's, 168; professor
 of, 313; Reformed, 99
 Modimo, 104, 111, 171, 172
 Mohlobi, V, 314, 318, 319
 Moltmann, J, 88, 93, 106, 107, 120–125,
 129, 142, 158, 207–209, 212, 216,
 217
 Moses, 28, 31, 63, 64, 116, 156, 168;
 Bishop Moses, 168
 Mosothoane, E K, 191
 Moyo, A, 182, 183
msasa/mtondo trees, 265
mubvumira (wild seringa), 265, 339
muchakata, tree, 60, 64, 253, 339;
 Muchakata (author's *chimurenga*
 name), 128, 129, 168; Muchakata
 nursery, 260, 262, 263, 266, 269
mudziyavashe trees, 265, 266, 339
mudzimu (ancestor) 189, 191; Mudzimu
 Mukuru (God), 182
mukurumbira (kiaat), 265
mukute (water berry), 266
mukwerere (rain ritual), 136, 277
munyai (messenger of Mwari cult), 100,
 279
 Mupakwa, Headman, 120
muponesi (saviour), 216
 Mupure, Bishop, 75, 121, 139, 167, 176,
 213, 221
 Mupui, A, 240
murapi (healer), 216, 217
muridzi wenyika (guardian of the land),
 16, 87, 125, 202; Christ as, 183, 216;
 Holy Spirit as, 217
muroyi (wizard), 24, 66, 71–73, 198,
 201, 211, 222, 226, 229; *muroyi*
wenyika (wizard of the land), 279, 296
 Musariri, D Bishop, 28, 31, 120, 128,
 130, 131
mushuku (wild loquat), 266
mupfura (marula), 266
 Musikavanhu, 136, 137
 Musiki (Creator), 112, 209
mutamba, 60, 266
 Mutendi, S Bishop (leader of ZCC), 24,
 27, 28, 107, 109, 111, 301; Nehemiah
 Mutendi, 34; Mutendi's church, 66, 70;
 as missionary, 153–158
 Mutikizizi, J, 43, 221, 224
mutobwe ('chewing gum'), 266
 Mutonga, R (coordinator Women's Desk),

- 122, 132, 133, 147, 161, 251, 252, 254, 255, 302
- mutumbu*, 44, 76, 80, 84, 116, 229
- Muuyu (Baobab) nursery, 266
- Muzambiringa (Zvanaka's *chimurenga* name), 167
- muzeze* tree, 339
- Mwari, 3, 14, 27, 39, 41, 43, 53, 62, 63, 70, 71, 97, 111, 114, 117, 124, 130, 132, 135, 136, 140, 163, 176, 186, 189, 222, 279; as Creator (Musiki), 93, 94, 97, 105, 106, 111, 114, 117, 121, 124, 143, 277, 297, 339; as Earth-keeper 75; versus earth-destruction, 139; the Liberator, 134; Mwari Baba (Father), 143; Mwari's co-workers, 127; Mwari cult, 95, 100, 105, 107, 110, 136, 141, 168; presence of (see God/immanence), 98, 116, 120, 124, 125; sovereignty of, 129, 130; and women, 122, 133
- nationalism, 27, 28
- natural resources, 311, 324, 329, 344
- Natural Resources Board, 75, 250, 264, 305, 322, 327
- Ndahwi, E Ms (women's club leader), 253, 254
- nganga*, 22, 106, 199, 201, 232; and AIC prophets 195; and Christ 193–196
- nganga Nzambi/nunkisi* 194
- ngozi*, 24, 44, 45, 76, 80, 81, 84, 86, 137, 145, 226, 229
- Nhongo, Bishop Darikai, 70–72, 126, 127, 162, 170; Evangelist Samuel, 70–72
- Niederberger, O, 98
- nihm trees, 267
- njuzu*, 273
- Nkulunkulu, 111, 171, 172
- Noah (of Old Testament), 63, 64, 137
- Norumedzo, 140
- Ntamburi, Z, 182, 183
- nursery, 46–49, 55, 57, 110, 177, 239, 241, 246, 250, 252, 253, 256, 261, 263, 268, 280, 283, 309, 319; as part of church, 161; development of, 3, 273; nursery keepers, 239, 241, 260, 261, 263, 268; self-support of, 267
- Nyamiti, C, 6, 102, 151, 152, 174, 182, 183
- Olivier, D, 314–316, 319
- Oosthuizen, G C, 21, 211, 235, 236
- Parks and Wildlife, 75, 250, 272
