

An Argument for the Academic Scrutiny of African Instituted Church (AIC) texts

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Abstract

This article argues for the rigorous academic scrutiny of Zimbabwean African Instituted Church (AIC) texts, such as African Apostolic Church (AAC) founder Paul Mwazha's The Divine Commission of Paul Mwazha of Africa. Using Mwazha's case as an example, the article discusses relevant aspects of Zimbabwe's socio-cultural history as constituting the context in which the AIC founder has developed a particular discursive practice, including a founding text, to insert himself as a 'world-historical figure' into the national history and that history into his own identity and that of the church he formed. The article concludes that the novelty of AICs resides in the fact that texts such as Mwazha's show that colonised Africans challenged the hegemonic order established by their European masters by insisting on their basic rights, such as human dignity and self-determination, leading to the formation of their own churches. Academic scrutiny of AIC texts will therefore reveal strategies used to attain this hegemonic goal and how this has shaped past and contemporary African identities.

Key terms: African Instituted Church (AIC); Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA); discourse; founding text; hegemony; identity; text

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to postulate and demonstrate the contention that academic scrutiny of Zimbabwean religious texts is important in understanding contemporary African group identities. This article adopts the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) concept of identity as developed by Blommaert (2005) and as used in Manyawu (2014). In terms of discourse, identity involves the dialogic construction of labels, making it a crucial battlefield in any hegemonic struggle, such as the contestation of missionary thinking about Africans and Christianity by such AIC founders as Mwazha. Given the complex linguistic, religious and political landscape in their country, Zimbabwean Christians may respond in different ways to the variety of discourses available in their society. Some individuals have navigated

this complexity by founding African Instituted Churches (AICs), such as African Apostolic Churches (AACs), drawing upon elements including both mission-introduced Christianity and indigenous African knowledge and belief systems, such as Shona traditional worldview. Cases such as that of Paul Mwazha, a former Methodist evangelist and head teacher who founded an AAC, are of particular interest as they have to do with the specific insertion of such individuals as 'world-historical individuals' (Lukács, 1938) within the parameters of a national culture at a crucial period in its history. A preliminary approach to help appreciate the full impact of discursive practices used to insert AIC leaders such as Mwazha as world-historical figures is to take a closer look at the author, his founding text and the context within which it was produced. This is in line with the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach to the study of genres and discourses as reflected in texts (Fairclough, 1992; Titscher et al, 2000; Van Dijk, 2003).

A category of African Initiated Churches that will not be referred to in this discussion is that of Modern African Pentecostal (MAP) churches (Manyawu, 2008), such as Ezekiel Guti's Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa Forward in Faith Ministries, Goodwill Shana's Word of Life International Ministries Church or Emmanuel Makandiwa's United Family International Church. This is because, apart from African leadership, these MAP churches show no significant ideological inclination to incorporate African traditional thinking into their discourses, preferring instead to emulate global televangelical movements. Thus, whereas MAP church text undoubtedly warrant scholarly attention because of the massive socio-cultural impact of these churches, their text genres are different the one used here as an example and are therefore better treated separately.

No evidence has been found that AIC texts across Africa have been subjected to rigorous textual analysis. In fact, any studies of African discourse from the textual and rhetorical perspective are quite recent (Dunton, 1998; Dunton and Mokuku 2003; Love, 2009; Salazar 2002; Mwangi, 2009; Manyawu, 2012a & b and 2014) and most do not focus on religious discourse, let alone religious texts. Studies such as those that this article advocates would therefore lay the foundation of a body of knowledge that would explore and document a key aspect of African culture, ideological formation and identities in Zimbabwe and elsewhere on the continent.

Conceptual Framework

This paper is rooted in the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach to understanding the construction and interpretation of meanings. This article refers to CDA because of its use of the linguistic analysis of discourse to reveal how institutionalised agents of power use language to gain and perpetuate hegemonic control and influence over targeted subjects, thus shaping their identities (Fairclough, 1992). In particular, CDA research is concerned with how abuse of power and socio-economic inequalities are “enacted, reproduced and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context” (van Dijk, 2003: 252). Prominent in the CDA are concepts of hegemony, discourse, text, and identity.

