

## CHAPTER THREE: DISPUTED AICS, THEIR TYPOLOGIES AND CENTRAL SPIRITUAL ELEMENTS OF FAITH

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The previous chapter discussed the origin and typologies of African Indigenous Churches (AICs). It noted that there are two distinctive broad categories of AICs - the Christian AICs and the non-Christian AICs (Turner 1967). A central criterion was used to arrive at that conclusion. Thus, any Church that does not proclaim the following cannot be classified as a bona fide Christian church:

- Salvation through Jesus Christ;
- The Bible as the inspired word of God;
- Believe in the doctrine of the Trinity, God Father, Son and Holy Spirit;
- Believe in the Doctrine of Christology;
- Believe in the Bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ;
- Believe in the Second coming of Jesus Christ to Judge the World (Bruce 1999).

This chapter's primary goal is to identify specific Zimbabwean religious movements that fall within Turner's (1967) definition of disputed Christian churches, which Bruce (1999) supported. The main thesis of the chapter is that a true Christian church must propagate a church spirituality that demonstrates the aforementioned spiritual principles. These religious movements were chosen in an attempt to place JMCN Church in Zimbabwe as either a Christian or non-Christian church. Though the study is narrowed to the Zimbabwean religious context, two Churches outside Zimbabwe have been also sampled in the study. One is the Malawian - Black Ancestor Church, and the other one is the Namibian - Herero Protestant Church. The reason why they have been sampled is to show that the debate on authentic and non authentic Church denominations is not confined to the Zimbabwean situation but even in other African nations. Two Zimbabwean Churches which are sampled as disputed AICs are the *Guta RaJehovah GRJ* (City of Jehovah) of *Mai Chaza* and *Guta raMwari GRM* (City of God) of *Tayali*. The chapter will begin by outlining the selected disputed AICs and their central spiritual elements. Finally, the chapter discusses, in detail, the highlighted selected central traditional Christian spiritual. We discuss central Christian

elements in detail in the chapter to judge the spirituality of the disputed AICs as we have judged the undisputed AICs in the previous Chapter.

The term 'disputed AICs' in the study is used interchangeably with earlier designations given by scholars such as Neo-pagan Movements, (Turner 1967), Post-Christian (Oosthuizen 1968), New Religious Movements, (Turner 1979) or non-Christian movements (Daneel 1987). The study posits that these terms are closely connected or rather are 'two-sides' of the same coin. For instance, *Neo-pagan* movements as a term was used to refer to AICs which represent a large-scale reversion to traditional religion (Turner 1967). *Post-Christian* denotes Churches that have deviated from authentic Christianity (Oosthuizen 1968) *Non-Christian* denotes a group of Churches which reacted to the sanctions and social patterns of western cultures and western Christianity and as a way of stabilizing the situation; they ended up demeaning western Christianity (Daneel 1987). New Religious Movements was used to refer to those AICs that blended indigenous religious beliefs and practices with Christian ones (Chitando, 2005:14). Below are examples of such AICs.

The Herero *Oruuano*, also known as the Unity Protestant Church, was established in 1955 by Alfeus Kanambunga and Pastor Reinhard Ruzo (Ejikeme 2011:57). This AIC emerged as a reaction to Lutheran missionaries' refusal to allow its members to continue practicing traditional burial rites (Ejikeme 2011:57). It is against this setting that the critics of this Church posit that Herero *Oruuano* or Unity Protestant Church as an AIC presented a questionable form of spirituality. For Kandovazu, this indigenous church radically inculturated incompatible African spiritual elements as a way to react to missionaries' approach to African culture (Kandovazu, 2009:7). Initially the Church started as a protestant group within the Lutheran Church in Namibia but later grew into a big congregation with a huge following numbering in the thousands.

As a protestant group its primary goal was to transform the Lutheran way of worship by accommodating ancestral veneration (Kandovazu 2009:8). For Kandovazu the Herero Unity Protestant group sought to integrate the liturgical tradition of Mission Christianity with Herero cultural traditions.

The controversy rose around 1955 in the Lutheran Rhenish mission when certain members who were accused of continuing with the 'holy fire ritual' were placed under Church discipline (Breure 1999:41). Holy fire is that small fire placed between the main bedroom of the head man and the cattle's kraal during the night (Breure 1999:41). It is their *axis mundi*, a place around which the whole ancestral veneration is centered (Breure 1999:1). The study posits that the small fire was a symbol of rendezvous between the living and the living-dead (Mbiti 1971).

One fascinating feature of the Herero Unity Protestant Church is the displacement of Jesus Christ as mediator between God and the Living. For Breure in the Herero Protestant Church there are God-ancestors and the Living ancestors (Breure 1999:74). The Herero Unity Church intentionally emphasized veneration of one's ancestor and traditional burial rites (Kandovazu 2009:8). It is because of religious conflict among other issues that the Herero Christian converts of Lutheranism withdrew from missionary Christianity to start their own AIC that accommodated the practice of veneration of ancestors. For the Herero people their traditional religious culture, based on traditional burial rituals and veneration of the dead was overshadowed by Western Christianity (Rajmund, 2001:49-65). This necessitated the exodus of most Herero peoples in 1955 to form the Protestant Unity Church. They wanted a Christianity that provided exorcism, forth-telling (prophecy) and a clear explanation on the continuation of ancestor veneration (Rajmund, 2001:50).

