

# UBUNTU Christianity

Dr Michael Jarvis



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I dedicate this book to my grandson

**Luke Itumeleng Jarvis,**

Born on 11 December 2006,

to his father David and his mother Tshepi

## Chapter 1.

### UBUNTU: Its importance for Africa's future

The well known and respected South African theologian Desmond Tutu, formerly Anglican archbishop, has said, *"In Africa we have something called 'ubuntu' in Nguni languages, or 'botho' in Sotho, which is difficult to translate into English. It is the essence of being human. It speaks of the fact that my humanity is caught up and is inextricably bound up in yours. I am human because I belong. It speaks about wholeness, it speaks about compassion. A person with **ubuntu** is welcoming, hospitable, warm and generous, willing to share. Such people are open and available to others, affirming others, do not feel threatened that others are able and good, for they have a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that they belong in a greater whole and are diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured and oppressed, or treated as if they were less than who they are. It gives people resilience, enabling them to survive and emerge still human despite all efforts to dehumanize them. It means it is not a great good to be successful through being aggressively competitive, that our purpose is social and communal harmony and well being".* (Allen 1997).

It is interesting to compare this description of 'ubuntu' with the biblical description of the first Christian church. We read, *All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need...They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people.* (Bible: Acts 2:44-47).

In literature outside of the Bible we have descriptions of early church activities. For instance, 'In

the period directly following the Apostolic Age there was an exuberant caring and sharing on the part of Christians that was unique in antiquity. Julian the apostate, an enemy of Christianity, admitted that *'The godless Galileans fed not only their poor but ours also'*. (Foster 1981).

Foster gives other examples. For instance, Tertullian wrote that the Christians' deeds of love were so noble, that the pagan world confessed astonishment. He wrote, *'See how they love one another'*. *By 250 AD, Christians in Rome were caring for some fifteen hundred needy people. He catalogued a long list of groups that were cared for. They supported and buried the poor, supplied the needs of the boys and girls destitute of means, cared for the elderly that were confined to the house, provided for those who had suffered shipwreck and gave to those who had been banished to islands or mines for their fidelity to Christ's cause.*

When we read descriptions of the early Christian Church, we see caring attitudes that are similar to Desmond Tutu's description of people with 'ubuntu' attitudes. That is why I have linked the words 'ubuntu' and 'Christianity', in the title of this book. However, the spiritual foundations that have led to ubuntu are different to those that led to the first Christian church.

**In following chapters we will identify the spiritual roots behind ubuntu and behind the early Christian communities.** This is important if we are to find out why Africa today shows so little ubuntu, so little love and compassion.

**We need to identify why this continent is groaning under the overwhelming burdens of widespread poverty, brutal wars, devastating diseases, rampant corruption and deep rooted racial divisions?**

## Chapter 2:

### The need for an African Renaissance

The term **‘Renaissance’ literally means ‘re-birth’**. Africa needs a re-birth that can lift the continent from being the most undeveloped and impoverished part of the world, and enable it to develop rapidly, to attain to the legitimate aspirations of countless millions of its inhabitants.

At the moment many people worldwide look at Africa as a failed continent. This is understandable since the news is dominated by regional conflicts, horrific war crimes, despotic dictators, declining agricultural production, frequent famines, widespread disease, high infant mortality, high mother mortality when giving birth, reports of ritualistic killings and in some places cannibalism. To many this is a ‘dark’ continent. Vast amounts of aid seem to disappear with little sign of progress.

As the world looks at African politics it struggles to find cases where genuine democracy reigns. Even in the areas with democratic constitutions, vast sums of money allocated for upliftment of the people, simply disappears into a few pockets. Corruption, inefficiency, incompetence, absence from duty, crime and violence, all dominate headlines in news broadcasts and papers. **Can we really doubt that Africa needs a Renaissance?**

Renaissance has not come to Africa, even though we have gained our independence from colonial rule. We have seen 40 years of going backwards! The average man is worse off financially, has poorer education and poorer medical care, and the countries have less efficient infrastructure, than existed during colonial times. This is because the fundamental problems have not been faced. If we do not face these fundamental problems then we have the prospect of another 40 years with little real change.

**Middle Ages Europe stagnated for hundreds of years. Why not learn from the lessons that Europe had to learn? We can 'jump start' Africa into a dramatic Renaissance if we have the courage to face the real issues. The greatest of these real issues is our religious beliefs and the dominant role that these have on our whole attitude to life.**

The European Renaissance is covered in the next chapter. It can help us discover the keys to our own Renaissance in Africa. Europe escaped from a dogmatic and dictatorial religious system that inhibited progress. Their Renaissance did not lead them to discard their belief in God, but they did re-discover some of the society changing dynamic that characterized Christianity in the first 250 years of its history.



## Chapter 3

### Lessons from the European Renaissance

For centuries Europe was gripped by a stagnation that is often referred to as 'The Dark Ages'. It had descended into intellectual darkness, due in large measure to the emergence of a religious system that subdued all knowledge that seemed to conflict with its dogmatic view of the world.

Europe had 'descended' into this state. It was not the same during the first two centuries after the death of Jesus Christ. It was only after the decline of the Roman Empire that Christianity became politicized and corrupted. Once the Roman Empire came to an end, further centralization and dogmatization of Christianity led to it no longer resembling the dynamic society-changing movement that characterized its start.

**This darkness was maintained by keeping the people uneducated and subjected to chiefs and kings who in turn gave allegiance to the religious powers.** The authority of the religious powers was enforced by preventing all but a selected few from hearing explanations of beliefs in their mother languages. Most people could not read or write and church services were in Latin. Only a few selected clergy were allowed to read the Bible.

The 'dark' Middle Ages were characterized by poverty, ignorance, brutality and fear of dogmatic authorities. Dissent was squashed by enlarging teachings about hell and demons and ensuring that the masses could only avoid such terrors by unquestioning allegiance to the religious system.

The Dark Ages saw little progress and the masses of the people lived in poverty, fear of spirits and fear of offending a church that seemingly had the power to determine life and death, both in the now and in the life after physical death. **Superstition and fear of spirits dominated the Middle Ages Europe.**

There are obvious similarities between the Dark Ages Europe and the overall situation in Africa today. In Africa most of the population still live in abject poverty, are not experiencing real progress and most live in fear of offending the spirits of ancestors and evil spirits.

So, the important questions to ask are:

**What brought about the Renaissance in Europe?**

**What lessons can we learn and apply to Africa?**

**Can we discover the keys to Africa's renaissance?**

To quote Robert Guisepi, the well known modern historian, *How was it, then, that at a certain period, about fourteen centuries after Christ, to speak roughly, humanity awoke as it were from the slumber and began to live?* (Guisepi 2007).

Another quote from Guisepi, *During the Middle Ages man had lived enveloped in a cowl. He had not seen the beauty of the world, or had seen it only to cross himself, and turn aside and tell his beads and pray. Like St. Bernard traveling along the shores of Lake Lemman, and noticing neither the azure of the waters nor the luxuriance of the vines, nor the radiance of the mountains with their robe of sun and snow, but bending a thought-burdened forehead over the neck of his mule – even like this monk, humanity has passed, a careful pilgrim, intent on the terrors of sin, death, and judgment, along the highways of the world, and had not known that they were sight worthy, or that life is a blessing. Beauty is a snare, pleasure a sin, the world a fleeting show, man fallen and lost, death the only certainty, judgment inevitable, hell everlasting, heaven hard to win, ignorance is acceptable to God as proof of faith and submission, abstinence and mortification are the only*

safe rules of life – **these were the fixed ideas of the ascetic mediaeval Church.**

Guisepi continues, *The Renaissance shattered and destroyed them, rending the thick veil which they had drawn between the mind of man and the outer world, and flashing the light of reality upon the darkened places of his own nature. For the mystic teaching of the Church, was substituted culture in the classical humanities; a new ideal was established, whereby man strove to make himself the monarch of the globe on which it is his privilege as well as destiny to live. The Renaissance was the liberation of humanity from a dungeon, the double discovery of the outer and the inner world.*

The new discovery of the world and a freedom to question beliefs, revealed itself through exploration of the globe and the exploration of the universe. In short, this is science and scientific discovery. At last the mind of man was permitted to explore the mysteries of creation and to use his imagination and creativity to fulfill his God given role, to *“Be fruitful and increase in numbers, **fill the earth and subdue it.** Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground”* (Bible: Genesis 1:28)

Mankind was meant to rule wisely and within the instructions of their Creator. We were meant to explore and use our God given creativity and intellect, in order to make this world a better place. The command to **‘subdue it’** clearly admits that there were aspects that needed to be brought under control. We were not meant to be passive fatalists.

The Renaissance, although initially viciously repressed, finally took hold. It led to changes and developments that started to lift Europe out of its ignorance and poverty. It also led to new questioning of the dogmatic authority of the Church and their interpretation of the Bible. It led to the Reformation,

where people like Martin Luther vocally challenged the Church authorities. It led to the masses gaining access to the Bible in their own languages. It led to a rediscovery of some of the things that were lost from early Christianity. It led to a new attitude of discovery of God's creation. In fact most of the early explosion in science and technology was motivated by Christian zeal to discover the wonders of God's handiwork in nature.

**However, this new found Renaissance and Reformation came at a great price.** Many were killed or banished. For instance Guiseppi writes, *We have to commemorate the vast conception of the emperor Frederick 11, who strove to found a new society of humane culture in the South of Europe, and to anticipate the advent of the spirit of modern tolerance. He, too, and all his race were exterminated by the papal jealousy.*

*Truly we may say with Michelet that the sibyl of the Renaissance kept offering her books in vain to feudal Europe. In vain, because the time was not yet... The nations were not ready. Franciscans imprisoning Roger Bacon for venturing to examine what God had meant to keep secret; Dominicans preaching crusades against the cultivated nobles of Provence; popes stamping out the seed of enlightened Frederick; Benedictines erasing the masterpieces of classical literature to make way for their own litanies and luries, or selling pieces of the parchment for charms; a laity devoted to superstition to saints and by sorcery to the devil; a clergy sunk in sensual sloth or fevered with demonic zeal – these still ruled the intellectual destinies of Europe. Therefore the first anticipations of the Renaissance were fragmentary and sterile. (Guiseppi 2007).*

Once the Renaissance gained ground, it restored access to ancient Greek manuscripts and encouraged reasoned criticism. This also applied to the Bible and led to theological criticism and release from unquestioning allegiance to the dogmas of the Church.

**This process of critical examination led to the birth of true scientific discovery and the dawn of our scientific and technological civilization.**

As Guiseppi so rightly writes, *Thus the word Renaissance really means a 'new birth to liberty' – the spirit of mankind recovering consciousness and the power of self-determination, recognizing the beauty of the outer world and the body through art, liberating the reason in science and the conscience in religion, restoring culture to the intelligence, and establishing the principle of political freedom. The church was the schoolmaster of the Middle Ages. Culture was the humanizing and refining influence of the Renaissance. The culture accessible to all – to break down the barrier which in the Middle Ages was set between clerk and layman, and which in the intermediate period has arisen between intelligent and ignorant classes.*

*Whether the Utopia of a modern world, in which all men shall enjoy the same social, political, and intellectual advantages be realized or not, we cannot doubt that the whole movement of humanity, from the Renaissance onward, has tended in this direction. To destroy the distinctions, mental and physical, which nature raises between individuals, and which constitute an actual hierarchy, will always be impossible. Yet it may happen that in the future no civilized man will lack the opportunity of being physically and mentally the best that God has made him.*

**So, can we summarize the key features of the Renaissance and Reformation in Europe? These great movements lifted Europe out of a long Dark Ages nightmare and ushered in the processes that have led to the spectacular advances in science and technology upon which our modern European civilization is based.**

Unfortunately, because of the existence of good and bad, these great discoveries have been used both for good and evil. For instance, the great discoveries of Quantum Mechanics and sub-atomic structures, have led to wonderful advances in medicine, but also to increased destructiveness of munitions of war.

Nevertheless, in spite of the negatives, it is only this post Renaissance world that has the potential to uplift humanity. **It is this scientific and technological civilization, if correctly modified by a reverence for God and a reverence for our God-given responsibilities in the world, that has the potential to lift Africa out of its own Dark Ages and usher in our longed for African Renaissance.**

In summary, the key ingredients for Renaissance are:

1. Escape from dogmatic and controlling religious beliefs that condemn criticism and condemn the pursuit of any new ideas that do not fit into their own narrow view of reality.
2. Escape from the belief that good and bad events are the result of us alienating or pleasing invisible spirits.
3. Adopting a new emphasis on education, where pupils are taught the rules of logic and critical examination of issues, and where logical reasons are sought as explanations for events, rather than 'parrot fashion' repeating of sectarian viewpoints on events.
4. A rediscovery of the God-given mandate for humanity - to pursue knowledge, to discover ways of 'subduing' the harsh realities of our environment, and to put into practice morality that seeks the betterment of our human condition. In short, to adopt an ubuntu like

attitude to our neighbours. As Jesus said, learn to love your neighbour as yourself. This means seeking to do to others what you would like them to do to you and for you.

5. Adopting a passion for using our God-given gifts and opportunities to the full. This means encouraging new ideas and new initiatives. This means recognizing the talents in others. This means accepting advancement on merit. This means allowing rewards to those who work to achieve them. This means abolishing advancement and opportunities based primarily on race, gender, age or political orientation. It means that those best suited for a task are given that task.





## Chapter 4.

### The spiritual blocks to Renaissance in Africa

As outlined in the previous chapter, the greatest hindrance to Renaissance in Europe was a superstitious fear of spirits and a fearful allegiance to a dogmatic system of religious belief. This held Europe in the Dark Ages for centuries. This held Europe in poverty, ignorance, disease and injustices.

#### **What is the prevailing spiritual situation in Africa today?**

We can look at this under several headings:

- 4.1. The veneration of spirits of ancestors.
- 4.2. The influence of the dead on the living.
- 4.3. The power of 'muti' and the sangoma.
- 4.4. Our concept of God and his role in events.
- 4.5. The 'Ithongo Factor' or corporate and continuing spirit of our tribe.
- 4.6. Reincarnation.
- 4.7. Other dogmatic religious influences.
- 4.8. Our attitude to time.

#### 4.1 The veneration of spirits of ancestors

Few would deny that the veneration of ancestors and the belief that they, the Amatongo (Zulu for people without bodies) have enormous supernatural powers, is the predominant belief system in Africa.

Anything or anybody that we fear and seek to obey or appease actually becomes something that we worship. For this reason many would say that 'ancestral veneration' is actually 'ancestral worship'.

The overall influence of ancestral veneration and the belief that spirits control the good and bad events of our lives, is well documented by authoritative African

writers. For instance, the writings of Mutwa Credo Vusa'Mazulu. His 1964 book 'Indaba my children' and his 1966 sequel to this 'Africa is my witness', describe in detail how these beliefs impact on African culture. Other deep insights include those of Munza (2005) and Lambert (2008). Although I do not quote extensively from Lambert's book, it motivated me to look deeper into this subject.