Hegemony is the notion that “man is not ruled by force alone but also by ideas” (Bates, 2008: 351). Gramsci uses it to denote a consensual relationship between the led and their leaders. That relationship is constructed in and by discourse. In a hegemonic relationship, consent “is secured by the diffusion and popularization of the worldview of the ruling class” into which dominated social groups buy (Bates, 2008: 352). As in Manyawu (2012a & b), discourse (in the singular) is used here to refer broadly to the use of language in the context of social life (Fairclough, 1992; Van Dijk, 2003) while *discourses* are the ways in which language is typically used to construct subject matter in specific social domains (Fairclough, 1992; Bakhtin, 1986). Text is ordinarily regarded as a finite set of spoken or written utterances constituting a continuous discourse and a specific whole corresponding to a constant within the situation of production of the said utterances (Galisson and Coste, 1976). Examples include a novel, a poem, and a conversational turn.

In the context of CDA, discourse constructs identity in the sense that a given social group “can be seen as built up of recognizable ‘discursive practices’, such as those used in educational, legal, religious or political contexts” (Allen, 2000: 211-212). Thus, through and in discourse, language, worldview and ideology are inherently bound together in a perpetual hegemonic struggle: “discourse is not simply that which translates struggles or systems of domination, but is the thing for which and by which there is struggle, discourse is the power which is to be seized” (Foucault, 1981: 110).

The discursive practice of a given subject is an aspect of genre, which refers to the way language is ordinarily and typically packaged in the form of texts, in line with generic and discursive conventions in a given social domain, such as the law, education or religion. It comprises three constitutive elements, namely text production, text consumption and text distribution, all of which are social practices in their own right (Fairclough, 1992). This concept is used here to construct aspects of this discussion dealing with the nature, place and role of Mwazha's founding text in his ministry.

Insertion as a world-historical individual

This concept was first used by German 19th century idealist Hegel, precursor of Marxism, and notably developed by Marxist, Georg Lukács in the early 20th century. It refers to "[...] the world-historical principle which takes possession of a person at a particular moment in time, using him as an instrument for its own ends. [...] Writing of the French feudal lords he (Hegel) says: 'They gave way not to Richelieu as a man but to his genius, which linked his person with the necessary principle of the unity of the state'" (Lukács, 1938: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lukacs/works/youngheg/ch34.htm>). In the case of Mwazha, first is his background as an African man with a relatively advanced Western education working in the Methodist Church prior to seceding to form his AAC. He was a qualified school teacher and Methodist evangelist when he left the Methodist Church to form his African Apostolic Church (Manyawu, 2012c). Second is his production of a 'founding text', *The Divine Commission of Paul Mwazha of Africa*, published in the three major Zimbabwean languages, Shona, Ndebele and English, as a central tool to promote his church and to appeal to a broad cross-section of Zimbabwean (and African) society. Finally, there is the fact that he has garnered a substantial following both in Zimbabwe and beyond the country's borders. Studying the discourse of his text can therefore shed light on how one 'educated' Zimbabwean has used textual resources available to him in a multilingual and multicultural society to create both a representation of himself and a new institution and to promote the latter.

***The Divine Commission of Paul Mwazha of Africa* as an element of Mwazha's discursive practice**

Mwazha's founding text, *The Divine Commission of Paul Mwazha of Africa*, is a two-volume book published in Zimbabwe's three official languages, Shona,

Ndebele and English. For the purposes of this article, the English version is used as the primary source as many of the generic innovations discussed here are most clearly illustrated in that version. For ease of reference, the two volumes are referred to as *Part 1* and *Part II*. The book covers a 71 year period, beginning with Mwazha's birth in 1918 (*Part 1*: 1) and ending with an account of AAC church work dated 25 September 1989 (*Part II*: 91). The founding text thus straddles three significant epochs in Zimbabwe's history: the colonial era, Rhodesia's Unilateral Declaration of Independence and independent Zimbabwe's first decade of existence.

The Divine Commission of Paul Mwazha of Africa explains the origins of Mwazha's AAC and characterises its place and function in African society. As the title stipulates, the major theme of the text is the "divine commission" of Paul Mwazha or the story of his life as founder and leader of the AAC. While *Part I* uses a mixture of apocalyptic visions and autobiographical data to tell the story of Mwazha, culminating in his decision to form his AAC, *Part II* narrates his work as leader of the AAC, such as the miracles he performed, his visions of experiences in the spiritual realm (encounters with angels, archangels, the Holy Spirit and Christ), his commissioning or ordination into a "heavenly priesthood" and, finally, the growth and expansion of his church in Zimbabwe. *Part II* also develops Mwazha's ideas on holistic African liberation and the reaffirmation of Shona traditional worldview. Ultimately, the founding text paints a spiritual picture of Mwazha's persona, gradually expanding his divinely appointed sphere of influence from his local Methodist parish, through the African continent to the entire world as symbolised by his claim that "the Divine House of God from where the Kingship reigns was now in Zimbabwe" (*Part II*: 66).