Arguably, their theology is based on a few bible verses which they read and seem to authenticate their pre-Christian ancestor veneration and consultation of soothsayers; reading portions where God is being associated with the dead. For example, they read Biblical passages where God referred to Himself as 'the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob' (Exodus 3:6) and hence they also wanted to pray to God through their ancestors. The Herero in turn wanted to worship God through their ancestors. They also wanted to revive the consultation of soothsayers and traditional healers especially after they read 1Samuel 28:11-15(KJV) which states in part:

Then the soothsayer said to Saul, whom shall I bring up for you? And Saul said bring Samuel up for me." ... And the soothsayer said to Saul, I saw a spirit ascending

out of the earth.' And Saul said what the form is? And the soothsayer said an Old man is coming up and he is covered with a mantle."...

Now Samuel said to Saul, 'why have you disturbed me by bringing me up ....

It is argued in the study that it is on the basis of these biblical verses that the Herero sought to revive ancestral veneration and consultation of witchdoctors and soothsayers as a solution to their social ills. This is how the missionaries' gospel was condemned as irrelevant and failed to mitigate African desires by members of this AIC in Namibia. Below are the central beliefs of the Herero Unity Protestant Church.

Herero Protestant Church central spiritual elements of faith are that:

- They believe in the 'holy fire', a fire set outside by the elders of each Herero;
- Home-stead to take the ashes for healing purposes;
- They believe in the Bible and read it but emphasis is placed on cultural similarities;
- They mix Christian faith with veneration of the dead;
- They believe in after dead rituals;
- They exercise exorcism through witchdoctors;
- They believe in soothsayers (Rajmund, 2001:64).

A close look at this AIC spirituality depicts an African Church whose spirituality has been highly influenced by African ways of approaching the divine that pre-dates western Christianity. It seems the Herero Protestant Church of Namibia gravitated from being authentically Christian to a fundamentalist New Religious Movement (NRM). Hence for Moodley (2008:58) "some AICs have moved away from orthodox Christian positions and thus would likely fall into the category of what Oosthuizen called "post-Christian" or in the terminology of Turner's *New Religious Movements*". The study postulates that African Churches should exercise extreme caution in their process of Africanising Christianity. For Shenk (1999:56), inculturation is a process whereby the gospel message encounters a particular culture, calling forth faith and leading to the formation of a faith community which is culturally authentic and authentically Christian. However, the Herero Church borrowed incompatible African spiritual elements like ancestor

eneration and consultation of the witchdoctors to inform their Church spirituality; hence presenting a questionable Christian spirituality.

The study therefore, pronounces that the Herero Protestant Church deviated from undisputed AICs theology in several ways. For Turner 'obvious-Christian movements or undisputed (AICs) have made a 'radical departure' from accommodating incompatible African spiritual elements which amount to a 'radical breakthrough' to worshipping God as prescribed in the Christian Bible (Turner 1979:166). For Turner, the key to the success of these undisputed AICs was their rejection of key incompatible African spiritual elements such as ancestor veneration, traditional after-burial rituals and consultation of traditional diviners by adopting Christian spiritual elements such as believing in Jesus Christ as mediator and believing in the authority of the Bible (Turner 1979:166).

The study notes that, there are certain traditional African elements that should be avoided in this process of inculturation so that the gospel message can remain culturally authentic and authentically Christian. Arguably, the Herero Protestant Church's liberal approach to ancestor veneration underpinned it as a non-Christian Movement (Turner (1979), Daneel (1987) and Anderson (1997). The Herero Unity Protestant Church, unlike the undisputed AICs, accommodated incompatible traditional African spiritual elements of faith, and it disregarded traditional Christian spiritual elements of faith in the process. The Church of the Black Ancestors in Malawi

The Church of the Black Ancestor was founded in Malawi in 1954 by Peter Nyambo, a Nguni from the present Central Region of Malawi (Schoffeleers 2013:248). Its Chichewa name is *Chipembedzo chaMakolo Achikuda* which can be translated to mean the Church of Black Ancestors (Chakanza 1959:81). Its theology rejects the authority of the Holy Scriptures condemning them to be the text book of the Jews and Whites (Chakanza 1959:81). The key reason for the emergence of this Church was to rediscover indigenous traditional religion and motivate Africans to struggle for a pan-Africanist, an Afro-centric religious liberation that redeems their cultural traditions and self-determination (Chakanza 1959:19). For Ranger, this self-consciously Africanist Church called upon Africans to return to their traditional religion

(Ranger 1993:88). In this Church, Jesus of the Bible is seen as the Savior of the Israelites and the Whites; hence it is irrelevant to Africans (Ranger 1993:88).

