

CHASING THE WIND AMIDST ROARING LIONS!¹ PROBLEMATISATION OF RELIGIOSITY IN THE CURRENT SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIO-POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC LANDSCAPE²

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Abstract

Mbiti once asserted that Africans are notoriously religious. For Mbiti, Africans are incurably religious. It becomes necessary to look intently at the current South African socio-political and economic landscape in the context of religiosity. There are vivid indications that religiosity in South Africa has become a common 'terrain' of use, abuse, and misuse in processes of both politicking and moralising. Interestingly, when any political leadership asserts power, there is also a discourse of 'religiosity' that develops. This propensity has unfortunately equated religion or being religious (in South Africa) to political democratic legitimization, consolidation and normalization. Outside South Africa is the narrative of Prophet TB Joshua. There are claims that a number of political leaders have been to the

¹ The metaphoric meaning of the expression: *Chasing the wind amidst roaring lions* refers to religiosity in action and the impact of politics on religiosity. In this case politics are presented as a force that has the potential to either 'tear or patch', hence roaring lions.

²This paper was first presented at the Research Institute for Theology and Religion (RITR) International Conference on: Accountable Leadership and Sustainability in Africa: Religion, Democracy and Civil Society, 21-24 April 2015, UNISA, Pretoria, South Africa. Critical comments and inputs by members of the panel are highly appreciated. During the panel discussion I was advised to focus the paper on the South African context.

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Synagogue Church of All Nations (SCOAN), Lagos headquarters, in Nigeria, arguably chasing their political validity. There are other relevant narratives and accounts in South Africa which include the frequent visits to Moriya, the headquarters of the Zion Christian Church (ZCC), in Limpopo and also the Isaiah Shembe meeting place at eKuphakameni. The question is whether *religion* or *religiosities* are appropriate instruments to give political credibility. The paper aims to question how *religion* and *religiosity* affect the current South African socio-political and economic landscape. Some anecdotes and narratives of how polarized this situation is will be presented and analysed.

1. INTRODUCTION

Current South African socio-political and economic landscapes are complex. Culture and style of political leadership remain points of public debate. The history of liberation struggles in South Africa can be structured according to pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial phases. In reflecting on this history, one cannot avoid the deeply nuanced meanings of liberation, freedom and democracy in South Africa. Religion and religiosity remained and impacted on the processes of South Africa's democratic consolidation and normalization. One notes that in 1996 when South Africa adopted its first democratic constitution secularism was embraced. Historically, during the apartheid dispensation, religion was effectively used as an *ancilla* to both justify and implement apartheid policies – thereby undermining and dehumanising blacks who are in the majority. This structured discrimination was theorised, rationalised, institutionalised and theologically validated. Biblical texts were selectively used to defend and mainstream the apartheid ideology and practice. This meant

that theological statements and narratives of power and domination were constructed along this. Franz Fanon⁴ asserted that imperialism leaves behind germs of rot which we must clinically detect and remove, not from our land only but our minds as well. Post 1994 South Africa found itself in a state where it had to reconstruct, cleanse and rid itself of the evil past. Unfortunately, it has not easy to address some of these endemic crises. In the process of doing this, other crises were created by the current ruling party. As Fanon⁵ argues, *slaves learn very well from their masters* (my emphasis and appropriation).

Religiosity and politics become part of the other crises currently facing South Africa. The current problem of politics and religiosity has many layers of meaning and interpretation. Haynes (1993)⁶ when discussing the high degree of political and religious heterogeneity in Africa discusses various issues of relevance, including: the relationship of the state with various religious organisations; the appeal of religious actors as political protagonists or as intermediaries between citizens and the regime. Haynes (1993:15) argues that:

Africa is a culturally and religiously diverse, politically complex, region of more than 50 countries – one quarter of the global total. The background to the region's recent democratic transitions was an array of apparently unpropitious structural characteristics, such as economic failure and ethnic

⁴ *Black Skin, White Masks*(1952)

⁵ *Wretched of the Earth* (1961)

⁷Mbiti's seminal book, *African Religions and Philosophy* (1969), was the first work to significantly challenge Christian assumptions that traditional African religious ideas were "demonic and anti-Christian". His sympathetic treatment of traditional religions was based on massive field work. Mbiti is clear that his interpretation of these religions is from a firmly Christian perspective, and this aspect of his work has sometimes been severely criticized.