According to the founding text, Mwazha's ministry and authority are mostly legitimised by the provision of material answers to the existential needs of the African person. His strategy for addressing these concerns is to conjure the Holy Spirit, causing it to intervene in human affairs. The success of this strategy (Mwazha cites examples of miracles) is portrayed as justification for more people to seek his ministry and thus join his church. For instance, after he prays for barren couples causing them to conceive and have children, more people with similar existential problems seek him out and subsequently join his church (*Part I*). Another key strategy is the geo-cultural specificity of

Mwazha's mission and ministry: he portrays himself as being of, from and (sent) to Africa (*Part I*). Mwazha seems to use these strategies to attain an ultimate strategic goal: the elevation of his person to divine status. Without this elevation, he might as well have remained a Methodist evangelist and teacher or become a priest or pastor in another mainstream missionary-founded church since not enough African people would be likely to believe in the potency of his ministry to justify the formation of a new church.

Every AAC member and prospective member is required to acquire and read Mwazha's founding text as a primary condition for entry into the church (Manyawu, 2012c). This researcher's primary experience in this regard is two-fold. Firstly, even though he explicitly informed the AAC evangelists and bishops he met in Harare and Mutare that he needed the book for purposes of academic research, they gave it to him free of charge as part of their evangelisation strategy, with one Bishop quipping that what the researcher sought was Jesus and that he was sure to find Jesus in their church. Secondly, each time this researcher asked a question regarding AAC teaching and practice, he was promptly referred to the founding text. Should he still have questions thereafter, he was advised to attend their forthcoming annual gathering at their Guvambwa shrine where, he was told, everything would become clear to him. There is thus ample evidence that an elaborate and deliberate 'discursive practice' (Fairclough, 1992) based on the founding text is at work in the AAC.

It is significant that a Zimbabwean Apostolic AIC leader such as Paul Mwazha chose to fix the history of his 'commissioning' as well as the intended meaning of his message in print form. It is also significant that Zimbabweans from all walks of life – most of them with little if any reading culture (Manyawu, 2005) – strive to read these texts as if their very lives depended on them. Over and above that, it is significant that believers' testimonies and behaviour underline the importance of these texts to their faith, identity and worldview. Even though the AAC teaches adherence to the Bible, believers tend to read first Mwazha's founding text and then the Bible, which they will read using the hermeneutic tools incorporated into the founder's text. The value of the founding text's rhetorical performance for the AAC can therefore not be overemphasised. This is especially so in view of the founding text's insertion,

and Mwazha's insertion through it, in the historical and socio-cultural context whose elements are highlighted below.

Mwazha in Zimbabwean history

Mwazha's text provides an Afro-centric religious perspective of a pivotal stage in Zimbabwean history upon which he draws for elements of discourses such as Black liberation theology and Liberation War ideology. The broad context of Paul Mwazha's text is 20th Century Zimbabwe – beginning with when the country was still known as Southern Rhodesia, through the years of the rebel Rhodesian regime and on to post-independence Zimbabwe. The colonial era is characterised by racial discrimination, which provoked Black political and cultural resistance, leading to nationalist politics and a protracted armed liberation struggle that culminated in the installation of a Black Nationalist government. On the religious front, it is an era fraught with activity as indigenous Zimbabweans respond variously to missionary teaching. Inspired by developments in South Africa, AIC Ethiopianism, Apostolicism and Zionism quickly emerge as the dominant responses to mainstream Christianity. This is fertile ground for a prophetic Christian discourse such as Mwazha's that affirms the dignity and integrity of the indigenous African Zimbabwean before a Christian God introduced by means of a missionary discourse generally hostile to the African traditional worldview.

