

AFRICANISATION OF CHRISTIANITY AT THE CROSSROADS:

A reflection of white garment
church spirituality in Zimbabwe



Phillip Musoni

Africanisation of Christianity at the
crossroads: A reflection of white
garment church spirituality in
Zimbabwe

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DEDICATION

To my late mother Lainah Chikuku-Musoni who introduced me to a life of devotion. She taught me from childhood that a human being is helpless without the intervention of God. Though she was a devoted Christian she continued to believe that human beings are so much connected to the soil so much that each time we travelled with her to other places, I always remember her giving us soil from the crossroad to eat to prevent us from falling sick during our stay there. This eating of the soil was mostly accompanied by a short prayer committing our lives into the hands of God almighty and *varipasi*, that is, our ancestors. Though spirituality as a term was not in her vocabulary, this study posits that in practical terms, Lainah my mother, was torn between two religious spiritualities- Christian and traditional African spiritualities. This devotional life impacted me from childhood and enthused me to research further on the genuineness of Christian spirituality in African Indigenous Churches (AICs) in Zimbabwe.

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BOOK SYNOPSIS

The study which has culminated into this monograph, is broadly situated in the domain of Church History under a sub theme 'Africanisation of Christianity'. Though Africanisation of Christianity is not a modern-day topic in Church History, the study posits that the theme should continue enjoying intellectual traction. The reason to this proposal is that it seems there is again a problem today, on how African Indigenous Churches (AICs) interface with local traditional spiritualities in communities they are planted. Thus, this current study deals with the blurred interface and religious boundaries between African spiritual elements of faith and traditional Christian spiritual elements of faith as depicted in the Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi (JMCN) Church in Zimbabwe. The assumption of the study is that the traditional African spiritual elements of faith are domineering the JMCN Church spirituality at the expense of traditional Christian spiritual elements of faith. It is this unconscious and inadvertent adapting and adopting of 'incompatible' African spiritual elements of faith by the JMCN Church that has whet the appetite to examine whether JMCN Church spirituality can be described as a genuinely Christian.

In an endeavour to understand genuineness of JMCN Church spirituality the study grouped AICs into two categories those that are said to be 'undisputed' and those that are said to be 'disputed'. While both groups have inculturated African Spiritual elements of faith, the study argues that the undisputed AICs consciously selected compatible African Spiritual elements of faith against the disputed AICs who unconsciously selected incompatible African spiritual elements of faith: A case study of the Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi Church spirituality in Zimbabwe.

This research critically explores the sacred places, objects of faith beliefs systems and practices of the Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi Church (hereinafter, the Church) in relation to the sacred places and objects of faith of the predominantly Karanga people of Chirumhanzu in Zimbabwe. Thus, the spirituality of the Church is identified by its appropriation of African/Karanga spiritual elements of faith like praying in traditional sacred caves and baptising church members in traditional sacred pools and dams. Critical to JMCN spirituality, is the removal of faith in Jesus Christ's death,

resurrection and faith in the Bible as the word of God for Human salvation replaced by belief in the power of water spirits and *tsanangudzo dzeMweya*, the sayings of the spirit respectively.

The primary methodology grounding this study is the phenomenological method of inquiry. This phenomenological method was utilised because it has two essential strands; the descriptive and the hermeneutical strands. The descriptive aspect helps the researcher to describe the spirituality of the Church accurately, and the hermeneutical phenomenological approach gives the researcher the ability to interpret the spirituality of the Church in light of other Christian Church spiritualities.

KEY TERMS

Africanisation of Christianity
African Indigenous Churches
African Independent Churches
African Initiated Churches
African Instituted Churches
African International Churches
African spiritual elements
Authentic/ Genuineness
Christianisation of African Religion(s)
Spirituality
Obfuscation of Christian spiritual elements
Christian spiritual elements
Non-Christian
Incompatible
Inculturation

ABBREVIATIONS

AAC	African Apostolic Church
ACCZ	Apostolic Churches Council of Zimbabwe
AFM	Apostolic Faith Mission
AICs	African Indigenous/ Independent/ Instituted/ Initiated/ International Churches
AoG	Assemblies of God
AOGA	Assemblies of God Africa
APCs	African Pentecostal Churches
ATR(s)	African Traditional Religion(s)
DCC	Deliverance Centre Church
FEC	First Ethiopian Church
FOG	Family of God
GRJ	Guta Ra Jehovah
GRM	Guta Ra Mwari
JMCN	Johane Masowe Chishanu yeNyenyedzi
JMCs	Johane Masowe Churches
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
NRM	New Religious Movements
NRRMs	New Religious Right Movements
PHD	Prophetic Healing and Deliverance Ministry
POTHS	Power of the Holy Spirit Ministries International
RGM	Robert Martin Gumbura
UFIC	United Family International Church
UN-DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
ZAOGA FIF	Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa Forward in Faith Church
ZCC	Zion Christian Church

TABLE OF CONTENTS

IV	Dedication
V	Acknowledgements
VI	Book Synopsis
VIII	Key Terms
IX	Abbreviations
XI	List of Figures
XII	List of Tables
1	Chapter One: Introduction to the Study
30	Chapter Two: History of Christianisation of Zimbabwe and the Origin of Undisputed Aics
53	Chapter Three: Disputed Aics, their Typologies and Central Spiritual Elements of Faith
74	Chapter Four: Central Spiritual Tenets of African Spirituality
85	Chapter Five: JMCN Theology and Center of Operations
118	Chapter Six: Inculturated African Spiritual Elements in JMCN Church in Zimbabwe
157	Chapter Seven: Conclusion
163	References

LIST OF FIGURES

- 122 Figure 6.1: Chivavarira sacred hill
- 125 Figure 6.2: Chivavarira cave
- 126 Figure 6.3: Example of religious objects kept in Chivavarira cave
- 127 Figure 6.4: Inside Chivavarira cave
- 129 Figure 6.5: Portrait of the Mawanga Mountain
- 131** Figure 6.6: Entrance into the cave that was turned into a Church Centre
- 141 Figure 6.7: Example of a kirawa
- 146 Figure 6.8: A portrait of the JMC church service in UK
- 149 Figure 6.9 Portrait Baba Sandros Nhamoyebonde

LIST OF TABLES

- 38 Table 1: Examples of undisputed AICs, their founders and years they were founded
- 40 Table 2: Typologies of AICs according to Turner, Daneel and Anderson
- 63 Table 3: Examples of disputed AIC, their founders and the years they were founded

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

This critically study interrogates the Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi (JMCN)'s ritualisation and institutional practices which can be described as expropriated from various African traditional beliefs systems. While Africa is now like the 'home' of Christianity because of the continuous mushrooming of new African Indigenous Churches (AICs), the study queries the genuineness of Christian spirituality as presented by some AICs particularly those in Zimbabwe. JMCN which is a new millennium Church was singled out as a case study of AICs which presents the phenomenon characterized in the study referred to as 'questionable Christian spirituality'. A careful study on the JMCN's theology and spirituality posits that JMCN confused Christian spirituality by its inculturation of 'incompatible African spiritual elements of 'faith'.

Accordingly, the discourse on the genuineness of Christian spirituality in Africa, particularly on AICs is an old debate that is resurfacing again among Christian boards in Zimbabwe today. For instance, a search for authenticity of Christian spirituality among AICs resulted in one Robert Martin Gumbura's African Independent Church 'End Time Message Church' being banned by the Apostolic Churches Council of Zimbabwe (ACCZ) (Mbiba, 2013). The church was banned for, among other accusations of practicing Satanism while masquerading as a bona fide Christian church. Another incident is of the *Vapositioni* Churches (white garmented) being accused of Satanism argued that they use power from water spirits *mweya yemuvhura* to cure the sick (Zuze, 2015). Prophet Walter Magaya, founder of a popular Charismatic Church Ministry, Prophetic Healing and Deliverance (PHD) allegedly accused all *Vapositioni* to be using the power of the water spirits, *mweya yemumvura*, for healing and exorcism of evil spirits (Zuze, 2015).

Therefore, this study's rationale is premised on the desire to test the accusation that all *Vapositioni* Churches should be banned as they were allegedly reported to be using healing powers from Water spirits, *njuzu* instead of the true Holy Spirit. This accusation would not go unnoticed because the *Vapositioni*, white garmented Churches are the fastest growing Churches attracting many people from all walks of life. We noted that again

this denunciation is an old one started by Bengt Sundkler in the 1948 and later in 1964 where he designated all AICs as Non-Christian (Molobi 2013:1-7). This research interrogates further this generalisation made by Prophet Magaya and other Zimbabwean Christian boards that all *Vapositioni* are non-Christian Churches because they draw their healing powers from water spirits. The study is done to put the dividing line between authentic AICs and non authentic AICs a debate introduced by Prophet Magaya and supported by other Christian Organisations in the Zimbabwean religious landscape today.

Similarly, in Nigeria, Pastor David Oyedepo of Winners Chapel faced backlash after claiming that his members could access wealth through acts of "sacrificial giving" (Akinwale 2016). In Kenya, Pastor James Ng'ang'a of Neno Evangelism Centre has sparked outrage by encouraging followers to engage in dangerous practices, such as rolling in fire for spiritual cleansing (Mbuthia 2017). In Uganda, Pastor Aloysius Bugingo of House of Prayer Ministries came under scrutiny for instructing his followers to abandon their sick loved ones for miraculous healing services (Kabakumba 2018). Additionally, in Ghana, Prophet Emmanuel Badu Kobi of Glorious Wave Church faced public controversy after claiming that women with certain physical traits could not enter the Kingdom of Heaven (Annan 2019). These incidents reflect broader trends of controversial practices that have sparked debates around the authenticity of spiritual leadership and manipulation of congregants in African independent churches.

It is against this milieu that the study investigated inculturated African spiritual elements in the JMCN Church Spirituality in Zimbabwe. The central questions grounding the study are: To what extent should AICs inculturate their pre-Christian beliefs and practices to shape their Church spiritualities without jeopardizing global Christian spirituality? Can African Indigenous Churches continue to appropriate traditional sacred shrines for Church rituals and ceremonies? Can there be a Church that does not use the Bible for its theology and yet presenting an authentic Christian spirituality? In trying to respond to these questions among others a popular notion 'inculturation' was used as a domineering concept for the whole research study.

However, it is imperative to note that this word 'inculturation' is narrowly used in the study to refer to the ratio at which the JMCN Church accommodated the traditional African spiritual elements to the ratio it accommodated traditional Christian spiritual elements to shape its Church spirituality. Following are key scholars whose definition of the term 'inculturation' shaped this research study. Aylward Shorter defined inculturation as "the creative and dynamic relationship between the Christian messages and culture or cultures" (Shorter 1988:11). For Ikechekwu (2012:25), inculturation in Church history refers to the "manifestation of the Christian message in particular cultural context". Duncan defined inculturation as the process whereby cultural values are transformed through their exposure to the 'Christian message' and the insertion of 'Christianity' into indigenous cultures (Duncan 2012:2). With these definitions quoted, the study summarized inculturation as the 'baptism' of the Christian gospel into African cultures so that Christianity becomes an African religion but without losing its global identity.

What is being presented as the main argument grounding this study is that inculturation is a process whereby Christian messages are simplified by being tainted with the local cultures without losing its shape and identity. Christianity takes different modes in different cultures and contexts to fit into the local environment but without dropping the *sine qua non* of Christianity (David 2010:24). Hence this research was done in a bid to interrogate on how JMCN whose headquarters is Chirumhanzu inculturated its pre-Christian African spiritual elements to shape its Church spirituality.

This research study is situated in Zimbabwe in general and Chirumhanzu district in particular. Though the JMCN was founded in 1990 in Chitungwiza at Nyatsime dam, 27km east of the capital city of Zimbabwe, JMCN became popular and attracted more members when it moved its headquarters from the urban center of Chitungwiza to a rural district called Chirumhanzu in May 2000 (Baba Gilbert: 2014). Reasons to this religious pilgrimage from Chitungwiza to Chirumhanzu shall be dealt with in the preceding chapters. Thus, Chirumhanzu district is very key and central for the JMCN Church spirituality. To date every month of October JMCN Church members those

within the Zimbabwean borders and those outside its borders go to Chirumhanzu for religious rituals.

One could be asking, what makes Chirumhanzu the Headquarter of JMCN Church? Or what type of a theology Masowe yeNyenyedzi presented which attracted thousands of followers to go to Chirumhanzu every year in October? Accordingly, the study grapples with these questions by examining the JMCN Church sacred places particularly those in Chirumhanzu District of Zimbabwe. The justification for the selection of Chirumhanzu is therefore, automatic owing to the fact that it is the centre of the church, a head office type of centre. Thus, the key contribution raised in the study is to flag on what pre- Christian beliefs and practices should indigenous Churches inculcate or not inculcate in their process of Africanising Christianity.

According to the Division for Social Policy and Development of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA) dialogue means a conversation between two or so people or a swap of beliefs and opinions (2005:3). Religious dialogue therefore, represents a mutual borrowing of:

Ideas and notions from either spoken or written that are based on norms and values that the discussion thereafter tries to widen and intensify to identify variances, similarities and criticisms and to find the loci where shared influences or mutual fecundation may take place (Adamo 2011:6).

Hence the study does not downplay mutual borrowings between African Traditional Religions and Christianity. However, the study opines that religious dialogue should not temper with the central pillars of any religion in the process of mutual borrowings. For example, Christianity has its central pillars such as the belief in the Bible and belief in Jesus Christ (Holt 2005:13) and many others Christian spiritual elements as the study will allude to. On the other hand African traditional religion has its central pillars such as belief in Ancestral spirits, belief in spirit mediums, belief in sacred places, mountains, caves and trees (Mbiti 1986:55).

Though there are some commonalities between Christianity and ATRs, these religions are rendered distinct by the central role played by what is referred to in the study as central spiritual elements. These central spiritual elements are

incompatible to other religions as they cannot be shared among religions as means of religious dialogue. It is against this background that the study interrogates to what extent have JMCN inculturated African spiritual elements to shape its Church spirituality.

The problem relates to the blurred interface and religious boundaries between African/Karanga traditional sacred places and objects of faith and the JMCN sacred places and paraphernalia of faith. Karanga traditional beliefs systems and the JMCN are in principle not in tandem with each other, yet in practice a symbiotic relationship exists. One where the Church adapts and adopts Karanga traditional belief system, symbols and institutions and uses them as part of their spirituality and Church practice. Thus, the study argues that, African/Karanga spiritual worldview dominated in the JMCN Church spirituality of Chirumhanzu in Zimbabwe. We argue that this African Church has replaced traditional Christian spiritual elements of faith with traditional African spiritual elements of faith to substantiate its Church spirituality. Thus, the study questions whether JMCN constitutes a Christian Church in the Christian sense of a church?

The study is anchored on the following rationale; the discourse about Africanisation of Christianity and the development of Christianity in Africa continues to surge on. In fact, this discipline continues to be vital to the analysis of the growth and development of new AICs and particularly the spirit-type or *mapositori* (Apostolic) churches (Chitando 2005:85). The present study constitutes a specific case-study on an investigation on impact of Karanga Spirituality on JMCN Church spirituality.

- The study investigates some theological developments ingrained in this African Indigenous Church of Zimbabwe today.
- The study also seeks to address and educate the local people on the need to be cautious about what to accommodate and what not to accommodate in the process of inculturation of the Christian gospel; hence a case study of JMCN Church spirituality in Zimbabwe.

The study is guided by the following objectives:

1. To assess the extent to which JMCN Church inculturated African spiritual elements.

2. To verify the extent to which JMCN spirituality deviated from universally accepted Christian spirituality.
3. To ascertain spiritual setbacks regarding the development of African Christianity through the continuous dilution of genuine Christian spiritual elements particularly by other AICs in Zimbabwe.

The study is guided by the following questions:

1. To what extent have JMCN Church inculturated African spiritual elements of faith?
2. How valuable is the accession that 'JMCN Church spirituality deviates from Biblical Christian spirituality?
3. What are the setbacks of 'Africanisation' of Christianity in the light of the continuous 'Christianisation' of Traditional Religious practices and beliefs by some AICs in Zimbabwe?

In “every research ventured there is an infinite amount of literature, countless reports on what others have done” (Leedy and Ormrod 2001:70). For Leedy and Ormrod (2001:70) “the essence of literature review is to find out what issues are already known about one’s topic of interest”. In addition, as the existing literature is discussed and critiqued, areas of further research are exposed. Therefore, this section reviews related literature on; Spirituality in general, African spirituality, Christian spirituality, African Indigenous Churches (AICs) and the notion of *masowe* (wilderness). This is done to find out what other scholars discovered on Africans as they inculturate pre-Christian beliefs and practices to shape their Church spiritualities particularly those in Zimbabwe (Chitando 2005:4). The literature provides a base to analyse, investigate, evaluate, scrutinize and assess effectively the impact of African Indigenous spirituality in the development of JMCN Church spirituality in Zimbabwe. This background helps the researcher to add to the already existing knowledge which serves as a guide and a critical stepping stone in the study of Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi Church spirituality.

It is important to note that the meaning of the word spirituality did not only underwent some changes in meaning over time but is one term which was also subjected to different interpretations by different scholars across various

disciplines (Kees Waaijman 2003:10). According to Jones, Wainwright & Yarnold (1986:26) the term spirituality means; “interior life, inner life, devotion, piety or mysticism”. McGrath (1999:9) defines spirituality as that “which expresses life or power on a person’s religious beliefs and practices.” It is that which awakens a person’s religious belief to greater depths and excellence. A basic definition of spirituality is the status of one’s reflection on the things of the spirit. And what are these things of the spirit? These are those things that cannot be directly professed by our senses but whose effects can be construed or inferred by our observations, such as, gods/God, death, life after death, evil spirits i.e. *zvikwambo* (goblins), forgiveness, peace, retribution/*ngozi*, reconciliation, justice and many other metaphysical elements.

Bouyer (1961:4) defines spirituality as person’s activities of self-transcendence as he/she gets connected to an ultimate concern’. For Bouyer:

It is through this bond that man constructs a worldview which defines particular ways of acting and interpreting reality. Spirituality is born from the union of such a worldview related to the holy or Supreme Being and the way of living which is in accordance with this worldview. In other words, spirituality is the basic, practical, existential attitude of man which is the outcome and expression of the way in which he understands his existence and the meaning of reality (1961:4).

According to Fabella & Surjirtharajah (2000:189),

“spirituality is a cry for life and for the ability to resist death and the causes of death. It energises the strength to go on, for it is the guarantee that God is in the struggle.”

Theorising on the notion of spirituality, Constable (2003:10) also contended that:

Spirituality fulfills the quest for self-discovery, self-affirmation, and self-inclusion, so the whole human community can live fully as human beings created by God. Spirituality is human connectedness to the ultimate concern, to human roots, to the rest of nature, to one another and to human self. Spirituality is celebrated in songs, rituals and symbols that show the energising spirit animating the community to move together in response to God.

Waaijman (2004:2) defines spirituality as:

One’s relationship with God which is experienced within a given community as a whole: at the time of birth and death, on the occasion of the naming and weaning of the child, in the child’s upbringing and at the time of marriage, upon entering new

pasture grounds and leaving them, at the time of illness and dangers, in the context of the assemblies and mutual helpfulness.

Constable (2003:10), Fabella & Surjirtharajah (2000:189) and Waaijman (2004:2) posit that this spiritual core is the deepest centre of a person because it is here that the person is open to the transcendent dimension; it is here that a person experiences ultimate reality. Hence spirituality deals with prayer, spiritual direction, the various maps of the spiritual journey, and the methods of advancement in the spiritual ascent. Therefore, spirituality can be summarized as one's connectedness to the ultimate concern. For Christians the ultimate concern here is the Supreme Being, the transcendent Trinitarian God.

However, the study observes that though the term spirituality seems to be new in ATRs, in principle spirituality as a concept is not new to Africans. For Orobator (2008:141) from time immemorial, Africans devised methods of communicating with the divine. It is against this knowledge that the study seeks to investigate how Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi church members relate to their pre-Christian ways of evoking the divine which shaped their Church spirituality. Briefly, the study pronounces that JMCN Church spirituality is consciously informed by pre-Christian African worldview that the spiritual world controls the fate of human beings. Hence in their prayers JMCN always engage in a spiritual warfare fighting, *mweya yekumadokero*, *mweya yerima* literally translated means spirits from the west which operates as the sun goes down.

It is on this note that members of Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi congregate for long periods, at times under extreme weather conditions in open spaces *kumasowe* without any shelter. They did this bare footed while they waited for a prophetic voice from any among them to pronounce blessings and reversing of all misfortunes *minyama*, *rushambwa* ne *rushavashava*/bad luck and misfortune. The study criticises JMCN's conscious or unconscious adoption of pre-Christian Karanga existential ways of wading away evil spirits among other life threatening challenges. We hypothesised that, a careful study of JMCN Church spirituality demonstrates that the Church inculturated incompatible Karanga spiritual elements of faith more

than it inculcated the traditional Christian spiritual elements of faith into their Church spirituality.

The study suggests that every Religion has its own central spiritual elements of faith. By central spiritual elements of faith, the study refers to essential tenets or teachings that sustain each religion. These tenets together form what the study refers to as incompatible Religious spiritual elements. For instance, Islam spirituality is identified by Muslims believing in central/incompatible religious spiritual elements summarized as the 5 Pillars of Islam. Thus, we argue in the study that though Islam is divided into Sunni and Shiites what makes them all Muslims are these central spiritual elements of their faith.

On the same note, Odak posited that African spirituality is articulated mostly in shrines and revered places where prayers and sacrifices can be offered (Odak, 1995:24). Odak describes a shrine as a place discernible for religious purposes and where sacrifices could be offered (Odak, 1995:24). Adding to that Mbiti (1975:9) opines that African spirituality is found in many holy shrines of which some belong to families, such as those related with departed family members for instance, family graveyards. Others belong to the community for example, provincial or national heroes' acres where war veterans are buried, some are rocks, some are caves other places like, hills, mountains, and under certain trees" (Mbiti 1975:18-21). Mbiti argues that:

Africans respect such shrines and in some societies no bird, animal or human being may be killed if hiding in such places. At the shrines and sacred places, Africans make or bring sacrifices and offerings, such as animals, food, utensils, tools and fowls. They regard such places as holy and sacred where people meet with God. These places are protected from desecration or misuse by unauthorized individuals. Religious articles and objects are found in such religious places. They are of different shapes, kinds, sizes and colors. Some are kept in the houses while others are kept in the forests. The graves of ancestors usually serve as shrines. These objects are material expressions of religious ideas, beliefs and practices like praying, making offerings and sacrifices and major ceremonies and rituals (Mbiti 1975:18-21).

African spirituality therefore, in the study is narrowed to refer to pre-Christian Karanga of Chirumhanzu ways of appealing to the divine world which is passed on from one generation to another generation through, among other methods, oral tradition, artifacts hidden in sacred places such as

graveyards, certain pools, rivers, dams, mountains, caves and trees (Mbiti 1975:21). These constitute what is referred to as African spiritual elements of faith in the study. Above mentioned, some of the central Karanga spiritual elements or emblems of faith for traditional Africans which will be discussed in the study are certain religious symbols, rituals and ceremonies the JMCN inculcated to shape its Church spirituality.

Strengthening the debate, Orobator posited that African spirituality represents Africans' various ways of expressing and celebrating their experiencing of God in certain places using certain objects that pre-dates Christianity and Islam (Orobator 2008:141). With this in mind the study selected well known sacred shrines of JMCN in Zimbabwe and interrogated why specifically the Church selected these places to be religious centres. Examples of these places are:

- Nyatsime Pool in Chitungwiza;
- Hokoyo/Gwehava dam in Gokwe;
- Gonawapotera Pool in Chirumhanzu;
- Chivararira Hill in Chirumhanzu; and
- DomboraMwari in Epworth in Harare.

We have noted that though other places mentioned above are religious rituals centres for JMCN Gonawapotera and Chivararira are the icons of their Church spirituality as shall be demonstrated in the study.

However, it is imperative to note that one cannot dismiss the fact that African spirituality was a fertile ground for the acceptance of Christian spirituality in Africa. For instance, the concept of prayer, existence of a true eternal God, rewards and punishments (Benyera 2014) are not new concepts to Africans. For Orobator (2008:141) what is new to Africans is Jesus and the Bible and not prayers and sacrifices to God. He further argues that "long before missionaries came to Africa; Africans had already developed their various ways of expressing and celebrating their experience of God" (Orobator 2008:142). Arguably, the critical questions raised in the study is: Should Africans continue to pray under certain African sacred trees, should they revive traditional sacred mountains, baptise their Church members in sacred pools where Water spirits are said to inhabit, should Africans Christian

Churches completely reject the Bible and the mediatorship of Jesus Christ and continue to be referred to as Christian? It is against this background the study interrogated inculturated African spiritual elements in the JMCN Church in Zimbabwe.

According to western missionary worldview Christian spirituality is defined as “an experience that arises from an inspired and vibrant amalgamation of faith and life, intended for adherents to live out the Christian faith genuinely, dependably, productive and wholly” (McGrath 1999:9). For Principe (1983:127-141), “spirituality is an authentic Christian term derived from the Latin word *spiritualitus*, an abstract word related to *spiritus* and *spiritualis* both terms used to translate the Greek words *pneuma* and *pneumatikos* as used in the Pauline epistles”. Principe further argues that Paul’s understanding of a “pneumatic” or “spiritual” person is one whose whole being and life is ordered, led, or influenced by the “Spirit of God, in contrast with this stands the “*sarkic*,” that is, the “carnal” person whose being and life oppose God’s Spirit” (Walter 1993:931). For Peck (2012:2) Christian spirituality is “the conscious human response to God that is both personal and ecclesial – it is life in the Holy Spirit”.

According to Sheldrake (2005:1)

Christian spirituality refers to the whole of the Christian’s life leaned to self-transcending knowledge, freedom, and love in light of the decisive values and highest ideals perceived and pursued in the mystery of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit – that is, spirituality concerns everything that constitutes Christian experience.

For Downey (1992:271-280) Christian spirituality is a spiritual status that a Christian acquires by following the teachings of the Bible. These definitions suggest that what differentiates Christian spirituality from other spiritualities is its rootedness in the Bible, following the teachings of Jesus as the role model. To sum up, the definitions of Christian spirituality as understood by missionaries means, a life of prayer that a Christian should lead which is informed by the teachings of the Bible and following the examples set by Jesus Christ through the help of the Holy Spirit such as; love, forgiveness, humility, long suffering, tolerance and many other virtues of the Holy Spirit. When a believer follows such an example of Jesus Christ, the

benefit is that when he dies he/she goes to heaven and enjoys life eternal (Dowley 1992:271-280). Therefore, it is in this light that the study have investigated the JMCN Church spirituality as mirrored by the above definition of Christian spirituality.

It must be noted that the term AICs was used in various contexts to denote various meanings or interpretations in relation to contemporary African Christianity. In fact, there are five ways in which the term AICs was used by scholars. For instance, AICs was loosely used to refer to different church formations such as the African Indigenous Churches (Turner 1967), African Independent Churches (Daneel 1987), African Initiated Churches (Hastings 1996), African Instituted Churches (Chitando 2004) and African International Churches (Maxwell 2007). Conclusively and as postulated by Chitando (2004), the term AICs refers to Christian Churches founded by 'Africans in Africa' and not by Western missionaries. By Africans here the study refers to black skinned populace living in the African continent.

Nevertheless, most of these Churches though started in Africa have crossed African borders and no longer confined to Africa hence defeating the nomenclature given to them by earlier scholars as 'African Churches for Africans in Africa (Kofi Appiah-Kubi 1979), (Turner 1979). Gerrie ter Haar posited that AICs are African Churches just by origin but in nature are African International Churches because they accommodated other nationalities such as Europeans (Gerrie ter Haar 1998). For example, Europeans, Indians and Chinese are enjoying the economy of salvation in these African Churches in the nations they have crossed to (Gerrie ter Haar 2001). However, it is imperative to note that while other AICs economy of salvation is for all nationalities, JMCN Church is not open to other nationalities. It is against this theological position that JMCN Church spirituality was interrogated in the study.

Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi Church is a split group from the original Johane Masowe weChishanu (John of the Wilderness that congregates on Friday). The study observes that there are several branches of the same Johane Masowe weChishanu which mushroomed in Zimbabwe. If one tries to enquire on the causes of the continuous breakaways in this Johane Masowe weChishanu church, it is not surprising to find out that the

leader of the congregation who is usually a prophet or prophetess is accused of deviating from the original teaching of *mutumwa* meaning Johane Masowe (Sixpence Shonhiwa Masedza), hence starting his/her own Church. Surprisingly after a time another leader will discredit this new leader and also claims to have received the vision from God resulting into another breakaway from a breakaway of the breakaway and the circle continues. What is noteworthy is that all these factions claim to be Johane Masowe weChishanu but adding something that distinguishes them from other Johane Masowe weChishanu. The study noted that after the death of Johane Masowe; many Masowe groups were formed such as:

- Johane Masowe weChishanu Jerusarema (John of the wilderness of the Friday Jerusalem);
- Johane Masowe weChishanu Vadzidzi (John of the wilderness of the Friday the disciples);
- Johane Masowe weChishanu Mudzimu unoera (John of the wilderness of the Friday Sacred ancestor);
- Johane Masowe weChishanu venguvo tsvuku (John of the wilderness of the Friday of red clothes);
- Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi nomwe (John of the wilderness of the Friday of the seven stars), (Baba Amos: 2014).

It is in this background that Johane Masowe weChishanu *inotungamirigwa neNyenyedzi*/the one led by the star which is identified in the study as Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi was founded. The Church Masowe yeNyenyedzi was founded by Sanders/Sandros Nhamoyebonde and was popularized by Antony a disciple of Sanders/Sandros Nhamoyebonde. Sanders/Sandros who was a disciple of Sixpence Shonhiwa Masedza (Madzibaba Johane) the original founder of Johane Masowe Chishanu Church in Zimbabwe (Engelke 2007:114). After the death of Johane Masowe in 1973, Mudyiwa Dzangara whose religious name 'Emanuweri' took over the leadership of the Church Johane Masowe Chishanu. According to the church key informants Emanuweri was accused of deviating from the teachings of Johane by encouraging polygamous marriage and consultation of the dead (Moris: 2013). It is on that note that Sanders/Sandros Nhamoyebonde embarked on a religious pilgrimage from Guruve to Chitungwiza, a district situated on the eastern side of Harare the capital city of Zimbabwe. Chitungwiza is significant because when Johane Masowe Chishanu Church

was first excommunicated from Port Elizabeth in South Africa on 7 June 1962 the Church came back and occupied Seke, Chitungwiza. (CliveM.Dillon-Malone 1978:36). Perhaps this is the reason why Sanders/ Sandros Nhamoyebonde revisited Chitungwiza imaginably in a bid to revive the original spirit and vision of Johane Masowe.

The inside informant informed the researcher that some pious Johane Masowe Chishanu members who were not amused by the dilution of the divine message by Emanuweri followed Sanders/Sandros to Chitungwiza (Moris: 2013). According to Engelke (2007:115) one day as Sanders/Sandros was praying with the disciples of Johane at Nyatsime pool there in Chitungwiza, he claimed to have seen a bright star leading the Church converting people from brewing of beer and polygamous marriages hence his name was changed to be *Mutumwa Nyenyedzi*, Angel star. This was in 1990 coincidentally after the death of Emanuweri who died in 1989 (Engelke 2007:115). Sanders/Sandros Nhamoyebonde professed that he had seen a star leading the church, restoring lost soul who were caused to backslide by Emanuweri's weird teachings of polygamous marriages and consultation of the dead (Baba Gilbert: 2014). The study observes that during Sanders/Sandros Nhamoyebonde leadership, the Church was still Johane Masowe weChishanu. But the group that remained in Guruve after Emanuweri died re-named itself *Mudzimu unorera* (John of the wilderness Church lead by a sacred ancestor). This Guruve Johane Masowe weChishanu also referred itself as the Church of the First born, *Chechi yematangwe*. This second name 'Church of the first born' signifies that they themselves were true followers of the doctrine of Johane Masowe and not the Nyatsime-Chitungwiza group of Sandros (Goredema: 2013).

Later, the name Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi became popular after the death of Sanders/Sandros in July 1994. This name was popularized by Baba Antony during a decisive moment on who to lead the church after the death of Sanders/Sandros Nhamoyebonde (Nyenyedzi) (Baba Gilbert: 2013). Among the founding disciples of Johane Masowe, only three were still alive; Father Godfrey Nzira, Father Micho of Chiweshe and Father Wimbo of Guruve. These three were fighting amongst themselves for leadership of the church. It is in the midst of this critical moment that Baba Antony stood up to announce that, "those who want to follow Nzira, those who want to follow

Wimbo and those who want to follow Micho you can do so but the rest we are going to follow the star” (Baba Gilbert: 2013). Baba Antony further declared that the time of human leadership is gone, it’s the time for the spirit/Nyenyedzi to lead this Church (Baba Gilbert: 2015). In Shona Antony lamented; *hakuchina mutimbi uchagagwa nomweya sezvawakaita pana Johane, pana Emanuweri ne pana Sanders/Sandros, mweya uchashandisa munhu upi ne upi* (the spirit is not going to operate as it used to, selectively choosing individuals like in the case of Johane, Emanuweri or Nyenyedzi; rather the spirit will use any one available). This is how the Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi was founded in 1994. However, the church became more visible and popular in the dawn of 2000 in the Chirumhanzu District and now has spread and has affected many parts of the Continent with branches in countries such as Zambia, South Africa, Botswana and Namibia.

