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'CATCH THE COCKEREL BEFORE DAWN': PENTECOSTALISM AND POLITICS IN POST- COLONIAL ZIMBABWE

David Maxwell

The study of the relations between religious movements and politics in sub-Saharan Africa continues to flourish.¹ In part, the growing literature has been stimulated by new levels of sophistication and debate.² But scholarship has also been moved by empirical developments in the fields of African religion and politics themselves: the growth of Islamicism in North and West Africa, the role of former mission Churches in the transition to multi-partyism in the late 1980s; the growing profile of African transnational religious movements and diaspora; the contemporary importance of witchcraft and witchcraft eradication; the explosion of born-again Christianity.³

This article focuses on developments within the Christian field, exploring relations between pentecostalism and politics in post-colonial Zimbabwe. It analyses pentecostalism's evolving response to politics by means of a case study of one of Africa's largest and most vital pentecostal movements, Zimbabwe Assemblies of God, Africa (ZAOGA), which claims to be Zimbabwe's largest Church and certainly has a membership of several hundred thousand.⁴ The article conceptualises the movement's changing political guises in terms of the distinctive contradictions, both developmental and transformational, which work upon African pentecostalism. Developmental contradictions are those inherent in pentecostalism and which are continually being worked out, such as the tension between populist voluntarist origins and an increasingly authoritarian leadership, or the tension between sectarian sources and the drive for respectability, recognition and an embrace of the world. On the other hand, transformational contradictions are those that come with the making of a new era, such

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¹ For useful reviews of the literature see Ranger (1986) and Ellis and ter Haar (1998).

² See, for instance, the debate between the Comaroffs (1991, 1997) and Peel (1995) concerning issues of agency, narrative and hegemony in the encounter of the London Missionary Society and the Southern Tswana of South Africa.

³ For recent studies in these fields see Westerlund and Rosander (1997), Gifford (1995), Hoerber and Piscatori. (1997), Comaroff and Comaroff (1993) and Gifford (1998).

⁴ In 1995 the movement claimed 1.5 million members in Zimbabwe. (Target 2000 Church Research Form 1995, file Statistics, ZAOGA Archives, Waterfalls; henceforth ZAW.) This is a serious exaggeration. In 1994 ZAOGA had 125,889 committed members. There are numerous others in assemblies (perhaps two-thirds) who do not take up membership. The movement is probably as large numerically as Zimbabwe's Catholic Church but by no means as powerful. (File Statistics, Central Statistics 1994, ZAW.)

as the transition from the colonial to post-colonial or Cold War to post-Cold War period. These internal and external motors of change on ZAOGA have collided and conflated to create very specific forms of politics.

This socio-historical model generates a number of propositions about the nature of interactions between post-colonial religion and politics in Zimbabwe. First, in comparison with the colonial period, current Church–state relations are more complex. This complexity arises, not merely because the political structure is more open and allows the participation of a larger number of players from the religious field, but also because those involved legitimate their actions from a vastly expanded range of ideologies and knowledge systems: Marxism-Leninism, liberalism, nationalism and Christian theologies, often combined with ingredients of traditional religious and political repertoires (Bayart, 1993: 243). The second proposition is that as religious and political elites seek legitimation from each other the religious and political fields are sites of shifting coalitions where rival parties and Churches compete for ideological and material resources. Finally, an analysis of the advantages—economic, educational and ideological—possessed by ZAOGA’s dominant faction suggests that Church leadership is far from just a source of status and prestige: it is both a product and the key source of social, economic and political influence in contemporary Africa. As such, movements like ZAOGA are subject to intense struggles for resources, patrons and clients.

The article begins by considering relations between ZAOGA and the Rhodesian and Zimbabwean states. This ‘classic’ approach, which focuses on the encounter between Church leaders and politicians, provides a baseline from which to examine post-colonial transformations in political culture. The focus on elites also provides an opportunity to engage with the concern of Africanist political science ‘to highlight the ways in which power is personalised and how legitimacy continues to rest on practices of redistribution’ (Chabal and Daloz, 1999: 2). The second part of the article analyses the political culture found at the base of the movement, showing how ideas move in both directions within ZAOGA’s hierarchy. To finish, the article engages with a recent debate between Paul Gifford and David Martin concerning the political significance of pentecostalism.

Briefly, Martin argues that the pentecostal community can become a protective environment where new egalitarian relationships and values are fostered and new skills learnt which are later adopted by the wider society seeking to reform itself in a similar manner:

A very large number of models of change which have gone to make up our modern world were set in position in precisely in this way. Women gained authority in the nunnery or the right to prophesy in the sect. Peaceability was nourished in the monastic fraternity and among Quakers and Mennonites . . . [1990: 287–8]

On the other hand, Gifford is less sanguine about the power of local

creativity in the face of Africa's contemporary plight: 'Popular resourcefulness must be celebrated, but in any discussion of reshaping social and political structures its efficacy must be kept in perspective' (1998: 11). Mindful that Martin's argument is one of the *longue durée*, he argues that the continent 'demands something structural, and something immediate' (1998: 348). For Gifford, pentecostal ideology and practice must 'make sense' (1998: 55) and he is sure that 'sense' means the rapid change of political and economic structures.

AOGA, ZIMBABWEAN NATIONALISM AND THE RHODESIAN STATE

The social sources of the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God, Africa, were the artisans and casual workers who lived in Harare (Mbare) and Highfields during the late 1950s. These locations were two of Salisbury's oldest townships, which expanded during Southern Rhodesia's brief post-World War II industrial boom. The movement itself emerged from the South African-derived pentecostal church, the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM). A collection of young pentecostal zealots—Joseph Choto, Raphael Kupara, Lazarus Mamvura, James Muhwati, Priscilla Ngoma, Caleb Ngorima and Abel Sande—formed a prayer band and choir around the charismatic evangelist Ezekiel Guti. This semi-autonomous group were expelled from the AFM in 1959 following a struggle with missionaries and an elder male fraction of the black leadership. The group subsequently joined the South African Assemblies of God of Nicholas Bhengu in association with the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada. Once again they were expelled, and in 1967 they formed their own organisation, Assemblies of God, Africa (AOGA).

AOGA shared its birthplace with that of Zimbabwean nationalism, Highfields township, and it is clear that in their schism with the AFM the prayer band was emboldened by the spirit of nationalism prevalent in Highfields at the time. In 1961 Willard Wilson, the AFM's Missionary Overseer, not known for his racial tolerance, wrote:

To put it plainly we have had just about all we can take from the Blacks. These days they are so arrogant and hard to deal with, this coupled with the political situation, make it just about unbearable. There are times when I feel that my nerves will just about snap off in dealing with these people . . .⁵

Nevertheless, the nascent movement which became AOGA had no direct links with Zimbabwean nationalism. Its desire for black autonomy and sectarian purity was quite in keeping with the tradition of Zimbabwean pentecostalism in which it stood. The prayer band's zealous determination to preach wherever it felt called, unfettered by official expectations of missionary supervision, drew directly in

⁵ W. L. Wilson, Mabelreign, to Brother Von Rensburg, 9 March 1961, file W. L. Wilson, 1939–78, AFM, Johannesburg.

inspiration and style on the linked traditions of Masowe and Maranke movements and the AFM.⁶

In its early life AOGA was highly sectarian. The movement was on 'social strike *from* society' whereas Zimbabwean nationalism was on 'strike *against* society' (Martin, 1990: 229; see also Hastings, 1979: 264). As well as shunning gambling, the bioscope and the beer hall the black artisan membership of AOGA converted out of the nationalist movement into pentecostalism believing that the violent life styles of nationalist youth, supported by alcohol and marijuana, were incompatible with born-again sobriety⁷ and bodily purity.⁸ While the nationalist movement focused on the community and the workplace AOGA pentecostals initially met under trees, at home or in classrooms, focusing their energies on individual transformation and the renewal of the family. What nationalist reaction there was to this then small sect was favourable, given AOGA's emphasis on black autonomy, and the absence of any obvious links with white missionaries.⁹ Thus the movement resisted the engrossing tendency of Zimbabwean nationalism and pursued its own agenda within the pentecostal religious field. While ZANU and ZAPU fought for political control of Highfields, Southern Rhodesia's black capital, the prayer band waged a turf war with other pentecostal groups for control of the township's growing pentecostal constituency. The acrimonious nature of this struggle was the immediate reason for the group's expulsion from the South African-Canadian pentecostal umbrella in 1967.¹⁰

Despite its assertion of black autonomy, AOGA still associated with born-again whites to procure resources for evangelism and church construction. The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada provided sponsorship of black pastors and tents and transport for evangelistic crusades. As relations began to sour with the Canadians the prayer band increasingly drew on the patronage of an English businessman, Alexander Warrilow. He also provided them with assistance for their crusades, helped roof their first Highfields church and perhaps financed Guti's studies in the United States.¹¹ Warrilow was cast as 'European Adviser' to the movement. White patronage was also needed in representations to the state, given that all Churches were still supposed to be under white supervision. Here the prayer band was assured of a smooth ride, owing to Warrilow's friendship and business links with the

⁶ On the history of Zimbabwean pentecostalism see Maxwell (1999).