- Paseka*, 73, 156, 198, 223
- paschal celebration, 158, 199, 217, 301
- patriarchy, 299–303
- Pauw, B, 191
- Pneumatology, Christology and, 216, 285; contextual, 233; distorted, 235, 236; ecological, 16; green, 216, 285; 'war pneumatology', 31
- Pobee, J S, 178, 182, 183, 194
- population growth, 305–307
- praeparatio evangelica*, 102
- prefiguration paradigm, 103, 104
- prophets, earthkeeping, 1, 46, 72, 110, 202, 203, 222, 223, 229, 259; 'green prophets', 69; and *nganga*, 195, 201; 'war prophets', 69, 112; and witchcraft, 232–236
- prophetic, healing, 11, 195; movements, 22, 195
- pungwe*, 28, 70, 112
- purification, 24, 45, 81, 139, 199, 227
- Rahner, K, 170
- rain/rainfall, 55, 73, 76, 77, 86, 105, 116, 124, 132, 136–139, 187, 272, 277, 310; as divine response, 41, 81, 100, 116, 135, 137; forests, 311, 343; God as raingiver, 135–137, 140, 141, 176; no trees no rain, 43; pleas for, 100, 272; rituals (see *mukwerere*), symbol of, 45; ZCC and rainmaking, 107, 109
- reconciliation, in earthkeeping community, 201, 202, 211; between humans and creation, 44, 73, 87, 118, 128, 203; in witchcraft context, 232–234
- red mahogany, 46, 261, 265, 266, 268
- redemption, see, salvation; 13, 177, 181, 185, 194, 217, 226
- Reformation, 141

- Reformed Church of Zimbabwe (RCZ), 101
- research, The Pew Project, 'African Initiatives ...', 313; of ZIRRCO, 10, 240, 242, 245, 247, 248, 259, 260, 306, 323, 327, 340, 344; Research Institute of Unisa, 314
- revelation, biblical, 105; 'general/special', 103; of Holy Spirit, 182
- rhino, 312
- rites of passage, 178
- riverbank cultivation, 67, 77, 227, 257, 272, 279, 297
- Robert, D, 248
- roora, 146
- Ruether, R, 135, 142, 143, 147, 224, 225
- runyaradzo*, 106, 192, 193
- ruponeso*, 187, 190
- Ruwadzano*, 11, 251, 299
- sacrament(s), and earth-care, 14, 75, 81, 93, 161, 174, 198, 199, 201, 202, 217, 218, 282, 299, 301; and missionary awareness, 170; sacramental empowerment for earthkeeping, 201
- salvation, of all creation/environment, 14, 49, 51, 56, 59, 77, 87, 135, 140, 157, 164, 166, 174, 187, 189, 190, 198, 217, 282, 311, 328, 340, 346; cosmic 158, 185; as economic progress, 31; as future in heaven 34; history, 103; here and now/as well-being, 27, 34, 41, 44, 55, 135, 157; individual/personal/soul, 51, 67, 125, 157, 184, 230, 298; and liberation, 7, 158; Old Testament perspective on, 160; this-worldly, 123, 141, universal, 185, 328
- sanctification, see cleansing; 328
- Satan, 24, 66, 67, 156, 218, 222–224, 232; fighting creation, 80, 86, 218, 223
- scarab trees, 267
- schools, teachers and pupils in earth-care, 310; and woodlots, 264, 265; youth clubs at, 256, 257, 270, 309
- Schreiter, R J, 5–11, 151, 174, 180, 182, 183, 199, 200
- Scriptures, see Bible
- seed collection, 248, 256, 309
- sermons, *passim*; see tree-planting sermons; appendices I & II
- Setiloane, G, 102, 104, 114, 116, 171, 172, 194
- shamhu* (literally whip that is discipline), 140
- shavi* spirits, 131, 144
- Shoko, A Bishop, *Ndaza* Zionist leader, 24
- Shonganiso Mission, 53, 60, 112
- Shorter, A, 199, 200, 229–235
