

# Reflections on a missional ecclesiology for Africa's expressions of Christianity through the Tswana lens



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**Dates:**  
Received: 11 Apr. 2016  
Accepted: 28 Sept. 2016  
Published: 18 Nov. 2016

**How to cite this article:**  
Henry, D., 2016, 'Reflections on a missional ecclesiology for Africa's expressions of Christianity through the Tswana lens', *Verbum et Ecclesia* 37(1), a1612. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/ve.v37i1.1612>

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The continent of Africa has indubitably shown exponential growth in the spread on the Christian faith since its introduction by colonial missionaries. It can thus be argued that a plurality of African Christianities thrive on African soil and are exported, through missionaries, to the developed world. This growth in Christian converts does not come without challenges to the future of the Church in Africa; these challenges abound and need to be articulated and worked through contextually and biblically.

**Intradisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary implications:** This article seeks to explore four missional challenges to African ecclesiology under a broad understanding of what can be termed a missional ecclesiology through utilising the Tswana world view as a case study. The article will challenge readers on the importance of continuity within the Christian faith in terms of a holistic biblical world view while touching on the overarching importance of contextualisation and Gospel adaptation. The article proposes a missional epistemological identity as opposed to a typical Western epistemological approach to mission work and contextualisation within the safeguards of an evangelical anchor. The interdisciplinary nature of this study is such that it deals with anthropological realities within a historical framework that impact in the traditional ways Christian practitioners approach the mission of God through his church in Africa specifically. The article challenges the comfortable and complicit attitudes related to the evident growth in Christian faith in Africa with the sobering reality of discernment in praxis and missional enterprise.

## Introduction

The African continent has indubitably shown exponential growth in the spread on the Christian faith since its introduction by colonial missionaries. It can thus be argued that a plurality of faces or expressions of Christianity that thrive on the African soil and are exported, through missionaries, to the developed world. This growth in Christian converts does not come without challenges to the future of the Church in Africa. In fact, the growth is largely disputed among various circles of evangelicals, and, at the least, one must concede in the urgent need for both substance and integrity to accompany the growth of Christianity throughout the African continent. This article seeks to explore four missional challenges to African ecclesiology under a broad understanding of what can be termed a missional ecclesiology with the Tswana context playing interlocutor.

## African Christianities

Christianity in Africa has resulted in the fastest growing, most controversial, most dynamic and most schismatic churches in the world. It is safe to say that all Christian communities in Africa (south of the Sahara) are experiencing growth, including Roman Catholic, Protestant, as well as African independent-type Churches. This growth has, in fact, surpassed all predictions by colonial missionaries. Most African societies south of the Sahara would be considered 'Christianised' and have had a meaningful penetration of what can be termed Christian influence that at times resembles Christian principles. This Gospel permeation must be celebrated and recognised for its contribution towards the evangelisation of the so-called Dark Continent.

Although African nations face very serious problems, such as poverty and disease, ethnic hostilities, non-democratic governments and religious persecution, scores of African people are still turning to Jesus every day. Churches and pastors are playing an increasingly important role in the day-to-day lives of ordinary Africans seeking to answer life's increasing complexities.

**Note:** This article is partially based on the author's thesis for the degree of Magister Artium in missiology at the Faculty of Theology, University of Pretoria, South Africa, with supervisor Prof. Cornelius J.P. Niemandt, received 2010, available here: <http://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/28826/dissertation.pdf?sequence=1>

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There is a rebound of balance in the expression of Christian love and mission in both boldness and humility that are emerging from both the ecumenical (see *Together Towards Life*, WCC 2012) and the evangelical perspectives in movements such as Lausanne, which affirmed its commitment to mission and love in the Cape Town Commitment of 2010.