Therefore, to oppose western Christianity, a religion equally exclusive and dogmatic, the Church of the Ancestors sought to possess all the traditional resources of Southern Malawi and then simplified them into what amounted to a party ideology (Ranger 1993:88). For Schoffeleers (2013:248) the main theological position of these African Churches was given in a circular when the Church started in Blantyre in 1954 which has a heading '*The truth about Jesus, the savior of the Israelites and the Whites*'. The interpretation of the circular was that Jesus was an ancestor for Jews and Whites; hence it was extraneous to African black communities.

The hierarchy of the Black Ancestor Church is made up of all traditional Chiefs, headmen, shrine priests and territorial mediums (Ranger 1993:39). What is significant in this particular Church is that it has also captured the shrines of the *Mbona* territorial cult. *Mbona* is a cultic god of the Malawians (Ranger 1993:89). The Church of the Ancestors has disrupted the celebration of the Mass, shouting that Christ was for the Whites but that *Mbona* (a cultic god) was the savior for Blacks (Ranger 1993:88). Below are the central theological tenets of the Black Ancestor Church of Malawi.

Black Ancestor Church of Malawi central spiritual elements of faith include that,

- They believe in the *Mbona* (Malawian cultic god), as mediator between God and the living;
- They believe in communication with the divine at traditional shrine of their cultic god;
- The Leadership of the Church is made up of the territorial spirit mediums;
- They believe that Jesus Christ is for Jews and Whites;
- They do not believe in the Bible; and
- They believe in exclusively black congregations without mixing with other races (Ranger 1993:39).

It is important to restate the central research question: what makes a Church authentically Christian? The Black Ancestor Church of Malawi has seriously

gravitated from being an authentic Christian Church to a New Religious Movement according to the criteria of judging Christian spirituality adopted in the study. This criterion is that “Any Church that does not proclaim *Christus victor* is a non-Christian movement” (Moodley 2008:79). Also the Black Ancestor Church becomes a New Religious Movement because it appropriated the *Mbona* cultic god as the mediator between the living and God, and adopted the traditional shrines for Churches among other things. Members of this Church constitute those who were once members of the Roman Catholic Church and those who were African traditionalists who had never been members of any Christian Church before (Schoffeleers 2013:264). For Schoffeleers it was easy for this *New Religious Movement* to recruit members from Roman Catholic because already Roman Catholic is more engaged with African culture than Protestant Churches which deny their members alcohol and smoking (Schoffeleers 2013:255).

Thus far, the study has noted that the Herero Unity Protestant Church of Namibia and the Church of the Black Ancestor Church in Malawi fit in the designation Non-Christian Movements or New Religious Movements (NRMs). The simple reason for this submission is that both Churches deliberately disregard the authority of the Bible and deny Jesus Christ as central and normative for their Church spiritualities. These Churches have a clear doctrine and teaching against the minority White community in their nations. These churches also intentionally want to return to African traditional religion (ATR). It can be argued that these Churches in the process of reacting to colonialism and to missionaries’ negative approach to African cultures and traditions, overstepped Christian boundaries. Examples are given of Churches from the Zimbabwean religious landscape which were cited by other scholars as ‘non-Christian’ although they themselves claim to be Christian Churches, (Daneel 1987) . These Churches present questionable Church spiritualities. Examples are Guta Ra Jehovah (GRJ) (City of Jehovah) and Guta rampart (GRM), (City of God). These two will be discussed in greater detail in the following sections.

In the Zimbabwean religious landscape, Daneel noted a Zimbabwean Church Guta Ra Jehovah (City of Jehovah) which presents a questionable Church spirituality. Persuasively, the study notes that Guta Ra Jehovah is just

a representation of numerous Churches in Zimbabwe today whose spiritualities are disputed. Many similar Churches continue to mushroom in Zimbabwe. Daneel cited Guta Ra Jehovah a Zimbabwean Church which shares the same theology with the Herero Unity Protestant Church of Namibia and the Black Ancestors Church of Malawi.

Guta raJehovah Church was founded by Mai Chaza a former Methodist member (Daneel 1987:36). She founded Guta Ra Jehovah in 1954 in Zvimba District in Mashonaland West Province. For Daneel (1987:36) “Mai Chaza’s Church departed from the groove of other AICs in Zimbabwe with a greater margin.” Daneel observes that Mai Chaza is seen as one of the Godhead where “She and Mwari (God) are seen as the original core creators of the earth and the Great Zimbabwe ruins in particular” (Daneel 1987:36). This suggests that Mai Chaza replaced Jesus Christ claiming that she was sent by God to deliver Africans like Jesus was sent by God to deliver Jews. Daneel (1987:33) also noted that Guta Ra Jehovah of Mai Chaza now based in the eastern Zimbabwe deliberately replaced the Bible with a revelational book of its own and produced a heretical reinterpretation of the Holy Trinity which deprived its claim of being a Christian Church.