Fig 1 - Below is the portrait of Baba Gilbert the longest member of JMCN



The portrait above is Baba Gilbert one of my Key informants, who witnessed the schism and formation of the Johane Masowe Chishanu yeNyenyedzi Church in Zimbabwe. Currently is the spiritual leader of the JMCN in Matebeland based in Bulawayo.

Thus, there is justification for suspecting and hypothesising that the purpose of these schematics in Johane Masowe weChishanu Church was not about feathering the gospel of Christ but were based on fighting for Church leadership as means of survival, particularly in the face of economic hardships that faced Zimbabwean during that time. These schematics are survival means in the sense that *hwai* (congregates) of these African Churches took upon themselves to look after their spiritual leaders in the person of *munzwi wedenga* (the one who hears from heaven). They catered for *munzwi wedenga* by paying rents, providing them with food, sending their children to school as token of appreciation. The study observes that there is no proper system of paying *munzwi wedenga* but *hwai* (believers) willingly bring anything as token of appreciation for the services rendered by *munzwi wedenga*.

The study observes that as a means of gaining popularity Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi introduced water Baptism in sacred dams and pools which is not done anywhere else in other Johane Masowe weChishanu Churches in Zimbabwe. This is central to its spirituality and as a result JMCN Church attracts most local people who are not sure whether to follow Western Christianity and abandon African Traditional Beliefs systems or to combine both. The study theorises that, Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi attracted more members by reviving the indigenous traditional sacred shrines as they redefined such places. The study perceives that for this African Church; a sacred place is always a sacred place and people want to familiarize themselves with such places regardless of religious affiliations. We found out that because of the Chirumhanzu/Karanga worldview (the world of spirits), Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi with its sacred water baptism and the revival of these traditional Chirumhanzu shrines, the church was growing tremendously. People across the borders of Zimbabwe were seen annually converging at *Gonawapotera* and *Chivavarira* hill for water baptism and exorcism of evil spirits respectively.

Masowe or *sasa* is described as a place where there is “poor soil that is difficult to build houses, grow crops, and do other things that would attract people” (Mukonyora 2007:12). The origin of *Masowe* or *sasa* is explored in the book, Wandering a Gendered Wilderness. (2007). Isabel Mukonyora highlighted in that book that the founder of this African Indigenous Church

decided to look for a “secluded place to worship God instead of worshipping in Churches which were built and led by white missionaries, the then colonizers of Rhodesia”. For Engelke (2007:5) the first founder of Masowe traditions Sixpence Shonhiwa (Johane) accused the colonial missionary Christianity of being too academic and out of touch with the existential African problems; as a result, it failed to attend to Africans’ deepest needs. This led Sixpence Shonhiwa to look for a new place of worship hence *sowe/sasa* becomes the ideal place. It is against this backdrop that almost all the Masowe Churches do not have church buildings. Instead they worship under trees, near dams, open spaces and roadsides to authenticate Shonhiwa Sixpence’s instructions. Their lack of buildings does not imply their inability to purchase such structures, as the Masowe members have become quite prosperous, but is a reflection of their doctrine (Mukonyora 2001:8).

According to Dillone-Malone (1978:28) Masowe people see themselves as aliens fashioned by their early experiences of being stressed by colonial missionaries and above all having a prophetic and redemptive word for Africans. Further he argues that Masowe Church members see themselves as mandated by the divine to minister to the whole continent of Africa, claiming to be the new Israel through many terrains and wildernesses as they made their way to the New Canaan (Dillone-Malone 1978:29). As a result of this vision, the Johane Masowe Chishanu yeNyenyedzi propagated a spirituality that is not wholly borrowed and that is not wholly local but ‘hybrid spirituality.

Daneel (1987:99) in Quest for Belonging noted some AICs whose approach to theology different to that of western missionaries. For these AICs, God is not confined in a written word but is manifestly present in His creations. It can be argued that this is how Masowe yeNyenyedzi almost rejected written scriptures and believed in the doctrine of ‘live and direct’. Accordingly, for the Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi church, God speaks to humanity through many ways such as dreams, signs and visions and through *munzwi wedenga* (prophet/prophetess). Besides the Masowe denying written scriptures, advocating for oral transmission of the divine oracles, evidence of what is shown in its efforts to revive sacred indigenous places as her place of worship. The question is: Is there any problem if African Christian Churches

intergrate African customs, cultures and practices as sources of their Church theologies and outrightly condemn the Bible and Jesus Christ as western imposition? Or should African Christians outrightly denounce their pre-Christian traditions; throw away their pre-Christian celebrations and rituals for them to be regarded as authentic Christians? Or must they throw away their African spirituality fashioned to some degree by the extensive indigenous view of a spiritual world or rather inculturate it and develop a new African Christian spirituality? (Nketia 2009:10). If they inculturate their pre-Christian religious spiritual elements of faith, should they consciously select those that are compatible to Christian faith or just unconsciously inculturate compatible and incompatible African spiritual elements. These are some of the questions this present research grapples with.

The study interrogates to what extent African Churches should accommodate their pre-religious systems without obfuscating the essence of Christian gospel. The debate raised in the study is on how some AICs in their attempt to Africanise Christianity ended up Christianise African Religious systems. However, there are scholars the likes of Mukonyora 1998, Daneel 1987, Chitando 2004 among others who raised that AICs are a result of Africans innovativity and creativity, by blending Christian beliefs into African thought forms hence the adoption of the five(Is) Indigenous, Independent, Instituted, Initiative, and International African Churches. By this AICs have successfully dealt with the sting of colonization, western missionaries' dominance, western theologies and imposition of western cultures. This is what was summarized by Musopele as theology cooked in an African pot (Musopele 1998).

However, in as much as the study appreciates different views on Africanisation of Christianity, what remains critical is how should AICs inculturate pre-Christian African beliefs and practices without confusing Christianity. Thus, the nerve centre of this thesis is an attempt to posit that every primal religion like Judaism and African Traditional Religions has compatible elements of faith to be adopted and incompatible elements not to be adopted in the process of localizing secondary Religions such as Islam and Christianity. Hence, this present study agrees that Christianity from time immemorial adapted to the various environments where it was taken. It was first expressed in Aramaic and then in Greek, a language profoundly different

from Aramaic and later to many other languages (Mushete 1978:50). For Mushete:

Though the Church takes shape of its environment, for instance, in Palestine it was called Palestinian-Christianity, in Asia it was Asian-Christianity and in Roman Empire it was called Hellenistic Christianity, “the church never ceases to insist upon the revealed truth such as the transcendental character of Christian revelation, totally given in Christ which has been defined and transmitted in diverse teaching (Mushete 1978:51).

In other words, Mushete is arguing that diversity is not bad, pluralism in Christianity is accepted, but certain central spiritual elements like belief in the Bible and faith in resurrected Christ must be maintained regardless of space and environment. What the study argues for is that these central Christian spiritual elements are the core values, the landmarks of how Christianity should be practiced. Ikenga-Metuh (1990:151) observes that some churches in Africa continue to embrace pre-Christian African spiritual element of faith to shape their Church spiritualities. Therefore, this present study posits that the central tenets of Christianity should not be overridden by African spiritual elements of faith (Ikenga-Metuh 1990:171).

Daneel (1987:25) in Quest for Belonging: An introduction to the study of African Independent Churches argued that some churches were growing in membership because they emphasized the total freeing of the ‘black man’ from the bad influence of western oriented missionaries and henceforth will have some latitude to incorporate traditional religion into their liturgy. He defined the term independent to mean freedom in organization, leadership and religious expression from the western oriented historical or mission churches. The title, *Quest for Belonging* describes the very essence of these African Independent Churches yearning to “feel at home” while in Church. However, the outstanding question is; to what extent should African Indigenous Churches incorporate African spirituality in their processes of Africanising the Christian gospel? This question becomes central to this research particularly on JMCN spirituality in Zimbabwe.

To sum up the study seeks to fill up the knowledge gaps in the history of African Christianity in a way in that: Most African Scholars popularizes contextualisation and Africanisation of the Christian Gospel, baptising the

Christian concepts into African ideas. However, little has been said on the process itself of contextualisation; on what to take and what not to take in a bid to avoid 'Christianisation' of African Traditional Religious beliefs and practices. In as much as inculturation is a noble idea for the gospel of Christ to be meaningful to the locals, howbeit/how about the study raises questions on what to inculturate and not in the process of Africanisation of Christianity.

The section above discussed the interrelated literature on AICs spirituality. Selected themes such as African Indigenous spirituality, Traditional understanding of Christian spirituality, Spirituality of the Johane Masowe weChishanu and the notion of masowe (wilderness) were discussed among others. The selected sources dealing with the above cited themes were reviewed to find out what other scholars discovered on AICs spirituality and how AICs inculturated pre-Christian beliefs and practices to shape their Church spiritualities particularly those in Zimbabwe. The study noted that though other scholars like Dillon-Malone 1978, Engelke 2007 and Mukonyora 2007 wrote specifically on the Johane Masowe weChishanu they did not account for many breakaway Johane Masowe weChishanu Church in Zimbabwe today. The above cited scholars among others presented Johane Masowe weChishanu as a unified homogeneous African Church movement and yet there are numerous Johane Masowe weChishanu Churches in Zimbabwe. It is the reason why the study selected one of these numerous Masowe Churches namely Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi Church in Zimbabwe. Thus because of the previous scholars generalisation of the Johane Masowe weChishanu Churches, there is dearth of documentation particular for the *Johane Masowe Chishanu inotungamirirwa ne Nyenyedzi* Church in Zimbabwe. Thus, the study fills an academic lacuna in that it tries to provide a historical and theological reflection of one of the fastest growing AIC in the Zimbabwean religious landscape.

In carrying out the study, there are two fundamental matters regarding methodology. The first deals with how the researcher will collect the data and the second deals with how the researcher will interpret the data collected. In that regard, the study utilizes the phenomenological method. The phenomenological method is employed because it has two essential

approaches: the descriptive approach and the hermeneutical approach. Kasomo, argues that an outsider (non-believer) can appreciate the meaning of religion as insiders (believers) do because phenomenology as a method encourages researchers to suspend temporarily their personal or academic presuppositions by provisionally placing them within brackets (*epoche*) thus permitting them to cultivate a feeling for the believer's own faith position (empathy) (Kasomo 2012:130). By so doing the researcher can describe the phenomena accurately, hence the descriptive phenomenological approach. After observing and describing the phenomena correctly, what follows is an authentic interpretation of the phenomena that leads to the second strand – the hermeneutical phenomenological approach. Thus, before the study discusses the two strands of phenomenological approaches it is imperative to define the method first.

Cox (1996:12) defines phenomenology as a way of pointing to the phenomenon. It is the 'study of appearances' and calls for 'bracketing assumptions'. It encourages the researcher to go back to the things themselves as they are and not as informed by the researcher's impressions or preconceived ideas. The phenomenological method is a qualitative method which is frequently defined as the study of the phenomena as perceived by the people themselves. Etymologically, phenomenology is derived from the Greek word, *phainomenon* that means 'that which appears'(Cox 1996:12). Further Cox as quoting (Kant who lived between 1778-1802) argues that phenomenology is a method that analyses 'things' that appear in the mind as if in the physical (Cox 1996:13). In other words, one cannot just dismiss something on the basis of one is not seeing it in the physical. Maposa suggests in his unpublished Doctoral thesis that Emmanuel Kant gave phenomenological approach a fresh and wider meaning in the distinction he made between *noumena* (things as they are in themselves) and phenomena (things as we perceive them) (Maposa 2014:36). In this regard, Sharpe (1975:2) observes that the phenomenological approach is a discipline whose focus is to develop researchers in their understanding of 'that which manifests' through participant observations. Schmidt (1985:45) further identifies two reasons why phenomenological approach is essential for empirical research. First, it allows the researcher to observe the phenomena and describe it. Second, it

reduces prejudice, pre-conceived ideas that influence the researcher to wrongly judge 'that which appears'.

As quoting Husserl (1859-1938) Schmidt argues that phenomenological approach is a scientific method which reacts against "positivism" (Schmidt 1985:45). Positivism here is used to describe an approach that is rigid and unchanging. What you know of 'A' applies on 'B' and does not change. It is against this background that Willig (2008:2) cited by Scott, J & Watt (2010:49) observed that research methods should not be viewed as 'recipes' but as 'an adventure'. Consequently, the study perceived that travelers and explorers to Africa failed to appreciate that Africans are religious because for them a religious group must follow certain 'recipes.' For them a religious person should be seen going into a temple or a mosque to offer prayers and rituals. According to Ijizu (1988:14) travelers and explorers did not see a temple or a Mosque in Africa and concluded that Africans were not religious. It is against this observation that Husserl (1905) dismissed the standard practice which dominated in mathematics that had influenced philosophers of his time, such thinking as; 'if it is not like this, then it is not' (Shoko 1993:13). An example is given by Idowu (1977:4) quoting Emil Ludwig a British Philosopher asking the following rhetorical questions:

- How can the untutored Africans conceive God?
- How can this be?

Deity is a philosophical concept which savages are incapable of framing (Idowu 1977:4).

For Ludwig a British philosopher as quoted by Idowu (1977:4), Africans cannot understand the concepts of God because Africans are not philosophers hence, they cannot comprehend the concepts of God, they are barbaric and uncivilized. It is imperative therefore, to note that the popular phrase, '*zu den sachen*' meaning, 'to the things themselves' conveys Husserl's determination to switch off from pre-conceived philosophical concepts towards allowing the phenomena to manifest itself and described it accordingly (Allen 1971:274).

The study observes that Husserl's phenomenological approach was informed by the quest to 'go to the beginnings, see it yourself then describe what you have seen and take it as it appears; do not judge. Thus, below are two main

strands of Phenomenological methods which are Descriptive and Hermeneutical approaches.

Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) is considered to be the chief proponent of the descriptive phenomenological approach. For Husserl the starting point for empirical research is to deal with personal biases which hinder researchers from discovering the essence of the phenomena (that which is studied) (Wojnar & Swanson 2007:172). Further, Husserl posits that the meaning of the phenomena may be unraveled only through one-to-one relations between the researcher and the objects of research. This interface must involve attentive listening, interaction and observation to create representation of reality more sophisticated than previous understanding (Wojnar, & Swanson 2007:143). It is through these phenomenological steps such as *epoche*, *eidetic* intuition, and *empathetic interpolation* that Husserl concluded that it is possible for a researcher to gain insights into the common features as universal essences or *eidetic* structures and considered them to represent the true nature of the phenomenon under investigation (Wojnar & Swanson 2007).

Smith *et al.* (2009:5) defined descriptive phenomenology as that skill of 'bracketing off' influences around a religious phenomenon to get to the essence of the phenomena. However, the critics of the method, question the practicability of *epoche* 'bracketing off' (Chitando 1998). In response Kasomo posits that bracketing is only for the period of phenomenological investigation (Kasomo 2012:133). It is in this sense *epoche* is used to mean temporary suspension of preconceived ideas for empirical research purposes only. Therefore, the focus of descriptive phenomenology is the correlation of the *noema* (what is experienced) and the *noesis* (how it is experienced) (Kasomo 2012:135). This means that the researcher has to observe the phenomenon as it appears, not as it is understood through opinions formed prior observation. The approach, therefore, begins by bracketing out and suspending the researcher's previous ideas, opinions and personal beliefs and withholding judgment on academic theories about religion, and allows the phenomenon to speak for itself (Shoko 1993:14). Once the things themselves have been identified, the descriptive phenomenology considers its work done (Kasomo 2012:136). The researcher thereafter has the liberty to do whatever he or she wishes with the outcomes. However, whatever the action he/she

takes is guided by what he/she had seen thus descriptive phenomenology. This is how we see the introduction of the second strand of phenomenological method, Hermeneutical phenomenological approach in the study of religions.

After Husserl died in 1938 his successor Martin Heidegger further developed the phenomenological method to include interpretation of the phenomena. Heidegger (1889-1976) a student of Husserl wanted to answer the question of the meaning of the existence. For him the question of the meaning of being can be discovered when a researcher moves further from descriptive to interpretive of that is being studied. The word hermeneutic is derived from the name Hermes, Greek god who was responsible for making clear, or interpreting messages between gods (Reiners 2012:3). Thus, Interpretive phenomenological approach is a process of bringing out and making manifest what is normally hidden in human experience and human relations (Reiners 2012:2).

Therefore, hermeneutical phenomenology, rather than seeking purely descriptive categories of the real perceived world in the narratives of the participants, will focus on describing the meaning of the individuals' being-in-the world and how these meanings influence the choices they make (Wojnar 2007:172-180). This is how phenomenological method was selected in the study. The researcher after describing the inculturated African spiritual elements of faith in the JMCN Church also at last interpret the phenomena by mirroring the Masowe spirituality with other AICs spiritualities. It is when JMCN Church spirituality is mirrored with other AICs Church spiritualities, that one can maintain or dismiss the authenticity of the Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi Church spirituality. Thus for one to achieve this goal, Phenomenological approach was coupled with "Intrinsic Bounded sets" theory of Hiebert G.Paul as outlined in his book Anthropological Reflection on Missiological Issues (1994).

Bounded sets theory was used to determine religious boundaries in the study. The theory was first used by Georg Cantor (1845-1918) a German mathematician (Hiebert 1994:111). The essential point of this theory is that a collection of objects can be regarded as a single entity (a whole) if the objects share properties that define a whole (Hiebert 1994:111). In other words, an

Intrinsic Bounded sets theory suggest that it is possible to judge any object as part of the set or as out of the set by simply looking at the central features of the objects in a set. Thus, Hiebert provided the features of Bounded set theory as follows:

The category is created by listing the essential characteristics an object must have in itself to belong to the set. The category is defined by a clear boundary. Objects within a bounded set are uniform in their essential characteristics-they constitute a homogeneous group. Bounded sets are essentially static sets- they remain the same regardless of space and time. Bounded sets are ontological sets- Birds of the same furthers flock together. A dog is a dog because of what it is (Hiebert 1994:112-113).

The Bounded sets theory was supported by Centered sets theory which posited that grouping of things basically is done basing on how those things relate to the centre (Hiebert 1994:122). This theory posulates that things related to the centre belong to the set, and those not related to the centre do not belong to the set (Hiebert 1994:123). Therefore, applying this theory, we noted that Christians would be defined as followers of the Jesus Christ of the Bible, thus the centre. This suggests that any Church movement that denigrates Jesus Christ and the Bible as normatives of its spirituality does not belong to the set, henceforth a non-Christian religious movement (Holt 2005:13).

Basing on these theories the Bounded and centred sets theories, the distinctiveness of a religion is confined and centred on the central beliefs of that religion. This suggests that though there is mutual borrowing between religions there are certain features which characterized the uniqueness of each religion. For example, though Islam divided into many sects, what makes these sects Muslim distinctive from other religions of the World are Islamic central beliefs such like:

1. Belief in Allah;
2. Central Five Pillars of Islam;
3. Cardinal articles of Faith in Islam;
4. Belief in Muhhamad as Prophet of Allah;
5. Central belief in the Holy Quran (Chidester 2012).

This suggests uniformity among Muslim religions regardless of them being divided. Thus, as guided by the Bounded sets theory, any religion that does not relate to the central spiritual elements of Islamic beliefs as shown above is not a Muslim religion. Arguably, Hiebert posited that the inimitability of a religion is determined by the basic central spiritual elements that make up that religion (Hiebert 1994). We used this theory to conclude that Christianity as well though divided into many denominations has its central spiritual elements which distinguished it from other World religions such like:

1. Central belief in Trinitarian God.
2. Belief in the Bible.
3. Belief in Salvation through the salvific work of Jesus Christ.
4. Belief in the Body resurrection of Jesus Christ.
5. Belief in the subsequent second coming of Jesus Christ to judge the World

It is based on this criterion that Church spiritualities are being judged as Christian or non Christian Churches in the study. Therefore, using Phenomenological approach and Intrinsic Bounded/Centred sets theories one can draw a line between disputed and non disputed AICs in Zimbabwe.

The study is primarily limited to research on the inculturated African spiritual elements in JMCN church of Chirumhanzu District, Zimbabwe. There is a significant amount of information about AICs, predominantly on the growth and expansion of these churches. In the study the researcher is mostly interested with the interface between African spirituality and AICs' spiritualities in Zimbabwe. The study opines that Africans had already devised methods of expressing and celebrating their experience with the divine. These ways included priests and priestesses at holy shrines, prayers and forms of worship in shrines such as in sacred mountains, sacred caves, under sacred trees, sacred pools and a great reverence of their ancestors. What is central to the study is to investigate the impact and influence of traditional African ways of addressing their divinities as depicted by Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi spirituality in Zimbabwe. To be more precise how does Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi socialise itself with old African indigenous ways of worship god at Shrines such as Chivararira hill, Chinhoyi caves, Matopo hills, Matonjeni, and sacred pools

such as Gonawapotera, Chirorodziva, Nyatsime and Hokoyo pools just to mention a few?

The study is limited in Chirumhanzu District in the Midlands Province in Zimbabwe. Most of these *Vapostori* (apostolic) Churches are predominantly found in Mashonaland Central, Mashonaland East, and Manicaland Provinces. It is for this reason that the research is restricted to the Midlands Province's Chirumhanzu district. Additionally, there has been little research on Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi done in this province. Some other key places outside Midlands will be referred to for referencing purposes because this Church started from Chitungwiza in 1990 at Nyatsime pool and gradually moved to Chirumhanzu (Baba Gilbert: 2014). Since 2000 Chirumhanzu became the headquarters of JMCN up to the time of this research. Every October most pilgrims attend JMCN annual pilgrimage in Chirumhanzu at Gonawapotera pool for baptismal and other rituals and ceremonies. Therefore, the research was prompted by the ever-increasing population of congregants in the Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi in Chirumhanzu District which started off as a small seed in early 2000 and now has grown to have thousands of members following this new faith in Zimbabwe. The study endeavors to examine Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi spirituality in the search for the imprint of African spirituality on its Church spirituality in Zimbabwe. Also, it is imperative to note that this research was conducted between 2013-2016, a period where *Vapostori* Churches were being accused of using powers from water spirits, abusing Children and female members among other allegations. Thus, we indicate the research time phrase because African Churches are dynamic and not static.

Limitations are foreseeable challenges in your study and are out of your control (Simon 2011). In every research one intent to embark on; one must identify potential challenges and put in place possible solutions ahead of the delinquent. This will guarantee the accomplishment of the study intended to be done. Thus for the study the biggest limitation was time, balancing between research works and lecturing at a just started University, Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University, a private Christian University which opened its doors to enrol students in May 2012. In 2013 the researcher started to do field work at the same time lecturing at this University. Another foreseeable

limitation was, the distance between Chirumhanzu my research area and Bindura where the researcher was working. Approximately Bindura and Chirumhanzu are 312km apart. The fact that Chirumhanzu is far from Bindura attracted more funds for transport and upkeep being away from home. Over and above researching about spirituality of other people's religion is always a risk. One possible risk expected was unavailability of information since JMCN Church does not have written documents. It means that the research on JMCN spirituality was going to be entirely gathered through interviews and participant observation. Having anticipated all these limitations the researcher applied for a three year study leave to be able to embark fully on research. The researcher also applied for funds research and a letter from the University which states that the purpose of the research was just for academics.

The major theory of the study is the assumption that every religion should or has its own unique landmarks and boundaries or religious spiritual elements of faith which should be maintained to keep the identity and essence of that religion. These landmarks define the essence of a practice by distinguishing one religion from the other. However, though the study acknowledges that a religion cannot survive in seclusion of other religion; mutual borrowing is inevitable, the study posits that there are certain 'incompatible' spiritual elements of faith that should be avoided. The study proposes that, in the process of inculturation, indigenisation, contextualisation or Africanisation of Christianity, certain indigenous spiritual elements of faith should be avoided so as not to obfuscate major Christian spiritual elements of faith such as the centrality of Jesus Christ and the Bible as normative of Christian spirituality (Holt 2005:13). These are the 'central features of Christianity' that distinguish Christian spirituality from Islam spirituality, Hindu spirituality, African spirituality among other Religious spiritualities.

To sum up, the following is chapter summary with Chapter One being an introductory chapter of research Study. The chapter discusses, the statement of the Problem, Justification of the study, Aims and Objectives of the study, Literature that shaped the study and the Research method used for the study. Chapter Two discusses the history of Christianisation of Zimbabwe that gave rise to the emergence of AICs in Zimbabwe. Chapter Two also outlined two major groups of AICs the undisputed and disputed AICs in Zimbabwe.

Chapter Three discusses the selected disputed AICs outlining their beliefs and practices. Chapter Four discusses African spiritual elements highlighting the central spiritual elements that makes African spirituality distinct from other spiritualities. Chapter Five discusses the Origin and theology of the Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi in Zimbabwe. Chapter Six discusses the Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi sacred places, objects of worship, Church symbols and ceremonies. And Chapter Seven gives a conclusion of the study based on the research findings.

CHAPTER TWO: HISTORY OF CHRISTIANISATION OF ZIMBABWE AND THE ORIGIN OF UNDISPUTED AICS

In Chapter One, we delineated the central study's focus that delved deep into the inculturated African spiritual elements of faith by the JMCN which is an African Indigenous Church (AIC) founded in Zimbabwe. The study hypothesised that JMCN appropriated incompatible African spiritual elements of faith resulting in a disputed AIC presenting an unclear Church spirituality. Thus, it is against this background the chapter discusses a major theme in African Church history; which is, Christianisation of Africa. Christianisation of Africa is seen as the first step for Africans to receive the Christian gospel which was brought by western missionaries to Africa. But this step led to step two in Church history that is the Africanisation of Christianity which in turn gave birth to what can be termed as undisputed AICs which can be defined as an enterprise of African Christian theologians. This step again led to the third one which is the Christianisation of African Traditional Religions by other AICs hence the notion of disputed AICs particularly in Zimbabwe. Accordingly, the chapter will begin by discussing the history of Christianisation of Zimbabwe, followed by a discussion on the Africanisation of Christianity in Zimbabwe. That will take us to a discussion of authentic AICs, their typologies and central spiritual elements in Zimbabwe.

The history of Christianisation of Zimbabwe is very long and complex. It can be effectively traced back to the 15th century with the arrival of the Portuguese missionaries from Europe (Mudenge 1986:12). Throughout the Christian epochs, western missionaries established various Christian denominations such as the Roman Catholic, Anglican and Methodist Churches (Baur 1994:417-422). These Western missionaries had their bases in England, Germany, Portugal, America and other countries. Apart from converting Africans to Christianity, Western missionaries established numerous mission stations, schools and hospitals for the nourishment of Africans (Zvobgo 1996:16). These include Gokomere in Masvingo, Waddilove in Marondera, and Hama Mission, Chinyika Mission, Drefontein all in Chirumhanzu District.

Murphree (1969:6) contends that in the southern part of Zimbabwe, “Roman Catholic missionaries were the first to arrive and establish several mission stations”. For Murphree (1969:6) “the first endeavor to introduce Christianity to the Shona populace was by a Portuguese Jesuit missionary, Gonzalo da Silveira, at the courtyard of the Mutapa empire until he was assassinated as a result of court scheming in 1561.” However, Bhebe (1979) noted with concern that this first missionary group’s attempt to evangelize Zimbabwe in particular did not materialize because of various reasons:

“Firstly, the Shona and the Ndebele saw no moral supremacy of monogamy over polygamy and could not see why missionaries denounced their customs. Secondly, Christianity did not seem to offer practical answers to the daily problems of Shona and the Ndebele people, but answers were provided by their traditional religion. Thirdly, a high God of love did not match with the droughts and disasters they were now experiencing” (Bhebe 1979:38).

Missionaries condemned the rain-making cultic worship as a mere wasting of time by the Ndebele and the Shona people. Coincidentally, in 1561 the Mutapa Empire experienced droughts for the first time ever (Isichei 1995). The blame was leveled against white missionary’s religion. The people of Mutapa Empire confronted the missionaries to explain that:

The Ndebele and the Shona did not believe that killing an ox or burning particular herbs makes rain, but these were the means by which they asked for the rain, just like missionaries do by reading the bible and recite a prayer (Isichei 1995:114). However, it was also unfortunate that the main purpose of the first group of missionaries who came to Africa, particularly to Zimbabwe, were more focused on trading than genuine preaching of the gospel. For instance, Ganzalo da Silveira’s coming to the Mutapa Empire was primarily for trading in gold and ivory (Mudenge, 1986:13). The other reason that was more political, was to expel the Arabs who were already in control of the trade (Mudenge, 1986:13). Above all, missionaries were, “regarded as emissaries sent by their white rulers to divorce Africans from their custom and traditions” (Zvobgo, 1986:44).

This does not imply that missionaries did not do anything positive to evangelize Zimbabwe. Western missionaries did a great deal to evangelize the country; for instance, they introduced free western education for all, free medical treatment for all and many other health facilities (Zvobgo 1996:16). Nevertheless, and to the contrasting, the locals perceived missionaries’ service as a bait to fish them out of their cultures, depriving them of their resources, and finally destroying their identity (Maposa 2014:141).

Isichei observes that:

The Shona/Ndebele people believed that high God Mwari had given each people the culture he intended for them. He made all things as he wanted them to be. He had made all people and that he had made every country and tribe just as he wished them to remain, he believed God made the *MaNdebele* and *MaShona* as he wished them to be and it was wrong for anyone to seek to alter them (Isichei, 1995:114).

Thus, the Shona and the Ndebele continued to see Christianity as a 'white man's religion' (Taylor 1963). This also was exacerbated by missionaries demanding of the changing of African names to Christian and or European names upon conversion. Even good Shona names like *Kudzaishe*, *Tinomudaishe* and *Tanatswanashe* (all praise names, translated Praise God, we love the Lord and we have been sanctified by God) respectively, were seen as ungodly and had to be changed into male or female Catholic saints as a pre-requisite of becoming a full church member. Such common names to be confirmed on the converted included Gabriel, Mary, Maria, Ezekiel, Daniel and many more. Maposa (2014:78) argues that earliest generation of white missionaries envisaged in bringing a Christianity that was 'clothed' in western cultural garb". He maintains that missionary Christianity was regarded as part and parcel of western culture (Maposa 2014:78).

To some extent, missionary Christianity was only a particular religio-cultural phenomenon. The study notes that this was delusion for missionaries to conclude that, what was good for Europe must be good for the local people they encountered in Africa (Maposa 2014:78). It is out of this fallacy that missionaries construed salvation to mean adoption of European cultures as a pre-requisite to become a bona fide Christian (Wiredu 1996:16). Against this background, European missionaries rigorously fought against African cultures and traditions. For European missionaries, blackness was associated with evil so much that even in their painting, Satan was depicted as a black being with horns and an Angel of God depicted as a white being with wings (Amanze 1998:50). This Satan was, again, perceived as masked and alive through the complex of African traditional practices and local cultural worldview (Amanze 1998:51). Therefore, the total destruction of African tradition and culture would symbolize the fall of Satan in Africa (Amanze 1998:53). The missionary victory would, in the end, signify also the victory of

Christ over the powers of darkness (African cultures) and the coming into being of the light of salvation (European cultures) (Amanze 1998:53).

Again, the study notes that most colonial missionary's agenda appeared as 'an attitude of goodwill,' but with an hidden agenda which was to dislocate African societies by replacing traditional culture with the so-called favorable Christian (western culture) and civilization (Amanze 1998:52). For instance, the, "African people were asked to disregard their cultures to be saved and be truly Christians" (Maposa 2014:79). Salvation was only possible if they renounce their African past, that is, their beliefs and practices and showed willingness to live according to the 'Christian'/western principles" (Amanze 1998:52). Polygamous marriages were denied and condemned as unbiblical. Accordingly, the Jesuits missionaries expelled polygamists from attending church services resulting into many polygamous men being stripped off from benefits accruing to Catholic members (Zvobgo 1996). In 1902 many polygamists from Empandeni near Bulawayo were barred from being members of a Jesuit Catholic Church arguing that, "it is better to lose in numbers, but registering in the minds of the locals that we mean business and that there is no negotiation between Christianity and pagan religion" (Zvobgo 1986:46).

Adding to that, Mbiti (1980:26) observes that western missionaries were reluctant in adopting African names for God, though in a big way various African names for God were closely related to reflect biblical teachings. Like all names, African names have meanings; hence names are not just randomly given either to their Children or even to places. Most of these names are very spiritual showing how these African people are connected to the spiritual world. They show the way of life of people. Sometimes they give their Children names of the departed member authenticating their strong belief of re-incarnation of life. However, the majority of names given to Children today among the Karanga people of Chirumhanzu are praise names such like *Makanakaishe*, you are good God. Their connectedness to the Supreme Being is also indicated by names they give to their God. Name like *Musiki*, (the creator), *Samatenga*, (Owner of heaven), *Mutanga kugara* (Alpha and Omega) and many others (Van der Merwe 1957:8). These names are indicative that the

Shona already worshipped God before the European missionaries 'introduced God' to them.