The Pentecostal and charismatic waves have demonstrated an increasing importance of the presence and evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit among Christians in Africa, which I believe has led to the phenomenal growth throughout the continent. There is a connectedness between the holistic world view of many Africans to life in the Spirit and the abundant life spoken of by Jesus Christ in John 10:10. JD Grear, a conservative Southern Baptist, and a rising younger evangelical leader and thinker, reminds evangelicals, who have been largely criticised in ecumenical and traditional sectors for a lack of compassion and involvement in society, that the fullness of the Spirit and depth in the Gospel are inseparable, and one always leads you to the other (Grear 2014). Sanneh goes beyond Jenkin's (2007) observation of the growing Global South and makes a pertinent observation (regarding this growth) when he states that charismatic Christianity has been the driving engine of the Third Awakening and is largely responsible for the dramatic shift in the gravity of Christianity. The statistics reflect the character of the situation. In 1970 there were over 72 million Pentecostals or Charismatics; in 2005, it was nearly 590 million. Projections estimate that by 2025, Pentecostals or Charismatics will number nearly 800 million (Sanneh 2008:275). '... Pentecostal Christianity may become the most widespread form of the religion, with as yet unquantifiable effects on mainline Churches and on global politics' (Sanneh 2008:275). There exists, within Neo-African Christendom, a competitive spirit of progress, evangelisation and Christian propaganda that remain largely unbalanced by amorphous statistics, unqualified data and a somewhat reticent desire for macro-contextual research. With these figures and the various forms Christianity is expressed throughout Africa, it is undoubtedly diverse and focussed on post-colonial forms reflecting traditional values (in the case of African Independent Churches [AIC]) or Western ones (in the case of NPC).

## A pan-African 'Weltanschauung' (world view)

Due to the phenomenal growth of Christianity in Africa, it is important for those investigating this growth to understand the African world view as this is very different to a Western world view in seeking to contextualise effectively and meet the diverse needs of Africa's people. Furthermore, any worthwhile conversation about the mission of the Church has to take the culture of the people among whom mission work is done very seriously. Therefore, it is necessary to engage people's world views and exegete their respective culture. There is even a limitation to any discussion on African world view as if this concept is all-embracing itself.

The author uses this term to distinguish largely between competing world views in question and how they correlate and differentiate when it comes to African and Western Christianity.

Understanding one's world view is paramount, as it remains a core issue in cultural studies to move from the exterior layers of cultural manifestation inwards. Kwast (2009) helpfully describes the layers of culture as a movement from behaviour, values, beliefs to world view, which is the fundamental core of a person's makeup:

Worldview relates to how an individual understands and interprets events that occur in his life and in the lives of those around him. One's worldview is, simply put, your view of the world. (see O'Donovan 1996:3)

It is what you presuppose, and it is the axis around which you view life, interpret your surroundings and orientate your soul (Ryken 2006:7). 'Worldviews are maps of the universe that give people some kind of understanding on how the visible world and the unseen world work' (Walls 1996:189). Thus, different groups of people around the world have different world views as a world view is geographically, religiously, socially, culturally and socio-economically determined. At its most basic level, one's world view is determined by the individual's community, as this has a primary influence on an individual's life. Having said that an individual's world view is geographically bound, I would also state that even people who live in a similar or close geographical proximity to one another may have different albeit similar world views.

Is there any importance in understanding the concept of 'world view' when it comes to missiological issues? I would argue that an understanding of the 'African world view' (and further contextual world views) will be a great help as we sketch the way forward for Christianity's continued growth on the African continent. Understanding a particular people's world view will give great insight into why a particular group of people live or act the way they do. Furthermore, our world view always reveals our fundamental religious commitments (see Ryken 2006:7–11); thus, the task of linking the Bible's world view (truth) to people's world views is the task of the Church. Assisting in understanding world views and in evaluating and correcting the mission of the church is one of the tasks of missiology. There's no doubt that in Africa, there must be a move from mere outward expressions of Christian behaviour, towards a transformed core and reflective of the reality Paul mentions in 2 Corinthians 5:17 – a new creation!