In contrasting views, it can be argued that most AICs emphasize the history of their founders; for instance, the ‘Church history’ of Samuel Mutendi, of Zion Christian Church (ZCC), the history of Ezekiel Handinawangu Guti of the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa, Forward in Faith (ZAOGA FIF) and the ‘New revelation’ of Johane Marange. However, the difference is that these churches do not do that at the expense of the Bible (Daneel, 1987: 252). For Daneel, this is not a grievous sin because even the early Church had the Bible and the tradition of the Elders as additional sources. According to Daneel these churches, “the Marange and the ZCC’s historical descriptions of the origins of the church and the experiences of their respective leaders are used not as a substitute for the Bible, but are introduced occasionally as additional sources of information, substantiating Scriptures rather than contradicting them” (Daneel, 1987:252). Daneel concluded by arguing that “of all the AICs, there is to my knowledge only one church which indisputably replaces the Bible with another book, namely Guta Ra Jehovah Bible (Anderson 2001:119). It is from this manual that preaching is drawn from. The manual includes a

portrayal of a form of the Trinity which is totally unbiblical, in which Mai Chaza is elevated to one of the three divine Persons who was present even during the creation of the universe hence given a new name *Musiki*, the creator (Amanze 1998a).

Amanze (1998:101) noted that Guta Ra Jehovah's lack of a proper doctrine of the Trinity denied it the right to be designated a 'Christian Church' to a NRM founded on Shona traditional religion has undergone a process of modernization by bringing into the movements some Christian ideas. In Guta Ra Jehovah, it can be argued that the authentic Christian message has degenerated and has been superseded to a point where one can no longer speak of a Christian Church in the true sense of the word (Daneel, 1987:253).

In contrasting views, for Mapuranga (2013:5) Mai Chaza's rejection on the use of the Bible is because the Bible was used as the final authority by the western mission Churches to oppress women. For Mapuranga (2013:1-8) there was also a rigid rejection of women from taking up leadership roles in these traditional missionary churches, and the justification for this was the Bible. It is against this background that Mai Chaza protested against male dominance in the Methodist Church leadership, as a result forming Guta Ra Jehovah Church. Conversely, the study has theorised that the fact that; Guta raJehovah totally rejected the Bible; the inclusion of Mai Chaza as one of the Godhead and the rejection of the salvific work of Jesus on the cross of Calvary led the study to concur with previous scholars that this Church is a typical example of a non-Christian movement in Zimbabwe. It can therefore, be argued that Mai Chaza's formation of a separate church away from the Methodist church whose Bible she argued 'prescribed' the oppression of women was a rebellion against the perceived marginalization of women by the bible and in the church. Thus, below are central theological beliefs of Guta raJehovah Church in Zimbabwe.

Guta raJehovah Church central spiritual elements of faith are that,

- They believe that Mai Chaza (*Musiki*/creator) is one of the Godhead;
- They believe in communication with God at traditional Shrine such as Great Zimbabwe;
- They do not believe in Jesus Christ for salvation of Africans;

- They do not believe in the Bible rather believe in their sacred writings;
- They do not believe in mixing with other races for worship rather it is an exclusively Black Zimbabwean Church (Daneel 1987:252).

After Mai Chaza died in 1960, the Church split into two denominations, Guta Ra Jehovah and Guta Ra Mwari. The study also intends to examine Guta Ra Mwari Church to investigate on the authenticity of its Church spirituality.

Guta raMwari Church was founded in 1960 by Taxwell Tayali who claimed to be God incarnate. Tayali was born in Zambia, formerly known as Northern Rhodesia, in 1920. He grew up in Southern Rhodesia which is now Zimbabwe. He was one of the first members to join Guta Ra Jehovah, founded by Mai Chaza, in its early months of 1954. After the death of Mai Chaza in 1960, Tayali claimed that the Spirit of God which was in operational through Mai Chaza was now working through him; hence he had become the host of God. He founded Guta raMwari (the City of God) in 1960 in Bulawayo which is the second largest city in Zimbabwe. Tayali's autobiography and his preaching sermons are presented by Hellen Tayali, his daughter, in a book: Guta raMwari: In my Own words, Deeds and Life, Twelve lesions and Fifty-Two Chapters of God's work (2008). The book was written by Tayali before he died in a car accident in 2003 but was only published in 2008. It is viewed by the adherents of Guta raMwari as the Holy Book for Africans with equal status to the Bible for Jews and Whites. This manual is different from Guta RaJehovah Bible. In Guta RaJevoha Bible only the deeds and sermons of Mai Chaza are compiled while in Guta RaMwari manual- in my Own words and Deeds only the sermons and the life history of Tayali is documented.

From an online book review, Lincoln Mathambo testified that Guta RaMwari Holy book's teachings should be "considered to be the most up to date word of God to humanity today" (Mathambo 2010) Mathambo who is from Bulawayo attested to using the book all the time to channel his life in the right direction and to remind himself that God is everywhere, and is "available to everyone who is in need of help" (Mathambo 2010:1-8). This is how we perceive Guta RaMwari, like Guta RaJehovah, coming up with their Scripture and substituting the traditional biblical Scriptures.