Indigenous Zimbabwean traditional beliefs

AIC discourses as developed in founding texts such as Mwazha's draw upon African traditional thinking, likely in order to position themselves as 'truly African'. The ideological and existential context into which Christianity was introduced in Zimbabwe is permeated by Zimbabwean African traditional belief systems and worldviews, such as the role of *midzimu* or *vadzimu* (ancestral spirits that protect the family) in Shona traditional family life and the practice of rainmaking ceremonies. The study of Mwazha's discursive practice should therefore seek to identify discursive strategies used to incorporate elements of Shona and any other traditional worldviews into AIC constructs of Christianity. A key element of indigenous Zimbabwean

traditional worldviews is the social practice commonly known as African traditional religion. Indeed, religion is widely seen by some as the key to understanding the African condition. Ellis and Ter Haar (2004) argue for the privileging of religion in studies of African questions in the human and social sciences. They claim that "it is largely through religious ideas that Africans think about the world today" (Ellis and Ter Haar, 2004: 2). Salazar (2002) argues that Bishop Desmond Tutu's oratory is a significant feature of South Africa's 'rhetorical democracy' while Dunton and Mokuku (2003) point out that at the dawn of the 20th century, many South African Whites believed that Black demands for social justice were driven by the AIC Ethiopian movement. Some scholars have, however, tended to see claims of the centrality of religion in African worldviews as either unfounded or highly exaggerated and tendentious. For instance, Green (2006) contends that views such as those of Ellis and Ter Haar (2004) are typical of reductionist, condescending and simplistic Western academic discourses of African realities. Her objection is founded on the need to avoid dismissively treating all African experiences and even religious movements as similar but rather to underscore the reality of the diversity of African cultures and existences. However, much as Green's (2006) argument is valid, it does not refute the notion of a privileged place of the spiritual in the African condition. On the contrary, she acknowledges the usefulness of "sensitising us to the salience of religion across diverse social settings" in African societies (Green, 2006: 636) but prefers to treat religion as a social analytical category equal to and apart from all other elements of the African socio-cultural experience. She further argues that culture and religion were used as tools of imperialism by providing "a convenient rationale for Western involvement in African economic, political and social development, an involvement informed by an ideology of conversion, albeit conversion up to a point" (Green, 2006: 637). Her use of the ambivalent "us" in the first quotation, however, tends to locate her on the side of the said patronising Western academic discourse with regard to the exotic other that is an Africa which must be explored and examined in order to be successfully integrated into a global socio-cultural order. Indeed, while arguing that Western observers were likely to misunderstand African religiousness, Appiah (1992) also warned against the simplistic use of the 'us' and 'them' binary in dealing with the African condition, which he views as highly hybridized and therefore complex. In much the same way, Epprecht (2004) has argued that the concept of otherness or the exotic other has been exploited as a convenient tool for

imperialist agendas as it justifies colonial programmes that are then portrayed as either 'sanitisation' or preservation efforts.

This article concurs with Appiah's (1992: 23) contention that, "the religiosity [sic] of the African [...] was something that was easy for Western Christians to misunderstand". The view of religion as an institutionalised belief or system of belief in a higher unseen supernatural controlling entity, and the attendant emotion and morality, ritual, worship, and devoted fidelity (wordnetweb.princeton.edu/perl/webwn), do not, therefore, satisfactorily account for the indigenous African experience in Zimbabwe. Neither do such abstractions as "motivate and expresser [sic] of path and destination of transcendence" (Reza, 2009: 1), whereby transcendence opposes the natural to the spiritual. On the contrary, a view of religion as signifying 'a way of life' (Gunn, 2003) is closer to Shona traditional practices that can loosely be categorised as 'religion'. Shona traditional 'religion' is an amorphous and heterogeneous category that seems to permeate all aspects of human existence and incorporates such apparently disparate social practices as medicine, spirituality, social relations, sexuality, theology, aesthetics, crafts, technology and the natural environment (Chavunduka, 1999). It is an all-encompassing worldview, an ideology that accounts for every aspect of life. It derives from the notion that "all things visible and invisible have a life. Nothing can be termed inanimate because everything that is has the ability to affect the life of another being or thing, especially so, the life of man" (Talboid, 1979: 27-28). This article does not, therefore, refer to an African traditional religion in the sense of a social category (among others) with neatly defined conceptual boundaries but to traditional indigenous Shona belief(s) in the pre-eminence of a spirituality characterised by symbiosis between the individual, the natural environment, and the spirits of other people, both living and dead.

