

The interview with MR Hezekiel Mavuso.

DATE :15.10-1995.

Thank you Mr Mavuso for allowing this Interview to happen.

Ques : Do you practice popular religion and why if yes ?

Ans : Yes I do because it is part of me, I grew under it, my family and community practice it so why not me. And it is my culture which forms my identity.

Ques : Can it be regarded as christian ?

Ans : Yes it can be regarded as a christian infact in my church it is christian and I also see no contradiction between it and my faith as a christian.

Ques : Do you see God in both of them as the same ?

Ans : Definatly He is the same , may be another thing that I should mention is that we African independent churches our faith is simple. We believe that God is above

everything that we do and he is present in everything that touches our faith. In African traditional religion we see Him as the Supreme Being present in the whole ceremony as he is in a church service. So for us there is only one God who is present in both christianity and our religion.

Ques : What parts of traditional religion do you practice ?

Ans : there is a lot of them but I can only talk about two of them which I think are more important which I practice. That is Umemulo [rites of passage] and ancestor veneration.

Ques : Do you practice it seperately from christianity ?

Ans : No we put them together.

Ques : how do you do that ?

Ans : I will start by Umemulo. This is what in english we call twenty-first birthday. Traditionally it is done by only family members, friends and community members take part in this function. A cow is slaughtered, the eldest Aunt of the family take the girl and advise her about the matured age she has now reached and how now she should behave

herself. Then she would also be taken by the grand mother to her house which was traditionally understood as a family shrine because that was where the ancestors stayed and came when visiting the family. She would be given sex education by the grand mother. Then meat would be cooked with traditional beer. Every body will celebrate and the girl would be given presents by all people who are there. People would be fed with meat and drinking that is the celebration that every body joins not by special invitation but all welcome. Then the celebration is over in the evening. People go home every body has been fed even the poorest of the poor in the community that day is fully fed. Now we christian we do the same thing the only difference is that for us not only members from the community is invited. We invite fellow christian from different places. We then have an all night vigil. In the service we bring gifts for this girl and her behavior that has been exemplary to her peers. We read a text that talks about good behaviour of young people and how does that relate to the will of God. We all give testimonies and this is an opportunity to preach to other young people to behave themselves. Then we have all brought presents to the young girl to encourage her. We feast from the meat and then go it is over. I must remind you that we have not spoken to ancestors but to our God then can you tell me where is sin there ?

Ques : I do not see any sin and then how do you practice ancestor veneration ?

Ans : traditionally only members of the family come on Friday in the beginning of the function. Now my brethren are also welcomed to all parts that only family members were allowed to talk to ancestors, we now talk to God. When the cow is about to be slaughtered we do not report them to ancestors but to our God we thank him for making it possible for us to remember our parents and we thank him

for them. We all assemble in one house where the elder of the family, welcome us to this function and he welcomes my fellow christians and ask them to fill free and be part of our family fully. After he has spoken we then sing the clan song which drives our emotions and some even cry remembering those who passed away who also sang this song with us.

After this song the elder goes out to report the cow to the ancestors and then it is slaughtered. Then he will sing all the praises of those who passed away. Only the intestines will be eaten this day the rest of the meat will be kept at the grand mothers' house with the traditional brew for the ancestors to feed during the night. The following morning the meat is cooked and there celebration, some roasted and there is drinking all the people are happy. Neighbours come with some food to give to us helping us with the celebration. According to my culture blood is cooked and eaten, books it is an essential element of the sacrifice. But then in my church we do not eat blood then we cook a special meat or those who are christians to eat in the place of blood. There is celebration till evening where my fellow christians come for an allnight vigil. They come from far to celebrate with and they are now part of my family. We then hand to a church elder to begin the service. Then the family elder will also welcome the christians to be part of my family. The text will talk about death, what do we mean about it and where is Gods' position as far as it is concerned. All present are given an opportunity to testify and share their perception about death. Then the will be presents given to the one who has organised this function to try and help him with costs of this function. In the morning meal will be fed and the service is over you can also tell me if there is sin ?

