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Ezra Chitando

## Singing culture

A Study of Gospel Music in Zimbabwe

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## 1. Introduction

This study examines the historical development, social, political and economic significance of gospel music in Zimbabwe. It approaches music with Christian theological ideas and popular appeal as a cultural phenomenon with manifold implications. Applying a history of religions approach to the study of a widespread religious phenomenon, the study seeks to link religious studies with popular culture. It argues that gospel music represents a valuable entry point into a discussion of contemporary African cultural production. Gospel music illustrates the limitations of discourses of authenticity wherein "African cultural production is consumed, judged, and analysed in terms of its 'Africanness'" (Baaz, 2001: 11). I maintain that gospel music successfully blends the musical traditions of Zimbabwe, influences from other African countries, and musical styles from other parts of the world.

Through the application of multiple methodological lenses, the study sets out to describe, analyse and interpret gospel music in Zimbabwe during the 1990s. It outlines the historical development of popular music in Zimbabwe, alongside locating the emergence of gospel music in the politically and economically challenging 1990s. The report captures the impact of Christianity on music performances, highlights the various groups of cultural workers who have derived opportunities from gospel music and undertakes an analysis of the context in which gospel music was able to thrive. Through an examination of dominant themes in Zimbabwean gospel music and its creative appropriation of various musical styles, the study illustrates the complexity underlying contemporary African artistic products.

This study also seeks to bring to the fore the long-standing issue of the relationship between Christianity and African culture. Although many African theologians, nationalists, missiologists, Non-Governmental Organisation activists and other practitioners have proffered valuable insights, in most instances their efforts have been vitiated by a preoccupation with a frozen view of African culture. Many writers have tended to view African culture as a relic from some glorious past. Although this may please avid cultural nationalists, it obfuscates the inherently adaptive nature of African, and indeed of any other, culture. Consequently, in this study the focus is on gospel music as an integral part of contemporary African culture. By examining gospel music texts, performances by artists and audiences at gospel concerts and television presentations, the study contributes to the discourses on religion and public spaces. The report also brings to the fore the neglected theme of music and the construction of religious and other identities.

## 1.1 THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study is prompted by the need to reach an understanding of the popularity of gospel music in Zimbabwe in the 1990s. Why did music with a fast, danceable beat and utilising Christian themes gain popularity? Are there any precursors to this development? What are the dominant themes in Zimbabwean gospel music? To what extent has it affected the performing arts in the country? Is there any relationship between gospel music and the social and political contexts? Does gospel music facilitate an understanding of the various forces that have gone on to shape African culture, broadly understood? This study wrestles with such questions and probes their meaning to the larger question of artistic production in contemporary Africa.

Generally, most African scholars of religion have not been interested in popular culture. As a result, much of the work that has been done on music has been by indigenous ethnomusicologists like the late Dumisani Maraire, media practitioners, and Africanist researchers in the United States of America. Existing studies on music in Zimbabwe have dwelt on specific instruments such as the mbira (Berliner, 1981/1978), the use of songs during the liberation struggle (Pongweni, 1982), the development of popular music (Zindi, 1985), the significance of music for the ancestral cult (Maraire, 1990), music instruments in general (Jones, 1992), the status of women in the music industry (Impey, 1992), protest by established artists like Thomas Mapfumo (Kwaramba, 1997), the impact of nationalism and other ideologies on popular music (Turino, 2000), as well as investigations into fear and self-censorship (Eyre, 2001).

Other researchers have confined themselves to developments within the church and have analysed the importance of Christian poetry and music drama (Axelsson, 1993) and the history of hymnody in Zimbabwe (Lenherr, 1977; Jones, 1976). Little research has been undertaken on gospel music. This study seeks to fill the *lacuna* in scholarly literature on gospel music in Zimbabwe. By adopting an interdisciplinary approach, I endeavour to describe, analyse and interpret gospel music in Zimbabwe during the 1990s. In order to locate this phenomenon in its proper historical context, I provide an outline of the development of music in Zimbabwe.

It is argued in this study that gospel music has created alternative space for social groups that had been rendered invisible. The history of music performances in Zimbabwe has been dominated by the figure of the middle-aged male artist. Perceived as the domain of the sacred, gospel music has facilitated the emergence of successful female artists. In addition, young people found a niche within which their artistic talent could thrive without the traditional parental rebuke. In this regard, the study provides fresh perspectives on the different categories of cultural workers in Zimbabwe. Where most writers on religious themes insist on the uniqueness of religious data, the presentation

seeks to integrate gospel music within the larger context of national events, while remaining sensitive to specific developments in Zimbabwean Christianity.

## 1.2 GOSPEL MUSIC IN ZIMBABWE: AN OVERVIEW

The decision to undertake an investigation into the significance of gospel music was informed by the phenomenal rise enjoyed by music in which Christian themes dominated. Between 1990 and 2001, the music industry in Zimbabwe witnessed the ascendancy of music drawing on Christian salvation history. Through an emphasis on salvation wrought by Jesus of Nazareth, his imminent return, the need for righteousness in the last of days, and the power of God in overcoming disease and restoring hope, numerous artists carved niches for themselves in a competitive industry. While some of them came up with original and creative compositions, others recorded popular hymns, funeral songs and choruses. High sales figures were attained and musical concerts or shows devoted to gospel music attracted large crowds in most instances. A number of radio and television programmes specialised in gospel music, while in flea markets, commuter omnibuses, and even night clubs, gospel music was given considerable exposure. Overnight journeys to funerals, weddings and parties were also accompanied by the playing of gospel tracks. In short, there was an explosion of gospel music in Zimbabwe in the 1990s.

As music utilising the Christian collective memory that is accompanied by an up-tempo, danceable rhythm or a sombre, reflective style attracted popular following, researchers were left behind. There was debate over the meaning of gospel music, the factors motivating artists, its sociological significance and other factors. How gospel music could facilitate discussion of the extent to which Zimbabwean society may be said to reflect a Christian ethos has been an issue that has not been satisfactorily addressed. The impact of gospel music on social restructuring, its contribution to ecumenism and how it feeds into popular music are areas that required more investigation. This study grapples with such questions and seeks to clarify the significance of the phenomenon.

Religious studies in the university has often been perceived as pursuing recondite topics that are far removed from the daily experiences of religious people. By undertaking an academic investigation into a topical subject, this study seeks to demonstrate the extent to which developments in popular culture offer valuable data for analysis. Researchers can appreciate the constant shifts and borrowings in the terrain of religion. Gospel music presents an opportunity to assess the communication environment in Zimbabwe, interrogate the question of African Christian identities, revisit the notion of gender

in music performances, evaluate the interaction between religion and society, and other themes.

This report on gospel music in Zimbabwe may also help to clarify the upsurge in music with Christian themes throughout Southern Africa, particularly in the 1990s. Across the region, artists who sang about Christian salvation, repentance, divine love and related concepts enjoyed growing popularity. Indeed, research in West Africa also indicated a similar pattern where artists who used to play other types of music decided to play gospel music. Although the need to examine the rise of gospel music in a specific context remains, this report may serve to indicate general trends and patterns in urban musical performances in sub-Saharan Africa, as well as to draw attention to the lasting influence of Christianity on popular consciousness in the region.

### 1.3 STUDY LAYOUT

To attain a comprehensive view of gospel music in Zimbabwe, a number of themes deserve attention. Methodological questions feature prominently in a work of this nature. Chapter two is therefore devoted to an exposition of the methodological options that were available and could be utilised for such an undertaking. A brief overview of methodological debates in religious studies is provided, alongside a description of the approaches that are dominant in this presentation. After justification of the selected interpretative tools, the chapter presents the data collection methods.

Chapter three traces the historical development of music in Zimbabwe. It describes the role of music in the traditional African setting, highlights the tension that characterised the introduction of Western hymns, and notes the steps that were taken to promote African compositions. Alongside drawing attention to developments in the larger music industry, the chapter addresses the issue of national sentiment in the immediate postcolonial dispensation. The chapter highlights the shifts in Zimbabwean music, while noting the impact of Christianity in the overall development of music in the country.

Chapter four traces the historical development of gospel music in Zimbabwe. It analyses themes that dominate Zimbabwean gospel music. It also examines the texts to identify notions relating to disease, suffering and death, political protest, material and spiritual poverty, ecumenism, confronting African Traditional Religions, and others. The role of the theology of radical discontinuity propagated by Pentecostal churches is analysed, while a sociological investigation into the social setting is undertaken. The chapter acknowledges that gospel musicians are cultural workers who are sensitive about their own social contexts.

A discussion of the various categories of performing artists who have derived mileage from the ascendancy of gospel music in Zimbabwe in the 1990s is offered in chapter five. The increased participation of women as respected

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cultural workers, the acceptance of recording groups from African Independent Churches, as well as the space occupied by children in Zimbabwean gospel music are issues that receive attention. How minority languages have had an increased profile due to gospel music is explored in this chapter. An argument is made that alongside contributing to Christian consciousness in the country, gospel music has played an important role in the emergence of more cultural workers.

Chapter six explores the communication environment in Zimbabwe in an effort to highlight factors that contributed to the popularity of music with Christian themes. This chapter assesses whether the reality of religious pluralism is seriously considered in the country. The controversies surrounding the financial statuses of gospel musicians are outlined, while a discussion of the role of gospel music in formulating postcolonial African identities is undertaken. A short summary of this study and its overall implications is offered in chapter seven as a conclusion to the discussion.

## 2. Methodological Framework and Interpretative Techniques

### 2.1 APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF RELIGIOUS PHENOMENA

This research focuses on the historical growth, social and political significance of gospel music in Zimbabwe. It principally locates gospel music within the category or genus of things that are 'religious'. Although Western European and North American scholars have offered considerable and incisive reflections on how the study of religion can be undertaken (Wiebe, 1999), African researchers have been conspicuous by their absence. This has created the unfortunate impression that African scholars slavishly follow methodological canons developed elsewhere. As Peter Connolly has convincingly shown in his work that brings together anthropological, psychological, phenomenological, sociological, theological and feminist approaches to the study of religion (Connolly, 1999), religion can be approached from multiple perspectives. Religionist scholars maintain that religious phenomena are *sui generis*, unique and irreducible (Studstill, 2000:180) and for many historians and phenomenologists of religion, social scientific approaches provide the milieu within which religious phenomena are embedded (Turner, 1981:2).

Although scholars in the different methodological schools consider their approaches to be mutually exclusive, it is possible to regard the various methods as complementary. In another study (Chitando, 1999), I demonstrated how the different approaches could be used to analyse gospel music. Different dimensions of a religious phenomenon require insights from particular perspectives. For us to attain useful knowledge about the emergence of gospel music, a historical approach is necessary. Sociological tools are invaluable for appreciating the social context within which gospel music has blossomed, while interpretative strategies from the phenomenology of religion help to clarify the religious aspects of a given cultural phenomenon. In the forthcoming section I discuss the approaches that are operational in this presentation.

### 2.2 STUDYING GOSPEL MUSIC IN ZIMBABWE: METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Religion is an integral part of culture. In Zimbabwe many factors have had a bearing on the development of culture. We agree with Preben Kaarsholm (1991:3) that in Zimbabwe one does not encounter a dismantling of tradition

and the emergence of an alternative new and abruptly modern culture. In the analysis of gospel music as part of African cultural production, I seek to draw attention to the borrowings, adaptations and creativity that can be discerned in this music type. The report examines the appropriation of externally derived musical styles, foreign languages and dance routines in a local context. It also investigates threads of continuity between gospel music and indigenous music performances. Until recently relatively little attention had been given to the question of African traditional religions in contemporary society (Olupona, 1991).

### **2.2.1 Historical Approaches to Gospel Music**

As has been noted above, a historical approach is critical for an appreciation of the development of gospel music in Zimbabwe. Cultural trends are better understood if the historical factors that have shaped them are understood. Within African scholarship, this is an area where continued research is relevant. Most contributors to the discourse on African culture are attracted to the idyllic past but they do not interrogate the politics of accessing that past. African scholars of religion in particular have been accused of not paying sufficient attention to difficult historical questions in their efforts to recover traditional religiosity (Ranger and Kimambo, 1972). Since the observation was made at the beginning of the 1970s, there has not been any significant growth in historical approaches to the study of African religions. This report seeks to address the shortfall by utilising historical tools to understand how music with Christian themes has evolved in Zimbabwe.

In line with the theme of cultural creolisation, it is important to illustrate the extent to which traditional religious songs have been changing over time. The encounter between Christianity and African culture, so central to the task of African theology (Muzorewa, 1985), needs to be historicised so that the adoption of Christian hymns is adequately understood. The high visibility enjoyed by female gospel artists in the period under review (the 1990s) necessitates an inquiry into the status of women in musical performance before the colonial period, during colonialism and in the postcolonial period. As part of popular culture, gospel music performance has been taken from the narrow confines of the church into the public arena. Consequently, gospel artists have not been immune to forces that are operational in the larger industry. The pressures of commercialisation, marketing, live performances, and the management of the backing group are issues that are equally felt by pop stars and gospel musicians. This study provides an overview of developments in the music industry, alongside describing the communication environment in which Christianity dominates.

### 2.2.2 Sociological Contributions to an Analysis of Gospel Music

Cultural workers do not operate in a social vacuum. Cultural production takes place in social contexts that are well defined and it is strategic to identify the matrix within which the actors are located. In this report, insights from the sociology of religion are harnessed in an endeavour to clarify how the setting in life of the composers of gospel music has influenced its overall character and outlook. Sociology of religion seeks to establish the interplay between religion and society (Bourdillon, 1990). It recognises the fact that religion is influenced by developments in the larger society and that it is practised by humans who are relational beings. After utilising a historical approach in tracing the rise of music reflecting Christian concerns in Zimbabwean popular culture, this study employs a sociological analysis to decipher the dominant themes. The impact of the high death rate due to Hiv and Aids for example, has had an effect on the growth of funeral songs. The negative publicity that followed Zimbabwe's approach to land reform (Moyo, 2000) also had a bearing on notions of decay.

This report also argues that gospel music represents one of the main ways through which African Christian identities are being negotiated. In the struggle for allegiance, Christianity and African traditional religions have made demands on their followers. In evangelical churches—the main site of gospel music performances—the creation of a new social identity is a major preoccupation. The idiom of conversion, the new life available in Christ and finding a haven of belonging characterise the evangelical discourse. Alongside other forms of popular music, gospel music plays a key role in serving as a powerful and meaningful symbol of identity, functioning as an avenue for expression and mediation of conflict (Manuel, 1988:16). Insights from sociology are therefore critical in the quest to locate the status of gospel music as an instantiation of how identities are being played out in Zimbabwe.

### 2.2.3 Phenomenological Approaches and the Study of Gospel Music

This study applies the phenomenological method to balance and complement historical and sociological approaches. Although in terms of methodological pronouncements phenomenological principles are gaining popularity in the study of African cultural phenomena (Chitando, 1997), there are very few studies that practically demonstrate the value of the method. This report contributes to the emerging body of literature that utilises the phenomenological method to illustrate contemporary cultural production within Africa. Phenomenological tools help to bring out how gospel artists creatively blend traditional concerns and musical instruments and new styles and performance contexts. Paying attention to the phenomenological tenet of the integrity of data under investigation while bracketing questions of truth and authentic-

ity presents new opportunities for understanding the popularity of gospel music.

In applying the phenomenological method, one is aware of the calls that have been made to transcend it (Flood, 1999). The decontextualising thrust and quest for scholarly neutrality constitute weaknesses that characterise the method. Indeed, every method has its own limitations, thereby justifying the adoption of a polymethodic approach. However, it remains a valuable approach due to its insistence on descriptive accuracy, non-reductionism, and sensitive treatment of religious phenomena. This study adopted its principles, but harnessed them with insights from other disciplines to mitigate some of its perceived limitations. Alongside the dominant historical, sociological and phenomenological approaches, the report also benefited from reflections available from gender studies, theology and other relevant perspectives.

### 2.3 GOSPEL MUSIC: DEFINITIONAL ISSUES

Thus far the report has employed the label 'gospel music' as if it is unanimously accepted. Like many other concepts that are used in the media and in scholarly discourses, such as globalisation, religion, democracy, human rights and others, it is a term that has received different interpretations. The description is popularly used, particularly in the United States of America, South Africa, Ghana, Nigeria, Zimbabwe and other countries, to refer to musical products closely tied to Christianity, but it has its own critics. These critics contend that the tag 'gospel music' is too elastic and devoid of content to be utilised as an analytical category. Despite the definitional predicament, efforts have been made to clarify the term. A researcher in the Nigerian context, Matthews Ojo notes the following:

The term 'Gospel music' is really too sweeping. However, it could be used to mean a distinct kind of music composed and rendered by men and women who call themselves Christians, and who refer to their music as 'ministration of the Good News in songs' (Ojo, 1998:211).

This report adopts Ojo's understanding of gospel music since it emerges from the phenomenological principle of recognising the actor's point of view. The emphasis on the self-understanding of the artists and how they interpret the value of their music seeks to strike a balance between expanded and narrow definitions of the phenomenon. Expanded definitions are as difficult to work with as narrow ones. The popular usage of the notion of gospel music is quite elastic and includes diverse phenomena within its application. Without engaging in an elaborate debate on the purposes of definition and procedures in defining, it is helpful to note that essentialist definitions are too ambitious and misleading. The report thus adopts an 'open' definition of gospel music by

understanding it as music laden with Christian themes and performed by individuals who regard themselves as Christians. These individuals seek to preach the word of God through music.

A report on music in Zimbabwe by Banning Eyre contends that due to the heavy Christianisation of the country during the Southern Rhodesia years, Zimbabwe has always provided a healthy market for gospel singers. Thus:

During the 90s, with the horrifically mounting toll of AIDS deaths, and a general sense of crisis arising from the nation's economic woes, more and more people have turned to Christianity and to gospel music. The productions tend to be simple, featuring electric keyboards and drum machines, avoiding altogether the mysterious tonalities of Shona traditional music and the giddy, free-wheeling guitar work of *sungura*. Gospel music represents a refuge from all that (Eyre, 2001: 96).

As I contend below, Eyre makes some valid observations but he adopts a narrow approach to gospel music in Zimbabwe. He overlooks the interface between gospel music and other genres, as well as adopting a reductionist paradigm in his interpretation of the phenomenon. This report approaches gospel music in Zimbabwe as an artistic product emerging from cultural workers who are influenced by the Christian cumulative tradition. These artists utilise various musical styles and instruments to communicate Christian themes. These include the mbira beat from a traditional musical instrument, *sungura* or *museve* (like an arrow, it pierces the heart) from Zimbabwean popular music, rap and hip hop from the African American influence, reggae from the Caribbean, country from the United States of America, Congolese *soukous*, and other types.

Alongside the aesthetic dimension, both the performing artists and consuming public have drawn attention to the religious aspects of gospel music. It is music that embraces distinctively Christian concerns such as the redeeming role of Jesus of Nazareth, the need for conversion to Christianity, ethical principles governing Christian living, hope in the resurrection of the dead, and others. Thus, the term 'gospel music' is an umbrella term for diverse musical styles that are united in terms of their texts. Compositions that drew on the Christian collective memory were classified as gospel music in the Zimbabwean context during the period under review.

Within the Zimbabwean context, the process of electronic recording, public performances and availability also contributed to whether or not a piece of music was considered as gospel music. There were many hymns and choruses that were composed and performed in the various denominations but were not classified as gospel music because they were not available as audio or video cassettes. Although there was a clear relationship between gospel music and the hymns and choruses that were performed in churches, gospel music

had moved into the public space. Granted that most of the composers identified themselves as furthering Christian causes, gospel music should properly be understood as forming part of popular culture in Zimbabwe. It represents the creative interplay between traditional musical performances, Christian influences, and global musical trends.

The paucity of material on music utilising religious themes in Southern Africa implies that the definitions adopted in this report should be understood as open and exploratory rather than as final and exhaustive. The report approaches gospel music an encounter with life, not only with its trials and tribulations, its bruises and abuses (Cone, 1972:116) but also for its celebration of life and its offering of hope and encouragement. By analysing gospel music and drawing attention to the definitional predicament, this study highlights the cultural variety and identity trends that are emerging in Africa. Modern techniques that come to the fore in electronic recording, new dance routines learnt from global media networks, identities deriving from the evangelical ideology and traditional musical practices have been creatively combined in Zimbabwean gospel music.

In summary, while the term 'gospel music' has often been used with special reference to African American cultural products, it has undergone considerable changes in Southern Africa. There are similarities between Zimbabwean and African American gospel music in terms of emphasis on Christian themes, audience participation, repetitiveness of its song verses, improvisation during performance, pattern of call and response, and other factors (Ojo, 1998: 211). However, Zimbabwean gospel music utilises local and international musical styles, vernacular languages, indigenous musical instruments, and addresses the traditional African worldview. It is therefore important to apply phenomenological insights and apply the concept with special reference to its application in specific contexts.

#### 2.4 THE DATA AND ITS COLLECTION

The data for this study was collected with the assistance of three research assistants hired for that purpose between June 1998 and August 2001. Through extensive interviews with various actors in the music industry, gospel musicians, ministers of religion, intellectuals, traditional musicians, radio and television programme producers, flea market personnel and other strategically located individuals, the study seeks to identify the social, political and economic significance of gospel music in Zimbabwe. Some of the respondents' views are directly indicated in the body of this report as 'Interview, 19XX' to capture interview transcriptions showing the year when the interview was undertaken. The main forms of specific data sought included the actual performances of gospel music, the composition processes, packaging in audio and video cassettes, marketing strategies and thematic concerns. Socio-

logical variables such as the educational, religious, denominational, gender, age, and ethnicity of the respondents were taken into account in assembling material for this study.

Participant observation was a major research technique that was used in this study. Researchers attended a total of twenty-one gospel music concerts that were mainly held in Harare at venues like the Harare Gardens, ZANU (PF) Hall, and the Harare Showgrounds. Other musical shows at which some gospel musicians performed, like the annual Jenaguru Music Festival, were also attended. In most cases the gospel musicians were available for interviews at such events. Follow up exercises were conducted, with researchers attending Praise and Worship sessions where gospel musicians took a leading role. Weddings and parties where gospel artists performed were included in an endeavour to capture the changing contexts. In a number of instances, gospel musicians were interviewed at their homes and places of employment.

Attention was paid to musical types, dance routines, as well as audience response and participation at gospel music shows. An analysis of the texts required listening to hundreds of gospel music tapes and to radio programmes, in public transport such as commuter omnibuses and long distance buses, flea markets, night clubs and record bars. Viewing many television musical programmes, such as the *Psalmody* and *MutinhimiraweMimhanzi/Ezomgido* familiarised the researchers with locally produced gospel music videos. Focus was on how gospel music could be viewed as an aspect of contemporary African artistic production. Musical programmes that played other music types and foreign music were also targeted for analysis.

Data on record sales and the chart shows was obtained from recording companies, retail outlets, newspapers, radio programmes and other sources. Flea-market vendors provided information on tapes that were in demand for the period under review. Valuable information was also accessed through interviews with presenters, other musicians not associated with gospel music, and the listening and buying public. Request shows, programmes for the ill, interludes during live coverage of the burial of national heroes and other observations were used to gauge the popularity of gospel music. Listening to the songs that were recurrent when people were celebrating, sorrowful, or sometimes drunk allowed us to compare gospel music with other types of music. In another study (Chitando, 1998b), the researcher examined the appropriation of Christian music by visually impaired street musicians in Harare. The responses by members of the audience were also utilised in establishing the significance of gospel music.

Specific attention was paid to the innovation, contextual sensitiveness and thematic concerns of gospel musicians. Data on traditional music performances, the status of female cultural workers and the communication environment in Zimbabwe was collected from primary and secondary sources. Material on macroeconomic indicators, the impact of Hiv and Aids and the

political environment was accessed from government publications, private agencies and research reports. The overall thrust of our data collection and analyses was to establish the role of gospel music in Zimbabwe. We sought to understand how this aspect of urban African culture contributes to new images about Africa.

Valuable information was obtained from organisations such as the Zimbabwe Association of Gospel Musicians (ZAGOM), the Gospel Songwriters Club and the Zimbabwe Union of Musicians (ZUM). Representatives of recording companies, retail outlets, the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC), and the National Arts Council of Zimbabwe were helpful in establishing the state of the music industry. Interactions with members of the Zimbabwe National Traditional Healers Association (ZINATHA), the Baha'i Faith, Judaism, Islam and other religious groups in other projects proved useful for this study. This enabled us to put the marginalisation of traditional religious songs as well as those from other religions into perspective.

In line with the phenomenological approach adopted in this report, the principal researcher also utilised his knowledge of traditional Shona musical and religious practices. Research into the Mwari cult in the Southern provinces of Zimbabwe from 1996 to 2000 made data available that pointed to the richness of indigenous music. The principal researcher's own avid interest in popular music in Zimbabwe and working familiarity with some gospel musicians in Zimbabwe proved to be important resources. Attending an international conference on "Playing with Identities in Contemporary Music in Africa" in Turku/Åbo, Finland in October 2000 facilitated interaction with some of the leading musicologists and provided valuable insights on trends in African music. Presenting papers at universities in Nordic countries and at the Nordic Africa Institute in October and November 2001 also gave useful perspectives. Overall, a multiplicity of data collection methods and interpretative techniques were utilised in the compilation and synthesis of the material used in this study.

## 2.5 LIMITATIONS OF DATA AND SOURCES

Studies on popular Zimbabwean culture in general and from a religious perspective in particular are few, rendering any undertaking in this area immensely difficult. Although studies on music in Zimbabwe have been undertaken, the approaches that have been adopted have not resulted in the emergence of a compact area of investigation. The analyses that have been undertaken remain fragmentary and tend to focus on internationally recognised artists like Thomas Mapfumo, popular music in general, or on traditional music. Gospel music as an aspect of how African cultures are being continually reworked has not received any appreciable scholarly scrutiny. A report by Banning Eyre (2001) only makes passing reference to gospel music. As a

consequence, there are very few interlocutors in this field. While this allows the study to break new ground, it has the attendant problem of restricting references to findings from other investigations into related phenomena.