## The Tswana world view

We have established that each community and grouping in the world has their own world view that is based on their specific context and is influenced by culture, religion, teachers, elders, politics and socio-economic status. We now make the point that it is important to understand that there are many points of commonality between various traditional

African groupings. This is illustrated by the fact that many people of the continent have a stronger sense of being African than of belonging to a specific country (cf. O'Donovan 1996:4). The author does not presuppose in any way that this African commonality transcends completely contextual realities. This commonality or 'sense of being African' can be illustrated by the elements that make up the map of the Tswana world view which are: a holistic view of life; belief in the living dead; relationship driven; its view of community; and the nature of its spirituality.

## Religion and spirituality

An important starting point for understanding the African world view is the idea that most African societies do not separate religious and secular issues because Africans have a holistic view of life. In addition, 'African societies are rich in myths, rituals, social institutions, ethics, doctrines from their beliefs, and places or objects of importance' (Mokgwathisi 2001:4). This richness permeates life and brings out a kaleidoscope of colours and contours that shape society in a holistic way. Religion permeates African life and rituals; the idea of atheism is an anomaly to many traditional Africans.

In the religion of Batswana, the supreme or divine being is called Modimo. Modimo is holy and sacred and is regarded with the highest respect possible. Therefore, to Batswana, the songs, prayers, rituals and even material goods set aside to Modimo are sacred. One can further state that work dedicated to Modimo is considered 'sacred work' and is set in contrast to secular work; which is not rendered as a religious duty, or in the name of one's Divinity (Mokgwathisi 2001). In the Botswana context, there are some people who have special involvement in rituals, such as dikgosi (kings) and dingaka (healers), and due to the nature of their work (being dedicated to Modimo) their participation is considered sacred. Having said that, I need to reiterate the fact that in African religions there is no distinction between sacred and the secular:

... in most of the African societies, the words sacred and secular have no equivalents in the local languages. There is no distinction between spiritual and material matters. Religion in African societies is all-permeating. It is a thin, invisible, but strong thread that runs through the whole life of the individual and community ... no one can be said to be non-religious. Africans live religion. (Kealotswe 1999:226; Mokgwathisi 2001)

Mokgwathisi (2001) illustrates the point of religious permeation in Botswana further:

... you might remember that when you grew up you were not allowed to wake up after sunrise. Every child had to wake up early in the morning before sunrise. By rising early in the morning the people place themselves in a position to meet the divine before anything else. This then gives them the opportunity to receive refreshment and blessing they need for the day. The fresh blessings come with the rising of the sun, which in some cases symbolizes the eyes of the divine or the supreme ... if you miss such an opportunity you may have the universe sleep on you because you came when others had taken all the blessing. So waking up early in the morning is a ritual and prayer. (p. 6)

Spirituality has been described as 'those attitudes, beliefs and practices which animate people's lives and help them to reach out toward the super-sensible realities' (Wakefield 1983:549):

Most Africans believe that there is a God, and therefore also believe in a world of spirits impacting the physical realm from time to time. One can go as far as deducing that the African worldview is 'Theocentric'. (Kealotswe 1999:226)

Africans are inherently spiritual, and the viewpoint many take on the relationship between the physical and spiritual reality is unique and important for any study of the African world view (Kalilombe 1994). John Mbiti (1970) illustrates the importance of the unseen world of the spirits to Africans when he states:

Whatever science may do to prove the existence or non-existence of the spirits, one thing is undeniable, namely, that for African peoples the spirits are a reality which must be reckoned with, whether it is a clear, blurred or confused reality. (p. 91)

Any study of African spirituality cannot ignore the inherent influence of African traditional religion. To many, even within the 'Church', African traditional religion is a way of life (Kealotswe 1999) and in many cases assists Africans to deal with the many fears and insecurities inherent in their world view. For an in-depth discussion on this, see 'Mission in an African way' (Odura *et al.* 2008:19–23, 40, 73–85).

## Relationships explored

Relationships are paramount in the African world view; one's whole life is existence in relation! Mokgwathisi (2001) states:

The individual exists for the community, and the community exists for the individual. The individual and the community exist in relation to the environment and to the divine and the departed. The relationships are intertwined and interdependent. (p. 6)

One of the common denominators among African world views is the emphasis on life in community, that is, living together with others of the same, sometimes extended, clan. The community imparts identity to the individual, and life is always seen in relation to one's community (Parratt 1995). 'There is a strong feeling of common participation in life, a common history, and a common destiny' (O'Donovan 1996:4). Thus, there is a sense in which the individual exists for the community and the community for the individual. Community and individual identities are intertwined in Africa and cannot be ignored. Life is essentially existence in community, for the life of an individual is only grasped as it is shared in empirical and super-empirical forms (Parratt 1995).