- sin(s)/sinfulness, see confession of; ecological/environmental, 8, 13, 43, 59, 63, 67, 69, 71, 75, 77, 127, 159, 181, 198, 200, 221–227, 280, 302, 328, 340; original 62, 63; ecological sinners, 57, 198
- soil erosion, 67, 69, 225, 249
- Spirit, of God, and earth, 3, 4, 125, 184; in creation 107, 119, 120, 207; in trees, 43; coolness of, 224; cosmic Spirit, 207–209; Creator Spirit, 213; 'manipulated' Spirit, 235
- spirit medium(s), 3, 49, 50, 69, 98, 112, 129, 134, 167, 168, 185, 186, 189, 226, 259, 269, 272, 274, 281, 297, 313, 322
- steward/stewardship of earth, environment, nature, 38, 43, 45, 49, 59, 60, 62, 67, 73, 86, 114, 116, 120, 122, 124, 125, 132, 144, 150, 160, 163, 193, 202, 229, 290–292, 297, 299, 302, 303, 315, 328, 332, 339, 341, 342, 347
- suffering, see Christ, God; of black people in South Africa, 173; fellowship of, 124; human, 231, 235, 326; oppressive, 172; redemptive, 172, 173, 177
- Sundkler, B G M, 21, 156, 184
- synthesis, of African and Christian truths, 96, 191
- Tagore, R, 119
- Tawoneichi, D, 43, 55, 56, 88, 89, 176, 212
- Taylor, J V, 94, 184, 190, 191, 229, 223

- TEE, 33
- Tempels, P, 6, 8
- theology, of abundance/compassion, 161, 169; African, 6, 8, 14, 101, 104, 105, 110, 134, 174, 182, 184, 191, 324–326, 338; AIC – enacted/celebrated, 4–9, 21, 44, 93, 152, 209, 248, 249, 281, 325; African traditional, 104; of creation, 106, 337, 338; dominion 290; earthkeeping/environmental, 10, 39, 59, 73, 96, 138, 212, 239, 240, 249, 280, 285, 297, 338; feminist, 333; incarnational, 105; of the land, 308, local, 8; people's, 11, 283; of religions, 105, 168, 170, 328; South African Black Theology, 325; theologia crucis, 152, 166; *theologia gloriae*, 152; Western, 93, 104, 106, 326
- Timberlake, L, 268
- Tizai, 272
- Toft, J, 267, 272
- Torres and Fabella, 328
- traditional, customs and wildlife, 271; concepts of God, 94; religion/rituals, 97, 101, 102, 191; and earthkeeping, 4, 11, 14, 86, 94 281; values revitalized, 277
- transformation, of culture/religion (as, mission strategy), 99, 111, 171, 177, 234, 235, 281
- trees, of consent, exorcism, protection, royalty, 339; 'gospel of trees', 56; as kin (brothers and sisters) of humans, 81, 84, 86, 118, 228, 234, 235, 241, 248–252, 256, 267, 271, 272, 281, 285, 298, 302, 312, 319; eucharist, 8, 14, 16, 41, 42, 69, 73, 75–77, 87–89, 116, 117, 121, 157, 158, 161, 167, 168, 170, 174, 177, 181, 193, 199, 216, 218, 223, 227, 298, 301; inherited from Christ, 162, 163; ministry of reconciliation, 44; national tree-planting day, 265; sermons, 10, 39, 48, 60, 64, 135, 137, 183, 301; in South Africa, 317; traditionalist, 130, 131; women's, 122, 147
- tribal, politics, 27, 33, 101; solidarity, 178
- trinity, interpretation (perichoresis) of, 208, 211
- Tucker, M E, 330, 333
- Tutu, D, 102, 325
- Ukpong, 101, 326
- ungano yembeu* (seed conference), 109, 110, 217
- University of South Africa (Unisa), 248, 313, 314, 319
- UN Stewardship Council, 320
- uroyi* (see wizardry), 66, 69, 70, 203, 218, 221, 223–228, 233–235; *misasa yevaroyi* 228; *uroyi hwenyika*, 16, 223, 286