A methodological problem emerging from the research is the observation that accurate figures pertaining to the music industry in Zimbabwe are difficult to establish. Recording companies, retail outlets and the performing artists themselves were not at ease when discussing record sales. This rendered discussion of the economic impact of gospel music in Zimbabwe difficult. Suspicions within the music industry, religious and ideological differences amongst some of the strategic actors and the perception that it is theologically inadmissible for a cultural worker in the domain of gospel music to derive economic benefits coalesced to make this dimension difficult to interpret. Consequently, many performing artists were hesitant to discuss the extent to which their economic status has changed due to their careers. Indigenous and Christian notions of modesty also played a role in accentuating this difficulty.

This study concentrates on gospel musicians who have had their work recorded in Shona. The limitation in terms of languages and cultural contexts discussed is clear. It is therefore important that other studies reviewing developments in Ndebele and other languages be undertaken. In addition, this research emphasises the experiences of gospel music with special reference to Harare. Although artists from other regions were interviewed, as well as noting the developments of church music in other areas, the high incidence of cultural workers from Harare needs to be noted as a limiting factor. Granted that Harare is the seat of the music industry in Zimbabwe, investigations in other settings may yield different results and patterns.

Although the presentation does make constant references to the development of hymns and choruses within the various denominations, this is not its main focus. Gospel music has moved from the church context into the public domain, although strong ties remain. Additionally, the popularity of gospel music is related to developments in other music types but these do not receive extensive coverage. The selective thrust adopted implies that further research into new compositions in the churches, their guiding theological ideas and performance contexts is necessary. It also requires a separate study to establish the achievements and constraints of the music industry in Zimbabwe. A regional study could also indicate the extent to which Christianity has influenced popular culture in Southern Africa through gospel music performances.

By adopting a gaze that seeks to survey gospel music in its overall development, the report may also sacrifice the peculiarities of individual denominations and performing artists. Since very little work has been done on gospel music in Zimbabwe, this is a limitation one has to bear with. However, other researchers can complement this study by tracing how denominations like the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe have produced more gospel musicians

than others. What is lost by not dwelling on specific artists and denominations is more than adequately compensated for by attaining an overall picture of the status of gospel music in the country. The limitation in terms of adopting a general overview however, needs to be acknowledged.

As a report in the domain of cultural studies, the presentation does not emphasise statistical details, tables and graphs to capture research findings. This is due to the methodological stance adopted whereby it is argued that the lived experiences of a people cannot be reduced to facts and figures. Tabulating material has the advantage of bringing together complex data in one place. However, in the field of cultural studies, figures may efface people and their experiences. Cultural products are not amenable to statistical reductionism due to their inherent dynamic nature. Nonetheless, it is envisaged that the format adopted will bring out the creativity and vitality that characterise gospel music in Zimbabwe.

## 2.6 SUMMARY

Although some critics contend that methodological reflections are not helpful, in this chapter I have argued that the process through which we accumulate data about specific cultural phenomena should be continually interrogated. This is particularly important in a discussion of cultural images emerging from Africa where distortions and ideological conflicts have been dominant. There was need to review approaches that have been used to study religious phenomena, as well as to highlight the methodological principles that guide this study. A multidisciplinary approach was proposed, while the specific contributions of the different methodologies were noted.

This chapter also draws attention to techniques that were used in data collection. Although the challenge was how to explain the cultural fusion that characterises gospel music, and problems of data collection, strategies to counter limitations of the data were effected. Through the use of questionnaires, in-depth interviews with key informants, source criticism of newspaper articles and a critical review of the communication environment, we endeavoured to clarify the importance of gospel music in Zimbabwe. By applying qualitative and quantitative research techniques, this study seeks to illustrate how gospel music is an integral part of cultural realities in postcolonial Zimbabwe. In the following chapter, I provide an overview of the history of music in the country.

### 3. Music in Zimbabwe: A Historical Overview

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a historical survey of the background necessary for understanding the emergence of gospel music in Zimbabwe. It builds on the view that developments associated with gospel music are understood better by appreciating the overarching historical processes that have shaped music performances in the country. Although gospel music asserted itself between 1990 and 2001, its trajectories can be traced back much further. It is therefore an act of doing violence to history if one neglects the larger context that has shaped the making of music in Zimbabwe. As a result of this realisation, the chapter sets establishing earlier Christian influences on popular music as one of its main objectives. This chapter however, does not intend to provide an exhaustive account of the history of music in Zimbabwe. It is important to recognise with Thomas Turino that there is no single 'history of music' in Zimbabwe (Turino, 2000:17). Multiple histories that are informed by the subject positions and varied experiences of the actors involved characterise any effort to research into this area.

#### 3.2 THE ROLE OF MUSIC IN THE TRADITIONAL SHONA CONTEXT

Music has been an important vehicle for identity formation, facilitating worship, and a source of entertainment across cultures. Among the Shona people of Zimbabwe, music performance fulfilled multiple roles in society. Although the term Shona is an 'invention', to put it in the popular parlance, it is retained in this report. It is employed to refer to closely related ethnic groups found in Zimbabwe who share common historical experiences and speak related dialects. A Ghanaian scholar and prominent ethnomusicologist, J. H. Kwabena Nketia has observed that in most African societies prior to colonialism, music performance was closely tied to communal events. Consequently, most community events were accompanied by music. His observations are also applicable to how the Shona people approached music. Thus:

Public performances, therefore, take place on social occasions, that is, on occasions when members of a group or a community come together for the employment of leisure, for recreational activities, or for the performance of a rite, ceremony, festival, or any other kind of collective activity, such as building bridges, clearing paths, going on a search party, or putting out fires—activities

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that, in industrialised societies, might be assigned to specialised agencies (Nketia, 1992:121).

Despite this important role played by music in African social life, where music accompanied one from the cradle to the grave (Mbabi-Katana, 1977), there are scant references to musical traditions of African people in history texts by both African and European scholars. This is mainly due to the fact that history has often been understood as an effort to understand past political processes, with little emphasis on the lived experiences of the people under investigation. For their part, ethnomusicologists, that is, those who isolate music for detailed analysis, tend to rely on historians in their efforts to describe African musical performances of the past. Many researchers have noted these difficulties and have sought the expertise of prehistorians and archaeologists to supplement the range of living memories. Prehistorians however have nothing of interest to report to musicologists until the invention of the bow some 30,000 to 15,000 years ago (Agordoh, 1994:2). Apart from its use in hunting, it is thought that the bow was used to produce musical sound.

The challenges facing musical research in Africa in general are also felt when studying the musical traditions of the Shona people in particular. The historical sources available do not focus on music, except only in passing. However, through oral tradition and reconstruction from Portuguese documents and other sources, it can be established that musical performance has been engraved on the Shona collective consciousness since the very distant past. The mbira music instrument for example belongs to the ideophone group of instruments with connections to an earlier instrument invented more than one thousand years ago. In addition, a Dominican father, Joao dos Santos who interacted with the Shona around 1586, provided descriptions of mbira (Ellert, 1984:60). Through a critical application of source criticism, Shona songs can also be used as a prime carrier of history in an African context. Many songs that have been handed down from generation to generation celebrate the achievements of cultural groups and indicate a long history of musical performances.

Although the history of the Shona people is difficult to reconstruct (Beach, 1980), it is probable that music has always been part of their cultural life. Having settled in the south of Zimbabwe by the tenth century, the Shona proceeded to oversee a thriving civilisation at Great Zimbabwe. Music was important to this traditional society. It included war songs, signal drumming, as well as music and dance for weddings, funerals and religious events (Berliner, 1981:21). Music performance also found its way to the court of Mutapa, where the ruler had professional state praise singers. Court musicians played many different musical instruments and sang a variety of songs for the entertainment and gratification of the king and his court officials (Jones, 1992:25). Many elderly respondents and cultural enthusiasts also testify to the presence

of a long musical tradition. From the available sources, it is convincing to uphold that musical performance has been built into the very way life of the Shona people from as far back into the past as history can allow us to grasp.

Music performances in precolonial Shona society covered the social, political, and spiritual spheres. Without falling into the misleading reductionism of saying that all traditional music was religious, it remains important to highlight the close relationship that existed between Shona music and the ancestral cult (Maraire, 1990). Although traditional Shona societies were not homogenous and professional court musicians could emerge, artistic products tended to be communal possessions. Songs were performed as part of the Shona cumulative tradition, with ample space for improvisation and innovation. As in other traditional African societies, music featured in initiation ceremonies, rituals and sacrifices, death and funerals, as well as in work, hunting and healing (Agordoh, 1994:29). In the daily lives of the people, songs played an important role in expressing dissent, correcting mistakes and for lamentation.

The protest song also represents a significant aspect of traditional Shona musical practice. While it has been tempting for many African cultural nationalists to glorify the African past, it should be noted that life has always been a struggle for all human beings in different historical epochs. It was in the encounter with the frustrations of life that the Shona protest song emerged. Such a protest song revolved on the solo-axis chorus. In such desperate situations individuals appealed to Mwari, the Supreme Being, for divine intervention instead of observing the protocol of handing requests to the ancestors for onward transmission to God (Kahari, 1986:83). Apart from this mode of protest directed towards spiritual beings, the Shona protest song was also useful in the domain of politics. This genre requires further analysis in Zimbabwe (Kahari, 1981).

In terms of its performance, vocal Shona music has three parts. These include the leading part called *mushauri* (the one who leads) or *muvambi* (the one who begins). The responsive character is represented by the term *vatsinhiri* (those who agree or accompany). There is also the *mahon'era* or the bass part (Axelsson, 1993:29). However, Berliner notes that traditional Shona songs have taken a number of different forms. Some are based on call and response patterns, in which parts are alternated between the leader and the chorus. Other songs are based on simultaneous singing. Alongside verbal singing, non-verbal singing styles such as humming and yodelling characterise Shona vocal practices (Berliner, 1981:26). In the recorded gospel music of the 1990s, these features of vocal Shona music continued to dominate, demonstrating lines of continuity.

### 3.2.1 Rhythm, Dance and Gender in Traditional Music

Considerable scholarly interest has been shown on the question of African rhythm and sensibility (Chernoff, 1979). An analysis of the Zimbabwean context shows that music was appreciated for its multiple roles. Various musical instruments were used in traditional music performances. A detailed review of these instruments, when the Shona people adopted them and their status in performance requires a separate study. These traditional musical instruments included various categories. Trumpets and horns (*hwamanda*), flutes, and pipes (*nyere*), represent some of the wind instruments. Mouth bows such as *chipendani*, hand rattles (*hosho*), leg rattles (*magagada*), wooden clappers (*makwa*), mbira and drums (*ngoma*) were all available for music production (Jones, 1992). Artists would play any one of these instruments to make music, although there was a tendency to integrate singing in the performances. In traditional settings, literally any spot could be utilised for performances. These included public places, exclusive sacred spots, the courtyard of a house where a ceremony was being held or a dance plaza (Nketia, 1992:31).

Rhythms and rhythmic structures were significant, allowing for diverse dance routines. These dances served both to channel the emotions released by the music and to encode social meaning. By combining song and dance, and spontaneously responding to musical rhythms, the Shona people demonstrated their passion for and celebration of life. Through rhythm and motion, dances such as *muchongoyo* reinforced deeply-rooted and cherished social values. Other dances included the *mbira*, *shangara*, *dinhe* and *mbakumba* dances, each one emerging from the different geographical areas of the country. Shona traditional dances exhibit a rich variety, including circle dances, line dances and others. Unfortunately, scholarly research into this aspect of Shona cultural life is still in its infancy. The value of such investigation is captured in one scholar's estimation the importance of dance:

Zimbabwean dance is African dance, it is southern African dance, it is Zimbabwean history, it is religion, it is cosmology, and, as such, it is a canon by which the cultural phenomena of the arts in Africa can be examined (Asante, 2000:18).

Within these traditional music performances, women had important roles to play. Their participation in singing, clapping, ululating and dancing was an integral part of the proceedings. Women also played musical instruments like the hand and leg rattles, as well as the whistle. Although the ancestral cult was based on patriarchal notions (Bourdillon, 1987:52), women were still central to its practice. Women could become powerful mediums of both the ancestral and alien spirits, they could emerge as healers, and in the case of the southern Mwari cult, they could become *mbonga* or ritual attendants in the worship of God. This sacred sanction facilitated the participation of women in music and dance. The conclusion that the role of women in the traditional

Shona world can be summarised in their having been subordinates to men needs to be relativised. Granted that the status of women in African society did not meet current feminist demands, it remains true that the story is simply not one of outright dehumanisation. As shall be noted below, this issue has a direct bearing on the status of women in the performing arts.

To contend that traditional Shona society accorded decent space for female participation in music and ritual should not be misconstrued as implying that women enjoyed equal status with men. A music researcher in Zimbabwe, Joyce Jenje Makwenda for example, argues that since the mbira instrument was rooted in ancestral traditions, women were not allowed to play it (Makwenda, 2000b:10). This injunction also applied to drums for ritual purposes. The association of the drum with the male form might also have contributed to its restrictions. Thus, "No woman would dream of beating her husband in public (even though she may occasionally be doing so in private!), nor may she beat the drum in the village square" (Bebey, 1975:15). In Shona traditional religions, menstrual blood has been considered as particularly polluting. As a result, elderly women brewed beer for ancestral veneration. Despite this, women actively participated in the ritual process and were at the heart of musical production. Perhaps we need to appreciate African traditional religions as having an ambivalent attitude towards women and occupying the middle ground between feminist denunciation and masculine African cultural nationalist celebration

Phenomenological precepts call for caution in cultural studies. Value judgements need to be minimised if the phenomena under investigation are to be understood on their own terms. The area of the participation of women in African societies is one such area where there is need for balance and a patient examination of issues. Failure to do this may result in the problem of hasty evaluation. A good example is how a well-meaning interpreter of Shona popular music such as Turino makes sweeping statements regarding the status of women. According to him, women are extremely subservient to men in Shona culture. He maintains that domestic relations are heavily patriarchal and that in indigenous Shona practice women were, and in some ways still are, legal minors. He cites the fact that women kneel for men as part of the evidence for the low place occupied by Shona women (Turino, 2000:81).

This report contends that women had ample space within which to artistically express themselves in Shona society prior to colonial occupation. As Michael Bourdillon contends, there is need to revisit the common misconception that women had little or no status in traditional African society. He emphasises the need to focus on the subtle, unacknowledged influence that they have possessed in the home (Bourdillon, 1987:53). In music and dance, women could participate and were recognised as serious cultural workers. Shona culture thus acknowledged and promoted contributions by women in the field of music. However, the strictures of patriarchal authority were felt in

some instances. These included lack of access to instruments that were associated with the ancestral cult such as the *mbira* and drums. The participation of women in ritual music could also be limited due to the ideology of ritual purity. Overall, traditional Shona society recognised the important contribution of women to music making. Significant changes were to occur with the passage of time, particularly with the reordering of space under colonialism.

### 3. 2. 2 Changes in Traditional Shona Music

While African creative writers have been influential and effective in dramatising the impact of colonialism on the African landscape in its various aspects, it is crucial to bear in mind that these traditional societies were not trapped in some frozen, unchanging time warp. Specifically among the Shona, openness to interaction with the outside world was a reality of life from very early on. The area of trade in particular allowed the movement of goods and ideas into the life experiences of the Shona. They traded in gold and ivory, leopard skins, iron, copper wax and other products from 900 AD (Beach, 1994:73). In turn they bought a wide array of goods, including luxury imports such as Persian and Chinese vessels that have been found at Great Zimbabwe. Arab traders brought the influence of Islam to the court of Mutapa, while trade relations with the Indians must have sensitised some of the Shona people to Indian spiritual traditions.

Within the sub-region itself, there was considerable movement of people and ideas prior to colonialism or the invention of the concept of globalisation. Some Shona ethnic groups borrowed cultural practices like male circumcision, for example, from neighbouring communities. Assimilation, adaptation, and rejection have always characterised responses at cultural frontiers throughout history. This openness had an impact on Shona musical performances. They integrated new instruments, dances and ideas within their repertoire. An instrument such as *marimba*, now closely associated with 'traditional' music, appears to have been a recent addition (Jones, 1992:85). The institution of the *shavi* (alien spirit) whereby the spirit of a cultural outsider possessed a Shona medium, was an avenue for bringing in new musical practices and dance styles. It is believed that the spirit of a foreigner who died in Shona territory might become tired of wandering and may seek an indigenous host. Ceremonies held in honour of such spirits were characterised by performances of music and dance from the spirit's own cultural traditions. Sacred regalia accompanying such performances was introduced and loan words from neighbouring communities crept into the vocabulary. Stored in the Shona cumulative tradition, such music is now considered an integral part of indigenous music and as contributing to contemporary Zimbabwean identities. As Shona people interacted amongst themselves, with those in their immediate sur-

roundings and the wider world, they continually transformed their musical practices.

As noted above, the changes in Shona traditional music should not only be thought of in terms of external influences, though these often instigate the most profound changes. Encounters with new experiences and challenges have always had an impact on music production. Internal changes occurred in the form of shifting centres of popularity with respect to particular traditions of music, borrowing across the various types, and compositions within the repertoires associated with different instruments (Berliner, 1981:25). In the light of these observations, there is need to recast the concept of 'traditional music' or 'African Traditional Religions'. These have never been static entities, but traditions characterised by continuous assimilation of new ideas and practices. As Terence Ranger and Jocelyn Alexander have argued with reference to the Northern areas, openness and integration have characterised the indigenous traditions of Zimbabwe (Alexander and Ranger, 1998). References to the essentially conservative nature of Shona society and how it prevents artists from experimenting with change (Asante, 2000:23) obfuscate the malleable nature of tradition. Amidst the ideology which musical practices that have been handed down from the ancestors are cast in stone, there is always a constant negotiation and creation of new artistic modes. This observation helps to explain why musicians from a Shona cultural background were not traumatised by the experience of colonialism, which is highlighted below.

### 3.3 COLONIALISM AND MUSIC IN ZIMBABWE: A RAPID REAPPRAISAL

The project of colonialism has enjoyed pride of place in most African historiography. Against the backdrop of serene rural life, colonialism brutally entered and dramatically reconfigured African space and time, many creative writers have contended. Where African communalism had thrived, where no distinction between the sacred and the profane had been made and where artistic products were not pursued for financial rewards, the Europeans introduced individualism, new religious traditions and shameless commercialism, African critics asseverate. Western ethnographers mourn the loss of African vitality, while Western ethnomusicologists and African cultural nationalists—strange bed fellows—are united in trying to recover the lost African cultural heritage. How to rehabilitate a battered African identity has been a major problematic for postcolonial African discourse. Taken up by African creative writers, it has found echoes in diverse areas like African philosophy, African theology, and African history. According to this dominant thread, colonialism undermined African culture in a very profound way. The Ghanaian scholar, Emmanuel Martey summarises the contentions thus:

From the writings of both Africans and blacks of the diaspora, African Christians have learned how colonialism drained African societies of their very essence, trampled African culture underfoot, undermined African institutions, confiscated its lands, smashed its religions, destroyed its magnificent artistic creations and wiped out extraordinary possibilities (Martey, 1993: 8).

Many commentators on music in Zimbabwe have used the colonial period to highlight the extent to which it shaped the context of music performances. According to Alice Dadirai Kwaramba, colonisation was a significant turning point in the history of the people of Zimbabwe. For her:

It introduced new social and political structures such as urbanisation, formal school education, the Christian religion, and much more importantly new varieties of music such as Christian hymns. The traditional role of music as a medium of instruction was replaced by the introduction of a formal education system that was closely linked to the new Christian religion (Kwaramba, 1997:2).

Another music researcher, Fred Zindi notes that as Westernisation became entrenched in Zimbabwe, in the late 1930s Western instruments such as the guitar, the banjo, the harmonica and accordion began to replace indigenous instruments. He argues that even traditional drums were replaced by Western drum kits and cymbals (Zindi, 1997:1). Caleb Dube also notes the decisive impact of colonialism, particularly in the area of the commercialisation of music. As urban settlements grew and Africans were needed as a source of cheap labour for white settlers, music underwent transformation. Municipalities and private companies utilised urbanisation to promote the emergence of paid performers (Dube, 1996:106). Beerhalls and beer gardens attracted many patrons due to limited entertainment possibilities for the black majority. These became centres of African musical performances in urban areas. The leading musicologists maintain that urban popular musical styles in Africa grew out of three types of colonial institutions: mission schools, churches and military bands (Coplan, 1985; Collins, 1985; Waterman, 1990). The paragraphs below focus on the influence of churches and mission schools in the Zimbabwean context.

While colonialism certainly remains important for its impact on African culture, there is a tendency to ascribe too much influence to it. As argued above, change has always characterised African cultures. Prior to colonialism, the Shona had interacted with the outside world and amongst themselves, adopting and recasting new ideas and practices. However, there is also some merit in dwelling on the significant effects of colonialism on African experiences. It is colonialism that facilitated the lasting influence of European cultural beliefs and practices on the African continent. In the area of music, colonialism made new musical instruments and traditions available. However, it

should be recognised that the project of colonialism was not as final and decisive as its architects and victims have sometimes contended.

A major limitation in the literature available on music is the preoccupation with the urban history of music in Zimbabwe. While this is understandable on grounds that the music industry in the country is predominantly an urban phenomenon, it creates the unfortunate impression that as people moved to the urban settlements, music virtually died out in the rural areas. Without exaggerating the rural-urban divide, it remains crucial to observe that traditional ceremonies continued to be held in the rural areas, alongside many of the occasions that promoted the performance of traditional music. Thus, "The vibrancy or disruption of indigenous artistic practices must be understood in relation to multiple histories, specific regions, and different subject positions" (Turino, 2000:100). Consequently, it must be borne in mind that some of the effects of urbanisation and commercialisation were of a limited nature, affecting mainly the urban context. However, the presence of a new religion that made universalistic claims had a more enduring influence, although it also worked in tandem with other factors. The following section examines the influence of Christianity on African musical performances in Zimbabwe.

### 3.3.1 The Impact of the Churches

Although there has been a tendency to highlight the close association between Christianity and colonialism, missionary activities in Zimbabwe predate the colonial occupation. In addition, Christian hymns were already known in the country prior to colonisation, with migrants from South Africa bringing Zulu hymns before 1890 when the Pioneer Column, representing the colonising force, moved into Zimbabwe. Some Protestant and Catholic missionaries "attempted to write hymns in Ndebele and Shona, though they worked in European idiom, often simply translating European hymns" (Lenherr, 1977:105). However, it remains true that the various mission bodies started gaining significant numbers of converts after colonial occupation, the defeat of Shona and Ndebele military power in the 1896/87 African uprisings, and the introduction of formal education in which the missionaries played a key part. This report however does not seek to debate current historiography on missionary activities in Zimbabwe (Zvobgo, 1996), except in relation to the question of how they affected musical performances.

The body of literature known as African theology today is replete with criticisms of the missionary enterprise in Africa. Nineteenth century North American and Western European missionaries are accused of advocating African cultural genocide, racism, insensitivity and a host of other injustices (Muzorewa, 1985). Missionaries are charged with operating with binary opposites concerning reality, regarding Africa as the antithesis of Europe, Afri-

can critics maintain. African spirituality was seen as representing the devil's machinations, and they envisaged that the cleansing power of the gospel would smash 'African heathenism' as they saw it. Although there have been efforts to question such wholesale condemnation of the missionaries (Sanneh, 1989), most African theologians continue to have as their opening salvo bitter denunciations of the missionaries' negative effect on African culture.

With the benefit of hindsight, it is possible to recognise that the missionaries who came to Africa were products of their time. They uncritically upheld the notion of their own cultural supremacy, while paternalism also marked their interaction with Africans in most instances. A good example is how most missionaries shared the colonial myth of Africans as lacking any appreciable knowledge in matters of hygiene. They saw their task as one of producing 'civilised' Africans who would turn their backs on all inherited traditions, becoming 'new creations' as per the biblical idiom. Personal cleanliness, no doubt foreshadowing internal transformation, was emphasised. Students at a number of mission stations in Zimbabwe recited a 'Catechism of Health' in the mid-1920s in which they pledged to strive to wash their bodies, citing the frequency (Burke, 1996:38).

In the domain of music, the missionaries have come in for some heavy censure for their suppression of indigenous music. This observation has also been made in the West African context (Bender, 1991:75). African theologians are bitter that missionaries undermined local instruments such as the *mbira* and drums since they were associated with the ancestral cult. Indigenous dances were also forbidden in mission stations. These mission stations were seen as 'liberated zones' where converts were expected to have broken off ties with traditional beliefs and practices. Kwaramba notes that written church hymns replaced African religious songs, and a choral type of music foreign to African experiences was introduced. New dress codes, voice modulation rules and instruments were imposed upon indigenous people. The concept of the choir effected a clear distinction between the 'talented' and those who were not, thereby inventing the notion of an audience in a society where previously everyone had had a role in musical performances (Kwaramba, 1997:2-3). Olof Axelsson also observes that nineteenth century missionaries tended to blur the distinction between Christianity and Western culture. This attitude had a negative effect on indigenous musical practices. It is necessary to cite him at considerable length:

Thus in respect of church-music, the European outlook was dominant; Christian music, by necessity, had to be Western, as African music was unintelligible to the European ear and regarded as inferior and pagan. The use of such music then could not be encouraged, but had to be firmly resisted, because of the risks of leading the newly converted African back to the heathen and 'sinful' society (Axelsson, 1974:91).

Some of the African converts also tended to look down upon their 'unsaved' compatriots. Having imbibed the missionary ideology of the superiority of the new religion over the old, they castigated their neighbours whom they saw as destined for hell-fire. They composed taunting and satirical songs that degraded those who remained in 'darkness' (Zimunya, 1993: 131–132). Such songs carried forth the perception that African cultural traditions were backward and needed cleansing through the power of the gospel. Songs portraying colonial Zimbabwe as '*Nyika Yerima*' (A Dark Country) were in line with binary opposites that tended to guide most missionary operations. Converts who performed such songs were simply parroting what they had received.