Most African societies believe in a continuous and eternal life so that when people die, they simply transfer from this world into the world of the ancestors or the divine. They are the living dead (coined from John Mbiti) and continue to live as they used to in this life. They remain responsible members of the community at large and are always invited to events of

community significance (e.g. births, weddings and funerals); they are called upon in times of difficulties, and they play an active role in the community of the living (Mokgwathisi 2001).

A unique feature among the Tswana, in Botswana, is that they have not excluded the possibility of reincarnation. In their local dialect, Setswana, names such as '*Obusitwe*' [one who has been returned] or '*Oduetse*' [who has been paid back] suggest that a departed person has been reincarnated (in the sense of the spirit coming back to be reborn in another body) in that child. Therefore, this is yet another way that the living dead influence and interact with the living world.

## Foundations of holistic missional architecture

Africa is indeed a continent of immense potential; however, there are many challenges that Africans face in this new era of 'post-independency', challenges that need to be uniquely dealt with by African scholars and concerned ordinary Christians dedicated to the cause of Christ for our continent. Figure 1 illustrates four problems that the Church faces in Africa today. These challenges are to be seen primarily in the sphere of African ecclesiology (cf. Muzorewa 1985:98–99).

### Continuity

Despite the incredible, albeit surprising, growth of African Christianity, it still seems that the Christian faith in its current and historical forms remains somewhat alien to many African believers. Traditional (mainline) Christianity in Africa has in many respects fostered a dichotomy between Christian faith and traditional religion which leaves many African believers somewhat existentially estranged, grappling to relate with their new-found faith to their African world, and this applies to Botswana as well. One may sometimes hear of Christian faith being identified solely as a 'white man's' religion.

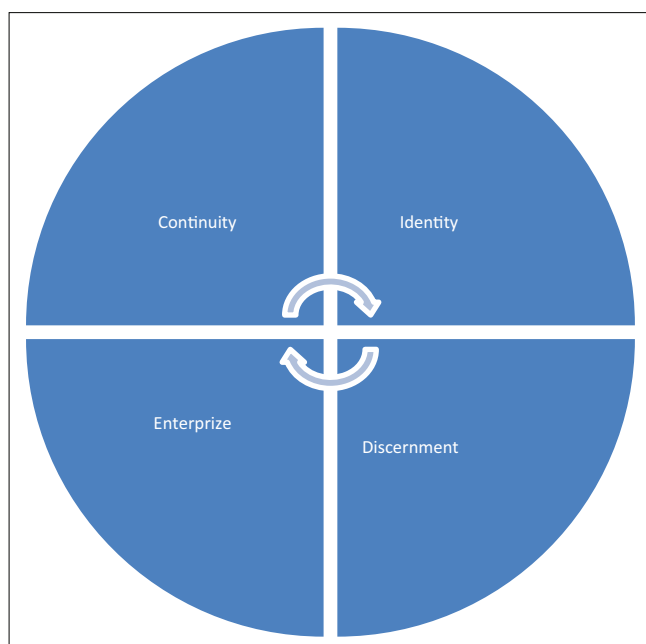


FIGURE 1: Problems that the African Church faces today.

This problem is further compounded in our era by the rapid rate of urbanisation and development in Southern Africa and the continual and relentless corrosion of traditional values in post-colonial African societies. This struggle raises questions like: What is the meaning of being African today? What is the role of tradition? Who is right: tradition or Western systems? These are some of the pertinent questions many Africans face today and will increasingly become central to African discourse and theology. These questions are such that dominate ecumenical dialogue and occupy platforms where the views from the margins are expressed, and the needs and injustices are highlighted.