The spirits of ancestors are believed to have supernatural powers and have great influence over everyday events. It is widely believed that, if I abandon my tribe's traditions or way of life or disturb the harmony within the tribe, the ancestors can withdraw their protection and open us up to attacks from the much feared spirit world, or they can themselves cause us pain.

Lambert (2008) points out that, *Victims of this ancestralism believe that they must maintain communication with the dead, as the ancestors protect or punish their earthly relatives according to the whims of their capricious natures. If things go wrong, divination is resorted to. The reasons for misfortune and the disfavor of the ancestors must be established so that harmony can be restored.*

Throughout much of Africa, people believe that the ancestors pass from the world of humans to the spirit world via ceremonies and rituals. These can take months and can be very expensive, since nobody wants to risk alienating the ancestors by skimping on the funeral rituals. This adds another enormous financial burden on the poor of Africa.

**The belief that spirits determine events discourages logical explanations for good or bad events in our lives.** For instance, if my cattle are killed by lightning when grazing on top of a hill, I seek to know, via divination, why this event occurred. What spiritual forces have I annoyed? Meanwhile, those who have escaped from bondage to these beliefs will give a good scientific explanation of what causes lightning and

will point out that the cattle just happened to be at the place where the lightning struck. We know that it normally strikes the highest place in the immediate area. The most helpful practical response to such an incident is to instruct whoever cares for the cattle, to make sure in future that they are moved away from the tops of hills or from close proximity to tall trees, when thunderstorms are close.

#### 4.2. The influence of the dead on the living

The veneration of ancestors means that many African people live with an acute awareness of the spirit world and believe that most events have some relationship to the influence of the 'people without bodies'. Since the ancestors are believed to have influence over the everyday events of life, bad and good fortune is attributed to the favour or displeasure of the ancestors.

Diviners and sangomas are thought to be able to communicate with ancestors and so can be consulted, in order to determine what is upsetting them and causing them to bring misfortune to individuals or to the tribe. This leads to widespread turning to 'diviners' for guidance, instead of working out problems in the light of their own decisions or conduct,

Ancestralism creates a fatalistic outlook on life. Fear of these unknown supernatural powers causes people to seek supernatural answers rather than practical and reasoned solutions. If someone is ill or encountering other problems, the sangoma is consulted. He determines the 'cause' and prescribes the needed traditional medicine in order to drive the evil away from the victim. In fact, no matter what I do, my fate is not in my hands but in the hands of ancestral spirits.

Munza (2005) points out that, *fear of witchcraft distorts and negates the benefits of science and medicine. Belief that spiritual beings are the source of everything good or bad that happens in life means that*

*all diseases are caused by these spiritual beings – including HIV/AIDS. We are not satisfied with scientific medical treatment because we ‘KNOW’ there is someone behind the disease who is causing it. It cannot be satisfactorily treated with medicine alone.*

This belief has led many to consult an inyanga (traditional healer) or sangoma before or after receiving medical treatment. In the case of HIV/AIDS this led to outrageous beliefs being proposed by some sangomas, such as that sex with a virgin or with a child could cure AIDS. This became such a problem in South Africa that Nelson Mandela felt motivated to condemn it on national television.

A very real feature of Africa is witchcraft, where a victim is tempted to approach someone to place a curse on another person. This practice is a violation of some traditional African medicine practitioner’s beliefs. However, it is widespread and causes much fear.

The distinction between diviners, who communicate with the deceased spirits, and witch doctors is not always evident. For instance, the administered medicines are believed to have both medicinal and spiritual powers. They are often administered with superstitious incantations. Thus objects such as fetishes and potions are thought to have the power to bring about both good and evil effects.

Fear of the ancestors and fear of evil spirits, sometimes leads to witchcraft that results in ritual murders. Well documented cases tell of people cutting off body parts from living victims in order to supply practitioners of witchcraft with powerful ‘Muti’, needed to bring about supernatural events. Very few of these cases ever lead to convictions in court, presumably because law enforcement agencies contain many people who fear supernatural repercussions on themselves.

### 4.3 The power of Muti and the Sangoma

Kasongo Munza (2005) was a Christian pastor from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In his book he wrote that his father was a Luba tribal chief who carefully instructed him in the traditions of his culture.

Munza wrote, *Because someone or something else causes everything, there is little sense of responsibility or ability to change things. Nothing is my fault. Everything bad that happens to me, happens either because someone bewitched me, or because the spirits predestined it. This affects both development and disease management.*

He continued, *This is why we wear and use fetishes. There are fetishes for success in school and business, for love in marriage, for security or protection against any action of one's enemies; and the list goes on.* But this goes much further. Munza gives insight into the widespread practice of eating human meat in the Congo.

In Southern Africa cannibalism is not so evident, but we do have many cases of using human body parts to make powerful 'Muti'. Essentially, these practices all fall into the same category.

**Munza says that cannibalism is not practiced in the DRC due to hunger. It is part of spiritual beliefs. He lists some of them as follows:**

- Behind cannibalism lies a strong belief that sacrificial blood contains supernatural power.
- Levels of power vary according to the type and purpose of sacrifice.
- One level of power deals with the blood of domestic animals like chickens, cows, pigeons.
- Another level would be a wild animal such as lion, leopard and certain bird or reptile.
- The ultimate is a human sacrifice.
- The levels also vary according to the status of the human and the reason for the sacrifice.
- Usually this goes from baby to elder.

- However, for some purposes the youngest person has more sacrificial value (power) for the fetish.
- Or it may be the closest and most important person will give one the most power.
- The fetishes to which these sacrifices are made are endless. For instance, invincibility, invisibility, invulnerability, luck, success in business, winning an election, winning a soccer match, winning your spouse, winning the favour of your boss.
- This is being practiced, not only by non-educated people, but runs deep among the most educated social classes – our political leaders, students, business men, army officers and even church leaders.

**Munza estimates that in the DRC about 80 % of the people practice fetish customs, and about 10 % of this 80 % involves ritualistic cannibalism.** These practices remain very secret, especially to people outside the tribe.

A refugee from the DRC, whose father held a very high position in the regime of former President Mabutu, has said that human flesh was provided at official banquets for visiting diplomats from overseas. They were totally unaware of what they were eating and of the spiritual overtones.

Munza writes, *Mobutu tried the strategy of unquestioning promotion of Africanism. He used the slogan “Nous voulons etre nous-memes, et non ce que les autres voudraient que nous soyons”. It basically meant, “We want to be what we want to be and not what others want us to be”. He promoted rejection of anything western, including names and dress. He thought if traditional customs were restored, it would restore his country. However, the opposite effect happened. We can all still see today that the DRC is a total disaster.*

Pastor Kasongo Munza broke totally free from his ancestral roots. **He was able to discover that the power of Jesus Christ and his sacrifice on the cross, was far more powerful than the satanic powers associated with human sacrifices and fetishes.** He points out in his book that, *indeed there is power in blood – but it is the Lamb of God whose blood has power. The blood of Christ cleanses, protects, gives victory, heals, and casts out demons and evil spirits. It is all we need.* Christianity has not taught this clearly and the misconceptions have reinforced false African teaching.

#### 4.4. Our concept of God

African cultures believe in a great Creator God. However, although he is good, he is remote and not involved in our day to day affairs. The day by day events are controlled by the decisions of the ancestral spirits. These are the powerful ‘people without bodies’ who must be feared and appeased at all times and who must be consulted before any decision is made that might affect the clan or tribe to whom the ancestors belong.

This concept of the Creator God is far removed from the Judeo-Christian concept. The Bible reveals God as being in all things, through all things and by him all things are held together. We read, *He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.* (Bible: Colossians 1:17). Again, *For from him and through him and to him are all things.* (Bible: Romans 11:36).

Jesus reminded his disciples, *“Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground without the will and knowledge of your heavenly Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered”.* (Bible: Matthew 10:29).

There are many Bible passages that remind us that God is immortal, everlasting, present everywhere at once, is all knowing and **he really is in control of the day by day operation of events in this universe and on planet Earth. It is he whom we need to revere**

**and hold in awe, not the spirits of ancestors or evil spirits.** Jesus reminds us that, *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age”*. (Bible: Matthew 28:18-20).

The Bible also supports the reality of the spiritual dimension and of spirits, both good and bad. However, the Bible condemns consulting the dead and tells us that the prince of rebellion in the Universe (Satan) and his rebellious angels (demons), delight in deceiving mankind. Jesus said about Satan, *“He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a **liar and the father of lies**”*. (Bible: John 8:44).

**The Christian understanding is that demons deceive people into believing that they are consulting spirits of the ancestors.** We are warned not to consult the dead. We read, *Do not turn to mediums or seek out spiritists, for you will be defiled by them. I am the Lord your God*. (Bible: Leviticus 19:31).

We read, *The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons*. (Bible: 1 Timothy 4:1).

Once Christians have experienced the involvement of God in human affairs, such as in answers to prayer or in a developing personal relationship with God, they no longer doubt that he is very much involved in human affairs. It is to him we come with all our hopes, fears and problems. We are told, *In the same way, the Spirit (of God) helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that*



*words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will. (Bible: Romans 8:26-27).*

*We also read, Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. (Bible: Hebrews: 4:16).*

**This discovery, that the Creator is knowable in personal experience, is life changing and it also cuts right across the deceptions and fears that are an integral part of ancestral worship.**

Because this discovery is so vitally important to an African Renaissance, I devote the last chapter of this book to outlining my own journey of discovery. Real life events are described in detail in order to illustrate how God is intimately involved with day to day events. He is the one to venerate and worship. He is the one to love and to hold in awe.

**It is this Creator God who invites us to approach him for wisdom, not via a priest or sangoma, but solely via our Saviour and intermediary, namely the risen Lord Jesus Christ. Furthermore, we approach our Creator without any payment of money!**

#### 4.5. The 'Ithongo' Factor

Ithongo is the belief that the spirits of the ancestors, jointly and together with living members, form the corporate 'spirit or soul of our tribe'.

Because it is believed that the spirits of dead ancestors continue to determine the wellbeing and destiny of the tribe, the combined influence of all the ancestors and the living, gives the tribe its corporate 'soul'.

Most African religious traditions have this concept of a tribal identity that is more than the sum total of its living members. The living members and the ancestors together form an ongoing corporate tribal soul.

Because of this belief, it is vital for all members of a tribe to refrain from any activity that might endanger this overall harmony. This results in the truly admirable 'ubuntu', which encourages caring within the tribe. However, a potentially negative aspect is a deep seated fear of an individual being different from the norm or behaving in ways that are different from the tribal traditions.

This negative aspect inhibits new ideas and new initiatives. It is one of the main reasons why Africa has remained in its own Dark Ages for so long.

**Another negative of the Ithongo belief, is that it has a very narrow application. I relate to the Ithongo 'soul' of my clan or tribe, but not to the Ithongo soul of another tribe.** This means that in a 'rainbow nation' such as South Africa, tribal loyalties frequently carry greater importance than national loyalties.

Another important aspect of the Ithongo belief is that there is a fixed amount of good fortune available to each clan or tribe. The chief can have more good fortune than the rest of the tribal population. However, if an average tribal member does exceptionally well financially or by obtaining a good job, he or she can be viewed with suspicion. This is because the individual has taken more than his or her fair share of the available good.

Such beliefs permeate into all sections of society. For instance, financial companies with many employees from similar tribal backgrounds find it very hard to promote someone on merit. The spirit of Ithongo says that a man should not work to gain a higher place in the group because this will disturb the group harmony.

Often the employees will want to dictate to management who should be promoted. This recommendation will often be based on seniority rather than proven initiative and talent. Promotion on seniority is far less intimidating to the communal soul of the tribe because it rules out individuals striving for promotion at the potential expense of others.

**The ancestral worship and Ithongo beliefs have also been a factor leading to political corruption and to appointments to jobs, based on tribal affiliation rather than expertise.**

If I really place my tribe and the Ithongo 'soul' of my tribe above all other loyalties, it will follow that, if I am appointed to a post with authority to appoint others, I will feel it is my first priority to fill as many of these posts as possible with people from my tribe. Such appointments may not be based solely on academic or experience qualification. This can result in appalling inefficiency.

**Modern industrialized and technologically advanced societies cannot survive such widespread lack of competence.**

As an example, when Zimbabwe gained its independence from the remnants of colonial rule, it was widely spoken of as an example of an African country with an exceptionally well developed infrastructure and it was the 'bread basket' of Africa, exporting a lot of surplus food and with an education system that many considered was the best in Africa. This had all been built up in less than 100 years!

However, politicians failed to realize that such a complex society depends on many types of skilled workers, just to maintain the infrastructure, let alone expand it further.

**So, what happened in Zimbabwe?** Politicians started making statements that scared away many of the most qualified people. They also started appointing

unqualified people to jobs. It was not long before the whole infrastructure was under severe strain. Now, in 2009, much of the infrastructure has virtually collapsed. Who suffers the most? Obviously it is the average man in the street who suffers. His children no longer have easy access to education, the standard of education drops dramatically, health care collapses, the money deteriorates, there is no longer a food surplus and people starve.

**These and other consequences follow logically from irresponsible political statements and to placing unqualified people in jobs that require hard earned skills.** When many of the skilled people left Zimbabwe, other people were placed in these jobs because of their tribal affiliation, clan affiliation and political loyalty.

**As just one small example of the disastrous effects of irresponsible policies;** In 1983 I was still employed in Zimbabwe as Senior Ecologist with the Department of Parks and Wildlife Management, based in Harare. Because of staff resignations we all had to fulfill far more tasks than normal. In addition, we embarked on a program of in-staff training. This was to help advance existing Game Scouts to more responsible Ranger posts.

Right at the start of this process we were asked by the Director to recommend junior staff who we thought had the best potential for advancement. I had one Senior Scout who showed much initiative and intellectual potential. However, when I advanced his name this caused considerable bad feeling amongst some other scouts. The reason was that the person of my choice had not been in the Department for as long as some others. In other words, there was little understanding of advancement on merit.

The country's infrastructure soon started to crumble. The telephone in my Harare office was frequently out of order. Then it was out of order for three weeks, in spite of frequent requests to the

telephone repair department. When finally a technician appeared, I asked how it was possible that it took three weeks to repair a telephone line. The poor chap explained that most of the qualified technicians had left the country and so he was totally swamped. I then sympathized with his situation and thanked him for coming. However, the very next day I picked up my telephone and it was again out of order.

This frustration added to a whole series of others. For instance, I had two small children in school at the time. The standard of education dropped so dramatically that I was forced to put them in private school. However, on my salary this was an almost impossible strain. Added to this were statements over state television by Robert Mugabe, saying that he would force the private schools to enroll whoever wanted to attend, even if they could not afford to pay. As parents, we knew that any such forced enrollment would further push up the school fees.

In addition, Mugabe kept reducing the assets that could be taken out of Zimbabwe by those deciding to leave. This was a major factor that influenced many to leave, rather than wait longer and possibly not be able to take anything out.

This was the sort of environment of uncertainty that was being created by statements and actions of politicians. People such as I were very stressed. Our work load had more than doubled, the schooling for our children was in jeopardy, and essential services were threatening to break down.