⁷ Defining features of 'born again' Christianity are the existential experience of conversion and belief in scriptural inerrancy. The born-again movement also embraces those who call themselves evangelicals and charismatics as well as pentecostals.

⁸ Interview, Overseer Christopher Chadoka, Waterfalls, November 1995.

⁹ Interview, Ezekiel Guti, Waterfalls, 11 October 1995.

¹⁰ Files General Correspondence, c. 1961-68, and Bhengu, c. 1959-69, Pentecostal Assemblies of Zimbabwe (formerly Canada), Harare (henceforth PAZ). Correspondence in the archives of the Assemblies of God, Zimbabwe (formerly Springfield MO), Borrowdale, Harare. Personal papers in the possession of Jeremiah Kainga, Greendale, Harare.

¹¹ *Ibid.* Interview, Abel Sande, Waterfalls, 30 April 1996.

Minister of Law and Order, the ultra-right-wing member of the Rhodesian Front government, Desmond Lardner-Burke.¹² Given the movement's quest for black autonomy, its association with whites appears to have been primarily pragmatically motivated, securing resources and cover but allowing black pentecostal activity to continue unhindered.

White connections also facilitated a form of extraversion, allowing Guti, and to a lesser extent his lieutenants, to accumulate enough resources to operate a neo-patrimonial system of Church government (Bayart, 1993: 21–3). A key moment in AOGA's evolution, and Guti's struggle to become its unchallenged leader, was his period of study at the Christ for the Nations Institute (CFNI), Dallas, in 1971. The Institute, founded by Gordon Lindsay, one of the patriarchs of the American pentecostal movement, was a dynamo of charismatic Christian advance, not just in America but also Africa, Asia and Latin America. Guti's stay in Dallas provided him with new ideas, a pool of resources and a huge range of international contacts. He used all of these to modernise the movement and enhance his own position within it.

Guti's first concern was to gain AOGA respectability like its American cousins. Soon after returning from the United States in 1972 he made a concerted effort to teach manners and *mores*, diet and hygiene to his ministers and their wives: they were taught how to 'make a party', how to address 'higher people', how to organise a bank account, how to exercise chivalry towards women. He also organised the first International Deeper Life Conference and invited white American speakers.¹³ Church members were taught to be financially prudent and to practise penny capitalism for their own economic advancement and that of the Church (Maxwell, 1998).

Another aim was the numerical expansion of the movement and the construction of more church buildings. Crusades continued in urban areas, usually led by Abel Sande, a widely acclaimed evangelist, and church structures were built in Salisbury's townships and in other towns and cities such as Fort Victoria, Gwelo, Chiredzi.¹⁴ A Bible school was completed in 1978, initially named the Christ for Rhodesia Institute. Despite the movement's own strong financial base in tithing and penny capitalism (Maxwell, 1998) much of the money for these new buildings came from CFNI's Native Church Crusade, whereby the American Bible school found sponsors to pay for the roof if local Christians found the resources to build the four walls.¹⁵ Finally, Guti sought to control the expanding movement through the construction of a personal bureaucracy.¹⁶ Executive minutes from the late 1970s to the

¹² J. Bush, Milton Park, to John Bond, Pretoria, 15 April 1967, PAZ.

¹³ File Deeper Life, 1974–96, Report on Deeper Life Conference, November 1974, ZAW.

¹⁴ File CFNI, 1973–96, ZAW.

¹⁵ File Christ for the Nations Institute, 1973–96, ZAW.

¹⁶ A striking Brazilian parallel with ZAOGA is the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (Lehmann, 1996: 117–29).

early 1980s reveal his fixation with administrative procedures and rules, but also a willingness to break them for kin and clients.¹⁷

In his endeavours to modernise the movement Guti was aided by a new white ally, Alistair Geddes. Before meeting Guti at CFNI, Dallas, Geddes had been a member of the Rhodesian police force (Lindsay, 1976: 228–32). Together they returned to Zimbabwe, backed by Forward in Faith Mission International (FIFMI). This organisation, with an American address and board of advisers, appears to have been a hastily convened front to raise money for AOGA's expansion into surrounding countries and beyond.¹⁸ Guti acted as FIFMI's Mission Director and Geddes as its International Director. At times Geddes also represented AOGA to the Rhodesian state.¹⁹

There can be no doubt that American sophistication and connections enhanced Guti's position within the movement. Prior to his period in the United States he had been perhaps little more than first among equals within AOGA. Abel Sande, for instance, had won much respect as an evangelist, while Raphael Kupara had a good deal of administrative clout. But Guti's new-found contacts provided him with an unrivalled source of patronage. Not acknowledging the sources of his funding, it appeared as if the new church structures were financed out of his own pocket.²⁰ Guti dominated executive meetings, discoursing on ideas about Church growth and administration. By the late 1970s the leadership cult which so characterises the contemporary movement had begun to emerge.

These developments within ZAOGA occurred during Zimbabwe's liberation war. Yet the movement's own sacred histories (Guti, 1989; Erwin, *c.* 1986; Takavarasha, *c.* 1988) and its archives barely mention it. Still a predominantly urban Church, AOGA was relatively unaffected by the war. Unlike main-line missionaries and black clergy on the rural front line, AOGA leaders were not called to mediate between guerrillas, security forces and the peasantry (Hastings, 1979; Hallencreutz, 1988; Bhebe and Ranger, 1995). Moreover the movement had felt no need to enter the debate about majority rule which preceded the war or subsequently to engage with the opposing sides about the gravity of the political violence that ensued, despite the fact that a number of Church members were among its victims.²¹ Thus the movement's guidelines for ten days of prayer at the beginning of 1977, a period when the war was beginning to heat up, remained completely 'apolitical', focusing on personal transformation and Church growth.²²

¹⁷ Executive Minute Book, 6 August 1977 to 25 September 1984, ZAW.

¹⁸ *The Macedonian Call* (1), 20 May 1972, published by FIFM International. This appears to have been the only issue of the journal ever published.

¹⁹ File AOGA Correspondence, 1964–80, ZAW.

²⁰ File CFNI, 1973–96, ZAW. Interview, Abel Sande, Waterfalls, 30 April 1996. Personal reminiscences, M. Chesah, 21 January 1996.

²¹ 'Call unto me and I will answer thee and show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest.' (MS, *c.* 1977, file Histories, ZAW.)

²² 'Ten Days of Prayer and Fasting'. Letter from Ezekiel Guti to Congregations, 16 December 1976, ZAW.

Nevertheless, AOGA's prayers were answered. By 1979 the movement could muster 10,000 members at a National Big Sunday gathering in the National Sports centre (Erwin, *c.* 1986: 118). It had also expanded along migrant labour networks into Malawi and Zambia and was growing rapidly in Mozambique (Guti, 1989, 1995). AOGA was poised to exploit the new post-colonial dispensation.

ZAOGA, ZIMBABWEAN NATIONALISM AND AMERICAN IMPERIALISM

By 1980 AOGA had evolved considerably. It had grown numerically and socially many of its founder members had become upwardly mobile. The movement's strict work ethic had both created and attracted businessmen and white-collar workers. While it retained a large township base, and would subsequently create a large rural membership, its socially mobile members migrated across the railway lines first into the former coloured suburbs and later into the former white suburbs. No longer did its founder members need to turn their relative deprivation into a mark of grace; they were ready to embrace the world (Bruce, 1996: 218). More important, there now appeared the opportunity to do so. Zimbabwean independence had opened the political field to black players as well as white. And the religious field was now open to movements like AOGA which had previously been restrained by the missionary monopoly of access to the state. Mission Christianity had been weakened by the wartime flight of expatriate personnel and momentarily compromised by nationalist slurs on its close relation with colonialism. Now that AOGA members 'had access to people in positions of power and judged that they had the numbers to effect changes in political systems, politics became a new game open to them' (Cleary, 1997: 13).