If we are to believe that theology is always contextual and the Christian faith and message 'liquid' and inherently adaptable and translatable, then it naturally follows that what we need to do in Africa is to establish continuity with the African world view and bridge the gap between the Christian faith and traditional religion as well as the transforming cultural and 'religious' scene. Therefore, an African theology is needed to accomplish this, and African scholars need to employ relevant theological 'tools' (see Muzorewa 1985:97–99) to formulate Christian theological tenets within the framework of African thought and world view. Muzorewa (1985) rightly states:

Theology, if there is to be continuity with traditional religion, must be responsive to African cosmology and a worldview centred on a concern for survival, for, unless any given 'truth' leads to or enhances survival, it cannot be deemed crucial for the African. (p. 99)

Although this statement is set in a time that would have personified this truth, it still contains an element of truth in that what must be totally avoided is an 'ivory tower' theology. Such a theology will only further enhance the African existential dichotomy. What is needed is ontological and experiential change – truth must affect one's being and living. Thus, the primary change needed is one of re-balance in mission with boldness and humility, discipleship and compassion, truth and unity, rich and poor, cultural sensibility and dependence on the Holy Spirit (cf. *Together Towards Life*, WCC 2012 & 'The Cape Town Commitment', Lausanne 2011).

### Identity

This factor is crucial in understanding context and applying truth. However, it is unfortunate that much of the colonial era's missiological endeavours have been tainted by the colonial influence as much of the recognised work done was on the part of the Mission Churches or colonial (Western) missionaries. This is especially true when it comes to theology and formulating missional praxis within the Church in Africa. As has already been established, we cannot escape the fact that many people working among the 'natives of Africa' of any given country throughout the continent in the colonial era worked closely with the colonisers. And in all honesty, it was difficult to differentiate between the motives of the missionaries and colonisers in that era as they were so interlinked. Much has been written on this topic, and it is not



the purpose or intent of this article to decide whether their motives or methods were correct or justifiable.

Nonetheless, it must be stated that the progress of spiritual growth in Africa was not enhanced by the coming of Christianity under these circumstances; it was disrupted and often distorted. Muzorewa rightly states: 'Theology must, to establish and preserve the identity of the African people, resist any tendencies toward domination and dehumanisation' (Muzorewa 1985:99).