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friction. While the precise source of democratic reforms varied from country to country, both domestic and international factors were often important.

The paper was prompted by earlier comments made by John Mbiti⁷, who asserted that (*generally*) Africans are notoriously⁸ religious. It is imperative to interrogate the current South African socio-political and economic landscape in the context of *religion* and *religiosity*. The paper argues that that in Africa, *religiosity*⁹ has become a common 'terrain' of 'use', 'misuse' and 'abuse' in the processes of both 'politicking' and 'moralising'. Interestingly, when any political leadership asserts power, there is also a discourse of 'religiosity' that develops. This propensity has unfortunately equated *religion or being*

⁷Mbiti's seminal book, *African Religions and Philosophy* (1969), was the first work to significantly challenge Christian assumptions that traditional African religious ideas were "demonic and anti-Christian". His sympathetic treatment of traditional religions was based on massive field work. Mbiti is clear that his interpretation of these religions is from a firmly Christian perspective, and this aspect of his work has sometimes been severely criticized.

⁸David Adamo (*Christianity and the African traditional religion(s): The postcolonial round of engagement*, **Verbum et Ecclesia**, Vol. 32 (1) (2011, Art. 285, 10 pages), argues that Mbiti's reason is that Africans are notoriously religious and there are different beliefs and tradition according to ethnic groups. There are so many ethnic groups as there are many traditional religions. Furthermore, Mbiti argues that AIR does not have one origin or one historic movement and that the beliefs amongst the different communities differ greatly. However, Mbiti later accepts the use of AIR in the singular, in the preface of the second edition of his book (*African Religions and Philosophy* (1969). He says that 'in the first edition I spoke about "African religions" in the plural to keep alive the diversity of African religiosity ... I now use the singular, "African religion," more than the plural expression' (Mbiti 1990:13).

⁹The author is very much aware of the 'generalising' effect that the paper might be taking. Hence appropriate anecdotes and narratives will be used to demonstrate this. Also the author is aware of often made general tendencies of 'wrongly assuming' that Africa is homogenous. It remains a fact that Africa is diverse given its political, economic, social, cultural and religious make-ups. Even in its diverse make-up there are *motifs* that deserve to be studied and analysed to construct the 'idea of Africa' in this regard.

religious in Africa to political democratic legitimization, consolidation and normalisation'. References has been made to the narrative of Prophet TB Joshua narrative. There are claims that a number of religious leaders have been to the SCOAN, Lagos headquarters, in Nigeria, 'arguably chasing their political validity'. There are other relevant narratives and accounts in South Africa which include frequent visits to the Moriya, at the South African Zion Christian Church (ZCC) headquarters in Limpopo, and the Prophet Isaiah Shembe at eKhuphakameni. The question is whether *religion* or *religiosities* are appropriate instruments for political validation. The paper questions how *religion* and *religiosity* affect the current South African socio-political and economic landscape. Some anecdotes and narratives of how polarised this situation is will be presented and analysed.

2. RELIGION(S) AND RELIGIOSITY (-IES) – SOME DEFINITIONS, CONTEXT(S) AND THEORIES

Religiosity, in its broadest sense has been defined as a comprehensive sociological term used to refer to the numerous aspects of religious activity, dedication, and belief (religious doctrine). Another term that would work equally well, though less often used, is religiousness. There are various definitions presented aimed at defining two broad related terminologies: religion and religiosity. The paper has opted to use Holdcroft's discussion and definition of these terms. Barbara Holdcroft (2006) notes that religiosity is a complex concept and difficult to define. She posits two reasons for this. First, is about "the uncertainty and imprecise nature of the English language" (2006:89) wherein "religiosity is found to be synonymous with such terms as religiousness, orthodoxy, faith, belief, pioussness, devotion and holiness". For Holdcroft, the latter synonyms reflect what "studies of religiosity would term as dimensions of religiosity, rather than terms that are equivalent to