Table 3: Examples of disputed AIC, their founders and the years they were founded

Example of a Disputed AIC	Its Founder	Year
The Black Ancestor Church of Malawi	Peter Nyambo	1954
Guta Ra Jehovah of Zimbabwe	Mai Chaza	1954
Herero Protestant Church of Namibia	Alfeus Kanambunga	1955
Guta Ra Mwari Church of Zimbabwe	Taxwell Tayali	1960

The study observes that the above-mentioned church organisations subscribes to a completely different spirituality which attracted more questions particularly regarding the authenticity of the form of their Christian spirituality. It has noted that the above Zimbabwean Churches share the same theological thrusts with the Church of the Ancestor of Malawi and the Herero Unity Protestant Church of Namibia as cited by Daneel (1987) and Anderson (1997). Below is an overall outline of central theological tenets of the disputed AICs discussed above.

The overall central spiritual elements of the disputed AICs:

1. They do not read the Bible; when they do, they read it very selectively;
2. Their membership is exclusively Black Africans;
3. They do not believe in Jesus for their salvation;
4. They use traditional objects for worship such as clay pots;
5. They use traditional sacred places as worship centers.

The study has shown that the theology of Herero Protestant Church of Namibia, the Black Ancestor Church on Malawi, and the two Zimbabwean Churches;Guta raJehovah Guta raMwari upheld questionable Church spiritualities. These Churches have been labeled non-Christian on the premise that they have willingly sidelined authentic traditional Christian spiritual elements of faith and replaced them with African religious spiritual elements of faith. This leads to the next section which unpacks exactly what constitutes traditional Christian spiritual elements of faith. These central Christian spiritual elements of faith add-up to the already stated criteria which was used by earlier scholars to judge the spirituality of Herero Protestant Church of Namibia, Black ancestor Church of Malawi, Guta raJehovha of Mai Chaza of Zimbabwe and Guta Ra Mwari Church of Tayali of Zimbabwe.

We have outlined the central spiritual elements of the disputed AICs. However, what remain unattended are questions like: Are these Christian Churches and what makes a Church Christian? On that note are few traditional Christian doctrines have been selected to judge the authenticity of these AICs spirituality as Christian or Not. Major doctrines such as Christology; Trinity; Eschatology; Soteriological and the doctrine of Bible are discussed below to judge the spirituality of the disputed AICs.

The central Christian spiritual elements of faith refer to the basic or core doctrines of Christianity. These are features that help in differentiating a Christian movement from a non-Christian movement. Without such a distinction, it will be very difficult to even argue that exists. For Tyron (2005:1) although Church denominations might differ in cultures and worldviews, they still possess some commonalities such as elements of Spirituality. One of the great pillars of Christianity is the mystical encounter between humanity and Christ as what Paul explains in (1Corinthians 15:3). The following section discusses the work and person hood of Jesus Christ. The person and work of Jesus Christ is discussed because Christianity is a Jesus movement hence a Church that does not teach about the life, Ministry Death, Resurrection and the second coming of Jesus Christ to judge the Word presents questionable Church spirituality. Christology there is no Christian Spirituality.

Christology deals with the issues of the person and work of Christ (Amanze 1998:103). For Macquarrie (1990:3), Christology is a discourse about who Jesus was and is and what Jesus did/ and does. The study posits that every Christian denomination must have Christ as its focal point to qualify as a Christian church. This is to say without Jesus Christ as the central pillar of Church faith there is no Christianity to talk about (Clarke 2011:4). Mugambi (1989:87) posits that a Christian is a person who has accepted Christian faith and made his/her own decision to become a follower of Jesus Christ. In other words, to be Christian is to accept Jesus Christ and His teachings as preserved in the Bible and maintained by the global Church (Mugambi 1989:87). It is argued here that there are so many African Christological titles which developed over years. For Nyamiti (1984), different titles given to Jesus Christ, particularly in Africa came as a result of numerous tribes, languages, historical, social, political and economic differences peculiar to each tribe and

nation. However, what is critical in the chapter is to showcase how the disputed AICs inculcated African traditional spiritual elements of faith at the expense of Christian spiritual elements of faith. From what we have gathered so far we agree that there is no clear articulation of the basic tenets of Christian faith such as the centrality of Jesus Christ in the all the sampled disputed AICs in the study. The disputed AICs in Zimbabwe designate Jesus Christ as an ancestor for white and not for black Africans while the undisputed AICs sees Jesus Christ as the Son of God, Mediator between man and God, Healer and deliver just to mention a few.

All the sampled AICs in the chapter downplayed the relevance of Jesus Christ for the salvation of their members who were predominantly Africans. These groups of churches argued that Jesus was sent for the Israelites and the white community while their African leader for instance, Mai Chaza was sent to Africans (Gifford 2009:94). Christ was never sent to Africans and hence irrelevant for Africans, the argument goes. It is on these grounds that these churches are excluded from authentic Christian Churches.