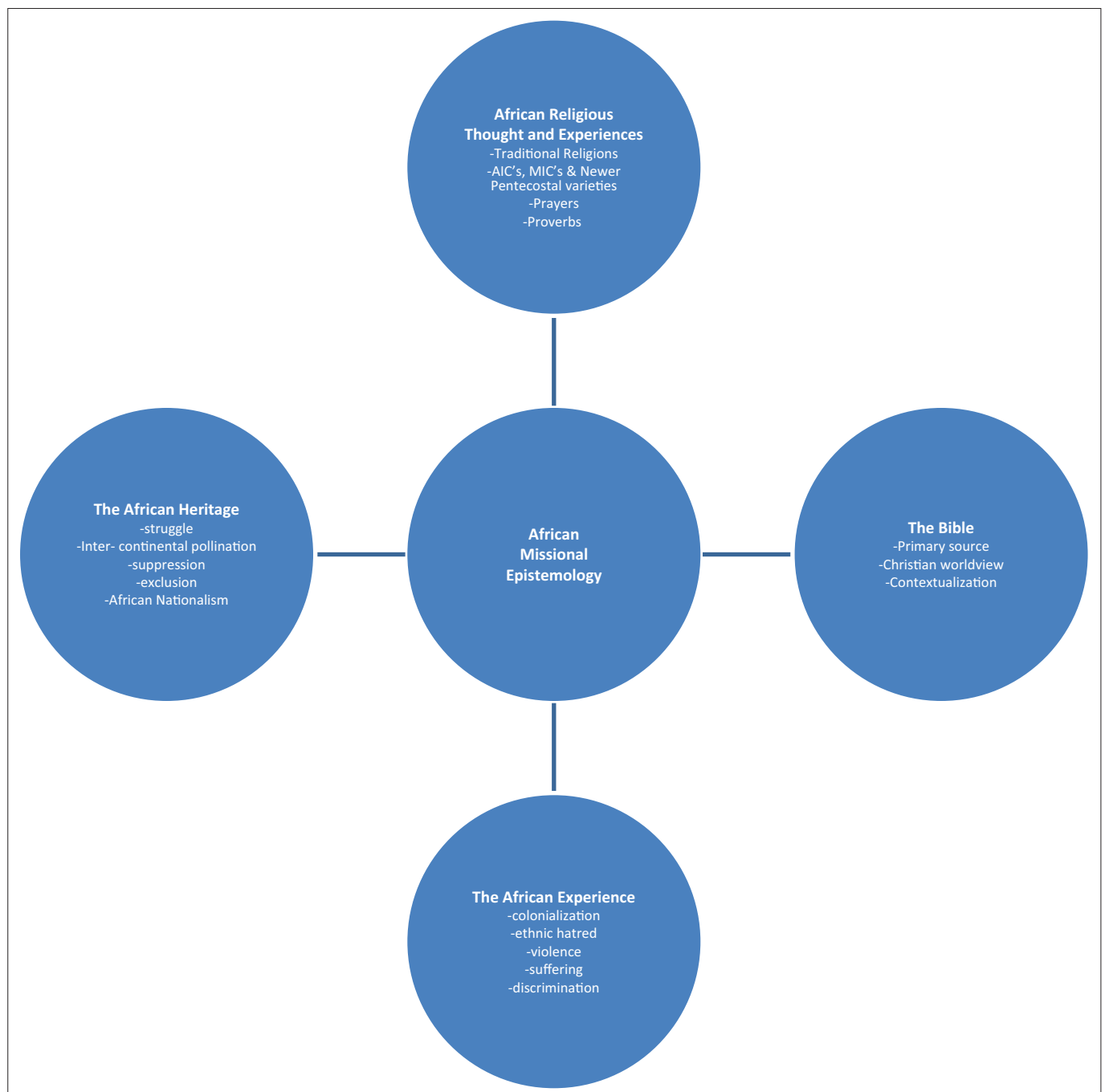
What is needed is the utilisation of an African epistemology as the governing factor defining the meaning of 'text' within the world view of the people it is presented to. Such an

approach should address questions like: What is the source of an African missional Church? Where should we begin?

As Figure 2 shows, there is no single source, although there is a sense of primacy, for a missional ecclesia, rather, there are a plethora of sources which can contribute to the epistemological core of the broader spectrum of African theology, and by implication missiology.

### Discernment

I wholly agree with Muzorewa (1985:99–100) when he points out the fact that the African Church is constantly finding herself in changing socio-political situations, which means a



**FIGURE 2:** African missional epistemology.

theology of the Church's responses and involvement is needed. A global African theology is the only hope in providing a 'home-grown', holistic, African interpretation of the times that affect Church praxis. Unless the African Church develops a distinctly African theology, how can the problem in question be solved? However, we need a framework within which people may understand and actively respond to political, social and religious issues, and one that is not in isolation from global trends and Christianity. Muzorewa (1985:100) suggests a de-compartmentalisation of African life in order to recapture the holistic philosophy which is a genuine African lifestyle. I do not fully agree with the term 'de-compartmentalisation' employed here and suggest, rather, an uncovering of the African world view and life that will lead to critical reflection, movement, continuity and discontinuity. It is not simply an issue of semantics, rather one of theological 'tools' employed.

The experience of AICs makes a valuable contribution to the framework necessary in the deconstruction of the African world view and the movement into a new era of doing theology the African way. This idea is now explored as we look at the developments in the AIC.