Western missionaries failed to appreciate this Shona (and Ndebele) worldview whereby there is no boundary between the secular and the religious, the material and the spiritual, concepts for which words did not even exist in Zimbabwe's African languages prior to the advent of missionaries. For instance, the use of the Shona "*kunamata*" (to pray or worship) or *chinamato* (a way of praying or worship) for the English 'religion' underscores the difficulty of translating the English concept of 'religion' in that language. This led, for instance, to the erroneous view of the Ndebeles as materialistic and to great difficulty in getting them to buy into such Christian

ideas as heaven, hell and the human soul (Zvobgo, 1986: 44). What Western missionaries failed to grasp is that in the Ndebele and Shona worldviews, reward and punishment are not deferred but are meted out by ancestral spirits in the here and now in accordance with their assessment of an individual or community's conduct and that the said reward and punishment are always in the form of the granting or withdrawal of existential needs.

Christianity in Zimbabwe

A direct benefit of studying texts such as Mwazha's is to enhance one's understanding, from an African perspective, of Zimbabwean society as predominantly Christian, particularly the development of the AIC group identity within the Christian Church. Virtually every major Christian tendency, from Catholicism through mainstream mission-founded Protestant churches to various shades of Pentecostalism and, ultimately, AICs, is represented in Zimbabwe. Recorded missionary presence in Zimbabwe dates back to the early 16th Century AD when Portuguese Jesuit and Dominican missionaries were active at the *Munhumutapa's* court in Mount Darwin (Mazarire, 2009). However, it was not until the last two decades of the 19th Century that Christianity firmly took root in Zimbabwe as part of a broader hegemonic project in which missionaries generally collaborated so closely with the colonial movement that they have been described as "forces and agents of colonialism" alongside such adventurers as concession-seekers, traders and empire-builders (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009: 39). Christianity was, therefore, part of a complete cultural package, a worldview that the Europeans introduced into Zimbabwe to undergird their imperialistic project. Early 20th Century Christianity remained visibly attached to the vested interests of the country's European conquerors, which now included not only trade but also outright political, cultural and territorial dominance. As a result, Africans tended to view Christianity as just another weapon, the civilising arm (Epprecht, 2004), in the vast hegemonic strategy called colonialism. Christianity's civilising mission was prompted by exceedingly negative and prejudicial Western perceptions of Africa as 'the Dark Continent'. Appiah (1992: 22) quotes the *Encyclopédie* (an 18th Century publication by highly-respected French philosopher Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert) as saying of the people of the Guinea coast:

The natives are idolaters, superstitious, and live most filthily; they are lazy, drunken rascals, without thought for the future, insensitive

to any happening, happy or sad, which gives pleasure to or afflicts them; they have no sense of modesty or restraint in the pleasures of love, each sex plunging on the other like a brute from the earliest age.

African responses to Christian discourses are thus largely shaped by the perception of missionary teaching as inspired by condescending views of Africa as demonic and backward. The formation of AICs, such as Mwazha's AAC, is therefore generally inspired by a revolt against perceived inequity and oppression of indigenous Africans in the Church (Chitando, 2003) as well as the rejection of ill-founded and facile labels that justified that inequity and oppression. Ethiopianism, the earliest form of African schism from mainstream churches, is a direct response to and a rejection of the notion of the inherency of White supremacy in the Church. According to Zvobgo (1986), the Ndebele peoples of Western Zimbabwe were suspicious of the true intentions of the missionaries, a suspicion and resentment strengthened by British conquest. So deep-seated and widespread was African resentment that it was later exploited by the propaganda machines of the guerrilla armies that waged Zimbabwe's War of Independence. Reflecting on Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) activities in north-eastern Zimbabwe's Katerere rural areas, Maxwell (1999:125) posits that,

[...] compared to adherents of Shona traditional religions, rural Christians were at an immediate disadvantage when it came to relations with guerrillas. Nationalists had vilified missionaries as key agents of the colonial project, and those political commissars schooled in Marxism Leninism viewed Christianity as a regressive ideology.

However, neither of Zimbabwe's two *Chimurengas* or Liberation Struggles (the 1890s uprising and the War of Independence) was fought on any one ideological platform since they were both basically uprisings against conquest, material dispossession and socio-cultural oppression. Being a major turf of the conflict of civilisations sparked by the introduction of churches and schools, religious discourse was expediently and inconsistently used by various actors to further their own parochial ends or those of the Struggle. For instance, in some areas of Zimbabwe, ZANLA combatants openly condemned church denominations deemed to harbour counter-revolutionary sentiments and encouraged locals to adhere to traditional African beliefs while elsewhere combatants were actively supported by Christian churches, such

as some AICs and elements of the Roman Catholic Church (Mukonyora, 2008). Consequently, Christianity not only survived the *Chimurengas* but has actually continued to grow, to the extent of assuming the de-facto status of State religion in the post-independence dispensation, at least to the extent that Christian rituals such as prayers and hymns are a prominent feature of all major State functions. Also, while participating on the commission set up by President Robert Mugabe to draft a new national constitution in 1999, Family of God Church founder and President of the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe, Andrew Wutawunashe, pushed for Zimbabwe to be declared a Christian nation (Mukonyora, 2008). Eventually, "an early draft constitution circulated for popular consideration in November 1999 began with a declaration that the nation should submit to the authority of God" (Mukonyora, 2008:147).