When I entered my office, picked up the phone and found it was again dead, this was a sort of 'last straw that broke the camels back'. It was about then that we decided to leave Zimbabwe.

**Who are the main sufferers in a scenario such as this? Without a doubt it is the vast majority of the population.** People like me were fortunate enough to have qualifications enabling me to obtain a job outside Zimbabwe.

**Qualified people are vital for the maintenance of a modern infrastructure. This not only applies to businesses and essential services, it also applies to agriculture.** A country can only guarantee food security for its population if it recognizes that large scale commercial farms are essential. When productive farms are divided up into small subsistence units, this may have short-term political benefits for those in power, but in the longer term the country becomes dependant on food imports. Unfortunately such imports cannot be guaranteed and they cost hard earned foreign exchange resources that are often in short supply.

Statistics on world food production show that reserves are critically short. All it will take to precipitate widespread hunger is for a crop failure in a major grain producing region of the world. In addition, countries with poor foreign exchange rates will pay more and more for imports.

**Clearly, politicians who have the interests of all at heart, should prioritize food production.** International pressures towards Globalization and unrestricted trade should be resisted, as far as food production is concerned. It is vital that each country in Africa become self sufficient in providing food for its people.

**Land should not be allocated according to ancestral tribal occupancy.** Such a policy is the result of the Ithongo belief. The best interests of the country demand that land be allocated to those people best qualified to farm it the most productively.

#### 4.6. Reincarnation

In many parts of Africa, an integral part of belief in ancestral spirits, is the understanding that those who have died may come back, and every birth is a coming back. Munza (2005) writes, *That is why we don't have family names; we use the names of the people who*

*are reincarnated. The same names are used over and over. The means of determining the person who is being reincarnated are usually dreams and visions by family members during the pregnancy. When these do not clearly show the right identity of the one being reincarnated, people consult the diviners.*

**Why do Christians not believe in re-incarnation?** The main reason is that the Bible clearly states in various ways, *man is destined to die ONCE, and after that to face judgement.* (Hebrews 9:27). In the Bible there is no room given for a second chance at life on Earth.

**To my mind, the whole concept of re-incarnation has logical problems that I see as follows:**

1. If I lived this life, built up character, had experiences and developed my own personality, I would be happy to come back again for another try. However, **to come back as a person who is normally unaware of his or her previous life, is highly unsatisfactory.** I might just as well have passed into oblivion when I died.  
Some people claim that they remember aspects of their previous lives, or go somewhere they have never been to before and it seems familiar. These vague feelings are just as likely to be 'memories' based on impressions gained in very early childhood, before the age of three or four. Even the best of these suggested 'flashbacks' is far from an awareness of my previous life.
2. **There are more people alive today than the cumulative total that have ever previously lived on this earth.** There must therefore be a chronic shortage of human spirits waiting to receive new bodies! In other words, millions of babies are being born today who cannot be re-incarnations of

ancestors, because there are far more people living today than all of the ancestors who have ever lived! Some say that this shortfall is overcome by using the spirits of lower forms of life that are ready to advance to a higher form of life. This always raises the question of how a lower form of life qualifies for promotion. We might perhaps consider that a mammal or other vertebrate could be in a position to make simple moral choices. Some might have earned the right to be considered better than others during their life. However, there is no evidence that any animals, other than mankind, can make moral choices.

- 3. Who decides where you and I return for our next life on earth?** If it is God, why would he have initiated a process that continued for millions of years without achieving any noticeable advance in human morality? Man is just as prone to evil today as he has ever been. Today he is generally a more educated sinner.
4. If the eventual achievement of an advanced spiritual state is dependent on a long series of re-incarnations, **I hate to think of the terrible fate awaiting those spirits that have not yet reached the final state before this earth is burnt up by our dying sun.** Science tells us that the time will certainly come when our sun will expand and swallow up the earth, before dying to a cold ember.

Those who choose to believe in re-incarnation are of course entitled to do so. **To my mind the Christian message of ONE life and then judgement, is far more satisfying and far more likely from a logical viewpoint.** Why go through all the toils and troubles of life again without any clear prospect of significant advance and without even a clear recollection of my past life or lives?



**The re-incarnation approach to life can easily become an encouragement not to worry too much about how we live,** because we will anyway have another chance to live better. It can also encourage an attitude of unconcern for the social state of the poor, because, after all, they probably deserved to be there due to a lack of progress in previous lives.

For instance, an acceptance of the 'caste system' in India is based on reincarnation beliefs. The lower caste 'deserve to be outcast' because they must have performed badly in the previous life.

**These rigid and debasing caste beliefs are a direct result of the Hindu belief in re-incarnation.** O'Neill (2003) wrote an article in National Geographic magazine, showing the fate of the millions of 'Untouchables' in India. The caste system is outlawed but still very prominent. One out of six Indians are born 'Untouchables' and are normally only allowed to perform jobs such as cleaning sewers. O'Neill records typical statements made by those who attacked an Untouchable, *"His sins are many. Why else would he, like his ancestors, be born an Untouchable, if not to pay for his past lives?"*

**It is significant that all the major humanitarian advances of recent centuries,** such as creation of hospitals, the Red Cross, orphanages, abolition of slavery, emancipation of women, the spread of education, all sprang out of the biblical tradition, and mainly from the Christian ethic.

Even the scientific method and the industrial revolution sprang from Christian roots. Western universities were founded as Christian institutions and many of the early scientists were motivated by a desire to explore God's creation and reveal more of his greatness. In the process, they discovered things that opened up our world to the scientific method, the industrial revolution and our technological age.

Belief in re-incarnation holds humanity back and blinds them to the need to prepare for the inevitable

appointment we all have, ***It is appointed to mankind ONCE to die and after that to face the judgement***

#### 4.7. Other dogmatic religious influences

In Africa many of its inhabitants claim to have adopted religions other than the tribal ancestral beliefs. Some have converted to Christianity and broken totally free from the influence of ancestors. However, in many cases aspects of tribal beliefs, including ancestral veneration or ancestral worship, have been retained.

Within major world religions we still find groups with very dogmatic beliefs and where adherents to these religions seek guidance from religious leaders before making major decisions. Remnants of the European 'Dark Ages' religious attitudes are still found in many places.

In groups where allegiance to religious authorities is more important than individual initiatives and individual decision making, this can be as great a barrier to progress as the ancestral worship. There are large parts of the world where such unquestioning allegiance to decisions and pronouncements of religious leaders is still the norm, as in some Islamic nations.

**Where young are brought up in a culture that demands conformity to very rigidly defined norms, there is enormous pressure to conform, in order to be accepted.**

Controlling cultures, such as Middle Ages Europe, much of the Islamic world and areas with ancestral worship, all place severe limitations on individuality and freedom of expression. **Such environments prevent Renaissance and prevent scientific and technological advance.**

Early Islam was characterized by many different interpretations of writings considered to be sacred. As a result discussion and debate was very much a part of the culture. This produced an environment that was

suiting to new ideas and Masood (2006) lists some 1001 inventions that date back to this period.

**It was while Europe sank deeper into its Dark Ages, that this vitality existed within the Islamic world.** However, this soon changed as the divergence of Islamic interpretations consolidated into three major divisions, namely Suni, Shia and Sufi. Each group sought to establish its influence by impressing upon followers that they must accept the viewpoints of their religious leaders without question. Conflict rather than dialogue developed between them, as is still seen today by the often violent confrontations between Shia and Suni factions.

An unfortunate side effect of this development of dogmatic conformity to religious leaders, was the destruction of a culture of enquiry and debate. As Masood (2006) points out, *Today there is little high-quality science and learning in Muslim countries. Indices of patents and research publications make it clear that countries with mostly Muslim populations rate poorly for generating new knowledge. They have produced just two science Nobelists: Egypt's Ahmed Zewail for chemistry and Pakistan's Abus Salam in physics, and even they won their honours at western universities.*

There are actually four other Muslim Nobel Prize winners not mentioned by Masood. These are Naguib Mahfouz from Egypt (1988), Orhan Pamuk from Turkey (2006), Shirin Ebadi from Iran (2003) and Muhammad Yunus from Bangladesh (2006).

This situation is surprising considering that about one fifth of the world's population is Muslim. Masood suggests, *Lack of encouragement for critical thinking is also a big factor. Scholarly debate and criticism flourished in the old Muslim world: it was possible to publish many things which today would result in an appointment with the censor – or even prison or exile or death. High quality research needs a level of freedom to think, speak and publish, that does not exist in many Muslim countries.*

Today, most new developments within the Islamic world are the result of adopting ideas and discoveries developed in western civilization.

By contrast we have the Jewish culture, where debate and discussion are encouraged. **Jewish culture has encouraged debate between theologians.** It has long been recognized that many sacred writings can have a number of legitimate alternative interpretations. Jewish society encourages individuality and debate. As a result, **although Jews constitute less than 0.2 % of the world population, they have won by far the most Nobel prizes of any nation or religious group, as a percentage of world population.** These Nobel Prizes include 12 for literature, 9 for world peace, 22 for chemistry, 36 for physics, 22 for economics and 38 for medicine. See web pages on Nobel Prizes where all names are listed. For Jewish names see:

([www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/nobels](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/nobels))

**The current marked difference in levels of original thought between the Muslim world and Jewish world, should serve as a profound commentary on the need to encourage debate and individuality.**

We can even see differences within the European cultures. The amount of original research coming from various European nations is also very much influenced by the extent to which people are regimented. Families with more disciplined and restrictive norms of behavior and belief, result in strong pressures to conform, in order to be accepted. This tends to inhibit independent and original thinking and so limits the creation of new breakthroughs in science and technology and the ability for logical debate.

In South Africa, a recent article in the Mail and Guardian newspaper comments on the **current trend towards 'Africanisation' of our universities** (Kistner

2009). He notes, *Africanisation in tuition at Unisa, for instance, comes with a list of mandatory “reorientations” closely in line with Thabo Mbeki’s version of the African renaissance, now bolstered by the establishment of a Thabo Mbeki leadership institute to be based at Unisa, in addition to the Centre for African Renaissance Studies.*

*The article continues, Afrocentrism, the valorization of things African, Afro-dynamism and Afro-optimism are central to this mission. A new division is being created between “the Africanised” and the “un” or “anti-Africanised”, implying a call for the policing of this division. Ways and means have been announced to enlist staff participation in and support for Africanisation. Preferably, staff should support this initiative “freely and voluntarily”, failing which “it may become necessary to develop some specific instruments”.*

**If this article correctly reflects a current trend, then it will be harmful to African Renaissance, unless it incorporates the realization that the re-birth of Africa depends on escaping from those aspects of African culture that are fundamentally opposed to invention and progress.** In other words, there must be an escape from veneration of ancestral and other spirits who control our destinies and escape from the Ithongo beliefs that perpetuate tribalism.

**South Africa has a constitution that acknowledges many basic human rights,** such as freedom of religion, freedom of speech, intellectual freedom, no discrimination based on sex, race or religion, and many other praiseworthy clauses. However, within South Africa we still find religious groups who do not allow their members to convert to another religion. **This reflects badly on such religions, because forcing allegiance to your group reveals a dictatorial system that stifles free thought and does not encourage initiative, creativity and individual conscience.**

**I hope it has become clear that Renaissance in Africa depends on discarding cultural and religious beliefs that kill individual initiative and inhibit freedom to develop new ideas.** These negative attitudes are primarily related to ancestral worship and the Ithongo beliefs about the tribal soul, but also include any religious or cultural system that demands and enforces strict adherence to its sectarian interpretations of theology or politics or acceptable behavior.

**As a priority, our educational system needs to emphasize and develop the debating and questioning abilities of pupils.** We do not want robots who are taught to learn things 'parrot fashion'. Students need to be taught the rules of logic and debate and taught to present reasoned answers to unexpected situations and problems.

In complex societies it is inevitable that unexpected situations or problems arise. If the people employed in various sections of government or business have not been trained to debate and analyse information, they will find it impossible to solve problems that are not listed in their instruction manuals.

The need for debate is seen in all aspects of society, including inherited racial attitudes. Tribal loyalties are also seen in the white and colored communities. These are inherited from our past and need to be exposed to logical debate. There is no room for racial pride in God's agenda, although we have to accept language and cultural differences. However, we can accept differences without concluding that ours is superior.

We need to realize that cultural differences, such as the type of music we like, are not what inhibits Renaissance in Africa. The fundamental problem in Africa remains ancestral control and belief in the Ithongo soul.

#### 4.8. Our attitude to time

To people raised in western civilization, the African attitude to time is hard to understand. For instance, employers may allow employees to take off time to attend a family funeral in some distant place. There may be a verbal agreement that the employee will be back at work in a week. However, the deadline comes and no employee arrives. In fact he may be away for another week or more and then suddenly turns up.

Normally the employer is quite upset and may threaten to fire the employee. However, the employee often seems genuinely surprised at the reaction he receives. To understand this reaction we need to realize that the ancestral spirits and the Ithongo beliefs are part of the problem.

If I am still believing in the importance of appeasing ancestral spirits and not upsetting the harmony of the tribal soul, composed of the living and 'dead' members of the tribe, then it is of paramount importance to avoid disturbing this harmony. When I arrive at the funeral I will probably be faced with other family and tribal issues needing to be discussed and resolved. It is vital to resolve these issues, otherwise I risk experiencing the wrath of ancestors.

It is only when all the relevant matters have been discussed and after the sangoma has been paid for advice, that the employee feels free to return to his work. He finds it hard to understand that his employer fails to accept that he was only doing his duty, as would anyone else who respected and feared the ancestors.

**Another feature of Africa, when dominated by ancestral beliefs, is that people develop a fatalistic attitude to life.** They are not motivated by a desire to excel at work or discover something new. There is therefore little incentive to cram a lot of activity into a day. Whatever has to be done can be done tomorrow.

Unfortunately this lack of incentive, to keep to time schedules, is counterproductive to modern

technological civilization. **In order for a highly technical society to work it is essential to tie activity to strict time schedules.**

A new emphasis on time keeping will need to follow and be part of Africa's Renaissance. It will follow naturally once our work ethic is changed and we become progress orientated.



## Chapter 5

### The KEY: UBUNTU Christianity

Vusa'Mazulu (1966) gives his assessment of why Christianity has largely failed in Africa. I will quote briefly from what he says because **it helps to illustrate our need to break free from 'westernised' Christianity and return to first century Christianity. In this way we can discover an expression of reality that can be described as Ubuntu Christianity.**

Vusa'Mazulu wrote, *The white man likes to worship God in a way that is alien to the soul of the Bantu. The Bantu prefers to rejoice, to sing, to clap hands and dance before his gods or goddesses. Hymns composed by white men sound dirge like to Bantu ears; they are too dull and solemn. When one sings these hymns one does not feel that one is honouring God, but rather that one is lamenting the death of one's soul... When a black man turns to God, he wants to talk to God, not repeat standard recitations. He wants to unburden his troubled heart and soul before the Almighty. He wants to bring his own problems, as well as his personal fortune to the attention of God.*

Vusa'Mazulu continues, *When a black man prays, he wants to gesticulate and pray at the top of his voice; he wants to weep before God, or laugh aloud if the occasion is one of happiness...When the Bantu feel that their prayers have been granted, they want to show their gratitude to God. They want to come dancing before God, clapping hands and booming drums, leaping, twisting and turning – no solemn clasping of hands and closing of eyes, with a barely audible and completely emotionless "I thank thee, Father, for all thy goodness..."*

**Perhaps the greatest tragedy mentioned by Vusa'Mazulu, is that so many white people, who brought the Gospel to Africa, have turned their backs on it. It is as if they have urged Africa to accept what they themselves do not believe, or**

**merely practice as some sort of occasional ritual at births or deaths.**

The greatest example of this rejection of the Christian Gospel message by white people, was the racism that finally resulted in the Apartheid doctrines. Many white people who were born into this system, never realised how far they had gone from the truths of first century Christianity. There has now been much repentance and soul searching.