AIC as a source of African theology must be included in any attempt to understand the world view of the African people they minister to so effectively. One of the most prominent changes in the social life in Africa over the last century has been the shift from rural areas and villages to urban areas and cities (see Oduro *et al.* 2008:171–175). Along with this shift, many cultural and social changes have taken place that continue to affect those living in urban areas as well as those 'left' in the rural areas and villages. Within this change, forces such as politics, development, education, entertainment, economy and city life all come into play which leads many African people to feel caught between two conflicting worlds (see Oosthuizen 1997:9; Pretorius 2000:117). In fact, many Africans experience difficulty trying to adapt their traditional way of life to a world that does not care about their African ideas of family, community, time, possessions, spirituality, et cetera (Oduro *et al.* 2008:174). Urbanisation is both positive and negative (see Kiernan 2004:51–53), but the urban areas remain, however, important centres of ministry for Churches. AICs have taken bold steps in ensuring that urban centres are permeated with the gospel and many communities have been established with the sole purpose of replicating family life in urban centres bringing harmony through relationships in order to cope with the challenges of modern urban dwelling. AICs' contribution to the wider Christian body relates to the way they effectively meet the need for family in an increasingly fractured society: the way friendships are fostered where members practically help one another with life issues. The fears and insecurities of many are dealt with in a serious manner and African answers (although not always sound and biblical) are given to problems that arise and challenge members. AICs are characteristically more multicultural and accepting more than traditional Churches and provide a place where both men and women are seen as gifts to the Church and are encouraged to utilise their gifting

through the empowering of the Holy Spirit. Their ministry is both 'attractional' and 'incarnational', and no one is limited by race, gender or lack of education or money (see Oduro *et al.* 2008:175–190).

One of the weaknesses of mission-initiated Churches (MICs) is that they tend to employ ministry frameworks that have little relevance to their specific context. This can be seen through models of Churches that have historically been employed in Church planting and revitalisation throughout the continent. Few have been truly effective, primarily because it is ontologically defective and epistemologically remiss. MIC can learn from AIC and the wider neo-Pentecostal movement in their 'missional hermeneutic' towards a relevant African missional ecclesiology. There is need for honest dialogue and communal missional discernment in Church life within the Southern African scene – this can only be achieved through the enabling of the Holy Spirit. It is not the easy route, but as AIC and neo-Pentecostals continue to show, it is the most effective route that makes sense to our context.

## Enterprise

The exploits of the Western missionaries were quite fruitful in Africa. Mission stations where missionaries lived and worked were developed throughout Africa. Hospitals and schools were built. Much was developed and achieved from this standpoint. However, one of the current missiological issues is related to the presence and continuous influence of missionaries and 'mother' Churches in Africa. The view of many African theologians, pastors and Christians is that, although the African Church is expanding physically, their presence to a large extent is stifling the spiritual growth potential of Africans. In the early years the missionaries gathered those who converted to the Christian faith at the mission stations as they desired to protect the new converts from 'heathen' practices. The missionaries gave the new converts all that they needed but somehow gave them little responsibility or freedom of choice (see Oduro *et al.* 2008:5–7). Pobee (1979:62) rightly states that this policy of missions inevitably undermined the unity of the traditional society and the authority of traditional rulers, thereby calling forth their anger and resentment of the Christian faith. This policy in turn fostered cultural segregation and dependence on the missionaries for food, clothing and education. This protection hindered the translation of the Christian faith as the newer converts were unable to interact holistically and fruitfully with the prevailing culture of the day shedding light on its inherent weaknesses and elevating its obvious strengths. Mission was restricted as the faith continued to remain largely alien to many Africans.

The former colonisers still seem to exert a paternal influence in post-colonial Africa that can be classified as neo-colonialism in the sense that an old system has been reshaped and has reappeared in a different context shaping the praxis of mission Churches. Also, the issue of foreign aid, although received with gratitude, over time inevitably fosters a spirit

of dependency to donor Churches or organisations (see Muzorewa 1985:100). This in itself can hinder mission as policies, methods, means, ministry and results need to be measured by non-African standards to keep the funds flowing. AICs' contribution to the wider mission of the Church is that the surprising growth of the AICs in the past century in Africa shows how much mission can be done for free. AICs are not dependant on finance (especially external or Western) to do ministry. Even missionaries from AICs do not cost anything to local Churches as they are sent with the understanding that they are to be self-supporting. Oduro *et al.* (2008) make a pertinent point when they state:

