

# 1. Holy Hustling

## CHRISTIAN PASSION IN HOLY HUSTLING: MIMESIS, EMPATHY, AND DEVOTION

The urban young men who are the charismatics in the city branch of their Apostolic church, Eloyi or Conollius, undergo moments of religious passion. As faith healers, they are seen to have vicarious experiences of the Holy Spirit burning fiercely within them. What they endure is not their own but their patient's suffering. It is overpowering and involuntary; it is visceral. The suffering is mirrored on their own bodies and dramatized by their gestures of pain. They turn their own gaze inward, while becoming a living and moving image in the gaze of others. In sacred mimesis, they feel a compulsion inspired by the Holy Spirit to be and behave like someone else, their patient.<sup>1</sup> Such sacred mimesis serves their patient for reflection, for knowing an interior condition that the patient cannot otherwise grasp clearly.<sup>2</sup> To be a patient is to suffer from not understanding oneself or one's situation and to be in need of someone whose extraordinary insight comes from a spiritual gift: charisma.<sup>3</sup>

With prophetic charisma comes both the compulsion to embody sacred mimesis and also the recognized capacity for sacred empathy. Prophets themselves are self-conscious about empathy in their practice. They say that they have to feel others' pain for them, put themselves in the others' position, identify with them as intimate others, as if they were one's mother's own children or even parents. The prophets' expressed intent is to make others' pain more bearable by being shared. But the sacred empathy of prophets surpasses mere identification or feeling for the situation of the other because, being understood in terms of divine inspiration, it is empathy that is revelatory, free of the other's misrecognition of self and situation. Or, at least, it is

presented as if it is the truer, higher insight. The Apostolic faith-healers as charismatics diagnose in the words of the Holy Spirit about the source of the patient's suffering; they reveal its causes and its remedies.

In dialogue with the patient, young Apostolic faith healers become assertive, even aggressive. The turn has come for the patient to become the object of subjection. It is subjection to the power of the young charismatics. They dominate forcefully, because they are sure they know the truth better than the patient, who may be an elder or perhaps some other person ordinarily owed respect and deference apart from such diagnosis.

In Chapter 2, I give in full the response by one of the most prominent prophets, Prophet Joshua, to my question about what happens in diagnosis. More briefly here, by way of introduction, Prophet Joshua's answer explains that he brings together both his bodily experience in empathy with his patient and, also, his intellectual activity in reasoning *akanya*, like a chess player. He reasons very quickly and intuitively to get a configuration as an arrangement of the bits; the bits flash by, as if it were on a "film" (he uses the English word). His "film" shows him who is the witch and the witch's techniques of occult attack.

What Prophet Joshua tells me is that as a prophet he has the sight of a "camera" (in English) with a "film" which reveals the occult. He is drawing a contrast to my camera. Mine merely shows what anyone can see, whereas his eyes, looking through his "camera," see what people do not know about themselves, their unwitting collusion in witchcraft. His reasoning, however, is human reasoning, and thus limited.

Even beyond the comparison to my camera, prophets alert their patients, in modern terms, to the prophets' use of an extraordinary means of visualizing the otherwise hidden and unseen. For example, in diagnosis with a patient who is a sophisticated civil servant, Prophet Andrew speaks of doing a scan, after a hospital model for internal investigation; he carries out her needed scan under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, as I show in Chapter 3.

Patients have to realize that they do not know even themselves truly. *Ga o itlhaloganye*, "You do not understand yourself," is a favorite truth that prophets insist on telling their patients. To see what is truly inside someone is the gift only prophets have, and it comes ultimately from the *mowa*, Holy Spirit.

Knowledge is elusive, especially self-knowledge, according to prophets' warnings. For prophets, knowledge is not absolute or total. It is not the knowledge of and for the four corners of the earth, which only God has. Prophets see and know fragmentary pieces, which have to be put together,

bit by bit, with the help elicited from the prophets' patients. It might be thought that prophets are simply bricoleurs, another instance of Levi-Strauss's famous insight; but if so, they are the bricoleurs who never claim authorship and who innovate in the name of a higher truth, partially glimpsed—the true author is the Word.