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religiosity". The second reason for this complex nature of the concept and term, argues Holdcroft (2006:89)¹⁰, "is that current interest in the concept of religiosity crosses several academic disciplines, each approaching religiosity from different vantage points". In this case, seminal works of JD Cardwell (*The social context of religiosity*, 1980), NJ Demerah and PE Hammond (*Religion in social context*, 1969), Groome and Corso (*Empowering catechetical leaders*, 1999) are referred to in this conversation of definition. In this debate, one finds different conversations, including, political scientists, sociologists, theologians, literary analysts, hermeneuticists etc. Holdcroft (2006:89) reasons that that consideration of a *plethora* of definitions "across academic disciplines to identify what could be thought of as like dimensions of religiosity makes it difficult to discuss without an explicit definition from the viewpoint of religious education and the application of that knowledge to the lived experience". What becomes useful to take from the work of Holdcroft is her presentation of: *Dimensions*¹¹ of religiosity. Holdcroft relies on the theoretical works of Glock and Stark¹² in defining religious orientation, origins and dimensions. For Glock and Stark, five dimensions can be identified: experiential, ritualistic, ideological, intellectual and consequential. The experiential, according to Glock and Stark

¹⁰ Anthony Apiah's definition of religion becomes relevant here,

¹¹It should be noted that in the early 1960s just before the Glock and Stark major publication on *dimensions of religiosity*, F Fukuyama examined four dimensions that he identified as cognitive, cultic, creedal and devotional. The entitled publication by Fukuyama is: *The major dimensions of church membership*. **Review of Religious Research** (2), 154-161.

¹²Refer to Glock, CY Stark, R (1965), *Religion and society in tension*. San Francisco: Rand McNally.

(2006:1) focuses on the personal faith (*a kind on transcendent encounter*)¹³. The ritualistic domain on the other had refers to the worship experience that is involved in community (Holdcroft 2006:1)¹⁴.

The ideological dimension of religiosity, according to Glock and Stark speaks to expectations that “the religious will hold to certain beliefs” – meaning professed doctrines. Unfortunately, both Glock and Stark do not spend time to explain whether these ‘professed doctrines’ are only written or whether there is a category of oral professed doctrines as it applies to most foundations of African traditional or indigenous religions (or religious expressions). In the latter, ‘orality’ plays a central role– thereby giving the whole enterprise a ‘lived and performed’ one. In this case one notices ‘religious expressions and intentions’ latent in poems, stories and storytelling, life-dramas, music performances, life narratives and histories of communities, indigenous knowledge about *fauna* and *flora*, astronomy and astrology knowledge of local people etc. The last dimension is intellectual, which has to do with the “expectation that the religious person will be informed and knowledgeable about the basic tenets of his faith and sacred scriptures” – the reason being that “knowledge of a belief is a necessary condition for its acceptance” (Glock and Stark 1965:20-21). It is interesting to note that both Glock and Stark (1965) acknowledge the fact that “belief does not necessarily flow from knowledge, nor does all religious knowledge accompany belief” (Holdcroft 2006).

¹³Holdcroft’s reading of Glock and Stark (2006:1) – noting the author’s emphasis in this regard.

¹⁴ Clifford Geertz (1979) definition of religion as a cultural system becomes interesting here – politicking and vulnerability – thereby making religion “power”

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There are two other interesting dimensions of religiosity raised by Allport and Ross (1967); extrinsic and intrinsic. As Holdcroft notes, Allport and Ross “interpreted extrinsic religiosity as a self-serving and utilitarian outlook on religion that provides the believer with comfort in salvation”. On the other hand “A person with intrinsic religiosity is one who internalizes the total creed of his or her faith and moves beyond mere church attendance” (Holdcroft 2006:90). Allport and Ross argue, “The extrinsically motivated person uses his religion, whereas the intrinsically motivated person lives his religion” (1967:434). Indigenous African views or dimensions on religiosity have varied through time. As indicated earlier, orality and expression of indigeneity are key in unlocking knowledge paradigms in this regard¹⁵. The works of Mbiti, Bediako, and Setiloane¹⁶, and others remain central in this dialogue. As noted by Holdcroft it becomes difficult to offer a single interpretation of the meaning of the term religiosity.