**What a pity that so much of visible Christianity in the western world has been reduced to rituals, ceremonies and money making , rather than the dynamic simplicity of the first Christians.**

In my book 'Come out of her my people' (Jarvis 2008), I point out how the Christianity we see practiced in much of the Western world, has deviated far from the teachings of Jesus and is far from the way Christians lived during the first two centuries after Jesus died and rose again.

**Christianity started out as a colour blind and race blind community of caring people and women were accepted as equal in the eyes of God, although fulfilling different roles. These groups of believers did not spend money on prestige buildings but rather on meeting the day to day needs of people. In fact we could describe early Christianity as a community with attitudes that were 'ubuntu' in external appearance. They really loved and cared for one another!**

This Ubuntu Christianity does not mean that we add to the Christian message all our old beliefs about ancestors and witchcraft. It means embracing the caring characteristics found in 'ubuntu', but the motivation for these attitudes now derives from a new discovery of a personal relationship with our Creator, through the mediation of Jesus Christ and the working of the Holy Spirit of God in our lives.

**I believe that Africa has the potential to show the world what Christianity was meant to look like, and to direct Christians back towards their roots.**

However, this potential 'healing light to the nations' is not achieved by cosmetic changes. We need revolutionary shifts in the way that we think and act. Such a revolution cannot be brought about by human efforts, although we do need to make decisions. This revolution has to be a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit of the Creator God.

All genuine movements of God lead to facing our sins and repenting of them. Repenting means turning around and going another way. **In our South African situation this includes repenting of those things that keep us outside of God's plans for Africa.** His plans include an African Renaissance as the foundation for healing our continent.

**By Renaissance I mean a 'New Birth'** into a right relationship with God. This will mean that Christians must renounce and break away from cultural and religious beliefs that conflict with the revelation of God that we find in the Bible.

**How can those who have been raised within the present tribal beliefs of Africa, reach the momentous and life changing decision to renounce ancestral worship?**

I believe it is only possible when we individually discover a personal relationship with God through our intercessor Jesus Christ. This discovery enables us to realise that it is God who should be held in awe, not the spirits of ancestors or any other spirit.

**My own journey** of discovering that God is directly involved in the details of my day to day events, is outlined in the last chapter of this book.

When the New Testament apostle Paul was writing to those who had been converted to faith in the Jesus who had risen from death, he reminded them, *My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.* (Bible: 1 Corinthians 2: 4-5).

**Once a Christian has experienced the reality and power of the risen Jesus Christ, he or she is no longer in fear of evil spirits, evil spells, curses, or the anger or favour of spirits of ancestors.** We can say with the apostle Paul, *For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.* (Bible: Romans 8: 38-39).

**The early Christians certainly faced dangers and persecutions and they certainly believed that Satan and demons were real. However, they had also experienced that the power of God was far greater than the power of Satan or of demons.**

Paul was an example of a Christian who suffered many things. He was constantly under attack from evil people and evil spirits. However, he was always victorious and had even come to welcome his hardships. He welcomed them because it was during the hard times that he most experienced the presence of God.

The trials that Paul went through were listed as follows, *I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked. I spent a night and a day in the open sea. I have been constantly on the move. I have been in*

*dangers from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles, in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers.*

*I have laboured and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked...*

*I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (Bible: 2 Corinthians: 11:23 to 12:10).*

**When Christians are prepared to stand up for what they know is right, no matter what the personal cost to their reputations, it is then that they experience the power of God at work the most.**

History has examples of how a country can be dramatically changed when people turn to God and reject their own ideas and own programmes. One example is England in the seventeenth century. Society was breaking down. At that time there was widespread poverty, drunkenness, abuse and violence in England.

God raised up the Wesley brothers and other great preachers. They and their team of converts preached in the pubs and at the mine shafts and wherever people gathered. They were largely rejected by the religious establishments of their day.

The revival that followed saved England from going through a bloody revolution, such as took place in France. The Wesley revival also led to a radically changed society. It saw the birth of orphanages, the abolition of child labour, abolition of slavery and many other wonderful changes. It was a platform that enabled Great Britain to lead the world in many aspects of science and technology and in refinements to democracy.

## 5.1. Back to simple and relational faith

**So, what were the early Christians like?** There is no doubt that they were very different from much of the visible Christianity that we see in the world today. It makes sense to try and analyse how they operated and what they really believed.

**A return to our Christian origins is the cry of many and is the only basis for true Christian unity.**

**Fortunately there are many Christians today, within ALL Christian denominations, who have re-discovered the dynamic life-changing reality of Jesus Christ and his resurrection. They have discovered that the essence of Christianity is a personal relationship with God, through Jesus Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit who lives within all true believers.**

To be a Christian is not to follow a list of rules and regulations, or to go through ceremonies. It is a path of learning to be a 'disciple' of Jesus. A disciple is someone who follows his teacher.

Many Christians, scattered through all the sections of visible Christianity, have made this discovery. The majority of these are in countries where they are persecuted and all but the essential realities have been stripped away. They have rediscovered the same dynamic power that motivated the first Christians. They have rediscovered the relevance and reality of the Holy Spirit in very personal and life-changing ways.

My own ancestors were amongst those who suffered under the Inquisition operated by the Roman Catholic Church in the Middle Ages. It was therefore a wonderful experience for me to meet some outstanding Roman Catholic Christians during a period I spent in Belgium. It was only after some time that I discovered that they belonged to the Roman Catholic Church! With

my background, as a descendant of Inquisition survivors, this was a very meaningful experience.

**It made me realise that Christian unity is possible amongst true disciples of Jesus, irrespective of racial, cultural or church structure background.**

**I believe the urgent call of God today is for committed Christians everywhere and in all ‘denominations’, to go back to the Bible and discard all that is not clearly found in the words of Jesus and the first apostles.** If church structures are not prepared to go through this process of self examination and repentance, then we will increasingly find that many committed Christians will no longer attend the churches they were raised in, but will meet in informal groups in homes. After all, this was the New Testament pattern for church.

**What was early Christianity like?** We read that, *all the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need.* (Bible: Acts 4:32-35).

In other words, **these early Christians were putting into practice the words of Jesus when he said,** “*As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that your joy may be complete. My command is this: **Love each other as I have loved you**”.* (Bible: John 15:9-12).

*“If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. (Bible: John 15:7-8).*

Much of what Jesus said was on this theme of loving God and loving your fellow believer and loving all people, even your enemies. **His promise was that, if his followers could fully put this into practice, they would be in close relationship with God and would be attuned to what he was saying. In fact they would know what to ask for and God would answer their prayers.**

The early **Christians met the basic conditions** that are the key to fruitful lives and to answered prayers. They maintained that close relationship with God and they obeyed the greatest commandment, to love one another. Loving your neighbour as yourself is not a natural ability and needs to be empowered by the Holy Spirit, through meaningful relationships. The early church discovered these vertical and horizontal relationships in a way that transformed lives and societies. **Because the early church met these requirements at the start, they were enabled to live dynamic lives, where the power and reality of God was present in dramatic ways.**

**This dynamic of the early church lasted well into the second century.** Various descriptions from the second century are summarised by Foster (1981). I quote, *In the period directly following the Apostolic Age there was an exuberant caring and sharing on the part of Christians that was unique in antiquity. Julian the apostate, an enemy of Christianity, admitted that “the godless Galileans fed not only their poor but ours also”.*

Tertullian wrote that the **Christians’ deeds of love were so noble, that the pagan world confessed astonishment.** He wrote, *See how they love one another.* By 250 AD, Christians in Rome were caring for



some fifteen hundred needy people. He catalogued a long list of groups that were cared for. They supported and buried the poor, supplied the needs of the boys and girls destitute of means, cared for the elderly that were confined to the house, provided for those who had suffered shipwreck and gave to those who had been banished to islands or mines for their fidelity to Christ's cause.

Another characteristic of early Christians was **their eagerness to learn** from the apostles. The apostles were mainly the followers of Jesus who had been with him from the start of his ministry. The New Testament Bible had not yet been written and so the apostles were the equivalent of the 'living New Testament'. They reminded the people of the words of Jesus and the events in his life and interpreted these in the light of the Old Testament (Jewish Bible).

**The early Christians had a hunger for God.** Before or after work they met together every day to share meals, hear teaching and to pray. We read, *Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.* (Bible: Acts 2: 46-47).

After a relatively short period of calm, persecution broke out against the first Jerusalem Christians, **and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.** *Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison. Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.* (Bible: Acts 8: 1-4).

It is noteworthy that the apostles, who did all the early teaching of Christian converts, remained behind in Jerusalem. The Christians who were scattered had been so well trained and had been so eager to learn that they

now became those who spread the 'Good news' far and wide.

Each Christian man and woman became an evangelist, meaning that each one spoke and witnessed to the faith that was in them, both through words and actions. This was not the function of a special few.

**An analysis of the early church shows a number of key ingredients that** may be summarised as follows:

### 1. The way to become a Christian

The New Testament gives the clear steps that were recognised by the first Christians, to be the way to become a Christian. These steps were:

- \* Repentance from personal sins and ungodly cultural beliefs.
- \* Belief in the Lord Jesus Christ and who he is.
- \* Baptism by immersion under water.
- \* Receiving the Holy Spirit.

The order of these events was not always the same, but the most usual was as listed above.

### 2. Believers were filled with the Holy Spirit.

Before the Pentecost experience, Christians were aware of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, but remained fearful and ineffective. It was only after they were filled with the Holy Spirit that they were empowered to live triumphant Christian lives and turn the Roman world 'upside down'.

All the other characteristics of the early church were direct or indirect results of the infilling by the Holy Spirit. We read, *When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy*

*Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. (Bible: Acts 2: 1-4).*

We read of Peter's first sermon, and how the crowds were amazed, *When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" Peter replied **"Repent and be baptised every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off - for all whom the Lord our God will call".*** (Bible: Acts 2: 37-39).

### 3. Believers showed real love for one another.

In a modern context, those who had successful businesses were willing to share profits with those needy people whom God placed on their hearts. Christians were called upon to view income as being given in trust by God and not to be used just as they pleased.

### 4. There was an emphasis on honesty.

Honesty was required between believers and with God. So we had the example God gave to the early church, *Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. With his wife's full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it all at the apostles' feet. Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God. When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great*

*fear seized all who heard what had happened.* (Bible: Acts 5:1-5).

A bit later his wife came in and was asked the same questions. She also lied and dropped dead. **This event was presumably allowed by God to teach his people the seriousness of honesty, and especially with money.** It is also noteworthy that **Jesus became very angry** when he saw people making money out of other people's desire to draw near to God. That is when he made a whip and drove the moneychangers and merchants out of the temple courtyard.

**Those who do this today, and there are many in this category, may not drop dead like Ananias and Saphira, but they may face the words of Jesus on Judgment day, "I never knew you, depart from me you evil doers".** (Bible: Matthew 7:23).

This does not mean that a full-time preacher or person in full-time Christian work cannot earn a salary. However, it does mean that excessive incomes and extravagant lifestyles cannot be financed from contributions made by believers towards the work of God in the world.

**Money matters were taken so seriously** that the early church set aside people specially to oversee the task of distribution. They did not choose people on the basis of business experience, but on the basis of spirituality, "*Choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom*". (Bible: Acts 6:3). One of these seven was Stephen who, in addition to supervising money matters, was, *performing great wonders and miraculous signs*. Shortly afterwards Stephen became the first Christian martyr.

5. Money was spent meeting needs of fellow Christians – not on building elaborate churches.

They met in public places and private houses and so had the freedom of not being tied to church structures. As time passed, there sometimes was a need

for larger meeting places, but **the emphasis remained on small groups meeting together**, because that is the only way to create bonds of caring and unity.

6. All those who met together were fully committed Christians.

Except for outsiders, who came to hear for themselves the Christian message, early Christians were people who had 'burnt their bridges' behind them. In those days it was a difficult thing to become a Christian and it normally meant instant ridicule or persecution. As a result, few became Christians unless they were totally convinced and totally committed to the cause.

7. Early Christians were totally convinced that Jesus was alive.

The resurrection event was witnessed by many and the risen Jesus had appeared to groups of disciples over a period of weeks. This certainty, combined with the empowerment of the indwelling Holy Spirit, created a dynamic that was contagious and unstoppable.

8. Many of the early Christians were willing to give their lives.

Many thousands were killed in the Coliseum, or dipped in tar and burnt as human torches in the Emperor's gardens. All they had to do, to escape death, was to give homage to Caesar as God. Their conviction that Jesus was God and that he was alive, led many to choose death. That choice was only possible to bear because of the presence of the Holy Spirit within them.

9. Converts were eager to learn and grow as disciples of Jesus.

They met together and remembered the death and resurrection of Jesus on a daily basis. In other words, whenever they broke bread at a meal they gave thanks for the body of Jesus broken for them, and whenever they drank from the normal mealtime wine cup, they gave thanks for his blood shed for them. The frequent meeting together showed that these early Christians were wholehearted followers, keen to learn and keen to put their learning into practice.

10. Converts from many different nations were treated as brothers and sisters

Early Christianity taught that all who had been 'born again' through repentance, faith in Jesus and receiving the Holy Spirit, were brothers and sisters. Paul could write, *Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all. Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which bonds them all together in perfect unity.* (Bible: Colossians 3: 11-14).

## 5.2. HOW to become an Ubuntu Christian

### A suggested prayer to God

Great God, you created me and gave me this amazing chance to be part of an Eternal destiny.  
You have loved me enough to give yourself for me on the cross of Calvary.

There you defeated Satan's claim over my life and destiny, by dying in the place of sinners like me.

God, I know I am a sinner. I have often failed to do what I knew was right. I stand guilty in my own eyes, but also in yours.

I ask you to forgive me, just as you have promised to do. You forgive me, Jesus, on the basis of what you did when you died in my place on the cross.

I now gratefully accept your free and unmerited forgiveness.

Thank you so much for making it possible to receive forgiveness.

Since you have promised to forgive me, I can now also forgive myself.

Because you have forgiven me, although I do not deserve it, in like manner I can now see my way open to forgive those whom I have been unable to forgive. They may not deserve my forgiveness, but neither did I deserve yours!

Thank you so much Jesus for dying for me.

Thank you Father God for the cross and all that it means.

I am truly sorry for my sins, both against you and other people.