For a long time, most denominations in Zimbabwe relied on Western hymns or contrived translations for their liturgy. However, starting in the 1940s, efforts to indigenise church music got under way. Specific denominations articulated different attitudes toward African cultural practices, as did individual missionaries, according to their personal dispositions (Turino, 2000:114). It is therefore important to recognise that while the general picture of a massive assault on indigenous music by missionaries is on the whole accurate, there is need to acknowledge that there were salient differences in how different denominations and individual missionaries in these denominations responded to this issue. The Catholic Church was a pioneer in the quest to encourage local compositions and to incorporate African musical instruments, alongside the Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Methodists. The latter denomination is particularly significant in that from about 1940 there was a lay organisation called *Wabvuwi* (Workers in God's Field) that gave Western hymns a refreshing African outlook (Axelsson, 1974: 99). Zimbabwean gospel music in the 1990s witnessed a marked presence of *Wabvuwi* groups from the Methodist church.

It however requires a longer narrative to discuss the contributions of specific denominations to the growth of indigenous church music in Zimbabwe. Within the Catholic Church, figures like Fr A. M. Jones were actively involved in the development of African church music (Jones, 1976). Particularly after the Second Vatican Council, 1962–1965, the Catholic Church actively promoted the emergence of African composers like Stephen Ponde and others (Mushayapokuvaka, 1997). Denominations such as the Methodists, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, Anglicans and others also saw the need to have African church music, although they all differed in terms of the pace and extent of inculturation, in line with their inherited theological traditions. While some writers were optimistic about the considerable progress that has been achieved (Lenherr, 1977), other researchers felt that by 1997 there was still much to be done within specific denominations (Tawonezvi, 1997).

For an appreciation of the spirit of co-operation amongst Zimbabwean gospel musicians in the 1990s, it is important to refer to the efforts of the musician and musicologist, Robert Kauffman. The American Methodist Board of

Missions seconded him to the country in 1960 to promote the use of indigenous music in churches and schools. He conducted research into music within the Shona society (Kaufmann, 1971) and sought to promote new African church music. Although operating from within the matrix of the Methodist church, Kauffman held workshops from 1960 to 1968 where musicians from the Catholic and Lutheran churches participated. He was also instrumental in the formation of an organisation called 'All-Africa Church Music Association' for the promotion of new church music in Africa. With the worsening political situation in the country, a local organisation, the 'Ecumenical Arts Association' emerged to promote the use of African arts in Christian worship (Axelson, 1974:99). The spirit of ecumenism in Christian musical production in Zimbabwe therefore has a long history. In the 1990s, the Ecumenical Arts Association continued to be actively involved in the development of church music in Zimbabwe.

From a historical perspective, it is also important to realise that the drive towards the Africanisation of church music in Zimbabwe was due to both internal and external factors. On the political front, beginning in the late 1950s African nationalism asserted itself. As many African nations attained political independence in the glorious 1960s, churches were under pressure to reflect the new political dispensation. Within the various denominations in Zimbabwe, some educated Africans began to question the wholesale condemnation of African cultural practices. Such individuals worked for liturgical change in Catholic and Protestant denominations. As African nationalism expressed itself on the political front, church music was simultaneously undergoing transformation. African cultural nationalism thus contributed towards the appropriation of traditional musical practices in Christian worship. The introduction of African instruments such as the *mbira*, drums and horns, as well as the fusion of traditional elements from indigenous musical styles is a direct outcome of such striving. Alongside the integration of indigenous music, reflections were undertaken on other dimensions of Zimbabwean traditional religions such as naming practices, death and mourning, and the ancestral cult.

Most analysts of the history of music performance in Zimbabwe overlook the important role played by African Independent/Initiated Churches in retaining traditional music, as well as creatively blending it with Christian themes. The missiologist Inus Daneel has provided a detailed account of the reasons for the emergence of these churches in Zimbabwe (Daneel, 1971). Some of the founders of the African Independent Churches wanted to respond to the African worldview in a more realistic manner than the mainline churches would allow. Reactions to missionary discrimination, personal ambition, sense of prophetic mission and other factors prompted the rapid expansion of this wing of Christianity in Africa. In line with their thrust of promoting African culture, many African Independent Churches carried over the

animal horn into their services (Berliner, 1981:22), as well as incorporating drums and creating new dances. African Independent Churches promoted new compositions by emphasising the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and have been influential in both preserving and reworking traditional music in Zimbabwe. Music also plays an important role in social integration within such churches (Jules-Rosette, 1985). It is also possible to regard African Independent Churches as leading the way in African theology in terms of their music, prayers and church structures (Daneel, 1984). A number of groups affiliated to African Independent Churches have enjoyed popularity in Zimbabwean gospel music in the 1990s, as I shall show in chapter five.

### 3.3.2 The Churches and Education

To gain an appreciation of the popularity of gospel music in Zimbabwe in the 1990s, it is important to recognise that Christianity has left an indelible imprint on education in Zimbabwe. Denominations such as the Catholics, Anglicans, Methodists, Baptists, Reformed Church in Zimbabwe, Seventh-Day Adventists and others run many secondary schools. In addition, church-related universities emerged from the middle of the 1990s. Such is the preponderance of Christianity in the country that in the first quarter of the year 2000 the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe championed the call to have Zimbabwe declared a Christian country in the rejected draft constitution.

As part of their task of bringing 'knowledge and salvation' to the Africans, missionaries took education very seriously. The emergence of African evangelists, teachers and administrators was dependent on education. On the other hand, the colonial administration wanted Africans to have rudimentary education so that they could service the needs of the colonial state. To this end therefore, there was church and state partnership in African education in Zimbabwe (Siyakwazi, 1995). In fact, prior to 1930 the state left the task of educating Africans to the missionaries. This allowed the missionaries to establish many schools and to contribute towards African education. When the colonial state required the curriculum to churn out subservient Africans, some missionaries protested (Zvobgo, 1994:14). In effect, the strategic positioning of Christianity in the education sector facilitated its dominance in the religious sphere.

Many composers in Zimbabwean music went through missionary schools and they demonstrate working familiarity with biblical stories. Like creative writers, cultural nationalists and politicians, they illustrate the extent of the Christian influence. It was also at the mission school that foreign musical instruments, hymns and choruses were encountered. By singing in church choirs at school and playing Western musical instruments, many young Africans were initiated into music making. Musicians were trained to blend elements from African, African-American and European musical traditions

(Dube, 1996:107). Through the agency of the mission school and the church choir, Christianity has contributed towards the emergence of performing artists in Zimbabwe. It is therefore not surprising that one encounters biblical motifs in popular music.

Graduates of mission or government schools in the 1930s formed choirs. Most of the choirs showed the variety that characterised music in the country. They performed Protestant hymns, North American spirituals, borrowed from South American composers and sang secular songs from England and the United States (Turino, 2000:124). Recorded gospel music in Zimbabwe in the 1990s included some translated African American spirituals. The institution of the choir has proved resilient, with most local congregations having church choirs. From the school context, choirs have evolved into the public domain. Commercial entities like Colgate Palmolive also contributed to the popularity of choral music in its religious and secular dimensions by sponsoring competitions.

Alongside the introduction of new musical styles in the form of the choir, the churches also influenced the emergence of church music opera in which expressive drama and dance appear in conjunction with poetry and music (Axelsson, 1993:15). Dumisani Abraham Maraire, later to become a leading exponent of *mbira* and traditional spirituality, wrote a play *Mazuva ekupedzisa* (The Last Days) in 1965 and it received popular acclaim. Other distinguished composers included Patrick Matsikenyeri, who was working with the Africa University choir in the 1990s, John Nduna and Julius Mushuku. This genre is particularly significant for its appropriation of traditional poetry, story telling and fidelity to traditional rhythmic and melodic structure. It has been utilised in the making of videos for accompanying gospel music in the postcolonial period.

### 3.4 COMMERCIALISATION OF AFRICAN MUSIC DURING COLONIALISM

The impact of colonialism on African musical performances has received a lot of scholarly attention. As noted earlier, mission schools, churches, and military bands were key institutions that influenced the emergence of African urban music. In Zimbabwe, such music had to wrestle with the problem of acculturation (Kaufman, 1972). The struggle was one of fusing traditional aspects with new influences in a cosmopolitan setting. Municipalities were instrumental in promoting entertainment and in redirecting energies away from the oppressive colonial state. Shebeens (illegal bars that promoted the sale of illicit alcohol), concerts, beerhalls and entertainment halls were centres of urban musical performances in Zimbabwe (Bender, 1991:158; Turino, 2000: 110–112). From the 1930s urban popular music emerged in Zimbabwe, with predominantly male cultural workers like Kenneth Mattaka, De Black Eve-

ning Follies, August Musarurwa and others becoming pioneer artists. In line with the reality of shifting cultural practices, some Africans also took to ballroom dancing (Turino, 2000:146–148).

It was during the colonial period that music production took a commercial direction. Individuals like Musarurwa cited above became prominent by producing a new brand of music that combined local traditions with South African influences. Musarurwa became well known for his song, '*Skokiaan*,' which attained international popularity. In the mid-1950s this song captured popular imagination and it epitomised *tsaba tsaba* or 'jive' music. In this type of music, cosmopolitan influences could be detected as solo acoustic guitarists, small guitar bands with indigenous instruments and larger groups all appropriated foreign musical instruments (Turino, 2000:142). Although it had South African influences, *tsaba tsaba* or *jit* music became an intricate part of urban music in Zimbabwe. South African musicians introduced *simanje-manje* and *kwela* types of music in the country (Zindi, 1985:13). Overall, the quick tempo that was introduced during the 1950s and 1960s was retained in the gospel music of the 1990s.

Migrant workers were also a potent force in mediating foreign cultural influences in Zimbabwe. They had a marked impact in terms of music, language, religion, and other spheres. A good example is how migrant workers from Malawi brought back the lasting influence of Islam. Although Muslim Arabs penetrated into present-day Zimbabwe from the East African coast before 1500 AD, it subsequently disappeared. After 1890 scores of job-seeking Malawians started coming to Zimbabwe, bringing with them the influence of Islam (Mandivenga, 1983:4). Workers from Mozambique, Zambia and Malawi who laboured in Zimbabwean mines, farms and factories brought with them their music to fellow Zimbabwean workers (Dube, 1996:112). Alongside this initial influence, from the late 1950s Congolese bands came to Harare looking for better economic rewards. They brought with them the lasting influence of Congolese '*rumba*', *kwasa kwasa* or *soukous* (Turino, 2000:245). From Europe, America and the Caribbean came the influence of blues, jazz, soul, rock'n'roll, disco, funk, country music and reggae, particularly in the period 1960 to the 1970s (Dube, 1996:112).

The Rhodesian Broadcasting Corporation (RBC) promoted the commercialisation of African music by paying artists if they had recorded a song that was played on the radio (Zindi 1985: 3). European record companies like Gallo also sold and recorded music by African groups in the country. Gallo recorded the music of the Green Arrows, the Great Sounds, Harare Mambos, St. Paul's Musami band and others in the early 1970s. Commercialisation is also suggested by the increase in the number of an assortment of street musicians who entertained people in exchange for tokens of appreciation, particularly coins. With the rise of recording companies that were driven by the reality of profit and sustainability, Zimbabwean music was on a sure path to

commercialisation. With the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in 1965 that effected international isolation, the music industry invested much more in indigenous artists and the local market (Mukombahasha, 2001). African music could no longer be viewed in terms of its communal and spiritual value: the forces of urbanisation and commercialisation now required creative packaging and marketing strategies.

### **3.4.1 The Status of African Female Musicians During Colonialism:**

#### **A Summary**

While the music industry in the country was expanding, it tended to be characterised by white males wielding economic power and black males providing artistic skills. Space for female artists in the music industry in Zimbabwe has been very limited, during both the colonial and postcolonial periods (Impey, 1992). In the discussion on the status of women in traditional musical performances in Zimbabwe, I maintained that women had played active roles in the traditional context. However, the reorganisation of space and social life under colonialism dealt a severe blow to their participation, particularly in urban contexts. The early decades of colonial rule were characterised by the loss of women's social status and economic marginalisation (Schmidt, 1992). Women had relied on agriculture as a source of economic survival, but the land policies of the colonial state were vicious and oppressive. Africans were systematically and forcibly removed from fertile lands into overcrowded and barren 'reserves'. While African men could seek employment, the newly built urban and mining centres were largely out of bounds for African women.

Due to the settlers' emphasis on male labour, women did not easily access urban space during the early colonial period in Zimbabwe. At any rate, the sprouting urban settlements were initially meant for white comfort, with black males supplying cheap labour. Before the Second World War, black women were viewed as outcasts in urban areas and the number of urbanised women remained low (Jeater, 1993:183). However, as the capitalist colonial economy expanded, the number of black women who joined the ranks of low paid workers increased. They competed with, and complemented, their male counterparts in serving the settlers as domestic workers since openings in the formal sector were restricted.

Black women who found themselves in urban areas faced numerous challenges. Accommodation was a pressing issue since initially only male dormitories were built. In addition, most African men left their wives in the village in order to continue to have claims to land rights. Like the colonial administrators, most African men did not appreciate the presence of black women in urban areas. European and African patriarchy thus combined to limit the presence of African women in urban space during the early years of colonial rule. When women finally found their way into towns and mining

areas, notions of domesticity prevailed. African women who dared to access urban public space were labelled as 'stray', 'loose', 'dangerous', 'prostitutes', and other derogatory terms (Lynette, 1999). African women thus suffered the triple oppression of gender, class and race.

The notions of domesticity that defined the communal areas as idyllic for African women can also be detected in creative writings. Urban areas have largely been portrayed as the enemy of African cultural purity. In Zimbabwe, most creative writers tend to regard the movement from the sacred confines of the rural home to the ritually impure and alluring urban centres as a form of spiritual degradation and cultural death. It is in the urban areas that hitherto responsible fathers completely forget about their families, children forsake their identity and respectable women are lured into prostitution. The city is thus portrayed as the death-bed of the Shona people's morals and decency (Kahari, 1986:108). Predominantly male writers are consistent in their (re)presentation of African women who have migrated to the cities—they have a bad ending in that they end up dead or mutilated (Gaidzanwa, 1985). Herbert Chimundu has also argued that all forms of Shona literature accord the highest status and esteem to married mothers (*madzimai*) who are contrasted with the despised prostitutes and loose women (*mahure*), particularly in the context of the city (Chimhundu, 1995:151).

It is within these negative images of black women in African urban contexts that female cultural workers emerged in Zimbabwe's mines and towns. A dualistic philosophy that sees the rural areas as pristine and urban space as profane made life difficult for female artists. The following citation summarises the struggles that they face:

Women artists, be they singers or actresses are often perceived as 'women of the night' or 'women of the streets'; perhaps this is because they exist in these roles in the unmarked territory outside domesticity and also in urban space which for historic reasons relating both to colonial and indigenous patriarchy has been officially defined as the territory of men (Chitauro, Dube and Gunner, 1994:111).

Despite the stigma, a number of African women emerged as performing artists during the colonial period in Zimbabwe. From the late 1930s to the 1960s, artists like Lina Mattaka, Evelyn Juba and the Merry Makers, Dorothy Masuka and others managed to establish themselves (Makwenda 2000a: 15). Mattaka, like a number of other artists in the country and across the world, started a musical career through church performances. These urban-based musicians of the 1930s to the 1960s played a mixture of jazz and traditional music. Makwenda contends that music by these artists was more socially conscious than the music played between 1963–1973 that tended to gloss over pressing social issues. Local musicians were playing cover versions of South African and Zairean groups and thus tended to ignore the local context

(Makwenda, 2000a:15). Artists like Dorothy Masuka were able to attain international fame, while Susan Chenjerai emerged in the 1960s/1970s with an emphasis on comedy love songs. Beula Dyoko became the first woman to record mbira in the 1960s (Makwenda, 2000b :10). Stella Chiweshe also began playing mbira in 1961 when she was nineteen years old, posing a fundamental challenge to the ideology that the instrument was a male preserve.

Alongside the achievements of female recording artists, it is also important to acknowledge the role of women who utilised music to make a living in oppressive urban contexts. Since many of the women who made it to the cities during the colonial period were not formally employed, some of them resorted to shebeens (illegal beer halls), sex and entertainment. These women contributed to the scene of colonial urban music as performers and supporters in the rise of cultural workers (Dube 1996: 103- 104). However, in their struggles for survival and in enjoying themselves in colonial urban settings, African women had to contend with the patronising attitudes of their male compatriots. African men defined decency and 'proper' moral standards, as the letter to the *African Weekly* of 19 April 1944 makes clear:

These days everybody knows that in towns and on mines there is a dance called the 'Tsaba-tsaba'. Like all dances it is a good dance if it is done properly. What spoils the dance are some women and girls who do degrading things. They fling up their dresses and move their behinds and fronts in a bad way, not befitting good girls and women. Please don't do things that degrade us; dance tsaba-tsaba properly (Barnes, 1999:129).

In summary, we can note that the notion of colonial urban space as an exclusively male domain restricted the activities of African female musicians. Women who dared to access public space were negatively labelled, while white male commercial interests dictated the nature of the local music industry. As African families realised the importance of formal education, they emphasised it ahead of all other cultural activities. Children were encouraged to study and education was deemed the surest escape route out of rural poverty. The area of music was therefore associated with those who were academically less gifted and of doubtful moral stature. Such interpretations made it difficult for African female musicians to assert themselves. However, starting in the 1930s, a number of women based in urban areas began to record their music. Other women promoted musical performances by hosting parties and selling illegal brews. African women were therefore important in musical performances during the colonial period in Zimbabwe, although further research remains important.

In line with our interest of identifying the impact of Christianity on Zimbabwean music, there is need to note that the religion played a role in furthering notions of domesticity. Christianity emphasised 'wifely' duties such as bringing up children and preached a gospel of righteousness whereby women

would be saved by staying at home. The women's club movement promoted the image of an obedient and industrious African woman who did not venture into public space (Ranchod-Nilsson, 1992). However, Christianity also positively influenced the emergence of female cultural workers during colonialism by providing space for music performances. As shown above, some pioneering artists like Lina Mattaka started their careers within the context of the church. It is Christianity that also mediated the introduction of Western musical instruments for female artists in Zimbabwe. Such examples serve to illustrate the fact that the story of Christianity's influence on African music in Zimbabwe is not a straightforward narrative. The story is a complex one whereby the religion stifled indigenous instruments and dances on the one hand, while introducing new instruments, musical styles and alternative space on the other hand.

### 3.4.2 'Songs of Struggle': *Chimurenga* Music and the War of Liberation

Songs that were composed for propaganda purposes during Zimbabwe's armed liberation struggle (1972–1979) also provide valuable insights into the impact of Christianity on cultural production in the country. The colonial occupation of 1890 and subsequent displacement of Africans from fertile lands had met with armed resistance by the Shona and the Ndebele, finding expression in the 1896/87 African uprisings (Ranger, 1967). Nehanda and Kaguvu, who were influential spirit mediums in this struggle, were executed. These mediums were adopted as the 'patron saints' of the nationalist movement from the late 1950s. Given the close relationship between land and African spirituality, the nationalists portrayed the quest for freedom and regaining of ancestral lands as a just war sanctioned by powerful ancestral spirits.

As the liberation struggle gained momentum in the 1970s, songs were composed to encourage young Africans to rise and take up arms. Other songs sought to highlight the cruel conditions under which blacks lived, while also castigating the white settlers for their intransigence. According to Alec Pongweni who undertook an analysis of these songs soon after independence, these songs 'won the liberation war' (Pongweni, 1982). The songs utilised traditional genres such as the narrative type of song to provide a history of colonialism. Other songs adopted the protest mode in which direct appeals were made to Mwari, the Creator, to intervene and release people from the yoke of oppression. However, as I shall indicate below, Peter Manuel overstates the case when he maintains that the *chimurenga* songs of the revolution against the white Rhodesian government derived primarily from traditional Shona music (Manuel, 1988:88). While traditional genres were effectively employed, Christian hymns were also appropriated in the songs that sought to empower the African masses to overthrow a racist regime.

Since the term has entered into global discourses on music, it is necessary to briefly highlight the meaning of the term *chimurenga* music. Kwaramba argues that the first Shona and Ndebele uprisings became known as the first *chimurenga*. She notes that oral tradition explains that the tag *chimurenga* was coined after the great Shona traditional warrior and legendary hero, Sororenzou Murenga who was renowned for his fighting prowess. Those who came after him and exhibited equal prowess were said to be possessed by his spirit. They were said to be fighting *chimurenga*, which means, 'fighting the Murenga style'. As noted above, the nationalist movement claimed this legacy, giving birth to *chimurenga* music. It is music that emerged from the striving of African people against colonial domination (Kwaramba, 1997: 4-5). Other writers also underline this connection between indigenous spirituality, the struggle for freedom and *chimurenga* music (Axelsson, 1993:40; Pongweni, 1997:64). The combatants creatively employed this music to inculcate values of the liberation struggle and to illustrate what a free Zimbabwe would look like. The term *chimurenga* became part of the history of the country and found its way into the national anthem where it is portrayed as the struggle whose fire gave birth to Zimbabwe.

During the struggle for Zimbabwe, ZANU had radio programmes broadcast in the country from Radio Mozambique in Maputo, while ZAPU's were broadcast from Lusaka, Dar es Salaam, Cairo and Radio Moscow (Turino, 2000:203). The songs that were played in these programmes were meant to provide morale for the fighters on the war front, as well as to inspire more people to take up arms. By ridiculing the enemy, praising the exploits of the armed cadres and highlighting the new dispensation that would unfold upon the attainment of independence, the songs were an intricate part of the mobilising strategy of the nationalist parties. Since the emphasis was on liberating the African in a holistic sense, there was an upsurge in practices associated with African Traditional Religions in most parts of the country (Lan, 1985). Some armed combatants condemned Christianity at the *pungwes* (nightly meetings) and some individuals were made to burn their bibles. Christianity was painted as the religion of the oppressors and there was a revitalisation of indigenous cultural practices. However, in some areas, the guerrillas did not confront missionaries or their African converts. The question of the role of Christianity and African Traditional Religions during Zimbabwe's liberation war is a large one and it continues to receive scholarly attention (Bhebe and Ranger, 1996; Maxwell, 1997).

Studies that have been conducted on *chimurenga* music have however, missed the importance of dance routines that were developed during the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe. As with the preoccupation with *mbira* music, researchers have tended to dwell on 'authentic' traditional dances such as *muchongoyo* and *mbakumba*. During the armed resistance, new dances such as *mujibha* and *kongonya* were developed for entertainment and military pur-

poses. These dances require further investigation in terms of the improvisation and their militant outlook. As shall become clear with the analysis of gospel music, the cultures of the people of Zimbabwe, like all cultures found elsewhere, have never been arrested. Under the oppressive colonial jackboot and the threatening jet fighters, people continued to live out and to create cultures.

Although ZANU espoused a Marxist-Leninist ideology (McKenna, 1997:146), it did not pronounce a ban on religious activities. In fact, the mobilisation songs made use of Christian hymns. Turino notes that of the musical resources used for ZANU's and ZAPU's *chimurenga* songs, approximately 50 per cent of his sample are Christian hymns (Turino, 2000:203). Through creative substitution, Christian themes were replaced by nationalist concerns and 'Beautiful Jesus' became 'Beautiful Zimbabwe'. Pongweni reflects on the politics of using Christian hymns thus:

But because, after nearly 90 years of colonialism, the majority of the population had become Christian, the artists also incorporated tunes of Christian hymns in their compositions. This appropriation of hymns had a devastating effect because of the sacrilege implicit in allegedly communist-inspired collections of rascals posing as church choirs. But the singers, whom the Rhodesian propaganda machine was denouncing as anti-Christians deserving to be disowned even by their own parents, were schooled in folk art: they were accustomed to the flexibility of oral poetic forms which permit textual manipulation to achieve specific objectives. And they extended this to church songs (Pongweni, 1997:66).

The influence of Christianity can be detected in how the armed combatants utilised hymns in their music. However, Pongweni's focus on the 'subversive' slant in such appropriation is worth noting. Another Zimbabwean scholar supports such an interpretation. He notes, "As the guerrilla war intensifies, church music goes through what one may say is a process of paganization. In this phenomenon, old hymns are stripped of their religious diction and converted into war songs" (Zimunya, 1993:135). This also occurred in the adoption of martial names by the guerrillas. Some took up names that were jarring to Christian sensibilities; names such as 'Judas', 'Killmore', 'Satan' and others. By doing so, the fighters were naming themselves in a manner that contradicted the teachings they had received at mission schools. Another example is how in regulating sexual relationships amongst the combatants and in insisting on the finality of marriage ZANU's policy makers were influenced by Christian teachings (Nhongo-Simbanegavi, 2000:67). In musical terms however, the adoption of Christian hymns and imagery, particularly of the biblical story of the Exodus as a prototype for African liberation, illustrates the extent of the Christian influence.

### 3.4.3 'Home Artists' and the Development of Music

It has become customary to divide music that was produced during the 1970s by home artists and those who were in exile. Pongweni maintains that the division is based on the relative freedom with which the artists could address political issues in their lyrics. Home artists who were based in the country addressed the socio-political issues strategically by resorting to innuendo and linguistic camouflage to avoid harassment, while the choirs that were in exile were forthright in denouncing the settler state (Pongweni, 1997:65). The decade 1970 to 1980 represents an important phase in the development of music in Zimbabwe. Turino notes that musical trends that began as experiments to achieve commercial success became generalised in the second half of the 1970s (Turino, 2000:307). It was during this period that artists like Thomas Mapfumo, Zexie Manatsa, Oliver Mtukudzi, Tineyi Chikupo, Jonah Sithole, Susan Mapfumo, Jordan Chataika and others became significant players on the local musical front. A detailed discussion of the careers of these artists however lies outside the scope of this report. For a general overview of the contributions of these cultural workers, see Zindi (1985), Turino (2000, chapter eight), for Susan Chenjerai, Chitauro, Dube and Gunner (1994) and for Mapfumo, Kwaramba (1997).