Que : There is a time where you report the function to

ancestors, do you not think God gets annoyed by that ?

Ans : "My friend God is great and intelligent, he also gave some small us intelligence now do you think he can be annoyed by my little intelligents' poor attempts to relate to him I do not think so.

Que : But baba is this not worshipping ancestors ?

Ans : No it is not. If this is what you call ancestor worship that is your problem, we do not call it that but for us we call it revering them and if remembering my ancestors is sin that means you are also guilty because once a year you celebrate John Wesley every 24 May and the Catholics and Anglicans all Saints day.

Que : do you see popular religion and christianity as complimenting another ?

Ans : I think they do you have heard how we have intergrated our popular religion to christianity. Non members of the family are now welcomed, we do not eat blood we have an all people are happy. Neighbours come with some food to give to us helping us with the celebration. According to my culture blood is cooked and eaten books it is an essential element of the sacrifice. But then in my church we do not eat blood then we cook a special meat for those who are christians to eat in the place of blood. There is celebration till evening where my fellow christians come for an alnight vigil. They come from far to celebrate with me and they are now part of my family. We then hand to a church elder to begin the service. Then the family elder will also welcome the christians to be part of my family. The text will talk about death, what do we mean by it and where is Gods"position as far as it is concerned. All present are given an opportunity to testify and share their perception about death. Then there will be presents given to the one who has organised this function to try and help him with costs of this

function. In the morning meat will be served and the service is over you can also tell me if there is sin.

Ques : What is the future of both ?

Ans : I think popular religion with us Africans is growing and it has a bright future because it has been intergrated with christianity. We are also recieving new members most of them coming from mainline churches as soon as they have got problems relating to heir culture or healing because your churches are not able to address that. This shows that people still see our traditiinal religion as an essential part of their lives. For christianity to survive I think it needs to be contextually relevent by entering dialogue with popular religion, then it will survive without that I do not see its future.

Que : What color do you think God is ?

Ans : I not know but I think he is black he can also be colorless because he is the God of all races.

Thank you Mr Mauvuso I really appreciate you kindness.

Evaluation

I think this interview was good and it had improved from the other ones that I had done before. Preparing a questionnaire was so helpfull that I was able to keep on the topic and to have questions to ask sense of direction for my interview.

I really value this interview it was very helpfull for me. It made me understand crucial issues about the importance of popular religion and how people understand it. It also made me to refrain from criticising the African Independent Church for practicing it. I got a lesson that it is wise not to criticise people before we can even understand what they are doing. We have always judged the Zionists for worshipping ancestors but that is not what they are doing.

At the end of the interview, I came to conclude that the AICS have contextualised christianity so that they have a unique theology that is relevent to their culture and situation. They are not suffering from identity crisis as a result of christianity thus they do not practice religion by day and religion by night. They do everything openly and with a clear conscience knowing that whatever they are doing is according to Gods' will.

I am convinced that there is still a lot that theologians of the mainline churches need to learn from the indegenous church. The interview made it clear to me that we think we know the indegenous churches but we do not know them.

I also liked the way they have changed their culture infavour of christian principles. For instance instead of making the traditional functions a family thing as it originally was they have now included all people because in Christ they are one family. This make it communal and totally inclusive which is one of the central messages of the Gospel. The way they do it is that every body is invited rich or poor and they all enjoy the feast. I think this is more christian than our selective invitations when having functions where we invite one or two people because of their statuses but here the invitation goes to the whole church

and all the people of God in it.

Another thing is that God is addressed throughout the service unlike before when the ancestors played an important role.

Now my understanding is that these people are conscious of what they are doing. There is also a lot to be discovered in the field of popular religion this was just removing the cover but we still need to work. The interview was very fruitful.

Conclusion

In this essay I have described the interview that I did with Mr Mavuso and Mrs Majola of the Apostolic church on Popular religion. I have also put the interview of Mr Mavuso into details. What this interview has done for me is challenging me to look at this issue deeply instead of ignoring. It also taught me respect for the AICs' theology and indigenisation of christianity.