Having made discoveries from the Holy Spirit, Apostolic faith healers promise hope and relief. Often, the revealed need is for demonic exorcism. The occasion becomes a moment of prayer, song, and dance by a supportive church congregation and yet also a moment of wildly tearing things to bits, of attacking furniture and even walls and ceilings. The destruction is meant to be liberating. Apostolic charismatics run amok in pursuit of the harmful, hidden matter of demons and witchcraft. Contact with the obnoxious things which they expose overpowers them with disgust; they swoon and have to be restored to consciousness with prayer by a man (bishop, pastor, or other prophet) who catches them protectively in his arms.

I call these young urban charismatics holy hustlers not to dismiss them, as if they were—and they are not—cynical charlatans or mere fakes. As streetwise hustlers, these young men push with impatient energy, when they dance ecstatically, diagnose affliction, treat patients, and exorcise demons. They sometimes say they are told by the Holy Spirit, by the Word, to *gatelela*. That means to subjugate, to press hard, down to the ground as in wrestling, or even rape. In youthful enthusiasm, charismatic prophets jostle and even batter their patients emotionally with fear of evil intent, death, and disease, and they may not always be “nice” in that they exact excessive gifts or extort cash fees, contrary to their church rules for free healing services. Contrary to their church rules, also, some of the young urban prophets dare to hold consultations and healing sessions privately at home, and they are accused of stealing from the church the holy ash they need for treatment. Their enemies—and they do have seriously hostile critics both within their church and beyond it—would find the label hustlers all the more apt, given the earliest usage in eighteenth-century England: gangs of pickpockets were hustlers.

In calling charismatics prophets, I follow Apostolic usage. Apostolics speak of prophets, in English, and *baprofeti*, using the term in the Tswana translation of the Bible—and for Apostolics, their *baprofeti* are the successors to the prophets of the Bible. It is, of course, a usage that is not common or standard for the English words, prophet and prophecy, which have a strong sense of telling the future. The Apostolic prophets tell more about the past and the present than about the future, except as it is or has been fabricated maliciously to become an unwelcome expectation.

As holy hustling, the charismatic practice is distinctively youthful, masculine, and urban. The charismatics themselves are twelve young men. Mainly in their early to mid-twenties and nearly all unemployed, they have the clairvoyance of the streetwise, of seeing clearly into a world of tricksters. Urban slang in some parts of Africa takes over a traditional term for a seer or diviner, one who “sees clearly” into the invisible world, and associates that with street smarts.<sup>4</sup> The urban slang introduces—or perhaps sharpens from past ambivalence toward the seer—what is a double edge in its sense of duplicity: the clairvoyant is able to see through the scams of tricksters but able also to con others, who don’t see clearly, or at all.

Urban slang among Eloyi’s charismatics treats “the seer” to a similar re-making with a double edge, which sometimes is turned against the charismatics themselves. In nineteenth-century Tswana, dictionary compilers found, *moitseanape* was a “diviner, a soothsayer,” derived from “*itse*, know, and *nape*, god of wisdom” (Matumo 1993: 253). Any expert is now termed *moitseanape* in common usage today. More specifically, in the urban slang of young charismatics, the term refers to someone with cunning that is suspect and used for harmful, occult purposes. The expertise is that of traditional doctors who fabricate organic substances, “medicines” as Tswana call them in English. What people call witchcraft—that is, malicious occult attack that causes affliction, including affliction by demons—they blame on the use of medicines by others who are jealous and malicious. “Seers,” including traditional providers of medicines, are the tricksters whose fabrications in witchcraft charismatics claim to be able to see and expose.

In my argument, what “holy hustlers” signals is not a pejorative judgment, or even an obvious contradiction, but a problematic, perhaps a synergy between contraries. Put generally: How do holiness and hustling fit together? More specifically, how do prophets bring one to bear on the other in prayer, diagnosis, prescription, and exorcism? In other words, how do they sanctify hustling in purity and holiness and, at the same time, energize holiness forcefully? How do prophets swing between extremes, between moments of reckless energy, most strikingly when they whirl until “flying” in their ecstatic round dance, and careful moments in prayer, reflection, or healing meditation? How do they dominate in prophecy and yet also endure vicarious suffering, on behalf of others, and become the transfigured subjects around whom Apostolics glorify their devotion to Jesus? These are the questions to which I return throughout much of this book.