- Van der Merwe, W J, 99
- vate* (paternal aunt), 144–146
- Vondo Mukozho (Mwari cult messenger), 100
- Venn's three-selves principle, 283
- Verkuy, J, 153, 192
- Walls, A, 231, 234
- Wapendama, K Bishop, 39, 41, 43, 46, 51, 126, 127, 160, 161, 198
- war of the trees, 4, 9, 47, 49, 117, 126, 127, 130, 161, 189, 260, 261, 267, 277, 285, 297, 310, 329, 340, 343, 346
- Warneck, G, 99
- water resources (see riverbank cultivation); 257, 272–274, 303, 323; protection of fountains, pools, rivulets, 272; protection of, in South Africa, 317; sil-tation, 257, 273; water holes, 273; pollution of, 273
- Wei-ming, Tu, 334–336
- wetlands, 273
- Wiebe, Rudy, 143
- wilderness, 132, 140, 193, 309–312, 323
- wildlife, 46, 69, 70, 144, 177, 240, 251, 257, 269, 270, 303, 311, 312, 322, 323; anti-poaching measures, 269, 270; game parks (Hwange/Gonare-zhou), 309; game sanctuaries, 170,

- 240, 251, 257, 269–272, 274; hunting laws, 270; Parks and Wildlife, 248; wildlife custodians/eucharist/liturgies, 271
- Wilkinson, L, 93, 124, 126, 142, 143
- witchcraft, accusations, 229–231, 234; affliction, 203; eradication, 100, 106, 230; witch hunts (in Europe), 141, 230
- Witvliet, 102
- wizard(s), detection of, 233, 234; spoiling earth, 3, 71, 72, 199–201, 211, 223, 228, 229, 235, 279, 285, 296
- wizardry, see *uroyi*; 100, 232, 233; against creation/the land, 16, 24, 69, 70, 84, 87, 218, 221, 223–228, 230, 234, 328, 340; in *chimurenga*, 28; and water pollution, 273
- Wokudenga, 109
- Wokumusoro, 14, 94, 121, 125, 279
- Women's Desk, of *Fambidzano*, 33, 302; of ZIRRCO, 122, 132, 134, 146, 147, 161, 239, 250–255, 258, 260, 273, 302, women's clubs, 122, 150, 239, 242, 252, 253; income generating projects of, 252, 255; leadership of, 299
- woodlot(s), 46, 57, 63, 73, 81, 129, 147, 177, 202, 218, 226, 229, 241, 246, 248, 252, 253, 256, 263, 264, 267, 268, 275, 280, 283, 302, 307, 319; after-care of trees in woodlots, 84, 268; woodlot committees, 260
- World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP), 315
- World Resources Institute, 323
- worldview(s), 101, 111, 203, 279, 297, 315, 331–335, 339, 345
- WWF (World-wide Fund), 248, 272, 313, 322
- Yahweh, 104, 106, 110, 111, 136, 171, 172
- Youth Desk/work/clubs, 239, 245, 255, 256, 270, 303, 309
- Zambezi valley, 309
- ZCC (Zion Christian Church), 24, 27, 33, 66, 107, 110, 153, 156, 301; mission campaigns of, 153–157, 170, 293
- Zerbe, 128, 135
- Zimbabwe Zion Apostolic Church, 43, 47
- Ziki, Chief, 145
- Zion Christian Church of St Aron, 75
- Zion City (of ZCC), 24, 33, 34, 107, 110, 136, 154, 157, 282
- Zion in Patmos, 31
- ZIRRCO, 10, 16, 17, 39, 50, 69, 126, 130, 133, 147, 164, 182, 201, 239, 260, 270, 303, 322, 323, 324, 340, 345; administration/organisation of, 239, 241, 245, 246; bonds with grass-roots society, 247; contribution of, 274–286; and female emancipation, 254, 255; and government, 57; story of, 347; and wildlife, 272; ZIRRCO and F & E relations, 319, 320
- Zvanaka, S Revd, 10, 117, 118, 138 139, 167, 195, 198, 239, 240, 246–248, 259, 338
- Zvokuwomba, T, 11