Home-based artists were able to assert themselves on the competitive music market due to a number of factors. To begin with, the Congolese, South African, and African-American influences had been distilled and creatively blended with indigenous styles by the 1970s. "By the mid-seventies", one researcher notes, "an indigenous popular music had emerged under the familiar impact of urbanization and acculturation" (Manuel, 1988:105). Second, the use of the vernacular in compositions proved to be effective. Whereas artists had previously done cover versions of European and American groups in English, the use of indigenous languages appealed to the listening and buying public. Third, the war situation in the seventies prevented many South African musicians from touring the country (Zindi, 1985:13), thereby allowing local artists space within which they could express themselves.

The artists who were in the country responded to the liberation war that was under way by composing songs that captured the suffering experienced by the black majority. While many writers have dwelt on Mapfumo's protest music, it is important to note that other artists like Mtukudzi and Manatsa also contributed to the music of resistance. Turino however, falls into an interpretive problem when he maintains that Mtukudzi's song '*Ndiri Bofu*' could not have been about the war since it "was an appeal to Jehovah" (Turino, 2000:298). He fails to decipher the cultural 'pass word' (Kwaramba, 1997:67) for him to understand that in indigenous traditions a direct appeal to the Supreme Being is only made in desperate situations. At any rate, the suggestion that appeals to a sacred realm cannot constitute a mode of protest is

quite restrictive. As I shall argue with reference to the gospel music of the 1990s, appealing to higher beings is a creative way of avoiding harassment. It would however be misleading to view home artists only in terms of their resistance to the settler state. Artists continued to pursue issues that were not expressly political in nature, such as love, marriage and others.

The home artists of the late 1970s remain significant for the decisive shift towards local music. While imported music had dominated the media prior to 1970, from the 1970s the country fostered a unique national popular style (Manuel, 1988:105). It was during this period that different types of music accompaniment developed, while experiments were made with the electric guitar and the mbira. Turino provides a comprehensive review of the combinations.

These elements included mbira, jit, or other dance-drumming rhythms; the "mbira" timbre in the damped guitar technique; the four-phrase 12/8 structure of classical mbira music, or the two-phrase 12/8 structure of many Shona dance-drumming and makwaya songs; the yodelling vocal technique and extensive use of vocables (Turino 2000:304).

The period is also significant for this report in that a number of artists recorded songs in which they pleaded with God to intervene and set black people free. While the term 'gospel music' had not yet been used, some releases by Mtukudzi and Chataika utilised Christian religious ideas to appeal to the Supreme Being. While some of Manatsa's songs such as '*Musango Mune Hangaiwa*' (There Are Guinea-Fowls in the Bush) released in 1977 sought the assistance of traditional spirit mediums like Nehanda, Mtukudzi's lyrics were more consistent with the inherited orthodoxy. As a member of the Methodist church, Mtukudzi has tended to be more influenced by Christian ideas than other popular artists. His song '*Ndiri Bofu*' (I am Blind) was an expression of surrender in faith, calling upon God to guide the suffering blacks. It is significant that Mtukudzi used the biblical name for God, Jehovah, and not the Shona traditional name, Mwari in this song. The emphasis is on his Christian conception of a liberator God, although a case could also be made for Mwari's liberating nature. Chataika's 1978 song, '*Tirwireiwo Mwari*' (Fight for Us God) retraced God's interventions in biblical times and called upon Him to do so for the struggling Zimbabweans (Turino, 2000:305). His other song, '*Ndopati-gare Pano*' (This Is Where We Stay) was another passionate appeal to God to address the plight of internally displaced persons at the height of Zimbabwe's liberation struggle in the late 1970s. Pongweni describes the impact of the song:

This song became a group anthem for the rural refugees because it chronicled the salient features of their suffering, physical and psychological, so faithfully that it created in their minds and hearts a nostalgia for those pastoral values

and pursuits which they have taken for granted, through familiarity, but which had now been so rudely dislocated: 'Yet Lord, we were living in houses built by our own hands, we had ploughed our fields dear Lord, we had planted our maize crop as usual (Pongweni, 1997:71).

As home artists were composing and performing Christian protest songs, churches were also involved in the struggle for justice. Christian songs that called upon Africans to liberate themselves were sung in some denominations. Calling upon black people to become proud of their cultural heritage and asking God to bless Africa, these songs had a popular appeal. Axelsson notes that the establishment of the Ecumenical Arts Association in Bulawayo in 1968 infused more emphasis on social justice within the Christian performing arts. He argues that we can justifiably speak about *chimurenga* songs within a Christian environment. However, this has been sidelined in favour of the liberation forces and popular secular activities (Axelsson. 1993 :42). The strains of lamentation and mourning by the liberation forces, home artists and church choirs however, ended with the attainment of political independence on 18 April 1990. This historic event had a marked impact on musical performances in Zimbabwe.

### 3.5 'SONGS OF FREEDOM': MUSIC IN THE EUPHORIA OF INDEPENDENCE

Zimbabwe's national independence celebrations in April 1980 were marked with music and dance. ZANU (PF) and PF ZAPU, the nationalist parties that had led the armed struggle, had scored a decisive election victory. The main artist to grace the celebrations was none other than the reggae maestro, Robert Nesta Marley, who had penned the song '*Zimbabwe*' in recognition of the struggle. While reggae had had some following before independence, after Marley's performance its profile increased significantly. With the government proclaiming an internationally acknowledged policy of national reconciliation and amidst national optimism, local artists celebrated the attainment of independence. Black advancement, equality, land and education for all, minimum wage policies and a host of other pronouncements endeared Robert Mugabe to the local and indeed, international audiences. The ZANU (PF) choir, Thomas Mapfumo, Zacks Manatsa, the Four Brothers, and many other bands recorded songs that congratulated the ruling party, the masses of Zimbabwe, and Mugabe in particular for their resilience. The songs of *chimurenga* had moved from protest to praise.

Songs that were released in the immediate postcolonial period also thanked the ancestral spirits and God for their guidance and support. As noted earlier, Nehanda, Kaguvi and Chaminuka were revered as the guardian spirits of the armed struggle. The attainment of independence was seen as a

confirmation of their recognition of nationalist leaders like Mugabe. In terms of musical styles, Wolfgang Bender homogenises when he contends, “the first year of independence, 1980–1981, became the year of chimurenga-pop” (Bender, 1991:164). All the inherited influences were utilised in the collective effort to celebrate the dawning of a new era. Rumba, reggae, country, choir music, jit and other types marked the music of the new nation.

The story of euphoria and optimism characterising Zimbabwe’s attainment of independence requires a longer narrative. What can be noted here is that the decade 1980–1990 is often portrayed as a honeymoon period in the history of the country. So confident were most people of the prosperity that lay ahead that one political and cultural nationalist declared in 1981 that “the protest song proper ended with independence for Zimbabwe on 18 April 1980” (Kahari, 1981:98). For their part, artists like Mapfumo, Mtukudzi and others “articulated the new government’s goals of unity, national consolidation, reconciliation and development through hard work” (Kwaramba, 1997:72).

Political independence had the significant impact of ending many years of international isolation. Reggae groups such as Misty in Roots, Jimmy Cliff, Don Carlos, Aswad and others had successful tours to the country (Zindi, 1985:20–21). Zairean rumba or *soukous*, South African *mbanqanga*, and country music from the United States of America continued to have a popular following on the music market. Promoters sought to bring artists from abroad to play in urban centres, particularly in Harare, Bulawayo and Mutare. Recording companies and retail outlets also sought to ensure the availability of various types of music to cater for the varying tastes.

A number of groups either emerged or increased their visibility and gained popular following in the period 1980–1990. The Devera Ngwenja Jazz Band made history by selling many albums in the early 1980s and gained a formidable following in the country and in the region. Based in the mining town of Mashava, they sang about daily life and employed the rumba beat with great effect. Nyami Nyami Sounds, Safirio Madzikatire, Leonard Dembo, John Chibadura, the Bhundu Boys and other groups also rose to prominence during the period under review. Experiments were made with traditional folk-tales, while story telling and light-hearted social commentaries were also performed. Paul Matavire and the Jairos Jiri were particularly effective in using deep Shona and amusing lyrics. Many artists dealt with the issues of love and romance, while the radio stations, particularly Radio 2, sought to give them maximum publicity.

Zimbabwean music also made its mark on the international scene. Thomas Mapfumo, Oliver Mtukudzi, the Bhundu Boys, Rozalla Miller, Stella Chiweshe and others undertook overseas tours and were well received. Miller and the Bhundu Boys relocated to London, while Chiweshe, specialising in *mbira* music, settled in Germany. *Mbira* and *kalimba* players like Dumisani

Maraire and Ephant Mujuru were also successful in their North American tours. Within the Southern African region, Chibadura and Dembo established a considerable following, particularly in Malawi and Zambia where migrant workers were located. By acting as supporting groups to the numerous musical shows that were being held in the country, many local bands improved their professionalism.

In summary, the music of the first decade of political independence in Zimbabwe is largely characterised by celebration and optimism. While church music continued to be composed and performed, it was confined to the 'sacred buildings and holy spaces' of the various denominations. It was music for funerals and weddings, and even then it was often eclipsed by music with a fast beat, mainly from South Africa and Zaire. Apart from the armed insurrection in Matabeleland, there was hope that the black government would pull off an economic miracle in which every one would benefit. The socialist philosophy espoused by the government had delivered remarkable achievements in the areas of health and education. Considerable progress had also been made in the area of gender equality, with the state passing progressive pieces of legislation aimed at improving the status of women. Songs of praise now dwelt on the achievements of Mugabe, while all those who did not support his policies were demonised. Mugabe was portrayed as the 'Redeemer and Saviour' of Zimbabwe. Christian music, with its tendency towards the eschatological and mournful tone, had no public space in a community that was enjoying life in its fullness.

### **3.5.1 'There Is Disaster in Our Country': The Return of the Protest Song in the 1990s**

The national elation that characterised the postcolonial period could not persist forever. Starting in the late 1980s, elements of pessimism began to creep into the national psyche. In the 1990s harsh economic realities and political contradictions threatened the unified nationalist project. Corruption by the ruling black elite, wastefulness by the state and intolerance of opposing views generated the painful reality that the government could not deliver the economic miracle that it had promised. The policy statement 'Growth with Equity' enunciated by the government to stimulate economic growth within a socialist ideology, now meant shrinkage of the economy with glaring disparities. In his 1990 song '*Varombo Kuvarombo*' (The Poor Get Poorer), Mapfumo protested at the emerging trend where the black leaders consolidated their wealth, while the poor majority were caught in a vicious poverty trap.

The period 1990–2001 was a trying one in the history of the country. The government abandoned its socialist philosophy and adopted the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) in 1991. Retrenchments, soaring prices, unemployment and destitution became widespread. The working poor

struggled to make ends meet (Gibbon, 1995), while those working in the informal sector faced serious economic challenges. Amidst the increasing poverty, the Aids pandemic threatened to decimate the country's economically active age group. Funerals became commonplace, while many in the productive ages were confined to their death-beds. The celebration and ululation of the 1980s had given way to pessimism and despair.

Musicians captured the national mood in their compositions. "In the late eighties and nineties", one writer observes of Zimbabwean musicians, "younger African singers were more strident in their criticism of the failure of the government's economic policies" (Vambe, 2000: 84). Artists like Edwin Hama, Leonard Zhakata, Simon Chimbetu, Leonard Dembo and others released songs that criticised the regular price increases, oppressive labour situation, high tax rate and other issues. That such songs received popular support in terms of high sales figures means that they struck a chord with the buying public. Zhakata's song, *'Mugove'* (Reward) released in 1994 is particularly significant for this report. Zhakata appropriated the biblical story of the prodigal son to press for his right to a full life before death. He attacked the political leaders for insensitivity and for abandoning their followers. Speaking on behalf of the working class, he sighed that he was oppressed, overworked and thoroughly abused. Zhakata called upon God to convene a heavenly council with His angels and to send down showers of blessings on a poor and suffering people.

In the late 1990s, the criticism levelled against the ruling party became more blunt and daring. Fear of the state security agents, members of the Central Intelligence Organisation (also popularly called the men in dark glasses) was exploded as more artists expressed their dismay at the worsening economic conditions. Andy Brown composed a song entitled *'Nyika Yematsotsi'* (The Country of Crooks) while King Pharaoh reminded the leaders of their broken promises in *'Vimbiso 2000'* (Promises for the Year 2000). Indeed, many policies were supposed to be fulfilled by the magical year 2000, including, 'Health for All', 'Housing for All' and 'Education for All'. However, as the year went by, it became apparent that the state had not delivered on its policies, and the leaders had developed selective amnesia. Simon Chimbetu castigated the empty political rhetoric and sloganeering that took place at rallies held by the ruling party, asking those who attended such meetings to remind politicians of matters of bread and butter. In his song *'Survival'*, he sings as a pained father, pleading with the ruling elite to allow his children to be granted their basic wish: to be allowed to survive. Notions of fear and self-censorship in Zimbabwean music (Eyre, 2001) are not matched by the widespread nature of the protest song from the late 1990s.

The doyen of *chimurenga* music, Thomas Mapfumo, could be trusted to provide incisive commentary on a 'paradise deferred'. He typically got himself entangled with the political authorities of the day—the same heroes he

had celebrated as liberators in yesteryear—when he declared that the country that people yearned for was now in tatters in his song, *'Mamvemve'* (Tatters). In case the politicians missed the message, he also released another track in which he bluntly announced, *"munyika muno maita disaster"* (there is a disaster in this country). After these songs in 1999, Mapfumo left the 'disaster-ridden' country to settle in the United States of America. Oliver Mtukudzi's song *'Wasakara'* (You are Used Up) represents the creative interplay between artists and their audiences. In the song, Mtukudzi advises an old man to accept that the wrinkles on his face indicate ageing and that he can no longer accomplish activities as he used to. While the artist denied any particular interpretation of the song and indicated that people were free to attach their preferred readings, predominantly urban audiences interpreted the song as a veiled attack on President Mugabe. Mugabe was now in his late seventies, having been part of Zimbabwe's political landscape for a long time. Other artists protested against unemployment, price increases, political violence and other challenges that faced Zimbabwe in the late 1990s.

### 3.6 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Amidst the rise in protest music in the 1990s, innovation and creativity continued to be experienced in Zimbabwean music. Younger female musicians, such as Chiwoniso Maraire, Irene Chigamba, Tichaona Mushore, Busi Ncube, Patricia Matongo and others emerged as good musicians in their own right. The industry continued to expand, with new recording studios, such as High Density owned by musician Tendai Mupfurutsa, emerging. Calls for the appreciation of local music increased, and by the late 1990s, it held its own in a competitive industry. On many occasions, local groups that had been billed as supporting acts succeeded in upstaging touring bands. In some instances, international artists were whistled off the stage or had beer cans thrown at them, in preference for local musicians. Although economic hardships were being experienced, popular music continued to provide the leisure, solace and social commentary that the consumers yearned for.

A detailed study of protest music, theatre, literature and other genres in postcolonial Zimbabwe requires a longer narrative than can be provided herein. For the purpose of this report, it is critical to note that gospel music rose to prominence during this period of protest. Between 1990 and 2001, when popular musicians mourned the declining standard of living, gospel music asserted itself on the Zimbabwean music market. However, as this chapter illustrates, the basis for such an explosion in music with Christian themes had firmly been laid in the preceding decades. The introduction of Christianity in the country and the dominance of mission education explain the dominance of a Christian ethos. Church choirs, the indigenisation of church music in the various denominations, the role of the church in nurtur-

ing some popular musicians and the appropriation of hymns in *chimurenga* music during the liberation struggle implied that Christian influences remained in focus. Some home artists had also utilised Christian ideas of redemption at the height of the war of liberation.

While celebration marked the first decade of independence, suffering and despair were the lot of the black majority in the 1990s, giving rise to a new wave of protest music. Kwaramba's analysis of Mapfumo's music as moving from protest during colonialism, celebration and identification with the system, to disappointment, disillusionment and protest (Kwaramba, 1997:140) can be taken to generally represent the development of music in Zimbabwe. The next chapter surveys how gospel music succeeded in establishing itself within this context. It offers an overview of the emergence of gospel music in the country, while linking it to the larger historical context outlined herein.

## 4. Gospel Music in Zimbabwe: An Examination of the Rise of Gospel Music and an Explication of Dominant Themes

The previous chapter provided a historical overview of music in Zimbabwe. It summarised the main trends and illustrated the extent to which the changing political and economic fortunes of the country had a bearing on music performances. This chapter builds on the historical survey undertaken in the previous chapter by placing gospel music within the framework of the constant shifts in the country's music market. It isolates gospel music for closer analysis, while linking it to changes in popular music. In line with the methodological reflections offered in chapter two, the examination of dominant themes in Zimbabwean gospel music is undertaken from historical, sociological and phenomenological perspectives. The first section outlines the emergence of gospel music in the country and traces the local and international influences. The second section explores the impact of evangelical/pentecostal churches and other factors on the development of gospel music in Zimbabwe. Issues that preoccupy gospel musicians in Zimbabwe receive thematic treatment in the fourth section, while the fifth section summarises the main issues emerging from this chapter.

### 4.1 'SACRED SOUNDS': THE RISE OF GOSPEL MUSIC IN ZIMBABWE

The previous chapter drew attention to the dominance of Christianity in the country. It also highlighted the extent to which church choirs, hymn singing and the indigenisation of church music contributed to the popularity of music with Christian themes during the colonial period. Christian music dramas and compositions by home artists perpetuated the Christian influence, while the creative appropriation of hymns by *chimurenga* choirs retained the Christian outlook. When popular musicians like Jordan Chataika composed songs that utilised theological ideas deriving from the Christian tradition in the late 1970s, they were laying a firm base for the emergence of gospel music in the country. By the late 1990s, gospel musicians like Machanic Joseph Manyeruke, Charles Charamba, Shuvai Wutawunashe, Elias Musakwa and others had to be included in any list of the top artists in the country. This section seeks to trace the development of gospel music from the margins to the centre of artistic production in Zimbabwe.

Amidst the euphoria of political independence in the early 1980s, songs extolling the achievements of the nationalist parties dominated. As indicated in the previous chapter, the national mood was one of contentment and expectation. However, artists like Freedom Sengwayo, Chataika and Wuta-

wunashe recorded songs that drew heavily from Christianity. In 1982, Wutawunashe released the song '*Tarira Nguva*' (Look at the Time) amidst a lot of scepticism. She maintained that recording companies were not keen to record music utilising Christian themes (Wutawunashe, interview 1999). There was genuine surprise when the song was warmly received. With the nation experiencing economic growth and attaining remarkable results in the provision of social services, hymns and choruses were confined to the churches. However, the promise that gospel music had could already be seen in the considerable attention that the pioneering artists received.

Chataika had mastered the art of the acoustic guitar that had become popular amongst Zimbabwean musicians by the mid-1940s. Drawing from Christian hymns, having original compositions and backed by his sisters Edna and Molly, he became almost a 'lone voice in the wilderness' by evoking Christian themes at the height of the liberation struggle. In the immediate postcolonial period, he concentrated on Christian music, moving away from his image as a popular artist. Songs like '*Riripo Tsime*' (There Is Well), '*Bvisa Shangu Dzako Moses*' (Moses Remove Your Sandals) and others were directly derived from biblical stories that most Zimbabweans identified with from Sunday school. The influence of country music and the African American spirituals is discernible in his music, having a laid-back and soulful rhythm. Chataika sang about the struggles of life, the reality of death and the need to submit to God. Unlike the gospel music of the 1990s and beyond, Chataika's gospel music was dominated by sombre and sedate tunes. In line with the main-line churches' emphasis on the 'prayerful' quality of Christian music, Chataika's music was meant for contemplation and reflection. Jordan Chataika would always maintain that his music searched the inner depths of human hearts (Ronnie Chataika, interview 2000).

Machanic Manyeruke inherited the mantle following Chataika's demise in the 1980s. He is considered by many to be the 'grandfather' of Zimbabwe's gospel music. In line with my contention that the roots of gospel music need to be traced back to the colonial period, Manyeruke belonged to a group known as the Gospel Singers of the Salvation Army in the early 1970s. Manyeruke was born in 1946 in Chiwundura communal lands, although he contends that the date is difficult to ascertain due to the oral nature of the community in which he was born. In a manner similar to eighth century Israelite prophets, Manyeruke maintains that he 'stopped breathing' after birth, but an uncle announced that he would live and have a productive career. As he grew up, he would sing at school. In his adult life, when he was employed on a farm he began to hear a voice 'singing' in his ears.

After working for Lyons Brook Bond in Harare as an ice cream vendor around 1971–72, he moved to Clan Transport at the end of 1972. He learnt to play the guitar during this period through a recording studio owned by the Baptist Church in Waterfalls. In 1972 Manyeruke was enrolled in the Salva-

tion Army Choir of the Harare Citadel. As a member of the Salvation Army, Manyeruke undertook a preaching tour of South Africa in 1973 with the Gospel Singers of the Salvation Army. He was playing the guitar for the group, while working as a gardener and housekeeper. He worked in this capacity for many white families who supported his early efforts. Manyeruke's lack of access to education during the colonial period, his employment in the domestic sector and as a waiter for Anglo American Corporation are important factors to bear in mind for an interpretation of how gospel music has given him a higher social status (Manyeruke, interview 2000).

In 1984, Manyeruke released his first single, '*Chirema Patembere*' (A Disabled Person at the Temple), derived from the biblical story where Peter asked a paralysed man to "rise up and walk". It was a commercial success. The album '*Zakewo*' (Zaccheus) followed in 1986 and he had made his mark on the local music scene. Manyeruke attributed his breakthrough to his earlier involvement with the Scripture Union, an interdenominational grouping with activities for young people. He had visited many schools, and by the time he released his first single, many people were already familiar with his music. Manyeruke proved his versatility and creativity by releasing albums like '*Ari Mandiri Jesu*' (Jesus is Within Me), '*Mabasa*' (Acts), '*Mwari Ishe Wazvose*' (God, the Lord of All), '*Nyasha Dza Mwarĩ*' (The Kindness of God), '*Va-rombo Pamweya*' (The Poor in Spirit), '*Siyabonga Baba*' (We Thank You Father), '*Ndeyeiko Nyaya Iyo*' (What Is That Story About) and others.

From the mid-1980s to the late 1990s, Manyeruke was an integral part of gospel music in Zimbabwe. His emergence as a cultural worker within the Christian context was accentuated by his use of the vernacular, command of the guitar, and producing Christian music with a danceable beat. One of the most outstanding *mbira* musicians and ethnomusicologists to emerge in Zimbabwe, the late Dumisani Maraire, contended that it was Manyeruke's introduction of *sungura* beat and fresh compositions that catapulted gospel music from the margins to the centre of music production in Zimbabwe (Maraire, interview 1998). That the government of Zimbabwe with its cultural nationalism could send Manyeruke to North Korea as a musical ambassador after the release of '*Zakewo*' bears testimony to his rising star. As the previous chapter has shown, there were many other popular artists in the country in the mid-1980s. Significantly, he regards his music as missionary outreach to the whole world, and his commercial success as a mark of divine favour (Manyeruke, interview 2001).

Manyeruke was able to take Zimbabwean gospel to international audiences. He held shows in the United States of America, Canada, the Netherlands, Austria, Italy, Scotland, Ireland, England, Bulgaria, Sweden, Belgium and other countries. This international success facilitated his setting up of a recording studio in Chitungwiza, the town where he is based. He has extended help to many upcoming gospel artists. As I shall highlight later, such

developments have contributed to the popularity of gospel music in Zimbabwe. His talent as a songwriter and musician created an enduring legacy in the history of the performing arts in the country. Manyeruke took his music to the people with a firm spirit of ecumenism, performing at musical galas with other popular musicians. During the annual musical shows that took place throughout the night, initially at Gwanzura Stadium in the early 1990s and then later at the National Sports Stadium in Harare, Christians and non-Christians danced and sang along to Manyeruke's 'beat with a message'. Manyeruke's career illustrates the peculiar character of gospel music in Zimbabwe. While he stands out as a member of the Salvation Army, his music has been taken out of the church context into the realm of popular music. Consequently, people of various religious persuasions have found solace and entertainment in his music.

As with other music types in Zimbabwe, gospel music was also influenced by developments in South African music. In the mid-1980s, a number of South African groups became popular by recording hymns, choruses and original compositions. Some of these groups toured Zimbabwe and gave shows that were well attended. Groups such as the Holy Spirits Choir, Holy Cross Choir and Steve Kekana brought gospel music to Zimbabwe and their music achieved commercial success (Chitando, 2000a:301). While these artists tended to specialise in Zulu gospel, their acceptance in Zimbabwe indicated the potential that vernacular gospel music could have. Local television programmes played video tapes of South African and North American gospel music, thereby cultivating and sustaining interest in this type of music. It is also important to bear in mind that 'the American Negro pattern' had been introduced to black Zimbabweans through the institution of the school during the colonial period (Turino, 2000:124–125). Nonetheless, Zimbabwean gospel music was to develop in its own way.

With local artists like Chataika, Wutawunashe and Manyeruke enjoying considerable success by the mid-1980s and South African gospel music making significant in-roads, more groups turned to gospel music. By the late 1980s, Brain Sibalo and the Black Saints based in Mutare had also released gospel tracks. Sibalo was closer to South African gospel music in terms of his beat, although he achieved popularity by performing popular hymns in a refreshing way. Indeed, alongside Chataika, Sengwayo, Wutawunashe and Manyeruke, Sibalo has to be included among the most influential figures in the rise of gospel music in the country. By the time he died in 1997, Sibalo had released 11 gospel albums, including the highly successful, *'Jerusalem'*. Gifted with a remarkably sweet voice and supported by polished videos, Sibalo was instrumental in popularising gospel music when only a few musicians were playing this type of music.