As pointed out above even poetry and storytelling form part elements, materials and possessions in African religiosity. It becomes necessary for this task to bring the voice of Gabriel Molehe Setiloane in this space. Setiloane engaged and challenged the Western theological discourse on the structure and function of what he calls African divinity. Most of his published dialogues pushed for the importance of an African theological discourse¹⁷. Some of Setiloane's sensitive, but also

¹⁵As Beyers (*‘what is religion? An African understanding’*, HTS Theologiese Studies/Theological Studies 66 (1), Art#341, 8 pages) argues that “even in efforts to try to understand African religions, scholars have ‘abstracted African religions from their cultural and historical contexts’ (Westerlund 1993:59). Scholars of religion, as well as anthropologists, ‘had a tendency to “Westernize” African religions’ (Westerlund 1993:59). African Traditional Religion is part of the category designated as primal religion (Momen 2009:356). A major characteristic of primal religions is the fact that they originated and developed in relative isolation from other cultures”.

¹⁶ Masoga 2014

¹⁷Setiloane, GM 1976. *The image of God among the Sotho-Tswana*. Rotterdam:

critical, expressions made by him (Setiloane) include statements such as, *Motho ke Modimo* ("a human being is God/divine")¹⁸. According to Setiloane, there is a need for a comprehensive understanding of divinity in African Theology encompassing all - the *living* and the *dead*. In this regard, Setiloane attempted to develop what he called the "African Divinity discourse", encompassing areas of life such as ethics and morality in secular contexts, family life, and civil authority, "riches and poverties" and the land question, crime, leadership styles, the functioning of the corporate sector in terms of *Ubuntu* and bio-centric ethics (Masoga 2012). For more than 30 years, Setiloane dialogued critically with the then proponents of Black Theology and Liberation Theology, holding the firm view that African Divinity derives from African culture and Black and Liberation Theology from a form of Western Christianity. His main points are that (i) for African people, African Divinity is primary to their life and death experience; and (ii) if one has to confront the fact that many African people are Christian bring a much more elevated and encompassing understanding of divinity to Christianity, ultimately enriching it (Masoga 2012). For Setiloane, Black and Liberation Theology - as is currently acknowledged - were contextual phenomena necessitated by the contingent challenges of having to advance the dignity of the oppressed African people on the basis of race and the struggle for political freedom in the context of an oppressive political and ideological regime (Masoga 2012). According to Gabriel Setiloane¹⁹, such movements

Balkema and Setiloane, GM 1986. *African theology: an introduction*. Cape Town: Lux Verbi.

¹⁸Refer to Mogomme A Masoga, A critical dialogue with Gabriel Molehe Setiloane: The unfinished business on the African divinity question, in: *Studia Hist. Ecc.* Vol.38 (2012) suppl.1

¹⁹Setiloane's views re-open a dialogue with a voice that has been side tracked by the past and current (South) African theological systems and structures. The author was

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were necessary at the time, but the question of African Divinity transcends them.

John Mbiti's views in his book *African Religions and Philosophy*, constructed an overview of African religious concepts based on a study of three hundred African tribal groups. African religions have no founders or reformers; they are an integral part of the daily life and customs of each tribe. Religion is not an individual matter, but is practiced as a community. African belief systems are homocentric; God is the origin of man and provides for man's needs: immortality, rejuvenation, food, knowledge, doctors, medicines, animals, fire and light. Man is at the centre, and everything else supports and sustains man. There are five categories of being: God; spirits (both non-human and people who died a long time ago); men who are alive or about to be born; animals, plants and the remainder of biological life; and phenomena and objects without physical life. Mbiti describes the African perception of time as being divided into *Zamani* (past) and *Sasa* (now). Events taking place in the immediate present gradually move into *Zamani* as those who experienced them pass away and the memory of the events is sustained only by oral tradition. When Christianity introduced the concept of the future and salvation, the result was a strong and immediate Messianic expectation and the appearance of many small religions focusing on messianic figures (Mbiti year of publication: 15–28).

privileged to have been entrusted with unpublished articles by the late Professor Setiloane. These unpublished articles are in the process of being published under the title *African Perspectives*, as instructed by the late Professor Setiloane.