## MASCULINIZING PROPHECY AND DEVOTIONAL SUBJECTS

Asserting a gendered dogma of inspiration, the young men who are prophets say that women have soft bones, too soft to bear the most intense energy of the Holy Spirit. Instead, women cry weakly; only men can endure the spiritual charge until they fall unconscious, at one in trance with the Holy Spirit, and then released, glorifying their Lord.

I call this masculinized inspiration a dogma in the sense of "an arrogant declaration of opinion." No woman was ever a prophet in the Bible, prophets told me, certain I would not contradict them. At Eloyi's city branch but not at Eloyi's headquarters in the remote rural village of Tsetsejwwe, the young male prophets, masculinizing their own domain, have effectively hustled older women away from prophecy. The change in the city toward an exclusively masculine and youth domain of prophecy is all the more distinctive, seen against the more general practice in similar churches in southern Africa. In other Apostolic and Zionist churches, women are commonly prophets; often, they are the only or main prophets.<sup>5</sup>

In Eloyi's city branch, men are held to be the right ones to take over from the traditional witchfinder. The archbishop prohibits that takeover at the village headquarters; he does not allow it in his presence, and he condemns it as not Christian. In the city, prophets accomplish their reprise of the traditional in Apostolic guise by becoming "sniffer dogs," in resonance with traditional practice of witchfinding. In the way of male dogs, their mission is to find the personal bits witches use to harm church members and weaken their prayers.

At a peak in a Sunday service, the bishop or, in his absence, the pastor-general sends prophets on the masculine hunt in their mission. Rushing wildly outside, here and there, sometimes to the roof of the church, sometimes to a distant crossroads or the very limits of the neighborhood, prophets sniff about, partly on all fours. When they burst into the church, dramatically, on their return, they bear one prophet, comatose and rigid in trance. He clutches the noxious bits, such as a church cape or photographs, worked on by the witches.

The electrifying feel of the moment is all the more intensely masculine because the prophet swoons and is manhandled, patted, then cradled by other men until he recovers from trance. "A woman's cape, nasty with blood, from a beast of prey or something else," announced the pastor-general at one such moment. "Maybe one of you women will be killed by something. Let us pray." It is striking, also, that the strong, tactile feel in the church is even more dominantly masculine in that only men hold

hands when dancing, making a whirling unity, and men are the ones to lay hands in blessing women and each other. Such masculinizing is not a reflection of touching in everyday life practice—where there is no such male bias—but a transformation in ritual, which creates a gendered imbalance in favor of men and which further sets church life apart in sacredness.

Earlier, I argue that prophets bring together the pitiable and the heroic, in being devotional subjects effectively in faith healing. Carrying the argument forward, I suggest that prophets also serve Apostolics by being the devotional subjects who enable the spiritual realization of parental virtue in ritual. After prophets swoon, the cradling itself, along with the surrounding by concerned elders, is thus a transformative rite for youth and elders. Enduring spiritual passion, youth become submissive and elders become assertive in devotion and care, in moral passion that brings them all closer to God.

One gets the impression, also, of a sensually masculine display during youthfully vigorous dance, showing off in the presence of women, and indeed prophets have an aura attractive to women, somewhat like pop stars, and like them, generally, a perhaps well-deserved reputation for being promiscuous.

Not surprisingly, and in accord with a general pattern in similar faith-healing churches, women are the prophets' main patients (Engelke 2007; Ishii 2008). It is said, also, that a prosperous woman sometimes keeps an attractive prophet to look after her and protect her, because of his charisma and power. Women form the supporting chorus during services. It is the prophets who take charge by usually leading the singing, dancing, and clapping, and by playing the tambourines and ringing the bells; they are the ones who give each other a break in diagnosis, sometimes at potentially awkward moments, by intervening and bursting out into song.