The next section discusses another important element of the authentic Christian Churches which is the doctrine of Trinity. The doctrine of Trinity is very central in this discussion because the Christian God unlike Muslim God is a Triune God. As a Church historian, I do not doubt that the Doctrine of the Triune God which was very central among the early soon after Jesus' ascensions no longer viable today. For Fowler this is because the Church has gone through many phases including Enlightenment period 'Age of reason' where discussions about Christian God became a thing of the past, as Mathematics and Science were introduced (Fowler 2013:3).

However, with the rate at which the world is becoming a village where one can find a Muslim, a Hindu, a Chinese and a Christian in one community, this present study calls for a renewed interrogation and re thinking of the distinctiveness of a Christian God. Waste still the rate at which different Churches are being founded particularly in Africa, we posit that we are in dire need for a radical change in how contemporary Churches perceive of the Doctrine of a Triune God and the implications of the Trinity for the revitalization of the Christian Community. The danger is if that is not done

Christian Churches will end up losing that which makes them Christian Churches.

Early in the history of Christianity the Church was so passionate and very alert on what Christians ought to know about their God. The Early Church professed that their God was unique and different from any other god in other religions of the world. This is how many Council meetings were called for to discuss the distinctiveness of their God who is a Triune God (Fowler 2013:3). Councils such as council of Nicene A.D 325 and the Council of Constantinople A.D 381 were summoned just to discuss about how God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit relate to each other. Thus the doctrine of the Trinity deals with the relationships of the perceived persons of the Godhead that is God as the Father, Jesus Christ as the Son and the Holy Spirit (Pannenberg 1968:181). According to the orthodox teaching of the Church there is one God who exists in three persons as; God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. The three persons are of the same substance, are identical, indivisible co-equal and co-exist; yet at the same time God the Father begot the son and from both together precedes the Holy Spirit (Karl Rahner & Herbert Vorgrimler 1965:497). For Amanze the doctrine of Trinity is evidenced in most AICs particularly in the baptismal formula (Amanze 1998:99). Further Amanze observes that many AICs baptise their new members by immersion in water or in a pool in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Amanze 1998:99).

Thus, the doctrine of Trinity was used by early scholars to distinguish between authentic Christian Churches from pagan movements. For Amanze, any religious movement that rejects absolutely the idea of a Triune God is not a Christian Church but a religious movement founded on traditional religion which has undergone a process of modernization by bringing into the movements some Christian elements (Amanze 1998:101). The study has discovered that there are four (4) AICs outlined in the chapter which do not recognize the function of the Triune God. For instance, in the Herero Protestant Church, there is God- Family Ancestors and the Living members. In Black Ancestor Churches there is God - *Mbona* - and the living members. In Guta raJehovah there is God - Mai Chaza and the living members. And finally in Guta raMwari there is God - Tayali - and the living church members.

This suggests that Churches mentioned above have crafted their own doctrine of the trinity that includes their Church leaders, traditional cultic gods as part of the God head. Compared to the undisputed AICs, the practice of putting Church leaders as Godheads, putting the cultic gods as conveyor belts to reach God explains how these African Churches designated the disputed . The next paragraphs focus on their eschatological views. By eschatological views the study pays attention on how these Churches appropriate the gospel of the second coming of Jesus Christ to judge the world.

### 3.II.3 DOCTRINE OF ESCHATOLOGY

Eschatology as a doctrine in western scholarship is concerned with the 'last things' that would take place at the 'end times'. The word eschatology is derived from the Greek words *eschatos* which means last, *eschaton* (singular) which means the end or *eschata* (plural) which means last things (Amanze 1998:135). On that note, Amanze summarized eschatology to mean the teaching about the ultimate destiny of humankind (Amanze 1998:135). It touches on issues like *parousia*, (the second coming of Jesus Christ), resurrection of the dead, the Day of Judgment and the eternal reign of Christ. Africans also believe that death is not the end in its self but the beginning of a deeper relationship with the spiritual world.

For Mbiti Africans did not have this concept of the consummation of time followed by a judgment day (Mbiti 1971:189). The primary focus of African Christians is to enjoy life here on earth. Guti (2011:9) argues that people in Africa go to Church not with the intensions of going to heaven but for their existential problems to solved first then they will think of going to heaven later. This suggests that most AICs believe in the dual eschatology the 'here and now' (realized eschatology) and the 'there-after' (futuristic eschatology). However, though their eschatology is dual in nature the greater emphasis is on the realized eschatology.