At the birth of independent Zimbabwe in 1980 AOGA metamorphosed into ZAOGA and made a concerted effort to raise its national and international profile.²³ Now free to move outside the country, Guti, along with senior Church leaders like Joseph Choto and Bartholomew Manjoro, helped expand the movement into Zaire, Rwanda, Botswana, South Africa and England.²⁴ But the first decade of Zimbabwe's independence did not bring the national recognition ZAOGA's leaders had hoped for. In the 1980s the movement's fortunes were shaped more by the culture and practices of Zimbabwean nationalism than by external relations with the American-dominated global born-again movement.

Like the main-line denominations ZAOGA initially trod very carefully in its relations with the new ruling party, ZANU/PF. Zimbabwean cultural nationalism had cast the Church as a retro-

²³ Minutes of Special Meeting of Executive Committee, 6 March 1980, file AOGA Correspondence, 1964-80, ZAW.

²⁴ Interviews, Bartholomew Manjoro, Belvedere, 27 April 1996; Joseph Choto, Bulawayo, August 1996.

gressive agent in colonial Southern Rhodesia, associated with land expropriation, racial segregation and cultural imperialism. At independence, Church leaders felt at a moral disadvantage and threw themselves behind state-led development to prove their good will (Maxwell, 1995). Hence one of Guti's first directives was to order assemblies to co-operate with the newly formed Ministry of Women's Affairs.²⁵ Two years later he told his executive, 'Christianity is to have a burden for the country and help people with needs'. A senior pastor was selected to liaise with the government over development issues and ZAOGA initiated its own development projects as well as donating to state-led enterprises.

ZAOGA's new-found social concern was, in part, shaped by enduring sectarian tendencies. 'In our constitution we have a clause saying no beer drinking, no ancestral songs or political songs because we just support the government', Guti told the same executive meeting in 1983.²⁶ But the movement was evolving and realigning itself ideologically. It had always been sympathetic to the idea of black autonomy and was fully aware of the force of Zimbabwean cultural nationalism. The leadership rapidly appreciated the value of 'African authenticity'. In 1981 Guti announced to the Church leadership, 'We don't just take from Western culture'. Henceforth the Mbira, a musical instrument usually associated with spirit possession, was encouraged in Church services. The Christ for Zimbabwe Institute was renamed the Africa Multi-nation for Christ College. Formal links with CFNI Dallas decreased as the movement recruited white American Bible teachers for its college from small independent or semi-independent assemblies which could not threaten the autonomy of the movement.²⁷ And the movement's international front, FIFMI, floated free from its American patrons. The leadership also made a concerted effort to write the movement's history in a manner which resonated with the prevailing nationalist ideology. The first edition of what became the Church's testament stressed Guti's primal encounter with God, unmediated by missionaries, and made connections with seemingly indigenous traditions of Zimbabwean and South African pentecostalism. In line with ZANU/PF's emphasis on self-reliance, ZAOGA's canonised history emphasised its penny capitalism and financial autonomy (Erwin, *c.* 1986; Guti, 1989; Maxwell, 2000).

Adrian Hastings has observed 'a marked shift in many [African] countries over the last twenty years from a "traditionalising" to an "internationalising" (even "Americanising") model of independency' (1994b). This is doubtless true, and the shift can even be discerned in the more recent stages of ZAOGA's evolution (Maxwell, 2000). Nevertheless, the transformative force of Zimbabwean nationalism

²⁵ Executive Minutes, 26 May 1981, ZAW.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 28 April 1983, ZAW.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 26 and 27 May 1981, ZAW.

meant that in the 1980s the movement initially de-emphasised the American connections out of which it had made so much capital in the previous decade.

Despite ZAOGA's conversion to the language and practices of development, and its sympathies with cultural nationalism, relations with the ruling party were not good. ZAOGA's highly effective and locally rooted organisational structure gave it a remarkable capacity for rapid multi-ethnic mobilisation, a capacity which the new Zimbabwean government seemed to fear as much as its colonial predecessor (Fields, 1985; Maxwell, 1999). Moreover its organisational character, its acronymic name and its leadership cult made it look like a political party. Its predominantly urban character meant that, like the ruling party, it could regularly gather its membership together in sports stadiums for large rallies. And in its control over the younger generation it rivalled the ZANU/PF Youth League. Worse still, like the newly constituted Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC), ZAOGA suffered from appearing to have the wrong political connections.²⁸ The flight or outmanoeuvring of the movement's co-founders throughout the 1980s served only to reinforce the movement's image of being dominated by the Ndau—an ethnic group which maintained strong loyalties to the rebel nationalist leader, Ndabingi Sithole, and his ZANU Ndonga party. This impression was reinforced by the fact that the archbishop's wife, Eunor, was related to Sithole. Finally, because its sectarian tendencies were never fully transcended, ZAOGA challenged ZANU/PF's authoritarian version of nationalism, which itself was founded on intolerance of pluralism.²⁹

The first big clash with the government came with the Zimbabwean born-again movement's connections with the American religious right. In 1986 ZAOGA, along with other pentecostal, charismatic and evangelical Churches, supported Reinhard Bonnke's Christ for all Nations Pan-African Crusade.³⁰ Following the Crusade, Ralph Mahoney, one of the team's American personnel, published a right-wing tirade against Zimbabwe:

The site for this FIRE CONFERENCE was a large complex which was constructed from contributions from East European communist nations . . .

I am sure that the communists never dreamed that their 'conference center' would one day be a meeting place of Africa's largest ever church congress on evangelism of the African Continent . . .

The nation became the object of communist interest some fifteen years ago, resulting in a 10 year civil war. The war ended tragically when the leaders of Rhodesia were betrayed by US Government State Department leaders.

Smith replaced by a 'communist "president" dictator' . . .

²⁸ Hallencreutz (1988). In the ZCC's case it suffered from association with Abel Muzorewa.

²⁹ A useful comparison with the post-independence situation between UNIP and the Lumpa movement in Zambia can be made here. See Van Binsbergen (1981), chapter 8.

³⁰ For a detailed description of the crusade see Gifford (1987).

If you fail to pull to the side of the road when the “president” comes by—the soldiers start shooting at you with their machine guns.

. . . Mercedes Benz were imported for all the ‘dignitaries’ of the new black government, right down to the level of village mayors . . .

The Mdebela [*sic*] tribal peoples (political opponents of the Shona tribal peoples) have been slaughtered in their thousands.³¹

In his book *The New Crusaders* Gifford interprets the incident as evidence of the American religious right’s ‘full political agenda’ for southern Africa (1991: 65–6). This interpretation correctly analyses Mahoney’s agenda but ignores the context and reception of the tirade by the Zimbabwean born-again movement, which had had very little control over the organisation or content of the crusade. Buoyed up by the prevailing spirit of Zimbabwean nationalism, the leaders of what constituted the majority of the Zimbabwean born-again Churches wrote an open letter to Mahoney demanding an apology. The letter, which was subsequently published in *The Herald*, Zimbabwe’s daily paper, complained that:

It seems to us that you equate western culture plus capitalism to Christianity and make communism an enemy of both. We wish to make it clear that our stand as church leaders in this country is that Christianity is not a political ideology. We are not here to propagate western imperialism, but to preach a gospel of salvation through the risen Christ . . .

It seems to us that standing for one’s dignity and self identity to your mind turns any black person into a communist that any white government must be helped to eradicate. It is tragic that in purporting to help us reach our people, you used the occasion to betray us.

Although, in retrospect, Mahoney’s accusations concerning ethnic violence against the Ndebele were not inaccurate, the born-again leaders were correct in reading his tirade as ‘an insult to our sovereignty as a nation’.³²

Nevertheless, the Zimbabwean born-again movement, ZAOGA included, burnt its fingers over the Mahoney incident. From the mid-1980s onward the movement began to realign within the spectrum of American Christianities. Henceforth, Guti cultivated links with black pentecostals whose doctrines on prosperity, black pride and self-actualisation amplified his own teaching against the Third World mentality: an attitude of fatalism, and deference to whites (Maxwell, 1998). Although this realignment within American Christianity was, in part, intended to make ZAOGA appear less vulnerable to right-wing causes, the movement had other ideological and material motives. Guti was not always at ease with the whites who taught in his Bible college in

³¹ R. Mahoney, ‘Focus on Africa’, in *Digest of World Missionary Alliance Plan* (1987).