I can think of many specific sins (name them all)

Thank you so much for forgiving me!

Lord God, I know that I am weak, but you have promised to be with me and help me to overcome the world with its false values, the flesh that so easily leads me astray and Satan who tries to trip me up.

I do want to follow you from this day forward.

I want to be loyal to your family and to your Kingdom.

I ask for your Holy Spirit to fill my life and to empower me day by day, to march in step with your best plan for my life.

I want to grow in my personal relationship with you as my Saviour and my Lord. I resolve to spend time reading your word, learning to pray, learning to listen to you, learning to serve others, meeting often with other

committed Christians for fellowship, for teaching and for service to others.

Give me a passion for you, a passion to discover more of your truth.

Help me to find a group of Christians who are truly on fire for you.

My friend, **if you can agree with this sort of prayer and have said it yourself, then, whether or not you feel any great emotion, you have just entered into the family of God through the merit of Jesus Christ. He has now recorded this event in his eternal records. He has become your PERSONAL saviour. You have just started a personal relationship with God.**

**I suggest you read this prayer again each day, preferably aloud, until the main truths have been well embedded in your mind. Also start reading the Bible, maybe start with the book of Luke in the New Testament section.**

Be aware of one thing, Satan and his demons of deception will now try to discourage you and trip you up as never before. He is furious, because he has lost another candidate for spiritual death. However, the Bible tells us that each time someone comes to God in repentance and faith, all the angels in heaven shout Hallelujah!, and may all the demons shudder, as they are reminded of the power and great victory achieved through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

One of the first things you now need to do is find a Christian friend, or anyone else, and tell them that you have made a decision to give your life to Jesus. The Bible says, *if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord" and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.* (Bible: Romans 10: God knows that this expression in words will help you to realise the importance of the decision you have made. It is like a first step on your new road of obedience to Jesus.



**NOW THAT YOU ARE A CHRISTIAN** you have in reality been ‘born again’.

## **You have entered into your own personal Renaissance!**

This means that you have a new Spirit within you. It is God’s Holy Spirit who has now put his seal of ownership upon your life. God does not expect you to become perfect overnight. He knows that change is a process, but it is an upward process. Part of that process is to join a group of enthusiastic Christians for fellowship, encouragement and support. You need to find one or two Christians of the same sex, to whom you can confide your problems, your hopes and your fears.

First century Christians showed their determination to follow Jesus by being baptized in water. This act of obedience was initiated by Jesus and the early church saw it as a visible sign of an inward reality. The new believer submitted to this as a sign to all around that he or she was dying to a self-orientated life, was breaking free from past beliefs and was entering a new life.

The symbolism of baptism was to die to self as you are pushed under the water and rising to new life as you come up out of the water. This is also a powerful symbol of how you have been washed from your guilt when God forgave all your sins. In an African context it is also a powerful statement that you are agreeing that the Spirit of God is far more powerful than any ‘water spirit’.

Jesus initiated this baptism after his resurrection, with the words, “*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age*”. (Bible: Matthew 28:18-20).

**It is the experience of generations of Christians, that the power to live a victorious life depends on the Holy Spirit of God working in your life.** You receive the Holy Spirit into your life at the moment you turn to God in repentance and in faith. However, each Christian needs to reach a point in their lives when they are prepared to let God become Lord of their lives. It is only the indwelling Holy Spirit of God who can empower us to give our lives totally to him.

Many have experienced a specific ‘infilling’ of their lives by the Holy Spirit. Some call this a ‘baptism in the Spirit’. No matter what name you use, this is a truly life changing encounter with God.

The basic requirement is a desire to give your life totally to God. This may mean that you first renounce previous involvement with magic, divination, or consulting spirits of the dead. Repent to God and ask his forgiveness.

**Say aloud “I today proclaim to the unseen world of spirits that Jesus Christ is Lord and his name is above every other name in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and I am asking him to be my Savior from sin and the Lord of my life”.**

You then need to ask God to fill you with his Holy Spirit and to believe his promise that he will fill you if you ask him to do it. Sometimes it follows from other Christians praying with you and placing their hands on you. Sometimes it takes place when Christians are totally alone. However, no matter how or when it takes place this infilling results in real changes in your life. Some Christians initially just experience a new joy, or a new desire to read and study the Bible. Some break out into spontaneous singing or receive a renewed ability to cry. Others discover they are speaking to God in words they cannot understand, referred to in the Bible as speaking in tongues.

No matter how you experience being filled with the Holy Spirit, this event is life changing. It is the indwelling Holy Spirit who alone can empower you to become a follower of Jesus. The Holy Spirit strengthens you, gives you insights into the Bible and enables you to share your faith with others.

**Of ourselves we have no authority or power over spirits of the air or water spirits or fetishes and muti. We can only break these powers when we have yielded our lives to God's Holy Spirit. Then we have the authority to rebuke all spirits in the name of Jesus Christ.**

His name is above every other name. As Jesus said, "*All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me*". How did Jesus demonstrate to us this authority? It was by the amazing miracles of healing that he did and by his rising from the dead after he had been crucified to death.

Now that you have started this personal relationship with the Creator God, through the merit of Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit within you, **you no longer need to fear any evil spirit, curse or spell or so-called magic. You have been set free from fear of the ancestors.**

**You have also been set free from the Ithongo belief and have accepted that in Christ Jesus, there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all. Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. (Bible: Colossians 3: 11-13).**

**We no longer give our loyalty only to a race, tribe or clan or the Ithongo spirit of our tribe. We are now part of one great family of God. We are all brothers and sisters in Christ. In South Africa we are all potentially equal members of a Rainbow Nation.**

As Christians we are called upon to consider others on an equal basis. Learn to love one another, in spite of the different ways we do things, like singing or celebrating. Learn to do to others as we would like them to do to us. Learn to give others space to do things differently to us. Do not expect others to mould into our behavior patterns. Accept that some people like crowds and social interactions and other people like more space and privacy.

## Chapter 6.

### Implications for African cultures and politics

Some practical results of breaking free from a fear of spirits and ancestral control, are as follows:

1. It is a fundamental step towards the death of racism and tribal loyalty.
2. It gives individuals and governments authority to resolve disputes by speaking out and acting against those who abuse their positions of power. It is no longer necessary to fear their ability to bring us curses or problems via spiritual forces, either now or after they die.
3. It sets us free to adopt a new work ethic, based on progress as a result of hard work and the use of individual initiative. There is no longer a fear of offending the Ithongo spirit of a tribe or doing something that might upset the spirits of the ancestors.
4. It enables us to escape from fatalistic attitudes towards events. Instead of blaming good or bad events on the whims of ancestors or the influence of evil spirits who are outside of our control, we now realize that our God given mandate is to '*subdue the earth and bring it under our control*'. (Bible. Genesis 1:28). This means that God has given us abilities and minds to plan practical solutions to problems, rather than sitting back and saying "what shall be shall be".
5. It inspires us to create a culture of responsibility. This is founded in our realization that God himself will call every man and women to account

for how they have lived their lives and how they have used their God given bodies, minds, money and opportunities.

6. It inspires a new approach to the HIV/AIDS crisis. We seek the most successful solutions, based on accountability to God and to our fellow humans. It means changing our emphasis from 'fire fighting' with condoms, to tackling the fundamental problems. It means vigorously fighting against all factors in our society that encourage moral decline.
7. It inspires a new approach to agriculture. This is based on the greatest good for the greatest number of people. It implies giving land only to people who have proven means and abilities to farm it productively. It means placing emphasis again on efficient and mechanized commercial farms, because they alone can supply the population with enough food and because they give employment to many people.
8. It empowers the forces of law and order. They now become more impartial in their dealings, uninfluenced by fear of curses or ancestral spirits, aware of the fact that they will all have to give an account before God on Judgment day. It means that there will be promotions within law enforcement on merit alone, not influenced by race or tribal association. It means having a genuine heart attitude of caring for the abused and harmed. It is no longer just a job; it is part of a God given calling to "love my neighbor as myself". It means that all cases will be investigated speedily and impartially, for the humblest members of society as well as the leaders.

9. It means that no-one in our countries can be allowed to starve or be deprived of basic medical care or basic education. It will be a society where resources are channelled to meet real needs, rather than prestige projects, or being diminished by corruption. It means handouts are only for those who genuinely cannot find work to provide for themselves and their families; No handouts for the lazy.

We can now look at each of these in more detail:

### 6.1. Death of racism and tribal loyalties

Once we accept the biblical revelation that all men and women are created with equal worth in the eyes of God, then there is no room for individual pride or tribal pride or racial pride. All that we are and all the abilities that we have are given to us in trust by God. Each of us will be judged by God on how we have used these blessings and opportunities.

This is clearly shown in the words of Jesus, *Much is required from the person to whom much is given, much more is required from the person to whom much more is given.* (Bible: Luke 12:47). This is also shown in the parables about the 'gifts' given to the servants. Jesus said, in his parable of the Talents, that one servant was given five Talents, one two Talents and one was given only one Talent.

When the master of the servants returned he called each to give an account of how he used his Talents. The one who had five had made another five; the one with two had made another two. The master was pleased with them and rewarded them. However, the servant who received only one Talent sat back and did nothing with it. He did nothing because he had a wrong belief about his master. His master was angry and punished that servant. (Bible Matthew 25: 4-28).

The first Christian church broke down century-long racial and religious barriers. These disciples of Jesus came from every tribe, nation and tongue and they met together in homes to share meals and to have fellowship, and to provide for the practical needs of those amongst them.

The apostle John, in his visions of heaven, saw a great crowd that no one could number, *After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb.* (Bible: Revelation 8: 9).

**There is no room in God's family for racial or tribal pride.** My only boasting should be in this, that I am part of God's family and that I have a part in his eternal plans for humanity.

There is no room for an Ithongo spirit of tribal loyalty above loyalty to Jesus Christ. As Jesus said, the greatest commandment of all is this: ***"Love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and love your neighbour as yourself"***.

Some of those who heard Jesus speak these words asked *"but who is my neighbour?"* In reply Jesus gave a story, *"A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him for dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he travelled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him.*

*He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him', he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have'.*



*Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" (Bible: Luke 10: 30-36).*

**How does this work out in our African situation today?** How many of us who travel the roads, look at broken down cars or people in distress and simply pass them by, because they are not 'one of us'. Do we judge the needs of our fellow humans on the basis of colour, race or tribe?

Of course there are other relevant factors to take into account. I would not recommend a woman driving alone to stop at each broken down vehicle or to pick up all who seem in need of a lift. This is because of factors other than race, relating to crime. Or we may be in a genuine need to keep an important appointment and will miss it if we stop. However, the vital victory to be won is to make our decisions without being influenced by race or tribe, but by a sensitivity to the promptings of God's Spirit.

And, if I am in a position to decide who should fill a vacant position at my place of work, will I look at all the applications without letting colour, sex, religion or race influence my decision. Will I recommend the person who has the best qualifications?

## 6.2. Authority to resolve disputes

In South Africa we have been witness to a long and in many ways theatrical display of ineffective mediation, in trying to resolve the Zimbabwe situation. It seemed that no-one was prepared to honestly face the fact that Robert Mugabe had lost his way and was responsible for many wrong actions that were greatly harming his own people. Why was he not told to his face, "It's time to go now?"

Unfortunately, this lack of straight talk is part of the legacy of Ithongo and belief in the powers of the ancestral spirits. Because of these beliefs some are

afraid to criticise any leader, especially an elder statesman, due to the belief that he will soon die of old age and then will have enormous power to do me harm, if I have gone against him.

This reluctance to face issues with honesty and courage is also partly due to the belief that **the chief is appointed on the authority of the ancestors**. Who am I to dispute their authority? The best I can do is to have endless discussions and hope that somehow the issues will fall into place. I don't want to come out strongly to say a leader must go. Who am I to take over the role of the ancestors and the Ithongo spirit of the tribe?

**The time has come for leaders and politicians in Africa to look at issues based on reasoned logic and the best interests of the majority of the population.** The time has come for genuine democracy and upholding the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary. The time has come for leaders who lose elections to step down. If they do not do so, then it is time for other leaders to tell them to step down. If they still refuse to do so then it is time for other leaders to force them to step down. Only then will justice be done for our neighbours.

This new approach is also essential for the welfare of our own nation and its people. Just look how the breakdown of society in Zimbabwe, and resulting cholera epidemic and economic collapse, adversely impacted on neighbouring countries. Leaders are responsible and accountable for their actions and for their lack of action.

### 6.3. A new work ethic

As soon as we accept that God is in control of our individual destinies, not the spirits of the ancestors, then we will acknowledge that we are only accountable to our Creator for our actions. We no longer have to fear stepping out of line with the Ithongo spirit of our tribe,

or of offending the ancestors, by making an invention that can improve my situation or that of my family.

Previously, new ideas and inventions were often 'killed' before they could find root. Maybe I invented a new sort of plough to pull behind an ox. It turned more soil for the same effort. However, the elders met to discuss my claim. They apparently consulted the ancestral spirits. The verdict came back, "Our ancestors have ploughed the land in this way for centuries. Who are you to question the wisdom of the ancestors?" What is the outcome? All too often, in tribal situations, the new ideas are 'killed'. Thus, centuries can pass with little change or progress, just like it was in Middle Ages Europe.

**Once we are free from having to give an account of our actions to the ancestors, this opens us up to a freedom to explore new ideas.** It opens me up to being able to work harder than my neighbours, without fearing that I am endangering the Ithongo spirit of my tribe or offending the ancestors. It opens me up to being able to promote someone under me if he shows initiative and hard work, rather than fearing censure from others. It allows me to promote and be promoted purely on merit, not on seniority or according to consensus of others around me.

#### 6.4. Escape from fatalism

Jesus taught that God knows the needs of all who have asked him into their lives, but he also provides for those who reject him. He makes his rain to fall on the godly and ungodly. However, there are many scriptures that urge us to strive toward a goal or to run the race or to take up our cross and follow Jesus.

Of course God is ultimately in control of our destinies, and some things happen to us that are totally outside of our control, such as earthquakes, floods and other natural disasters. However, he has given mankind free will and the ability to make choices. He wants us to

make the right choices but he does not force us. God does not promise his followers an easy life but he does encourage us to face the trials and challenges of life in a positive manner.

How do we face circumstances in a positive manner? Well, our Creator gave us minds and hands and legs and creative abilities. He expects us to use these 'talents' wisely. He has given mankind the task of improving the earth through his activity. He is to plough the land and bring the earth under his control.

**Thus, there are two sorts of fatalism.** One sort is good, namely to acknowledge that ultimately God is in control and that he will ultimately 'balance the balances' and bring justice to all. This will be at the last judgment of the living and the dead.

The other sort of fatalism is not Godly, namely to sit back and do as little as I possibly can do, due to a belief that everything that happens to me is out of my control. This is not the case. God sends us into the world to make a difference. Paul wrote, *It is by grace you are saved, through faith – and this faith is not from yourselves, it is a gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.* (Bible: Ephesians 2:8-9).

You and I are placed in this world to make a difference for God. He expects us to work hard for our family, our friends and our country. This is part of the Renaissance process.