The Black Saints are particularly significant in that they did not use any denomination as a springboard. Most gospel musicians in the late 1980s were

traceable to particular denominations and their music was regarded as an extension of their Christian commitment. The Black Saints possessed a Rastafarian outlook and specialised in reggae tunes. Their popular album, *'Oh Ishe'* (O Lord) is a compilation of popular hymns in reggae style. The previous chapter has noted the status enjoyed by reggae in the country, illustrating the close connection between gospel music and trends in popular music.

In summary, a number of issues need to be noted concerning the rise of gospel music in Zimbabwe. In the early 1980s, celebratory popular music dominated, leaving little space for gospel music. Recording companies were hesitant to record Christian music, preferring the music of nation building and praises for the ruling party. However, artists like Chataika, Wutawunashe and Sengwayo marked the presence of gospel music on the market. With Manyeruke's success in the mid-1980s and the influence of South African gospel music, music with Christian themes gained increasing following in the country. In terms of its rhythm, it is important to realise that country, reggae, *sungura* and other types accompanied gospel music. Its close ties to hymns and choruses can be seen in how artists like Sibalo, The Black Saints, Chataika and others borrowed from the various denominations. There is therefore a clear line of continuity between the emergence of gospel music in the early 1980s and trends in the music industry outlined in the previous chapter. Significantly, the only prominent female gospel musician in this early phase of gospel music in Zimbabwe was Wutawunashe. Developments in the 1990s would radically transform the character of music in the country.

#### 4.2 'JESUS DOES!' THE DOMINANCE OF GOSPEL MUSIC IN THE 1990s

The social and economic turbulence that characterised Zimbabwe in the 1990s was highlighted in the previous chapter. The Economic Structural Adjustment Programme led to increases in poverty, while Hiv/Aids threatened to decimate the economically active age group. In this context, popular musicians shifted to the protest mode. The previous chapter illustrated how the protest song became more daring and blunt in the late 1990s as artists captured the disillusionment within the nation. It is during this decade (1990–2000) that gospel music became an integral part of the music of Zimbabwe. This section identifies the importance of pentecostal churches, changing attitudes by recording companies, the emergence of new recording studios and an oppressive social and economic environment to be some of the explanatory factors behind the dominance of gospel music in the 1990s.

Developments within Christianity in Zimbabwe are critical for an appreciation of the ascendancy of gospel music. In the 1990s evangelical/ pentecostal churches became the fastest growing brand of Christianity in sub-Saharan Africa. While a detailed review of their beliefs and practices requires a longer narrative than can be provided herein, it remains possible to describe their

characteristics that have had a bearing on the dominance of gospel music. From the late 1980s, pentecostal/evangelical churches witnessed phenomenal growth in Africa. This mode of African Christianity has gained followers among younger members of society, particularly among student populations in universities and colleges, and among the young upwardly mobile members of the urban working class. Through speaking in tongues, prayer healing, religious ecstasy and music, these churches seek to offer a message of spiritual and economic salvation to Africans. They also present themselves as succeeding the older mainline and pentecostal churches. Thus:

The interesting characteristic of this new wave is that it combines a lot of the features of the older pentecostal churches with youthful enthusiasm and appeal, with personally charismatic leaders, with an explicit location in the modern sectors of life and with an explicit use of the modern means of communication: the media, video, radio and magazines (Van Dijk, 2000:13).

It is within the context of using modern means of communication that evangelical churches have been responsible for the upsurge of gospel music throughout Southern Africa. Writing on pentecostal churches in Nigeria and Ghana, Rosalind Hackett notes that music is in fact one of the most important ways in which the charismatics construct their own identity and invade public space. Consequently, the gospel music sector was dominating in Ghana and Nigeria, with gospel singers becoming celebrities (Hackett, 1998:263). In Zimbabwe, evangelical/ pentecostal churches provide the highest number of gospel musicians. Gospel music is regarded as a strategic device to spread the word of God and to bring people to repentance. It also seeks to 'purify' popular culture.

Pentecostal churches have established themselves firmly on the religious map of Southern Africa (Gifford, 1990). Preaching a message of radical conversion, they have appealed to many young people across the region. In Zimbabwe, the growth of pentecostalism in the 1990s coincided with social pressures and economic uncertainty. Indeed, at the heart of the discourse of pentecostalism is spiritual adjustment to facilitate economic prosperity. A form-critical analysis of the songs coming from this stable of Christianity shows a concern with both spiritual and economic prosperity. As I shall show below, the message of prosperity is an integral part of the teachings of pentecostalism. It is however in relation to the need to preach the message of salvation through Christ and the need to be 'born again' that gospel music has been a key resource for these movements. The popularity of gospel music in pentecostal churches in turn influenced musical groups in mainline and African Independent Churches to record gospel music.

In Zimbabwe, gospel music had a low profile in the first decade of political independence. As the preceding section highlights, a few artists performed

music that was associated with Christian beliefs and practices. However, in the 1990s there was a phenomenal growth in gospel music. New groups like Shalom Singers recorded the album, *'Jesu Ndichangamire'* (Jesus Is Lord), Pastor Haisa released his album, *'Uchava Mufaro'* (There Shall Be Happiness) and Elias Musakwa also recorded *'Jehovah Ngaavongwe'* (Thanks Be To Jehovah) in 1995. Musakwa's case is particularly informative in that his earlier release, *'Ndiri Mwana Wako'* (I Am Your Child) in 1988 did not cause any waves, unlike his later releases when gospel music had become popular. Brother Sam recorded his first album with Zimbabwe Music Corporation, *'Cherechedza'* (Analyse) in the same year, 1995 (Sam, interview 1999). The group, Gospel Trumpet, was formed in September 1995 and they released their first album, *'Love and Devotion'* in 1996. It contained the smash hit, *'Rose of Sharon'* which had a catchy, danceable beat. It was also between 1995 and 2000 that artists and groups like Charles and Olivia Charamba, Ivy Kombo, Carol Chivengwa, Munyaradzi Munodawafa, Mahendere Brothers, Vabati Vajehovah and many others made their mark on the Zimbabwean music industry. This presence of numerous artists playing various music types but dwelling on the need for conversion to Christianity embodies the dominance of gospel music in the country.

The policies adopted by recording companies are also a critical factor in accounting for the rise of gospel music in the 1990s. Many of the artists who recorded after 1995 maintained that they had always had their compositions. However, recording companies were turning them down on the grounds that their Christian music would not be marketable. Top-selling artist Charles Charamba confirmed that his initial single was not successful, and that when Gramma Records finally decided to record his album, *'Tinashwe Akatendeka'* (We Have a Faithful King) it was as an experiment. The need to trace antecedents in gospel music performance in Zimbabwe was vindicated by Charamba's reference to Jordan Chataika as his source of inspiration (Charamba, interview 2001). Other gospel musicians noted that recording companies were now releasing their music at a faster rate, while representatives of the companies admitted that the high sales figures attained by most gospel groups made this type of music particularly good for business (Maronga, interview 2001).

As I shall demonstrate later, the liberalisation of the economy in the 1990s also promoted the emergence of new recording companies. While Gramma Records had enjoyed a virtual monopoly in the industry, the discourse on black economic empowerment in the 1990s encouraged some black entrepreneurs to venture into the area of music recording and marketing. Many players in the industry had criticised the policies of Gramma and Gallo (later to become ZMC) music companies (Zindi, 1985:86; Mukombahasha, 2001), and there was enthusiasm regarding the participation of blacks in the recording sector. This availability of alternative studios meant that there was more variety in terms of types of music recorded and gospel music derived a lot of

mileage from the competition. New studios tended to attract up-coming gospel musicians and employed engineers who were sensitive to new musical tastes (Almero, interview 1998).

The buying and listening public in Zimbabwe was quite receptive to gospel music. As shown in the previous chapter, a strong Christian ethos pervades the country. The influence of Christianity on education, health and its appearance as the religion of modernity put it at a strategic advantage on the spiritual market. When music with Christian themes became available on the market on a larger scale, many people identified themselves with the music. For many, the hymns and choruses that they sang in church and at funerals were conveniently packaged in cassettes and compact disks for consumption at home or on a journey (Ncube, interview 1998). Others found in gospel music the right type of music to play at parties and weddings.

The success enjoyed by gospel music in the 1990s saw a number of groups either diverting from *sungura* music to gospel music, or recording some gospel albums alongside their traditional type. Musicians like Oliver Mtukudzi belong to the latter category. This is significant because Mtukudzi is one of the celebrated popular artists in the country, alongside Mapfumo. Other groups have completely 'gone gospel' and these include David Chi- yangwa (Mr Bulk), Zacks Manatsa, Cephas Mashakada, Noel Zembe and Moise Matura. Since most of them were closely associated with popular music and may not have had specific denominations to readily identify themselves with, they tended to record popular hymns and choruses. While complaints were raised regarding originality and copyrights, these artists continued to do well in terms of sales figures. They also exploited the ambiguity associated with the label 'gospel music' and claimed that they were also spreading the word of God like the other church-based gospel musicians.

Artists saw themselves as offering solace and comfort in an environment where economic hardships and a high death rate had made life such a bitter struggle (Simende, interview 2000). Gospel music tended to address the setting-in-life of Zimbabweans, and it struck a chord. It provided a simple message to the people in terms of how they could get a better life, in both this world and in the one to come. By addressing the reality of suffering, disease, moral decay, oppressive spiritual forces, death and other themes, Zimbabwean gospel music appealed to people sharing varied social locations. Without falling into sociological reductionism, it is possible to admit that the social context of the 1990s was ripe for music that engaged in diagnosis and therapy from a religious perspective. In an environment where numerous orphans emerged by the day due to a high death rate, where inflation hit the most vulnerable groups and where the nationalist project appeared to be disintegrating, gospel music was always going to be popular. Where politicians and economic programmes had failed to cover the basic needs of the majority, the slogan, 'Jesus is the answer!' was likely to get the most resounding support.

The paragraphs below seek to explore the themes found in Zimbabwean gospel music.

#### 4.3 GOSPEL MUSIC IN ZIMBABWE: A THEMATIC SURVEY

It is interesting to note that gospel musicians and consumers put a lot more emphasis on the texts than on the music styles. In other words, gospel music is defined by its lyrics, more than the beat. This is why it is more of an umbrella term than a distinctive music type. Artists like Charamba and Manyeruke have employed *sungura*, others like the Black Saints have used reggae, Pastor Bandimba utilises *soukous* and yet other groups like Appointed have a rhythm and blues outlook. Gospel musicians interviewed for this report were unanimous in separating the musical style from the content of song texts. In another project on music and nationalism in Zimbabwe, Thomas Turino also discovered the clear separation of the message of the song text from the musical style vehicle that carries it (Turino 2000:308). We shall return to this theme in a discussion of the extent to which gospel music represents creativity and a working out of African Christian identities. Presently, it is important to analyse the texts so that we appreciate why gospel music became popular. These themes are multiple, and the paragraphs below only highlight the recurrent ones. In addition, while the themes have been isolated for better conceptual analysis, in reality they are closely intertwined.

##### 4.3.1 Spiritual Salvation through Jesus Christ

A form-critical survey of Zimbabwean gospel music shows a high incidence of the themes of conversion and finding salvation through Jesus Christ. This thread runs through compositions from all branches of Christianity found in the country, as well as the recorded hymns and choruses by independent artists. Indeed, for songs to qualify under the label 'gospel music', they have to be seen as being connected in some way to the central message of Christianity. This is the message of the gospel: that God gave forth His son Jesus so that all those who believe in him would attain eternal life. Performing artists, music critics, recording studio personnel, members of the public and various other categories of respondents identified the 'essence' of gospel music in Zimbabwe as this clear focus on Christian salvation history.

Gospel music is therefore replete with biblical citations concerning the eternal life available through Christ, the promises that God has made for the faithful and related ideas. Ivy Kombo released a track, '*Wawana Jesu*' (Having Found Jesus) in which she outlined that those who find Jesus have everlasting peace. Manyeruke sings of the fulfilling life that comes from Christ, while the Ngariende St Luke's Rugare choir dwelt on the peace and happiness that is attendant to Christian living. Sung in the vernacular or in English, gospel

music tends to place emphasis on Christian soteriological beliefs. The release and redemption wrought by Jesus are put forward as an invitation for all to partake. In addition, Jesus is portrayed as the rock, as Pastor Haisa maintained when he sang, '*Jesu ndiye dombo ravarwere navatano, ravapfumi neva-rombo*' (Jesus is the rock for the sick and the healthy, for the rich and the poor), while Shuvai Wutawunashe sang, 'Lord, you are my shelter from the storm' (English). Martha Knight and the Glorifiers also sought to encourage the distraught nation, '*Shingirira munashe, usadzokere shure kana nhamo dzikauya*' (Persevere in the Lord, do not retreat even if troubles come).

Conversion to Christianity is symbolically presented as becoming a new creation. Particularly in gospel tracks released from pentecostal churches, conversion implies 'making a clean break with the past' (Meyer, 1998). New life in Christ, turning one's back on the past and working for God are dominant ideas. Calls for forgiveness, as in Elias Musakwa's '*Baba Ndiri Mwana Wako*' (Father, I Am Your Child) are uttered, while all creation is urged to give praise and honour to God. Consequently, many tracks, such as the Mahendere Brothers' '*Rumbidzo*' (Praise) emphasise that only the divine name should be lifted up. This theme was also taken up by Charles Charamba in his, '*Kumakomo Ngaarumbidzwe*' (Let the Mountains Praise Him). A number of groups also recorded the popular chorus, '*Hakuna akaita saJesus*' (No One is Like Jesus) to demonstrate the primacy of Jesus to Christian salvation history. This theme is also related to the conviction that these are the last of days and that the second coming of Jesus is around the corner. Remington Mbeya, a producer of Christian programmes on television and an emerging gospel musician, contended that all signs of the end had manifested themselves and asked, '*Chasara chiiko?*' (What Is Now Left?). To this end, Zimbabwean gospel music had an eschatological thread running through.

#### 4.3.2 Illness and Death

As noted in the sociological analysis of the 1990s, Hiv/Aids has had a devastating effect on Zimbabwe (Bindura-Mutangadura, 2001). Gospel musicians refer to the high incidences of illness and death, while calling upon God to intervene. Many artists portray the reality of Hiv/Aids as a pandemic of eschatological proportions and ask for divine mercy. Charles Charamba attained national fame with his song, '*Mhinduro Iripo*' (There Is an Answer) in which he counselled people on how to treat those who suffered from the infection and advised that Jesus was the solution. The United Methodist group, Harare West M.U.M.C choir presented Jesus as the healer in '*Murapi Aripano*' (The Healer Is Here), while Caroline Chivengwa explained that Jesus had already carried human illnesses in her song, '*Wakatakura Matenda Edu*' (He Carried Our Diseases).

In the context of much suffering and death, artists called upon God to intervene and restore health. In the late 1990s death had become a common occurrence throughout Zimbabwe as the economically active age group succumbed to Hiv. This had a notable effect on traditional cultural beliefs associated with death, such as the cutting down on the days of mourning and the increased participation by indigenous people in the death industry. Most of the 'high density' areas of Harare were characterised by a marked upsurge in home industries specialising in making coffins, gowns and pillows for corpses, and funeral transportation services. Gospel musicians addressed the reality of death, recording popular hymns and choruses to console the bereaved.

Some respondents maintained that their interest in gospel music was activated by listening to songs that had featured prominently at funerals and wakes for loved ones (Matambirei, interview 1999). As Zimbabweans cared for their terminally ill relatives, as they travelled on overnight journeys to attend funerals for friends, relatives and colleagues, and as they paid hospital visits, gospel music offered them a consoling message. It is also significant to observe that in radio programmes set aside for hospital messages, gospel music was often played and requested (Ngwenya, interview 2001). Music that addressed the contemporary concerns of disease and death was therefore likely to be more appealing than music dwelling on romantic love.

In his overview of the various musical styles found in Zimbabwe, the American writer Banning Eyre contends that gospel music represents a refuge from the mounting toll of Aids deaths and that it provides solace in trying economic times (Eyre, 2001:33,96). While this interpretation has its own merit, I shall argue below that this is only a partial explanation of the popularity of gospel music. As the historical survey in the previous chapter illustrated, the Zimbabwean ground had already been fertile for the dominance of music utilising Christian themes. However, in their responses to the high death rate and widespread sickness, most artists were calling for a total surrender in faith, as in Ronnie Chataika's submission that if God saw it fit that he leaves behind his young family, he would comply. Haisa reiterated this in his track, '*Ndinobvuma*' (I Accept).

#### 4.3.3 A New Heaven and a New Earth

In line with its explicitly Christian outlook, gospel music in Zimbabwe also tended to have an 'other-worldly' slant. However, as I shall illustrate in the discussion on protest, it would be unfortunate if researchers were to quickly apply the Marxist hypothesis of religion as the 'sigh of the oppressed creature'. A new Jerusalem, the city of perfect peace, where God shall be with his people and wiping away tears from their eyes and death shall be no more (Revelation 21: 3-4) is a recurrent theme (Chitando, 2000a:305). Tracks such as

'Masodzi' (Tears) by Noel Zembe, 'Ikoko' (There) by Charles Charamba, 'Jerusalem' by Brian Sibalo, 'Nzvimbo Yakanaka' (A Beautiful Place) by Elias Musakwa and many others paint attractive pictures of the 'real home to come'. Through the use of biblical verses and appealing indigenous imagery, gospel musicians contend that all the suffering encountered in this world is in no way comparable to the peace that shall accompany the faithful in heaven.

In terms of musical style, it is important to recognise that compositions that focus on death and the new Jerusalem utilise varied musical styles. Some tend to be sorrowful and sedate, such as 'Garai Neni' (Abide with Me) by the Olives, whereas Charamba's 'Ikoko' (There) has a quickened tempo and is rendered in the *sungura* style. *Wabvuwuwi* choirs from the United Methodist Church (see 3.3.1) use indigenous musical instruments for accompaniment, with emphasis on harmonic singing. As I underlined in the introductory segment, what unites different compositions performed in Zimbabwe under the label 'gospel music' has much more to do with texts than with musical styles. Various actors in the cultural sphere contend that it is when a song dwells on Christian theological ideas—whatever its beat—it comes to be included under the banner 'gospel music'. However, this has generated its own controversies, some of which I will explore in chapter six.

#### 4.3.4 Socio-Economic Difficulties and Political Protest

Writers who have conducted studies on political protest as expressed in Zimbabwean music, such as Alice Kwaramba (1997), Maurice Vambe (2000) and Banning Eyre (2001) have completely ignored gospel music as a potential resource. This is understandable because of the common assumption that such music tends to be 'churchish' and to focus on expressly spiritual matters. Scholars have therefore turned their attention to popular music where established artists like Thomas Mapfumo, Simon Chimbetu, Andy Brown and others have been forthright in their criticisms of the government in the late 1990s (4.2).

Zimbabwean gospel musicians have however, demonstrated a surprising sensitivity concerning economic matters. They have captured the suffering experienced by the majority of the population in the 1990s, although they call upon people to stand firm. While the solution prescribed is continued faith in divine providence, various artists have laid bare the economic hardships facing postcolonial Zimbabwe. Once rated as Africa's emerging economy, the Zimbabwean economy found itself in the doldrums from 1997. Rising unemployment, decreased growth, galloping inflation and a crippling shortage of foreign currency were some of factors afflicting the economy in the year 2000. With the farm invasions generating negative international publicity, the country had been firmly removed from the list of 'promising nations' to that of

'rogue states'. Bryan Callahan offers a summary of the ills that have afflicted the nation:

Since independence in 1980, Zimbabwean citizens have staggered under the weight of multiple burdens, including economic recession, IMF-sponsored structural adjustments, government corruption, political violence, ethnic tensions, land scarcity, drought, and an HIV/AIDS epidemic that has killed many of the country's brightest and most productive people (Callahan, 2001:85).

Gospel musicians joined their fellow popular artists in cataloguing the ills that characterised society in the late 1990s. As Chimbetu was singing '*Ndaremerwa*' (I Am Burdened), a gospel musician, Douglas Siziba implored God to heal Zimbabwe's economic woes. In 2001 Siziba pleaded:

Bayai nyika jekiseni, yapinda hutachiona. Vana havachawani mabasa. Zvirwere zvwawanda, izvo zvipatara zvacho zvadhora! Mwari Baba rapai nyika yedu, nyika yedu yarwara. Pindirai, isu pachedu tazvitadza (Give our country an injection, it has been infected. Children no longer find jobs. Diseases have multiplied, while the medical fees have become expensive. Father God heal our country, our country is ill. Intervene, for we ourselves have failed).

This imagery of paralysis, national illness and human limitation in addressing the issues at hand was in direct contrast to the adapted hymns of ZANU (PF)'s Women League who maintained that as long as President Mugabe was present, there would be no crying ('*Handimbochemi kana VaMugabe varipo*'—I will never cry if Mr Mugabe is present). Other gospel artists like Ivy Kombo in '*Tibatsirei MuZimbabwe*' (Help Us in Zimbabwe) mourned the negative effects of the devaluation of the local currency, while Vabati VaJehova exploited linguistic ambiguity when they dared to say '*Vatungamiri venyika ino marema*' (The rulers of this country/world are fools) who should be allowed to perish in the darkness that they so loved. To utter such pronouncements in a heavily polarised political environment called for courage.

Alongside direct economic commentary, gospel musicians also emphasised the folly of trusting in fallible political leaders. As outlined in the previous chapter, the immediate postcolonial period in Zimbabwe witnessed the transformation of Robert Mugabe from a shrewd guerrilla leader into a national saviour, a Messiah figure who brought the Promised Land to his people (3.5). When artists like Charamba cite biblical verses to the effect that it is better to trust in God Almighty than in mortal and scheming human beings, they engage in a radical desacralisation of the political office. A young female musician, Fungisai Zvakavapano also sang in 2001:

Ndaona nyika ichinetsekana. Vanhu nhasi vari kubvunza, "Zvinhu zvose zvazvakwira/ chingwa nhasi chodhura, ko mangwana torarama nei? Ini pano ndine mhinduro: Variko Jesu, Baba vanogona. Ramangwana hama harina kujeka.

Ramangwana harina anoziva—Anogona Mwari wedu, anogona. (I have seen the country being troubled. Today people are asking, “The prices of all basic commodities have gone up/bread is now expensive, how are we going to survive tomorrow?” I have here an answer: There is Jesus, Our Father, He is able. The future looks bleak. Nobody knows about the future, He is able, our God, He is able).

The emphasis on God’s ability should be read against the backdrop of perceived political incompetence. What Siziba and Zvakavapano succeed in doing is to highlight the economic chaos and the attendant inability of the politicians (Mugabe included) to bring abundant life to the people. The Rugare Ngariende St Luke’s choir also advised, “*Kana zvarema, daidzai Jesu, ndiye mutungamiri akanaka*”. (When things get tough, call upon Jesus, he is the good leader).

In a country where police brutality increased in the late 1990s as the state tried to clamp down on growing dissent, some gospel musicians have had the courage to denounce such tactics. During the regular demonstrations at the University of Zimbabwe, heavily armed police, military and intelligence personnel molested people, including the visually impaired and people with disabilities, as well as pregnant women. In 2001, one such attack had a tragic end when a student, Batanai Hadzizi, who had been reading in his room, was brutally murdered by police officers. While the officials covered this up, one gospel musician, Pastor T. Chivaviro composed a song, ‘*Runyararo*’ (Peace) as a tribute to Hadzizi and to keep his memory alive. According to Chivaviro, gospel musicians have the duty of becoming the conscience of society (Chivaviro, interview 2001).

Although most gospel musicians in Zimbabwe would expressly distance themselves from a direct engagement in the political arena, their music has had an impact on political and economic awareness, as the preceding section highlights. Even artists in the evangelical/pentecostal section of local Christianity have had compositions that amount to political protest. Zvakavapano’s song cited above is a good example of how young people felt that careless and unscrupulous leaders had mortgaged their future. They also capture the popular discourse that centred on the themes of decline, hopelessness, corruption and hardships (Marshall, 1992:20). By commenting on the deteriorating standard of living and invoking divine intervention, Zimbabwean gospel musicians were effectively questioning the competence of the rulers of the day.

#### 4.3.5 Social Restructuring and Offering Ethical Guidelines

Although gospel artists painted a negative picture of the nation’s economic fortunes, they did not conclude that the situation was entirely hopeless. As indicated above, the slogan that permeated Zimbabwean gospel music was

that, 'Jesus does!'. It was the firm commitment that things could be turned round that led many artists to provide moral guidelines for individual and communal salvation. Concerning the high death rate that was caused by Aids, gospel musicians dwelt on the need for obedience. This obedience was interpreted as the observance of biblical injunctions, with Charamba reminding Christians that God placed loyalty ahead of empty sacrifices in his song '*Ku-teenera*' (Obedience). Leading a 'born again', righteous life was put forward as a solution to the woes haunting individuals and the community.

Fighting corruption and all other forms of wickedness is a theme that also permeated Zimbabwean gospel music. This demonstrates the fact that the futuristic orientation and focus on the present world can in fact co-exist in creative tension. In '*Murevi wenhema*' (A Liar), the group Shalom Singers emphasised the biblical injunction that to love God is to do good to fellow human beings on earth. Manyeruke called upon leaders in society to lead exemplary lives:

*Varume davirai kuna Mwari muve vatungamiri vakanaka. Vamwe toverenga mupapanhau vatadzira Mwari. Varume davirai kuna Mwari.* (Men/People believe in God so that you become good leaders. We read about some in the newspapers after they have sinned against God. Men, believe in God.)

Through gospel music, artists hoped to engage in a radical transformation of society. They attacked corruption in both the private and public sectors, while calling upon Christians to make a difference to society. Manyeruke celebrated the biblical story of Joseph's flight from the Egyptian ruler's wife when she wanted to seduce him, asking all Zimbabwean men to take after Joseph and mitigate the spread of Hiv/Aids. However, some gospel musicians also criticised what they saw as injustices within the churches. Elias Musakwa has been a champion of this genre, castigating the churches' double standards when they accord more respect to wealthy members of society. He also attacked the seduction of young girls by pastors and elders in the church. Gospel musicians therefore saw themselves as having the responsibility of providing ethical precepts to be followed by those in positions of leadership, by all Christians, and the entire nation. The Gospel Songwriters Club, an umbrella body for gospel musicians, was to run workshops to help budding gospel musicians to compose songs that would help to transform society (Wutawunashe, interview 1999).