³² *Herald*, 19 March 1986. The letter was signed by Ezekiel Guti of ZAOGA, Langton Kupara of the Apostolic Faith Mission and Richmond Chiudza of the Glad Tidings Fellowship. Gifford merely footnotes the African response (1991: 79 n. 82).

the early 1980s. Some, at least, came from the populist tradition within the US Assemblies of God which valued the 'socially "humble" person as more receptive to the gospel' and was little concerned with social respectability (Freston, 1995: 124). They challenged Guti about his growing personality cult and fixation with money. Others had little time for his assumption of the title 'Archbishop' and his wearing of clerical garb.³³

Around the mid-1980s Guti made connections with black Americans and Afro-Caribbeans. Their brand of Christianity was characterised by glossy magazines, high-profile conventions in plush hotels and heavy reliance on the electronic media. According to Gayle Erwin, Guti's hagiographer, this realignment represented the Archbishop's attempts to enter what he perceived as the big league.³⁴

In ideological terms the realignment also signalled the beginnings of a shift towards the right which would take on greater significance in the post-Cold War era. While these new American friends had a black theology more consonant with ZAOGA's own historical experience they nevertheless preached a prosperity gospel which increasingly aligned the movement with the values of liberal capitalism. But, whatever subtle ideological shifts were taking place, the leadership continued to defend African autonomy. Mindful of the force of American imperialism, US influences were increasingly brought under the centralising control of the leadership, who policed transnational connections through a separate office staffed exclusively by Guti's family and friends. Visiting Americans were always chaperoned and those who taught at the Bible school had their preaching activities restricted to certain churches.

The next clash with the government occurred over a prospective big-league event. In February 1988 Nathan Shamuyarira, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, banned ZAOGA's rally at the National Sports Stadium, Harare, and the Ministry of Home Affairs deported the invited black speakers. The rally had been widely advertised on radio and television. Shamuyarira sent Guti the following rebuke:

TRANS-DENOMINATIONAL RALLIES OR ASSEMBLIES

When you hold trans-denominational public gatherings that go beyond usual church services in their scope and organisation, and when they involve preachers from other countries, especially from the United States of America, you should seek the permission of this ministry to do so. There may be international repercussions to such occasions, which go beyond preaching the word of God.³⁵

³³ Interview, Reverend Ronnie Meek, Smyrna TN, 26 April 1997. (Meek taught at ZAOGA's bible college in the mid-1980s.) Interview, Gayle Erwin, Cathedral City CA, 29 April 1997. Sermon, Myles Munroe, International Leadership Conference, Harare Sheraton, 1993.

³⁴ Interview, Gayle Erwin, Cathedral City CA, 9 April 1997.

³⁵ N. Shamuyarira, Minister of Foreign Affairs, to Archbishop E. H. Guti, 15 February 1988, file Relations with Government, ZAW.

Undaunted by the government ban, ZAOGA's leaders fasted, prayed and then took the Commissioner of Police to court, gaining an order to restrain him from banning the rally. The rally went ahead and Guti preached a message of personal repentance and black pride:

. . . our people want to be servants of white people. They trust whites better than our own people. This is what we call third world mentality . . . Don't go to Europe and learn their ungodly things. Learn what they used to do before [they were backsliders] . . . One day I saw another man carrying his car battery and asked him where he was going and he said, 'I am taking my battery to trustworthy white people.' You see! We must change our minds and be faithful to one another. . . . We will trust our skin. Only righteousness can change our minds. Without righteousness we will live in a country telling lies to each other.³⁶

A month later Guti wrote to Shamuyarira demanding an apology. In what must be one of the bluntest African clerical rebuttals of state power in recent years he pointed out that his movement had gained approval from the Ministry of Home Affairs for the rally and complained about the 'confusion and misunderstanding' between that Ministry and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the little warning he had been given of the ban: 'After advertising through the radio, local paper and TV wasn't it the duty of the minister to let us know in time? If the minister was too busy doesn't he have secretaries or deputies to assist him?' Drawing together the rhetoric of black pride and cultural nationalism, he threw them back in the Minister's face in a stinging rebuke:

Are whites to be honoured more than blacks? We couldn't understand whether the move to deport blacks was in the interest of our Government . . . We pray that God may not put into authority Zimbabweans with Rhodesian minds.³⁷

While Marxism-Leninism had lost much of its rhetorical force by the late 1980s, ZAOGA leaders rightly recognised the continuing force of cultural nationalism as among the most powerful grounds for criticising the government and holding it to account (see also Alexander *et al.*, forthcoming).

In seeking to ban the rally the government may have been influenced by two incidents preceding it. The previous year ZAOGA had experienced its most bloody public schism to date when the respected evangelist Abel Sande left the movement, attempting to take part of his Mashonaland East Province with him. The schism was accompanied by violence between Guti and Sande factions, and the destruction of

³⁶ 'Life up a Standard for the People', National Stadium, Harare, 7 February 1988, cited in Guti (1989: 23-7).

³⁷ Ezekiel Guti to N. M. Shamuyarira, 14 March 1988, file Relations with Government, ZAW.

property. Given Sande's undoubted popularity, the Zimbabwean government may have feared a pentecostal punch-up at the rally. Secondly, the movement's Overseer of Zairean Assemblies appeared to have been using his Church identity and transnational connections to facilitate dealings in the arms trade.³⁸ But these two factors are not necessarily at odds with the ruling party's overriding concern that ZAOGA undermined its project of nation building. As a movement which commanded strong loyalties, and loyalties which transcended the Zimbabwean state, ZAOGA evoked notions of citizenship very different from ZANU/PF's hegemonic project for the nation (Werbner, 1991: 158–60).³⁹

But ZAOGA's confrontation with the government came at a pivotal moment in Church–state relations. The signing of the Unity Accord between PF/ZAPU and the ruling party on 22 December 1987 brought about a rapid change in the political climate. 'People were able to direct their attention to the real issues and could air their views without being mistaken as supporters of ZAPU or dissidents, hence being labelled as enemies of the government' (Ncube, 1989: 309). In this new environment of openness the ruling party's legitimacy rapidly began to wane. ZAOGA doubtless sensed this in its confrontation with the government in 1988. In his subsequent sermon at the National Stadium Gutu did preach loyalty to the government. But while the language of his address—sin, backsliding, righteousness—was not overtly confrontational, he did put forward an 'argument of accountability' (Werbner, 1995; Maxwell, 1995), in itself a moral critique of the *status quo*. Recovering from its moral disadvantage in the early 1980s, the Zimbabwean Church now represented new sources of legitimate authority, in contrast to the diminishing authority of ZANU/PF.

ZAOGA AND THE ONE-PARTY STATE: 'THE POLITICS OF THE BELLY'

Dogged by corruption scandals, a poor human rights record and an economic downturn, the ruling party lost legitimacy from 1988 onwards and support from the older historic mission Churches began to decline. Various agencies within the Catholic Church started to voice concern. The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace began to press for democratisation and accountability,⁴⁰ while the radical Catholic monthly, *Moto*, revived public concern over the 5th Brigade's ethnic-based violence against the Ndebele.⁴¹ Silveria House, an engine of Catholic social teaching, began to critique the newly adopted Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (Balleis, 1992; Renfrew,

³⁸ Chimpaka Lawanda Penge, Lusaka, to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Zimbabwe, 13 February 1987, file Relations with Government, ZAW. Interviews, Ezekiel Guti, Glen Lorne, 8 February 1996; Simon Monde, Glenorah, 7 February 1996.

³⁹ See Marshall (1998) on alternative notions of citizenship.

⁴⁰ CCJP, Annual Report, 1992, p. 9.

⁴¹ Oskar Wermter, 'Time to choose', *Moto*, November–December 1992.