Having looked at Zimbabwean African traditional beliefs systems and worldviews as the ideological context into which Christianity was introduced, and having discussed Christianity itself, I shall now characterise the Zimbabwean AIC movement.

AIC Movements in Zimbabwe

AIC discourses have contributed immensely to the development of contemporary African identities and ideologies since the advent of colonialism and Christianity. While at the beginning of the 20th Century many of Zimbabwe's Christians belonged to missionary-founded churches, towards the end of that century the majority of Christians were to be found in AICs (Amanze, 1998), mostly those labelled Zionist or Apostolic. Masowe's Apostolic AIC alone is reputed to have one million members in Zimbabwe (Mbon, 1984) and three million members from South Africa to Kenya (Mukonyora, 2004: 434). Also, according to Chitando (2004: 125), "over a million pilgrims" attend Mwazha's annual convention at his church's Guvambwa shrine near Sadza Growth Point in the Chikomba District of Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwe's largest AICs date back to the early 20th Century. Their founders are contemporaries and a good number of them are deceased. Samuel Mutendi started his Zion Christian Church (ZCC) in 1923, Johane Masowe launched his African Apostolic Church (AAC) in 1932 (after his 'death' and

'resurrection'), and the same year Johane Marange started his own AAC while Mai Kwenda 'died' and 'rose again' in 1948 and, under the name Mai Chaza, launched her Guta Ra Jehova (City of God; GRJ) Church. In fact, the biographies of many AIC Apostolic and Zionist church founders include a resurrection narrative, which adds a Christ-like and therefore messianic dimension to their personae. Mwazha is therefore neither the only nor the first founder of an 'African Apostolic Church' in Zimbabwe. Having been founded in 1959 (*Part 1*), Mwazha's AAC is the youngest of these early AICs. Of the major founders, only Mwazha is still alive, the others having passed away between 1960 (Mai Chaza) and 1976 (Bishop Mutendi). AIC teaching draws upon such a wide range of contemporary discourses prevalent in Africa that founding texts such as Mwazha's offer a fascinating perspective of African concerns and thinking in general.

Conclusion

This article has argued for the academic scrutiny of AIC texts. It has discussed relevant aspects of Zimbabwe's socio-cultural history as constituting the context in which AIC founders such as Paul Mwazha have used particular discursive practices, including founding texts, to insert themselves as world-historic figures into the national history and that history into their own identities and the identities of the groups they formed. It has been shown that AICs seek to legitimate Africans as worthy believers in the Christian God. The novelty of AICs thus resides mostly in the fact that colonised Africans challenged the hegemonic order established by their European masters by insisting on their basic rights, such as human dignity and self-determination, leading to the formation of their own churches. Since textual genre and discourse are direct products and tools of particular socio-cultural settings (Bhatia, 2010; Bakhtin, 1986), it can be assumed that a challenge to Western hegemony in Africa as is represented by Apostolic AICs such as Mwazha's AAC would have implications for the configuration of genres and discourses within his discursive practice. Textual productions such as his founding text should therefore be approached as possibly containing some generic and discursive characteristics that may not be typical of better documented discursive practices. This, however, is to be expected of all hybridised societies. What is important therefore is not to simply identify the said

characteristics but to explore possible reasons and effects of their selection and configuration within the text concerned.

Another immediate epistemological implication of this discussion is that, much as one talks of rhetoric and text analysis, one is keenly aware of the Western origins of these notions and their potential inadequacy to account for a discourse event that is essentially African. Scholars studying texts such as Mwazha's should therefore attempt, within the limits of the academically possible, to take advantage of this opportunity to contribute to an understanding of African religious discourse from an Afro-centric perspective by, in the case of Mwazha, for instance, using Zimbabwean African worldview as a context-defining tool. Studies should also seek to attract academic attention to the need to examine indigenous African languages for categories and descriptors more apt to enable access to African realities as Africans experience them.

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