While other AICs believe in the second coming of Jesus Christ to judge the world, the four (4) sampled disputed AICs do not subscribe to that view. For them there is no second coming of Jesus to judge the whole world because for them Jesus Christ was sent for Jews and cannot be the judge of Africans. If he is coming to judge people, for these AICs, he should be becoming to judge

Jews because it is them who killed him. Amanze observes that these disputed AICs instead of waiting for the second coming of Jesus Christ, advocated that God had sent “Black Messiahs” to preach to Blacks as he did by sending Jesus to the Jewish and other white communities (Amanze 1998:140). When these “Black Messiahs”, die, the Holy Spirit in them comes back and occupies another black human body; hence their notion of the second coming (Moodley 2008:88). Though these Black Messianic leaders might be dead by now, members of these Churches continue to remember them in their songs (Moodley 2008:89).

The next section discusses the concept of salvation in the disputed AICs. We presupposed that salvation as a concept differs from one religion to the other. The fact that there is multiplicity of religions in the World, each with its own distinctiveness of central spiritual elements of faith creates an obvious assumption that the concept of salvation differs from this religion to that religion. We posit that each religion presents itself explicitly to the world through its doctrine of salvation. For instance, salvation in Buddhism is different from Islam likewise Salvation in African Traditional Religion is different from salvation in Christianity. Thus, Hick argues that while their various overlaps between religious beliefs and practices there are also radical differences how they relate to the divine, to the world around them. One key question in this discourse of salvation is Do people live only once on this earth or are they repeatedly reborn? (Hick 1988:293).

The word salvation connotes freedom from distress and the ability to pursue one’s objectives (Ogunkunle, 2009:138). According to Aland (in Amanze 1998: 120), it is derived from a Greek word *soteria* which means reclamation, deliverance, preservation or rescue). It is a doctrine which deals with issues concerning human life or deliverance or release from evil and sin. Hence for Ogunkunle (2009:138) salvation is in three fold from the Old Testament perspective.

Firstly, salvation means welfare and prosperity (Joel 2:25):

I will repay you the years the locusts have eaten... You will have plenty to eat, until you are full, and you will praise the name of the Lord your God who has worked wonders for you never again will my people be ashamed (NIV).

Secondly, it means deliverance from battle. In this sense salvation is connected with divine assistance rendered at a critical time of war as in Exodus 14; 14 “The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still” (NIV)

Thirdly, it denotes being rescued from external evils and finally it means victory (Ogunkunle, 2009:138). Borrowing this definition of salvation by the previous scholar this present study argues from the research finding among AICs in Zimbabwe that their stereological thrusts can be summarized in three-fold hypothesis:

1. Deliverance from poverty into prosperity;
2. Deliverance from spiritual warfare;
3. Living a victorious life both in this world of flesh and the after world of the Spirit.

However, what is fascinating is that though the majority of undisputed AICs in Africa presented salvation mainly as welfare and prosperity, as deliverance from spiritual battles as being rescued from external evils and as means of living a victorious here and after, the study posits that the difference with the disputed AICs is the approach and means to salvation. For instance, while other AICs postulate deliverance only through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the cross the above cited undisputed AICs condemned that approach. For them Jesus Christ was never sent to Black Africans. Even if they believe that Jesus Christ died for these Churches Jesus Christ did not die for Black Africans but for those people overseas (Whites and Jews). Chakanza wrote that the Black Ancestor Church of Malawi denounced Jesus Christ mediatorship arguing that Jesus Christ was an ancestor for whites (Chakanza 1959)

We have noted throughout the study that the disputed AICs have removed salvation through Jesus Christ to other means. First, these Churches posited that family ancestors protect their people from dangers such as disease, droughts famine sorcery and witchcraft (Amanze 2002:146). Apart from protecting family members, ancestors also punish people who depart from traditional moral norms and values. This suggests there is no end of time which is followed by judgment. One is judged immediately after one has disobeyed the ancestors. It can be argued that these disputed AICs have been influenced by African traditional spiritual elements of faith in the process of

formulating their Church spirituality than being informed by traditional Christian spiritual elements of faith.

We have noted that the undisputed theology is Christocentric. They read passages like (Acts 10: 38) which states that, 'How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and went around healing all who were under the power of the devil...' Generally, these undisputed AICs are characterized by a rigorous move from just being African Indigenous Churches to African International Churches (Gerrie ter Haar 2001). These undisputed AICs are appealing to all nationalities because they emphasize salvation through Jesus Christ.

In contrasting views these disputed AICs are limited and can not affect and effect other Nationalities because for them their Churches are only for Black Africans 'African Ancestors Religion: *Chipembedzo chaMakolo Achikuda* (Chakanza 1959). Unlike disputed AICs Gundani, noted that undisputed AICs are striving to move from being in the periphery towards the centre. For instance, these Churches have now embraced the theological education and development-oriented projects that AICs members embarked on, for about many decades now (Gundani, 1989:139). These undisputed AICs according to Gundani (1989) salvation is about having good life in this world which is understood to mean deliverance from evil spirits to enjoy life here on earth then thereafter in heaven. This last section of the chapter deals with the position of the doctrine of the Bible in these disputed AICs, We have noted that the undisputed AICs theology is drawn from the Bible.