1992). Other main-line Churches followed suit (Maxwell, 1995). As these Churches publicly distanced themselves from the ruling party, ZAOGA's leadership, in its search for respectability and advantage in the religious field, filled the legitimacy gap. But this religious realignment was more than an instrumental move on ZAOGA's part. Its religious leaders were taking their place among Zimbabwe's dominant elite, participating in its culture of patrimonialism and prebendalism. On the state's part 'it was inevitable that . . . [it] should attempt to absorb religious personalities who are suspected of having the ability to control the youth, and instil them with an alternative model of society' (Bayart, 1993: 188).

Admittedly, Guti did develop what could be described as an explicitly 'political theology', an idiosyncratic political and economic programme which attributes Africa's current crisis to a shifting combination of external agency, moral failing and the malign work of Satan. This theology was first articulated at ZAOGA's International Christian Leadership Summit for Africa, held in the Harare Sheraton Conference Centre in February 1993, and in a number of Guti's sermons which were later published as a short book:

All of these problems we are facing in Africa, most of them are not our own but it's outside influence which causes us to fight one another. So that they can sell more guns and kill each other. They are earning their living through selling guns . . .

Preaching alone without involvement in the development of the nation it can only help spiritually, but people are living in poverty. That's why the politicians are not worried about the indigenous churches . . .

The signing of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme has caused African countries to release exports in order to get foreign exchange. By doing that we have sent all our good things for little profit, trying to get foreign currency from devalued local currency . . . why is it that the American Government borrowed billions, trillions, but their money never devalued, why? You must think. Their people never suffer.⁴²

This hybrid of evangelical morality, liberation theology and cultural nationalism described, and proposed political remedies for, the structural condition of the majority of ZAOGA adherents, many of whom filled the seats of the conference centre. On another level it was rhetorically effective showmanship for a constituency outside the movement. The speech was what Herbst, in his study of contemporary Zimbabwe, calls 'symbolic politics', mirroring the ruling party's rhetoric on South African regional dominance and American imperialism (Herbst, 1990: 233-34). The context of Guti's utterances are important for understanding their significance. The International Leadership Summit was a huge public relations exercise designed to impress local politicians and enable Guti to make his mark on the

⁴² Sermon, E. H. Guti, International Leadership Conference, 9 February 1993, and Guti (1994).

International Third World Leaders' Association (ITWLA) which he had recently joined and rapidly came to lead.⁴³

The style of high-profile political posturing adopted by Guti in the 1990s derives directly from the ITWLA. It is a form of politics highly conducive to the neo-patrimonialism that so characterises the practice of African states. It functions through personal ties between religious and political elites on the pretext of reforming the political process: 'Our major thrust is to become a catalytic agent for unity among Christian leaders, statesmen, Churches and Ministries who desire to share a common bond of commitment to the Kingdom of God.'⁴⁴ Conducted by high-flying 'religious executives' (Martin, 1996: 35), this politics of influence happens at state banquets, presidential prayer breakfasts in international hotels and high-profile Christian conventions. Save for its emphasis on 'marriage' and 'morality', and the virtues of liberal capitalism, it essentially lacks ideological content which can be readily transformed into a political programme.⁴⁵ It draws from an elite political culture which capitalises on the 'Third World' label but ignores the problems of developing countries.

From the early 1990s ZAOGA began to court the leadership of ZANU/PF. Party leaders and their spouses were invited to conventions and conferences and the opening of new churches.⁴⁶ And the movement lent its conference centre for state events. When President Mugabe made anti-feminist (Guti, 1995: 58) or homophobic statements ZAOGA members marched in support. Although these were moral issues where there was ideological agreement between the movement and the ruling party, ZAOGA's press statement on the issue of homosexuality made a point of stressing the movement's 'solidarity with his Excellency the President of Zimbabwe'.⁴⁷ More important, ZAOGA's leadership was seen to place its massive constituency at the disposal of ZANU/PF. One of the first formal engagements of Robert Mugabe's presidential election campaign in 1996 was a pastors' meeting for those involved in the Benny Hinn Healing Crusade, an event convened and controlled by ZAOGA, which chose to convene it at ZANU/PF headquarters. The event was brought to a close with a prayer led by Benny Hinn. Along with others on the platform, Mugabe raised his hands as Hinn prayed.

⁴³ In his recent update of the movement's sacred history Guti reports that the conference 'made the servant and apostle of God to be invited to be a spiritual father for other countries' (1995: 64). A few pages earlier Guti tells his readers that Myles Munroe, Chairman of ITWLA, had declared 'by the Spirit of God that God has made Dr Ezekiel Guti the spiritual father of Third World Christian Leaders' (1995: 46).

⁴⁴ 'Introducing the Third World Leaders Association', n.d., file International Third World Leaders Association 1993-96, ZAW.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* For a Latin American comparison see Lehmann (1996: 210-15).

⁴⁶ Ministers and their wives were particularly invited to Husbands Agape and Gracious Women meetings. (In line with Church growth strategies ZAOGA organises ministries aimed at evangelising specific social categories such as wives, husbands, young people, students, etc.). File Gracious Women, ZAW.

⁴⁷ 'Homosexuality', ZAOGA press release, September 1995.

This moment of presidential charisma could be interpreted as a gesture of sheer pragmatism. Mugabe has long cast himself as a sober atheist and has never been known for acts of ecstatic activity. Nevertheless, he may well have been captured by the passion of the moment. Other government ministers have certainly been moved by ZAOGA events. As guest of honour at the 1993 International Leadership Conference, Vice-president Muzenda turned his address into a lengthy sermon, punctuated by 'Amen's' and 'Halleluyas'. William Gumbochena, the Deputy Minister of Education and Culture, was deeply moved by the testimonies of former street kids at a ZAOGA youth rally.⁴⁸ Florence Chituro, Minister of Home Affairs, who accompanied Gumbochena, is well known as a born-again Christian, sympathetic to ZAOGA. In his conversion to pentecostal practice President Mugabe may well have been moved by another sort of passion. His second wife, Grace, is a ZAOGA member and related to one of the overseers. Moreover, Mugabe's sister teaches at a Sunday school in ZAOGA's Chispite Assembly. Such close familial relations are crucial determinants in contemporary Zimbabwean politics.

The day after the ZAOGA/ZANU/PF rally, *The Herald* displayed a picture of Mugabe and Guti on its front page.⁴⁹ 'Catch the Cockerel before dawn,' a senior pastor told his faithful a few days later when encouraging them to vote, the cockerel being the ZANU/PF symbol. ZAOGA's 'proselytisation' of ZANU/PF has also enlightened it about the civic virtue of pentecostalism. Today ZAOGA-style pentecostalism is seen as means of social control, an ideology which gets young people off the streets and provides them with a moral framework.⁵⁰ Moreover, in the post-Cold War era the prosperity gospel and bourgeois values propounded by ZAOGA's leaders are consonant with the regime's abandonment of Marxism-Leninism and engagement with economic liberalisation and structural adjustment.

In this 'reciprocal assimilation of elites' (Bayart, 1993: 150-79) ZAOGA gets a helping hand to expand within the national and global religious field (see also Freston, 1996). In particular, Guti has used his connections with Mugabe to aid the movement's transnational expansion, such as a letter of recommendation to President Moi to facilitate the movement's registration in Kenya, or a visa for the Archbishop to visit and preach (clandestinely) in China.⁵¹ More

⁴⁸ Interview, William Gumbochena, Deputy Minister of Education and Culture, Harare, 31 July 1996.

⁴⁹ *Herald*, 29 February 1996.

⁵⁰ Interview, William Gumbochena, Deputy Minister of Education and Culture, Harare, 31 July 1996.

⁵¹ For Kenya, Archbishop Ezekiel Guti to President Robert Mugabe, 24 May 1994, file Relations with Government, ZAW. For China, sermon preached by Ezekiel Guti, South Africa, 3 June 1995, file Sermons, ZAW. In this sermon Guti was extolling the virtues of support for the government. He told his audience of his difficulty in getting travel documents and then remarked, 'We have a very good President. If we have any problems we just go to him.'

generally, good relations with the government, especially the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and of Trade and Commerce, facilitate the movement of money, personnel and equipment necessary for transnational crusades and Zimbabwe-based international conferences and conventions. American evangelists and healers are seen no longer as a threat but among other things, as a political opportunity.