## 6.5. A culture of responsibility

As already mentioned, a culture of responsibility comes firstly from the realisation that, *it is appointed to man once to die and after that to face the judgment.* (Bible: Hebrews 9:27). This sense of responsibility also comes from a realisation of how much God actually loves each individual and wants each of us, from a free

choice, to place our lives in his hands. We then discover in personal experience that he really does love us and care for us.

Our response to God's love towards us should be to show love towards our fellow humanity. When in the Bible book of Genesis we read that Cain killed his brother Able and God said to him "*Where is your brother?*" Cain answered "*Am I my brother's keeper?*"

Amazingly, the words of Jesus and the early Christian writers, all emphasise that we are in a real sense meant to be our brother's keeper. This involves wishing him or her all the good that we wish for ourselves. It means whenever we are able to do so, to help our neighbour when in need.

## 6.6. A new approach to the HIV/AIDS crisis

This epidemic is one example of the consequences of individuals and nations disregarding the morality guidelines given in the Bible. Some of the sufferers are infected with the HIV virus as a direct result of being caught up in the modern sexual attitudes where 'sleeping around' and homosexuality is widely accepted and practiced. Others are infected as indirect consequence of the behaviour of others, such as children born to HIV positive mothers, rape victims and from infected blood transfusions.

How individuals and nations react to this crisis depends on their morality. Do they try to avoid becoming infected by 'fire fighting' the effects, or do they determine the root causes and take drastic measures to implement changes? Unfortunately far too many rely on condoms as a 'solution' to prevent infection, largely disregarding the other major social factors that impact on the crisis.

Africa is a continent more affected by the AIDS epidemic than any other area of the world. South Africans are very belatedly becoming aware of the frightening prospect that, within a decade, at least one

quarter of our population will be infected, with much higher incidences than this amongst the younger generation. This situation, together with the many infected children, and the millions of orphans, is a national and humanitarian disaster. In some African countries over a third of the population is HIV positive!

By and large, South Africans have tended to concentrate their response to this crisis on 'AIDS Awareness' campaigns. However, The AIDS crisis is closely associated with other problems related to our cultures and accepted lifestyles, and **these have to be changed** if our awareness efforts are to succeed.

I visited a Zimbabwean farmer where virtually every week a worker or member of his family dies from Aids. The farmer employs a large work force and attempts to take good care of them. He has organised educational programmes for Aids awareness and even stocks coffins in a prominent place where they are seen every day by his workers. But all this concern is to NO AVAIL because each weekend most of the men feel it their duty to show their manhood by getting drunk. In such a state, no amount of 'AIDS education' helps. The situation is further aggravated by a culture in which women have little say in sexual matters. What use is 'AIDS awareness' to a drunk man, or someone high on drugs, or to a woman who is forced by her culture to submit to a man who refuses to even wear a condom!

Here in South Africa we also have a culture where drinking alcohol to excess is widely accepted and even encouraged. We have the highest incidence in the world of Foetal Alcohol Syndrome, which causes various types of permanent damage to unborn children, and handicaps them throughout life! To this major problem of alcohol abuse we can add widespread attitudes that give many women little say over their lives and their bodies.

In addition, South Africans are increasingly filling their minds with television programmes, videos, advertisements, songs and literature that directly or

indirectly suggest to the viewers that it is normal and acceptable behaviour to jump into bed with each and every casual acquaintance who feels likewise. We are in many ways a 'sex crazed' society!

We are often told that condoms are the main answer, not the need to change basic lifestyles. In addition, many South Africans do not really believe that AIDS is at present incurable. We have been told on television that some 'traditional healers' claim they have cures, and this has even been repeated by some high profile politicians. Viewers are not told that there is no evidence to substantiate these claims.

Some 'traditional healers' and 'sangomas' even suggested that sex with a virgin would cure AIDS. As a result we have seen a spate of rapes of young women and even of small children. This was such a real and widespread problem that Nelson Mandela (whom I personally greatly admire) felt it necessary to speak against it on National Television.

A report on Internet news of 18 June 2005 reports that some 50 children a day are raped in South Africa. Captain Percy Morokane reported that South Africa is notorious for the number of rape cases; some 40 percent of the victims (over 40,000 per year) are under the age of 18. According to organisations such as Rape Crisis the real number of rapes is more than a million!

**So, what is our 'Aids awareness' achieving? In my estimation it is just 'fire fighting' without addressing the root causes of the fires.** It is time to vigorously promote the message that it is NOT acceptable to get drunk; it is NOT acceptable for television and other mass media to promote sexual relationships outside of mutual commitment and responsibility.

**Seeing the seriousness of the hour, we should actually precede and follow each film that has sexually explicit scenes, with a reminder to the**

**audience that sexual promiscuity is not desirable for strong family structures, that strong family structures are the basis of strong societies and nations, and that unprotected sex is highly likely to lead to AIDS, and that even the use of condoms are NOT always a guarantee against infection.** We have warnings on cigarette packets so why not on films that promote reckless sexual behaviour?

It is NOT acceptable to be bombarded every day with media, seemingly designed with a specific agenda, namely to drag society down into a culture of sexual irresponsibility. Each month, up to the time of writing this, the public are exposed to more explicit and irresponsible sexual behaviour. On first exposure we may be shocked, but it is common knowledge that, **in time, we are no longer shocked and we become 'punch drunk' into accepting the progressive slide of morality into the abyss.**

Adding to the AIDS crisis is legislation that refuses to make it a certifiable disease. I certainly do not want society to ostracise and avoid those unfortunate enough to be infected. They need love and compassion and care. However, it is sheer madness that people can be carriers and continue to have reckless lifestyles, without anyone knowing the risks they are taking by having sexual relations with them. This is often the unsuspecting married partner!

**Our society seems to have a 'head in the sand' mentality.** We speak as if we want the problem to go away, but we are not prepared to face the real issues. We continue to play with fire and hope that we will not be burnt. In reality, we are mainly promoting 'AIDS awareness' during the week, but we have 'AIDS promotion' activities each weekend. We are a heavy drinking and violent society, and we are even more likely to act irresponsibly because our minds have been filled with television, video and literature attitudes that encourage reckless sexual behaviour.



As our younger generations watch the television programmes and see explicit sex and virtually sex on demand, how often do these same programmes show any indication of the participants taking precautions? **NEVER.** There is also a nearly total failure to be truthful about the effectiveness of condoms. Various studies suggest that, due to breaks, leaks or slipping, **condoms offer only 85 per cent protection against HIV** (Le Page 2003). Therefore, in reality 15 out of every 100 uses fail to prevent infection! The promotion of condom use, as the main weapon against AIDS, is like encouraging the population to play Russian roulette!

Another major problem relates to ignorance about basic hygiene. In much of Africa it is the tradition to circumcise boys at about 18 years of age. This involves attendance at 'initiation schools' in the bush. Much of what goes on at these schools is kept secret to all outside a particular cultural tradition. However, in one part of South Africa, since 1995, unhygienic circumcision rites have landed 6,000 youngsters in hospital, about 300 of these died and a further 50 were permanently emasculated due to the need to amputate the sexual organs that had become severely infected. (This was reported during a radio interview on SAFM radio with a high official on 10 January 2005).

This phenomenon has been ongoing for centuries, and was only exposed by the public outcry. Initially these things tended to be 'overlooked' because they were part of 'cultural tradition'. Not only is it criminal to cause so many deaths and mutilations, but these ceremonies also serve as ideal channels for the spread of HIV infection.

**Why have public media not realised the urgency of the hour, and the necessity to show programmes that encourage marital faithfulness, family values, sober lifestyles, and the virtues of drug avoidance and the rights of women?** Why are the youth not being motivated to resist following the easiest path that leads to destruction? Why do we allow

many advertisements to centre on sexually explicit material? At every turn and to a much larger extent than many other countries, we are bombarded day and night with provocative sexual images on our screens. All this while our people die by the thousands each week, slow, painful and terrible deaths.

The situation in South Africa is being repeated in many other countries. I believe that, if we take the AIDS epidemic seriously, then the basic approach must involve vigorous education against free and easy sexual relations, against heavy drinking, against drug taking, against dictatorial male dominance over women, against 'traditional healers' or 'sangomas' or 'government officials' or whoever else suggests cures that are not scientifically proven.

**We also need a compassionate society** that, at very least, provides free medications for rape victims, to reduce the chance of Aids infection, and to pregnant mothers to reduce the chance of mother to child infections.

We also need to reverse the trend towards turning some South African cities into 'Pink zones' that encourage homosexual tourism. A survey of homosexual clubs in California showed that many men experience as many as 15 partners in a night, aided by taking stimulation drugs. Can anyone consider such to be normal behaviour or beneficial to society? (Anderson 1984).

It is one thing to have legislation that allows so-called 'Gay' lifestyles. **It is totally another thing to allow active promotion of such lifestyles.** We have seen a rapid escalation of programmes in the public media that directly or indirectly promote these lifestyles as the norm.

The truth is that it is a minority lifestyle, and our youth should be educated to realise that it is biologically not the norm. Claims that people are born homosexual have not been proven, and young people should also be taught this fact. There is considerable

evidence linking such tendencies to very early life experiences, or to being brought up in dysfunctional families, or to being molested by family 'friends,' or being subjected to homosexuality at school.

Le Vay (2003) points out that; *the market for sexual conversion is still driven mainly by unhappy homosexuals who want out.* Furthermore, a paper in 'Archives of sexual behaviour', involving 200 subjects, revealed that a majority of them had achieved successful transition from homosexual to heterosexual lifestyles. Respondents said; *that they were experiencing sexual attraction to at least one opposite-sex partner, their homosexual urges were diminished or (less commonly) abolished, and they did not experience any harm as a result of the therapy.* Interestingly, the majority of gays who reported a change in sexual orientation. said that they were "very" or "extremely" religious.

This HIV/AIDS crisis is more than a cultural problem. It is an almost unavoidable consequence of our drift away from belief in a God to whom all humanity must ultimately give an account. Wake up South Africa! We are far on the road to great sorrow.

**It is also not acceptable to make prostitution legal.** Experience from Europe shows that such a measure leads to increased trafficking in children and women and to exploitation and control of prostitution by gangsters. It also leads to increased incidence of sexually transmitted diseases.

## 6.7. A new approach to agriculture

Once we escape from tribal loyalties and ancestral appeasement, we are ready to allow land to be used by whoever can make it the most productive. The most productive use of land is vital if we are to feed our population. Feeding our population is a fundamental human right. It is a direct outworking of 'Love your neighbor as yourself'.

Ancestral worship and Ithongo tribal beliefs are the main driving force behind pressures for return of land to the ancestral owners. This is believed by many to be the major reason why Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe embarked on a program of land redistribution, even though it became obvious to most that this was having a disastrous affect on agricultural production and caused the loss of many jobs. Apparently, the spirits of the ancestors promised Mugabe blessings if he obeyed their instruction, relayed via sangomas.

**African Renaissance will not take place while we have people like Robert Mugabe in control of nations.** If people are motivated by ancestral beliefs and the Ithongo tribal goals then they are not qualified to govern a multi-cultural, multi- racial country. People like him are not qualified to govern the Rainbow Nation.

We need leaders who have escaped from the assumed authority of ancestors and have escaped from the destructive forces of racism and tribalism. We need leaders who put the interests of all their people first.

**In relation to agriculture,** African countries can not afford to rely on imports of food; firstly, because we do not have the financial means of maintaining such imports; secondly, because the world food situation is in crisis. There is no guarantee that we will have food to import in coming months and years.

**How do we ensure that our people will not starve? This can only be achieved through modern mechanized commercial agriculture.** This means that the best farming land must be farmed by the people best qualified to do so, and with the financial resources to do so.

Of course there is room for small-scale and largely subsistence farmers. However, these should not be allowed to take over highly productive commercial farms. This is no longer an issue to be discussed in

terms of 'ancestral lands'. It is to be discussed in terms of the best interests of the people of Africa.

**We should also realize that the whole discussion of 'ancestral land' is a farce.** If we truly decided to hand all land in Africa back to the descendants of the ancestors who lived there, then we should hand the whole of South Africa over to the San or other nomadic tribes who used to roam its soils.

A 'Renaissance Africa' needs to place enormous emphasis on upgrading agricultural production. In fact, farms need to be subsidized in times of drought or natural disaster. We cannot afford to allow our most basic need for food to be jeopardized by short term political appeasement or misplaced reliance on the whims of ancestral spirits, as interpreted by sangomas and at a considerable price.

Land should not be allocated according to ancestral tribal occupancy. Such a policy is the result of the Ithongo belief. The best interests of the country demand that land be allocated to those people best qualified to farm it the most productively.

**Large commercial farms produce more food per hectare of land than do small subsistence farms covering the same total area of land** This is because maximizing food production requires inputs of capital, in the form of machinery, fertilizer and labour and inputs of technology, weed and pest control and marketing.

Large commercial farms normally rely on one or two water supply points, in the form of dams or boreholes. If such farms are divided into many small subsistence plots, most of these farmers will have to rely on rainfall for crop production, with all the resulting unpredictability of weather patterns.

In addition, a subsistence farmer cannot produce enough crops to finance the needed fertilizer applications and chemicals for pest control. As a result the land produces less every year. In pre-colonial Africa

subsistence farming was a bit more productive, largely because there was enough empty land to allow for shifting agriculture. When the land had been farmed for two or three years the farmer simply cleared a new area of bush. This can no longer be done, due to increased human population.

For small subsistence farms to produce enough to support a family and to sell enough produce to finance a house, children's education and the other basic necessities of life, it is vital for government departments of agriculture to be able to determine the minimum sized piece of land that can be viable. This minimum size will vary from area to area, depending on soil type, availability of water, proximity to markets and many other factors.

**In other words, a policy of land distribution, without taking into account all the relevant factors, is doomed to failure.** Not only will it be a failure for the subsistence farmers but also a failure for the nation. This is because the total food production will drop drastically and sooner or later this leads to widespread hunger, especially for the lower income sections of the population.

It is the poorer income sections of Africa's population who most need up-liftment and the benefits of an African Renaissance. **Politicians need to understand that they will in time be held responsible for the starvation that will follow from politically motivated or Ithongo motivated land distribution, undertaken without sound scientifically based research.**

## 6.8. Renewed vitality for law and order

Once we are free from a fatalistic attitude to life and a belief that the spirits of ancestors control the events of the living, then even our law enforcement can be improved. This is because the officer can now act solely on his intellectual assessment of the situation. He

can arrest the worst criminal and not fear being cursed. He can arrest the sangoma found with human body parts and bring him to court, without fear of being cursed.

A release from tribal loyalties will enable advancement on merit in the police and army. A realization that we are all going to give an account before God for our actions, will motivate us to honesty and impartiality and to avoid bribery and corruption.

A new work ethic and sense of responsibility will lead to more efficiency, and more effective law enforcement. We will do our job with devotion even when not being watched. We will report for duty on time and not take sick leave when we are not sick.

A motivation to 'Love my neighbor as I love myself' will lead to greater enthusiasm to solve crimes and to capture drug dealers, human traffickers, rapists, abusers of women and children, and even to take domestic violence more seriously. The public will look to the police as friends.