I witnessed one exorcism when a woman went on the rampage, in a fit much like a prophet, as if she were a sniffer dog. At first Prophet Andrew held her back, then, told by a pastor-general to let her go, he freed her. She grabbed a mattress, tore and ripped to get to the bits inside, and used her mouth dog style. But what she got, according to Prophet Andrew, was nothing, and eventually the pastor-general stopped her dismantling further. Having ordinary senses, I, of course, smelled and saw nothing different from the other stuffing that prophets wrenched from nearby furniture. "It was," Prophet Andrew told me, "her imagination." In using that English word, I take it that he meant "a fantasy, not inspired by the Holy Spirit."



Figure 4. Church servants laying on hands.

It might be thought that the assertion of masculinity in prophets' holy hustling makes for triumphalism. Elsewhere, and notably among Catholic charismatics in the Philippines, participation in the spiritual war of good and evil is taken to be empowering, at least from an analyst's perspective, because these Christians confidently know their ritual brings victory (see Wiegele 2004). Eventually, the good will triumph.

By contrast, prophets of Eloyi, like many other Apostolic Christians in Botswana, are not so sure, especially at the height of Botswana's AIDS pandemic.<sup>6</sup> These Apostolic Christians are often fearful their prayers may fall short, that enemies may be too cunning in their occult expertise, that malicious witches and demons may be too strong. To stand up to these dangers and uncertainties calls for men in the lead, prophets insist, but men who are able to climb the city hills by themselves, go out in the wild, pray and get closer to God, away from people. According to Prophet Joshua:

The Bible says old men and women cannot be caught by the spirit like the one which catches young men and young women. The old see when sleeping. On waking up in the morning, they say I dreamt like this and that. That's the spirit of the old. Their visions come when they

sleep, as the Bible says, because their bones are tired. They don't have the marrow to withstand the force of the spirit. When the spirit enters you, it can make you fall down. But old women who fall down will be unable to stand up.

It was Prophet Joshua who, in a moment of fierce inspiration, hit the church's first and powerful crystal ball with his fist, shattering it to bits, and in so doing frightened away the women, especially the elderly women, from presuming to be prophets. With the shattering, the women felt their inspiration ebbing away; they were struck silent, I was told. More modestly and with less fear, the women continued to present nighttime dreams for the congregation's consideration.

#### CHRISTIANIZING THE WITCHFINDER'S EXTRASENSORY ATTITUDE

Although prophets in name and confirmed by Eloyi's bishop, the young charismatics are, nevertheless, diviners and mediums in many of their ideas and practices.<sup>7</sup> But as prophets, they aggressively oppose diviners and mediums. Even in the face of their archbishop's outraged condemnation, however, some deliberately go to *sangoma*, mediums of ancestral spirits, to get training in divinatory trance, in dream interpretation, and in the extraction of harmful occult substances from the body.<sup>8</sup>

Certain prophets want to know all of what some say are the tricks of the *sangoma* and other "traditional" doctors, the more effectively to counteract them. In this turn to an older religious tradition, anathema for Eloyi's founders, a third generation of the church led by the young prophets takes up a legacy of occult practices from grandparents or other relatives, who were diviners. There is in recent Eloyi prophecy at its city branch—for somewhat more than a decade—a Christian reappropriation of an old attitude toward the senses—the extrasensory attitude. According to the extrasensory attitude, the gifted specialists who go beyond ordinary knowledge of the world have an extraordinary and powerful capacity that is extrasensory. Power and knowledge come together in this extrasensory attitude, which is linked to the dead. More specifically, and in a version widespread across southern Africa, this extrasensory attitude is the perceived ability, like that of dogs, to "sniff out" witches and witchcraft substances (Ashforth 2005; Niehaus 2001). Just as dogs smell a trail beyond human capacity—they smell what is out of sight—so too do prophets "sniff out" the invisible: they know the unseen according to the extrasensory attitude on their occult hunts.