The 'emergent political hybridity' from this new-found reciprocity is 'a two-way process' (Werbner, 1996: 16–17). While Mugabe lifts his hands to become momentarily a charismatic Christian, gives his testimony at prayer breakfasts, and appropriates the language of moral and spiritual renewal to replace the discredited rhetoric of Marxism-Leninism, so the ZAOGA elite find at their disposal a wealth of bureaucratic and symbolic material to aid the restructuring and consolidation of the movement in their favour. Wearing the ruling party's clothes now becomes fair exchange for pentecostal legitimation. Like President Mugabe, Archbishop Guti's authority is boosted by civic ceremonial displays: the motorcade, the staged entry and exit, the birthday gift. It is celebrated in women's songs, emphasised through the globalisation of his photo portrait. Before each day's work at ZAOGA headquarters in Waterfalls, Harare, devotions are held, during which a reworked version of the former Zimbabwean national anthem is sung:

God bless Africa,
Exalt its name.
Hear our prayers.
God bless your family.

God bless ZAOGA,
Exalt its name.
Hear our prayers.
God bless your family.

God bless Ezekiel,
Uplift his spirit.
Hear our prayers.
God bless your servant.

In a quite literal illustration of what Richard Werbner calls 'cross-dressing' (Werbner, 1996: 17) Eunor Guti arrives at church events, amid much fluster and flurry, like royalty (or the First Lady), dressed in gold and silks, adorned with a brooch shaped like a crown, wearing a brightly coloured turban.

Moreover the ruling party provides ZAOGA's leadership with an excellent blueprint with which to restructure internally. The dominant political culture of 'chiefism', tribalism and nepotism has been reproduced within the movement. Since the 1980s it has been riven with factionalism. Ezekiel Guti and his wife have systematically purged the movement's co-founders and replaced them with successful businessmen, family members and those of their Ndau ethnic group. A personality cult, not dissimilar from the cult of the African President, is encouraged, not least through the rewriting and celebration of the

movement's history as Guti's hagiography. In the politics of internal restructuring much is made of Guti's access to the President. Photographs of Robert Mugabe, accompanied by Guti, visiting the Bible school adorn the walls of the headquarters. The dominant political culture is also an important source of legitimation. It legitimates pentecostalism's developmental tendency towards authoritarianism, and the bloody schisms of the 1980s and early 1990s when Kupara, Sande, Choto, Manjoro and others were forced out of the movement.

At times ZAOGA's leaders sound more like chest-thumping politicians than men of God. In a surprisingly unpastoral statement to his annual pastors' conference Guti taunted his Church leaders, '[Some of you] are with me because there is nowhere else to go. Others are with me because I have overpowered them . . . they cannot do better things. They do not love me but they have nowhere to go . . .'⁵² The assimilation of ruling-party practice also legitimates the rapid movement of resources up the hierarchy through the processes of gift exchange and clientage. In August 1996 Overseer Christopher Chadoka, the movement's No. 3, was called upon by the popular monthly *Parade* to defend the leadership's increasing tendency towards nepotism and tribalism. He chose to do so by drawing not on biblical precedent but on the practice of patrimonialism. 'If we look at these companies, are there no managing directors' relatives? . . . And if you buy bread, do you give it to other people, leaving your relatives hungry?'⁵³ In a vivid illustration of what Bayart (1993) calls the 'politics of the belly' Chadoka enlightened the 1996 Deeper Life Conference on the virtues of giving:

I did not know that you can call money, saying, 'Money, come, come, come' [beckoning gesture]. Many times in my house if we did not have eggs I would walk up and down [praying] because I am pastor and you would see the eggs coming . . . One day my kids told me the meat in the fridge was getting finished. I said, 'I am not going to buy, it will come.' One region would bring a goat or a sheep. If Mrs C. . . . was here—she was filling my deep-freezer with meat. When I was in Norton preaching, raising money . . . somebody ran away and brought a goat. Now the boy who is working at my home is getting tired of killing because the God of Ezekiel supplies.⁵⁴

It is noteworthy, however, that the wealth of the ZAOGA leadership is often seen as a 'chief political virtue' rather than an 'object of disapproval' (Bayart, 1993: 242). 'For those at the very bottom of the social order, the material prosperity of their betters is not itself reprehensible so long as they too can benefit materially from their association with a patron linking them with elites' (Chabal and Daloz, 1999: 42). 'A man of wealth who is able to amass and redistribute

⁵² Ezekiel Guti, Pastors' Conference, Glenorah, 9 November 1995.

⁵³ *Parade*, August 1996.

⁵⁴ Overseer Christopher Chadoka, 'Better Giving', Glenorah, 10 February 1996.

becomes a “man of honour” (Bayart, 1993: 242).⁵⁵ As in other African Christian movements, a rich and powerful leader is believed to be more able to secure property for the Church and thus put it on a sure economic foundation. A ‘big’ Christian leader is also viewed as likely to be more effective in representations to the government, able to rectify the injustices and dispossessions visited upon his people by the white man (Sundkler, 1961: 129–30; Campbell, 1995: chapter 1).

In seeking to ground African religion and politics in local idioms there is a danger of exoticising them. The excesses of American ‘televangelists’ like Jimmy Swaggart and Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker are well known (Blumhofer, 1993: 254–60). Some of the Guti family legitimate their hold over the movement by pointing out that Christ for the Nations, Dallas, is now run by the widow ‘Mrs Gordon (Freda) Lindsay’ and her son, Dennis. Moreover, American evangelical leaders, such as Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson, have attempted to influence the political process, and successive American Presidents have not fought shy of calling themselves ‘born again’ or appropriating the Christian language of moral and spiritual renewal. However, in Zimbabwe religious and political interactions do take specifically local form. Given the relative weakness of civil society in Africa, the relative strength of the Church (Gifford, 1995, 1998) and the limited size of the dominant elite, Church leaders can exert a direct and personal influence on politicians in a way that the complexities of the American political system would not allow. This personalised politics stands in contrast to the highly organised politicking of the US Christian right.

‘WE ARE NOT LIKE ZANU/PF’: THE POLITICS OF THE BASE

Despite the entry of ZAOGA’s leadership into the political culture of corporatism and clientage, the movement’s contribution to politics is contradictory, a result of the complex interaction of both developmental and transformational contradictions. In terms of developmental contradictions, the movement is a victim of its own success. While it has engendered social mobility and expanded across classes it has retained its original township base and reached out into the rural areas. Today it is a microcosm of wider society, embodying all its tensions. While ZAOGA’s dominant elite attempt to foster a civic consciousness within the movement this identity is compromised by tensions of class, generation and ethnicity. Likewise, as the leadership tends towards authoritarianism it is in tension with the more egalitarian culture located at the grass roots of the movement. The newer richer members of the movement, along with those who advanced their position through

⁵⁵ Although Bayart, Chabal and Daloz share an interest in elite politics their approaches are different. Chabal and Daloz criticise Bayart for assuming a distinction between ‘high’ and ‘low’ politics. However, as this article shows, such a distinction is crucial. While everyone eats, ‘not everyone “eats” equally’ (Bayart, 1993: 235).

pentecostalism, find their tendency towards unfettered consumption trammelled by the aspirations of the mass at the movement's base.

These developmental contradictions interact with transformational tensions to further complicate ZAOGA's relations to politics. While ZAOGA's leadership articulates itself to the politics of patrimonialism fostered by Zimbabwe's dominant elite factions, those operating at the grass roots have made connections with populist and democratic causes. It is, of course, easy to romanticise the grass-roots culture of the movement. Like all human institutions the local assembly is subject to hierarchy, prejudice and power struggles. Neither can it be considered separately from the politics of the leadership. Some elders and deacons will organise gifts to well placed overseers to secure their patronage (see Maxwell, 1998). Nevertheless, in-depth fieldwork in a number of assemblies does point to signs of an alternative egalitarian culture in conflict with that of the dominant faction of leaders.