**The high level of crime in South Africa is the result of several factors.** We inherited a violent mentality from Apartheid years. The migrant labour policies of those times led to thousands of men living far from their homes in men's hostels. This encouraged immorality, breakdown of family relations and a breakdown of traditional norms or morality. All of this has been further fueled by increasing levels of violence and immorality on television.

In addition, although many people have retained their beliefs in ancestral control of events and the power of muti and fetishes, the widespread migration patterns of labour have led to a weakening of the ubuntu attitudes of caring and community accountability. **In many ways vast numbers of people feel 'lost' in a world that has grown too big.** They have lost their roots, their close family bonds and many have landed

up in situations of poverty. This in itself is a breeding ground for crime.

Identifying some of the root causes of increased crime can help us understand the current situation, but each of us are still held accountable to God for our choices. **In other words, the greatest contributing factor to crime is our drift away from God, both in our individual lives and the life of our nation.**

Any call to God to 'heal our land', is only meaningful if accompanied by individual and national repentance. Only then can we claim the Bible promise, ***If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.*** (Bible: 2 Chronicles 7:14).

#### 6.9. No more starvation or poor medical care

In an African Renaissance there will be no starvation, nobody dying because of poor medical care, far fewer women dying in childbirth, far less poverty, alcoholism and drug taking. Far fewer young people with lives ruined through drugs or AIDS.

No longer will we be an Africa that is characterized by fatalism, discouraging individual thought and action, dominated by fear of spirits and the fear of stepping out of line with the 'norm' for my tribe or group.

**The key to African Renaissance is Ubuntu Christianity.** It is this dynamic that turned the Roman world 'upside down' in the first two centuries after Jesus. This was not through force of arms, but through changed lives. This is the dynamic that enabled Dark Ages Europe to escape into the Renaissance and Reformation, leading to the scientific revolution and our modern benefits of civilization.

These benefits of the European Renaissance have been enormous. Certainly we can do without the



negative ones, so often seen today in the western world. However, the upliftment of our people depends on fully adopting the society-changing technologies developed by western civilization. We need the improved infrastructures, the communication media, the miracles in health care, the agricultural revolution, the vast increase in knowledge, the research engines that turn out new discoveries and inventions.

All of this is potentially great and can uplift our standard of living in Africa. However, let us reject the negative aspects, such as making materialism our God. May God help us to maintain the positive aspects of ubuntu, empowered and motivated by our Renaissance 'New Birth'. **Ubuntu Christian revival is the only key to raising Africa from its present Dark Ages.**



## Chapter 7:

### Rainbow Nation: Key to African Renaissance

Why is South Africa a key to unlocking Renaissance in Africa? I believe this is for a number of reasons:

1. We have emerged from a history of racial divisions. If we can escape from racial and tribal loyalties and embrace a Christianity that has ubuntu-like characteristics of caring, but originates from the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives, then we will become a shining light, not only to Africa but also to the whole world, showing how diverse people can learn to live in harmony. This is very important because the world is torn apart by sectarian and tribal divisions.
2. We have the great privilege of inheriting the most industrialized and prosperous part of Africa. If we get our act together then our economy will grow further. It is God's plan that our resources be shared with others in Africa. This will largely be through our trained people going north to help start development projects and to help upgrade agriculture, but most importantly, to take with them the message of Ubuntu Christianity.
3. I believe it is part of God's plan for Africa that this Ubuntu Christianity revival starts at the bottom of the continent. This is because we are already started on the road of reconciliation. Our 'Truth and Reconciliation' process was extremely important to God. I can say this because God emphasizes over and over the importance of forgiveness. There are many crimes that cannot deserve to be forgiven. However, God forgives us

all for our many sins, when we turn to him in repentance, even though we do not deserve his forgiveness. However, he says, *If we do not forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will not forgive you.* (Bible: Matthew 6:15).

4. I believe the Rainbow Nation will be used by God to start an African Renaissance, because we have seen a great movement of prayer here in the last few years. Each year stadiums across the country are filled with Christians offering prayers of repentance and petitions to God to 'Heal our land'. We are reminded in the Bible that, *For our struggle is not against flesh and blood.* (Bible: Ephesians 6:12). In its final analysis, our struggle is against spiritual forces of deception. Therefore, we need to petition the Holy Spirit, through our prayers.

**God has heard these prayers** and this prayer movement has now spread far and wide across the earth. This movement started here in South Africa and this is another indication that God has placed an historic calling on South Africa, to become a 'light to the nations'.

It will not be a 'light' to glorify South Africa. It will be a light that glorifies God, because it will be clear that the African Renaissance originated in a new discovery of the God who cares, and who is knowable in personal experience.

**Africa, you are at a crossroads of destiny. Choose this day who you will serve. Will it be your past traditions, steeped in fear of ancestral spirits and curses and fetishes, or will it be re-birth into Renaissance, into a rediscovery of the freedom of Ubuntu Christianity.**

## Chapter 8

### My personal journey of discovery

I believe my personal journey of discovery helps to illustrate that the Creator God is the one who is intimately involved in day to day situations of our lives. **It is God who has our personal destinies in his hands, not the spirits of ancestors.**

In 1960 my parents moved from Nairobi in Kenya to Cape Town, and I enrolled at the University of Cape Town, with Zoology and Botany being major subjects.

During my time at University I remember on one occasion going out alone under a starry sky. Here I spoke out loud, “God, if you are really out there, and if you really know that I am honestly searching for truth, please send me an angel to speak to me, then I will really know that you are there”. However, nothing unusual happened right then.

After graduating with a PhD. in Zoology, and getting married, in 1975 we immigrated to Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). Here I was employed as Ornithologist with the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management. However, the country was being torn apart by a bush war that intensified each year and I had to carry a rifle wherever my research projects took me.

Within six months of arrival in Rhodesia I was enrolled into the military. In my unit we had to do military service for periods of about three weeks at a time and then return to our civilian duties. **These periods of duty turned out to be my first real personal experience of God.**

In the wartime events that I am about to describe, **I am most grateful to God that I was always protected from actually shooting anybody. Each time we went through vehicle ambush situations it happened that I was seated on the opposite side of the vehicle from the ambush site.**

During the war I was in a unit called PR 4 connected to the police reserve. It was thought that our exposure to real battle situations would be unlikely, because we were not part of the combat army. However, **a series of events took place that really changed my whole outlook on how God works in human situations.**

28 May 1977 I was deployed to a fortified base called Beveke, north of the town of Mount Darwin. Jerry Ziebell and I were responsible for a group of newly recruited soldiers (actually armed Department of Home Affairs personnel) who had received very little training. Our main responsibility was to supply four other fortified bases with supplies, and to do this we had to drive a considerable distance into Mount Darwin, collect supplies, and then drive along these dusty two-wheeler tracks through the bush.

On 9<sup>th</sup> June we received a radio call from one of the bases in our area called Muteravendi. The corporal in charge said he had a sick soldier who needed to be uplifted to Mount Darwin. Jerry and I decided to leave early the next morning, as it was already late afternoon and no travel was done at night because it was too dangerous. However, early in the morning we received a call from Mount Darwin that we must first go there to collect supplies needed urgently by another base. I tried to protest that we needed to first go and collect the sick soldier. However, I was overruled by senior rank.

By the time we returned from Mount Darwin it was already early afternoon. We organised two mine-proofed vehicles and planned to head towards the Muteravendi base and sleep there overnight. I had two soldiers with me and we drove in front, because I had travelled this road several times, whereas Jerry had only just arrived at the base. These roads had no signposts and you had to know your way by experience. Jerry followed in a mine proofed Landover, together with two soldiers.

I drove confidently down the dusty road until I came to the first fork. Here, without any conscious doubt as to my choice, I took the left fork. I only realised I had made a mistake when I saw a small dam on my right side and I immediately remembered that this should normally be on my left side. I was about to swallow my pride, and tell Jerry that I had taken the wrong turn, when I noticed that there was a vehicle track going along the dam wall and this would take me back to the correct road. So, not wanting to admit my mistake, I simply drove onto the dam wall. However, unknown to me there was a soft patch in the road and the right hand rear wheel sank in deeply. In fact the heavy armoured vehicle was in danger of rolling down into the dam.

We carefully climbed out and I apologised to Jerry for my mistake. He was very understanding and suggested that we should leave the soldiers to guard the stuck vehicle while he and I would drive back the few kilometres to our base. At base we had a Bedford truck that we could use to pull the stuck vehicle back out of the sand.

I jumped into the mine-proofed landrover next to Jerry and he then attempted to put the vehicle into first gear. It was one of those Land rovers with a ball at the base of the gear stick on the floor. As he tried to put it into gear the lever simply broke off flush with the ball.

When we got over our amazement, we tried to get the vehicle into gear with a screwdriver. However, there were no other tools and it turned out that both of us were totally ignorant of mechanics. No way could we get that vehicle into gear, so we now had two stuck vehicles.

I remember at this point saying to Jerry, "It looks like we are not meant to go to Muteravendi" We then decided that Jerry and two soldiers would walk back to base while the rest of us guarded the vehicles.

After some time Jerry appeared with the Bedford truck. It was now approaching evening and we decided

it was not a good idea to try to tow the vehicles back until the morning, because a night-time curfew was in operation. As we drove back into camp I heard an excited voice on the radio calling us and saying, "We are under attack". It was the corporal at the base that we had intended visiting.

It was now that I 'heard' a voice in my head saying very clearly to me "Your times are in my hands". I was quite shocked, because it seemed to me that this was probably a phrase out of the Bible. The full significance of this did not immediately strike me because I had to attend to the radio.

At first I was very disappointed, because I knew that all the troops on that base were new recruits and had very poor training. A couple of weeks earlier another base had come under fire and the troops just fired in all directions until they ran out of ammunition. The only reason they were not overrun was because the opposition forces apparently did not realise that they had no more ammunition. My real fear was a repeat of this situation. After some persuasion and shouting over the radio I managed to get the corporal to stop his men from firing and to just hold their position. Fortunately the opposition did not press home another attack that night.

In the morning we started down towards Mutravendi, to see what damage had been done. Another group of army came with us. About two kilometres from the Mutravendi base we found that a land mine had been placed in the left wheel track (I actually took a photograph). In the bushes to the right we found flattened grass where an ambush had been in wait. Apparently the ambush was expecting us to come to pick up the sick soldier. It was common for such information to filter out of camp to the opposition. When we did not appear the previous evening and it became so late that the ambush must have known that we would not be coming that day, they then decided to let off their frustration by firing at the base camp.



The ambush site was very well planned. The two-wheeled track ensured that the lead vehicle would hit the landmine. Both Jerry and I realised that we would have been in a very precarious position because of the mine, but also because the four troops with us were still very poorly trained and inexperienced.

**Jerry and I now put together the events of the past two days.**

1. Clearly the opposition had known we intended to visit Muteravendi on the 10<sup>th</sup> June.
2. Our intention was delayed because of the urgent command to collect supplies from Mount Darwin.
3. We still tried to get to Muteravendi to collect the sick soldier.
4. Things went further wrong when I somehow got confused and took the left fork instead of the right. I got the one vehicle stuck on the dam wall.
5. We still tried to salvage our plan by driving back in the second vehicle.
6. This was further frustrated when the gear lever broke off in a most amazing way.
7. We still hoped to salvage the situation, but by now it was again too late to travel to Muteravendi. All these events added up to us missing possible death in the ambush.

As we were analysing all this, **we both came to the conclusion that there certainly seemed to be ‘someone up there on our side’**. We did not analyse how this ‘someone’ had organised events. However, it seemed to involve influencing thoughts and decisions of several people, and also using soft patches on roads and broken vehicles. Overall, there had to be careful timing of events to ensure that we missed that ambush. **The ‘someone’ seemed to be aware of the intricate details of our situation.**

That night, I looked through a Bible that I had with me and managed to find where those words in my

mind had come. It was in Psalm 31, "*My times are in your hands*". As I thought about this I was suddenly reminded of that prayer I prayed years before while a student, "God, if you are really out there, and if you really know that I am honestly searching for truth, please send me an angel, then I will really know that you are there".

In an instant it was like that 'voice' in my head said, "You asked for a vision of angels. You have just received it". Well, I thought, I never saw an angel but it certainly seemed as if there was one organising events for us. I then got quite excited and my next prayer was something along these lines, "God, yes, it really does seem that you were behind all this. Thanks a lot and I am really grateful. But God, I hope you do not mind my asking but I would be really pleased if you could do this sort of thing again".

So it happened that, after another couple of years, I remember my section Commander saying to me one day, "how come, whenever our section gets into an ambush or dangerous situation you seem to be there?" I actually believe it was because God took my prayer seriously. He showed me again and again that he really does intervene in real life situations and even in individual lives. Here is another case:

28 February 1978. I was in charge of a group of five men, tasked with escorting commercial vehicles from Fort Victoria to Renco gold mine. This was a particularly dangerous task because nearly every convoy to the mine during the preceding few months had been ambushed. On one occasion five elite Selous Scouts were killed. The insurgent group operating in the area was led by a self-styled General Nylon, who was trained in the best of Rhodesia's army but had defected to the other side. It was with some trepidation that we faced our task. We were a Police Reserve unit and normally we did not have automatic weapons, only

semi-automatic FN rifles. We expected to be ambushed with machine guns and anti-tank rockets.

We were meant to escort the convoy with one mine proofed Land Rover and a Bedford truck, covered with sand bags against land mines. However, the truck had engine trouble and no replacement was available. We waited three days for the vehicle to be fixed, but in the end I pestered the mechanic so much that he gave us another truck which he said was his best vehicle. At last we headed for Ungundu halt and intended continuing to Renco mine the same day.

Before leaving Fort Victoria I was approached with a request to take two MAG machine guns to a Selous Scout group at Renco mine. None of us had been given training with these weapons but we had no problem taking them with us.

We were hardly 50 km along our route when the so-called 'best truck' started jerking and showing signs of serious problems. We finally reached Ungundu halt but realised the vehicle was in no state to make the rest of the trip to Renco mine. We were now stuck at the army base until an alternative vehicle became available.

Since we were immobilised, I asked the army lieutenant at Ungundu halt base if one of his chaps could instruct two of us in the use of MAG machine guns. This was duly done and I was one of the pupils. The other chaps with me were Wesley Chambers, Derrick Robinson, Daniel Rossouw and John Urie. If I remember correctly John Urie was the other pupil.

On 5<sup>th</sup> March, the Lieutenant took pity on us and volunteered to send one of his army trucks together with 6 troops, to escort us to the border of the tribal area. The instructions were that this truck would turn back at the border and we would continue on the back of one of the commercial vehicles. However, when we reached the tribal border there were definite signs of trouble waiting. There was not one person in sight and we knew this was the usual sign that an ambush was ahead. The leader of the army group tried to radio

through for permission to continue with us to Renco mine, but there were no radio communication. He then took his own decision and decided to go with us.