It is a religious act, prayer, which Christianizes the old extrasensory attitude and turns it into something new. In Eloyi, the ancestors and the dead are more a burden of darkness, *sefifi* (also, “bad luck,” *senyama* in Zulu), than a means of access to power and knowledge, which come from God. If, in the past, extrasensory ability was given by or in harmony with the ancestors, once Christianized, it is for the avowed purpose of getting the prophet closer to God and, through his intercession, getting the patient closer, too. In addition, the Christian attitude is meant to be realized with the sincere, moral passion of wholehearted faith in God’s mighty glory and active benevolence.

Charismatic intercession in Eloyi takes prayer out of the context of the ancestors and descent into a context of trust and faith in the church. But it does so, with some unease—one might say an existential anxiety—in the presence of the continued perception of descent as a force in everyday life, a matter of one’s very substance and essence, and also, for many if not most church members, in the presence of ancestral intercession, pleading for relief with the dead, as a commonplace practice at home or in their original villages.

There is an underlying point, which Chapter 6 advances more fully. Charismatic prayer, like the faith upon which it is predicated, is intersubjective, and not the unburdening of the subject as an individual. Even more, for Eloyi members prayer is one of the most important religious means they use for the management of their intersubjectivity. Of all the linguistic modes charismatics use as prophets in intercession, prayer is the framing mode. It is the one that, for charismatics, is essential—without it the others are of no avail.

#### RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE AND DIALOGUE BEYOND DIVINATION

The Apostolic prophets are more like Tswana diviners than the classic non-Christian prophets in the Africanist literature, such as prophets among the Nuer. Arguably, as Thomas Beidelman has suggested, the Nuer prophet is perceived to have little or no agency (Beidelman 1971). When he undergoes a visionary experience, it imposes itself upon him, and he is merely the means through which some Power as a refraction of Spirit communicates.

By contrast, the Apostolic prophet, while undergoing the experience of the Word, wonders in amazement, according to his own report. When he

tells this to his patient, he presents himself as an active agent in conversation with the Word and the angels: he tells of asking the Word and the angels so that he can reason through his amazement. In turn, he elicits from the patient participation in their direct dialogue. This reflects on the wondrous conversation that he keeps reporting and about which he asks the patient—the patient has to identify and recognize familiar bits, reported as unfamiliar by the prophet in his revealed vision. The prophet thus has the questioner's agency in the dialogue, questioning the Word and the angels and, in turn, the patient. Not that the prophet has nothing to say of his own—he does offer advice and reasoning, he counsels forcefully, but he usually does so only after understanding the patient's answers or response.

I call this linguistic form a doubled dialogue because it flows back and forth, interactively, between two registers of dialogue, the interior monologue and the direct dialogue. The interior monologue, which I conceptualize after Mikhail Bakhtin, is one speaker's talk that resonates with other speech which the speaker reports or alludes to. Commenting on "dialogized interior monologue" in Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, Bakhtin writes of a "model of the *microdialogue*: all words in it are double-voiced, and in each of them a conflict of voices takes place" (italics in the original, Bakhtin 1984: 74). The interior monologue conveys its register through idioms of citation, such as "It is said," "I wonder," and "I ask." In this register, the prophet rehearses his inner conversation for the patient, who hears only the prophet's voice speaking of, to, or with the Word. One of the most articulate of the prophets, Prophet Joshua, calls his interior monologue "the report" in English and *mafoko* (news, words) in Tswana.

By contrast, each participant in direct dialogue is an interlocutor. Each speaks and hears; the conversation is mutual. This is the register that patient and prophet use directly with each other. How and when shifts are made from one register to another is an important question, and I return to it later in my close analysis of actual cases, most fully in Chapter 7.

My immediate interest is more broadly to introduce the religious change in holy hustling by which divination and prophecy are brought together and Christianized, and yet opposed in competition and, even more, in declared hostilities.<sup>9</sup> Prophecy is now contemporary with divination and the practices are consulted alternatively by some people, even otherwise devout Apostolics. For Apostolics, the prophetic dialogue is borne of the divinatory, with which it shares the shifting between interior monologue and direct dialogue. The pattern is familiar in religious change that involves observable distinctions between reproduction, replication,

and replacement; being “borne of” does not mean being “the same as” or necessarily “taking the place of.”