ZAOGA's dominant elite espouses a clear ideology. Its teachings and practices reproduce the values of liberal capitalism: 'the acquisition of consumer durables and real estate' (Lehmann, 1996: 217); the centrality of the nuclear family; the virtues of education, cleanliness and sobriety (Maxwell, 1997). But this class ideology is clouded by the elite's promotion of a civic consciousness: emphasis on citizenship, obeying the law, respecting property, challenging corruption (Guti, 1989, 1994). This consciousness, based on the identity of the total religious community, was fostered in the 1980s by the gathering of the movement together at Deeper Life Conferences, National Big Sundays and rallies of the various ZAOGA associations. By the 1990s the movement had expanded to such a degree that it was forced to decentralise. Big Sundays were restricted to regions and districts within them. Tensions of class, generation and ethnicity have increasingly come to the fore.⁵⁶

These social divisions are most manifest among the young pastors and Bible school students. Many of these young men (and women) do indeed have nowhere else to go. Often they are from the streets or a poor background, possessing few qualifications. They are reliant on the Church for their training, bride-price and wages. They are a long way from the spoils of power which they see rapidly disappearing up the Church hierarchy. Some make ethnic jokes, complaining that they have not progressed within the movement because they did not marry an Ndau. While the gifted, the well connected and the sycophantic are promoted to richer churches, and the opportunity of extensive gifts from their flocks, most remain poor. While many pastors look up the hierarchy, coveting the wealth of the more fortunate, they are nevertheless vulnerable to 'capture from below' (Campbell, 1995: 142). Because they are dependent on their local assemblies for their survival these pentecostal foot soldiers are drawn into local struggles for

⁵⁶ For Latin American comparisons see Gill (1990) and Muratorio (1981).

housing, health and employment and spend a good deal of time meeting the material needs of their flock.

Compromised by their dependence on the senior leadership, young pastors and Bible school students 'toy with power rather than confronting it directly' (Mbembe, 1992: 22). While a senior pastor saw fit to tell his flock to 'catch the cockerel before dawn' a younger pastor told his congregation a joke about an American tourist who confused ZANU/PF headquarters, emblazoned with the symbol of a cockerel, with the fast-food chain Chicken Inn.⁵⁷ Many of the young pastors shared the delight, widespread among Harare's citizens, at the much publicised by-election victory of the rebel politician Margaret Dongo over the official ZANU/PF candidate in 1995. Like the young people in South Africa's Zionist churches, they are none too impressed with the politics of their elders (Kiernan, 1994: 79–81).

The pressure from below can exhibit itself in outright challenges to clerical power. One assembly in the township of Mbare, who described themselves as 'some of the poorest people in Zimbabwe', organised a petition and delegation to headquarters against a greedy pastor who appeared bent on humiliating church members rather than seeking the betterment of the whole religious community (Maxwell, 1998).

Tensions of class, ethnicity and generation are given added force by the culture of the pentecostal assembly, which itself can pick up messages from the wider society. At the level of the local gathering the disciplined believer participates in a democratic culture of pragmatism and competition. Social relations are remade at the base of the movement, within the 'freespace' of local assembly (Martin, 1990). Ethnic and class differences are repatterned in the language of Christian brotherhood, and the marginalised find human dignity. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, women and young people participate fully in assembly leadership and are encouraged to seek greater responsibility in their careers and public life. Prophecy, tongues, healing are all seen as gifts of God. As such they restore dignity to the downtrodden and give them an alternative, divine, authority by which to live. Irrespective of social category, the believer becomes a new person. Henceforth he or she is a person of consequence, value and authority, a 'member of a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation' (1 Peter 2). The born-again Christian is dressed in God's 'finest robes' and given His 'ring of authority' (Luke 15). Biblical images of personal and communal transformation offer a radical and attractive alternative to the now much discredited political discourse of Marxism-Leninism (see also Martin, 1996: 6–7).

Signs of an alternative plural and egalitarian political culture abound in the life of the assembly. Local-level financial accountability is assured, as tithes and offerings are recorded with mathematical accuracy. In pre-service Bible studies scripture is discussed in an

⁵⁷ Students at the Bible college regularly referred to ZANU/PF headquarters as 'Chicken Inn'.

atmosphere conducive to debate and to mutual respect. But, more significantly, elections to the posts of deacons and elders are conducted with great scrupulousness, in marked contrast to the corruption and filibustering that characterise ruling-party politics. In January 1996 there was some disquiet over the elections in the main assembly in Highfields. The contest had taken place too quickly, and some of those in office had been dropped without warning or a chance to stand again. On 14 January a flying squad of two elders from assemblies outside Highfields arrived to officially nullify the results and re-run the election. Having discoursed from the *Rules and Policy* booklet and checked the credentials of those standing, they oversaw an orderly vote. Once a new set of elders and deacons had been elected to public approval a leading female member of the assembly got up and announced, 'We are not like ZANU/PF. We have a good spirit here.'

Since the movement's beginnings in the early 1960s the egalitarian culture found in its assemblies has in the case of Highfields been influenced by the radical politics of the township, which it did not directly engage with, but nevertheless impinged on the life of the community through rallies, the press, even sports fixtures. ZAOGA's founders drew on the spirit of open mass nationalism to make themselves autonomous from the AFM. By Independence the founders had themselves become a dominant elite and the Highfields Action Party came into being. This new group of pentecostal youth was energised by its experience of wartime mobilisation. It protested against the growing prominence of Guti's second wife and family, and the promotion of businessmen as overseers. Such was the strength of the Action Party's campaign that Guti and his family relocated to Mutare for a while.⁵⁸ It is clear that not all ZAOGA members view the wealth of its dominant elite 'as a symbol of their *collective prominence*' (Chabal and Daloz, 1999: 42). Guti's stocky bodyguard is a forceful reminder of that.

Another source of egalitarianism lies in the movement's associational life. These organisations, which are lay-run and removed from the hierarchy, operate with a degree of autonomy. Particularly influential are the student and postgraduate associations. Their educated elite membership is well read and travelled and has other models of Church government with which to compare ZAOGA. It is also influenced by Western-derived rights discourses which are more than just rhetorical devices, as they are in the hands of political elites (Monga, 1996: 46–54). Hence they speak out in assemblies against erroneous prosperity doctrines and abuses of power. It is widely accepted that Think Progressive ZAOGA (TPZ), a troublesome pressure group within the movement, has its base in this constituency. TPZ recently went to the popular monthly, *Parade*, to expose nepotism, tribalism and authoritarianism within the leadership.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Executive Minutes, 14 February 1981, ZAW. Interview, Cuthbert Makoni, Mount Pleasant, June 1996.

⁵⁹ *Parade*, August and September 1996.

PENTECOSTALISM AND THE STATE

The entrance of ZAOGA into mainstream politics is not, perhaps, as sinister as it first appears. The leadership's political machinations have so far had little effect on the movement's wider membership. Because pentecostalism has voluntarist origins and has traditionally sought a strict separation from the world it is not possible to associate ZAOGA's membership with any specific political/economic programme (Iannaccone, 1993). The populist voluntarism which launched the movement in its early stages now counters and contradicts the chiefist command from the centre.

Moreover the state is not ZAOGA's 'critical referent' (Marshall, 1993: 216). ZAOGA's leadership is accomplished in what Paul Freston describes as 'time serving', 'the art of keeping oneself close to power, regardless of ideology or principle, in order to receive benefits' (1994: 563). Guti instructs his followers:

Every church leader must support the Government and pray for the Government. It is not good for a church leader to take sides in politics because you will not be able to do what Billy Graham does. He prays with any government that comes in because he doesn't take sides. [1994: 44]

ZAOGA's energies are directed first and foremost at constant internal restructuring and domination of the religious field, and the leadership's rhetoric and practice are primarily concerned with this *religious* struggle. Having just purchased the former Dutch Reformed church in Waterfalls for the movement, the jubilant Overseer Chadoka told a crowded suburban gathering:

We will choose which building we need and not waste time. God said we are going to move the names of other churches and put ours in its place . . . The God you will see in this organisation is different. Others come to our Big Sundays to take what we teach to their churches . . . this is the Royal family in the Kingdom of God.⁶⁰

In its spiritual imperialism ZAOGA has come into conflict with other Churches and Christian organisations. Scripture Union has made representations to the Ministry of Education concerning ZAOGA's College and High School Ministry's tendency to get into schools and block SU entry, or hijack SU groups themselves.⁶¹ In dealing with the state a higher profile is, of course, useful. Whereas in the 1980s ZAOGA's attempts to gain a foothold in the Chaplaincy Corps were dismissed because it was not seen as a 'main and well known denomination', today a ZAOGA member is Chaplain in General of the police force.⁶²

⁶⁰ Overseer Chadoka, sermon, Mount Pleasant Big Sunday, University of Zimbabwe, 5 November 1995.

⁶¹ Interview, Tobias Nyatsambo, National Director, Scripture Union, Harare, 8 July 1996.