#### 4.3.6 Breaking with African Traditional Religions (ATRs)

Closely related to the themes outlined above is the extent to which the texts of Zimbabwean gospel music emphasised the need to turn away from African Traditional Religions (ATRs). While academic African theologians based in Departments of Theology and Religious Studies across the African continent

have been demanding that Christianity in Africa should become a truly African religion by integrating ATRs (Bediako, 1995), most gospel musicians in Zimbabwe construe African identity in a different way. True Christians, they maintain in their music, are those who are no longer bound to indigenous spirituality. The popularity of tracks that denounce ATRs illustrates the success of the message that understands 'conversion' in terms of radical discontinuity between the 'old' and 'new' worldviews.

Gospel artists from evangelical/pentecostal 'born again' churches dominate in terms of songs that denounce ATRs. In his song, *'Mweya wemadzinza'* (Lineage Spirit), Tafirenyika Kativhu sang:

Zvehupenyu chaizvo ini zvandinetsa. Ndinongopunyaira, ndinongotetereka. Kushanda ndiri kushanda asi zvandinoshanda handizvione. Mwari wangu honaiwo! Kutsvaga chikonzero unongonzwa zvichinzi mweya yamadzinza. Mwari nunurai vana venyu. Mhuri zhinhi dzangove nherera pamusana pemweya yemadzinza. Mwari pindirai. Varoyi vanetsa, zvikwambo zvanetsa. (Life has troubled me. I brood and wander about. I work, but I do not see the fruits of my labour. Lord look! When I investigate the cause, I am told that it is due to ancestral spirits. Lord liberate your children. Many families are now orphaned due to ancestral spirits. God intervene. Witches are troubling (us), goblins trouble us.)

This song lays bare the fundamental message of evangelical/pentecostal churches that ancestral traditions are responsible for 'the spirit of poverty' (Maxwell 1998). Continued observance of the ancestral cult is shown as spelling doom and destruction. Charles Charamba also reiterated this contention in his songs, *'Sarudzai'* (Choose) and *'Jesu ndiye ega'* (Jesus Is the Only One). Tamuka and Elizabeth Chinouriri discouraged parents from giving their children culture-bound names because some of the names mystically condemn individuals to a life of poverty. In *'Zita renhamo, Jabez'*, they challenge individuals to reject names that are not empowering. Given the cultural significance of Shona names (Chitando, 1998c), it can be seen that they are calling for a confrontational approach to indigenous traditions.

A conceptual and theological revolution occurs when ancestral spirits are removed from the category of benign spirits (which they are in ATRs) and they are recast as *'madhimoni'* (demons) amongst some Christians in Zimbabwe. If 'only Jesus does', then all other spiritual powers pale into insignificance. This theme of making a complete break with the African 'spiritual past' is prominent in recorded Zimbabwean gospel music and corresponds with observations made in other African contexts concerning the evangelical/pentecostal ideology (van Dijk, 1992:56). Some members of mainline churches in Zimbabwe also espouse this contention.

Zacks Manatsa, one of the most popular performing artists in Zimbabwe from the mid-1970s to the early years of independence, converted to the Zim-

babwe Assemblies of God church (ZAOGA) in 1993 and became a minister of religion. According to him, *mashavi* (alien spirits) were responsible for his composition of songs that praised ancestral spirits during the liberation struggle. He maintained that he would not perform such songs as, '*Baba Tipiwo Ndege*' (Father Give Us Aeroplanes) that did not bestow honour to God. It is interesting to note that Manatsa maintained that popular musicians were inspired by ancestral and alien spirits, while gospel musicians were inspired by the Holy Spirit. Spiritual warfare, he argued, continued even on the musical terrain (Manatsa, interview 1999).

#### 4.3.7 Prosperity

A number of gospel music tracks in Zimbabwe maintain that the lives of converts to Christianity are characterised by prosperity. In Christ there is abundance, and all the needs of life are taken care of, artists argue in their lyrics. This theme is dominant in music coming from evangelical/pentecostal churches, although it also occurs in the compositions from mainline and African Independent church artists. Spiritual and material prosperity was shown as a positive outcome of becoming 'born again'. Ivy Kombo maintained in her song, '*Wawana Jesu*' (Having found Jesus) that whosoever had found Jesus had found life and prosperity. He or she had run away from tears and had found true happiness. Other artists have also portrayed conversion to Christianity as giving peace of mind and material rewards.

The prosperity message maintains that God wants a Christian to be wealthy (Gifford, 1990: 375). As the analysis of the sociological context shows, Zimbabwe's economy was under severe strain in the late 1990s and such a message was particularly appealing. In addition, many of the young, upwardly mobile members of pentecostal/evangelical churches run businesses and they are comfortable with such a gospel (Chitando, 1998a). Some gospel musicians achieved considerable financial security through gospel music, interpreting it as a mark of divine favour. As Mathews Ojo observed in the Nigerian context, although material prosperity has its source in God, it is also thought of as being the work of one's hands (Ojo, 1996:105).

There is an observable link between the gospel of prosperity found in Zimbabwean gospel music and the theme of providing ethical guidelines. It is those individuals who observe divine precepts who thrive, some songs contend. Those who are obedient and who shunned corruption and 'wicked politics' as practised by those who were still 'in the flesh' were the ones to prosper materially. These could follow Christ while making money, lyrics contend. Prosperity would not come from visiting traditional healers or appeasing ancestral spirits, but through total surrender in faith.

#### 4.3.8 Promoting Ecumenism

From the preceding paragraphs, one would be forgiven for assuming that gospel music contributes to the hardening of denominational loyalties, and to the separation of evangelical/pentecostal churches from the rest of the other forms of Christianity in the country. At gospel music concerts, on radio and television programmes devoted to gospel music, and in the song texts, the emphasis has been on forging a united Christian front. The slogan has been '*Shoko ndiro rimwe chete*' (The word/gospel is one). Gospel music in Zimbabwe attempts to blur denominational distinctions and to cultivate a common Christian identity. At gospel music concerts efforts were made to downplay divisive practices like speaking in tongues.

Gospel music tapes were also bought across the denominational divides. Catholics could buy Charles Charamba's music with its distinctive evangelical slant, while members of African Independent churches could buy music from the Seventh Day Adventist choirs (Chikati, interview 2000).

The rising ecumenism had its roots in earlier efforts to share hymns across denominations in the 1960s (3.3.1). Some funeral songs defy denominational identification and their availability in portable forms facilitated a wider circulation. Tracks like '*Masodzi*' (Tears), '*Hatina musha panyika*' (We Have No Abiding City on Earth) and others became well known due to the high incidence of death. Other popular hymns and choruses have been electronically recorded and have been shared across the wide spectrum of Christianity in Zimbabwe. It is this ecumenism that was also responsible for the ascendancy of gospel music in the country since artists realised that they could address people from different denominations through music. Gospel music concerts are specially designed to reflect the diversity within local Christianity (Wutawunashe, interview 1999).

It is also important to realise that virtually every denomination in Zimbabwe has had a group that has recorded gospel music. Although members of evangelical/pentecostal churches dominate in that their 'Praise and Worship' sessions had always been dominated by danceable music, hymns and choruses from the various mainline churches now form part of Zimbabwean gospel music. Even the Catholic church that has traditionally been wary of evangelical financial activities has had audio and video tapes of distinctively Catholic church music, perhaps to counteract gospel music from other stables of Christianity. Many artists however, seek to have their music transcend their particular denominational location and to reach the entire Christian body, as well as those outside of it. This wider sense of ecumenism has seen South African gospel musicians receiving a considerable following in Zimbabwe, while groups from the formerly marginalised African Independent Churches have been able to get fans from other branches of Christianity (see 5.2).

#### 4.3.9 Reflecting and Instilling a Sense of National Pride

In his historical review of the development of music in Zimbabwe, the American researcher Thomas Turino paid particular attention to the impact of the ideology of nationalism (Turino, 2000). However, his study was conducted prior to the dominance of gospel music, hence he did not address the question of how nationalism features in songs that are expressly Christian in outlook. An overview of some of the texts of gospel music in Zimbabwe highlights the fact that although artists lay bare the economic and political challenges, they still believe in the nationalist project. While reviewers of popular music in Zimbabwe such as Maurice T. Vambe have noted that some popular artists in the late eighties and early nineties were more concerned with deconstructing official truths about the process of nation building (Vambe, 2000:78), gospel musicians tended to encourage the forging of a common national identity, albeit in a heavily Christianised form. Shingisai Suluma, for example, urged the nation to persevere and look forward to a better future in her song, '*Mirira Mangwani*' (Wait for Tomorrow)

A number of gospel music tracks produced in Zimbabwe may be considered as prayers for national salvation. Artists plead with God to intervene and ensure the country prospers yet again. Groups like the Rugare Ngariende St Luke's choir, Vabati va Jehovah, Charles Charamba and others have released tracks that contend that with more fervent prayers, God would turn around the economic fortunes of the country. Zimbabwe is likened to the biblical Israel. As God promised, he punishes errant nations and rewards loyal ones. Christians, that is those who are called by God's name, are supposed to lead the path to national repentance and to call for divine intervention. Jonathan Wutawunashe pleads with God when he sings, '*Mwari komborera Zimbabwe*' (God Bless Zimbabwe). Particularly in the late 1990s when the land question, economic upheavals and a high death rate appeared to threaten the very existence of the nation, some gospel musicians adopted a patriotic position. While they could criticise the ruling elite, they still felt that prayers to God would transform the country. A number of groups also recorded the hymn with the refrain, '*Tarirai nyika yokwedu, muregere kuipa kwayo, muregere kutsamwa nayo*' (Look at, and bless our country, forgive its sins and do not be angry at its errant ways).

The preoccupation with Zimbabwe however, does not rule out Pan-African solidarity. While scholars like Paul Gifford have identified evangelical/pentecostal churches as being influenced by foreign ideas (Gifford, 1990), a survey of the texts of gospel music coming from artists affiliated to these churches shows a commitment to African progress. There is an underlying contradiction when members are asked to sever all ties with African Traditional Religions, but they are also asked to pray for the continent of Africa. However, this may be explained by the preoccupation with postcolonial mod-

ernity, where a recreated Africa shall be launched from the new pedestal of Christian commitment. A number of songs make direct reference to the biblical verse, 'Let Ethiopia hasten to stretch out her hands to God' (Psalm 68:31). As the study of Christianity in Africa shows, this verse has had considerable influence on the African religious imagination. In Rastafarianism and forms of African Independent Churches, Ethiopia stood out as a symbol of freedom in Africa (Oosthuizen, 1999:159). The group Shalom Singers questioned the inferiority complex that was instilled in the early African converts:

Pane chirevo chakataurwa kare kare kumadzitateguru edu, ivo vakazvitenda. Vakanzi, "MuAfrica munhu mutema haana chaangaite; Hapana chaangaitire Mwari. Asi bhabheri, shoko raMwari rinoti, "Ethiopia ichasumudza maoko ayo kuna Jehovah". (There is a saying that was communicated to our ancestors a long time ago, and they believed it. They were told, "In Africa, the black person cannot do anything; there is nothing that s/he can do for God. But the bible, the word of God says, "Ethiopia shall stretch out her hand to God".)

The verse also occurs in the song, '*Tibatsireyi muZimbabwe*' where Ivy Kombo prays for Zimbabwe and Africa. The group, Apostolic Melodies pleaded with God to save Africa in their song, '*Messiah Sunungura Africa*' (Messiah Liberate Africa). This Pan- African solidarity can also be seen in the movements of gospel musicians across the sub-region. South African gospel musicians like Rebecca Malope, Vuyo Mokoena, Siphosiphos Makabane and others have given successful shows in Zimbabwe, while Wutawunashe has played in Botswana and in other countries. Artists regard the present time as 'Africa's hour in Christianity' and consider gospel music to be an intricate part of their outreach activities. During the joint gospel music concert between South African artists Rebecca Malope and Vuyo Mokoena and their Zimbabwean counterparts in Harare, August 2000, the anthem, '*Nkosi Sikelel'iAfrica*' (God Bless Africa) was sung. This anthem carries a clear Pan-African message (Lundby, 1998:114).

#### 4.4 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter I explored the emergence of gospel music in Zimbabwe. Refusing to ignore historical antecedents, I connected the popularity of music with Christian themes in the struggle for Zimbabwe to the ascendancy of gospel music in the mid 1990s. The pioneering efforts of Jordan Chataika, Freedom Sengwayo, Shuvai Wutawunashe, Brain Sibalo and Machanic Manyeruke were noted. I showed how songs that celebrated the attainment of political independence dominated in the immediate postcolonial period. The chapter also summarised the impact of evangelical/pentecostal churches on the production of gospel music, as well as noting the multiple themes that characterise such music. Emphasis was placed on the texts, with my central contention

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being that diverse musical styles have been appropriated by hundreds of gospel musicians and groups that have emerged in the country.

In the next chapter, the report proceeds to a discussion of the various social groups that have been empowered by the popularity of gospel music. An effort is made to show that gospel music in Zimbabwe has nurtured more performing artists than a casual observer would notice. It shall be argued that far from being a 'foreign' imposition, gospel music has been creatively assimilated by both the musicians and the general public. How formerly marginalised social groups have been given mileage by gospel music receives special attention in the forthcoming chapter.

## 5. Bringing Those Absent: Gospel Music and Disadvantaged Groups in Zimbabwe

The previous chapter analysed the rise of gospel music in Zimbabwe. It identified the key figures, alongside highlighting the political and economic contexts within which gospel music thrived. The interplay between gospel music and other music styles was briefly commented on, with more focus being placed on thematic considerations. It emerged that gospel music in the country was inspired by, and addressed, a plurality of themes. Artists from various denominations and adopting different music styles all combined to give gospel music a definite sense of presence in the music industry in the 1990s.

This chapter explores the role of gospel music in facilitating the emergence of more musicians in the country. The first section highlights the increasing profile of female gospel musicians. The second section focuses on the space that groups from African Independent/Instituted Churches (AICs) have gained through gospel music. How children have utilised gospel music to lay claim to their status as cultural workers is outlined in the third section. The fourth section examines how gospel music has revitalised some minority languages, while the fifth section is a summary of this chapter.

### 5.1 PREACHING OPENLY AND UNHINDERED? WOMEN IN ZIMBABWEAN GOSPEL MUSIC

In foregoing sections (3.4.1 and 3.6), reference was made to the status of women in the performing arts during the colonial period and in the postcolonial period. It was noted that black women suffered from racial, class and gender oppression, particularly when it came to music performances. While women had had important roles to play in the traditional musical contexts, the definition of urban public space in patriarchal terms excluded women. Negative stereotypes accompanied women who dared to access this space, let alone those who tried to become musicians. These were labelled as 'stray', 'loose', 'dangerous', and other unfortunate descriptions. However, some women facilitated the emergence of African urban music during the colonial period by promoting the sale of illegal liquor, having their houses as centres for entertainment and in many other ways. Others became musicians in their own right, and individuals like Lina Mattaka, who started in Bulawayo in the 1930s, Evelyn Juba and the Merry Makers, Dorothy Masuka and others emerged (Makwenda 2000a:15).

As noted in chapter four, the church had an important role to play in the emergence of musicians in the country, although they had earlier denounced

indigenous music in its totality, denominational variations notwithstanding. It achieved its contribution in two main ways. To begin with, the hold that the church had on colonial education meant that it was at school that many musicians learnt to play Western musical instruments like the guitar and the piano. Secondly, Christianity's arrogant, desacralizing thrust facilitated the availability of ritual instruments like *mbira* and drums to women. While the incorporation of traditional musical instruments was a positive step in the drive towards the Africanisation of Christian worship, it also effected the 'demythologisation' of the same instruments. Thus, Beulah Dyoko became arguably the first woman to record *mbira* music in the country in 1965, but the colonial authorities suppressed her music (Makwenda, 2000a:16).

Female musicians in Zimbabwe have faced multiple challenges. In most cases, parents disapproved of musical careers, while spouses contend that female musicians play in 'unsafe' environments. However, a number of female artists like Stella Chiweshe, Dorothy Masuka, Susan Mapfumo, Busi Ncube, Chioneso Maraire and others have had successful careers. Their successes have, unfortunately, not extinguished the flames of prejudice. Many black women in music, drama, sport and other areas continue to fight against stereotypical representations. In fact, the challenges of accessing urban public space are still as formidable in the postcolonial period. It remains difficult for a woman to walk freely in an urban area, without unsolicited comments and verbal abuse following her (Mashiri, 2000).

Some popular male musicians have not helped the situation either. In their lyrics they perpetuate the notion that the black female in the urban area is a 'hure' (prostitute) or 'loose' in some sense. As Vambe, (2000:82–85) notes, the irony is that the same artists can release protest songs against an oppressive state, while characterising women as 'dangerous'. The notion that 'safe' women are found in the rural areas (3.4.1) persists in the postcolonial period. A good example is the song, '*Ndinoda Wekumaruzevha* (I Love One from the Rural Areas) by an up-coming artist, Willom Tight. Thus:

Ndinoda wangu wekumaruzevha/wekumaruwa akarairwa natete. Ndinoda wangu wekumaruzevha, handingawani wemudhorobha. Handidi munozzi akarasa tsika. Tete ndokuunzirai muroora kuti dzinza rikure, muroora akabya kuvanhu. Dzokai vana vevhu. Kutora tsika dzevamwe woti istyle, Ndaramba zvemunozzi, ndinoda musikana wekumapfanya ane tsika dziri straight (I would like one of my own from the rural areas, one who has been instructed by her aunt. I would like one from the rural areas, I cannot marry one from the urban areas. I do not want one who speaks through the nose, one who has lost our traditional culture. Aunt, I would like to bring to you a daughter-in-law, so that our lineage can expand; one who has been nurtured by her people. Come back, children of the soil. Taking other people's cultures and thinking that it is fashionable! I do not like one who speaks through the nose, I would like one from the rural areas whose behaviour is straight).

Space and thematic considerations prevent us from engaging in a detailed deconstruction of this song. It was quite popular in 2001 and was backed by a video of the 'safe' rural environment and the 'polluted' urban women. However, one can readily see the artificial and rigid separation that has been made between the 'indigenous and authentic' rural woman and the 'culturally lost' urban woman. It is within such a context that female musicians have to operate in urban areas.

The challenges that face female pop musicians in Zimbabwe have precluded the emergence of many more performing artists. In the late 1990s, some female musicians like Patricia Matongo, who plays the guitar, emerged. Indeed, female musicians who play their own instruments in the country are very few because of the patriarchal ideology that denounced women in music. However, it is in the gospel music arena that female musicians have emerged in significant numbers. A researcher in Zimbabwe, Susan Manhando-Makore makes the following submission:

In Zimbabwe, it is female gospel musicians who seem to enjoy a good image in society. Because they are singing about the goodness of God, they are often portrayed favourably, even if they perform at night. It is female pop musicians who are seen in a not so favourable light. They sing about the trials and tribulations of everyday life in beerhalls, noisy nightclubs and stadiums. Perhaps because the image of bad girl is so daunting, especially to new musicians, that is why there is an increase in the number of female gospel singers, both young and old (Manhando-Makore, 2000:6).

It is indeed correct to note that in the late 1990s the majority of female musicians in Zimbabwe played gospel music. Manhando-Makore is also correct to surmise that some female musicians have opted to play gospel music and not other types due to the general respectability accorded to this music type. However, it is contestable to assume that it is only female pop artists who sing about the trials and tribulations of everyday life. In addition, female musicians in the gospel music arena are also susceptible to the challenges facing women in pop music. As I have argued in this report, sometimes the conceptual chasm that is drawn between gospel music and other music types is too extended. While acknowledging that gospel music has its own ideological grounding, it should be interpreted within the larger context of musical practices within the country.

The ideology that gospel music represents a specific religious outlook has gone a long way in facilitating the emergence of more female musicians in the country. Since they are understood as carrying out the religious task of spreading the word of God, female musicians who play gospel music appear to receive greater social acceptance than female pop artists. Unlike some male gospel musicians who may be labelled as 'independent' in the sense that they do not operate from any particular denomination, female gospel musicians in

Zimbabwe are readily traceable and identifiable with certain churches. This has allowed them to sustain the claim that their music has an evangelical concern and to attain greater public acceptability.

According to the pioneering female gospel musician in Zimbabwe, Shuvai Wutawunashe, it was not easy for her to make a breakthrough. When she sought to record her song, '*Tarira Nguva*' (Look at the Time) in 1982, music with Christian themes was looked down upon, and there were few female musicians in the country. Women who dared to play music were discouraged. She maintains that she persevered because she wanted to demonstrate that God gives talents without regard to race, class, or sex (Wutawunashe, interview 1999). Many other female gospel musicians who began to record in the mid-1990s cited Wutawunashe as an inspiration, alongside other female international gospel musicians such as Rebecca Malope.

Unlike male gospel artists who tend to be spread across the denominational divides, an overwhelming number of female gospel musicians in Zimbabwe are from evangelical/pentecostal churches. Wutawunashe herself is from the Family of God church, Ivy Kombo and Carol Chivengwa started to record while with the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God (ZAOGA), Olivia Charamba and Martha Knight are members of the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe, while Ruth Mapfumo, Fungisayi Zvakavapano, Christabel Dukuche, Shingisayi Suluma and others also belong to the evangelical/pentecostal fold. Most of these female gospel musicians are professionals in other areas and they perform music on an on the side basis. This has helped to mitigate some of the financial demands. They also tend to possess better educational qualifications than some of the female musicians who end up as supporting acts to other groups. However, they have been prolific in releasing gospel tracks and they have become an integral part of the Zimbabwean music scene.

The attraction of evangelical/pentecostal churches to professional young women in Zimbabwe and elsewhere requires a more patient examination. Writing on Southern Nigeria, Ruth Marshall noted that these churches offered contradictory opportunities for women since they have a fundamentalist approach to the biblical text and tend to play up the ideology of the man as the head of the house. However, she argues, young women find in born-again communities opportunities to construct a space where they can move with relative freedom and dignity (Marshall, 1992:22). The churches also put emphasis on the nuclear family, marital fidelity, the sharing of tasks and other teachings that appeal to professional young women. For their part as female musicians, their attraction to these churches is the unambiguous message on the need for genuine repentance and the role given to music in the ministry to bring salvation to the nation (Chivengwa, interview 2000).

Female gospel musicians in Zimbabwe do not regard themselves as being insulated from problems that other female pop artists face. According to Martha Knight, "It is not easy for a woman to venture into the entertainment

industry, but with God's help, I have managed" (Knight, interview 2001). Like other popular artists, female gospel musicians face problems like accessing instruments, financial security, marketing and royalties. While the church context goes some way in ensuring a market, musicians were quick to add that denominations did not feel obliged to support them in their careers. There were also difficulties surrounding social acceptance before the mid-1990s when most people felt that only men could stand up and sing in public.

While some of the tracks by female gospel musicians indicate concern for women's issues, it is clear that the artists do not specifically direct themselves to women. Their aim is to address society in its entirety, not just one segment of it (Dukuhe, interview 2000). Writing on gospel music in Nigeria, Matthews Ojo (1998:222–223) argues, "more women have found Gospel music as a potent means of enhancing self-expression and self-determination". However, artists expressed hope that their increased profile would facilitate the emergence of more musicians in the country, particularly in the area of gospel music as more 'singing preachers' were needed.

The dominance of female gospel musicians in Zimbabwe was indicated when Olivia Charamba became the first female musician to sell over eighty thousand copies of a single album (Munyuki, 2001). Her first album *'Amen'* sold quickly and confirmed her as a serious musician in her own right, and not just, 'Charles Charamba's wife'. Charles Charamba was Zimbabwe's top-selling gospel musician between 1999 and 2001. His wife, Olivia, contends that gospel music offers an opportunity to female artists to express themselves musically and to demonstrate that God can use women to do His work (Olivia Charamba, interview 2001). When the TSAMA music awards were inaugurated in 2000, the organizers found it necessary to include the category of 'Best Female Gospel Musician' and the honour went to Chivengwa in 2000. All these examples illustrate the significant presence of female gospel musicians.

While African womanist scholars might challenge female gospel musicians for not addressing pressing women's issues such as domestic violence, rape, female genital mutilation and others directly, it is also important to note that they have been effective in social analysis. From Nigeria, Ojo notes, "Increasingly, women are transcending their parochial world by commenting on issues which are of immense concern to most Nigerians today" (Ojo, 1998:225). Artists like Kombo and Zvakavapano have released gospel music tracks that highlight the economic struggles many Zimbabweans encountered in the late 1990s. Notions of despair, political protest and hope through Christ characterised these songs. By so doing, they demonstrated the fact that female gospel musicians can be serious artists in their own right.

The ideology that gospel music is 'different' and that it has a clear Christian missionary thrust facilitated the emergence of more musicians in Zimbabwe. While some sections of the bible maintain that women may not preach

(1 Corinthians 14:34–35), gospel music opened new avenues for young women. They regard their music as being designed to bring people to repentance. However, critics like Manhando-Makore contend that the concentration of women in gospel music should not be celebrated uncritically. She writes:

Female musicians continue to enjoy the respect of society and audiences, because they are seen to respect God, even though a significant number of them are just in it for the business side, that is making money. Of course, they sing about admirable virtues, faithfulness, forgiveness and love and are always dressed in long, decent dresses and outfits. They do not gyrate but sway gracefully to soothing musical tones (Manhando-Makore, 2000:6).