Mbiti suggests that the chief yardstick to determine the validity of any Christian theology is the centrality of the Bible (Mbiti 1977:17-23). He further argues that, for those claiming to be Christians, nothing can substitute the Bible. Thus, any Christian theology that does not refer to the Bible in its teachings cannot be classified as an authentic church. Chitando (2007:6) argues that one of the significant aspects of the Christian heritage in Africa has been the centrality of the Bible. The Bible is read widely in African homes, schools, churches and on a variety of occasions (Chitando 2007:6). Sanneh (1989) in Translating the message: the missionary impact upon Culture, has

demonstrated how the translation of the Bible into vernacular languages facilitated the tremendous growth of Christianity in Africa.

Christianity developed to become what can be termed a truly African religion as Africans were able to relate the biblical message with their socio-cultural repertoire as they used the bible as a resource to meet most of the exigencies of life (Sanneh 1989:7). Phiri (1997:23-28) argues that “there is no doubt therefore, that the bible in AICs does not only imply a literalist approach to the text but rigorous and reflective as the truth claims of the Bible are applied to diverse African contexts. AICs are therefore, churches which are not only comfortable to declare the Bible as the word of God but take seriously do what the Bible says that Jesus himself is the word of God . (Gunda 2014). As Dozier (1991:89) says, “it is troubling for some to consider that God did not become incarnate in a book, but as a person, Jesus of Nazareth. Further he argues that by engaging Jesus’ life and ministry and the cross and what it means to African Christians, is that the Bible becomes a liberating text (Dozier 1991:89).

However, we have noted that the disputed AICs disparage the authority of Bible for their theology. Those who read it do it very selectively, like someone reading the text with a view of finding what suits his/her preconceived ideas. For instance, the Herero Protestant Church of Namibia reads the Bible very selectively. The other three cited disputed AICs do not at all read or refer to the Bible for their theology. Instead they have come up with their own sacred scripture where sermons are drawn from. For Togarasei (2014) any movement that does not use the Bible as its base of theology should be treated with suspicion. He said denominations might differ in the way they interpret the Bible; some using literal interpretation like most AICs and some using historical criticism but not using the Bible invites much questions (Togarasei:2014). The study observes that downplaying the centrality of the Bible and the person and work of Jesus in these Church denominations resulted in their being treated with suspicion.

Overall, the chapter observed that the sampled disputed AICs exhibit questionable Church spiritualities. This submission was reached based on what these Churches have inculturated to shape their Church spiritualities. First, the Black Ancestor Church of Malawi was dismissed from the class of

authentic Christian Church because of its appropriation of African Traditional Shrine such as the shrine of the Mbonga god of Malawi for their Church services. Not only did the Church appropriate the shrine, the Church went further to accommodate traditionally sacred objects such as clay pots for religious rituals. It was also argued that Black Ancestor Church of Malawi was a reaction to White missionary Churches. The Priest and Prophets of this African Church are the traditional leaders and Spirit mediums. Consultation of the Black Ancestors by the members of the Black Ancestor Church of Malawi positioned this to argue that the Church is not an authentic Christian Church. Arguably the role and function of Jesus Christ as one who mediates on our behalf was replaced by veneration of Black ancestors. The main reason for their rejection of the Bible is that Jesus Christ is seen as an ancestor for Whites. Jesus Christ is associated with Whites because White missionaries are the ones who introduced the Bible and Jesus Christ to Africans.

Another finding discussed in the chapter is the Herero Protestant church of Namibia who inculturated the Holy Fire a practice commonly practiced by the African traditional religious people of Namibia. The Holy Fire was the Herero Protestant Church holy of holies a meeting place with the divine. Above all the Herero Protestant Church encouraged Church members to continue venerating their ancestors. Again Christ's mediatorship for salvation of human kind was overshadowed by ancestor veneration.

A third finding is that the Zimbabwean Churches Guta rajehovah and Guta raMwari both redefininity to include Mai Chaza as one of the Godhead. It is against the background of these findings that the next chapters discuss JMCN's origin and spirituality. Chapter 4 discusses the nature of African spiritual elements of faith. African spiritual elements of faith are discussed to investigate to what extent has the JMCN Church inculturated pre Christian African spiritual elements of faith to shape their Church spirituality in Zimbabwe. Chapter 5 discusses the origin and theology and geographical location of its headquarters in Zimbabwe. This is discussed to test the sources of its theology and how the Church selects its headquarters.

Therefore, this chapter has dealt with the spirituality of the sampled disputed AICs. We note that the Churches are designated disputed AICs because they have removed the central Christian spiritual elements of faith in

their process of Africanising Christianity. Now the following Chapter discusses African spiritual elements. African Spiritual elements are discussed in the chapter because the study hypothesised that JMCN Church spirituality is questionable because the Church inculturated African spiritual elements to shape its Church spirituality replaced with the central African spiritual elements of faith. Imaginably is could what the Zimbabwean Church JMCN does as we will find out in Chapter 5an 6 of the study.