3. SOUTH AFRICA TODAY – A BRIEF OVERVIEW

The current South African socio-political and economic landscape is interesting for any human and social science research analysis. Liberation struggles intensified in the continent for centuries ago – to liberate African men and women from the ‘troubles’ and ‘pains’ of colonialism. The continent became serious about the possibility of ‘African governing’. These periods of struggle for liberation were not without challenges. Killings and violence engulfed most communities²⁰. All kinds of theories were proffered to explain such carnage and spate of violence. Reflections at the time became ‘heated’ on how an oppressive colonial system that undermined African human life should be dismantled. The current African situation has become complex. New issues and challenges have emerged. The HIV/Aids pandemic remains a challenge. Poverty and unemployment remain stubbornly high. The economic storm clouds are far from disappearing. Crime is not only soaring, but increasingly violent. There is a pervasive aura of public corruption. In some democratically consolidated states such as South Africa efforts to make the public service more efficient have failed. Often, one notes, with a sense of disappointment that democratic institutions are battered. The abuse of children²¹, women and the aged have reached terrifying levels.

Communities are paralyzed by the feeling of anxiety, drift and foreboding of imminent collapse among communities. Most communities are facing a broken state²² in South Africa. There are voices calling and demanding for fresh ideas and a

²⁰Current South Africa’s Xenophobic and Afrophobic debates and events

²¹Boko Haram matter should be brought up here – Somalia, Sudan situations become relevant in this regard

²²Bring the matter of Nigeria, Kenya, Malawi, Botswana and Zimbabwe here

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new direction – which appears to be spectacularly lacking²³. The spate of violence and protests by communities across the country against sluggish government service delivery, indifferent officials and corruption are also likely to continue. Restlessness grips the entire continent. It is giving a strong sense of uncertainty, discontentment and doubt, - even to the point of seriously questioning the validity of the some of South Africa's democracy that have been fought for many years inside and outside the continent.. The latter in essence pushed a number of people to do African regional self-introspection and self-critical engagement about the already established South African history of protest and affirmation.

This constant reflection is noted in various forms which includes local narratives and anecdotes and also reported stories of anger, frustration, anguish and agitation. This came to the point where public infrastructures were destroyed in the process of staging these protests. One noticed that there were two kinds of protests: first “social delivery protests”, which often spring up as road blockades, burning tyres, trashing vehicles, scattering rubbish and then die away, and the activities of social movements, which assume a more ongoing and organized form. These protests have been called “social delivery protests”²⁴.

While one agrees with generalised comments raised on South Africa's ‘growing democracy’, one is inclined to read that there is a level of dissatisfaction and disappointment

²³A new agenda for Africa –AU debates to be included in this discussion.

²⁴ This is a form of anxiety – to borrow Jean Satre's word: nervous condition which he uses to explain the condition of the native in his preface to Frantz Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth*. Also the work of Walter Rodney “*How Europe underdeveloped Africa*” becomes relevant here. While it is true that Africa is plagued by leadership it is important not to discount the impact that Europe's intentional pillage of Africa is having on the continent today.

among communities. The fact remains – all is not well. A serious rethinking is necessary to push African leaders to the drawing board and start to re-strategize on a number (on) of issues: reflect on the mandate, and consider honestly on the servitude task for the people of Africa, have a better way to re-articulate policies around public service, review the human capability plans, have a well-shaped monitoring and evaluation plan in place. On another level, there has always been a need to distinguish between political leadership and administrative task. Although at times the two are linked they should not be confused.

4. CONSTRUCTED TRAJECTORIES OF “POLITICAL HOLINESS”

The focus of this paper as earlier stated is to question how *religion* and *religiosity* affect the current South African socio-political and economic landscape. As stated earlier, some anecdotes and narratives of how polarized this situation is will be presented and analysed. The paper does not claim to address all matters related to how *religion* and *religiosity* affect the current African socio-political and economic landscape, nor does it assume to have the capacity to exhaust all avenues in this regard. Having noted briefly highlighted some theories and definitions of religiosity and sketched the current African socio-political and economic landscape, the focus now turns to how politics and religiosity intersect.

This section of the paper discusses two camps: political leaders and religious leaders. Some pre-colonial and colonial stories become helpful here – assisting one to understand the genesis of the intersection of religiosity and politics in Africa.