As we approached a wooded area, that 'voice' spoke clearly in my head, "Fear not, I am with you even to the end of the age". It was amazing the peace these words gave me. We then rounded a corner and started going up a hill. The land rover was in front and two commercial trucks followed us. I was on the back of one truck with the MAG machine gun ready to fire. Suddenly the ambush opened up from close range and I just saw blue smoke as everyone on both sides of the truck opened fire. We did not know which side the firing was coming from, but it later came to light that I was sitting on the truck facing away from the ambush site.

However, the ambush was probably taken by surprise when our two machine guns, and the two with the army group, returned fire. Probably because of this intense sound of firing, the ambush did not direct fire as accurately as usual. The land rover was hit with rifle fire and a bullet passed inches behind the driver's seat, but no one was injured. When we got past the firing we found that our truck was not even hit once.

So, why tell this real-life story? It is because **these events again illustrate a pattern that I saw repeated over and over. Events occurred that frustrated us, yet they all worked together to ensure that we came out of the situation alive.** For instance;

1. Our wait at Fort Victoria for three days, because of vehicle problems, resulted in our getting two machine guns in addition to our normal rifles.
2. Our further delay at Ungundu halt meant that we were given instruction in their use. The further failure to obtain a replacement vehicle led to the army Lieutenant taking pity on us and sending us on our way with an escort.
3. When we reached the tribal area we should have lost the army escort, but a lack of radio

communications led to their decision to go ahead with us. This meant far more fire power than the ambush was expecting.

4. The 'someone' had a detailed awareness of our personal situation.

All these delays and developments led to a failure of the ambush, because of the unexpected intensity of our return fire. Are all these circumstances pure chance? If it happens once we are tempted to say so. However, this was now the second time that **all the chaps with me said, "There was someone up there organising events"**.

29 January 1979: We were based at Umtali in eastern Rhodesia and our task was to escort convoys of heavy commercial vehicles between Umtali and Chipinga. The escort consisted of two Mazda pick-up one-ton trucks with a Browning machine gun mounted on the back. These machine guns were the same as used in the Second World War Spitfire fighter planes. The guns were mounted on a rotating turret and the gunner was partly shielded by armour plating. Each vehicle had a gunner on the back, a driver, and one person in the passenger seat. One escort vehicle led the convoy and one brought up the rear.

On the way south I was manning the machine gun on the lead vehicle. The driver and companion both had their FN rifles out of the windows ready to fire. As we reached the turnoff to Cashel, I noticed a circular mark on the tarred road in front of us. This looked like a typical situation where a circle of tarred road is removed by rotating a cut metal drum that had been heated in a fire. A landmine is then placed in the hole and the circle of tar replaced.

This dangerous looking circle passed right under our vehicle between the wheels. I then signalled to the commercial truck behind us to swerve around this mark. We had strict instructions not to stop. I was

gratified to see that each truck behind us followed the same detour.

On arrival at Chipinga I discussed this episode with Dick Salt and Geoff Sanderson who were in my vehicle and with the other escort vehicle. Dick mentioned that he also saw a circular patch, but at a point about 250 m from where I saw mine. We decided that on the return trip our vehicle would bring up the rear and when we got to this suspicious spot we would stop and investigate while the convoy continued without stopping.

On this return trip I was driving, Dick Salt was next to me and Geoff was manning the machine gun. When we got to the spot where Dick had seen the mark we stopped briefly, but amazingly could not find the mark he had previously seen. It seemed to have totally disappeared. We then checked out the mark I had seen but again it was no longer visible. Meanwhile the long line of very slow commercial vehicles moved slowly ahead up a steep slope, at 5 to 10 km per hour.

I decided it was time to catch up with the convoy that now disappeared over the top of the rise. Because of this I was travelling much faster than would normally have been the case. When half way up the slope we suddenly were under heavy fire from the left side embankment. I started firing out of my window while driving in case there were also enemies on the right. However, my rifle suddenly jammed and instinctively I took my hand off the steering wheel to cock the rifle action. As I did this, the vehicle swerved violently to the right. At that very instant there was a loud 'whoosh' and flash immediately to our left.

This flash was in fact a rifle grenade and I am sure it missed us only because I had swerved at that instant. Meanwhile all of us continued firing as we accelerated up the slope. None of us were hit and the only casualty was a soldier to whom we had given a lift. He had apparently been told by a Sangoma that he would die today. When the firing started he threw

himself on the vehicle floor with such violence that he cut his hand. Needless to say the sangoma was wrong in his prediction of death.

We were given radio instructions to continue with the convoy and another reaction group would follow up on the ambush. This follow-up found 35 firing positions on an embankment, hundreds of spent bullet cases and remains of one M60 rifle grenade that had been fired at us. So, why were we not hit? Again our analysis of these events showed **very precise timing that all added up to our amazing escape from any injury.**

1. The mark on the road. Was there really a mark or did I 'see' something that was not actually there?
2. The decision to investigate on the return trip. This meant that we caught up with the convoy at far greater speed than normal and so were much harder targets.
3. My rifle jamming, leading to me swerving at the precise moment that the grenade was fired at us.
4. The 'someone' had a detailed awareness of our personal situation.

We assume that the leader of the ambush had decided to attack the tail vehicle, because there would be less chance of the lead vehicle offering assistance. **Another amazing event came to light when we got back to camp.** Don Mclean and Peter Haddon, from the lead vehicle crew, told us that, as the convoy was going slowly up the steep slope, the escort vehicle driver saw in his rear mirror that one commercial truck was overtaking another. This was against convoy rules. The escort vehicle doubled back on the right-hand side of the road and pulled the driver to a standstill to tell him off.

Without realising it, they had stopped immediately opposite the ambush position that was on the left side of the road. However, the heavy commercial

vehicle was between them and the ambush. Presumably the ambush did not open fire because the escort vehicle was shielded by the truck, and because they knew our follow up escort vehicle was still to arrive.

Once again, all the chaps discussed the events over a beer and all agreed, “someone out there was on our side today”. But no one had a good reason as to why. However, it seemed that the ‘someone’ had again influenced human thought processes, leading to split second timing of events.

A few days after this event a note was handed in at a police station, apparently written by the man in charge of the ambush that we had driven through. It said that we had been ‘extremely lucky’ but assured us that next time it would be different. Well, I thought, it may seem like luck but actually all the evidence points to the direct intervention of the God who says in the Bible ‘My times are in his hands’.

17 September 1979: One of my duties, when not on military call-up, was to help protect cereal crops from literally millions of small finch-like birds called Quelea. The official policy was to wait until these birds collected in large groups and actually threatened agricultural crops. A million Quelea can eat and waste more than a ton of wheat in a day.

The procedure was to identify the bushes or reeds where these birds congregate in a dense mass to sleep at night. We then called in a specially trained pilot with a crop spraying aircraft, such as a Thrush Commando. We would fly over the area earlier in the day to help the pilot pinpoint the site and then direct him in by radio just before dark. He then released a fine spray of Fenthion poison over the roosting birds. A survey the next morning would sometimes reveal several million dead Quelea. It was rather an unpleasant task, but at the time this was the only approved way of protecting crops from potentially disastrous damage.



On this occasion I flew to the Mid-Sabi irrigation scheme with Mike La Grange and the pilot of a small one engine plane. That afternoon four of us went on horseback down the Sabi River looking for the reed bed where the Quelea were roosting. You could tell this from the carpet of white droppings on the reeds and sandbanks. We failed to locate the exact site that afternoon. However, from watching the direction of flight taken by vast 'clouds' of Quelea towards dusk, we were able to approximately pinpoint the roost.

Towards dusk we passed through a village of huts used by workers on the irrigation scheme. We asked them if they knew where the Quelea roosted but nobody was able to answer accurately. The next morning one of the workers came and told us that a group of opposition troops entered the village that night and asked the workers what we were doing in the area.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> September we managed to identify the roost from the air. We arranged to conduct the spray that evening and we also asked a local group of police for protection of the operation. We arranged to meet with the police group at 17h00 at one of the farmhouses. However, there were delays due to having to fill the aircraft with fuel. On arrival at the rendezvous at 17h30 there was no sign of the police group and we thought they had forgotten to meet us.

Mike La Grange and I now drove to the riverbank and walked down the dry riverbed between two parallel rows of tall reeds. We intended to pinpoint the Quelea roost more accurately since we still had about half an hour before the aircraft was due to start the operation. After a while we heard the aircraft starting up in the distance. We were not yet quite up to the Quelea roost. If we had arrived at the river ten minutes earlier we could have reached the roost before the aircraft started up.

Mike said we must run back to the land rover, because this had our only radio to communicate with the pilot. I was at this point furthest from the land rover

and about to follow Mike, when firing opened up just ahead of us at the Quelea roost we had been heading for. We could see tracer bullets bouncing off the riverbank.

Mike came up to where I was standing. Our first instinct was to return fire, because we believed it must come from the opposition forces. We presumed they could not see us due to the reeds, but probably thought they knew where we were. Mike La Grange said, "Let's rather dash back to the land rover and warn the aircraft to abort the Quelea spray".

We ran back under cover of the reeds, called off the operation and returned to camp. Here we discovered that the firing had in fact come from the police group. They had gone on their own to the river bank without thinking of informing us and had thought they saw people moving through the bush on the opposite bank of the river. They believed these were opposition forces because there was a curfew in the area. The bullets we saw hitting the bank close to us were in fact 'friendly fire'. If we had returned the fire it would have resulted in a very nasty battle between us and our police protection unit.

**On reconstructing the events of the day, Mike and I realised how close we had come to a very nasty fire fight with our own side.** We would have been very vulnerable, because we were in the bottom of a flat riverbed. We realised that we had been delayed, by refuelling the aircraft and then by waiting ten minutes at the planned rendezvous with the police. If we had arrived at the river ten minutes earlier we would have reached the Quelea roost at the time that the police group opened fire on the people moving on the opposite bank. The police would not have realised our presence because we were shielded by tall reeds. We would therefore have been in direct line of fire and would certainly have returned fire.

**Once again, we saw how pinpoint timing of events led to us escaping a very nasty situation and almost certain loss of life.** Clearly, the ‘someone’ who was in overall control of the events, was aware of the minute details of my life and circumstance.

Other Rhodesia adventures: I have outlined some of the more dramatic Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) events that convinced me that God was, for some strange reason, not willing that I should die at that time. His intervention revealed itself through the precise timing of events, the breakdown of vehicles, and through influencing the decisions made by people. There were many other situations where I felt we had been supernaturally protected.

God at work in Belgium: In 1988 I faced some dramatic events that necessitated my going to Brussels as part of a legal action. At the time I was employed by the South African Department of Agriculture. My goal in Belgium was to locate missing family members. This was a private goal financed by my family and there is no need to go into details. However, I needed to know if some people lived at a particular address in Brussels, and to determine this without myself being seen at that address.

When my sister heard I needed accommodation in Brussels, she contacted a friend who had been at school with her in Kenya, but now lived in Belgium. This friend said she was about to spend time with her mother in Germany and I was welcome to use her flat in Brussels. On arrival at the flat I discovered that it was situated in the very same street as the house I needed to watch. Furthermore, I could watch that house from the balcony of this flat! **For those of you who know the size of Brussels you will appreciate the odds against such an event being chance!**

During this time in Brussels I found I had to stay longer than planned. I was introduced to a small group

of English speaking Christians who met informally in a school hall. I was asked by some of them why I was in Belgium and I told them it was in connection with a pending court case. However, I did not tell anyone of my real financial situation.

One family, the Ridings, put me up at a very low rent. However, I still realised that I would run out of money before my tasks were completed. After a few days, I asked the landlord what he did for a living. He bought old houses, renovated them and then resold them at a profit. I offered to help with renovations when not otherwise occupied. After a couple of days he told me that, if I could help him in this way, I could stay in the accommodation free of charge.

In spite of this generosity, my finances were again soon nearly used up and I was worried that I would have to cut short my stay before all the work was finished. One Sunday, as I sat in the school hall where the Christians met, a young German man came up and asked me how I was getting on. I said all was fine, I just had to wait for events to happen. He then handed me an envelope and said God 'told' him to give this to me. I regret I cannot recall this man's name. If he reads this please do contact me. I would love to show my gratitude in some way.

When I got to my accommodation, I opened the letter and it contained 20,000 Belgian Francs. At that time this was a considerable amount of money. I used it sparingly on various essentials. For instance, I had to hire a vehicle for a few days to check out something in a small village outside Brussels. By the time I finally headed back to South Africa, on a previously purchased return air ticket, I still had a little of the Belgian money left over.

On arrival at Johannesburg on a Sunday, I realised I did not have a ticket to Cape Town. I went to the ticket desk and intended paying by cheque, since a salary had been deposited into my South African account in my absence. However, in those days banking

was still not well automated and the ticket office told me that they could not accept a cheque for payment, and I did not have a credit card at that time. The man suggested I go to a bank that was open in the airport terminal. Here I encountered the same story. They could only cash a cheque up to R100, which was far too little for the ticket.

I was looking for a solution to this problem when the teller asked if perhaps I had some foreign currency on me. I remembered the Belgian francs and when he changed these into Rands, together with the R100 cheque, it was just enough money to purchase my one-way ticket to Cape Town!

**I hope my reader can see why I now believe in a God who does intervene in human affairs, especially when the human is in desperate situations and when that human exerts a measure of faith and trust in this God.** I am quite sure that He is actively involved in this world at all times, but we only become particularly aware of this at certain times.

The suicide case: Sometimes, being in the right place at the right time is really dramatic. For instance, we lived in a small town called Wellington, about one hour drive from Cape Town. One morning I and my wife Anna needed to visit Cape Town. We neared the city at a point where the highway broadens into four lanes in each direction. This is a very busy highway and at mid-morning the traffic is only slightly less intense.

On this morning, as we rounded a bend and started climbing the hill near Tygerberg hospital, we saw a young man standing in the middle lane. I instantly saw that he was most distressed and traffic was rushing past him on both sides. Almost instinctively I found myself stopping immediately in front of him. I put the hazard lights flashing and got out to talk to him.

Amazingly, vehicles continued to rush past on both sides. The young man was suicidal and my initial

attempts to get him into the car were resisted. It must have been five or more minutes of quiet talking, with Anna praying hard in the car, before he reluctantly got into the back seat in a very stressed state.

As we drove on down the highway we slowly got him to tell us where he lived. When we arrived there he told us he had no key. However, it happened that his mother arrived on foot at exactly that moment. She was most relieved to see her son. After things calmed down she explained the events that had preceded our finding her son.

Apparently, they were being driven in a car along the highway and were having an argument. At one point when the vehicle slowed down, her son jumped out of the car and disappeared through the traffic. His mother decided she could do nothing so she prayed, "God, please send someone to help him".

When her son had calmed down, and realised how close he had been to death, he kept saying that we were angels sent to help him. We thought to ourselves, how true it was that God had indeed intervened. He answered the desperate prayer of a mother by sending us along that road at precisely the right time. Apparently no one else was interested in stopping, since the cars kept rushing past on both sides of us. I believe that God also intervened by preventing a major pile-up of cars and by enabling me to calm the man down enough to get him into the car.

**This sort of event has been my experience on a number of other occasions.**

**I am therefore totally convinced that God does intervene in individual human lives.**

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