Hence missionaries' negative attitude towards African culture and worldviews *inter alia* gave rise to African Indigenous Churches. Waruta (2000:125) notes that missionary Christianity did not touch the hearts of the locals because it failed to become indigenous enough to the Africans and therefore, was condemned by locals as irrelevant. Muzorewa (1991:96-97) agrees with the above and observes that imported theologies did not touch the hearts of the African believers because they were couched in a religious language foreign to locals. For Taylor (1963:13) Christianity which was presented in Africa was offered as a White man's religion. For him:

It is bad enough that religious pictures, films and film strips have almost universally shown a white Christ, child of a white mother, master of white disciples; worshipped almost exclusively with European music set to translations of European hymns, sung by clergy and people wearing European dress in buildings of an archaic European style; that the form of worship should bear almost no relation to traditional African ritual nor content of the prayers to contemporary African life; that the organizational structure of the Church and its method of reaching decisions modeled more closely on Western concepts rather than deviating from them (Taylor 1963:13).

To this view, Idowu as cited by Sawyerr (1996:87) concluded that prefabricated theology did not quench the thirst of the indigenous Africans. Later, Orobator (2008:11) concurred with these views when he noted that the form of Christianity which was presented to Africans by Western missionaries was 'cooked in a western pot', hence there is need to 'brew it in an African pot'. According to him, 'theology brewed in an African pot' presents an invitation to taste of theology in an African context" (Orobator 2008:11). Western missionaries required Africans to give up their traditional heritage to become Christians. Accordingly, this model of approach denotes that, for one to become Christian, one must become culturally European. This is why Kwabena Nketia (2009:10) quoting K.A. Busia queried western missionaries approaches to mission by demanding that Africans give up their traditions, their celebrations and ritual cycles and discard their spirituality before they become Christians.

These missionaries' approaches to *missio Dei* (the mission of God) led Africans to initiate a 'home grown Christianity' (African Christianity), a Christianity exhibited by AICs. This term African Christianity suggests that though Christianity is universal there are some features that when looked at one can denote that this Christianity is now an African Religion. Thus, the term 'African Christianity' was first used in the 1960s and gained popular usage after it was used by Pope John Paul VI at a Pan African Episcopal meeting of Roman Catholic Bishops and Priests held at Gaba, Uganda (Shorter, 1975:20). During that conference, Pope John Paul VI concluded by saying:

From this point of view, certain pluralism is not only legitimate, but desirable. An adaptation of the Christian life in the fields of pastoral, ritual, didactic and spiritual activities is not only possible, it is even favoured by the church; the liturgical renewal is a living example of this. And in this sense, you may, and you must have 'African Christianity' (Shorter, 1975:20).

The above quotation indicates the introduction of the second phase of 'Christianisation of Africa' with African Christians 'Africanising Christianity'. This Africanisation of Christianity by African Christians is seen in form of African Indigenous Churches (AICs). Therefore, the main aim of these AICs in Africa was, to ensure that Africans could be Christians without feeling that they are living on borrowed religion and borrowed culture. Mbiti (1977:183) also observed that at first European missionaries Christianised Africa while African Christians later Africanised Christianity. This is how the study conceptualises the second phase of evangelization of the gospel in Zimbabwe which gave birth to the emergency of AICs, Africanisation of Christianity by African Christians.

We reconstruct the second phase of the history Christianisation of Africa particularly in Zimbabwe. This second phase is commonly known as Africanisation of Christianity. This is the enterprise of African Christians as they took over the propagation of the gospel from western missionaries. The main agenda of these African Christians was to make Christianity an African Religion. We have already noted that missionaries presented a gospel tinged in western clothes and hence in Africanisation of Christianity, the intention was just to remove the western garments but keeping the universal Christian gospel as it was from the beginning with its centrality on Jesus Christ and the

Bible. For Gehman (1987: 2) “Africanisation of Christianity is the quest to make Christian faith authentically an African Christian faith”.

Further to the foregoing, Gehman argues that Jesus Christ must be interpreted to the Africans in such a way that HE is both true to the scripture and meaningful to the African man. It is in this milieu that Nyamiti (1984) popularised a new tag for Christ that is Christ our ancestor. Nyamiti posits that the cult of ancestors should control how the Church in Africa understands its life and operations (Kaoma 2015:45). Through incarnation and redemption, Christ has become our kin our mediator and our example (Kaoma 2015:45). About eight years later Benezet Bujo further developed Nyamiti’s school of thought of Christ being our Ancestor. However, for Bujo Christ as ancestor can only be used metaphorically since Jesus Christ transcends all ancestors (Bujo 1992:87). It is against this argument that Bujo labels Christ as our Proto Ancestor (Bujo 1992:87). By Proto ancestor Bujo implies that Jesus is the first to resurrect from the dead, evidenced by HIS Christophanes, ascended to heaven and hence the vehicle of a new life between the weak human beings and the supreme God, the creator (Bujo 1992:89). In a way, Bujo is presenting to an African man Jesus Christ as an ancestor par excellent who transcend over all other ancestors. By so doing Africans will feel at home both in Church and in their African cultures. This is how Africans perceived and constructed praise names like *Mudzimu mukuru* (Great Ancestor), *Chidza chepo* (The One who has no beginning), *dande mutande* (the one who is everywhere), being accommodated in Christianity though during ‘Christianisation of Africa’ such words were deemed to be evil and unwelcome by the Church. Thus, we argue that the Africanisation of Christianity is a by-product of western missionaries failing to inculturate the gospel into the African worldviews.

As we have already noted that inculturation is the process whereby cultural values can be transformed through exposure to the Christian message and the insertion of Christianity into indigenous cultures (Duncan 2014:11). This suggests a dual process whereby the Christian gospel adapts and adopts the new African environment at the same time maintaining its central tenets. Thus, western missionaries’ rigid approach to Christianisation of Africa triggered the migration of church members from missionary Churches to start

their own African Independent Churches. By the time many African nations gained freedom from colonial governments, African Indigenous Churches were getting to be more and more visible in many of these African countries. The main purpose of these AICs was to redefine Christianity from an African perspective and through African thought forms and idioms but still continuing to be in tandem with the rest of the Christendom (Muzorewa 1985). This is what Orobator (2008) referred to as “brewed theology in an African pot” Thus, resulting in a Christianity that was influenced by and conceived from an African worldview, African Philosophy, African Tradition and African Cultures (Fielder et al. 1998:34).

We posited in the study that in this process of ‘brewing’ Christianity in an African pot some AICs went on to accommodate incompatible African spiritual elements hence presenting suspicious Church spiritualities. This suggests that there are two broad categories of AICs: Undisputed and Disputed. For us to reach to this conclusion, firstly we need to agree on what constitute an authentic Christian Church and what characterised a disputed Church. Burrige (2001) gives us a tentative working definition of a true Christian Church. Thus, a genuine Christian Church is a group of people that follows the doctrine of Jesus Christ, His death burial and resurrection for the salvation of humankind (Burrige 2001:10). This doctrine of Christ is found in the Bible, mostly in Old and New Testaments (Burrige 2001:11). Basing on this working definition thus, any Church that does not teach the Doctrine of Christ; and does not use the Bible for its theology is presenting a questionable non-Christian Spirituality. Below is a discussion on the origin of authentic AICs in Zimbabwe. A selection of the disputed AICs shall be undertaken in Chapter 3.

It is factual that this phenomenon called AICs came to the then Rhodesia from South Africa. The simple reason to this assumption is that the first and second AICs in Zimbabwe were all from South Africa. According to Daneel (1987:51) the earliest AIC in the then Southern Eastern Rhodesia was the ‘First Ethiopian Church’ (FEC) which was founded by Mupambi Chidembo from the Ndau tribe of Chipinge in 1910. Chidembo returned from the then Transvaal and now Limpopo province of South Africa) and established an independent Church first among the Karanga people of Bikita, then Gutu and finally his home area Chipinge (Daneel 1987:51). The second AIC was the Zion

Christian Church (ZCC) (Daneel 1987). Zion Christian Church of the Zimbabwean chapter was founded by Samuel Mamvura Mutendi of Bikita district in Masvingo province in 1925 as he broke away with Enginase Lekganyane (Chimininge 2014:33-48). After the establishment of FEC and ZCC, many more emerged such as Johane Marange in the early 1930s, and Assemblies of God Africa (AOGA) now called Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa Forward in Faith (ZAOGA FIF) Church founded by Ezekiel Guti in 1960 among other AICs in Zimbabwe. Since then, AICs continued to spread so that today they are numerous in Zimbabwe.

Table 1: Examples of undisputed AICs, their founders and years they were founded

African Independent Church	Founder	Year
First Ethiopian Church	Mupambi Chidembo	1910
Zion Christian Church (ZCC)	Samuel Mamvura Mutendi	1925
Johane Marange Apostolic Faith Church	Johane Marange	1935
African Apostolic Church	Paul Mwazha	1951
AOGA now ZAOGA FIF	Ezekiel Handinawangu Guti	1960

Arguably, as these AICs continue to multiply the study also argues that the typologies given to designate these AICs need to be revised. This is so because for Anderson (2001:107) the typologies given overlooked the complexities of the subject hence causing confusion and wrong interpretation of the phenomenon. Anderson further argues that earlier scholars of these AICs were shortsighted because their typologies of AICs do not match the intricacies of the subject matter and are very misleading (Anderson 2000:107). Thus the study shares the same sentiments with other scholars like Dana and Daneel (2007) who argued that the tendency of studying one movement and presupposes that all AICs are the same should be discouraged.

It is important to highlight that this research was carried out among the Vapostori (Apostolic) Christian Churches in Zimbabwe. Still, the researchers of the study admit that one cannot carry out meaningful research if one targets the Vapostori as a whole because there are enumerable number of Vapostori denominations in Zimbabwe. Among the Vapostori Churches, there are those of the 'Book' and those of the 'Spirit'. By those of 'the Book' the study refers to those Vapostori who use the Bible for their theology.

Examples of these are: *Positori yekwa* Johane Marange (the Johane Marange Apostolic Church), *Positori yekwa* Mwazha (African Apostolic Church) and *Positori yekwa* Mugodhi (the Mugodhi Apostolic Church) among others. And another group is Vapositori of the 'Spirit'. These Vapositori normally referred to themselves as 'Christians who do not read the Bible' but rely on direct communication from God (live and directly) (Matthew Engelke 2007).

As of 2016, there were commonly known as *vekumasowe* (wilderness) or *chechi dzekuMadzibaba* (Fathers Churches). Therefore, in an attempt to fill up the academic *lacuna*, our submission is that, the earlier scholars who researched on Vapositori of the 'Spirit' or *Madzibaba* or *Masowe*, the likes of Dillone-Malone (1978) Mukonyora (1998), (2007) and Engelke (2007) among others did not account for variables amongst the Masowe religious groups. It appears as if there is one unified Johane Masowe weChishanu Church in Zimbabwe. Yet there are numerous Johane Masowe weChishanu Churches in Zimbabwe. Perhaps during their time of study Johane Masowe weChishanu Church was still a unified religious group. The study observes that after the death of Johane Masowe in 1973 resulted in many splinter groups emerging but they all continued to be designated by the preface Johane Masowe weChishanu. The study shall provide a list of these Johane Masowe weChishanu Churches in Zimbabwe and their identity. It is among the numerous lists of the Johane Masowe weChishanu Churches that Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi has been explicitly selected to be the case study of this research. The reason why we are carrying a research among this religious group is that the Church attracted thousands of followers in Zimbabwe and its neighboring countries hence attracting scholars to discuss its Church spirituality. Below is a brief study on the typologies of undisputed AICs.

The term 'typology' in the study is used to imply a classification of AICs according to certain specifications. A typology is a genre or class that helps to characterise a certain phenomenon (George 2012:3). It is on these grounds that scholars who studied AICs identified some broad categories. These categories are based on certain features of the church. Convincingly, the study notes that although there has been an extensive literature on AICs, Bengt Sundkler (1948) is credited with being the first to systematise the study of

AICs (Anderson 2001:12) into two broad groups; the ‘Ethiopian’ and the ‘Spirit-type’. This two-fold distinction of AICs, of Sundkler was later developed by Turner (1967). However, though Turner adopted the two-fold categories of AICs, he noted that there are some AICs which do not fit into the two broad subdivisions. These according to Turner were disputed AICs hence he categorised them as Neo-pagan movements and Hebraic movements (Daneel 1987:34-35). For Him any other AIC that does not fit into the two main broad categories ‘Ethiopian’ and ‘Spirit-type’ is Neo-pagan or non-Christian. Seemingly, the discourse on the authentic and non-authentic Christian Churches is central to the study hence Chapter three of the study will pursue Turner’s argument that “some AICs are non-Christian and others are more obviously Christian” (Daneel 1987:35).

So, the two-fold distinction of AICs propounded by Sundkler (1948) supported by Turner (1967) and later by Daneel (1987), was further subdivided by Anderson (1997) into three broad categories-Ethiopian, Spirit-type and Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches. The Pentecostal Churches, according to Anderson, are those that emerged after Zimbabwe became independent of colonisation in 1980. Thus, the chapter discussed the three broad categories of AICs - Ethiopian, Spirit-type and Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches.

Table 2: Typologies of AICs according to Turner, Daneel and Anderson

Church typology	Examples
Ethiopian	1.The First Ethiopian Church (FEC) of 1910 2.African Congregational Church of 1953
Spirit-type	1.Zion Christian Church 2. Johane Marange Apostolic Church of 1935
African Pentecostal Churches	Assemblies of God Africa (AOGA) Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa Forward in Faith Church of 1960 Worldwide Family of God (FOG) Church 1985

These typologies are studied for three main reasons; first, to find out whether the categories of AICs added more knowledge to the academic study of this phenomenon or has caused much confusion; second, to locate the JMCN Church group in Zimbabwe; third, whether the three-fold typologies: Ethiopian, Spirit-type and Pentecostal is a full representation of AICs in Zimbabwe.

The first group, as observed by Sundkler (1961:53), is a generic group of what he termed 'Ethiopian Churches.' For him, these churches are linked ideologically to the Coptic Church in the medieval kingdom of Axum in Ethiopia. It was the first Christian Church established at Alexandria in Egypt before it was rooted in the Latin North Africa (Daneel 1987:38). However, for Sundkler (1961:53), these Churches are not significantly different from most of the 'parent' mission churches in terms of their theology and liturgy. He argued that the chief dissimilarity is that they are led and controlled by Africans. In other words, for Sundkler (1961) the main reason for their emergence has been to empower Africans into Church leadership. For Anderson Ethiopian Churches are AICs that do not claim to be prophetic or to have special manifestation of the Holy Spirit but emerged on racial and political grounds (Anderson 2001:16). The term is derived from Ethiopia, the only African nation that had successfully rejected colonialism by defeating Italy in the battle of *Adwa* which was fought on 1 march in 1896 (Anderson 2001:16). Apart from Ethiopia defeating Italy in a war, it is the one of the few African countries mentioned in the Bible (Psalm 68:31), (Anderson 2001:16). Thus, Daneel (1987) the leading exponent on the study of AICs in Zimbabwe outlines the main spiritual elements of faith of the Ethiopian Churches:

- They lay no claim to manifestations of the Holy Spirit;
- They have a political outlook based largely on Africa for the Africans;
- They claim a close connection with the New Testament Christianity through the Coptic Church of Ethiopia;
- The label Ethiopia occurs prominently in the names of the Churches (Psalms 68:31);
- They stress the reading of the Bible;
- They value Biblical exegesis following patterns of the mainline Churches;
- Their teachings are very close to the theology of missionary churches (Daneel 1987:54);

The examples of the Ethiopian Churches in the Zimbabwean religious landscape are as follows:

- The First Ethiopian Church of Zimbabwe (*Chechi yaMatopia*) by Mupambi Chidembo founded in 1910;
- African Congregational Church founded by Mheke Semwayo in 1942;

- Apostolic Faith Mission of Africa International by the late Rev Sibanda now led by Tony Tshuma in 1985;
- African Reformed Church founded by Rev Jonas Zvobgo.

For Daneel (1987:51) the first Ethiopian Church (FEC) in the Zimbabwean Chapter was founded by Mupambi Chidembo, a *MuNdau* from the Bikita district in Masvingo province who worked as a migrant labourer in the then Transvaal in South Africa from 1890 to 1910 where he came into contact with the South African “Ethiopian Church.” What is noteworthy in the study is the origin of the founder. Mupambi was *Ndau* but located in Bikita area, an area of the Karanga people. Most *Ndau* people in Zimbabwe are from Chipinge, not from Bikita. Also the name Mupambi Chidembo is not a *Ndau* name but a Karanga name. This could imply that if this man was a *Ndau* he could have migrated from Chipinge and forcefully grabbed a piece of land in Bikita hence the nickname Mupambi meaning someone who grabs things by force. Chibembo is an animal that smells a lot that no one is comfortable staying close to. So by him being so named, the locals were not amused by his grabbing of the land and forcing his way to stay among the Karanga people. It is this man like Saul of the Bible who was a killer but turned to be a great preacher of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Mupambi Chidembo despite his displeasing background started a Church and people followed him. This church, is no longer functional as it used to be during its hay days when it was then popularly known as *chichi yamatopia*, meaning the Ethiopian Church mostly among the Gutu, Ndanga, Bikita and Chipinge districts (Daneel 1987:51).

The second group identified by Daneel (18987:53) of the Ethiopian Church was the African Congregational Church founded by Semwayo, a *muRozwi* from Chipinge district in Manicaland province. Semwayo left the American Board Mission to start his own Church among his people as result of leadership disputes (Duncan 2015:213). The dispute arose at Mt Silinda because White Missionaries were supporting the colonial regime that was there in Zimbabwe. It was during this time that most African country were advocating for Pan- Africanism (Duncan 2015). It is interesting to note that most Church founders are from Chipinge and are of the *Ndau* tribe. On contrasting views Chipinge district is commonly known for witchcraft and

sorcery (Kelso 1993:4). Kelso raised that his Editor friend Maxwell Chivasa informed him that powerful sorcerers reside in Chipinge (Kelso 1993:4). Surprisingly most great Church founders are from Chipinge. However, the primary focus of the study is not discussing the origins of African Indigenous Church leaders but to discuss the typologies of AICs.

The second group of AICs after the Ethiopians was the Spirit-type Churches (Daneel 1987:53). Historically, these churches are related to the Zionist movements in South Africa and *en route* to Zion City of Illinois (United States of America) (Sundkler1976:16ff). Spirit-type churches are more dissimilar and different from the missionary Christianity in the area of theology and liturgy. For Daneel (1987:54) “the prevalence of such terms as Zion, Jerusalem, Apostolic, Full Gospel, Pentecostal and the like as the designations of African Spirit-type Churches in itself indicates that most of them are strongly inclined, or at least pre-eminence to the work of the Holy Spirit.” Daneel (1987) summarised the main tenets of the Spirit-type Churches as follows:

- They are Spirit type Churches;
- They ideologically pride themselves as Amazonia who emanate from Mt Zion in Jerusalem;
- They emphasise prophecy under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit;
- They value the power of revelation, visions and dreams;
- They emphasise the authority of the Bible;
- They emphasise exorcism and healing; and
- They affirm some aspects of traditional society.

Examples of Churches which fall under Spirit-type in the Zimbabwean Chapter according to Daneel are:

- Zion Christian Church (ZCC) founded by Samuel Mutendi
- Zion Church (*Zioni reNdaza*) Zionist of the sacred cords founded by Andria
- African Apostolic Church of God founded by Paul Mwazha
- Johane Marange Apostolic Church founded by Johane Marange

However, it is important to note that the third category of AICs was later introduced by Anderson (1997). For him though the second group of AICs (the Spirit -type) is spiritual in nature, there are distinctive features that are

there between the old Spirit-type Churches of the 1910-1970s with newly Spirit-type Churches which came as the aftermath of the Zimbabwean independence(Anderson 1997:3). This is how the third categories of AICs were introduced particularly on the Zimbabwean Christian landscape.

The third group of AICs is the African Pentecostal Churches. African Pentecostal Churches are the third fastest growing phenomenon among the AICs in Zimbabwe. For Martin (2008:9) Pentecostalism represents the third great force of Christianity. Mapuranga (2013:172) as quoting Togarasei (2010:20) argues that the emergence of African Pentecostalism was largely facilitated by Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) which entered in Zimbabwe in 1915 through a South African Evangelist called Zacharius Manamela. AFM Church brought Pentecostal revivals in the country which gave birth to many African Pentecostal Churches in Zimbabwe. The oldest of these African Pentecostal Churches emerged from AFM is Assemblies of God Africa (AOGA) of Ezekiel Guti of the 1960s (Machingura 2011).

This term Pentecostal is taken from the Day of Pentecost experience of the Acts Chapter 2:1ff (Anderson 2001:18). This strand of Christianity in Africa, particularly in Zimbabwe, is characterized by its emphasis on the outpouring of the power of the Holy Spirit on its ordinary members who thereafter break through both cultural and economic limitations (Maxwell 1998:350-373). David Maxwell (1998:350-373) who studied ZAOGA FIF one of the Zimbabwean oldest Pentecostal Churches, argues that African Pentecostal Churches seek to cultivate a theology that attends to the needs of Africans. For Maxwell these African Pentecostal Churches emphasize deliverance from the spirit of poverty since Africa from time immemorial is characterized by poverty, disease and wars (Maxwell 1998:350-373).

For Duncan Pentecostalism is a globalized form of faith expression, a transnational, worldwide form of Christianity (Duncan 2014:1-11). Further Duncan argues that African Pentecostal Churches are innovative where scripture is used to speak into existential situations of believers and in response Church members believed it will act in their favor (Duncan 2014:9). More so, unlike the ‘Spirit-type, spiritual-healing Churches’, African Pentecostal Churches (APCs) emphasize the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This baptism is for all Church members. For Musoni (2014) all members are

baptised by the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in other languages popularly known as speaking in tongues (*glossolalia*). This is different from the Spirit type Churches which believe that the gift of the Holy Spirit is for special individuals in the Church. The study posits that African Pentecostal Churches propagated a theology of priesthood for all believers basing their theology from Acts 2 which states in part that:

... And they were ALL filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. (Acts 2:4 (KJV)).

The study observes that African Pentecostalism was increasingly becoming a force to reckon in Zimbabwe after 1980s (Anderson 2004). One thing that has been a mirage among scholars who studied this strand of Christianity in Africa is that African Pentecostalism is not static but is dynamic. Maxwell (2007) described African Pentecostal Churches as 'transitional' African Pentecostal Churches. For him African Pentecostal Churches are characterized by vacillation especially when it comes to political issues. Maxwell observed that the leader of one African Pentecostal Church the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa's leader Ezekiel Guti draws towards Mugabe at one stage and moved towards the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) at another stage (Maxwell 2007). Following is a discussion on types of APCs and their Church spiritualities in Zimbabwe.

According to Ukah (2007:1), "African Pentecostalism have taken the African south of the Sahara by storm". Kalu (2008:6) added that these Pentecostal Churches built mega-center of worship; use attractive and expensive places such as stadiums and cinemas; organize well attended crusades and revivals; own radio and television stations. Dovlo (1998:52-69) summarize the major tenets of the APCs emphasis on:

- Success (material prosperity), prosperity that comes through giving and paying of tithes;
- A life of mission (suffering for the gospel);
- Deliverance from evil spirits;
- Use of mass media;
- The Bible as the source of their theology;
- Emphasis on speaking in tongues (*glossolalia*) *Spiritometer*;
- The priesthood for all believers;

- All night prayers, praying in the name of Jesus Christ Dovlo (1998:52-69), (Musoni 2014:15).

Examples of these African Pentecostal Churches in Zimbabwe are as follows:

- Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa (ZAOGA F.I.F) by Ezekiel Guti of 1960;
- Worldwide Family of God (FOG) Church led by Andrew Wutawunashwe of 1985;
- Faith World Ministries founded by Bartholomew Manjoro 1993;
- United Family International Church (UFIC) by Emmanuel Makandiwa 2008;
- Prophecy Healing and Deliverance Ministry (PHD) Walter Magaya 2012.

However, it has been noted in the study that some other scholars used the term New Religious Movements (NRMs) or New Religious Right Movements (NRRMs) to refer to African Pentecostals Churches. In the Zimbabwean setting (Mpofu 2013) in his unpublished doctoral thesis used (NRRMs) to refer to this group of Christian Churches in Zimbabwe as movements that have deviated from preaching the true gospel of Christ. Arguably, the term NRRMs or NRMs used to refer to this brand of Christianity is derogatory and raises more questions than answers. The reason for this submission is that it appears as though those scholars who use NRRMs to refer to African Pentecostal Churches follow the armchair theorists and critics of the West, who question phenomena without proper empirical appreciation of the phenomenon. For instance, the immediate question one can ask is: is the term 'Religious movement' synonymous with the term 'Christian Church' or what constitutes a Church, Christian or Religious Movement? Can the word 'Movement' used interchangeably with the word 'Church' without confusing? For Galgalo and Peter (2012:76) what makes a Church Christian is the proclamation of the gospel of Christ, His death and resurrection. Considering the theology of these Churches that are referred to as Religious Movements-a theology that is Christ centered, drawn from the Bible, scholars like Mapuranga (2013) prefers to use African Pentecostal Churches than New Religious Movements. The term New Religious Movement lost significance because of its ambiguity and lack of clarity. For George the word 'new' is so confusing because for him the so

called 'new religious movements' are certainly not new phenomena (George 2006:3). For example, a Church that has existed for over five decades cannot be still referred to as New Religious movement. Anderson (1997:4) decided to designate a new tag for this strand of Christianity particularly in Zimbabwe. Instead of being New Religious Movements Anderson termed them 'New Pentecostal Churches'. For him they are New Pentecostal Churches because they emerged after Independence in 1980 (Anderson 1997:3).

However, the only error that Anderson made at first was to assume that Churches like ZAOGA started after 1980 (Anderson 1997:4:3) which he corrected later in his 2001 publication citing that the Church started in the 1960s (Anderson 2001:179). Perhaps what confused him earlier was the initial 'Z' on Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa (ZOAGA). Maxwell adds that the Church was founded between the 1950s and 1960s by Guti and a small group of believers who were dismissed from the Apostolic Faith Mission Church (AFM) because of Guti's charisma (Maxwell 2006:13). This group joined Nicholas Bhengu of South Africa's Assemblies of God (AoG) before Guti started his Assemblies of God Africa (AOGA) in the 1960. Therefore, its name then was 'Assemblies of God Africa' (AOGA) before it was renamed after Independence to be Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa. As this Zimbabwean Pentecostal Church continued to reach out for other nations outside Zimbabwe, it was again renamed the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa Forward in Faith Church (ZAOGA FIF). This is why Maxwell referred to this Church as African Zimbabwean 'Transitional' Pentecostal Church (Maxwell 2006:13).

George and Wilkins further argued that the term New Religious Movement is misleading because all the ancient religions were once new, even mainline Christianity. However, for Turner (1987:13) the term New Religious Movements (NRMs) is a substitute of the pejorative term 'cult'. George and Wilkins (2006:3), Saliba (2003:3) defined New Religious Movements as: Any religious movement that is organizationally distinct and has doctrines and or practices that contradict those of the Scripture (Bible) as interpreted by traditional Christianity as represented by the major Catholic and Protestant denominations, and as expressed in such statements as the Apostles' Creed.

Guided by this definition the study posits that some Churches which were labeled 'New Religious Movements' need to be correctly called 'African Pentecostal Churches (APCs)' The reason for this submission is that these Churches that are typically identified as New Religious Movements or cults subscribe to the traditional Christian spiritual tenets.

There is a gross conflation between New Religious Movements (cults) and African Pentecostal Churches. These denominations that are typically identified as New Religious Movements (cults) subscribe to the traditional tenets of Christianity (George 2006:3). A case in point is ZAOGA FIF. However, for Mpfu (2013) ZAOGA FIF is New Religious Right Movement because Guti as the founder of the movement is glorified to the level of a demi-god (Mpfu 2013:63).

Further Mpfu argues that too much power in one person has led to many splits within the ZAOGA FIF movement giving birth to many ministers starting their own Churches for instance, Prophet Uebert Angel of Spirit Embassy Ministries (Mpfu 2013:64). The study posits that a misinterpretation of facts by some academic scholars resulted in the disseminating of false information to the corporate world. For example, it is a misinterpretation of fact that Uebert Angel broke away from ZAOGA FIF. Similarly, that ZAOGA FIF is a New Religious Movement because the ordinary followers of the Church revere a person as the 'son of God' in Christological stature is again empirically unproven. In fact, what can be empirically proven is that Guti teaches who he is and what his members should do. Guti taught his members that he is not Christ nor claimed to be equal to Jesus Christ but just a servant of Jesus Christ. As Guti wrote:

I never preached myself to be Jesus or pretend to be Jesus. I am a servant and Messenger of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, who died and rose for you and me. Amen. (Guti 2014:17).

In a continuous endeavor to clarify this misunderstanding, The History of ZAOGA Forward in Faith, (2014) is a book that is read to all members of the church on every Church anniversary. Therefore, to argue that ordinary followers of Guti see him as a 'son of God' with Christological stature (Mpfu 2013:64) is a theologically and doctrinally misleading statement. Therefore, apart from the few scholars who preferred to name African Pentecostal

Churches New Religious Movements, the chapter posits that the majority of scholars unanimously agree that the above mentioned categories of AICs- Ethiopian, Spirit type and African Pentecostal movements are authentically Christian Churches. Below are the criterion used to distinguish disputed AICs from undisputed AICs by previous scholars in this domain.

The study notes that though there are many different Church denominations displaying variable Spiritualities what makes them Christian are certain boundaries. For Holt (2005:13) Christianity has a very big playing field, but there are also boundaries outside which the 'game' is no longer Christian. Holt further argues that in this modern era, demarcation lines are not always as clear as they used to be in the past centuries hence there is need to critically discuss on criteria of Christian spirituality (Holt 2005:13). For him 'not every spirituality is a type of Christian Spirituality' (Holt 2005:13). Therefore, the study is necessary for the identity and integrity of undisputed AICs in an environment where everyday a new Church is being started particularly in Zimbabwe.

The study continues to argue that while religious dialogue is necessary, Christians should not lose the central spiritual Christian elements. The study posits that boundaries are set to define parameters and identities. It is reasonable to argue that Christianity like any other religion has boundaries that should be preserved to safeguard its integrity and identity. Clark (1998:38) observes that "boundaries protect what is at the heart of the matter for a community of faith, that an assault on boundaries is an assault on the heart of the matter". He adds, "Boundaries also define the shape and extent of an entity, and distinguish between what is inside and what is out" (Clark1998:44). Further, Clark gave examples of boundaries.

Some boundaries are like the Berlin Wall - fronted by land mines, topped with barbed wire, guarded by machine guns. Others serve to facilitate interaction with the environment. Other boundaries are elastic and semi-permeable, define the self and require bonding with the other, points to the reality of mutual inter-connectedness. Such communion attests that we inhabit a single context, and within that context we live deeply within one another's boundaries. The only way to in-habit is to co-habit. The fantasy of the impermeable self or religious boundaries is a snare and a delusion. With

such understanding of boundaries might encourage those willing to cross over and return, and create the conditions for peace between traditions long separated from each other? Semi-permeable boundary protects the authentic identity of an entity and generates creativity and community (Clark 1998:44).

For Smith, “boundaries define us; they define what is me and what is not me” (Smith 2011:2). Further Smith argues that “boundary shows me where I end and someone else begins, it leads me to sense of ownership”. Therefore, the study on inculturated African spiritual elements in the JMCN Church looks into what the Church has adopted from African Traditional Religion to shape their Christian spirituality in Zimbabwe.

Accordingly Clark (1998) and Smith (2011) definitions of the ‘boundaries’ can be equated to central religious spiritual elements which define the essence of a religion. For Bruce (1999:1) Christian spiritual elements are the very mystical essentials which form the line of demarcation between undisputed Church Movements and Disputed Church Movements. For him though there are many these Christian doctrines; seven doctrines are undisputable and all Christian denomination should uphold them. The study maintains the same perspective in dealing with African Indigenous Churches. Religious scholars are aware of the contestation on the criteria for distinguishing undisputed Church denominations from disputed Church denominations. The study subscribes to the seven undisputed spiritual elements according to Bruce (1999). Following are the summarised Christian tenets according to Bruce (1999):

- Salvation through Jesus Christ;
- The Bible is the inspired word of God;
- The doctrine of the Trinity, God Father, Son and Holy Spirit;
- The Doctrine of Christology;
- The Bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ;
- The Second coming of Jesus Christ to Judge the World;
- The sacraments, i.e., Eucharist and Water Baptism.