The larger debate here is whether ‘women’s liberation’ can be adequately attained within a religious context. While this is a large question that cannot be exhausted within the confines of this report, it is important to raise the issue that a number of ‘puritans’ have already complained about the dance routines of some female gospel musicians, insisting that they should not be influenced by ‘secular’ dances. Ivy Kombo was also criticised for ‘overdressing’, while rumours have circulated about the ‘doubtful moral standing’ of some female gospel musicians. The matter here is not one of whether or not gospel musicians should be ‘saints’: it is simply one of illustrating the challenges that continue to face women in Zimbabwean gospel music.

On the whole, gospel music in Zimbabwe has created more female players in the performing arts (Mapuranga, 2000). Although female gospel musicians continued to face some challenges, their emergence as competent musicians led to greater social awareness on the need to allow women space within which they can express themselves. While Christian and traditional African patriarchal traditions had connived to efface women from being valuable cultural workers, gospel music proved to be an unlikely source of strength in the fight for recognition and acceptance on the part of women. Amidst numerous challenges, gospel music granted female artists space where they could sing themselves into national prominence. As noted in chapter four, the colonial period tended to squeeze out female musicians. It was during the upsurge in gospel music in the 1990s that more female artists emerged, hopefully to dispel all prejudices associated with women in music. For their part, female gospel musicians considered it as an opportunity where they could be “preaching the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ quite openly and unhindered” (Acts 28:31).

## 5.2 AFRICAN INDEPENDENT CHURCHES AND GOSPEL MUSIC

The area of African Independent/Initiated Churches (AICs) has attracted a lot of scholarly attention in the study of religion in Africa. Debate has dwelt on the causative factors, characteristic features, role of healing, and other issues.

The terminological confusion has persisted, while the distinction between the older AICs and newer evangelical/pentecostal churches remains murky. Given the specific 'subject position' adopted in this report, I will avoid any extended engagement with these issues, important as they are. The South African specialist, Gerhardus C. Oosthuizen writes, "Those AICs which 'split off' from the 'mainline' mission churches are referred to as 'independent' churches, whereas churches which were indigenously self-initiated are 'indigenous'" (Oosthuizen, 1999:158). Pentecostal churches, manned by young, educated Africans, have maintained a kind of reflexive distance from Independent churches by proclaiming their dissociation from syncretism by rejecting a whole array of traditional practices, purification and protection rituals and symbolic repertoires (van Dijk, 2000:11–12). In Zimbabwe, AICs have been associated with the need to reflect the African worldview realistically and to give followers a sense of belonging (Daneel, 1987).

Attention has already been drawn to the role of AICs in preserving African music during the colonial period in Zimbabwe (3.3.1). However, the music of AICs has largely been confined to their church contexts. In fact, within the mainstream media, members of these churches have generally been the subject of scorn and derision. Due to the dominance of mainline churches and the aggressive nature of evangelical/pentecostal churches when it comes to media technologies, Independent churches have not had equal access to the media in the country. On the whole, their followers are portrayed as uneducated, and their religious beliefs as an uncritical mixture of traditional spirituality and Christianity. In the early eighties the popular musician (who turned to gospel music in the late 1990s) Zacks Manatsa portrayed the Apostles as bearded, tea-loving, patriarchal figures in his song, '*Tea Hobvu*' (Strong Tea). While a separate study is necessary to document the appearance of AICs in Zimbabwe's media, it remains correct to say that the dominant images have been condescending.

Members of AICs have felt these negative images, and many have resorted to periodic retreats to the sacred wilderness (Mukonyora, 2001). Portrayed as uneducated and theologically naïve, AICs have struggled to be accepted as legitimate Christians. Preachers in mainline and evangelical/pentecostal churches constantly mock the healing sessions of the Independent churches, while their dependence on oratory is denounced. Christianity is often presented as the sole preserve of the established denominations, and yet their members regularly seek the services of prophets from the Independent churches.

The image of AICs as hapless Africans traumatised by urbanisation and gathering under a tree for psychological healing is a far cry from reality, at least in the Zimbabwean context. Many Zionist and Apostolic churches, for example, include professionals and other highly placed individuals, sometimes including cabinet ministers. The attractiveness of these churches has

been their willingness to tackle the African spiritual realities to 'stop suffering' (Chitando, 2000b) Consequently, many young blacks have converted to Independent churches in the hope that matters associated with ancestral demands would cease to worry them. These churches have a distinctive African outlook, and their singing is passionate and engages the African spirit world in a confrontational manner whereby the Holy Spirit is introduced to overcome all other oppressive spiritual forces.

In the year 2000, the group, Vabati VaJehova (God's Workers) made a breakthrough on the music scene when they released a highly successful album, *Mweya Mutsovene WaMwari* and followed it by the top selling, *Wauya Mucheki* (The Harvester Has Come) in 2001. With their distinctive white garments, these members of the Vimbiso YaJehova Apostolic Faith Church became national celebrities because of their harmonic singing. Since they do not use any instruments, the established recording companies were hesitant to record this Apostolic group. According to group leader, Wiseman Magaya:

When some of our church members died in a road accident in 1997 we decided to record a dedication album in their memory. We also hoped to use the proceeds to support the orphans, particularly in the area of school fees. However, we were frustrated by the established recording companies. You see, they thought that Mapostori could not be marketable. They did not think that our music could sell since it does not include any instruments. We persevered and prayed, until God answered our prayers. Duncan Jaramba came to our aid and financed our recording with High Density Records (Magaya, interview 2001).

As indicated in the previous chapter (4.3.8), the ecumenical spirit that characterises gospel music allowed people from different religious backgrounds to enjoy and buy music from Vabati VaJehova. With their music becoming widely available and videos of their songs being screened on television, AIC groups like Vabati VaJehova became better known. Apostolic Melodies, a group from the Holy Apostolic Church, also released an album, *Messiah Sunungura Africa* (Messiah Liberate Africa) in 2001. Another group, Zion Christian Church Mbungo Stars recorded two albums that sold well. These are, *Kusaziva* (Ignorance) in 2000 and *Zino Irema* (False Smiles) in 2001. According to group leader, Lucky Chikuwo:

The road has been a long and bumpy one for us to reach where we are today. As you may be aware, the ZCC Mbungo Stars have been playing music for a long time now, and we have provided support at national church conventions, weddings, parties and other functions. We finally decided to record our music after noticing the heightened interest in Christian music. Our music addresses the African person in his/her spiritual condition; how relatives bewitch successful individuals and we also use our traditional African instruments. Our dance routines are energetic because the bible teaches us that we can dance for God until our robes are torn (Chikuwo, interview 2001).

Given the earlier observation that many gospel groups recorded and released their albums around 1995, it can be seen that AIC groups were latecomers. However, since they were singing about 'universal' Christian themes, they succeeded in finding space in the music industry. The success of their music also entailed some form of reviewing of the prejudices associated with AICs. In other words, one could not play and enjoy a track from Vabati VaJehova in one's car, for example, while continuing to think that nothing good could come from Zionist and Apostolic churches. When flea market traders continued to play music from AICs at high volume in most of Zimbabwe's urban areas, and many clients kept making enquiries regarding the identities of the artists, it perhaps implied that a considerable reassessment of the AIC movement was underway.

The fact that groups from AICs could borrow from the 'magic of modernity' and have their songs electronically recorded also meant that people could not continue to regard them as being steeped in the past. Without making extensive claims on behalf of gospel music, one can observe that it allowed musical groups from AICs to achieve a higher degree of visibility, although some prejudices still persisted. Sacred practitioners from AICs continued to be ignored in favour of those from mainline churches, while their success on the highly competitive religious market courted further attacks from denominations that lost members to them. Gospel music however, enabled many Zimbabweans to appreciate the talent and inspiration that is also found in this strand of Christianity.

### 5.3 'LET THE CHILDREN SING': GOSPEL MUSIC, CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Middle-aged men have tended to dominate the music scene in Zimbabwe. Unlike in South Africa, Europe and North America where they have had teenage music sensations, for example, Zimbabwe has found it difficult to produce many youthful artists. Parents have tended to discourage their children from pursuing music, insisting that they acquire a sound education first. This has its legacy in the history of the country. Due to the colonial regime's discriminatory policies, it was only the educated blacks that stood a chance of moving up the rigid social structures. Since then, parents would like their children to get the best possible academic qualifications as this is seen as a guaranteed way of escaping poverty. This resolute stance has seen some talented children failing to pursue careers in music, sports and other non-academic ventures.

The emphasis on academic qualifications also implied that a negative perception of the performing arts was inculcated in many black people. A child that indicated an interest in music could be reprimanded for enticing *mashavi* (alien spirits) to possess him or her (3.2.2). In addition, most black

musicians were not financially stable during the colonial period, prompting many to associate music with *hurombe*, 'the spirit of poverty'. Parents would agonise when a child showed a passion for the performing arts, and most of the leading musicians in Zimbabwe today were successful *despite* their parents' and guardians' efforts to discourage them. The colonial and Christian portrayal of African musical traditions as backward and inferior also accentuated the disdain for indigenous arts among some black Zimbabweans.

Gospel music helped to change the situation by facilitating the emergence of children's groups and youthful bands. Once again, the underlying conviction that gospel music is 'sacred' helped to alter perceptions regarding the role of children in music. From the mid-1990s, a number of children's groups released gospel albums that had a measure of success. Other teenagers, like the visually impaired Munyaradzi Munodowafa proceeded to become national celebrities. His song, '*Shandisa Chipa*' (Use Your Talent) called upon individuals to use their God-given talents and to celebrate them. According to him, gospel music allows young people to preach to their elders and also to demonstrate their gifts from God (Munodawafa, interview 2000). A group composed of primary school children from Frank Johnson in Harare, called Love, Peace and Joy released their album, '*Ndimi Mega*' (You Are Unique) in 2000. The group was also able to undertake a tour of the United States of America, a dream many established artists yearn for (Turino, 2000: 333). It would appear that the dominance of Christianity in the country meant that parents felt proud when their children played gospel music. As a result, there was a greater concentration of children's groups in gospel music than other musical styles.

A number of youthful groups playing gospel music emerged in the country in the late 1990s. To further demonstrate the fact that the tag is an umbrella term for diverse styles, the youthful groups have employed hip hop, rap, soul, rhythm and blues, ragga and other styles to appeal to young audiences. A good example is the group Appointed that has the Boys 2 Men soulful sound. Their debut album, '*Somlandela*' (I Will Follow) was well received and their energetic dance routines at gospel music concerts won them many admirers. David Chifunyise, Mercia Pinda, Joyful Heart, Gangsters for Christ, Soul Challengers and others also represent this youthful presence on the Zimbabwean gospel music scene. The influence of African-American youth culture is apparent in the musical styles and some of the adopted names. While some critics have lamented the 'profanisation' of gospel music by incorporating chants and 'worldly beats', one can also appreciate the creativity and sophistication that have been shown by the youthful groups.

The fusion in gospel music happened alongside 'modern trends' in Zimbabwean popular music. The American journalist Banning Eyre refers to efforts that have been made in "nurturing youth music and helping reach international standards without losing its Zimbabwean identity (Eyre, 2001:97).

Some tracks released in 2001, such as “*Amai*” (Mother) by Guess, “*So Ndiani?*” (Now, Who Is It?) by Slice and “*Muroora*” (Daughter-in-law) by Chifunyise appealed to young audiences as they successfully mixed foreign musical styles with vernacular language lyrics. These experiments served to show that music is never static; through innovation artists are always seeking to produce new products for their fans.

Other young artists like Dzidzai addressed serious issues like sexual abuse against the girl child, thereby demonstrating that they are sensitive about what goes on around them.

As with women and AICs, gospel music has been an avenue through which young people asserted their right to be seen, heard and recognised as cultural workers in their own right. Since gospel music operated under a sacred canopy, many parents allowed their children to participate in musical activities. In this regard, evangelical/pentecostal churches were influential in propagating the notion that there is ‘good dancing’ which goes on in gospel music, and ‘bad dancing’ that occurs outside it. The chant and invitation, ‘*Tambira Mwari Wako, Tambira Jesu*’ (Dance for Your God, Dance for Jesus) seeks to establish gospel music as a legitimate undertaking in the service of God. Although many of the ‘worldly’ bodily movements found their way into gospel music dances, they were understood as being employed in a new, sacred environment. As argued above, the same reformulation empowered children and youths to access space for public music performances, thereby increasing the number of cultural workers in Zimbabwe.

#### 5.4 ‘PRAISING GOD IN THEIR OWN LANGUAGES’: GOSPEL MUSIC AND MINORITY LANGUAGES

A number of authors in the study of Christianity in Africa have made massive claims on behalf of the religion and its revitalisation of indigenous languages. Scholars like Lamin Sanneh, Kwame Bediako (1995) and others have argued that the underlying factor behind Christianity’s rapid expansion on the continent is that it is an infinitely translatable faith. Sanneh in particular made this argument well known in his work in which he maintains that missionaries contributed to the African confidence in their vernacular languages when they translated the scriptures into these languages (Sanneh, 1989). While these writers within African Christianity celebrate the positive contributions of the missionaries, some African scholars have accused the missionaries of ‘inventing’ tribalism in Zimbabwe (Chimhundu, 1992). Other debates in areas like African literature over whether African writers should continue to write in English also illustrated the importance of language to postcolonial African identities. However, these are large questions that we will not be able to exhaust within the confines of this study. With the specific case of gospel music in Zimbabwe, it is important to realise that the majority of the recordings have

been in Shona and Ndebele, the dominant vernacular languages in the country.

The Africanisation of African church music (3.3.1) had a decisive impact on the use of local languages in hymns and choruses. The fact that Africans could address God in their own languages, and sing praises to Him in the vernacular had an effect on indigenous responses to Christianity. However, in administrative issues and radio broadcasts, Shona and Ndebele tended to dominate. Smaller ethnic groups were subsumed under the larger groups and debate has raged on over the need to accord space to all the various languages found in the country. Gospel music has provided an important avenue through which minority languages stake their claim to be heard.

Artists like Elias Musakwa contend that genuine Christian commitment arises from responding to God in one's own language. He has promoted Tonga music, and his track, '*Wanga Murena*' has had ecstatic receptions at gospel music concerts. Although Musakwa himself comes from Masvingo and does not belong to a minority language, he has argued that evangelical/pentecostal praise and worship needs to be sensitive to disadvantaged languages. Musakwa bases his argument on the story of the pentecost in Acts chapter 2 whereby people from different countries could hear God's word in their own languages:

In Africa, cultural imperialism has robbed our indigenous languages of their vitality. We need to reclaim our languages. If people sing to God in their languages, it would be coming from deep down in their hearts. They can express themselves profoundly if they are allowed to use the minority languages. As an African, I have used my company, Ngaavongwe Records to promote the use of minority languages in gospel music (Musakwa, interview 2000).

However, for the time period covered in this report, the Shona language overwhelmingly dominated gospel music in Zimbabwe, probably due to the fact that it is the language spoken by most people in the country. While there were efforts to increase the number of gospel music releases in minority languages such as Tonga, other languages have not had high profiles. As gospel music expanded, it was hoped that minority languages would be adequately covered so that all indigenous languages could be accorded their rightful status.

From the analysis of the texts, it also emerged that most gospel musicians in Zimbabwe employed vernacular languages. In fact, leading artists like Machanic Manyeruke suggested to young and upcoming artists that they avoided recording in English. Manyeruke maintained that his success in overseas tours was due to his originality in terms of music and application of the vernacular (Manyeruke, interview 1999). There was a firm conviction that singing in African languages evoked more passion and emotion than using the language of the colonial masters, English. However, some artists like Wu-

tawunashe, Shingisayi Suluma, Gospel Trumpet and a few others have recorded some songs in English. This reflects a cosmopolitan outlook within Zimbabwean music (Turino, 2000). Such artists hoped that they would be reaching a wider audience, in line with the universalistic thrust of their Christian music. Others maintained that gospel music sung in vernacular lyrics is equally powerful in spreading the message of Christian salvation 'to the end of the world'.

### 5.5 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have outlined how gospel music has created alternative space for formerly marginalised social groups to assert their rights as performing artists. I maintained that the contention that gospel music operates within the sacred realm goes a long way in removing some of the obstacles faced by different categories of cultural workers in Zimbabwe. The ideology that gospel music is tied to Christian evangelism has facilitated the emergence of more female musicians, I argued. While female pop musicians face the challenge of negative images, female gospel musicians appear to have had a greater level of social acceptance. African Independent church groups have also found new opportunities to record and distribute their music because gospel music has reached new levels of popularity. Shaking off the image of 'unsophisticated' movements, some AIC groups have attained considerable fame and fortune by having their music electronically recorded. Children and the youth have also gained from the ideology of gospel music as a sacred undertaking. I illustrated how they have experimented with foreign styles, alongside tackling serious issues like the abuse of the girl child.

The next chapter offers an interpretation of the significance of gospel music. It examines the social and economic significance of gospel music in Zimbabwe. How gospel music offers a platform for the negotiation of postcolonial African identities is explored. The chapter also pursues the issue of the communication environment in the country and how it has contributed to the ascendancy of music from one particular religion, Christianity, ahead of other religions found in the country

## 6. Gospel Music in Zimbabwe: An Interpretation

Having analysed the development of music in Zimbabwe from the colonial period to the late 1990s, accounting for the rise of gospel music, highlighting the dominant themes in gospel music and how it has nurtured more musicians in previous chapters, this chapter is an interpretative essay on the significance of gospel music. The first section examines an aspect that is often overlooked in discussions on cultural production in Africa. This is the theme of the communication environment and how it affects the distribution of cultural products. The second section traces the economic significance of gospel music in Zimbabwe by drawing attention to the financial returns enjoyed by various actors. It also notes the controversies that have arisen from this dimension. How gospel music contributes to discourses on postcolonial African identities is tackled in the third section of this chapter. I interrogate the ideology of cultural closure and argue that contemporary African identities are not rooted in some mythical African past.

### 6.1 THE DOMINANCE OF CHRISTIANITY ON THE COMMUNICATION ENVIRONMENT IN ZIMBABWE AND THE ASCENDANCY OF GOSPEL MUSIC

Although Zimbabwe is a religiously pluralistic country, Christianity enjoys a very high profile ahead of all other religions. On radio and television, Christian programmes dominate while other religious traditions are hardly featured. When they are, they are usually the objects of derision by Christian ministers of religion. Like other African countries, Zimbabwe is home to diverse religious traditions. These include African Traditional Religions (ATRs), Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Sikhism, Jainism, Chinese religions, Buddhism, new esoteric religions, the Baha'i faith and others (Platvoet, 1996:50). However, the earlier association of Christianity with the colonial state, the hold by missions on education and health and the aggressive use of the media by mainline and evangelical/pentecostal churches have ensured that Christianity dominates the communication environment in Zimbabwe.

In assessing the ascendancy of gospel music in Zimbabwe, it is important to recognise the role played by radio and television programmes in promoting music with Christian themes. Many respondents noted the importance of the television programme, *'The Psalmody'* in generating and sustaining their interest in gospel music. According to the producer, Remmington Mbeya, the programme was started because Christians wanted more music. By playing video cassettes from the various gospel groups in the country, the programme

introduced the latest Christian music to members of the public (Mbeya, interview 2000). The national broadcaster, the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) set aside time in which music deriving from Christianity can receive exclusive airplay. Gospel music also featured on the other television musical shows, *'Mutinhimira WeMimhanzi/Ezomgido'* and *Afrobeat*, allowing it to have greater publicity.

On the various radio stations (there were four at the time when this study was conducted), there was also time set aside for gospel music. A good example of the exclusive treatment enjoyed by gospel music is how the programme, *'Nziyo Dzechitendero'* (Religious Songs) on Radio Four was dedicated to gospel music, when the title would seem to imply religious pluralism since 'religion' transcends Christianity. Even the station associated with youth and cosmopolitanism, Radio Three, had a programme, *'Beat with A Message'*, dedicated to gospel music and Christian perspectives on public issues. A long-time presenter, Noah Pashapa, contended that it was crucial for Christians to assert themselves and he regarded the programme as one of the ways in which Christians could become a vibrant aspect of civil society (Pashapa, interview 1998).

Religious programmes on radio and television in Zimbabwe were therefore heavily tipped in favour of Christianity. American televangelists enjoyed considerable coverage (Arnsten 1997), and Sunday viewing in particular had a Christian outlook. While there were attempts to balance this in some talk shows like *'Nzira YeMutendi'* (The Path of the Faithful), *'ChiKristu neTsika'* (Christianity and African Culture), *'ChiKristu neChiJudah'* (Christianity and Judaism) and others, a distinctively Christian ethos dominated. In most instances, these discussion programmes were quickly taken off air when it appeared that representatives of other religious traditions were challenging Christian tenets in a profound manner. Members of other communities of faith in Zimbabwe feel that as a public enterprise, the ZBC should not be seen to favour a particular religion and its music (Kwindima, interview 2001).

The dominance of Christianity of the communication environment meant that religious music from other communities of faith did not get much coverage on ZBC. Although there was a substantial Muslim presence in the country, for example, religious music from this community was never played. Since African Traditional Religions (ATRs) are loosely organised, their music did not receive as much prominence as gospel music. There were some programmes on Radio Two, for example, *'Dze Chinyakaré'* (Traditional Music), dedicated to indigenous African music. However, they did not help to promote interest in this music style since such music is presented as coming from the remote past, and not as a contemporary reality. At any rate, programmes dedicated to traditional music were very few, and did not receive the kind of reverence reserved for gospel music. This hesitancy to incorporate aspects of

ATRs into the 'modern nation-state' permeated various areas, but the media stood out (Harbitz, 1993).

While national statistics regarding religious commitment varied, upward of sixty five percent of Zimbabweans associated themselves with the Christian faith. During the run up to the referendum on the rejected draft constitution in early 2000, the evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe ran a campaign to have Zimbabwe declared a Christian country. Gospel musicians Shuvai Wutawunashe and Elias Musakwa were featured in television programmes, outlining the purported benefits of such a development. Although the state was secular, the reality on the ground was that Christianity was *de facto* the official religion of the country. It was Christian prayers that were used at official state events, and Christian ministers of religion, not imams or traditional spirit mediums, were the sacred practitioners. They were also the ones who served as chaplains in the army and prison services.

The dominance of Christian programmes on radio and television, and its overall impact on the popularity of gospel music, may also be understood within the context of the Religious Advisory Board to ZBC. It was exclusively Christian, being made up of representatives of various denominations and was responsible for overseeing that certain 'standards' were kept for the religious programming on ZBC (Lundby, 1998:88–90). Given that Christianity is a competitor for souls on the volatile spiritual market, this control of the communication opportunities put it in a very strong position to outshine its competitors. Gospel music obviously gained from this situation. Greater publicity was being given to gospel music because of its presentation being an integral part of Christian expansion.

Perhaps the only other religious type of music that has enjoyed coverage on ZBC is reggae. Due to the influence of Bob Marley at the independence celebrations and successful tours by many high profile reggae groups in the postcolonial period (3.5) reggae gained a considerable following in the country. Although it is closely related to Rastafarianism, it was able to have a commercial life of its own. In a sense, gospel music has also moved from the restricted domain of church performances into the public arena. Although it has been presented as an integral part of Christianity in Zimbabwe, its public performance has gone some way in desacralising it.

However, followers of other religious traditions in Zimbabwe have complained about the special status that seems to be reserved for music with Christian themes. Adherents of ATRs in Zimbabwe would agree with the South African scholar, Nokuzola Mndende's complaint that the 'new' South African government was nothing else but Christianity at prayer. Mndende also criticised the denial of access to the media for indigenous African religions on the basis that they are 'minority' religions. Thus, "Our question is this: Judaism is the majority religion in Israel, Islam in Arab countries, and Hindu-

ism in India; but if African Religion is a minority religion in its own country of birth, where, then, is it a majority religion?" (Mndende, 1999:152).

In summary, while gospel music in Zimbabwe has had its inherent artistic appeal, extraneous factors need to be taken into account when considering its ascendancy. The fact that the majority of the population identifies with a Christian ethos and the dominance of Christianity in the media contributed to the growing popularity of gospel music. Through radio and television programmes devoted to gospel music, the public had greater exposure to this particular music type. Since it was associated with religion, the promotion of gospel music successfully avoided costs that would normally be associated with advertising. Gospel music was therefore cushioned from some operational costs because it operated under a religious ideology.

## 6.2 'SINGING ABOUT CHRIST, MAKING MONEY'? THE ECONOMIC SIGNIFICANCE OF GOSPEL MUSIC

One of the recurrent criticisms levelled against gospel music in most parts of sub-Saharan Africa has been that artists get into gospel music due to the lure of the financial rewards. In trying economic times, individuals will exploit whatever avenue there is to get an extra dollar, according to this argument. Since gospel music proved to be popular in the 1990s, many artists moved into this type of music in the hope of reaping attractive financial rewards. Suspicions regarding the Christian commitment of particular artists, the change in social status, and other outward signs of wealth are subject to intense scrutiny. During the research, it became clear that the most debated issue in Zimbabwean gospel music was the question of what it is that motivated artists to record hymns, choruses and other music associated with Christianity. Critics of gospel music dismissed it as one of the many 'income generating projects' undertaken by individuals in an oppressive economic environment. A music columnist introduced his article on how gospel music became a financial bonanza in hard times thus:

A colleague once said that if one wants to make money, one can either run a café or a commuter omnibus and guess what else? Become a gospel musician. A gospel musician, yes! (Guchu, 1999: 18).

Gospel musicians have been categorised alongside other religious entrepreneurs like evangelists who form their own churches, prophets and traditional healers who promise to eliminate all forms of suffering and other confidence tricksters who use religion to earn a living. Gospel musicians have thus generally been associated with financial astuteness, just being in gospel music "for the business side, that is making money" (Manhando-Makore, 2000:6). Fred Zindi, a musician, music researcher and an academic, also took up the

issue of financial rewards as an important factor in the expansion of gospel music in Zimbabwe. He argued that while there is an ideology that promotes the 'sacred' nature of gospel music, it should be remembered that all musicians are business people in the first instance (Zindi, interview 1998).

