

Interview at Amawoti on Popular Religion

Interviewee : Jabulani Gumede

(He was born in 1958 at Hamarsdale. He studied at a Catholic for primary education in Greytown. He left school when doing std 6. He is currently unemployed and he mends shoes for a living. He is Zionist and serves as a Deacon.)

David : It's a pleasure to meet you Brother Jabulani and to have an opportunity to share ideas with you!

Jabulani : For me this is a blessed day for I am visited by scarce people like you.

David : There is a number of questions that I would like us to discuss pertaining to African Traditional Religion versus Christian Religion. But firstly I would like to know whether do you yourself practice African Traditional Religion?

Jabulani : Yes I do and I don't think I can live without doing it.

David : Do you mind if you can tell me why ?

Jabulani : I think your question can be answered in two ways. First is that my church is not against it as you know we are Zionists. Secondly my life has not been good or satisfactory at all and that allowed me to learn a lot.

David : What was your past like ?

Jabulani : Before I became a Zionist I was a Catholic, I studied there until std 6, at a mission school. I grew up in a Catholic church. I was an altar boy helping the priest. I and other boys also went to farm in a mission farm as we lived there. Our priest used to tell us that we must not eat the Eucharist for we will vomit blood and get terribly sick.

We believed this and even warned others about that. But one day, my colleague and I proved everything to be wrong when we found Eucharist which had been thrown away in the planting field. Our priest knew that we know and he removed us from the role of being altar boys. That affected my religion life and I was so angry such that I left my church and I realised later that I don't like my church anyway.

All the time if someone speaks about the church I will think of that white priest and what he did to us.

David : *Was that all ? Were there no other additional motivations which led you to abstain from the church ?*

Jabulani : Yes for sure ! I developed a political perception towards the church. Even when I came to Amaoti I was no longer interested in the church. In 1990 I was so sick and doctors could not help me. It was, I thought a witch related sickness. I went to "iSangoma" and he told me I will be Sangoma too. I was so cross because I wanted to be cured and not to be a Sangoma.

David : *Do you have a problem with becoming a Sangoma ?*

Jabulani : Yes if a person is sick and in need of being cured and no if it is an offer from his / her forefathers. But let me finish my story, I will come back to your question. I then told myself that I won't go back to that Sangoma and I will try something else. At night my grandfather in a dream and told me to go back to that Sangoma and tell him that I must get cured but not become a Sangoma. When I told the Sangoma that, something banged his roof so hard and he told me that it is confirmed. For the first few months I slept peacefully but again the "thing" started. I went to my friend who is a Zionist who told me to go to church with him. I did that and nothing ever changed. My grandfather showed me a man in a Zionist uniform and he told me that this was the person who will cure me and I must go to his church. I went to the church knowing that my grandfather is leading everything was on his shoulder, I said. When I entered the church I saw the man. It seemed as if he already knew about me. I was asked to remain after the service. He told me to abstain from food and from drinking water for three days. I did that and he took me to sea (with the congregation). Since then I did not suffer from the same sickness anymore.

David : *What impact did that have on your life ?*

Jabulani : I learned to respect and to be open to my grandparents (deceased / ancestors) and not to call them demons, because in times of crisis they help out. For example now I know that from time to time I have to slaughter for my parents. If I don't have a space here I use the church.

David : *Does that mean you see African Traditional Religion and Christianity working together ?*

Jabulani : Yes, for example it was my grandfather who showed me the minister who later cured me. But I also think there are things which need to be removed in Africa Traditional Religion and those which need to be kept (inculturated).