For Moodley (2008:78) one set of criteria to accurately evaluate the authenticity of Christian spirituality in a Church organization is its

Christological beliefs. Moodley summarized Peter Beyerhaus (1967)'s orthodox Christology as follows;

- Christ must be proclaimed as *Christus Victor*, the one who triumphs over evil forces (Colossians 2:15) (ASV)
- Christ must be proclaimed as the *Crucified One* who took the curse of our sins upon himself
- Christ must be proclaimed as the one who is present, still working powerfully among his people and assisting them in their needs, dangers and temptations
- And Christ must be proclaimed as the one to come who will appear at the full revelation of God's kingdom (Moodley, 2008:79).

The chapter argues that the emphasis on the person and work of Christ by the above discussed AICs Ethiopian, Spirit-Type, and Pentecostal Charismatics particularly in Zimbabwe is an important criterion in concluding that these AICs are undisputed Christian Churches. The study posits that there is plethora of other AICs whose theology and spirituality is questionable. It is against this locale that chapter three of the study discussed the theology and spirituality of the disputed AICs in Zimbabwe. The chapter will start by looking at other disputed AICs outside Zimbabwe then moves on to discuss the ones in Zimbabwe.

This chapter has posited that there are two phases of the Christianisation of Zimbabwe. The first phase was European 'missionaries' enterprise (1561 to 1900). The second phase is the African Christian's initiative (about 1910 to present). The study observes that while the initiative of evangelisation of the Christian gospel shifted from European Missionaries to African Christians, the centrality of Christian spirituality continued to be noticeable i.e. they continued to proclaim *Christus victor* (Amanze 2002:34), using the Bible as the source of their theology, preaching and waiting for the second coming of Jesus Christ to judge the world, and they continue to fellowship in the Pascal mystery of Jesus. It is to these results the groups of AICs discussed in the chapter are designated as undisputed AICs in Zimbabwe. However, the purpose of the study is to discover the authenticity of JMCN Church spirituality. We have noted that the JMCN Church was not listed among the undisputed AICs hence a need to selected other groups of AICs in Zimbabwe.

This selection of other AICs is done to ascertain the place of Jesus Christ, His mediatorship role, His death and resurrection, His second coming and primarily the place of the Bible for their Theology and spirituality.

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

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.

CHAPTER FOUR: CENTRAL SPIRITUAL TENETS OF AFRICAN SPIRITUALITY

It was noted in chapter one of the study that there is no homogenous definition of African spirituality due to diversities of African cultures and many conceptions thereto. However, what we refer to as African Spirituality in this study's specific intellectual purview, is the traditional Karanga ways of approaching the ultimate-being that pre-dates Christianity. African spirituality signifies the homegrown knowledge system *chivanhu chedu* Our humaneness that includes the worship of God *Musikavanhu*, in designated sacred shrines, veneration of ancestors and using of certain objects and substances for worship (Turaki 2000). We argue in this research that what distinguishes African Spirituality from other spiritualities are these central elements of faith, elements such as; ancestor veneration, reverence of certain sacred places, the use of certain selected objects and following certain rituals and ceremonies.

Orobator raised that, long before missionaries came to Africa, Africans had already developed various ways of expressing and celebrating their experience of God (Orobator 2008:142). To be precise, African spirituality denotes African traditional ways of communicating with the divine that was handed down orally from one generation to another by our forebears. For Nyamiti (1994:68), African spirituality is a phenomenon shaped by Africans' problems, needs and aspirations. This spirituality is expressed in various ways and systems such as symbols, worshipping in certain sacred places, such as pools, rivers, trees, hills and mountains. Wakefield (1983:16) defines spirituality as beliefs and practices which move religious people's lives and help them reach-out towards their ultimate concern. This is a way of life connected to the spiritual world. The study posits that the Karanga people of Chirumhanzu have designated places that are sacred to them which are characterized by the presence of traditional priest and priestesses offering prayers and rituals guided by certain taboos. These places still exist with chiefs as the priests of such places. Example of such places is the *Gonawapotera* pool and *Chivavarira* hill of Chirumhanzu Midlands province in Zimbabwe. These places are characterized by mythical stories, certain practices and taboos that depict the manifestations of the spiritual world

(Mbiti 1970:15). Thus, for Mbiti (1970:16), the spiritual world of Africans is populated with spiritual beings, spirits, and the living-dead all of whom play a major role in Africans' well-being. It is the aim of the study to investigate to what extent JMCN Church inculcated such African worldview to shape its Church spirituality in Zimbabwe.

Rituals are religiously meaningful performances that members of that grouping perform in appropriate circumstances, usually following a standard format (Lugira 2009:74). Thus, rituals are tangible manifestation of a group's belief systems. These rituals are carried out in the events of an individual's birth, naming, initiation, marriage and one's death (Lugira 2009:73). Some rituals are carried out on communal gathering such as harvest and bringing rain ceremonies (Mbiti 1991). Some events are for the family and others are for the nation. These events are religious, not secular. Members express their beliefs in practical terms that include praying, sacrifices and offerings, rituals and observing customs. Festivals are enjoyed when people sing, dance, and eat on an event like rain ceremonies, harvest, birth of a child. These rituals are done in designated places such as mountain, caves and rivers. For Maxwell (1999:198), places like mountains and caves are sacred places because such places are associated with ancestral spirits because they are burial shrines for chiefs. However, it has been noted that not all mountains and caves are revered by Africans, but certain mountains, caves, trees, rivers and pools are central shrines for African Indigenous religions. Mbiti observes that certain forests are sacred places such that no one is allowed to kill a bird that hides in such places (Mbiti 1986:55). It was found out during fieldwork that, according to the Karanga people of Chirumhanzu, mostly mountains and caves where chiefs were buried are usually the ones used for these rituals. In a way, carrying out these rituals at these burial places connects the living living with the living dead (Benyera 2015:13).

These places are not commonly used except for religious purposes. Some are man-made features and others are natural and set apart for religious purposes in their original form. Some shrines are for family and others for the nation e.g. family - grave yard, national graves such as the National Heroes' Acre in Harare. Africans bring sacrifices to sacred places where they pray and offer these sacrifices for accompanied with specific requests and prayers. There are traditional priests who preside over the offertory processes, clean the site,

receive visitors and protect it from misuse. It is such sacred shrines the study investigated to ascertain to what extent Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi embraced them for Church services. The study discusses Church rituals and ceremonies conducted in such places and why such sacred places are selected by African Churches.

Mbiti 1975:19-30) argues that African spirituality is expressed in rituals, objects, symbols, myths and customs. The study advances that there are certain objects that are uniquely African Traditional Religious objects. We have observed that the majority religions have certain objects of faith that are used for worship. Muslims for example, have the Black stone in the ka'ba, a sacred stone believed that one's sins are forgiven as one kisses the stone during Ramadan(Zaehner 1982:179). Christians have objects of faith such as the Pulpit, Crucifix, Temples and Church buildings.

Likewise, ATR has its objects of faith such as wooden plates, religious rods and clay pots. The study notes that metal objects are prohibited in ATR sacred places. Why? I presume it is because they were brought by whites and thus not considered to be very traditional. Thus, one is not allowed to take with him/her a metal object like a watch to a sacred place. Therefore, the study discusses JMCN religious objects in a bid to discover which African traditional objects the Church has inculturated to shape its Church spirituality in Zimbabwe.

In African Indigenous Religions there are certain symbols or rather signs which are decoded to mean manifestations of the divine in African's daily lives. A symbol is defined in the study as an emblem, a sign or gestures decoded to convey a religious meaning which otherwise it does not depict at face value. These symbols vary from one community to the other and also from time to time. It is essential to highlight that the examples given in the study on African religious symbols are drawn from among the Karanga people of Chirumhanzu in Midlands's province of Zimbabwe. For example, in Chirumhanzu, certain movements of human body parts are decoded as non-verbal language of the spirit world sending messages to the human world. For instance, blinking of the lower eye lid depicts joy whilst blinking of an upper eye lid depicts impending sorrow. The appearance of certain animals or reptiles to individuals is a message either of peace or of trouble. For example,

appearing of an African puff adder, *chiva*, or biris arietans *shukukuviri* is a sign of bad omen or the death of a relative. This is how Kaoma posited that some snakes were treated with respect, dignity as the manifestation of the deity among the Shona people of Zimbabwe (Kaoma 2015:61).

Also a sound from an owl *zizi*, (strigiformes) is a sign of the presence of witches. Besides sounds from animals and reptiles' dreams are others means of the living and the dead in African spirituality. For Daneel the dead communicate with the living through dreams (Daneel 1971:99). Among the Karanga people of Chirumhanzu some dreams are taken to mean impending bad happenings while others are taken to mean impending good happenings. For example, a dream while one is walking in a green healthy field for the Karanga of Chirumhanzu is a sign of death in the family while dreaming catching fish means much wealth coming your way. Again, the study shall exhibit how the JMCN Church inculturated these symbols and dreams as sources of their Church theology and spirituality.

According to Eliade, myth relates to a sacred history that is a primordial event that took place at the beginning of time (Eliade 1959:95), whereas a legend is a story or a narrative that describes deeds of divine beings or heroes or supernatural beings (Degh 2001:42). There is a general tendency of interpreting myths as legendary false stories. This is where mythical stories are taken as fictitious stories or fantasy hence no truth in them. However, from a religious perspective, myths are interpreted as symbols conveying truth about human existence or superhuman reality (Eliade 1959:96). They explain the interrelationship between human beings and their environment. They also explain the interrelationship between people and their gods and man and his physical environment. From a religious perspective, a myth therefore, expresses a way of being in the world. It constitutes the history of the acts of supernatural beings that history is regarded as true and sacred. Myths provide models of all important human actions. For Mbiti (1991:29) African knowledge about God is expressed in proverbs, myths and short statements. What is important to note is that for Africans there is no myth about the end of world since time has no end (Mbiti 1990:23). However, every other action tends to have its model rooted in some form of mythology. Myths in the Shona Karanga worldview are stories which depict a meaning of

life. For instance, we grew up hearing stories like do not sit on cross roads you develop boils. Such stories can be taken casually today but then they were stories pregnant with meanings. It was a way to say if you sit on cross road you can be hit by a car. It is a form of poetry that proclaims the truth (Schilancestorbrack 2003:85). Myths awaken and maintain consciousness of another world or a world beyond the current. Myth enables religious people to live in a time beyond the current time (Mbiti 1991:29). Religious people possess a quest for understanding their origins, for example, understanding the various accounts of creation takes religious people to the very origins of the world (Mbiti 1991:30).

For Eliade (1957:96) myths are true stories because they deal with sacred realities of life. We argue therefore, in the study that some myths were used to preserve nature while others were used preserve the sacrality of the sacred places. Over and above some myths were used to teach moral lessons. Therefore, we critically discuss how the JMCN substituted all western Christian ways of teaching Church members advocating for Karanga traditional myths and legends as shall be demonstrated in Chapters 5 and 6 JMCN of the study.

The question of how God is approached in African traditional religion is central to the study which postulates that there are certain beliefs and customs that are central in African Indigenous Religion. In ATRs, Africans believe that God, *Musikavanhu* is approached through ancestors in using African prayers performed by the elderly or chosen priests or priestesses to invoke a blessing and benevolence for the individual, the family or for the community at large. Moodley (2008:39) defined ancestors as the spirits of the socially significant deceased members of family, lineage, clan and tribal groupings. Mbiti agrees and refers to the ancestor the living dead. In most cases the living dead act as mediators between their families and God (Mbiti, 1997).

Priests and Priestesses are selected to be guardians of people's welfare and subsequently entrusted with the custody of the sacred places. Accordingly, the indigenes of Chirumhanzu believe that during decisive moments if they go to Chivavarira cave to ask God's favor through their ancestors, God will hear

them. Today, Chivavarira is a burial shrine for chiefs and respectable elders of Chirumhanzu district. This hill is characterized by numerous caves where these men and women are being laid to rest. Also, religious ceremonies are carried out on this hill and at the pool downhill called Gonawapotera. Consequently, the spirituality of the Karanga people of Chirumhanzu is centered on these two sacred shrines. The study posits that sacred places are not approached unceremoniously but there are certain prescribed ways to approach such places. Therefore, this research seeks to discuss to what extent the JMCN Church was influenced by Traditional African beliefs and customs more than it was shaped by Christian ethos.

African values and morals are rooted in indigenous ideas that safeguard and uphold the life of people in relation to others and the world around them (Mbiti 1991:22). They deal with issues of truth, justice, love, right and wrong, good and evil, character, praise, blame, integrity (Paris 1995:35). They help people to live harmoniously with one another, settle differences amicably, maintain peace, share their collective assets and relate to the environment in a sustainable manner (Mbiti 1991:20). Values and morals may differ in some societies but most of them are commonly shared. Again, we will assess how JMCN's theology shaped by Karanga cultures *tsika dzevanhu vatema* (morals and values of Karanga Africans). The study posits that African moral values, *tsika*, are part of the scripture for the JMCN Religious movement. Some of the terms they use for example, *vasadare* (the one who presides over) as the study will showcase referring to an elderly person who presides over ceremonies such as marriages and is derived from Karanga term *padare* (where elderly people give counselling to young men in marriage). Even when we look at how women greet male counterparts, one can depict a replay of Karanga values and morals by the Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi Church in Zimbabwe today. Women kneel down or sometimes they burnt down to show that they are not equal to their male counterparts. Findings in the study shows that people from outside JMCN seeing this as human abuse, however, women and girls who are members of this Church are actually existed in doing that. One lady a University student informed us that *Mwari aka chiva tsika dzevanhu vatema*, God admired our African cultures hence our kneeling to greet male counterparts is done ungrudgingly (Madzimai Melissa: 2014).

Death, among Karanga people of Chirumhanzu, has remained mystical such that the burial rituals and ceremonies for many years ago have resisted cross-cultural impacts. The taboos and the order of events characterized traditional Karanga Chirumhanzu funerals are still persevering to this very day. For instance, it is a standard norm in Chirumhanzu that from 12-lpm the corpse is not allowed to be taken out of the house for burial. Therefore, it is against this background that the study interrogates JMCN inculturation of traditional Karanga death and burial rituals to shape its Church spirituality.

According to (Moyo 2013) though sometimes the causes of death appear to be very natural, for the Karanga people of Chirumhanzu, death is always caused by evil spirits or human magic and witchcraft, *kuroiwa*. Even if someone was hit by a car, the Karanga people will still go to a traditional seer to investigate *chadya munhu*, what killed the person. This points out that there is no natural death in the Karanga worldview, death is caused by external forces such as sorcery, witchcraft and evil magic (Mbiti 1997:80). This is why whenever a person dies, the Karanga seek for a cause of the of death *kuenda kugata* (spiritual autopsy), (Benyera 2014) and in most instances, culprits are identified and blame apportioned to them. There are various forms of punishment that are then meted on the culprit, including but not limited paying fines in the form of livestock, cash or being completely excommunicated from society (Moyo2013).

In ancient Chirumhanzu rural community, those who would be found guilty of bewitching others used to be thrown into Gonawapotera pool situated along the Shashe River. This practice which was a norm in the early 1880s was banned by the colonial government through the enactment of the *Witchcraft Suppression Act* (Chapter 73) in 1899c (Chavunduka, 1980:130). The study seeks to envisage how the JCMN conceptualized the causes of death. It will also discuss Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi's ways of dealing with the causes and prevention of illness. For Karanga people of Chirumhanzu some illnesses are caused by broken taboos or oaths such as failure to pay *mombe yeumai* (a brides price cow for the mother-in-law) while the majority of illnesses are caused by witchcraft. If one breaks oaths such as failing to pay *mombe yeumai* the couple can be barren or bear children that die prematurely. The study will shade more light on how the theology of the

JMCN shaped by traditional worldviews of the Karanga people of Chirumhanzu in Zimbabwe.

There are certain prescribed burial sensitivities, rites and ceremonies practiced by the Karanga people (Mbiti 1991:119). Proper care is given so as not to offend both the living and the departed. These rites are not performed for strangers, thieves, murderers, witches, and trouble makers (Mbiti 1991:120). These rites are normally performed by selected elders. There are other people who are not allowed to touch or come near the corpse. These include children, pregnant women or suspected witches (Mbiti 1991:118). Burial is done at the backyard of one of the houses in a family burial place or original place of birth. The grave maybe rectangular, cave like, or a cave made for that purpose (Mbiti 1991).

In ancient times, people would dispose of the body in the bush for animals or birds to eat or kept in a house to decompose till only the skeleton is left for burial (Chidester 2012). In many parts of Africa people are buried with certain of their earthly belongings such as spears, bows, arrows, stools, snuff, cups, and plates some being placed on the grave afterwards (Mbiti 1991:122). Thus, the Karanga people also believed that the departed needs these things on the way to the next world. Among the Karanga of Chirumhanzu a good correct burial cannot be done without *rukukwe rwemufi* (metress for the deceased). Even though members of the family would buy an expensive coffin traditional reed mattress, *rukukwe* must be laid down first then the coffin will come in after. We observed some similarities, mutual borrowing of burial rites for both African Religion and JMCN Church of Chirumhanzu. Members are buried following certain rituals and styles that the study seeks to unpack. Actually, there is systematic teaching on *kuvigwa kwemupositori* (burial rites for a Masowe/Apostolic member) as the study shall demonstrate.

A funeral occupies a central place in Karanga cosmology. The significance of a funeral depends on the status of the deceased. The funeral of a child and unmarried person is usually simple and not a complicated event. The funerals of chiefs or kings are national or at times international affairs where daily activities are suspended until the person is laid to rest (Mbiti 1991:121). The funerals of important people are fore grounded by much preparations. A great

deal of resources is spent on such funerals which also take days. During this liminal period this funeral of a Head of State, religious groups attract much attention. When a chief dies the eldest son becomes the interim chief till the selection of another takes place. At the burial of an elderly person due care is given to send off the departed peacefully and promote the unity to continue between the living dead and the living living (Benyera 2015). The burial is properly done such that the spirit are not angered, in which case they might seek revenge on the living.

Among the Karanga people of Chirumhanzu, when death has occurred in a family animals will not be milked. Husbands do not sleep with their wives for a month. The dust in the house where the corps was is swept and is kept in a clay pot for 21 days. After 21 days that Clay pot is broken up on cross roads. All these are done symbolically, for instance, Husbands are not allowed to have sex with their wives because for the Karanga people sex is meant for reproduction hence a Child that can be conceived during this Dark Age is considered a misfortune. Breaking of the clay pot at the crossroads is a sign that mourning days are over members are now free to resume normal daily living. Thus, the study will discuss JMCN Church funeral rites. The purpose is to discover to what extent has the Church inculturated traditional Karanga spiritual elements of faith to inform their Church spirituality in Zimbabwe.

Again after 21 days of burial the Karanga people organize what they call *manyaradzo* (comforting) or *Masuka foshoro*, washing of shovels which were used during closing of the grave. Beer is brewed and immediate village members are invited to come together to drink and eat. We noted that 21 days after burial is symbolical. For them they believe that after 21 days of buried body should have that time busted, *kuputika*. This busting of the corps is a sign of the spirit embarking on a new journey. The assumption is all this while the spirit was hanging around the grave hoping perhaps the body will come back. But the busting of the corps is a sure sign that the body will never come back to life again, hence a new journey started. The Johane Masowe we Chishanu yeNyenyedzi organize a similar function and gathering 21 days after the burial. It's significant and meaning shall be discussed in the preceding chapters.

For the Karanga people, the dead go to the land of the spirits, *Nyikadzimu* (Mbiti 1980:160). For some this place is underground while for others *Nyikadzimu* is far above the sky (Chikukwa 2007). However, some Karanga people do not visualize any geographical location of the dead since they believe that the dead continue to live in spirit form among the relatives. For Opoku (1978:137), the dead are not cut off from the living for they continue to reveal themselves in dreams or sometimes appear to their beloved ones in visions, sometimes to give instructions, warnings or information. He adds that Africans believe that the dead are also able to return to the earth to be reborn into their families (Opoku 1978:137).

This is how Africans give their children names of the deceased. Closer to Christianity and Islam, the Karanga also believe that the departed return to their creator where they become intercessors and mediators between the living and the creator. The study deals with how the JMCN members upheld such concept of continuous living of the dead as described in this treatise. We posited that this concept of 'the dead mediating between God and the living is an ATR concept. In ATR community members believe that the next world is invisible but very close to that of the living (Mbiti 1991:116). It is situated on the same earth in the rivers, mountains, lakes, forests, homesteads, fields, domestic animals, wild animals, and all things formed in our physical life. This is how hill like Chivavarira is revered by the indigenes of Chirumhanzu community.

According to the Karanga people of Chirumhanzu, the departed remain in the cosmological neighborhood of their human homestead (Mbiti 1991:122). They still belong to the family of the living. The living believe that the departed remain close to them. They uphold the view that the departed live in woods, forests, river banks, hills (Mbiti 1991:123). For Mbiti (1991:123), these places are avoided and people cannot build homes or cultivate fields there because they do not wish to disturb the departed in these resting places. There is a close knit view of the afterlife concept among major religions of the world; a view that human spirit continues to live even after this present life but in different forms and places. Thus, the study grapples with the concept of afterlife in the Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi Church spirituality.

This will be discussed when the study addresses the subject of the burial rituals for apostolic members, *kuvigwakwe mupositori*.

In this chapter, we have summarised the beliefs and practices of the indigenes of the Karanga people of Chirumhanzu in Zimbabwe. As has been shown, the Karanga people of Chirumhanzu believe that God is found in Chivavarira hill and in the pool Gonawapotera. Most prayers and traditional rituals are done in these two sacred places. We also noted that certain objects are significant for traditional ceremonies, objects such as *mbiya* and wooden rods for traditional celebrations while other objects are prohibited such objects made out of metal. Accordingly, the missiological challenge is to find ways to inculturate Traditional African beliefs and practices of the Karanga people of Chirumhanzu without demeaning the central Christian spiritual elements. It is on this note that following chapter discusses the origin, theology and geographical headquarters of the JMCN Church in Zimbabwe.

CHAPTER FIVE: JMCN THEOLOGY AND CENTER OF OPERATIONS

The spirituality of the controversial AICs was covered in Chapter 3. According to this study, the Black Ancestor Church of Malawi, the Herero Protestant Church of Namibia, and the Guta RaJehova/Guta raMwari were introduced in the preceding chapter. These churches were labelled as churches that provide non-Christian spirituality due of the way they incorporated spiritual aspects of African faith, confusing the role of Christ. The Black Ancestor Church of Malawi, for instance, was disregarded as a legitimate Christian church due to its inculturation of the Mbonga god and its cult centres. The Herero Protestant Church of Namibia was similarly denied Christian status due to its adoption of the Herero traditional holy fire as a venue of divine communion, a practice taken from the ATRs. The Guta raJehova and Guta raMwari churches in Zimbabwe were likewise disregarded as non-Christian churches since they rejected the Bible and suggested their own, in which Mai Chaza is equivalent to the Christian Bible's Jesus Christ. Because the aforementioned AICs do not fit into the category of legitimate AICs, the study identified them as disputed African churches. With this in mind the chapter discusses the location of the JMCN Church's historical background, its theology and its present geographical headquarters, theology and doctrine. Its location, history, theology and doctrine are discussed to reveal what influenced its Church spirituality.

We noted from Chapter 1 how JMCN that as a breakaway Church from the original Johane Masowe we Chishanu Church. The main reason for this breakway as highlighted before in Chapter 1 was the inconsistencies and deviation of Emanuweri from the original teaching of Johane causing people again to worship ancestors (Baba Gilbert 2014). Chapter I of the study revealed to us how Sandro embarked on a religious pilgrimage back to the origins Seke Chitungwiza to revive the original spirit of Johane Masowe Chishanu. Chitungwiza remained an icon for the Johane Masowe Chishanu because thus where this Church first settled after the Johane Masowe weChishanu members deported from South Africa as indicated in the first Chapter of the study.

According to Engelke the Johane Masowe weChishanu branch of Nyatsime continued to grow and attracting thousands of people from all corners of the country during the leadership of Sandros (Engelke 2007:79). Engelke describe Sandros as a liberal leader whose theology was not very secretive as compare to Johane and Emanuweri. For Engelke Sandros could interact with all age groups and different races, even press for the first time was able to interview him and some of the Church members about their faith, a phenomenon that was never before during the leadership of Johane and Emanuweri.(Engelke 2007:81). What is very important to note is that after Sandros died the Church splitted into many groups. The one Johane Masowe weChishanu led by Madzibaba Nzira went to Highfield which today is congregating at Coca cola area in Harare; the other Johane Masowe weChishanu led by Micho went back to Mazowe where Emanuweri received his call to lead Johane Masowe weChishanu after Johane died; the third one led by Wimbo went back to Guruve in Mashonaland Central where up to this day the Church has its headquarters there and the fourth group is the one that remained for a while at Nyatsime and this is the *Johane Masowe Chishanu inotungamirirarwa ne Nyenyedzi* (Baba Gilbert: 2014).

The researchers of this were aware that the history of the Johane Masowe Chishanu is shrouded with broken inconsistent disjointed stories. Perhaps it is because the Church does not have written documents hence a distorted history. Another report that the researchers of the study ready from the Herald Newspaper of 19 February 2015 “Johane Masowe Way of Worshipping and Life: The Truth versus Myths” portrays a different historical background from the one gathered for this research. However, what is undisputable in the study is the theology of the Johane Masowe weChishanu because the information was gathered through participant observation. We were very careful not to generalise our findings across all the Johane Masowe weChishanu because though they seem to be the same there are variables in their spiritualities.

We have outlined only four indentifiable Johane Masowe weChishanu that our research informants gave us, but it is undoubtable that many groups emerged after the death of Sandros. Therefore, the chapter interrogates the

theology of the JMCN Church in Zimbabwe. We noted that the doctrine of Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi is not complete without *mutumbi mitatu*, three sacred leaders. *Mutumbi mitatu* is part of their confessional statement *tiri Johane Masowe weChishanu inotungamitirirwa yeNyenyedzi inotenda paMitumbi mitatu*, we are the Johane Masowe weChishanu following the Star believing in three sacred leaders), (Madzimai Mergury 2016). Despite the fact that Emanuweri was accused of misleading people, the JMCN Church believes in Johane, Emanuweri and Nyenyedzi constituting the three sacred leaders. Asking them why do they believe in these three leaders, our informants told us that they don't believe in them as human beings, *panyama* but they believe in the Angels operated in them (Moris:2015). Below is the contribution each Church Father gave to the formation of JMCN Church spirituality in Zimbabwe.

According to Dillon-Malone (1978:3) Shonhiwa Masedza came from Gandanzara near Mutare in Manicaland province. Shonhiwa Masedza introduced a complete new face of Christianity in Zimbabwe. Baba (Father) Shonhiwa Masedza is credited of coining the religious name *masowe* (wilderness) which became more popular in the mid-1990s in Zimbabwe (Mukonyora 2007). Today, Zimbabwe is characterized by the mushrooming of many white garmented churches whose religious shrine is *masowe* (wilderness), recognizing Friday as the day of worship. He started this Church in the 1930s (Dillon-Malone 1978:11). From the beginnings the Church looked insignificant and was associated with those who were the marginalized and the poor people in society. But today the Church has a diverse following comprising the educated and less educated, rich and poor and is found in many African countries even in some parts of Europe and the Americas. It is this Church that gave birth to numerous *Vapositioni* Churches among which Johane Masowe Chishanu yeNyenyedzi Church belongs to.

For Mukonyora (2007), the mission of Johane Masowe is a replica of John the Baptist but to a different audience. Masowe members argue that John the Baptist and Jesus Christ were sent by God to overseas people *mhiri yegungwa* - that is the white skinned community while Shonhiwa (Johane Masowe) was

sent by God to the Black skinned community to introduce *chinamoto chechipoitori* (Apostolic Church for Black congregates), (Baba Givemore: 2014). The study argues that for Johane MasoweweChishanu Church members, revelation cannot cross boundaries. In their view, God deals with people and nations, exclusively, according to their spiritual, epistemological, cultural and theological contextual settings.

Thus, Baba Givemore argues that Johane Masowe was sent to the lost souls of Africa and not to the lost souls of Europe, *kudzora mweya yakarasika mumativi mana emu Africa* (to bring back the lost Souls of black Africans) (Baba Givemore: 2014). Engelke also confirmed that Johane Masowe established an African Church *Masowe* (wilderness) *weChishanu* (of the Friday) whose followers are all dark skinned who refer to themselves as *Vapositioni* (Apostles) a designation now used by several other churches in Southern Africa (Engelke, 2007:2). From its inception Johane Masowe weChishanu Church, undoubtedly informed its adherents that the Bible was insignificant to African peoples. Hence, the followers of Johane Masowe weChishanu Churches claim to be Christians who do not read the Bible (Engelke, 2007:2). They claim that the Bible is a White man's book which the white man used to brainwash Africans and later colonized them (CliveM.Dillon-Malone 1978).

The Johane Masowe weChishanu Churches arrived at this position because prior to the arrival of white missionaries in Africa, Africans were not writers or book readers. It is generally agreed that missionaries introduced reading and writing to Africans. The study notes that the Johane Masowe weChishanu Churches apart from not reading the Bible in Church, shun all inventions attributed to whites such as immunization and modern contraception methods (Machingura 2014:179). Machingura adds that Johane Masowe radically proclaimed the message of withdrawal from all European things and the destruction of all religious books including the Holy Bible (Machingura 2014:179). Arguably the tension between blacks and whites emerged due to harsh conditions black Africans were facing during the colonial era. For Masowe Church members, most of this racial discrimination was as a result of what was written in the Bible. Africans were forced to obey

their masters (whites) as according to the Bible (Colossian 3:22, Ephesians 6:5 and 1 Peter 2:18).

Further the tension was also fueled by Africans' aspiration for leadership positions within the missionary Churches which they were being denied (Mukonyora 2007:11). Most Africans were denied leadership and Church position because they were perceived as not obeying Bible laws such as that a man should have only one wife. Additionally the majority of African Church members were not educated according to the European standard and were therefore, deemed unfit to hold Church positions (Mukonyora 2007:10). This resulted in the African people perceiving the Bible as an evil white man's book. Consequently, the disciples of Johane emphasized on "live and direct" revelation from God without reading the Bible (Engelke, 2007:3). Above all, Johane Masowe introduced khaki short-trousers and white T-Shirts for male members while female members wear white skirts, white T-shirts and should cover their heads with white scuffs. Both men and women were also taught by Johane Masowe not to keep long hair or to stretch their hair. Besides, Johane Masowe introduced *mbiya* a key utensil to carry *mitewuro*/prayers. After the death of Johane who died of cardiovascular disease in 1973, (Dillon-Malone 1978) a new leader emerged whose name was Mudyiwa Dzangara.

Mudyiwa Dzangara, took over the leadership of the church in the same year Johane Masowe died, 1973. Dzangara changed his name to Emanuweri following his claim that the spirit which was once operating in Emmanuel (Jesus) the son of Mary, was now upon him (Engelke, 2007:115). In other words, Dzangara claimed to be the new Black Messiah for Black Africans. He taught that God first sent to Africans Johane Masowe as a forerunner and later sent Him (Emanuweri) to take over from Johane Masowe. Likewise, Mudyiwa taught that John the Baptist and Jesus were sent by God to serve the white community (Engelke 2007). Critics of this Church movements question how Mudyiwa Dzangara came to know about the two; John the Baptist and Jesus Christ when he did not read the bible. They also question where he got such knowledge from if he did not read the Bible. The study maintains that while the Johane Masowe Churches do not read the Bible, this did not necessarily posit that the members of this Church have never read the

Bible in their lifetime as most of them would have at one point belonged to other Churches that read the Bible. This research study observes through interviews and participant observation that the majority of members in these Churches were at one point in time members in these renowned mission Churches such as the Roman Catholic, Dutch Reformed Church or Anglican Church before they migrated to Masowe Churches. Some have read the Bible in schools (Madzibaba Tawona 2015a).

Accordingly, during his term of office Emanuweri encouraged his members not to read the Bible but to follow the teachings of Johane Masowe. Emanuweri also encouraged his Church members to revive African traditional practices such as, brewing of beer, ancestor veneration and polygamous marriages, practices which Johane condemned (Engelke, 2007:116). For him (Emanuweri), prohibiting people from such practices would inhibit prospective members from joining the Church. Polygamy is a traditional African marriage practice where a man is legally allowed to have more than one wife. Thus, for Emanuweri a man was permitted to marry up to maximum of six wives. (Morris: 2013). Emanuweri's reason for supporting polygamous marriage was that, though Johane Masowe did not teach members to have more than one wife, he (Johane) survived with six wives. This dispute of Johane Masowe marrying six wives was also recorded by Clive Mary Dillon-Malone in the book, *The Korsten Basketmakers: A study of Masowe Apostles, an Indigenous Church* (1978).