For most critics, the fact that former popular or 'secular' musicians have turned to gospel music is sufficient testimony that financial rewards are the prime motivating factor. In Zimbabwe, these include the late 'Mr Bulk' David Chiyangwa, Cephas Mashakada, Fungai Malianga, Noel Zembe, Moise 'Ghetto Soldier' Matura, Hosiah Chipanga and others. From the responses, it would seem that this category of 'converted gospel musicians' is the most problematic. Greater levels of authenticity appear to accompany those who started by recording gospel music, like Shuvai Wutawunashe, Machanic Manyeruke, Charles Charamba, Vabati VaJehova and others. In addition, artists who appear to be closely connected to particular denominations and are traceable to local congregations had more appeal amongst Christian respondents. However, in terms of record sales, 'independent gospel musicians' like Mashakada with his flowing dreadlocks were doing quite well for the period under investigation (Samu, interview 2001).

Another dominant criticism related to the issue of recording popular hymns and choruses. Many respondents called upon churches to be sensitive to copyright laws and to use them to discourage musicians from using hymns and choruses to derive financial rewards. Although some musicians regarded the electronic recording of hymns and choruses as reflecting a lack of talent in the area of composition, others supported the move on the basis that it ensured the longevity and greater circulation of Christian music. One of the leading gospel musicians, Pastor Haisa, made a distinction between those whom he called, 'domestic musicians' who could only sing hymns from their own denomination, and 'talented musicians' who took it upon themselves to demonstrate their originality and who could survive outside the patronage of their denominations (Haisa, interview 2001). It emerged that the question of recording church music by individual artists remained open to further debate.

Gospel musicians themselves tended to dismiss the argument that they were pursuing material and financial rewards as the work of the anti-Christ who were bitter that the message of salvation through Christ was spreading rapidly in gospel music. However, others like Manyeruke, Charamba, Musakwa, and Haisa acknowledged that their life styles had had significant improvements due to their successes in the music industry. A form-critical examination of the responses shows that the financial rewards have been interpreted as a mark of divine blessing and as a sign that they should continue with their proclamations in gospel music. Oliver Mtukudzi, one of the leading popular musicians in the country, maintained that when he recorded gospel music albums it was not as a result of desperation or the quest for financial rewards. Mtukudzi argued that he wanted to thank God for all the blessings

that he has had in his musical career (Mtukudzi, interview 1999). He contended that he had a Christian spirituality and a right to play gospel music. Other popular musicians like Leonard Zhakata have also participated in some joint shows with gospel musicians. Some of Zhakata's songs like, "*Unochemeyi*" appropriated Christian themes and appealed to some gospel music fans.

To counteract the criticism of using gospel music as an avenue for financial rewards, and also to express the Christian conviction of charity, some gospel musicians engaged in charitable activities. During the period under investigation, Ivy Kombo was actively involved with the group, Comforters Zimbabwe that takes care of the poor and socially disadvantaged. Charles and Olivia Charamba also gave a highly successful gospel music show at the Harare Gardens in 2001 in support of Manhinga Children's Home, an orphanage run by the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe church. A number of joint gospel music concerts were held to draw attention to pressing social issues such as Hiv/Aids, particularly among the youth. Other shows were held in support of the Bible Society of Zimbabwe that deals with translating the bible into vernacular languages, HelpAge, which supports old people, and for other prominent social causes. These outreach activities and expressions of charity had a positive contribution to the image of gospel music, and went some way to project gospel musicians as people with genuine interest in the welfare of society at large.

The question of gospel musicians enjoying some financial rewards from their artistic production however, indicates the openness of African cultural and religious products to processes of commodisation (Dube, 1993). However, within the framework of both Christianity and indigenous religions, there are sufficient ideological sanctions that have been used to justify the economic successes of recording artists. It is true that some artists have been able to buy houses in exclusive suburbs, purchase fancy cars, and to generally attain a higher economic status. In traditional explanations, success is interpreted as a mark of ancestral support, while in Christianity it is taught that those who are obedient enjoy divine favours. For their part, artists also argued that the so-called riches that they were supposed to have attained were not so abundant. Indeed, very few gospel musicians had their own instruments and they tended to complain about lack of publicity, like most other popular musicians. The criticism that gospel musicians are only after making money however, remains contentious and needs further exposition in the light of theological and cultural studies.

Alongside the financial rewards that have been attendant on gospel musicians, recording companies have certainly derived mileage from gospel music. As gospel music proved to be marketable in the mid-1990s, more resources were channelled towards the production of this type of music. The effective monopoly of Gramma Records and Zimbabwe Music Corporation

(ZMC) meant that they had a lot of influence in shaping music tastes in the country by virtue of controlling the production of music tapes (Mukombahasha, 2001). In the early 1990s, another company, Record and Tape Productions (RTP) emerged, but it was soon brought under the wings of Gramma/ZMC. RTP uses Gramma's studio and CD duplication services, and focuses principally on gospel music (Eyre, 2001:37). Such has been the popularity of gospel music that recording companies tend to encourage and promote artists who work in this genre. Since the maximisation of profits tends to be the driving force in the music industry (as with all others), any interpretation of the success of gospel music in Zimbabwe has to contend with the financial benefits that recording companies perceive to be coming from gospel music (Maronga, interview 2001).

It is also critical to note that gospel music thrived in the 1990s when the discourse on indigenisation of the economy or black economic empowerment was becoming more prominent (4.2). Although it requires a longer narrative to do justice to this issue, it could be summarised as the call to give blacks or indigenous people an ownership stake in the economy of their country (Maphosa, 1998:139). In the 1990s, Zimbabwe witnessed the emergence of groups such as the Affirmative Action Group, Indigenous Commercial Farmers Union, Indigenous Business Women's Organisation and others that made militant demands for blacks to be included in the mainstream of the economy. The entire undertaking was full of problems and prospects (Chiwawa, 1994), issues that go beyond our current concern.

A number of recording studios emerged in the 1990s that had a direct interest in gospel music and were owned by indigenous people. High Density studios owned by the musician and producer Tendai Mupfurutso, Ngaa-vongwe Records owned by gospel musician Elias Musakwa and another studio owned by pioneering gospel musician Machanic Manyeruke illustrate this trend. These entrepreneurs felt challenged to demonstrate that blacks had the requisite technical and managerial skills to promote their own music, instead of being completely dependent on white-owned companies. They subsequently began to record gospel music at a time when established companies were still insisting that Christian music was not viable and were only recording a few artists on an experimental basis. The success of these smaller enterprises forced the established companies to change their rather dismissive policies. In short, the rise of gospel music may also be related to political developments in the 1990s when the rhetoric of indigenisation reached fever pitch in the country and there were calls for black people to be creative and to 'think big'.

The success of gospel music in Zimbabwe has opened it up to export within the region and overseas, thereby bringing much needed foreign currency. Due to the worsening economic conditions in the country, many professionals in the country 'voted with their feet' (Gaidzanwa, 1999) to seek

greener pastures. Many of these economic migrants are Christians who continue to enjoy Zimbabwean gospel music and to place orders or ask relatives to send them the latest releases. For example, in England, some congregations of Zimbabwean evangelical/pentecostal churches like the Family of God church and Zimbabwe Assemblies of God are vibrant, while in some parts of the United States, the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe has active members. Although these individuals are no longer in Zimbabwe, they continue to identify themselves with their denominations and indeed hope to return when and if the economic fortunes of the country would have improved. Gerrie ter Haar has figuratively described these African Christians in Europe as being 'half-way to paradise' (Ter Harr, 1998).

In summary, the economic significance of gospel music in Zimbabwe should be an intricate part of any explanatory framework that may be adopted to account for the phenomenon. This is where the advantages of applying a multidisciplinary approach (2.1) become clear. Insisting that religious and cultural phenomena are 'irreducible' blinds researchers to the importance of the social context that shapes these materials. Appreciating the communication environment in the country, as well as acknowledging the economic dimension to gospel music facilitates a more rounded picture of the phenomenon. Nonetheless, from a phenomenological point of view one could still argue that gospel music possessed its own inherent appeal and that these factors accentuated (but did not cause) its popularity. Whatever methodological standpoint the different interpreters of gospel music in the region might adopt, it remains clear that an examination of the social context facilitates a more holistic perspective.

### 6.3 'SINGING IDENTITY': GOSPEL MUSIC AND AFRICAN CULTURAL DYNAMICS

The issue of postcolonial African identity has been pursued in various areas including cultural studies, African theology, African philosophy, African history and others. Although a large question, "identity is related to the question of the difference between us and others: a difference in culture, social class, sex, religion, age, nationality, living area, etc." (Schipper, 1999:4). Crucially, identities are not given entities; "they must be defined and redefined in a responsive dynamic" (Lundby, 1998:28). The question facing postcolonial African cultures has been how to relate to the Western gaze, as well as how they could be strategically positioned on the global cultural market. As noted in the introduction to this study, the ideology of African authenticity has compounded the discussion because of the emphasis on a 'pure' African identity. In terms of cultural products, some writers have contended that 'Africanness' should not be compromised. Thus, "while borrowings and adapting are often encouraged and celebrated as a sign of creativity in cultural produc-

tion in 'the West', the same standards do not apply to cultural production in Africa" (Baaz, 2001: 11).

Gospel music is particularly interesting to interpret in the context of the debates on African identity. For proponents of cultural authenticity, the success of gospel music represents the ultimate triumph of a foreign ideology, namely Christianity. That a whole population can consume and promote music that seeks the expansion of a foreign religion would be the greatest mockery for some. Others would regard the popularity of gospel music in Zimbabwe as a betrayal of 'ancestral traditions' and as indicating the demise of traditional spiritual music associated with the mbira instrument. Indeed, some critics may wonder why this study has dwelt on gospel music when traditional Shona music is 'in danger of being lost'. Proponents of cultural authenticity and cultural closure would contend that the study has not focussed on 'real African culture' since gospel music is largely an urban, Christianised phenomenon.

It is my contention that gospel music offers a valuable entry point into the discourses on contemporary African cultural production and the notion of African identity or identities, given the plurality of issues being grappled with. To begin with, the dominance of Christianity in most parts of sub-Saharan Africa is a fact of life to be accepted and to be worked with. As the section on the Africanisation of music within the church (3.3.1) demonstrates, Africans who converted to Christianity were not some clueless natives who were taking on an oppressive foreign ideology. In Zimbabwe, beginning in the 1940s, Africans demanded to have a Christianity that reflected their own cultural context. The introduction of vernacular hymns and choruses, indigenous instruments and oral traditions in church music meant that while Africans converted to Christianity, they were also converting Christianity to African cultural realities. Cultural interaction has never been a one-way affair, but has always entailed creating new horizons for encounters.

The implication of the foregoing is that researchers should be as interested in what Christianity has done to Africans as in what Africans have done to Christianity. In Zimbabwean gospel music, one witnesses a creative effort to 'sing an African Christian identity'. As cultural workers, gospel musicians have employed indigenous languages, retained the call and response formula, as well as responding to the inherited worldview of spiritual forces, and employing a wide array of traditional musical instruments. To this end, Zimbabwean gospel music has been loyal to 'traditional African culture'. The antiphonal and responsorial character of Shona music has been preserved, while contextual sensitivity has been upheld, as the discussion of themes (4.3) demonstrates. To contend that gospel music is a complete betrayal of 'African identity' would be to refuse to accept the extent to which it has carried forth aspects from 'the past'.

It should be acknowledged that gospel music also illustrates the highly mobile and malleable nature of identities. In Zimbabwean gospel music and its success on the competitive music market, we witness the refusal by most Africans to be confined to 'traditional music'. That tastes change over time and that music with Christian themes can dominate at a specific historical period is an indictment against those who would want to locate African identity solely in the past. Gospel music, with its creative blending of some Western music styles and African concerns, reinforces this basic truth: "Identities are not ossified fossils from a distant past" (Schipper, 1999:10). As Zimbabweans listen to and dance to gospel music, they are constantly reworking what it means to be African, Christian, male or female, young or old and other related issues.

The success of gospel music in Zimbabwe and in other sub-Saharan African countries also highlights the reality of hybridity. Due to the influences of Christianity and colonialism, it is no longer possible to retreat to some pristine African culture. 'African culture' is what we encounter today in gospel music, in urban youths in Harare who like Dolly Parton's country music, and in rural elders who may contend that watching the World Wrestling Federation on their solar-powered black and white televisions is better than telling folktales to their grandchildren. Of course, the same dedicated fan of gospel music may also nod in approval when the mbira instrument is played, the urban youths in Harare will appreciate Thomas Mapfumo's music, while the rural elder may switch off the television to converse with the ancestral spirits. Thus:

The notion of hybridity challenges the ideas of the existence of separate bounded cultures, and the idea of the possibility to retrieve the 'real' and 'unspoiled' African culture. The notion of hybridity also challenges the prediction of the doomsday prophets regarding the fate of African cultural production in the age of globalisation (Baaz, 2001:14).

The idea of African cultural products surviving in an age of globalisation is an important one. One would have suspected that locally produced artistic products would have had no chance against the invasion of foreign products. However, because gospel musicians tend to address local concerns, as well as suggesting possible solutions, their music has had a greater appeal. Since gospel musicians share the same 'toposcape' and 'glossoscape' with their audiences in terms of space and language (Lundby, 1998:23-24), they perhaps are better positioned to strike a deeper chord. As noted earlier, by emphasising a common Christian identity in promoting ecumenism and instilling patriotic pride, the 'we' in Zimbabwean gospel music contributes to identity formation.

Gospel music also highlights the contestation there is regarding the notion of a Christian identity. Like all other identities, it is nebulous, essentially

contested and unevenly negotiated. Ambiguity and openness are to be counted among its characteristic features. When critics accuse an artist like Hosea Chipanga of not being a genuine and active Christian, he has been able to argue that he has received a personal call from God to play his own type of gospel music. Due to the spontaneity that has been associated with popular choruses, many independent artists have appropriated them and have laid claim to the financial benefits. Since being a 'Christian' is not completely encapsulated in going to church, many popular artists have exploited this inherent ambivalence in religious identity to derive economic rewards. In turn, many people who no longer subscribe to Christian tenets have bought gospel music tapes, thereby highlighting the lack of rigidity that marks the boundaries of religions. Mbira music exponent and teacher, the late Ephant Mujuru, maintained that it is a form of religious exclusivism when the tag 'gospel music' is restricted to the Christian tradition. He argued that his own highly successful song, '*Magariro*' (Living) had to be included under the label since it sought to promote prosperity and national well-being (Mujuru, interview 1998).

Zimbabwean gospel music in the 1990s cultivated interest across the racial, class, ethnic, gender, age and other divides. In a sense, it illustrated the power of music to transcend various categories, particularly when it addresses the existential needs of individuals. Through courting sacred powers, challenging earthly rulers and working out a sense of meaning in a difficult environment, gospel music sought to provide spiritual support, solace and entertainment. As the preceding sections illustrate, the communication environment and other factors provided an enabling environment within which gospel music could thrive. However, its popularity brings urgency to the following reflections:

Who is best placed to suggest which form of culture is best for African peoples? Who defines the needs of the people and the related epistemologies that best serve them? The debates on these issues obviously bear on the issue of the role of contemporary African intellectuals within the wider context of cultural discourse (Karp and Masolo, 2000:10).

It is my contention that it is the sole prerogative of African peoples to work out their own culture, as it is indeed the prerogative of any other people. Contemporary African intellectuals and all other interested observers should only direct their gaze towards African cultural dynamics in a way that is not intrusive. In the case of gospel music in Zimbabwe, a multiplicity of factors enabled it to gain ascendancy in the country for the period under review. As individuals and communities interacted with this vibrant cultural phenomenon, they both shaped and were shaped by it. As artists groaned in pain and

yelled in victory, their audiences imbibed and critiqued their lyrics, thereby significantly contributing to the 'singing of contemporary African identities'.

#### 6.4 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have provided an interpretation of the overall significance of gospel music in Zimbabwe from a number of perspectives. In the first section I explored the impact of the communication environment on the popularity of gospel music. Using insights from communication studies, I highlighted the dominance of Christianity in the public media and the exclusion of music from other religious traditions. I showed how the association of gospel music with the Christian faith has given it a higher profile than other music styles since Christianity effectively enjoys a monopoly in the local communication environment. In the second section I outlined the economic significance of gospel music and the controversies that this has generated. The third section examines the importance of gospel music to the discourses on postcolonial African identities. I argued that gospel music illustrates the vibrancy of African cultural production and the refusal by many Zimbabweans to define themselves in terms of a nostalgic identity.

The next chapter offers a conclusion to this study. I briefly examine the importance of utilising multiple methodological lenses in the study of African cultural phenomena. I also focus on how gospel music in Zimbabwe could be used as evidence of the fact that the story of Africa is not simply one of hopelessness and despair that the global media networks have tended to portray. A concluding paragraph on the question of gospel music in Zimbabwe brings the study to a close.

## 7. Concluding Remarks: Gospel Music, African Cultural Production and the Politics of Imaging

This study has provided an overview of the history of music performances in Zimbabwe. Having introduced the key issues concerning gospel music and the methodological stance adopted in this study in earlier chapters, in chapter three I offered a summary of the developments that have shaped the nature of music in the country. With the social and political conditions in Zimbabwe during the 1990s having been clarified, I examined the rise of gospel music in chapter four. How gospel music has helped to create more cultural workers such as women, children and members of African Independent Churches is outlined in chapter five, while chapter six seeks to interpret the social and economic significance of gospel music.

As noted in chapter two, it is when the study of African cultural phenomena opens itself to a truly multidisciplinary approach that a more rounded appreciation of cultural dynamics can be attained. Applying historical, sociological and phenomenological perspectives enabled this study to highlight the complexity and fluidity that characterise gospel music in Zimbabwe. While developments within church music from the 1940s were critical to the dominance of gospel music in the 1990s, numerous processes outside the church context were equally significant. The commercialisation of African cultural products that was instigated by colonialism is one such factor, alongside the development of urban African music and the appropriation of foreign musical styles. As I show in chapter three, the 1970s saw some popular artists utilising Christian religious ideas, while most the songs of resistance in the struggle for independence relied on hymns. The music of celebration in the early 1980s, and the rise of protest music in the mid-1990s were seen as providing the backdrop for understanding the popularity of gospel music.

Adopting multiple methodological lenses helps to avoid the pitfall of viewing cultural phenomena as 'unique, pure and irreducible', as many theorists in African Departments of Theology and Religious Studies tend to do. The effects of prospects of financial rewards, the role of recording companies and other factors are taken into consideration when there is a realisation that religious concepts and practices always take place in a given social context. In the case of gospel music in Zimbabwe, the study highlights the controversies and ambiguities that accompany the specific cultural product. Against the notion of African purity, I argued that gospel music represents a facet of contemporary African cultural production with the same right to analysis as traditional mbira music for example. On the whole, an application of a variety of perspectives has helped to clarify the status of gospel music in Zimbabwe

and to document a musical genre that has been dominant in the country for some time and looks set to continue that way in the foreseeable future.

The investigation of popular culture in Africa could also help to transform Departments of Theology and Religious Studies into sites of struggle for national development. A major criticism has been that scholars housed in these institutions operate from ivory towers and that their researches have no reflection on the lives of the people. Granted that the concept of 'the people' is problematic, one could still appreciate the need for scholars in cultural studies to avoid esoteric and recondite issues at the expense of the lived experiences of individuals. In this study, gospel music was accorded a high profile since it is the music that dominated the industry in Zimbabwe for the period under investigation.

The vibrancy of the arts in Zimbabwe, as indeed in other African countries, also demonstrates the fact that despite economic hardships and numerous forces of death, life continues to be lived meaningfully. As individuals and the community create gospel music and dance to its varied rhythms, they vote for life and not death. They may name pain, suffering, disease and death in their songs, but ultimately, they choose life. While global media networks might continue to beam images of total collapse, chaos and misery (Palmberg, 2001:7), Africans refuse to succumb to existential despair and paralysis. In Zimbabwe, alongside the gospel music described herein, they also enjoy their *sungura* music; "fast, punchy, electric guitar and vocal music" (Eyre 2001: 95), traditional mbira music, community theatre, soccer and various other interests. To say this is not to conjure up yet another image of 'natural Africans in rhythm with nature' but to acknowledge the gritty determination *to be*.

Gospel music in Zimbabwe highlights the 'double gaze' that many people have adopted in fashioning and negotiating their identities. While some Westerners and African cultural nationalists have yearned for Africans to define themselves solely in terms of the past, many have adopted the wisdom of the chameleon. A chameleon can have one eye looking backwards, while the other one is resolutely looking ahead *at the same time*. In gospel music artists and consumers are arguing that African identity is located in both the ancestral traditions and the unfolding future. In the politics of imaging, this facet is not highlighted, thereby missing manifold opportunities to illustrate the creativity and determination.

In conclusion, it should be reiterated that this multidisciplinary study of gospel music in Zimbabwe demonstrates the need for more scholarly examination of African cultural products. Within the context of music in Zimbabwe, more work remains to be done on issues like the nature of the music industry, the fusion taking place in 'traditional music', preserving the memory of many musicians who have died since the beginning of the 1990s, and other themes. To locate the overall impact of Christianity on popular culture, there will also be need to examine the role of missionaries in sculpture, the development of

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literature, dance and other areas. This study has however, demonstrated that gospel music has been embraced by the generality of the Zimbabwean population. As they sing along to mournful refrains or energetically dance to the powerful rhythms of gospel music, Zimbabweans will be 'singing their contemporary identities and cultures into being'.

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## SELECT INTERVIEWS (All interviews were conducted in Harare)

- Almero, Beauty. Recording studio engineer. 4 August 1998.
- Brother Sam. Gospel musician. 30 October 1999.
- Charamba, Charles. Leading gospel artist. 23 June 2001 and 25 August 2001.
- Charamba, Olivia. Leading female gospel musician. 23 June 2001.
- Chataika, Ronnie. Gospel musician and son of Jordan Chataika, a pioneering gospel musician. 27 May 2000.
- Chikati, Timitia. Flea market vendor and music fan. 15 May 2000.
- Chikuwo, Lucky. Gospel musician from a Zionist church and band leader. 31 March 2001.
- Chivaviro, Pastor T. Gospel musician and theology student. 25 August 2001.
- Chivengwa, Carol. Leading female gospel musician. 2 December 2000.
- Dukuhe, Christabel. Female gospel artist. 2 December 2000.
- Haisa, Pastor. Prominent gospel musician. 22 June 2001.
- Knight, Martha. Female gospel musician. 9 June 2001.
- Kwindima, Benjami Farai. Elder of Israel. 10 May 2001.
- Magaya, Wiseman. Gospel musician from an Apostolic church and band leader. 6 July 2000 and 18 June 2001.
- Manatsa, Zexie. Popular musician who converted to Christianity and became a gospel musician. 27 November 1999.
- Manyeruke, Machanic. Pioneering gospel musician and owner of recording studio. 27 May 2000 and 26 May 2001.
- Maraire, Dumisani A. Ethnomusicologist and traditional music specialist. 3 August 1998.
- Maronga, Stan. Representative of a recording company. 20 June 2001.
- Matambirei, Jeniffer. Gospel music fan. 2 November 1999.
- Mbeya, Remington. Producer and presenter of gospel music programme and gospel musician. 27 May 2000.
- Munodawafa, Munyaradzi. Young gospel musician. 19 August 2000.
- Mtukudzi, Oliver. Celebrated popular musician. 27 November 1999.
- Mujuru, Ephat. Mbira music exponent, music teacher and popular artist. 20 August 1998.
- Musakwa, Elias. Prominent gospel music and owner of a recording company specialising in gospel music. 27 May 2000.
- Ncube, Hazel. Flea market vendor and gospel music fan. 5 March 1998.
- Ngwenya, Chaka. Music presenter on radio and master of ceremony at gospel music concerts. 1 June 2001.
- Pashapa, Noah, Rev. Presenter of gospel music and discussion forum on radio, biblical scholar and Christian minister of religion. 3 August 1998.
- Samu, Domingo. Representative of a music marketing company. 14 June 2001.
- Simende, Primrose. Female gospel musician with the group, Shalom Singers. 27 May 2000.
- Wutawunashe, Shuvai. Pioneering female gospel musician and coordinator of the Gospel Songwriters Club. 20 November 1999 and 19 May 2001.
- Zindi, Fred. Music researcher, musician and educationist. 3 August 1998.

## SELECT DISCOGRAPHY

Material arranged in terms of artist or group, album title, record number and year of release (although some songs do not have release dates, most of the songs were released between 1995 and 2001)

- Appointed. *Somlandela*, TAP 001, nd.  
 CCAP Voice of Mbare. *Nganganga*, L4RTL124, 1996.  
 Charamba, Charles. *Exodus*, ZC199, 2001.  
 Charamba, Olivia. *Amen*, Gramma110, 2000.  
 Chataika, Jordan. *Mashoko aMwari*, L4JFLP1001, nd.  
 Chikuwo, L. and ZCC Mbungo Stars, *Kusaziva*, L4ZCC100, 2000.  
 Chimbetu, Simon. *Survival*, L4KSALP173, nd.  
 Chinouriri, Tamuka. *Vhangeri Renyasha*, L4ENL010, 1998.  
 Chivengwa, Carol. *Ropa raJesu*, LCC110, 1996.  
 Glen View SDA. *Ndine Musha Kumusoro*, L4SDALP2, nd.  
 Haisa, Pastor. *Burukai Mwari Baba*, L4PH100, 1998.  
 Harare West MUMC. *Zano Chiro Chakanaka*, L4MTHLP, 2000.  
 Knight, Martha. *Munasho Tsungirira*, L4EML021, nd.  
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 Musakwa, Elias. *Ngaavongwe Zvikurusa*, L4EML005, 1998.  
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 Sibalo, Brain. *Jehova Ndinotenda*, L4BSLP12, nd.  
 Suluma, Shingisayi. *Mumaoko*. L4SSO3, 2000.  
 Vabati vaJehova. *Mweya Mutsvene waMwari*, VVHD4001, nd.  
 Wutawunashe, Shuvai and the Family Singers. *Tadzoka*, TP11, 1998.