What the AICs have learnt is that the real mission of the Church is to show those around us that God is alive and at work inside us ... and all this good news can be shared with the people around us for free ... (pp. 159–161)

AICs and MICs alike have noted that a paradigm shift has occurred missiologically where Africa is no longer the object of mission, but has become a participant in mission sending, not only in Africa, but throughout the world. This can be seen in the proliferation of AICs in diaspora faith communities worldwide. Where traditional mission sending agencies have been cutting down on missionaries sent to Africa and other parts of the world, this has given the African Church 'space' to contribute. This trend is encouraging, as it shows that Africans are continuing to take initiative when it comes to missions throughout Africa, and the ends of the world (Ac 1:8).

The AIC contribution to both the Church's missional self-understanding and to its missional praxis is significant and important for mainline and MICs to consider. AICs are found in over 59 countries throughout the world and are not uniform in any way. Oduro suggests that studies conducted in 2001 confirm that there are more than 83 million AIC members with at least 10 000 different denominations in Africa alone. AICs are not uniform in size, beliefs or praxis. However, despite all this, the importance of the AIC movement cannot be questioned. Bosch (quoted by Oduro) considered AIC to be the most remarkable new development in the worldwide history of Christianity (Oduro *et al.* 2008:11):

Few students of the African religious scene today would doubt the importance and the significance – also for the future of Christianity on this continent – of African Independent Churches. These Churches ... may indeed be seen as the fifth major Church type, after the Eastern Orthodox Churches, the Roman Catholic Church, the Protestant Reformation and the Pentecostal Churches. (Daneel 1987:9)

AIC members display an enviable quality in that when members of a particular AIC migrate to other countries, they simply take their Church with them and start another branch where they are located in what is called the African diaspora communities (Oduro *et al.* 2008:12–13). Pobee and Ositelu (1998:52) reported that there were at least 20 AIC congregations in Amsterdam alone. The presence of these diaspora faith communities is increasing exponentially in Western countries all over the world. These Churches are characteristically very

sure of the particular mission as given to them by the Holy Spirit and are very bold to evangelise where they are located. This can attribute to their phenomenal growth especially in Africa. Oduro *et al.* (2008:12), state that even when those Europeans who have no religion see them 'as unauthorised intruders from poor nations, they refuse to apologise for their coming, since "the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof"' (Gerloff 2001:177).

It is of utmost importance for the African Church at large to further develop its 'theology of mission'. 'The Church needs to reformulate its self-understanding so that it may genuinely know itself as a part of Christ's mission in the world' (Muzorewa 1985:100) – this is the crux of this article. The African Church must recognise its missional identity and formulate a contextually relevant African missional ecclesiology. What is our response to Scripture's missional injunction? What is our response to the poor and the wealthy, the sick, those stigmatised and the disenfranchised? What methodology needs to be employed to further the cause of an African missiology? These are some of the essential questions an African 'theology of mission' must address.

The need for an African missional Church is imminent and essential to the health and vibrancy of African Christianity – AICs have shown MICs and other Christians, both in Africa and elsewhere, that this is indeed needed and achievable, not only in the West, but also in Africa.

## Conclusion

The growth of the African Church in recent years has been phenomenal, albeit surprising. Its effects have been felt around the world through a diaspora of African believers working abroad, establishing faith communities in foreign lands, taking the Gospel back to the former bearers of both Gospel and culture. This movement continues to permeate urban centres worldwide and excite those involved at the coalface of mission and evangelism across the board.

This article has shown that there is a need for a missional ecclesia that is uniquely Afro-centric and seriously addresses the specific needs of the African landscape through the reflection on the Tswana context and world view. Any cursory study of AICs and MICs in this context validates this necessity in post-colonial Africa.

The Church in Africa, although one of the fastest growing in the world, must recognise that the only way ahead is for the Church to boldly recognise its missional roots, for honest dialogue, and for unity in action, taking seriously our text, context and faith community.

## Acknowledgements

### Competing interests

The author declares that he has no financial or personal relationships which may have inappropriately influenced him in writing this article.

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