Also, veneration of ancestors was permitted by Emanuweri because, for him, one's parents will continue to be one's parents, even when the parents are dead. Thus, according to him, the dead parents should continue to receive respect from the living family members. This is how today in the doctrine of the Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi Church Johane Masowe/Emanuweri Mudyiwa and Sanders Nhamoyebonde (Nyenyedzi) are always remembered. Songs are composed in memory of them. Emanuweri also revived the use of *mbiya* (small clay pots) as religious objects. These clay pots are used as containers of *muteuro* (small religious stones, water from sacred dams and honey for religious rituals). The origin of *mbiya* as a sacred object of worship has a long history.

According to our key informants, *mbiya* was first used by Johane Masowe right from the beginning of this religious movement. Baba Amos of Kwekwe narrated that, one Friday night in the 1930s, Johane Masowe was led by the Spirit to go and attend traditional ancestral ceremony, *bira* in a village known as Mhondoro Ngezi near Norton town in Mashonaland West province. That night it was a nightmare for the villagers because no Spirit medium received the word from the ancestors. Around 3am one Spirit medium spoke ecstatically saying “there is someone here who is a stranger (not the village man), we want to give him time to tell us what brings him here”. Thus, how Johane stood up to introduce himself to the people, telling the people that he was sent by God to turn people from worshipping ancestral spirits to worshipping of one true God. He asked everyone to follow him to a Muhacha tree and requested *mbiya* from the Spirit medium for him to use for prayers. Henceforth *mbiya* became an icon in all the Johane Masowe Churches. It is therefore, noteworthy that *mbiya* as a sacred object of worship in the Johane Masowe Churches was borrowed from Karanga spirituality. The Karanga used *mbiya* for traditional ancestral worship to pour beer and libation for the ancestors. This is how the Karanga way of approaching the divine was inculcated by the Johane Masowe Churches in Zimbabwe.

Emanuweri is also credited with introducing *kirawa* (not an English name) but a religious name which denotes a sacred *axis mundus* (*holy of holies*), (see figure 2 of Chapter 6). This is the most important sacred place, an *axis mundus* where prayers for the sick and exorcism of evil spirits are done. The place is marked by certain shrubs and plants that are grown there for religious purposes. An exhaustive discussion of *kirawa* will be take place in Chapter 6 of the study. Mudyiwa Emanuweri is also remembered for introducing the Ten Commandments (*gumi remitemo*) and laws and regulations (*miko nemirairo*), (Baba Gilbert: 2014). Additionally, Mudyiwa Emanuweri introduced full white garments for both men and women. Before Emanuweri the Johane Masowe members used to wear khaki three quarter shorts and white T-Shirts for men and white skirts, white T-shirts and white head gear for women.

Figure 5.1: The full garments introduced by Emanuweri for Church members



This is an online posted Image shows the full dress introduced to the JMCN Church by the late Emanuweri Mudyiwa. JMCN Church moved away from white T-shirt and Skirts for when and Khaki Shorts and White T-Shirts for Men to full garments during the leadership of Emanuweri Mudyiwa.

In 1989 Emanuweri died. Members of Johane Masowe weChishanu expected Emanuweri to resurrect because Emanuweri had promised his members that he will rise from the dead three days from his burial like what happened to Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, Emanuweri did not resurrect. According to the information gathered, the majority of church members lost faith and backslide because Emanuweri did not rise from the dead as he had promised (Father Gilbert: 2014). It is in the midst of despair that Sanders also known as Sandro Nhamoyebonde, who was third from Johane, moved from Guruve to establish another Johane Masowe weChishanu branch at Nyatsime River in Chitungwiza (Engelke, 2007:127). Many church members followed Sanders to Chitungwiza, while others remained to introduce a new Johane Masowe weChishanu Mudzimu Unoera Church (Baba Amos: 2014). This Mudzimu Unoera (Sacred Ancestor Church) was founded by one conservative follower of Emanuweri, Baba Nyanhete who claimed that the spirit which was operating in Emanuweri was now operating in his daughter (Nhambura 2015:4). This was done to authenticate Emanuweri resurrection. These

followers of Emanuweri interpreted the resurrection motif of Emanuweri to be incarnation of Emanuweri in Nyanhete's daughter of Guruve, in Mashonaland Central province. According to the Herald newspaper (11 April 2015) the girl was six (6) years old in 1989 when Mudyiwa Emanuweri died. The name of Nyanhete's daughter was since changed to Girl Jesus but her real name is Tepsy Nyanhete (Nhambura 2015:4). The study observes that Johane Masowe Chishanu Mudzimu Unoera Church is the first breakaway movement from Johane Masowe Chishanu Church in Zimbabwe.

Sanders/Sandros Nhamoyebonde started preaching against the brewing of beer and polygamous practices which were legalized by Emanuweri. For Sanders brewing of beer, ancestor veneration and polygamous marriages were practices which were condemned by the founding Father Baba Johane. Thus, Sanders became a shining star (*Nyenyedzi*) that was leading people from darkness to light (Baba Gilbert: 2014). The Church grew and many people became members of Johane Masowe Chishanu under the leadership of Sanders. However, to date there are numerous religious groups designated Johane Masowe Chishanu starting from Nyatsime in Chitungwiza province. The study noted that more schematic movements emerged immediately after the death of Sanders Nhamoyebonde in July 1994. It can be argued that these schematic incidences were as a result of power politics within the Church. Father Sanders (*Nyenyedzi*) died and was buried in Chitungwiza (Engelke 2007:89). The following year witnessed more Johane Masowe Chishanu erupting in Chitungwiza. Today we have many Johane Masowe weChishanu Church such as:

- Johane Masowe weChishanu Mwedzi minomwe;
- Vadzidzi, Johane Masowe weChishanu nguvo tsvuku;
- Johane Masowe weChishanu Jerusarema;
- Johane Masowe weChishanu Gaburona; and
- Johane Masowe Chishanu Chiedza Chavatendi and many more.

It is also against this background that Johane Masowe Chishanu yeNyenyedzi Church emerged. It is quite interesting to note that Chitungwiza historically is the birth place not only for *Vapositioni* Churches but also for most powerful Zimbabwean Pentecostal prophets such as; Prophet Makandiwa and First Name Magaya all from the Aquatic complex in Chitungwiza. To date Prophet

Emmanuel Makandiwa is in the process of building a massive Church structure for United Family International Church (UFIC) in Chitungwiza.

It was noted earlier in the study that this new Church emerged during the leadership crisis after the death of Sanders in July 1994. The study also noted that Nyatsime (Chitungwiza) was now the Headquarters of the Johane Masowe Chishanu Church in Zimbabwe representing a shift from Mhondoro and Guruve. In an interview Baba Gilbert one of the longest member of the original Johane Masowe and now a member of this newly established church narrated in detail how the newly established church emerged. The emergence of JMCN Church took place during a prayer retreat at Nyatsime in May 1997 (Baba Gilbert: 2014). Church members were divided over the succession of Sanders (Nyenyedzi faction). The contestation was among the three long serving members of the Church; Baba Micho of Mazowe, Baba Godfrey Nzira of Mhondoro, and Baba Wimbo of Guruve (Baba Gilbert : 2014). It was during this decisive moment that Baba Anthony of Gweru stood up and spoke ecstatically saying “those who want to follow Micho, Nzira and Wimbo can do so, but the spirit is saying *mweya haucha gari pamutumbi sezvawakaita pana Shonhiwa, Mudyiwa kana Sanders* (the spirit is no longer going to reside in an individual as his host like what he did during the era of Shonhiwa, Mudyiwa and Sanders). He further stated that henceforth the Spirit was going to use anyone available for the holy use”, (Baba Gilbert: 2014). He continued to say “no human flesh will lead this church but the star, Nyenyedzi” (Baba Gilbert: 2015).

This is how the people who followed Baba Anthony rebranded their Church to be Johane Masowe weChishanu ye Nyenyedzi in Zimbabwe. Others who followed Micho began calling themselves Johane Masowe weChishanu nguvo tsvuku (red garments). Those who followed Wimbo called themselves Johane Masowe weChishanu Vadzidzi (the disciples) and those who followed Godfrey Nzira called themselves Johane Masowe weChishanu Madzibaba. It is imperative to note that all these breakaway churches maintained the designation ‘Johane Masowe Chishanu’. However, for identity purposes some are Johane Masowe Chishanu Jerusalem, *venguwo tsvuku* (red garments), *Mudzimu unoera* (Sacred Ancestor), *Vadzidzi* (Disciples), and many more. All these groups and factions of Johane Masowe weChishanu observe Friday as

their Sabbath day.. All of them do not eat meat on Fridays; do not read the Bible and they congregate in the open spaces, *masowe*.

The study notes that Baba Sanders/Sandros Nhamoyebonde is the first person to talk about seeing a star leading Masowe people. This happened in Chitungwiza at Nyatsime River in 1994 (Engelke, 2007:150). However, the name Masowe yeNyenyedzi as a church name was popularized by his disciples after his death. Baba Antony of Gweru and Baba Tawanda of Chirumhanzu both from Midlands province popularized the name Masowe yeNyenyedzi (Apostolic Church of the Wilderness led by the star) (Baba Gilbert: 2014). It is on this background that Father Antony and Father Tawanda promoted the phrase '*tinotevera Nyenyedzi*' 'we follow the star'. This emphasis on 'we follow the star' can be viewed as at the Church's quest for an identity. The study argues that 'identity crisis' is very crucial particularly in the light of the Zimbabwean religious landscape where Churches are mushrooming nearly on daily bases. It is on this basis that Baba Antony and Baba Tawanda, with the fear of losing members to Baba Micho, Baba Nzira and Baba Wimbo emphasized that they were the real followers of the recently deceased leader Sandros.

According to de Gruchy (2014:15) the quest for identity is the search for self-understanding. This suggests that this millennium Church by designating itself as Johane Masowe Chishanu yeNyenyedzi, intends to send a signal to other denominations (white garmented) that though they wear white garments like them they are not the same. The designation Johane Masowe Chishanu yeNyenyedzi denotes true followers of a recent departed leader-Sanders/Sandros. In Karanga spirituality a recent departed elder qualifies to be an ancestor and mediator between the living and God (Idowu 1996). This suggests that the newly established church is heavily influenced by African spirituality.

It was also noted that "identity has to do with certain images, the way in which people communicate who they are, the way in which the media represent them, and the way in which others relate to them. (de Gruchy 2014). This implies that the quest for identity is inextricably linked to the reason for one's existence. It is from this understanding that Johane Masowe

weChishanu yeNyenyedzi Church designed flags that have stars which they hoist during prayers at Masowe. The reason for having this flag is to tell apart from other Johane Masowe weChishanu and hence identify themselves to passers-by as Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi Church (see fig 5- the *Kirawa* Image in Chapter 6).

Data gathered revealed that in August 1998 JMCN church moved its headquarters from Chitungwiza to a remote part of Gokwe district (Madzimai_Mergury: 2013). This church stayed there for about two years before its final move to Chirumhanzu district in May 2000 (Morris: 2013). JMCN was welcomed in Midlands's province from 2000 up to this day. The study observes that this new faith was accepted by the Chirumhanzu people because the villagers had experienced spiritual attacks during the night which they could not solve. During that time the only popular Church that was there in Chirumhanzu was the Roman Catholic. According to Shoko (2008:28), the Roman Catholic Church failed to bring lasting solutions to this spiritual problem (Shoko 2008). The white Roman Catholic priests shared a different worldview with their African Church members. This is why Oborji (2005:2) observed that in spite of the influence of modernity and of other world religions such as Christianity and Islam, Karanga worldview continue to be the determining factor in the people's search for ultimate reality and meaning for life. For Orobator (2008), the Karanga people are highly spiritual. For them nothing just happens without being caused and they believe in the world of spirits. The Roman Catholic Church's attitude towards witchcraft and sorcery was very dismissive of the institution of witchcraft. This created a tension between the indigenes of Chirumhanzu and the Catholic doctrine. In a Karanga worldview, witchcraft and sorcery constitute a real and imminent threat against which one needed to be protected. Shoko noted an attempt to mitigate this spiritual dilemma by one African Roman Catholic priest who was stationed at Chinyuni in Chirumhanzu (Shoko 2008:27). The priest organized a prayerful group of both men and women to cast out evil spirits from victims of witchcraft and sorcery (Shoko, 2008:27).

This group fasted every Wednesday, seeking power to cast out evil spirits from victims of witchcraft and sorcery. However, that attempt was seen as

misgivings by the Roman Catholic superiors resulting the African Roman Catholic priest being transferred to Gutu mission (Shoko, 2008:28) The name of this African priest was Father Augustine Urayai Madyauta who was a resident of Chirumhanzu. As a priest stationed at Chinyuni, Father Madyauta also oversees the parish at St Joseph Hama Mission, Mapiravana Mission and Driefontein Dioceses all in Chirumhanzu district. The group he had organized was called 'Supper Roma' (Shoko, 2008:28).

The study observes that it is this spiritual crisis that necessitates the acceptance of the new faith in the district of Chirumhanzu district. Many people were attracted by the new faith's claim that *tinoshandira* (we pray for people and exorcise demons). Vengeyi observed that there was an eruption of the phenomenon of *kushandirwa* (prophecy) by so called prophets who performed 'strange' miracles (Vengeyi, 2013:29) in Zimbabwe. These Churches fit into the fundamental African worldview of the cosmos, with its rigid belief in innumerable spirits and powers (Chitando 2013:98).

It is against this background that any Zimbabwean church that do not subscribe to this worldview and does not appreciate this phenomenon of the day 'gift of prophecy' is on will lose members to the ones where prophecy is done. This is evidenced by the continuous migration of Christians from so called mainline Churches to these newer prophetic churches (Mpofu 2013:13). The study posits that it is now an 'in thing' for most Zimbabweans to socialise themselves with churches which claim that they can provide solutions for social, economic and spiritual ills such as healing of Human Immuno Virus and Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome (HIV and AIDS), give people prayers that they can be promoted at work, deliver people from the spirit of barrenness, poverty and misfortunes. Therefore, the arrival of Masowe yeNyenyedzi in Chirumhanzu with such a package ushered the locals into a new dispensation, the dispensation of the operation '*mweya kumasowe*' the Spirit in wilderness.

Geographically, Chirumhanzu district is located in Midlands Province in the southern part of Zimbabwe. It is a rural district where subsistence farming and cattle rearing are the main sources of livelihood (Masinire, 2013:15). This is the district that is situated at the border of Midlands and Masvingo

Provinces. The district consists of a majority of Shona speaking people with a few Ndebele speaking people. The two provinces, Masvingo and Midlands, are divided by a river called Shashe. Though the study has highlighted earlier that Chirumhanzu is the birth place for Baba Tawanda Ndaidza, religiously Chirumhanzu becomes an icon for Masowe yeNyenyedzi because of its two traditional sacred places, Gonawapotera and Chivavarira hill. According to the key informant interviews, after the Nyatsime baptism episode in 1997, the Spirit instructed the church leaders that time has come for the Church to migrate to other places. At first Masowe yeNyenyedzi moved its headquarters to Gokwe and baptise its members in a dam nicknamed Hokoyo (beware) but the original name for this dam is Gwehava in Gokwe central 12km out of the township (Bulawayo 24 News 2012). In 1998 converts were baptised in that pool. After the baptism at Hokoyo, Masowe yeNyenyedzi spent the whole year not knowing where to take their new members for baptism because the church claims to be led by *mweya* the spirit. It was at their annual prayer (*muteuro wegore*) in Gokwe at the end of 1999 when it was alleged that the Spirit said 'go to Chirumhanzu and possess Gonawapotera and Chivavarira hill' (Tsitsi: 2014). With this historical background and present location of the Johane Masowe Chishanu yeNyenyedzi Church, the next paragraphs deal with the theology and doctrine of this newly established Church in Zimbabwe.

A reflection on the Masowe yeNyenyedzi Church doctrine is by no means an easy endeavor. There are an inconceivable number of different doctrinal views. This is due to data collection that has always depended on members who claim that they were there when it happened without proper documents or original testimony to refer to. This makes this an extremely delicate and intricate undertaking. Apart from lack of evidence researchers are not allowed to take pictures or record videos during church services. This research was almost abandoned because of the secretiveness of the church, but for the assistance of friends who are members of this Church. They continued inviting us and facilitating interviews. Thus this research was made possible by means of participant observation and interviews.

The researchers of the study attended almost all critical conferences of the JMCN Church such as; *muteuro wegore* annual prayer conference held in

Masvingo heroes' acre on 15-17 May 2014; *kuverengwa neNyenyedzi* the census by the star conference, on 21-23 August 2014 in Gweru; *rubhabhatidzo rweNyenyedzi* (the baptism of the Star in the Gonawapotera pool) on 16-18 October 2014 at Shashe river; *rupawo rweNyenyedzi* the seal of the Star conference held in December 11-13 at Mapiravana in Chirumhanzu and their Easter commemorations in lower Gweru on 2-5 April 2015. All these conferences started on Thursday at 3pm and end on Sunday 12noon. During these conferences the researchers had sufficient time for interviews fielding many questions. Based on these participant observations, this research is a true reflection of what was gathered from insiders of the Johane Masowe Chishanu yeNyenyedzi Church in Zimbabwe. Thus, the following passages discuss Masowe Chishanu yeNyenyedzi Church doctrine.

The study maintains that in the process of Africanisation of Christianity certain Indigenous religious elements must be avoided to avoid obfuscating authentic Christian spirituality in the process. This suggests that any Christian Church must maintain fundamental Christian doctrines for it to be regarded as an authentic Christian church. As alluded to earlier on in the study, there are some selected fundamental Christian biblical doctrines which differentiate Christianity from other religions of the world. These selected Christian doctrines or tenets are efficacious in test the authenticity of the Masowe yeNyenyedzi Church spirituality as Christian spirituality or has fallen out of the scope. The question raised in the study is: is the Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi spirituality influenced by Biblical spirituality or by Karanga spirituality today? To answer this question again, we need to use the same criteria used previous in the study to judge the spirituality of the four (4) sampled disputed AICs. The criteria for judging Church spiritualities as Christian or non Christian ready; Does the Church; Accept the divinity of Jesus Christ (Christology) Believe in the Holy Trinity; Believe the Bible to the True word of God; Believe that Salvation comes through the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ; Believe in the Second coming of Jesus to judge the world.

Having established the holistic and integral central Christian spiritual elements the next section interrogates how the JMCN Church approaches to the above central selected Christian spiritual elements of faith. Does it going

fall into the same pit of the discussed disputed AICs? This shall be discovered through the research findings as presented in the next section of the chapter.

The doctrine of Christ is commonly known as Christology. Christology is the discourse about the person and work of Jesus Christ (Macquarrie 1990:3). This term is derived from a Latin term *Christus* and from Greek *Kristos* meaning the 'anointed one' (Macquarrie 1990:3). Thus, *Christus* is a title and not a name. For van Niekerk, Christology can be defined as;

- What Christ teaches about God; or
- What do we mean when we say that Jesus is both God and Man and that in Him human salvation is realized? (van Niekerk 1982:4).

Thus Christology deals with who Jesus was and what Jesus did (Macquarrie 1990:3). The study posits that the person and work of Jesus Christ is of central significance to Christian doctrine. Christ is the historical point of departure for Christianity as he made salvation possible for humanity. His death is sufficient for all sinners who have ever lived, for it was not merely a finite human, but an infinite God who died (Erickson 1992:213). It is against this background that any Church that does not present Christ as normative for salvation offers a questionable Christian spirituality. Macquarrie posits that Peter's response to the Christological question 'Who do people say the Son of Man is?' (Mark 8:29) (KJV) is the beginning of Christianity (Macquarrie 1990:3). This denotes that every Church that claims to be a Christian must respond to this Christological question - Jesus is the *Christos* without which there is no human salvation.

Thus, the study observes that Johane Masowe Chishanu yeNyenyedzi seems to have replaced the doctrine of Jesus Christ with their spiritual leaders such as Shonhiwa, Mudyiwa and Sanders. This position has been arrived at because for this Church movement, Jesus Christ was sent by God to the lost souls of Israel and to the white communities, not to the black communities of Africa (Baba_Amos: 2014). Thus, for them God sent Johane Masowe, Emanuweri Mudyiwa and Sanders Nyenyedzi to serve Africans hence the doctrine of replacement. For other AICs in Zimbabwe Jesus Christ is seen as God incarnate to save all humankind. In contrasting views, the Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi Church sees Jesus Christ as the savior for

Whites not for Blacks. The study observes that the term Whiteman represents all other nationalities excluding Black Africans. Thus anyone who is not a Black African is referred to as Whiteman, including the Chinese, Arabs, Japanese and other non-Europeans with fair skin.

The study observes that though these three leaders are all dead, Johane Masowe Chishanu yeNyenyedzi Church continues to revere them as sacred spiritual leaders. During a key informant interview, one of the Church member said “*tinotenda mitumbi mitatu*,” literally, “we believe in three divine bodies which are *Johane Masowe*, *Emanuweri Mudyiwa* and *Sanders Nyenyedzi* for the salvation of Africans (Madzimai Melissa: 2014). In their prayers, they continue to mention the above names as intermediaries between the living and God. This research posits that this doctrine of deification of human Church leaders was introduced by Mudyiwa Dzangara who led the Church after Johane Masowe. In his teachings Emanuweri Mudyiwa taught that dead family elders continue to be inter-mediators between the living and God. Songs are composed and sung especially for the *muteuro wegore* (annual prayer).

- *Baba Johane vana venyu vaunguna muvatungamire murwendo*
(Father Johane your Children have gathered lead them)
- *Murwendo rune makwidza ne makwidza*
(This journey which has ups and downs)
- *Baba Emanuweri vana venyu vaungana muvatungamire murwendo*
(Father Emanuweri your children have gathered led them)
- *Nyenyedzi vana vako vaungana uvatungamire murwedzo*
(Star your children have gathered leads them)

A close analysis of this song denotes that this African Church has developed a new Church Doctrine that depicts a complete new way of salvation. The majority of African Indigenous Churches follow the Biblical Christian doctrine of salvation that says in part: there is no salvation in any other name except through the name of Jesus Christ (Mbiti 1986:138). On contrary views, Masowe yeNyenyedzi believes that the departed leaders mediate between the living and God. When other Christians believed that salvation was made possible through Jesus’ sacrificial death on the cross of Calvary, the JMCN

posits that Jesus was only sent to White communities and not to Black communities.

It has been also noted that JMCN Church does not even commemorate the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Rather they have introduced a new doctrine *tsoro yaJohane* replacing the passion narratives and *Christus victor* during their Easter celebration. *Tsoro ya Johane* denotes a theological reflection on to the salvific work done by Johane Masowe, Emanuweri Mudyiwa and Sanders Nyenyedzi respectively. During the JMCN Easter celebrations, a narration of how God used these three leaders to establish an African Church is given on every Easter Friday. Composed songs in memory of these sacred leaders are sung throughout the whole Easter weekend. Below is one song sung during Easter celebrations:

- Kwakatanga Baba Johane (There came Father Johane);
- Ndokuzouya Emanuweri (followed by Emmanuel);
- Kwazouya Nyenyedzi (lastly the Star)⁷; and
- Denga rose raombera (And heavens celebrated)

The content of the song and the doctrine of *tsoro yaJohane* are two important considerations in the study which summarized the Church doctrine of the JMCN Church. As other Christian Churches such as the Roman Catholic, Anglican Methodist, Dutch reformed Church, *inter alia*, dramatize the passion narratives of Jesus by carrying a wooden cross, the JMCN Church dramatize the release from the suffering of their spiritual leaders from the then colonial government of Rhodesia by trying to introduce this African Church *chinamoto chechipositori* (Roswense: 2015).

According to Daneel (1987:250) a Christian Church is measured by certain criteria which are unwavering proclamation of the word (Bible), proclamation of the risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the belief in the holy Trinity and celebration of sacraments. Adding to that Maposa & Sibanda (2013:97-109) posit that, “Christian Churches are normally identified by acknowledging Jesus Christ as Lord and savior; by preaching a gospel that is rooted in a clear doctrine of Christology and their thrust of soteriology concerning human salvation is biblically inspired”. One of the study’s findings was that with the criterion given above, Johane Masowe weChishanu

yeNyenyedzi Church gravitated away from this Biblical Christological position. The simple reason for this pronouncement is that by and large the Johane Masowe Chishanu yeNyenyedzi Church inculturated non compatible African spiritual elements and denigrate the salvific work of Jesus Christ for the human race. Thus the study submits that there is a doctrine of Christology in the Masowe yeNyenyedzi Church which renders the church unauthentic.

It was also found out that the JMCN Church also re-defined the theology of the cross by dismissing the relevance of Jesus Christ's death for the salvation of Black Africans. Though this Church acknowledges that Jesus was crucified and was buried they do not subscribe to the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. The resurrection motif of the Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi Church is different from the Orthodoxy Christian concept of bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. According to key informant interviews conducted in April 2015, Masowe yeNyenyedzi believe that both John the Baptist and Jesus were just ordinary human beings whom God selected to bring salvation to the White communities. For them, because both were killed by Whites, God was not happy and abandoned the White community forever (Baba Andrea: 2015). At first God sent John the Baptist who was killed by Whites, the argument goes. Later God sent Jesus to proclaim good news to the Whites. Again the Whites killed him. It was after all this that God abandoned the White community in preference of Africa by raising three sacred leaders; Johane, Emanuweri and Nyenyedzi. Today all the Johane Masowe Churches do not mix with Whites. For them whites are the enemies of the gospel of salvation.

According to the church's doctrine, after John the Baptist and Jesus Christ were killed, God decided to send HIS spirit to Africa. This is how the spirit came from God and entered an African man who was a shoe-maker, Shonhiwa Masedza Tandi Moyo in the then Rhodesia to serve the Black community. For Baba Moris (2014) *mweya wakaburikira pana Shonhiwa ne zuva reChishanu rinova zuva rakatambudzika Mwanakomana mhiri yegungwa* (the Spirit descended and struck Shonhiwa on a Friday the same day Jesus was killed).

Thus, for JMCN Church, Friday is sacred day because this was the day God transferred the spirit which was operating in Jesus the son of Mary and Joseph (both Whites) to Johane Masowe (Black) for the salvation of Black Africans. On that note every Thursday from 3pm up to Saturday 3pm, Johane Masowe Chishanu yeNyenyedzi members observe certain rituals such as not eating meat; not bathing and do not changing their clothes. According to the interviews this ritual is known as in their semantic *kubatidza amai Maria kuchema mwana wavo wakabaiwa mhiri yegungwa* (helping Mary the mother of Jesus to mourn her beloved son who was killed overseas).

It was found out that the practice of helping Mary the mother of Jesus to mourn her son Jesus is a practice borrowed from two worlds, the Traditional African worldview and the Christian worldview. First, the concept of not bathing is a practice borrowed from African worldview because neither in most African countries the bereaved do not change clothes nor bathing until after burial. Secondly the practice of sitting around the fire is a borrowed phenomenon from Christian worldview because for instance, the Roman Catholic practice what is called *moto waPetros* (fire of Peter) as they dramatize the night Peter denied Jesus Christ three times before the cock crows. Likewise the Johane Masowe Chishanu yeNyenyedzi Church sits around the fire from Thursday night till Friday morning. This fire is sometimes referred to as *choto chaPetrosi* (fire of Peter) *pacharara* or *pazambara* (no English equivalence). (Melissa: 2013).

Convincingly, the study observes that, Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi Church's interpretation of the *passio* narratives is different from other Christian denominations. For instance, for them Jesus' death was an accident of history. His death was not God's pre-ordained to serve human beings but jealous whites killed him. However, they believed that the spirit which was operating in Jesus after his death embarked on a journey to Africa. This spiritual journey is sometimes referred to as wilderness journey, *rwendo rwemurenje*. This is the wilderness journey of the Spirit, *rwendo rwemweya murenje* where the same spirit which worked through Jesus was in search for a house in Africa. At first the spirit entered Shonhiwa then Mudyiwa and lastly Sandros. (Baba Moris, 2014).

The study notes that JMCN's understanding of the resurrection of Jesus was informed by elements of Karanga spirituality. Generally, The Shona and the Ndebele people believe in a different form of resurrection. They believe that the spirit of a dead person comes back and dwells among the living, to look after the living; this is African spirituality (Banana 1991:31). The human spirit cannot die but exists in spiritual form having physical traits because it can assume a physical form through its possession of spirit mediums, *masvikiro* (Banana 1991:31). Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi Church, therefore, believe that the spirit which was in John the Baptist and in Jesus *mhiri yegungwa* (overseas) is the same spirit operating in the three African human bodies, *mutumbi mitatu* ; first in Shonhiwa Masedza, Mudyiwa Dzangara then lastly Sanders Nhamoyebonde.

The study notes that resurrection in Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi Church is not the resurrection of the body but it is the “re-introduction of the living timeless (spirit) into the ranks of the family through spiritual presence” (Banana 1991:31). JMCN members are taught that there is only one spirit that worked through Johane, Emanuweri and Sanders/Sandros. The study argues that the fundamental theological belief among all Johane Masowe traditions is that; if a leader dies will proceed to hold an influential position in heaven and is accountable and responsible for interceding for the remaining church members. Church leaders like Johane, Emanuweri and Sanders/Sandros are believed to be now part of the angelic beings whose responsible is to help and guide Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi Church members.

A Shona popular song from Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi Church members summarizes this belief. The song is called *Pandimire pakaoma* (I'm in danger). It goes like:

- *Jehovha ndibatsireiwo Baba pandimire pakaoma* (God help me I'm danger);
- *Verudzi rwangu vakandigare dare* (my family members are planning evil against me);
- *Vane Chikwambo chinondisveta ropa* (they have a goblin that sucks blood from me);
- *Vatsvene vanobva kudenga ndibatsireiwo* (Holy saints from heaven help me);
- *VaMutinhimha ndibatsireiwo* (Saint Mutinhima help me I'm in danger);

- *Baba vaChindenga ndibastireiwo* (Saint Chindenga help me I'm in danger);
- *Baba Madziya ndibatsireiwo* (Saint Madziya help me I'm in danger);
- *Baba Chimhundu ndibatsireiwo* (Saint Chimhundu help me I'm in danger);
- and
- *Ndinotambudzika chikwambo chinondisveta ropa* (I'm suffering because there is a goblin that sucks my blood)

The analysis of the song shows that all Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi Church in Zimbabwean conceptualizes the concept of the resurrection of the dead from an African worldview. According to this perspective, any family member who dies becomes an intercessor for the remaining family members. The singer mentioned names such as Baba Mutinhima, Chindenga, Madziya and Chimhundu. These are church leaders who died in recent years and are being called upon to assist free the singer from the goblin's afflictions. According to Mbiti (1975:69) the departed of recent generations are called 'the living dead' and in some way they form a link in the chain of contact between their living family members and the invisible God. It is against this orientation that the JMCN sees Johane, Emanuweri, Sanders/Sandros like Chindenga, Mutinhima in song as 'conveyor belts, helpers or assistants'(Mbiti 1975:69) in their spiritual journey. Therefore, the study observes that Christ of the Bible's mediatorship role especially in relation to life after death is totally usurped by Shonhiwa (Johane) Mudyiwa (Emanuweri) Sanders/Sandros (Nyenyedzi) which makes the person and work of Jesus trivial for the JMCN Church in Zimbabwe.

The study noted the demeaning and downplaying of the role of Jesus Christ for human salvation in the Johane Masowe Chishanu yeNyenyedzi Church. For Hearne (1990:89-96), any talk or action about "inculturating" the Christian faith must be seen in the fight of the mystery of Jesus Christ and not just as efforts to make a system or an institution more "meaningful" to people of different cultures. This denotes that Christology is at the very heart of any Christian theology of inculturation. Thus, by Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi Church lacking this fundamental doctrine of the person and work of Jesus Christ, the study posits that its Church spirituality was influenced by African spiritual elements such as veneration of the long dead African Church leaders.

African Christians observe the Bible as the inspired word of God. Most AICs uphold the traditional view of inspiration which observes that the Bible was written by God through human authors. God worked through human authors so that, what they wrote was that which God intended to communicate with his people. In Greek inspiration is described as *theopneustos* that literally means "God-breathed" (2 Timothy 3:16) (Sulistyawati 2014:11). It is on the basis of this definition that some theologians argue that this "God-breath" makes the Bibles to be infallible or of limited inerrancy that affirms that the Bible is free of errors as a guide to salvation (Sulistyawati 2014:11). This suggests that the Bible should be taken literally (to mean what it says). This position informs the practice of most African Indigenous Churches. They normally preach from Revelation 22:18-19 where the Bible warns people not to add or take away from the words of the book of the prophecy. Literally they interpret Revelation 22:18-19 to mean 'the Bible should be taken as it is and not to be interpreted' (Togarasei 2009). For these AICs, the Bible does not contain scriptures, the Bible is scripture itself (Gunda 2014:147). However, the study does not dwell much on how other AICs interpret the Bible. Instead the study is more concerned about the position of the Bible in JMCN Church.