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Here there are two interesting cases: Kings Shaka²⁵ and Moshoeshoe²⁶. There are narratives that remain unrecorded but circulate as 'loose' stories that both Shaka and Moshoeshoe used traditional healers (*isangoma*, *ngaka*, or *sedupe*) for advice and 'spiritual strengthening' (*go tiiswa*). Oral tradition has it that there was creative tension between *kgosi* and *ngaka*. *Ngaka* was regarded as the 'direct eye and ear' of the 'spiritual realm/ space. He or she communicated and interpreted messages such as dreams and visions for the welfare of the entire community. *Kgosi*, on the other hand remained the anchor and protector of the sacred canopy (including both people and the spiritual realm). The relationship between Moshoeshoe the First and Makhetha Mantsopa²⁷, the prophetess is instructive here. It is reported that Mantsopa was a sister, advisor to King Moshoeshoe I. It is also reported that Moshoeshoe I was threatened by the talented Mantsopa and banished her from the Kingdom²⁸.

²⁵According to the recorded narrative (*Biographies: Special South Africans*) King Shaka was born circa 1787, son of a minor Zulu chief. According to this special narrative King Shaka's mother was an unranked woman, and Shaka was a humiliated and discredited child. Taking refuge with his mother in the court of the Zulu leader of the day, he grew up to become a great military leader. When the Zulu leader was murdered by a rival clan, Shaka assumed the throne.

²⁶ King Moshoeshoe's name was allegedly changed from Lepoqo after a successful raid in which he had sheared the beards of his victims – the word 'Moshoeshoe' represented the sound of the shearing. In 1820 Moshoeshoe succeeded his father, Mokhacane, as the chief of the Bamokoteli. His first settlement was at Butha Buthe, but he later built his stronghold at Thaba Bosiu (Mountain of the Night). He united various groups of refugees during the Shaka wars, a period known as the 'mfecane' or difaqane (1813-1830), into the Basotho nation (*South African History On Line: King Moshoeshoe I*).

²⁷ Born in approximately 1795.

²⁸ Moira Stewart's rumblings through the arts: *Mantsopa, sister to a king and a prophet in her own right* (**Arts Comments** (2014/08/10). It should be noted that both Moshoeshoe and Mzilikazi had close friendship with missionaries (the French and Robert Moffatt respectively) and often "used" them for advice and guidance – often

Interestingly, with the dawn of democracy - riddled with its own normalisation and consolidation challenges there are political leaders on the continent who use any form of religiosity to validate themselves²⁹, by either proclaiming themselves to be ‘*the holier than thou*’, ‘priests’, ‘sacred men’, ‘bishops who are at the same time leaders of democratic institutions’ and ‘leaders who straddle between a democratic office and traditional position’³⁰.

Interestingly Ranjeni Munusamy’s work (*In the name of the Father: Jacob’s law on politics and religion*) published in the *Daily Maverick* (08/10/2013) portrays Jacob Zuma been ‘angelified’. Munusamy is a survivor of the Salem witch trials and has the scars to show it. She has substantial collection of tat-

to influence political direction. This occurred notwithstanding the fact that they also used other traditional healers (dingaka).

²⁹In this case it becomes interesting to note that according to Sebudubudu and Molutsi (2008), Botswana’s democracy is unique in the sense that it is founded on Setswana traditional values / culture of consultation, participation and consensus building (2008). Historically, the *kgotla* / traditional parliament played a critical role in governance because this is the place where decisions were taken. It is in this sense that the new state retained the *kgotla* and at the same time allowed chiefs to play an important part in governance. Despite its limitations of being afflicted by among others poor attendance (apathy), the *kgotla* continues to play a critical role in governance as a major structure of consultation on policy matters and dissemination of information (Sebudubudu and Osei-Hwedie 2006; Sebudubudu and Molutsi 2008). Lekorwe (1989) argues that the *kgotla* is a structure of communication. Before a policy could be taken to parliament for discussion politicians and public servants take a proposed policy to the *kgotla* to solicit public views on the policy. This helps government to gauge public opinion on the proposed policy and also build consensus in and around the policy and thus ensures ownership.

³⁰Botswana Ian Khama’s ‘conflictual’ position is a point in case here – being both kgosi and democratically elected president of the country. Where does one draw a line?