⁶² Acting Secretary, Chaplaincy Advisory Board, Harare, to ZAOGA, Harare, July 1983, file Relations with Government, ZAW.

Moreover, despite the 'noisiness' (Freston, 1996: 164) of ZAOGA's arrival on the political scene, its importance must not be exaggerated. The Catholic Church's political activity is less visible because the Church has direct access to government Ministers, many of whom are Catholics. And, with decades of experience, Catholic bishops are deft in the art of *Realpolitik*. Catholic political footwork was most recently apparent in the papal blessing of President Mugabe's marriage to his former mistress. While government Ministers recognise the political significance of ZAOGA's large constituency, they still acknowledge that the Catholic, Anglican and Methodist Churches have more political clout, owing to their vast mission infrastructures of health and education.⁶³ Some Ministers know very little about ZAOGA at all.⁶⁴ Thus, while it is significant that Guti was hand-picked by President Mugabe to sit on the 1999 government-appointed commission to redraft the constitution, it is also noteworthy that he is only one of 395 appointees and sits alongside numerous other Church leaders as well as dignitaries representing a host of interest groups. ZAOGA is but one of a range of sources of legitimacy ZANU/PF seeks to draw upon.⁶⁵

Furthermore the already rich plurality of Zimbabwean Christianity is added to by the inclination of ZAOGA's leadership towards authoritarian control. This authoritarianism has spawned a host of schismatic movements, seeking to escape the dominant faction's centralising dividing the pentecostal field even further.

Often the 'noisiness' of ZAOGA's arrival on the political scene is just that. Contemporary pentecostalism is characterised by a good deal of hype and choreography. Pentecostals are fixated upon size. They tend to exaggerate the scale of their memberships in order to demonstrate God's blessing. Pentecostal leaders have also realised that their often socially marginal flocks like to feel part of a movement 'counting for something in society' (Martin, 1990: 65). Everyday events are made miraculous in order to convince members that they are part of a unique and anointed movement. The recent update of the movement's canonised history casts Guti as central to the nation's post-civil war experience. The reader is told that during the International Leadership Summit in 1993 Vice-president Muzenda knelt before Guti 'as the apostle of God prayed for the country to be healed' (Guti, 1995: 63). Yet Muzenda himself had preached a message about individual cleanliness and was coaxed into receiving Guti's blessing by the Ghanaian master of ceremonies Kingsley Fletcher. A disaffected guest speaker at the summit complained that there were in reality very few national or international leaders there at all. The conference centre had been packed with ZAOGA women.⁶⁶

⁶³ Interview, William Gumbochena, Deputy Minister of Education and Culture, Harare, 31 July 1996.

⁶⁴ Interview, Dumiso Dabengwa, Minister of Home Affairs, Harare, July 1996.

⁶⁵ I am grateful to Terence Ranger for drawing my attention to Guti's role on the commission.

⁶⁶ Interview, Reverend Phineas Dube, Harare, 1 March 1996.

Finally, it is apparent that ZAOGA is seeking to create identities which transcend the nation state. Much of Guti's own preaching and writing focuses on a pan-African identity delivered from its deference to whites and proud of its heritage, which claims the Christian mantle from the secularised and apostate Western Church. At other times ZAOGA places itself squarely in the global born-again movement.

CONCLUSION THE SENSE OF PENTECOSTAL PRACTICE

By considering pentecostalism's relations with both elite and grass-roots cultures this article offers insights into its capacity to renew politics. More specifically it sheds light on the debate between Gifford and Martin concerning the power of local creativity, summarised in the introduction. While Gifford's vigorous commitment to political change is praiseworthy, his brusque dismissal of Martin's thesis is unfounded. It is difficult to see how Gifford arrives at his conclusions, given that there is precious little evidence of culture in his work. For him African Christianity is the faith of religious elites: religious NGOs, church councils, pastoral statements, conferences and conventions. There is only very limited evidence of research in townships or rural locations, considering the reception, localisation and manipulation of elite discourses. Such detailed ethnographic case studies might have enlightened him on the 'sense' of pentecostalism, not in his own terms but on those of the believers. Given the persistence of patrimonialism in African politics (Gifford, 1998: 5-8), surely a cultural change in values is necessary for the political process to 'work'⁶⁷ and for structural change to endure.

However, while Martin's work shows much more sensitivity to the idioms and culture of pentecostalism, and its varied response to politics, he nevertheless downplays its tendency to authoritarianism and linked propensity to the politics of corporatism and clientelism (perhaps because the significant Latin American forays into politics occurred after his study; Freston, 1994). At present the highly authoritarian governmental structure of ZAOGA is in tension with forces contributing to a democratic political culture: egalitarianism within the local assembly, new religious identities, empowerment by the spirit. In the long run the movement's contribution to politics will hinge on the eventual balance between these two tendencies.

Moreover, while Martin makes a sound case from precedent for pentecostalism's capacity to renew political culture, he again downplays external transformative influences which might themselves change religious culture. Pentecostalism's lack of religious tradition, its scorn for formal theological education, its reliance on lay initiative, its

⁶⁷ Here I am in agreement with Chabal and Daloz (1999) that the current state of African politics 'works' for elites and their clients but, as this article has made plain, many consider politics to be failing them.

acceptance of supernatural explanations, all make it particularly responsive to local and national agendas. It is possible that ZAOGA will not renew society but be renewed by it, picking up messages from student and trade union movements, lawyers and journalists, NGOs and human rights organisations, pressing for political rights, due legal process and social justice. Or perhaps external and internal tendencies towards egalitarianism will join forces. As President Mugabe grows more removed from his people, and more unpopular, so too does Guti. The comparison is not lost on ZAOGA members.

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ABSTRACT

The article examines relations between pentecostalism and politics in post-colonial Zimbabwe through a case study of one of Africa's largest pentecostal movements, Zimbabwe Assemblies of God, Africa (ZAOGA). The Church's relations with the state change considerably from the colonial to the post-colonial era. The movement began as a sectarian township-based organisation which eschewed politics but used white Rhodesian and American contacts to gain resources and modernise. In the first decade of independence the

leadership embraced the dominant discourses of cultural nationalism and development but fell foul of the ruling party, ZANU/PF, because of its 'seeming' connections with the rebel politician Ndabiningi Sithole and the American religious right. By the 1990s ZAOGA and ZANU/PF had embraced, each drawing legitimacy from the other. However, this reciprocal assimilation of elites and the authoritarianism of ZAOGA's leadership are in tension with the democratic egalitarian culture found in local assemblies, where the excesses of leaders are challenged. These alternative pentecostal practices are in symbiosis with radical township politics and progressive sources in civil society. Thus, while pentecostalism may renew the process of politics in Zimbabwe, it may itself be renewed by the outside forces of wider Zimbabwean society.

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article examine les relations entre le pentecôtisme et la politique au Zimbabwe après l'époque coloniale à travers l'étude d'un des plus grands mouvements pentecôtistes d'Afrique, le ZAOGA (Zimbabwe Assemblies of God, Africa). Les relations entre l'Eglise et l'Etat ont considérablement changé entre la période coloniale et la période postcoloniale. Ce mouvement était à l'origine une organisation sectaire issue des townships qui rejetait la politique mais usait de ses relations avec les Américains et les Rhodésiens blancs pour obtenir des ressources et se moderniser. Au cours de la décennie qui suivit l'indépendance, ses dirigeants adoptèrent les discours prépondérants en faveur du développement et du nationalisme culturel mais se brouillèrent avec le parti au pouvoir, le ZANU/PF, en raison de ses liens «apparents» avec le politicien rebelle Ndabiningi Sithole et la droite religieuse américaine. Au terme des années 80, le ZAOGA et le ZANU/PF s'étaient réconciliés, les deux partis se conférant mutuellement une légitimité. Cependant, des tensions s'exercent entre cette assimilation réciproque des élites et l'autoritarisme des dirigeants du ZAOGA, d'une part, et la culture égalitaire démocratique présente dans les assemblées locales au sein desquelles les excès des dirigeants sont contestés, d'autre part. Ces pratiques pentecôtistes alternatives sont en symbiose avec la politique radicale des townships et les sources progressistes de la société civile. C'est pourquoi, bien qu'il soit susceptible de relancer le processus politique au Zimbabwe, le pentecôtisme risque de connaître un renouveau sous l'influence de forces extérieures dans l'ensemble de la société zimbabwéenne.