It can be asked, why so much emphasis on the Bible? For Dickson (1995:47), the Bible is the fundamental source of theology (Dickson, 1995:47). Dickson further argues that any Christian Theology that does not refer to the Bible as its central source is fallacious. Mbiti (1986:53), complements Dickson on that point when he said "the Bible is the principal benchmark for determining the validity of any Christian theology professing to be African". Adding to that Holt (2005:13), argues that any Church spirituality that does not take the centrality of the Bible and Jesus Christ as its norm presents a questionable Church spirituality. Fashole Luke quoted by Mugambi declared that "the Bible is the basic and primary source for the development of African Christian Theology" (Mugambi, 1997:97). Chitando (2010:6) argues that 'indeed one of the significant aspects of the Christian heritage in Africa has been the centrality of the Bible'. Most African Churches are therefore, Churches who are not only comfortable to declare the Bible as the word of God but also take seriously what the Bible says that Jesus himself is the word of God (Gunda 2014).

In contrasting views the Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi rejected the Bible outrightly. This is because Johane Masowe taught them that the Bible is irrelevant to Africans. Below is a direct quotation from one member interviewed by Dilon Malone:

He Johane preached that he was the Baptist sent by God to earth. He argued everyone present to adapt the religion of their forefathers, to drink plenty of kaffir beer and eat the meat blessed by our forefathers; further, that we should burn the religious books of the European, as our forefathers did not have books. He suggested that the Bible hymn books and the New Testament should be destroyed, together with all other religious books. He promised that he would carry out baptising after which he would foretell the end of the World (Dillon-Malone 1978).

This theology of Johane Masowe was later supported by a renowned Zimbabwe liberation theologian Canaan Sodidho Banana. For Banana the Bible should be re written it has become irrelevant to people in post-colonial communities. According to him, there are portions of the Bible where the oppressor used to make other people suffer. He also noted that the Bible was written for certain people in a certain community hence we need to come up with our own Bible that speaks highly of our sacred Mountains (Banana 1993:18). Not only Banana subscribe to that view of disregarding the Bible. This notion of the 'Bible as the instrument of oppression' was supported by Mapuranga (2013:1-8) who highlighted how the Bible was rejected by African Women Church leaders such as Mai Chaza of the Guta raJehovah Church in Zimbabwe. Mai Chaza rejected the Bible because for her it was used as the final authority by the western mission Churches to oppress women (Mapuranga 2013:8). In the same manner the JMCN rejected the Bible. Whether they are going to change their position in favor of the Bible, but from the time of this research 2013-2016, the JMCN were not using the Bible as a source of their Church spirituality.

Accordingly, the JMCN Church was in the process of compiling its own sacred Scriptures (Baba Nicholas: 2014). The argument raised by JMCN Church members is that- since there was a time when the Bible was not in existence as a written document but was orally transmitted until a certain period when many eye witnesses were dying like-wise it is also important for them(JMCN) to start compiling the sayings of the spirit for future generations (Nicholas:2014). They also maintained that the Bible was not

written with Africans in mind but was compiled as a historical book for the Ancient near East. Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi Church members argue that the stories in the Bible are irrelevant to Africans. Africans have their own story to tell, how they encountered God in sacred mountains, pools, caves and under sacred trees.

During their Friday services, Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi always repeat and remind each other on what was taught by Johane, Emanuweri and Sanders/Sandros. On one occasion during my participant observation a certain old man stood up to correct members on how to sit at Masowe (seating arrangement). He started by chanting the church slogan *Rufaro kwamuri, Rufaro kwamuri, Rufarooo* (Joy unto you, Joy unto you, Joyeeeeee.) Then he proceeded:

Men and Women have we forgotten what Emanuweri taught us; how we should sit at Masowe? We were taught that we should sit in straight lines so that the Angel *Gaburona* (Gabriel) will be able to take nice pictures from heaven.” (Anonymous member: 2014).

After his address members of church started reorganizing themselves into the proper sitting arrangement. The whole service which runs from 9am to 3pm is punctuated by songs, reciting of their formulated Ten Commandments, *gumi remitemo*, the sayings of the spirit, *tsanangudzo dzemweya*,) Masowe law and regulations, *miko nemirairo* that constitute the teachings of Johane, Emanuweri and Sanders. The service will end with healing and exorcism, *kushandirwa*. There is no reading of the Bible for they believe that they receive ‘live and direct’(Engelke 2007:55) from God.

The study noted that although Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi Churches rejects the reading of the Bible, there are similar occurrences and Biblical references. A notable example for Bishau (2010) is the *gumi remitemo*, Ten Commandments. Johane Masowe Chishanu yeNyenyedzi observes the Biblical Ten Commandments with some slight changes in the order and phraseology. Their Ten Commandments are as follow:

- Do not have other gods before Me;
- Honor your Father and Mother;
- Keep Friday as a scared day of worship;

- You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain;
- You shall not murder;
- You shall not steal;
- You shall not covet;
- You shall not commit adultery;
- You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour; and
- Love your neighbor as yourself (Baba Morris: 2014).

The implication of these Ten Commandments is that Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi accepted the centrality of the Biblical Ten Commandments. Contrastingly, from the data gathered from the interviews conducted the Church insiders argue that the similarity between the Ten Commandments in the Bible with Masowe yeNyenyedzi *gumi remitemo* is a clear testimony that God's revelation is in continuous process; as God was with Moses so is He with African Prophets and Church Leaders (Madzibaba Painos: 2014). These Ten Commandments are repeated over and over again and that makes part of their main preaching. *Gumi remitemo* was introduced by *Mudyiwa Dzangara (Emanuweri)*. These Ten Commandments are part of the scripture in the Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi Church. Congregants confess their sins, those who will be found missing the mark in accordance to Ten Commandments are also called upon by the Church leadership to confess to their sins. Congregants will confess to their sins in turns; chanting the slogan then confessing their sins publicly. The common sins confessed were: *ruchiva* (lust), hatred *ruvengo*, and un-forgiveness *kusaregerera*.

Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi Church observes certain dietary laws rigorously. The dietary Laws are referred to as *miko* in Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi Church religious semantic. According to Baba Painos (2014) a member who deviates from *miko* (dietary laws), *mutumwa* (Angel) *Gaburona (Masowe semantic)* will remove the protection from such individuals (Baba Painos: 2014). Accordingly, a true member of Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi Church observes the following dietary laws among others:

- They do not eat animals whose hoofs are not divided;
- They do not eat animals which do not chew the cud;

- They do not eat animals that stay under the water that do not have fins nor scales;
- They do not eat meat that was dedicated to the worship of ancestors; and
- They do not smoke or drink alcohol.

Again the study observes similarity with the Old Testament dietary laws given to Israelites by God (Leviticus 11:1ff). The study argues that the above mentioned dietary laws must be strictly observed in this new religious movement in Zimbabwe. During *musangano weNyenyedzi*, the Star Conference held in Gweru, members were encouraged to confess everything including sin of disobeying the dietary laws in one way or the other. If you leave out sin unconfessed the Star, Nyenyedzi will not consider you as a registered member in the Masowe spiritual world (Baba Morris: 2014).

On a critical note though Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi Church claims to be Christian who do not read the Bible the Biblical yet their dietary laws and the Ten Commandment are clear evidence that this new religious movement selectively reads and applies the Bible. This therefore, typifies notable features of a New Religious Movement or what can termed a syncretic movement. A New Religious Movement is a religious movement that promotes double standards in terms of its doctrine. In this case Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi cannot be fully referred to as a Christian church, neither can it be referred to as fully African Traditional religious movement hence its classification as a New Religious Movement. Apart from the dietary laws Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi Church doctrine is centered on what is referred to as *mirairo paMasowe*, General regulations.

There is what they call *mirairo paMasowe* (general regulations of Johane Masowe yeNyenyedzi Church). It was found out that These Johane Masowe yeNyenyedzi Church have the following general regulations;

- Marriage laws, i.e. courtship and paying of brides price (lobola)
- Burial rituals for a member
- What to eat and what not to eat during funerals and fasting
- What to wear for men and women during service
- Sitting arrangements at Masowe and their justification
- Water baptism in sacred dams and pools.

The study also observed that these general laws and regulations in the Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi Church constitute the Church's Spirituality. Members of these new religious movements are so observatory and religious to these laws in addition to the dietary laws. These general regulations will be discussed in Chapter 6 of the study when a discussion on the spirituality of the Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi Church in Zimbabwe. The following section deals with the Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi Church and its perspectives on the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity.

The doctrine of Trinity originated from the patristic tradition. Initially the doctrine sought to reconcile particular understandings of Jesus Christ with monotheistic views of God (Parker 1965). Thus in the Trinitarian doctrine, God is three persons in one - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This term Trinity was first used by Tertullian (160-225, CE) (McGrath 1994:66). He was the first of the church fathers with a typically "western style", and in many respects he was the founder of the western theological tradition (McGrath 1994:67). The idea of the Trinity came up because the early church was worshipping Jesus Christ alongside His Father and the Holy Spirit. For the early church, Jesus was a unique being who had come to save the people such that HE became the focus of worship (Parker 1965). Apart from Jesus Christ and God, the Holy Spirit was valued as part of the God-head. The Holy Spirit was regarded by the church as representative of the resurrection of Christ.

The Old Testament does not have an elaborate idea of the Trinity except for some few glimpses of the Trinity (Genesis 1:2-2, Exodus 3:13-14, Number 6:22-27, Isaiah 6:3). However it is in the New Testament where one finds the idea of the Trinitarian God in its totality. For example, in Mathew 28:19, it is stated: "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptise them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit". Thus, for the person to be fully Christian one has to be baptised in these three persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The same idea about the Trinitarian God is also contained in II Corinthians 13: 4. Therefore, the New Testament gives us a clear connection between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Wherever the Holy Spirit is mentioned, the Father and the Son are also mentioned (I Corinthians 12: 4-16, II Corinthians 1: 20, Galatians 4:6, Ephesians 2: 20-22,

Thessalonians 2: 13-14, Titus 3: 4-6, I Peter 1: 2). All these scriptures reflect the connection between these three Beings.

However, for the Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi doctrine, Jesus Christ is not considered equal to God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. For them Jesus Christ was not God but just a messenger, *mutumwa waMwari* of God. To them, Jesus Christ is just like Johane Masowe, Emanuweri Mudyiwa or Sanders Nhamoyebonde Nyenyedzi. The only difference between them is that Jesus Christ was sent by God to the white communities while the three, Johane, Emanuweri and Sanders were sent by God to black communities. Mabvurira et al. (2015:14) observed that the Johane Masowe we Chishanu's Trinitarian doctrine is shrouded by *mutumbi mitatu* such that even when they give muteuro at most three is the dividing number. They give three stones to go and put in bathing water for healing and cleansing from *minyama*.

It is against this background that the Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi Church's Trinitarian doctrine is not aligned to the Biblical Trinitarian teaching of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ is not God for them but is just like any other Prophet God sent to the white communities. However, the Holy Spirit features more vividly in their Church doctrine than Jesus Christ. Hence, for Amanze, any Church movement that does not appreciate the divinity of Jesus Christ presents a Christian spirituality which cannot be classified as authentic (Amanze 1998:56). In his study on Christianity in Botswana, Amanze noted one Church Guta RaJehovah, a Church founded in Zimbabwe by Mai Chaza where he found out that this Church presented a questionable form of Christian spirituality due to its Trinitarian doctrine.

This conclusion was based on the Church's teachings which center around Mai Chaza who was renamed *Musiki/Creator* as one of the God heads who was present during the creation of the world (Amanze 1998a) Thus, for Guta raJehovah the Trinity comprises God the Father, God Mai Chaza and God the Holy Spirit. It is in the same vain that the study debates the Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi Church spirituality. Comparing the Trinitarian doctrines presented in the JMCN and in the Guta Ra Jehovah we concluded that these two Zimbabwean Churches present questionable

Church spiritualities. Christian Spirituality in simple terms is the spirituality of Christ of which JMCN and Guta Ra Jehovah rejected contesting for live and direct communication with God the Father. The next section deals with the doctrine of Salvation in the JMCN Church of Zimbabwe.

The etymology of the term soteriology is from the Greek words *soter*, “savior” and *soteria*, “salvation” (McGrath 1994:318). It is generally accepted that Christians believe that through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary human beings were saved from their sins (McGrath 1994:319). As a result of this position, the study investigates the doctrine of salvation in the Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi Church in Zimbabwe.

For most AICs the Old Testament was a precursor pointing to the coming of Jesus Christ who was God incarnate to save human beings from their sins and the power of death. Thus, salvation is summarized in AICs as the spiritual and physical liberation or deliverance of Church members in times of trouble during their earthly lives. Salvation is thus expressed in such acts of healing, exorcising of evil spirits, enablement of the individual self, fertility and promotion in one’s earthly ventures (Masondo 2014:3). It is also expressed as deliverance from physical evils such as poverty and the general lack of material provisions such as housing. It is on these grounds that the prosperity Gospel Churches resonate with the populace hence their prominence in most AICs in Zimbabwe. Scriptures such as (2 Corinthians 8:9) are literally translated to mean that since Jesus Christ became materially poor today’s Christians need to become materially rich. Salvation in these churches also denotes victory over one’s earthly enemies (Numbers 23-24). In most AICs enemies are witches and evil spirits which threaten good health, prosperity and longevity of life.

Besides linking to the New Testament, AICs use and identify themselves with the Old Testament’s literal teachings. Hence concerning revelation and salvation, God’s self-revelation and agency are argued to exist in and through Jesus Christ. As such, the Christ-event (incarnation, life, teaching death, resurrection and ascension) is the centre of redemptive history in most of these African Indigenous Churches today.

While other AICs put Christ Jesus at the centre for salvation the study observed that the Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi replaced the salvific work of Jesus Christ with the works of their Church fathers-Johane, Emanuweri and Nyenyedzi. For them, God sent black Messianic figures to black communities as he did sending the white messianic figures as John the Baptist and Jesus Christ respectively. Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi Church invited strong criticisms to itself particularly regarding their understanding and interpreting of the person and work of Jesus Christ and the doctrine of Christology.

It has been argued that because of their overemphasis on the work of Johane Masowe, Emanuweri Mudyiwa and Sanders Nyenyedzi, these Churches presented what can be termed a weak Christology. Jesus Christ is not mentioned throughout Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi Church services. The over 50 sermons preached in the Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi during all my participant observation services, not even one sermon mentioned the importance of Jesus Christ. Even in their prayers though they draw the cross sign like the Roman Catholic Church does they do not mention the name of Jesus Christ. Additionally, the name of Jesus Christ was not even called upon even when they prayed for the sick and those in need for spiritual deliverance like other AICs do. As mentioned earlier on, there was no Bible reading throughout the day during the church service. Instead of reading the Bible, various preachers talk about the importance of the founders of the Church, Johane, Emanuweri and Nyenyedzi. Another noteworthy finding is that the Church did not mention the Lord's Supper in any of their teachings and rituals.

It was argued elsewhere in these pages that African Indigenous Churches (AICs) present authentic Christian churches. The reason for that submission is the finding that all AICs are biblically oriented and worshipping the Christian Trinitarian God. This is the popular subscription amongst many African theologians such as Chitando (2013), Gunda (2013) and Maposa (2014). They argue that the worshipping of a Triune God is evidenced in almost all AICs. These scholars argue that the earlier scholars who studied AICs misjudged AICs as either post-Christian, Non-Christian or New Religious movements because they failed to account for AICs' legitimate concern of contextualising the Christian message into African cultural and

religious background. For Clarke (2006:72) AICs are in fact genuine Christian churches with a presupposed doctrine of a Triune God, clear Christology, prominent pneumatology, and a realized-futuristic eschatology.

Earlier paragraphs of the study demonstrated that JMCN Church completely substituted the mediator-ship role of Jesus Christ with their African spiritual leaders. It was also highlighted that the Church presents a Trinitarian doctrine that is not original but rather adulterated. The major criticism raised in the study against the JMCN Church spirituality are; neglecting Christ for salvation; neglecting the Bible for Church Theology and neglecting Lord's Supper a sacrament that reminds Christians that Jesus Christ died and rose again. It is against this background that the following sub-section deals with the doctrine of Pneumatology in the JMCN Church in Zimbabwe.

From data collected through key informant interviews and participant observation, the study observed that the only doctrine of Pneumatology dominated in the theology of this Church movement. The bulk of the time during their church services were allocated to the Spirit that in their religious semantic is termed *nguva ye tsanangudzo* (time for explanations). This event is second to what they call *nhorondo ya Johane* (the call of Johane Masowe). This call of Johane Masowe is for them the major preaching of each day as they gather at *Masowe* (open space for worship). They take turns to remind one another about the spiritual journeys of Johane Masowe, Emanuweri Mudyiwa up to the time of the star (Nyenyedzi).

After this long service members of the Church embark on a short break as they prepare for another long section of *tsanangudzo dzemweya* a session that normally takes three hours while members sit and listen to the Spirit. Likewise *vakokeri vomweya* (those with the gift of prophecy) will be given turns to tell the congregation what they claim to have received from God. For Engelke (2007:55) the doctrine of Pneumatology is very central in all Masowe Churches as they emphasize "live and direct" communication with God. Engelke further argues that *Masowe* tradition is unique in making the claim that God communicates with his people through the spirit (*mweya*) (Engelke 2007:56). The study prescribes to the view that the doctrine of Pneumatology

is at the heart of the JMCN resulting in the doctrine of the Bible, Trinity and Christology being sidelined.

The central argument of the study as presented in this chapter and other preceding chapters is that the JMCN Church in Zimbabwe in its efforts to inculcate African spiritual elements of faith into Christianity created for questioning its authenticity. Following the description given in the study, it can be concluded that the JMCN replaced the doctrine of the Bible; the doctrine of Christ; the doctrine of Biblical salvation and the doctrine of Trinity with African spiritual elements. The Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi in its process of inculcating African spiritual elements of faith ended up minimizing the centrality of the gospel by ignoring the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; downplaying the role of the salvific role of Jesus Christ; denying the doctrine of Trinity and neglecting the authority of the Bible. For them Christ of the Bible was sent by God to White communities and not to Black Africans. The following Chapter deals with sacred places, religious rituals and objects of worship used by the JMCN Church. This following Chapter presents some of the study's key findings and it also shades more light on the Church spirituality.

CHAPTER SIX: INCULTURATED AFRICAN SPIRITUAL ELEMENTS IN JMCN CHURCH IN ZIMBABWE

This chapter critically unpacks the central research question which is the inculturated African spiritual elements in the JMCN Church spirituality. The notion of inculturated African spiritual elements in the JMCN Church spirituality is the centre of the study because spirituality of any religious movement is displayed in its sacred places, rituals, celebrations, sacraments, religious objects and symbols; which will be focused on in the chapter. The JMCN Church's elements of inculturated African traditional aspects such as sacred places, ritual, celebrations, sacraments religious objects and symbols are discussed to ascertain whether the JMCN Church's spirituality is aligned with other AICs Spirituality. The study does not dispute the fact that there is no homogenous and singular Christian spirituality since there is nonsingular Christianity but Christianities (Ukah 2007:11).

Although there are many Christian spiritualities, like Anglican, Pentecostal and Catholic and now AICs spiritualities. The study postulates that there are certain elements or tenets which should continue to be at the centre of any Christian spirituality regardless of space and time. These are; doctrine of Christ (Christology), Trinity, Soteriology, doctrine of the word and Pneumatology (Moodley 2008:76) and (Amanze 1998a:55). The study observed that what constitutes an authentic Christian spirituality is such AICs maintained the majority, not all of the major Christian tenets such as Christology, pneumatology, missiology, ecclesiology, Trinity and soteriology (Amanze 1998:63). This is not the case in the case of JCMN Church.

There is a general consensus among African theologians such as Kofi Appiah Kubi (1979) that AICs took a major step in contextualising Christian gospel by selectively inculturating compatible African spiritual elements into their Church liturgies. Appiah Kubi who studied AICs in Ghana. Observed that most AICs in Ghana such as Church of Christ in Africa (CCA), Church of Messiah in Ghana (CMG) and, the Celestial Church of Christ (CCC) all in Ghana have made a conscious attempt to revive or perpetuate selected certain aspects of local cultures to inform their Church spiritualities Kofi Appiah-Kubi (1979:118). For Appiah-Kubi these AICs, Christ continues to be at the centre of human salvation. Amanze adds that Jesus Christ is seen by the AICs

as the mediator between the AICs members and God. The Bible is also read and interpreted from an African perspective (Amanze 1998a). Chitando (2004) argues that this initiative was taken to make Africans Christians feel at home in Church. This suggests that AICs presented a Christianity influenced by African traditional institutions and belief systems (Amanze 1998b).

This Christianity is referred to as African Christianity in the study. African Christianity, therefore, in the study is a brand of Christianity that is African in nature but continue to be in tandem with the rest of the Christendom. What makes an African Church to remained in tandem with the rest of Christian Churches in the World are the central Christian spiritual elements discussed in the study such as, the divinity of Jesus Christ; Holy Trinity; Doctrine of the Bible; Salvation through belief in Jesus Christ and belief in the Second coming of Jesus to judge the World. However, it was noted that as other AICs maintained the central traditional Christian spiritual elements of faith the disputed AICs disregard them and consciously inculturated incompatible African spiritual elements of faith.

Therefore, we are argued that in the process of inculturation only accommodated 'selected' compatible African spiritual elements, like translation of the Bible into local languages (Dickson 1995:45), accommodation of local music instruments in Church services (Mbiti 1976:27), accommodation of the African worldview of ancestors to explain that Jesus Christ is the "Proto Ancestor" (Bujo 2003:113), accommodating the Trinitarian God, Christ Jesus being the incarnate God, is the best way so as keep what makes a Church Christian.

Incompatible African spiritual elements are defined in the study as the *sine qua non* of the *sacrosancta* of African Traditional Religion. These are central spiritual elements that cannot be borrowed by any other religion in the process of religious dialogue. In other terms, these are the core spiritual elements that distinguish ATR from Christianity or from Islam in Zimbabwe. As alluded to earlier on, every religion has its own unique central spiritual elements. For instance, in Islam there are central rituals; places of worship; celebrations; a certain seating arrangement Muslims follow, different from other religions of the world. The theology of a Muslim is guided by the *Holy*

Quran while Christian theology is guided by the *Holy Bible* (Mbiti 2008). This explains that what constitutes genuine Islam as expressed through the five pillars of Islam as contained in the Holy Quran.

Likewise ATRs and Christianity possess their own unique spiritual elements that make them unique in this setting of religious pluralism. These are referred to in the study as non compatible spiritual tenets. We argue that such spiritual tenets are incompatible for religious dialogue because they are the landmarks of any religion in any case. For example, a Muslim cannot take Jesus Christ to be his/her Savior and continue to be identified as a Muslim. This idea is borrowed from Hierbert Paul's theory of Bounded set theory (Hiebert Paul 1994). According to this theory, there are certain boundaries or elements that separate religions. Thus, elements such as African forms of worship and rituals, African traditional shrines (sacred places), African objects for religious ceremonies, certain African taboos and the respect for ancestors (Mbiti, 1980:77) are argued in the study to be incompatible African spiritual elements that cannot be borrowed by any other religion, either by Christianity or Islam.

Critical questions for the study are: what to inculturate and not to inculturate? Should African Church inculturate incompatible African spiritual elements such like respect of ancestors, praying under selected traditional sacred trees, using traditional sacred objects for worship and initiating Church members in traditional sacred pools and dams and retain the designation of a Christian Church? The study posits that certain religious spiritual elements should be avoided in this process of inculturation. The argument being made in these pages is that the difference between African Christian spirituality and ATR is their central spiritual elements of faith.

One can question that; unlike in Christianity and Islam where central spiritual elements of faith are concealed in their sacred written Scriptures, where do we find those of ATRs, since ATRs do not possess any sacred scripture? To respond to this Mbiti argues that, though African Tradition Religion has no written scripture, African spirituality appears in different forms and settings (Mbiti 1980:56). For him African spirituality is a response to situations in life such as calamities, birth, death or wars. This is how certain mountains, rivers pool, caves and trees are central to African spirituality. Hence the situation where there are certain mountains, hills,

rivers, dams, caves and trees that are sacred shrines for ATR. These specific places were separated and become distinctly different from profane space due to certain happenings or manifestations of the divine (Eliade 1957). This is the reason why early scholars' adage of referring to Africans as 'Animists' because they saw them praying to their god under certain trees, caves and rocks. The study has demonstrated that African spirituality is in the history, hearts and experience of people. African spirituality is applied to a situation as the need arises. Hence Africans live their spirituality as circumstances prescribes. Therefore, we argue in the study that JMCN Church 'inculturated' certain selected traditional sacred shrines, certain traditional rituals, certain traditional religious symbols and certain traditional African objects to inform their Church spirituality in Zimbabwe.

Sacred places are central to most religions. For Eliade a sacred place is the *rendezvous* between human beings and the divine (Eliade 1959:25). Thus, a sacred space functions as the focal point in most religions. For instance, Muslims congregate in Mosques and annually pay homage at the Ka'abah in Mecca. Most Christian congregate in temples, church buildings and some African Indigenous Churches congregate under certain trees. Eliade (1959:26) argues that every sacred space implies a hierophany, an eruption of the sacred that results in detaching a territory from the surrounding cosmic milieu and making it qualitatively different". Arguably, a sacred place is different from an ordinary profane spaces because it is the manifestation of the divine (Eliade 1957). Likewise, JMCN has its own sacred places.

Examples of such places are; Chivavarira hill in Chirumhanzu, Mawanga Mountain in Domboshava and DomboraMwari in Epworth. These are some of the African traditional sacred shrines which the JMCN Church appropriated as their religious places for prayers. The study examines how and why Johane Masowe churches willingly turn such old African traditional shrines to be their holy shrines?

Chivavarira hill is situated in Chirumhanzu district at the borders of Masvingo and Midlands provinces. This particular hill appears to be ordinary to the natural eye, yet it is a sacred shrine for the community of Chirumhanzu. Old Shona novels such as Gonawapotera (1978) and Nhume yaMambo (1988), depict the sacredness of the hill. According to these two Shona novels Chivavarira became a sacred hill from early 1890s during the tribal wars

between the Ndebele and the Karanga people of what Mutasa (1988) termed *Chiri-muhanzu*. The Karanga people of Chirumhanzu used to hide in the numerous caves in the hill when the Ndebele regiments came to attack and raid for women, young men and cattle.

The term *Chivavarira*'s etymologically is derived from a Shona word *kuvavarira* which means (striving to reach the place of refugee) (Musoni 2016:10). It was however, noted through interviews that even to this day, the local people of Chirumhanzu testify to and confirm the sacredness of this hill. The critical question is: what makes the hill sacred that has attracted the JMCN Church esteemed it the same way it is revered by the indigenes of Chirumhanzu today? Below is the portrait of the Chivavarira hill.

Figure 6.1: Chivavarira sacred hill



This photo was taken by the researcher showing the sacred hill Chivavarira. The researchers were shown about 23 caves used as graves for Chiefs and Headmen of Chirumhanzu district. At the centre of the hill situated the religious Shrines for Chirumhanzu residents. This cave is used for religious prayers and rituals today.

Mbiti, a writer and researcher of African Traditional Religion, posits that African spirituality unlike Islamic spirituality and Christian spirituality is not found in a book or Scripture but is found in sacred places such as hills,

mountains, rocks, rivers and trees (Mbiti 1991:20). These places are jealously guarded and certain taboos are followed when one approaches such places.

Three years of visiting Chivavarira and randomly interviewing the indigenes of Chirumhanzu gave the researchers confidence that the hill continues to be a holy shrine from past generations to this generation. Thus, the sacredness of Chivavarira is not legendary or fictitious but it is a place that attracts people from all walks of life coming for various religious rituals. The hill continues to be a sacred shrine for the indigenes of Chirumhanzu even in the aftermath of 1890s tribal wars because of two important phenomena. First, Chivavarira is a sacred shrine for the indigenes of Chirumhanzu because of the numerous caves which the locals used to hide during tribal wars. These caves were turned into burial shrines for Chiefs and respected family elders. Second, on top of the Hills is a big cave which is being used for religious ceremonies by the local people (Zvarevashe, 1978:10).

From the interviews carried out, it emerged that since the beginning of the year 2000 until 2015, the traditional leaders of Chirumhanzu were uncomfortable because their traditional shrines were taken by the JMCN Church and the African Apostolic Church (AAC). Concerted efforts to bar these Masowe Churches from using the cave failed. These two African Indigenous Churches took turns to visit the sacred hill religiously every year around the same time. Each year the African Apostolic Church (AAC) led by Paul Mwazha visits Chivavarira in August while the JMCN visits the place in October. Further to that, these two Churches; the JMCN and the AAC erected religious centers near the hill.

Paul Mwazha is originally from Chirumhanzu before his family migrated to Guruve (Mwazha & Mwazha 1997:1). This is the reason why today the AAC has bounced back to the original root of its founder, to the sacred Chivavarira hill. Similarly, the national leader of JMCN, Baba Tawanda Ndaidza is from Chirumhanzu, Mapiravana (Baba Gilbert: 2014). Obviously, Baba Ndaidza and Mwazha knew about the sacrality of Chivavarira from their childhood. This historical background of these two African Indigenous Church leaders plays a very pivotal role in supporting the argument that the use of Chivavarira hill by these two Churches is not an accident of history but a well calculated religious move.

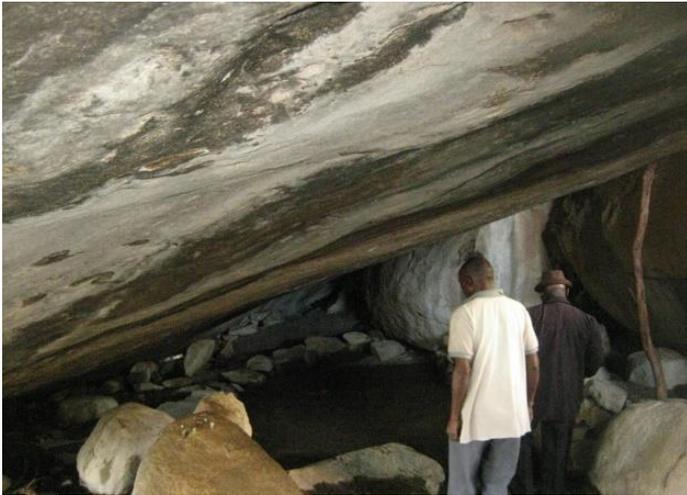
During their visit to the place in August and October respectively, an advance team of *vabati vemweya*, those gifted with the spirit, will go ahead for seven days to prepare for the religious visit. According to key informant the advance team would spend those seven nights praying in the cave while during the day they will be at their designated centers down the hill. It was not clear whether this was done to persuade the spirits of the hill not to hinder them from conducting their religious rituals. Though fire is not allowed near the hill, even cutting of trees, on several occasions the Chief would find fire-wood and ashes in the cave that is a sign that these churches were in the cave for their religious rituals. Asking why these African Churches forcefully appropriated such renowned traditional African sacred shrine, one member of JMCN church claims that as it was is with Israel, certain mountains and rivers are sacred, so too with Africa. Baba Gift in an interview further noted that Chivavarira hill is a sacred place because God is believed by the locals to have his inhabitants in the cave and in the pool Gonawapotera (Baba Gift: 2014).

This takes the discussion back to the central research questions of the study which are: should Christians go to renowned ATR shrines in search for God and do Christians find God in African Traditional Shrines. These questions are raised to suggest a theological prolegomenon to undergird future religious dialogues. For undisputed AICs such places are not desirable for Christian church services. Though many AICs pray on mountain tops, they do not specifically go to renowned African traditional Mountains for prayers. Rather they go to any mountain in their proximity. Some AICs members go to mountains on which their founders encountered a revelation. An example cited in the study is ZAOGA FIF with the Mt. Chipindura in Bindura (Maxwell 2007:72) now turned to be *gomo reZAOGA*, the ZAOGA mountain. Mt. Chipindura became sacred because Ezekiel Guti, the founder of ZAOGA Church claimed to have encountered God on this mountain as was praying in a cave (Guti 2014:23). It is also imperative to note that not only AICs select mountains for worship. In Zimbabwe, the Anglican Church annually visits Bernard Mizeki hill in Marondera district, Mashonaland East province for prayers where one of their influential priests, Bernard Mizeki, was laid to rest.

The study observes that prayer retreat in mountains and caves is therefore, not uniquely AICs but also some missionary churches have the same practice, particularly those in Zimbabwe. It can be argued that the concept of visiting

mountains and hills for prayers is a borrowed phenomenon from both Old and New Testaments. For example, in the Old Testament Moses prayed on Mt Sinai and in the New Testament Jesus invited his disciples to go up the mountain for prayer (Matthew 14:23, Luke 6:12). However, what is not common among other Christian Churches in Africa particularly in Zimbabwe is the deliberate attempt to revive or perpetuate selected traditional sacred Mountains and hills for Church prayers and Church services. JMCN Church's appropriation of Chivavarira cave represents a new approach towards the practice of inculturation. Chivavarira cave is used by the indigenes for religious ceremonies as evidenced by the presents of African Traditional paraphernalia such like wooden clay pots, traditional tobacco used for traditional rituals, sacred traditional linen, *maretsso*, used for traditional celebrations, wooden rod and traditional spears are all kept in this cave. It is in such a cave that the JMCN Church and AAC also go for prayer retreats. Below is the portrait of the Chivavarira cave.