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tered t-shirts from having “been there and done it” – from government, the Zuma trials, spin-doctoring and upsetting the applecart in South African newsrooms.

According to Ranjeni Munusamy, Jacob Zuma the ‘angel’ ‘*angelified*’ or ‘sanctified’– or going through the process of *angelification* or *sanctification*– the making of Angel and Saint Jacob Zuma. One could take this forward and bring the divination process in the making of Jacob Zuma *divinity*. The implication of the entire story is to present a pure (*umsulwa, umhlope, akanacala, uyincwele, uphakeme, unamandla*) and ‘sits at the right hand of God the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit’. In short, he is divine and exudes a sense of perfection, completeness, righteousness and purity. All these ‘heretical’ and false attributes create a political idea of leadership. It also undermines the democratic processes and institutional systems. Religiosity is both usurped and abused. It should be noted that the story of Jacob Zuma as relating to religion and politics becomes an interesting evolution of narratives and plays. Munusamy opines that:

In the Gospel according to Jacob (Zuma, that is, not the son of Isaac and grandson of Abraham in the Old Testament) there are a whole lot of us going to Hell for sins against the government. Zuma, who is an “honorary pastor”³¹ of the Full Gospel Church, is now a regular commentator on the nexus between politics and religion. He has fascinating insights on how God perceives the African National Congress, its supporters and its critics. As it turns out, religious gatherings are a convenient campaign platform; so expect to hear a lot more political rhetoric at a pulpit near you (2013:2)

³¹ Jacob Zuma was ordained as an honorary pastor in the Full Gospel Church in 2007.

The tale of his 'Holiness Jacob Zuma' finds affirmations in some interesting related stories about the evolution of the African National Congress (ANC)., Firstly, the birth of the ANC was in "a church in Bloemfontein in 1912 and several of its founding members were clergymen" (Munusamy 2013:2). One wonders whether this should validate the ANC as a political denomination – as Munusamy comments that many of the ANC's "original values were derived from the church and other religious teachings. Even the ANC anthem *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* (on which the South African national anthem is based) was a hymn composed by a lay preacher Enoch Sontonga" (2013:3). Van Onselen of the *inside-politics* wrote an interesting piece with the title: *The Ten Commandments according to Jacob Zuma* (2012/09/17). According to van Onselen

Jacob Zuma has, over the last years, spent much time advocating his and the ANC's religious credentials: that his is a party endorsed by God that it will rule till the end of days that its enemies will suffer damnation that he is like Jesus, even that an ANC membership card is a ticket into heaven.

In this regard, the van Onselen of inside-politics organised all Jacob Zuma's religious rhetoric into ten key ideas "everything Jacob Zuma has ever said about the ANC and religion". Below are ten organised key ideas:

Thou shalt believe in God and the ANC alone

The gates of heaven shall be opened only unto ANC supporters

Blessed shall be the ANC

Jesus shall return only when the ANC falls

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Those who oppose the ANC shall be condemned

Thou constitutional democracy shall be based on the word of God

The Church and God shall guide ANC government policy

Like Jesus, Jacob Zuma shall be persecuted

No man shall stand in the way of the ANC

No party shall be allowed to govern other than the ANC

The picture above looks interesting in the sense that the laws are 'divinely' received and should be 'religiously' observed and honoured. A critical analysis of each 'key idea' or 'law' as Munusamy refers to them has had serious implications for the current South African socio-political and economic landscape. Some of the latest stories include how the 'Nkandla gate' debacle has been handled. To larger an extent, public institutions such as the parliament, judiciary, security and public protector in South Africa have been intensely tested in terms of their consistency, integrity, independence. All debates referred to how the president has been protected and feared. In this case the law of Saint Jacob Zuma applies³². Below a picture by Van Onselen vividly presents the idea of Jacob Zuma's Ten Commandments.