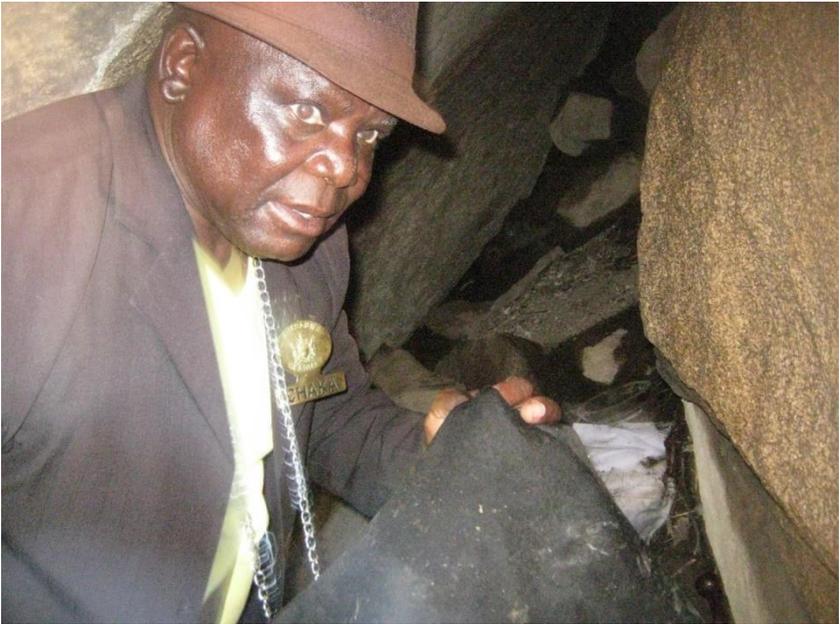
Figure 6.2: Chivavarira cave



The photo, taken by the researcher 19 December 2014, depicts the entrance to the Chivavarira cave. Picture there shows Chief Chaka in dark suit followed by his body guard Mr. Mhazi. A closer look in the cave reveals stones arranged to beyond no one is allowed to cross. On the right is a wooden pole the JMCN Church used to tie their religious flag during their all night prayers.

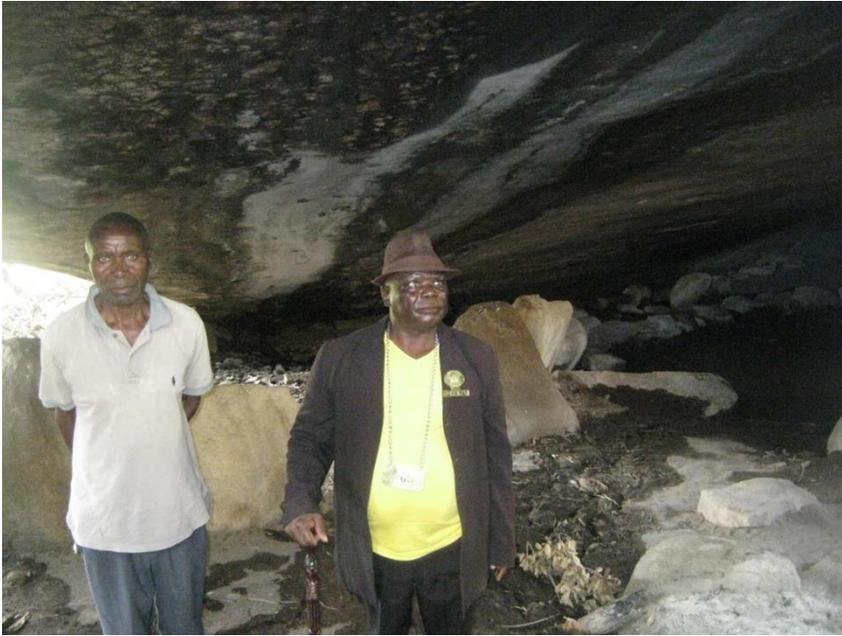
The JMCN Church holistic approach to this sacred cave Chivavarira is a fascinating one. It is fascinating in the sense that they do not go there with a motive of vandalizing the places and turn it into a new sacred place for denoting a Christian Church. Rather the Church has inherited everything found in the cave as using for worshipping their God. In this cave there are sacred objects for the Indigenes of Chirumhanzu such as wooden plates, clay pots, traditional clothes/ machira e Mudzimu, traditional tobacco and a traditional rod as is shown on this portrait.

Figure 6.3: Example of religious objects kept in Chivavarira cave



The photo, taken by the researcher 19 December 2014, depicts the Chief Chaka showing us religious objects kept in the cave. Among the objects are the black and white clothes, wooden rod, clay bowl, wooden bowl and traditional tobacco.

Figure 6.4: Inside Chivavarira cave



The photo, taken by the researcher 19 December 2014, is showing Chief Chaka and Mr. Mhazi standing in Chavavarira cave. On the extreme right are ashes remained in the cave after the Church used the cave for all night prayer.

The JMCN Church did not only grab Chivavarira and Gonawapotera Chirumhanzu sacred shrines. We noted that DomboraMwari in Epworth is another shrine the JMCN turned to be their place of worship. Below is a discussion of another notable traditional sacred shrine that was appropriated by the JMC churches called DomboraMwari Epworth in Harare.

DomboraMwari is one phenomenal place that continues to attract people of different faiths -the AICs and the Shona Traditionalist. DomboraMwari, literally God's rock, is situated in Epworth in Harare outside the residential area of Epworth. This rock is a 318 meter flat topped rock and the largest physical feature in the area (Vambe 2008:69). In his book, *The hidden Dimensions of Operation Murambatsvina in Zimbabwe* (2008) Vambe perceived a potential religious contestation besides the political Murambatsvina of 2005 one which

resulted many people from Epworth residence homeless (Vambe 2008). For him Christian faith mostly the white garmented Churches compete to control the place while the Shona traditionalists claim historically and culturally rightful owners of the rock (Vambe 2008:69). The reason for this contestation is that historically the rock was and continued to be a sacred shrine.

Mythical stories have been told about the Rock and its surroundings. Firstly, it is believed that on top of the Rock there is an incredible sight of a footprint indicating that somebody walked across it before the molten lava set. If one imagined the temperatures of molten lava as it was discharges out of an active volcano, then one would obviously infer the footprint can only be God's hence the name DomboraMwari. Accordingly, DomboraMwari was formerly a traditional sacred place for the indigenes of Epworth (Gundani 2007:146). Secondly, on the bottom of the rock there was a Musasa tree where people could be served with Sadza and meat(Vambe 2008:69) Below is a portrait depicting Mapositori praying at DomboraMwari (See Fig. 3 overleaf).

What is important to note is the repetition of Chivavarira religious contestation resurfacing again in Epworth Harare. This denotes that the Chivavarira conflict was not an accident of history but a welcome calculated JMCN theological move. They do not just turn a profane space to be sacred, the revive the already declared sacred places by other religions a typical example of a syncretic fundamentalist religious denomination. However, today the numerous Apostolic Churches have forcefully grabbed the shrine for their prayers.

JMC Churches in Zimbabwe have not only grabbed Chivavarira and DomboraMwari sacred shrines but many more. These Masowe Churches also grabbed Mawanga Mountain in Goromonzi district, Mashonaland East province for their religious purposes. Mawanga Mountain is a renowned sacred shrine for the indigenes of Goromonzi district from time immemorial. It is against this background people from different parts of Zimbabwe come to this shrine for healing and deliverance from evil spirits (Kawadza 2015). This Mountain which stretches from Chakabvapati and Mushayapekuvaka villages to Chinhamora on the Northern boundary is now a religious icon for both Masowe Churches and traditional healers. According to the Herald of 17

January 2015, on one end of the mountain was a Johane Masowe Chishanu prophetess and on the other end of the same mountain was *Sekuru* (Spirit Medium), both were drawing equal huge crowds (Kawadza 2015). The prophetess, Madzimai Tabeth whose real name is Marjory Charuma confessed that she was using the power that was coming from the sacred mountain to heal the sick and exorcising demons (Kawadza: 2015).

Figure 6.5: Portrait of the Mawanga Mountain



In this photo sourced from the Herald of 17/01/2015 depicts the Mawanga Mountain where a big sacred cave is being shared between a Traditional healer Sekuru Sibanda and A JMC Prophetess Madzimai Tabeth for exorcism and healing powers.

It is posited that the reviving of old sacred shrines in search for power by the JMCN Churches is a replica of the 1950s Black Ancestor Church of Malawi and the Herero Protestant Church of Namibia. The study demonstrated that

the above cited churches redefined African Traditional Shrines and Traditional African practices to inform their Church spiritualities. For instance, the Herero Protestant Church accommodated the notion of the Holy fire (Kandovazu 2009) which is an African traditional way of ancestor veneration while the Black Ancestor Church revived the *Mbonga* cultic shrine (Schoffeleers 2013).

The study argues that this wave of inculturating traditional sacred places continued resulting in more newly established AICs appropriating more traditional sacred places. What is noteworthy is the continuous thriving of AICs to redefine Traditional African sacred shrines into Churches centres. In 2014 a new AIC was founded in Chitungwiza. According to the 20 May 2016 Kwaedza Newspaper edition, a Church called The Power of the Holy Spirit Ministries International (POTHS) or Deliverance Centre Church (DCC) whose Founder is Apostle Farai Rukweza was founded in Chitungwiza's Unit A (Mapupu 2016).

It was also found out that when people hear about a new Church being founded, what quickly comes into their minds is a building or an open space (*masowe*). Surprisingly, in Unit A in Chitungwiza, DCC Church members turned a traditional sacred cave into their Church centre. The particular hill housing this cave is known from time past as a sacred shrine for the indigenes of Seke Chitungwiza (Mapupu 2016). The cave was used for religious ceremonies such as *mapira emhuvura*, rain making ceremonies, and *mapira ekutenga vadzimu nekuda kwegoho*, harvest ceremonies. This cave contains paintings of bushman images which drawn on the walls of the rocks, wooden pates, clay pots and spears. Apart from this hill being used as a sacred shrine for religious rituals, because of its big cave at the centre, the Kwaedza newspaper crew reported that there are numerous caves in this hill which are now burial shrines for Chiefs and religious leaders. The study has noted that Unit A Chitungwiza hill is similar in function with Chivavarira hill of Chirumhanzu. The only difference is that the indigenes of Chirumhanzu are not comfortable to share their sacred places with other religions hence a contestation of the holy shrine. Apostle Rukweza was granted permission to transform the sacred place into a Church by the indigenes of Chitungwiza.

Below is the portrait of the entrance into the Traditional shrine turned into a Church by DCC.

Figure 6.6: Entrance into the cave that was turned into a Church Centre



This photo taken by the Kwaedza crew on 20 May in 2015 depicts the entrance to the Unit A cave which the DCC church turned into its centre. In the photo the one standing far right is the founder of the Church Apostle Rukweza.

Apostle Farai Rukweza (33) the Founder of this Church in an interview by Kwaedza newspaper, posited that his coming to this cave was a result of God speaking to him through dreams many year ago, well before he became a Christian in 2008. He claimed to have received this vision when he was in Bulawayo 450km away from Chitungwiza (Mapupu 2016).

Apostle Rukweza told Kwaedza that he saw in a dream praying and healing many people in this Hill. On the portrait above a chain has been used to demarcate the sacred pace from profane pace. Also a signage in scripted 'Last Bust stop' is by the entrance into the cave. Asked by the Kwaedza crew what was the significance of the signage 'last Bus stop', Apostle Farai Rukweza responded that through entering into the sacred cave, all problems are solved.

The Kwaedza crew highlighted that there is also another sacred pool in the hill believed by the Church members to be a curative pool. Tellingly water from this pool is drawn to heal all types of sicknesses and diseases. However, the researcher did not get an opportunity to authenticate these claims.

Examination of the appropriation of traditional sacred places by AICs in Zimbabwe today constitutes a new concept which the study termed 'back to the beginnings'. The AICs' understanding of traditional sacred places as meeting places with the divine is a dominant feature in their theology and spirituality. There is a strong belief that Mwari *anogara muzvimbo dzaiyereswa nemadzitateguru edu*, God is found in these sacred places and not anywhere else. This is how JMCN among other revived the old sacred places for Church services and rituals. Below we discussed the inculturated traditional sacred trees by the JMCN Church in Zimbabwe.

There are certain trees which were used for religious purposes in Zimbabwe from time immemorial. For instance, trees like *Muhacha* (hissing tree), *mukondekonde* (candelabra tree), and *mutarara*, (powder-bark gardenia). The above-mentioned trees are sacred trees in African traditional religions. *Muhacha* is one of the trees that grows big and is always green even during drought sessions. It has dark green leaves and egg-shaped fruits. According to information gathered the tree's dried leaves were used by traditional healers to treat *chikoshoro*, terrible cough. A traditional healer will mix *muhacha*'s dried leaves with hot water as tea leaves to give to their patients. It is common even to ordinary community members that *muhacha* tree is a sacred tree. According to traditional mythology the tree was also used as a luck charm to bring back lost lovers (Aschwanden 1989:69). If a girl whom you love has turned her back on you, you just need to go to a *muhacha* tree and take a small stick, put in your pocket as you go to persuade her to consider you as her lover again (Aschwanden 1989:70).

Therefore, it can be stated that both traditional healers and the Johane Masowe Churches have high beliefs that *muhacha* tree is no ordinary tree. This is reinforced by the customary rule that no one is allowed to cut down *muhacha* tree. According to the history of Johane Masowe Chishanu, the Church started under the hissing tree in Mhondoro Nevanji in the 1930s

before it spread to other parts of the country (Madzibaba Tawona: 2015). This was supported by what was gathered from interviews that Shonhiwa Masedza (Johane Masowe) during one early Saturday morning led a group of people who followed him from a traditional night ceremony into a bush and sat under a hissing tree (Baba Andrea: 2014). There, he performed prayers after he had sung *Hossana! Hossana!* This song is the most common song among all Johane Masowe Chishanu Churches. The song is commonly known as *Hossana mukuru* (long hosanna). Thus, from that incident Johane Masowe Chishanu members believe that if they pray under a *muhacha* tree they will be heard by God. The study observed that most of the Johane Masowe Chishanu Churches believe that bad spirits are easily cast out under the hissing tree or by burning *muhacha* leaves in their homes. Asking why Johane Masowe Chishanu Churches always want to associated with such trees, Baba Emmanuel Mudarikwa, a prophet responded, “these are the only trees that you find green throughout the year hence they provide a good shade (Emanuel Mudarikwa: 2014). Obviously, the trees provide good shade but what about *mukondekonde* and *mutarara* trees? These trees do not provide shade but still occupy a very significant position in the JMC Church spiritualities.

Mukondekonde is the other of the draught tolerant trees that remain green even during very dry sessions. The *Mukondekonde* tree produces milk like juice which bird trappers use to trap birds for relish. The juice which the tree produces from its trunk is ideal for bird hunting as it sticks thereby trapping birds. Also mythological, it is believed among the Shona people that traditional healers use the *mukondekonde* juice to trap witches. In an interview Tsitsi testified that *mukondekonde* is very central in the Church spirituality because the tree does not wither and is drought tolerant symbolizing their spirituality which is always giving life to the people (Tsitsi: 2013).

Water baptism is the initiatory religious rite for most Christian Churches. The ritual is a sign of commitment for new members. It is also a public declaration that one has joined the new faith. Symbolically baptism depicts the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is against this background that we discuss the Christian practice of baptism from a JMCN perspective, highlighting its significance and purpose. The study has highlighted that since 2000 JMCN baptism was conducted at one central place along the

Shashe River in Chirumhanzu. The river is the borderline for Masvingo and Midlands provinces.

This river is central to this thesis because it is in this river that the sacred pool Gonawapotera is situated. The pool is to the right side when crossing Shashe River towards Beitbridge from Harare. According to Zvarevashe (1978:13), witches and thieves used to be drowned in this pool as death sentence in the 1890s. Resultantly, many lives perished in the sacred Gonawapotera pool (Zvarevashe, 1978:14). Traditionally, any person who would be appointed to be the future king for the people of Chirumhanzu was supposed to swim across the pool (Zvarevashe1978:14). The belief was that if the prospective king has the divine a mandate, the water spirit, *njuzu* would protect them from being devoured by crocodiles (Zvarevashe 1978:26). Therefore, what makes the pool sacred is the belief held by the locals that water spirits inhabit in the pool (Chief Chaka: 2014).

According to the local chief, Chief Chaka, people see clothes lying on the rocks early morning, but upon getting closer the pool, the clothes would mysteriously disappear into the pool (Chief Chaka: 2014). Hence the pool remains sacred up to this very day (April 2016) because of the water spirit which is believed to inhabit in the pool (Chief Chaka: 2014). The custodians of African Traditional Religion jealously guard the pool for their religious rituals. This is why Shoko (2008:61) observed that in the traditional religious context, mythological pools inhabited by *njuzu*, the water spirit, are viewed as sacred and associated with curative powers (Shoko, 2008:61). Water and stones from such sacred places where *njuzu* inhabits are taken as *muteuro* (small rock pebbles used for healing and exorcisms) (Shoko, 2008:61). It is in such a pool that Masowe yeNyenyedzi baptised its members from 2000 till this day (April 2016). We attended the Masowe yeNyenyedzi annual prayer meeting *muteuro wegore* in Masvingo, where Madzimai Margret, a prophetess of about 45 years of age stood up to give a word of prophecy. She told the members that water baptism will continue to be held at Shashe in Gonawapotera as long as members continue to follow what the spirit says (Margret: 2014).

The study demonstrated that Gonawapotera was chosen to be the baptismal pool because it is believed to inhabit water spirit. We observed that JMCN is

the only Church among all the JMC Churches in Zimbabwe that exercise water baptism. Other Johane Masowe members do what they call *kugeza munyama*, washing away bad luck in the same pool (Melissa: 2016). For Melissa all members must go through the process of being cleansed from bad luck. The member must dress up in white including the inner clothes. Each one should walk in the water that covers almost the whole body except the head narrated Melissa. However, for JMCN *rubhabhatidzo rweNyenyedzi*, the star baptism is only conducted in African Traditional sacred dams, rivers and pools. This is not by coincidence that members are baptised in such sacred places. We have noted through research that before they moved to Gonawapotera sacred pool, members were baptised first at Nyatsime in Chitungwiza then Hokoyo Dam in Gokwe, all these are sacred places for ATR and they will be discussed in greater details in the next section.

Nyatsime sacred pool is situated in Chitungwiza, 45 kilometers southeast of capital city of Harare. Etymologically the term *Nyatsime* means the owner of the pool. This suggests that the pool is not just an ordinary pool to the locals but one which belongs to someone and this someone is none other than the water spirit. Since Nyatsime is a traditional sacred pool no one is permitted to do laundry for soup is not allowed in such sacred waters (Chief Mutema: 2014). In 2010 a young boy allegedly disappeared in Nyatsime pool as he was playing with his friends. The residents of Chitungwiza with the help of town council searched for the victim but in vain. It was after the consultation of traditional leaders that the boy resurfaced on the waters of Nyatsime but was already dead (Chief Mutema: 2014). It is in this pool that the JMCN Church baptised its first members who had moved away from the original JMC Church. The first baptism took place in 1997 soon after the death of Baba Sandros who had established the JMC branch at Nyatsime (Engelke 2007:55).

Hokoyo dam is situated in the Gokwe about 12km outside the town again in the Midlands Province (Bulawayo 24News 2012). The common name for this dam is Gwehava dam but because of some mysterious happenings one of our key informant up-to-dated us that the dam is nicknamed Hokoyo. The term Hokoyo literally means beware. This term, beware, is a warning denoting that some mysterious happenings occur in the dam. According to key informant

interviews, the dam was given that name because much people had mysteriously disappeared into the dam. Unlike Nyatsime and Gonawapotera, the residents of Gokwe are allowed to go for fishing in this dam, but certain taboos are to be followed. One such taboo is that one is not allowed to go alone for fishing and that one is also not allowed to remain alone fishing while others have gone home (Chief Nemangwe: 2013). These mysterious happenings were also recorded by the Bulawayo News 24 that Gokwe township continues to face serious water challenges despite the completion of the construction of Gwehava Dam amid revelations that authorities are failing to draw water from the dam owing to water spirits (Bulawayo 24News 2012). The News reported that the angry water spirits which at times takes the form of a large snake, blocks the pumping of water by either causing electrical faults that damage the pumping system or would simply coil itself inside the pipes.

It is in such dreadful dams that JMCN Church baptises its Church members. Madzimai Mergury informed us that after the Nyatsime baptism of 1997 the JMCN Church conducted its second baptismal ritual in Hokoyo/Gwehava dam in 1998 (Mergury: 2014). Upon verifying why all the JMCN Church baptismal rituals are conducted in such dreadful dams and pools or rivers that are said to be the inhabitants of water spirits, the response was that baptising people in such places result in members acquiring curative powers to heal and acquire protective powers to fight evil spirits (Mergury: 2014). While it is important to inculturate the local cultures into the Christian message the study is concerned with the influence of ATR in the JMCN Church particularly on especially when it comes to their understanding of baptism being only conducted in African traditional sacred places.

The study posits that the JMCN Church's death and burial rituals are deeply rooted in African spirituality. Thus, the study found out that these rituals were guided by African worldviews of life after death; the spiritual powers and mediatory role of the deceased. However, it was noted that certain African traditional death rituals were discontinued. These include, but not limited to the killing of an animal during funeral gatherings known in Shona as *mombe yenhedzo* (Benyera 2015). Throughout the funeral gatherings

mourners eat dried fish and vegetables. Apart from the discontinuation of ritual of animal killing the study observed rituals of mutual fecundation that is a revival of African traditional death and burial rites by the JMCN Church. JMCN members believed that a person must have died a natural death for his/her spirit to be accepted by God. During *muteuro wegore* members are taught that they should pray that when death comes, it must not come to them through unnatural means such as murder, car accident or long illnesses. According to their teaching, anyone who dies in any of the above manners *haana kufa rufu rwemupositori* did not die appropriately. The ostracisation is worse for Church members who commit suicide. Data gathered from key informant interviews revealed that one who committed suicide was not accorded a Masowe yeNyenyedzi burial ritual. For the JMCN certain rituals are done during post and after burial. While other Johane Masowe weChishanu church members cannot be buried in a coffin for JMCN Church it is not important whether one is buried with or without a coffin. However, what is mandatory is the process called *rukukwe rweMupositori*. Literally *rukukwe* is African traditional mattress made-up of reeds. However, for JMCN *rukukwe* comprises of *mahapa* (water lilies), *nhokwe* and *shanga* (water reeds and rushes). These three items are spread in the grave before the deceased is lowered into the grave. This ritual is only performed only to members who have died *rufu rwemupositori*, a natural death. Thus, if one committed suicide the above rituals will not be followed. The sacred song *Hosanna!! Hosanna* again is not sung during burial. There is no memorial service for someone who commits suicide. Nyaradzo, memorial service is very important because this is when the prophets inform the beloved members of whether the deceased has gone to heaven or is still wondering. If he/she is still wondering, certain rituals and prayers are done to plead *Mutumwa Gaburona* (Angel Gabriel) the gate keeper to open the gate (Baba Israel: 2016). The gate keeper can only open the gate when the immediate spiritual leaders, i.e. Baba Johane, Baba Emanuweri or Nyenyedzi signaled *Mutumwa Gaburona* to do so. The idea behind this is that, only the immediate dead members who hold higher position in church can negotiate with *Mutumwa Gaburona* to open the gate of heaven. After these ritual prayers, members are informed that the deceased finally had

succeeded in joining the saints such as Johane, Emanuweri and Nyenyedzi. *Nyaradzo* ceremony usually takes place 21 days after the burial.

The concept of correct death is a borrowed phenomenon from African traditional religion. According to Bourdillon, the person must have had a good death for him/her to be accorded a proper burial ritual and ceremonies. By good death Bourdillon is referring to a death which is not caused by accident or one committed suicide (Bourdillon 1987:209). Apart from correct death, in ATR there are after burial rituals. Two key after burial ritual are *Masuka foshoro* or *Nyaradzo* and *kurova guva*. These rituals are done to qualify the deceased as the family ancestor, thus bringing back the deceased's spirit to look after the remaining family (Benyera 2014). In JMCN *nyaradzo* ritual, can be undertaken from the time that relatives are informed by the prophets that the person has gained *zororo remweya* meaning he/she has gone to heaven. From then one becomes the mediator for his family pleading with the *madzidza* to allow other family members to become members of Johane Masowe. This is how even the three spiritual leaders of this Church Shonhiwa Masedza, Mudyiwa Dzangara and Sandros Nhamoyebonde though all dead are still revered by Church members.

Marriage is understood by Africans as the meeting-point for three layers of human life, the living dead, the living living and the living unborn (Mbiti 1991:104). The living dead are the roots on which the living stand and the living are the link between the living and the living dead and the living unborn are the for future generations hence marriage makes it possible for them to germinate and sprout (Mbiti 1991). This is how the living dead are involved by the Karanga in their traditional African Marriages ceremonies. For instance, during the paying of bride price, *lobola*, the money is placed in a wooden plate or a clay pot, *mbiya*, to show respect for the ancestors, the living dead. Normally paying of *lobola* is contacted in a kitchen in rural areas. The kitchen that is usually a thatched round hut, is considered a sacred shrine for most Karanga people.

Traditional prayers are recited in the kitchen by the eldest family member while kneeling barefoot at what is called *chikuva*. *Chikuva* is a place in the kitchen where water gourds are kept. Apart from the kitchen possessing a place which constitutes a sacred shrine, the kitchen also denotes authority for a married woman. It represents the core of the maternal spirit among the Karanga people. In ATR maternal spirits are feared because they are believed to cause more harm than paternal ancestors. This is evidenced by the African concept of *kutanda botso*. *Kutanda botso* occurs when a person wrongs their mother; the maternal spirits will cause that victim to suffer until a diviner is consulted and appeasement rituals done. The diviner will advise the victim to put on sack-clothes and move around confessing that they wronged their mother. This exercise is called *kutanda botso*. As a result, every African woman is honored and given due respect. It is against this background that the JMCN Church value *mombe yeumai*, brides' price cattle due to the mother, more than anything on *lobola* form. *Mombe yeumai* is a token of appreciation due to the mother of the bride before the two are pronounced husband and wife. This *mombe yeumai* besides being a token of appreciation is also a means of appeasing the maternal ancestors so that they bless their daughter so that her marriage does not fail.

According to information gathered during research, if this cow dies before it gives birth, the son in law will buy another cow to replace the dead one. After it has reproduced once or twice, the cow is then slaughtered in another set of rituals called *nyama yemakunguwo*, literally meaning meat for crows. Three families are invited (the son in law's family; the family of the in laws and the family where the mother-in-law was born) for a ritual called *nyama ye makunguwo*. This ritual is called *nyama ye makunguwo* because when the cow has been slaughtered meat is shared among the three families, and a certain portion of meat is left for crows to eat. This portion eaten by crows represents a meat offering to the maternal ancestors.

For this Church *mombe yeumai* must be paid first before paying other forms of *lobola* such as the father's bride price known as *rusambo*. JMCN teaches that by failing to pay this cow, one will be inviting barrenness or stillbirths in the

family. Thus, members of the Church are taught to pay *mombe yeumai* to avoid angering the maternal ancestors. The study posits that the way this Church values *mombe yeumai* exhibits the high influence of African spirituality informing the JMCN Church spirituality. For JMCN money cannot be accepted in exchange for *mombe yeumai*. For other AICs *mombe yeumai* is just a token of appreciation for the mother-in-law so much that the mother-in-law can be given the money equivalency of a cow. This is not the case with the JMCN Church where a cow must be bought and presented. It is on these bases that the study concludes that *mombe yeumai* is no longer taken as a mere token of appreciation but a means of appeasing the maternal ancestors among the JMCN Church as it is in Karanga traditional religion.

JMCN developed new semantics that are not found in any English, Shona, Ndebele or any local language dictionaries. *Kirawa* is one of the most popular words in the JMCN Church. It denotes a demarcated place *pa Sow*e were members of the Masowe yeNyenyedzi gather for religious rituals (*kushandirwa*). There are certain objects and certain plants that are found at a *Kirawa*. The place is marked by stones surrounding the place. No one is allowed to walk into the *Kirawa* except through an open entrance which is the only entrance to the place. Certain rituals are followed at the entrance such as that one should kneel down, touch the forehead, chest, left and right shoulder (the crucifix sign) prayerfully. This is followed by certain confessions before one enters in the *kirawa*. This process is called *kupinda pachikero* (going through the scale). All prayers are offered facing to the east (*kumabvazuva*). From the interviews held, it was found out that praying while facing east has religious connotations. For them mercy and grace comes as the sun rises from the east (*kumabvazuva kunobva tsitsi nengoni*). Religiously, facing to the east is ritually done expecting mercy and grace to fall on them as they pray. Prophets and Prophetesses always faced the western direction as they administered religious rituals (*kushandira*). Similarly facing the west has religious connotation. For Masowe yeNyenyedzi, evils spirits come from the west (*kumadokero*). As the sun goes down evil spirits are believed to take over and afflict people throughout the night hence prophets faced that direction so that they could fight against these evil spirits (*mweya ye kumadokero*).

Figure 6.7: Example of a kirawa



This picture depicts a typical kirawa. Traditional objects of worship such as clay pots, *mbiya*, are clearly visible in the background.

A *kirawa* is characterized by objects such as clay pots and small stones in the clay pots, *mituro*. These clay pots, *mbiya*, played a very significant role in defining Masowe yeNyenyedzi spirituality. *Mbiya* is an African traditional household utensil used as either a storage container for beer and other products such as animal blood used for traditional religious ceremonies. Even on marriage ceremonies money for *lobola* is placed in the clay pot or a wooden plate. Clay pots are found at *kuchikuva* that is the equivalence of where plates and pots are displayed in a typical rural Karanga kitchen. This place is an *axis mundi*, where African prayers are offered at this revered area in a hut. During these traditional rituals, family elders put traditional tobacco into a clay pot and kneels *pachikuva* to offer prayers to their divine. Children are not allowed to sit on this sacred area in the kitchen. In some the Karanga African

communities, of Chirumhanzu, if a family member dies, the corpse will be placed *pachikuva* over night before burial.

Likewise, the JMCN members kneel before the clay pots as they offer prayers. Small stones for religious rituals are kept in these clay pots. In Karanga traditional religious rituals elderly people kneel before *chikuva* place where clay pots are displayed in the rural kitchen. Even the dead body is laid near *chikuva* the whole night before burial. We argued that kneel before a clay pot for prayers by JMCN Church is a borrowed phenomenon from Karanga spirituality. During their prayers all members kneel facing east and those with spiritual problems will be given small stones to use from *mbiya*. Again, water for prayers, *muturo*, is also kept in these clay pots. From the interviews, these small stones and water are taken from sacred rivers, *nzizi dzinoera*, pools such as Chinhoyi caves, also known as Chirorodziva, Gonawapotera, Nyatsime, and Hokoyo for religious rituals (Baba Nicholas: 2014).

Upon investigating on the significance of *mbiya* Baba Nicholas noted that *mbiya* is significant because it was used from historical times by Karanga ancestors for many functions such as food storage. Thus, originally *mbiya* is an African household utensil which has been inculturated by the Masowe Churches (Baba Nicholas: 2014). He reiterated that the Spirit admired our culture, our household utensils and our old way of worshipping the divine (*Mweya wakafaririra tsika dzevanhu vatema*) (Baba Nicholas: 2014). Baba Andrew supported that view stating that from the day Johane Masowe founded the Church, he started his ministry with *mbiya* and a rod under a *muhacha* tree in Mhondoro (Baba Andrew: 2015). Another important religious object used by JMCN Church is a rod, *tsvimbo*.

Another important object Masowe uses at the kirawa is the rod known in Shona as *tsvimbo*. There are numerous types of religious paraphernalia which those presiding over Masowe uses for the different rituals. The study argues, for example, that these rods are different depending on what the spirit instructed. For instance, there are rods from a traditional tree called wild gardenia, *mutarara*. Normally in African traditional religion, the tree branches of *mutarara* are used to cover the grave immediately after burial. It is believed

by the Karanga that the branches of *mutarara* tree chases wades off witches who would come to take away the dead body during the night. Therefore, the study opines that by Johane Masowe churches using rod from *mutarara* denotes the traditional concept of driving away evil spirits among the members. Thus, the use of *mutarara* rod is a borrowed phenomenon from African spirituality.

Another type of a rod the Johane Masowe uses is the one from a bamboo tree, *mushenjere*. Again, this rod is for specific individuals according to the directives of the spirit. During certain church services, there will be as few as five members having the rod among congregants numbering thousands. The bamboo tree rod is a special type of rod that represents JMCN Church spirituality. Rules and regulations are to be adhered to for one to continue having such a rod. The study observes that the rod itself is a plant plucked from the river banks from a bamboo tree. From time past, Africans from my tribes were discouraged from using this bamboo tree for firewood or any other household chores as the tree is regarded to be sacred. The belief behind this practice is such trees are associated with the water spirits. It is on such trees according to data collected from key informant interviews that mysterious clothes will be hung and upon one advancing towards the river the clothes mysteriously disappeared (Chief Chaka: 2014). The study posits that Johane Masowe use this bamboo rod as a point of contact with mysterious water spirits for curative powers. From the above, he study concludes that, it is one of the main reason why the Masowe yeNyenyedzi Church baptise their members in sacred dams and pools.

The study also observes that the majority of the Masowe yeNyenyedzi male members carry the rod from a tree called *mutema masanhu* (no English name, botanical name could be ascertained). This tree is normally found near mountains and hills. It grows to be a big tree that birds hide from the weather elements. Ironically, the tree does not bear any fruit yet provides a very good sanctuary from the aforementioned whether elements. One key finding about the tree is that dangerous snakes are not found in that shady tree which is unusual to other shady trees. Only snakes like *shanga nyoka* can be found in such trees. These snakes are not poisonous or harmful such as house snakes, *shanga nyoka* are found in and around the tree. In the Karanga worldview,

harmless, non-poisonous snakes are not allowed to be killed. These 'protected' snakes include *shanga nyoka*. The Karanga people of Chirumhanzu believe that this snake represents one's immediate ancestor. For the Karanga people, ancestors are believed to take different forms as they communicate with the living.

The study can conclude that the use of rods from such trees such as *mutema masanhu*, mutarara and the bamboo tree denotes an inculturation of African spiritual elements in the JMCN church spirituality Zimbabwe. African spirituality as argued by Mbiti is found in such trees. Apart from using such rods, all the JMC Churches uses *mbiya* for their religious rituals as argued before. Thus, *mbiya* is very central in defining Masowe spirituality. One informant noted that:

We use *mbiya* to disguise evil spirits so that the evil spirits think we are together though we are against them. He said whenever evils spirits see *mbiya* they will leave us thinking we belong to them while the opposite is true (Baba Gift: 2014).

It can be argued that the JMCN Church spirituality replaced the central Christian objects of faith with *mbiya*, rods caved from sacred trees, stones and waters from sacred dams and pools. Additionally, the Church preserved many of traditional African rituals such as funeral rites and marriage. It was found out that it the Church found it reasonable to inculturate Africans funeral rituals, sacred objects of worship like *mbiya* and cave religious rods from sacred trees for their rituals to make Christianity an African religion. Africanisation of Christianity is a defensible idea chiefly because Africans received a westernized or Europeanized Christianity (Paris 1995:38). For Paris this is the only way Christianity can become an African religion; hence Africans can give devotion to something that resonates with their cultures. However, this process of Africanisation of Christianity does not imply the absence of the reverse, that is, the 'Christianisation' of African religions (Paris 1995:38). It is against this view that it was concluded that indeed there was the inculturation of African Spiritual elements in the JMCN Church spirituality. The JMCN Christianised African religions in their process of trying to Africanise Christianity. The adjudication of the authenticity of JMCN spirituality will not be attempted in this research. The rationale is that Christian spirituality judgments must be elaborated on and not solely be

viewed as deductive and prescriptive. Considering the symbols in the JMCN it can be argued that JMCN is an authentic Christian Church, presenting authentic Christian spirituality. Below is the discussion of the JMCN Church symbols.,

This section explores the key JMCN Church symbols namely the cross and the star. These two are central symbols in the church's spirituality. What is interesting to note is that the Cross and the Star as religious symbols were never used to represent one religion but one was commonly used to represent that religion, while the other symbol was used to represent that religion. Suprisingly JMCN put them together to represent their Church spirituality.

The symbol of the cross was widely accepted by almost all Christian denominations. The study observes that all the Johane Masowe weChishanu Churches have images of the cross on their sacred clothes and Church flags. We argue in the study that JMCN is identified among AICs because of these cross images which are central to the Church spirituality. The cross is seen on their uniforms particularly those who operates in the prophetic offices known as *vabati vomweya*. Besides these cross images, the JMCN Church draw a cross sign at the beginning and at the ending of each prayer session ritualizing the beginning and ending of each ceremony. Some Johane Masowe weChishanu Churches went further to make wooden carvings and designs form of small crosses representing the crucifixion, like the Roman Catholics have rosaries. These small crosses are put at their door posts and even under their pillows during bedtime.

However, though the cross images are prevalent in this Church, we learnt that JMCN does not believe in the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Church also does not believe that Jesus died a vicarious death. For them Jesus was killed by white people from overseas. So, the cross in the JMCN saves just as a remembrance for the suffering and work of their three spiritual leaders Johane, Emanuweri and Nyenyedzi. The cross sign and images were borrowed from the Roman Catholic but representing different meanings and significance altogether. However, it could be argued that since the JMCN have Cross images, imitated the cross sign like the Roman Catholics do congregate on the Fridays, the day supposedly to be the day Christ was

crucified qualifies to be designated as authentic Christian Church. They even commence church services from Thursday around 3pm till Sunday 3pm which serves as a memorial service for Jesus who was killed (Baba Duson: 2014).

According to the data gathered it was found that the JMCN Church members do not bath from 3pm on Thursday to Sunday. They don't apply deodorants, perfumes or any other fragrant oils. They do not also eat meat for all these days known as *kubatidza amai Maria kuchema Mwanakomana* that is, helping the mother of Jesus to mourn her son who was killed overseas. This will suggest that JMCN Church of Chirumhanzu borrowed the use of the cross from the Roman Catholic though the Catholics are not known of not bathing from Thursday, but some Roman Catholics members do not eat meat on Fridays.

Figure 6.8: A portrait of the JMC church service in UK



In the picture above, Church members are seen singing Hossana Hossana with a white cloth spread before them. Three crosses stand in the picture represent mitumbi mitatu, Johane at the centre, Emanuweri and Nyenyedzi on either side. Again, there is mbiya a symbol of their spirituality. Sometimes the clay bowl contains water or small stones.

The cross symbol dominates the JMCN Church spirituality. However, the combination of the cross and clay pot, *mbiya* typifies syncretic movement

hence the notion of undoubted New Religious syncretic movement. New Religious Syncretic Movements are Churches that advocates for double standards. These churches are neither here nor there, they use the cross but denying the Christian significance of the cross. They make wooden crosses from African Traditional sacred tress such as *mutarara*.

Apart from the cross, Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi Church displays the star, nyenyedzi, on their church regalia and even on church flags at all of their holy shrines. These flags play a very significant role for JMCN Church spirituality as they act as their spiritual antennas for connecting to the religious signal. The flags are hoisted high above all objects around the place to receive the spiritual signals. More importantly flags serve as a trademark for the church since Masowe churches are many and follow different doctrines. Therefore, the star symbol on the flag are primary identifiers identifying to the people that this is the Johane Masowe Chishanu yeNyenyedzi, *inotungamirwa neNyenyedzi*, John of the wilderness that is led by the star Church. It is very possible to find more than 10 small groups of white garmented Churches in one open space. These small white garmented groups represent different JMC Churches. The star on their regalia and Church flags distinguishes the JMCN from other JMC Churches.

The star also represents the Angel that guides the Church, *Mutumwa Nyenyedzi* who leads JMCN Church wherever the Church is. It has been noted through the study that almost all the Apostolic sect subscribe to certain a *Mutumwa* Angel. Some believe in *Mutumwa Maikoro*, Angel Michael and some in *Mutumwa Eria* and Angel Elijah. However, in the JMCN, three Angelic beings are mentioned all the time. These are *Mutumwa Nyenyedzi*, *Mutumwa Gaburona* and *Mutumwa Edah* (an explanation will be given later). We noted that *Mutumwa Nyenyedzi* is the Arch Angel for this Church. Therefore, each year there is a conference, *musangano weNyenyedzi* mandatory for all JMCN members. Members from Botswana, Burundi, South Africa and other African countries gather together during the month of August to attend this conference in Mkoba 19, Gweru in the Midlands province. Key informants noted that the conference was very special because it was a time for building spiritual census in Church and members are counted by *Mutumwa Nyenyedzi*.

One can also not that this is the first time Star is used in a Christian Religion. We used to know that a star and a crescent are found in the Islamic Religion. Surprisingly the star and crescent are also found in the JMCN Church. This becomes confusing whether the Church borrowed this from Islamic faith or African traditional beliefs since the Church does not read the Bible. In the Karanga traditional religious beliefs a star and crescent are central religious symbols. A cresset is a half moon and in the Karanga religious beliefs when the moon is half it means something good is coming and usually when you see a star moving very fast if you are not married your life partner will come from the direction the star goes. From interviews the star represents an Angel of the Church. We have also noted that the JMCN Church have many other central Angels that constitute their spirituality.

One of these is Mutumwa *Maikoro*, Angel Michael who is considered to be God's Angel of war. This Angel operates through selected and very few prophets within the Church hierarchy. During their religious rituals like *muteuro wegore* or *Jorodhani pana Shashe* (Jordan at Shashe), one prophet leads the congregation, and this must be a prophet guided by *Mutumwa Maikoro* who is also the Angel of revenge and death. All members of this Church were reported to be afraid of this person who they believe to be overshadowed by *Mutumwa Maikoro*. This person is always identifiable by wearing a red garment while everyone else wear white garment during such ceremonies.

Apart from *Mutumwa Maikoro* there is *Mutumwa Edah* who is honored in a song sung during *musangano we gore*, "*Tichifamba naEdah*, guided by *Edah*. *Edah* is the rod which was handed down to the Church leaders from *Baba Sandros Nhamoyebonde*. This suggests that although *Sandros* died and was buried in July 1994, he left a rod that leads the JMCN Church members. The rod is used during water baptism ceremonies, for deliverance during *muteuro we gore* and the rod is also used to count people during *kuverenga neNyenyedzi*. This rod is like a magnate that when the prophet pointed at a member in the queue, the Prophet can detect whether the person is afflicted with demons or not. This rod is therefore, central in the church's spirituality as it is efficacious in administration of key church functions such as healing of the afflicted.

During *Muteuro wegore* which was held in Masvingo Mucheke in 2014, many congregants fell down after being pointed by this rod while standing in a

queue. However, another informant said *Edah* is an Angel sent by God to Africans, like Jesus Christ was an Angel sent to whites (Madzimai Edzayi: 2013). Though it was not clear who *Edah* was, it can be concluded that *Edah* is the sacred rod that was handed down to the JMCN by Baba Sandros Nhamoyebonde to be used for religious rituals. It resonates with other narratives where a rod was handed down to the future generation from the founders of AICs. In Zimbabwe we know of the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) with *svimbo yaSamueri Mutendi*. Stories are told that Bishop Dr Nehemiah Mutendi the son to late Samuel Mutendi is using the rod that his father used for religious purposes. Thus, below is a portrait of the late Sandros holding the rod supposedly referred to as Mutumwa *Edah*.

Figure 6.9 Portrait Baba Sandros Nhamoyebonde



This picture was taken from the memorial program of events which is held in July every year to remember this great Father of faith in the JMCN Church. Every July the Church hosts a memorial service at Sandros grave in Seke Chitungwiza cemetery. The picture above depicts Sandros Cryson Nhamoyebonde carrying the sacred rod (supposedly Mutumwa *Edah*) for

the JMCN Church today. Even though this great leader has departed His rod remained with the Church. The rod is used during muteuro wegore to cast out demons and during Jorodhani pana Shashe. The rod is always in front of their Church possessions especially on Joridhani pana Shashe.

The study observes that this rod continued to be a sacred rod from the time of Sandros throughout to this generation in the JMCN Church. The same rod is used during national gatherings such as annual prayer, the star census conference, water Baptism at Shashe and lastly at the *Rupawo rweNyenyedzi* conference.

The following paragraphs deal with the religious commemorations in the JMCN Church. Religious commemorations are discussed because they constitute the centrality of any spirituality. Spirituality is seen and displayed in the inherent spiritual ceremonies. We have noted that Church spirituality is also celebrated in songs, rituals and symbols that show the energising spirit animating the community to move together in response to God (Constable 2003:10).

Memory and remembering is a key concept in almost all religions. Mbiti posits that a repeated word or action is powerful since it is spoken in a dramatic fashion and repeatedly (Mbiti 1991:131). We argue that the act of memorizing certain passages of scriptures, doctrines and teachings is at the centre of any religion. Jesus taught his disciples to repeatedly do the Lord supper in remembrance of Him (1Corinthians 11:24). Thus, the study discusses the celebrations in the JMCN Church. The reason of discussing these celebrations is to unpack what is at the centre of their celebrations. The analysis is guided by Jesus' command that Christians should always commemorate the HIS, death, burial and resurrection. The study posits that Christian spirituality can be called Christ spirituality because there is no Christ (ian) spirituality without Jesus Christ. Following are the key JMCN celebration the study selected to discuss:

- *Muteuro we gore*, annual prayer
- *Musangano we gore*, annual conference
- *Pasika*, Easter Conference.
- *Muteuro wegore*, annual prayer

The JMCN Church hold five annual celebrations and these are:

- Annual prayer conference in every May,
- Easter conference following the Gregorian calendar,
- Annual Conference held in August,
- Water Baptism Conference in every October and
- Seal of the star conference held every December.

Thus, *Muteuro wegore* is a common conference in most JMC Churches. What differed were the ways in which these celebrations were done. For the JMCN Church the Annual prayer is very important. The other name for this *muteuro wegore* is *Musangano weku pitsikwa kwemadzidza* (no proper English translation but could mean-final release from Evil spirit). The meaning of *kupitsikwa kwemadzidza*, is held during the annual prayer and is a conference to convince the ancestors, *madzidza* to allow its family members to constantly, faithfully subscribe to JMCN spirituality (Baba Amos: 2014). Baba Amos argued that as long as one is not permitted to follow this new faith by his/her ancestral spirits, the person will certainly not last long in the new faith (Baba Amos: 2014). It was noted that the highest selling point for this Church is by first instilling fear into the people then convert them to be their Church members from henceforth they will be beholden. Many people in this Church are afraid of *mweya ye kumadokero*, *mweya ye madzidza*, spirits of the dead and goblins. A key informant stated confidentially during *muteruro wegore* that:

kana madzidza asina kukutendera kuti uroore unongoona musikana anga abvuma zyakana naka ave kuti haachadi (unless ancestral spirits permitted you to marry, promising love relationships just fade-up).

It can be noted that the congregants believed that one cannot materially prosper or get promotion unless their ancestral spirits desire it to happen. Accordingly, during *muteruro wegore* commemorations *vabati veMweya* will persuade family members' ancestors to allow the said member to get married those who want to get married, get job promotions, and job-seekers to get jobs. During these negotiations between the living and the living dead some congregants were informed by the prophets to go and make peace with their parents and in laws before any spiritual intercessions could be undertaken on their behalf. Some congregants were asked to go and appease their angry

ancestors so that they could be delivered and get married, get jobs and be promoted. An analysis of the annual prayer revealed that the mediatorship of Jesus Christ was demeaned as Prophets negotiated with family ancestors. We argue that this process of persuading the family ancestors for the promotion and well-being of its members seems to be deviating from traditional Christian doctrine on salvation through Jesus Christ.

Easter commemorations became a worldwide event within the Christian liturgical calendar. The purpose of this commemoration is to remember the passion, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Messages on the passion, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ are energetically proclaimed throughout the holy week which usually begins on a Holy Thursday ending on a resurrection Sunday (Easter Sunday). Some Churches dramatise the events that led to the death of Jesus Christ and how He was crucified on the cross. Apparently, the purpose of this ritual of the re-enactment is to capture the minds of the congregants on how their saviour suffered and eventually died on the cross to bring salvation to humanity. Invariably, on the resurrection Sunday, the services will end with a ritual of Holy Communion.

However, while other Christian denominations commemorate the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ at Easter, we have noted that the JMCN Church, celebrate 'Easter' with a difference. For them 'Easter' is the time to remember the 'Fathers of Faith', i.e. the messianic leaders whom God raised to give leadership and guidance to the church. Every Easter, the JMCN Church commemorates deliverance from evils spirits which was made possible through the charismatic leadership of Shonhiwa Masedza (Johane) (founder of the original 'Church', Mudyiwa Dzangara (Emanuweri), second from Johane and Sandros Nhamoyebonde (Nyenyedzi), third from Johane. This commemoration is commonly referred to in their semantics *tsoro yaJohane* literally a *three tier* game which is played in turns. Hence for them Johane came to introduce the religion, then followed by Emanuweri and lastly by Sandros hence the notion of *tsoro yaJohane*.

The study observed that though this Church commemorates Easter, the passion death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ was removed from the

centre of the event and replaced by Johane, Emanuweri and Sandros. The main purpose and significance of Easter commemorations has been overshadowed hence inviting more questions on the authenticity of this church's Christian spirituality. We argue throughout the study that JMCN Church spirituality seems to have deviated from the central Christian spiritual tenets in a myriad way. We thus posit here that the Johane Masowe Chishanu yeNyenyedzi Church gravitated more towards becoming a syncretic, New Religious Movement. This reason is based on the fact that the commemoration of salvation that came through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, *Christus victor* which was replaced by remembering of the work done by Johane, Emanuweri and Sandros during Easter commemoration. For the church *tsoro yaJohane* is 'the' gospel. We have also noted that every Friday *tsoro yaJohane* or *nhoroondo ya Johane*, the history of the Church is the main sermon that they preach. After *nhoroondo ya Johane*, the JMCN Church have what they term *tsanangudzo dzeMweya*, prophecy. These two *tsoro ya Johane* and *tsanangudzo* together with *Gumi remitemo*, *Miko ne murairo* form the theology of the JMCN Church.

It is against this strong emphasis in the JMCN Church doctrine that Baba Gift in an interview spoke boldly that JMCN Church members are not Christians but simply followers of Johane Masowe/tiri vadzidzi va Johane (Baba Gift: 2014). He adds "Christianity is a religion for white, we follow the teaching of Baba Johane hence we are his disciples (Baba Gift: 2014). This was supported by Baba Tawona in his defence of the religion of the Vapostori in an online article "Johane Masowe Way of Worshipping and Life: The Truth vs Myths and Lies", (Madzibaba Tawona 2015b). In that article Madzibaba Tawona said, "I mentioned before that we, of Johane Masowe yeChishanu, are not Christians" (Madzibaba Tawona 2015b).

The last conference discussed in the study is the Annual Conference, *Musangano we gore*. This conference is held in the month of August annually. The main purpose of this conference is to take census of the said true members of JMCN Church. Members from every country attend this conference. The conference venue changes from one place to the other and from one country to the other. In 2014 this conference was held in Mkoba 19, Gweru, in the Midlands province of Zimbabwe. This conference is sometimes referred to as *musangano wekuverengwa ne Nyenyedzi*, the star census conference.

Members of this Church believe that *Mutumwa Nyenyedzi* should always take a routine count of true members of JMCN who have followed the doctrine genuinely throughout each year. Thus *gumi remitemo* and *miko nemirairo*, Ten Commandments and rules and regulations are the key elements of their spirituality. Anyone who would have disobeyed one of the laws cannot be counted by *Mutumwa Nyenyedzi*.

Much time is devoted to confession of sins from Friday and Saturday while congregants wait for the counting process to commence on Sunday morning. Members will be in two long queues one for men and the other one from ladies. Unlike other conferences, the international leader Baba Antony normally presided over the counting process. The JMCN sacred rod, *Mutumwa Edah* is used to count members in the queues. Something to note is the presence of Baba Antony (International leader) at this conference. We could not have access to interview him because he was surrounded by his subordinates and was virtually inaccessible. His presence shows the magnitude of this conference in the JMCN Church. The Baba Antony is now staying in Botswana where he is a tentmaker.

After the census exercise, we were told that there will be ‘the seal of the star’ conference to be held sometime in December after *Jorodhani pana Shashe*. The seal of the star form what we gathered through interviews is the time members of the JMCN are given a mark to show that they are true members of JMCN Church. Upon enquiring the type of a mark, and where the mark is inserted on members, the response was that, the seal was spiritual and not physical.

Again, the study posits that the role of Jesus Christ for salvation of humanity has no place in the JMCN Church. *Mutumwa Nyenyedzi* is at the centre of these celebrations. We observe that throughout these celebrations, the JMCN do not officiate the Lord supper, Holy Communion and Jesus Christ message is not preached. Emphasis is on following the *Gumi remitemo miko ne mirairo* and Rule and Regulations.

In the chapter we offered some inculturated African spiritual elements. A special focus was paid to the JMCN’s sacred places, rituals, objects, symbols and celebrations. These elements were discussed to respond to the main

research question: *To what extent should AICs inculturate African spiritual elements to shape their Church spirituality in a bid to have African Christian spirituality without obfuscating the central Christian spiritual tenets?* Hence, in summary this research which is based on participant observation and interviews brings to the fore the following observations, uncertainties and contests.

First, the JMCN Church has appropriated the central African traditional shrines of the Chirumhanzu indigenes i.e. Chivavarira hill. This is a concern because the locals are not amused with this kind of sharing of sacred places. Efforts to put security fence around Chivavarira by the indigenes of Chirumhanzu was work in progress (April 2015). Also, a critical concern in African Christian spirituality is: Should Christian Churches go to African traditional sacred mountains and hills in pursuit of spiritual powers? Second, the JMCN church gravitated more to African tradition religion by initiating their newly Church members into sacred pools such as Nyatsime, Gonawapotera and Hokoyo in the name of baptism. Arguably, these cited examples of pools, dams and rivers are believed by locals to be sacred because they supposedly inhabitants of Water Spirits. Baptising Church members in such places in quest for curative powers from water spirits is a course of concern.

Third, while the JMCN celebrate Easter, they do not believe that Jesus Christ died for human sins. According to the JMCN, Jesus was just killed by white people of overseas. Their ritual gathering during Easter is just to help the mother of Jesus to morn his son who was killed by whites and Jews. We observe that JMCN Church also do not believe the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. Rather after whites killed Jesus, God took the spirit which was operating in Jesus and put it in Shonhiwa Masedza first then into Mudyiwa Dzangara secondly and lastly into Sandros Nhamoyebonde for the salvation of black Africans. For them God could not have sent a White person (Jesus) to give salvation to blacks.

Fourth, the Karanga people of Chirumhanzu use clay pots for religious ritual. They observe Muhacha tree as sacred place. So, the study posits that JMCN's use of such objects for worship is evidence of the resilience of African spirituality in the JMCN Church. Fifth, the JMCN Church believe that their

Church is led and guided by three Angels, *Mutumwa Nyenyedzi*, *Mutumwa Gaburona* and *Mutumwa Edah*. However, the fourth angel is the angel for war, thus *Mutumwa Maikoro*. This theology of African Angels leading the Church is contestable terrain in Christian spirituality for it seems to have substituted mediatorship and Lordship of Jesus Christ over His Church. The challenges raised in the study are: How to rebrand Christianity in African cultures without clouding and dropping the essential Christian spiritual elements? Is there any room in Christian Theology for Christians to persuade their family ancestors to allow members to become true Christians, and how should it be done? With this question raised, the following chapter gives the concluding remarks of this research study based on the findings: Is JMCN Church spirituality Christian or Not.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

This chapter is the climax of the study 'Africanisation of Christianity at the crossroad: a reflection of the white garment church spirituality in Zimbabwe. It is organized in four sections which look at the following areas: conclusions of the study, study limitation, study contribution and areas of further study. The research study analysed the extent of the inculturation of African spiritual elements in the JMCN Church in Zimbabwe. This was accomplished by answering the following research questions:

1. To what extent have the JMCN Church of Chirumhanzu inculcated African spiritual elements of faith?
2. How valid is the assertion that JMCN Church spirituality has deviated from authentic Christian spirituality?
3. What are the setbacks of Africanisation of Christianity with some AICs Christianising African Traditional Religions in Zimbabwe?

The study found out that there were five basic elements that defined African spirituality which are:

1. Veneration of ancestor;
2. Rituals in sacred shrines;
3. Use of certain objects in worship;
4. Strong beliefs in the world of spirits; and
5. Strong belief in mystical powers.

This research has shown that out of five Karanga pre-Christian spiritual elements of faith, JMCN inculcated four basic Karanga spiritual elements of faith. The evidence for this conclusion is based on the following beliefs and practices of the JMCN Church in Zimbabwe. First, we have noted that the JMCN Church sacred places are those renowned African Traditional sacred shrines. Examples cited in the study are the Chivavarira hill, the DomboraMwari rock in the Epworth Harare suburbs and the Mawanga mountain of Goromonzi Chinamhora District all in Zimbabwe. Praying in these sacred places is not an accident of history but it's done in search of the intervention of the sacred powers that are associated with these places.

Second, JMCN Church initiates its new Church members in sacred traditional pools such as Nyatsime and Gonawapotera. It has been shown in the study that the cited pools are revered by the locals because they believe that such pools were residence of water spirits, *njuzu*. There is a traditional myth that if one is taken by a *njuzu* he/she will come out of the waters equipped with curative powers. Basing on that belief the JMCN initiated its members in such dreadful pools.

Third, the Church uses sacred traditional objects of faith such as *mbiya*, *makate*, wooden rods caved from sacred trees like *mutema masanhu*, *mutowa*, and *mutarara*. The use of these objects proved that the Church spirituality is heavily engrained in African spirituality.

Fourthly, JMCN's emphases on paying of *Mombe yeumai* in particular is an indication that its spirituality is heavily steeped in African Karanga worldviews. *Mombe yeumai* in particular is paid to appease the maternal spirits which are feared by most traditional Shona people of Zimbabwe. Maternal spirits unlike paternal spirits can cause untold suffering in a newly married couple. It can cause stillbirths and other misfortunes in marriage. It is against this background that the JMCN emphasis on *mombe yeumai* on their marriage rituals.

Fifthly, it was also found out that the JMCN Church follow traditional African burial rituals for example, in what they call *rukukwe rwemupositori*, using *mahapa*, *nhokwe ne tsanga*. It is on these grounds that JMCN is classified in the study as a disputed African Indigenous Church.

There are five central spiritual elements that characterized authentic Christian spirituality. These are:

1. Doctrine of Christ;
2. Doctrine of the Bible;
3. Doctrine of the Trinitarian God;
4. Doctrine of Salvation through Jesus Christ;
5. Doctrine of the Second coming of Jesus Christ.

The JMCN Church observed none of the five central Christian spiritual elements listed above. In lieu of the five central spiritual elements of faith listed above it was found that JMCN developed an alternative set of spiritual elements which were borrowed wholesomely from African Traditional Religions. The following JMCN Church spiritual elements were studied and found out that the Church removed the central universal Christian spiritual tenets with certain pre-Christian beliefs and practices.

First, JMCN replaced the mediatorship of Jesus Christ with its own Church Fathers Johane, Emanuweri and Nyenyedzi. The reason for doing this was that Jesus Christ does not qualify to mediate black Africans to God since he (Jesus Christ) was a white man from overseas. For them logically only black Church leaders whom God sent for black Africans have the capacity to mediate for black African Masowe Church members.

Second, the Bible was replaced by *tsanangudzo dzeMweya* the 'sayings of the spirit'. This removal of the Bible by the Church posited that the Church presents a non Biblical spirituality. This becomes an important issue because Christian spirituality is a bible-based spirituality. As we have Islamic spirituality from sacred scripture -Holy Quran, the Bible is a key source for authentic Christian spirituality without which the Church presents a questionable spirituality.

Third, JMCN Church presented a strange Trinitarian doctrine. In their Trinity there is God the Father, three Church Fathers and the Holy Spirit. Thus, their Trinity has been distorted by their doctrine called *tsoro yaJohane*. *Tsoro yaJohane* is a teaching that states that salvation for Africans was made possible by the salvific work done by Johane Masowe, Emanuweri Mudyiwa and Sandros Nyenyedzi. Salvation was made possible only through *mitumbi mitatu* (three sacred Holy Fathers).

In the study JMCN Church spirituality has been presented as a questionable Church spirituality because the Church does not believe in the second coming of Jesus Christ to judge the world. While other Christians believe in the second coming of Jesus Christ/ *Parousia*, JMCN does not teach or believe in

the second coming of Jesus Christ. This is so because they do not even believe that Jesus Christ came once to save human beings hence they cannot believe in his second coming.

It can be concluded that to a greater extent, indeed JMCN spirituality wholesomely deviates from universally accepted Christian spirituality. This happens to the extent that JMCN spirituality is closer to African Traditional Religion than to Christianity. Below are general responses given during interviews showing that the Church deviated from being an authentic Christian Church to another syncretic Religious Denomination in Zimbabwe: We are not Christians, *tiri vadzidzi vaJohane*; we are followers of Johane Masowe(Baba Gift:2014).

Christians follow the teachings of Jesus from the Bible, but we follow what the Spirit said to us through prophets(Madzibaba Tawona: 2015)

- Jesus was sent by God to people of overseas, *mhiri yegungwa* and not to Africans (Baba Givemore: 2014)
- Jesus had his disciples, but Johane Masowe has also us as his disciples (Baba Amos:2014)
- Christians go to Church, we don't go to Church we go to the wilderness, *kumasowe*(Madzimai Marjory:2025)
- I know that Jesus was sent by God to the whites, but they killed him. This is the reason why *mweya akati tisabate musoro varungu*, we don't trust whites, we don't convert a white person (Madzimai Mellisa:2013)
- Christians celebrate Holy Communion but we do not (Baba Israel: 2015).

The Africanisation of Christianity is not a new concept. It is one that was developed to render the Church in Africa more appealing to indigenous Africans. However, JMCN ended up appropriating most if not all of its central spiritual and worship practices from African Traditional Religion. This accommodation of African spiritual elements was substantial to the extent that instead of the orthodox Africanisation of Christianity, what we found was the opposite- the Christianisation of African Traditional beliefs and practices.

We found out that carrying a research in such highly religiously sensitive area of spirituality invites high risks and lack of information. We could not have any chance to speak to the hierarchy of the Church for we were told that in Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi there is no human leader, only the Holy Spirit/ Nyenyedzi is the leader. They all argued that unlike other Churches where you find Archbishops, Priests, Clergy, Pastors e.t.c, JMCN does not have such structures. Anyone who is being pushed by the Spirit can be the leader for that instance because the Spirit had insisted that all members shall be vessels of the spirit.

We found out that the Church relies heavily on oral transmission and no documents were available to study the History and theology of the Church. There is a book being compiled now for the JMCN *tsanangudzo dzemweya* which upon requesting to ready we were informed that the book is not yet accessible to everyone since it is in the compilation stage.

This was again a strong limitation of the study. We went into the field without any scholarly documents on JMCN spirituality. Most of the scholarly work available was on AICs spirituality which suggests that AICs spirituality is homogenous that in any way is not what we found on the ground. We were like breaking new grounds particularly on the mutual symbiotic relations between a Church spirituality and African Traditional spirituality.

JMCN, like any other JMC Churches in Zimbabwe, is very secretive. The Church is not comfortable in welcoming other members of different church denominations to most of their shrines for research. Only those people who go there for spiritual help can easily follow their rituals and ceremonies through to the end. Studying other people's religions is always a challenge to some extent limited the scope of analysis and extent of the debate.

The study set out to determine the extent to which JMCN inculturated African spiritual elements of faith to shape its Church spirituality in Zimbabwe. The major contribution made by the study is the documentation of the theology and spirituality of JMCN Church in Zimbabwe. This was a grey area that needed some exploration which the study aptly did.

There are various areas that still need to be explored. The study only analysed the inculturated African spiritual elements by JMCN Church and left out other aspects that still deserve to be explored. These include but are not limited to the following: Church governance in the JMCN Church; the causes of the numerous breakaways in these Churches. We only looked at the inculturated African spiritual elements in the JMCN, other scholars can also look at the same topic but in other various Johane Masowe Churches as the study as shown that Johane Masowe weChishanu is not a homogenous Church but has numerous Church denominations using the same designation.

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Synopsis

The study which has culminated into this monograph, is broadly situated in the domain of Church History under a sub theme 'Africanisation of Christianity'. Though Africanisation of Christianity is not a modern-day topic in Church History, the study posits that the theme should continue enjoying intellectual traction. The reason to this proposal is that it seems there is again a problem today, on how African Indigenous Churches (AICs) interface with local traditional spiritualities in communities they are planted. Thus, this current study deals with the blurred interface and religious boundaries between African spiritual elements of faith and traditional Christian spiritual elements of faith as depicted in the Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi (JMCN) Church in Zimbabwe. The assumption of the study is that the traditional African spiritual elements of faith are domineering the JMCN Church spirituality at the expense of traditional Christian spiritual elements of faith. It is this unconscious and inadvertent adapting and adopting of 'incompatible' African spiritual elements of faith by the JMCN Church that has whet the appetite to examine whether JMCN Church spirituality can be described as a genuinely Christian. In an endeavour to understand genuineness of JMCN Church spirituality the study grouped AICs into two categories those that are said to be 'undisputed' and those that are said to be 'disputed'. While both groups have inculturated African Spiritual elements of faith, the study argues that the undisputed AICs consciously selected compatible African Spiritual elements of faith against the disputed AICs who unconsciously selected incompatible African spiritual elements of faith: A case study of the Johane Masowe weChishanu yeNyenyedzi Church spirituality in Zimbabwe.

About the Author



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