4.1 Some South African faith formations in a trapped position

It cannot be eschewed that during the apartheid era in South Africa churches played a critical role in the fight against this evil system. Their role included providing refuge to freedom

³² There are also consistent references to the Bible and biblical figures to stress metaphorically the primordial status of the ANC. Such like the ANC will be there till Jesus comes again (Zuma) and the ANC is like Moses who can face difficult times, but is on its way to the Promised Land (Mantashe).

fighters and supplying chaplains to liberation movements or organisations and some religious leaders were at the forefront of the United Democratic Front. There is no denial of the historical association between the church and the ANC - it remained deeply entrenched over the 102-year of the ANC existence. Post- liberation, the ANC has attempted to go the route of ‘all religious faiths’ with the result that all major events now commence with interfaith prayers. According to van Onselen, 2013:3) churches have

...become powerful campaign platforms and politicians attendance as big religious events translate into passive endorsement for them and their parties. The Zion Christian Church (ZCC) has estimated six million followers, which is why leaders such as President Jacob Zuma and expelled ANC Youth League leader Julius Malema, now the leader of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), have attended the mass gathering of the ZCC at Moria in Limpopo over Easter. Zuma has also visited the four million strong Shembe Nazareth Church, which is a mixture of Zulu tradition and Christianity.

Although van Onselen’s observation that the fact that church leaders are consenting to the attendance of political figures shows that there is nothing wrong with “the president and other political leaders visiting and seeking spiritual guidance for the important task of running the country” appears plausible the question is, how critical this whole matter becomes. Are these political leaders held accountable? At what level are these political leaders held accountable? Is this not a form of religious endorsement³³?

³³ The current role of the ANC Chief Whip, Dr Mathole Motshekga becomes interesting. He is the ANC’s Cultural Desk. Pushing for civil religion in parliament speeches and motions – the emerging civil religion in South Africa today.

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5. CONCLUSION

The other interesting narrative is that of President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe. Mugabe has pointed at a number of occasions that he is God's chosen leader and that his leadership has been approved by God himself (This is typical of the civil religion taking root here – no wonder there is such an appreciation of Mugabe). A Botswana newspaper, the Daily News (18/02/13) reported that in an apparent bootlicking crusade that has become synonymous with Zanu PF officials, the party's Bulawayo provincial chairperson, Killian Sibanda equated

Zimbabwean President, Robert Mugabe to Jesus Christ Sibanda, who had been elected into the position late that year reportedly said Mugabe was like Jesus brought on earth to deliver people out of the political and economic mess. Sibanda was directly quoted by the Daily News, saying: "Why I say that, it is because Jesus was sent by God to come and deliver us from our sins, similarly our President was sent by God to come and save the people of Zimbabwe from all the challenges we face today. So as from today know that our president Robert Mugabe is just like Jesus". Telegraph newspaper on (UK) January 5, 2005 reported that a former mayor of Zimbabwe's capital, Harare, Tony Gara, who once likened President Mugabe to Jesus Christ has been awarded land seized from a white farmer by Zimbabwe's government. Gara, now a businessman, was listed in the state-controlled Herald newspaper with other Mugabe supporters whose loyalty had been rewarded with land.

It is important to relate the connection of religion to politics and to political authority as a form of civil religion where the politicians take up their role as divinely predestined to the benefit of society. This mix of indigenous belief and Christianity may be understood given the high percentage of Africans

who believe in the protective spirits, ancestors and sacrifices. Democratic South Africa's first president, Nelson Mandela is also reported to have consulted isangoma. But the important issue is rather the power of the metaphorical mission of the leaders towards "salvation" and the immunization of their political programme against "mundane" criticism. The deepened crisis is the intrinsic dynamics of the mix of Indigenous – Christian belief and coupled with a kind of fundamentalism regarding a diffused sense of religious destiny in all spheres of life, but mainly its consequence of power in the political sphere.

Outside South Africa, it is amazing to look at how Africa is prone to the ritualistic and charismatic religiosity –the growth of Christianity in its charismatic expression is very dominant and will certainly deepen through political "trafficking" of ideas and also in the face of an Islamic emphasis on religion and societal order witnessed in Boko Haram (IS). Even in this case religion was often the dividing and uniting factor in major conflicts. In the Serb- Croatia wars religion was a major factor. Church –State tensions may escalate, but more dangerously what one can expect is "state-owned" religion to serve its political ends. The fact remains, Jacob Zuma also deliberately seeks the support of religious leaders and several attempts have been made in this regard. Fortunately there are some other religious leaders (Desmond Tutu and the South African Council of Churches) who are beginning to see it is a subtle manoeuvre to gain moral support and religious legitimacy.

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