One hallmark of the birth of the prophetic from the divinatory is in the call for consent from the very beginning of the consultation—the appropriate response in the séance being “Yes, I hear and understand (i.e., agree),” and for the Christian and pious answer in diagnosis, “Amen.” Another such hallmark in dialogue is the common use of citation idiom, for example, “It is said.” In the prophetic interior monologue as in the divinatory, the reporter of what is said is not its author; prophet and diviner alike address and question an answering agency that is authoritative—the lots being the agency for the diviner. The Christianized citation idiom refers to the otherwise inaudible, the remote speaker, as the God of Gleaming Brilliance, *Modimo wa Kgalalela*, the King, the Voice, the Doctor of Life, and the Angel of Might and Life, *Lenyelo le Maatla le Botshelo*—with each divine remote speaker saying and answering what the prophet reports in his interior monologue.

The approach to verse and the textual is, moreover, significantly different in the interior monologues of divination and Apostolic prophecy. The diviner draws, at least in wisdom divination, on a repertoire of archaic verse, mellifluous in sound, rich in imagery, cryptic and condensed in significance. The diviner’s interior monologue is highly allusive. It has a superabundance of meaning much of which is so beyond ordinary comprehension that it takes an expert, the diviner, to unpack it in plain speech. The diviner displays specialist command of a cultural archive, with more or less depth according to his expertise and personal wisdom (Werbner 1973, 1989:19–60, 2001).

By contrast, if also ambiguous, the Apostolic prophet’s interior monologue is free of allusive verse. Unlike the diviner as poetic specialist, he reports in everyday language, which may shock or surprise but is not in itself mysterious or an index of knowledge open only to an initiated expert. *Ranolela*, to clarify, is the prophet’s intent in speech with the Word, and simple clarity is its form of expression. Texts are not the prophet’s forte; they are not the means of his assertion of the wiser, more authoritative understanding than that of his patients. He is not set above them in diagnosis by any esoteric command of texts and their truth. Nor is he the one who gives the indispensable Bible readings at services—the reader is often a woman—and his knowledge of the Bible is something he shares much in common with many other Apostolics. The prophet has Power, and thus knowledge beyond that of others, such as his patients. But what characterizes the prophet’s language is sharing with others, intersubjective inclusion: as in his dialogical revelations, so too in his language.

Like the wisdom diviner, the prophet is a specialist in knowledge beyond that of ordinary people, but unlike the diviner, the prophet is a charismatic who speaks the street language of the common people. If, currently, wisdom diviners are keepers of culture, their successors and competitors, streetwise prophets, are today's trendy men of God.

In their practice, prophets introduce a religious language of their own, new in spiritual idiom and forms of divine address, yet old in dialogics. What resonates through the prophets' diagnostic monologues and dialogues is an *artful* echo of the séances of diviners and witchfinders. I stress *artful* to draw attention to the poetics of moving, persuasive language; it does not remain the same in the move from the divining séance to the prophetic diagnosis, but the continuing narrative art and the play of rhetoric, evolving from one to the other, is remarkable.

Even more, what is deeply shared, from divining séance to prophetic diagnosis, is their common, logocentric perception of the power of the word and the voice.<sup>10</sup> For prophets, however, the logocentric perception takes a Christian turn, embedded in prayer and religious dialogue with the Word and Voice of God: power becomes Power.<sup>11</sup>

#### HUSTLING IN DIAGNOSIS AND EXORCISM

An important part of prophets' hustling, in diagnosis and in subsequent treatment, constitutes the materiality of witchcraft. In this respect, also, prophets belong to the long tradition of hustling by witchfinders. Witchfinders discover things, which they produce as proof of witchcraft. Their hustling concretizes the unseen and the invisible, manifesting their perceived capacity for extraordinary knowledge. Prophets dominate their patients in making witchcraft something material, first as realized objects of reconnaissance—fabricated objects exposed, envisioned, and reported in diagnosis—then as actual objects, the things found and torn apart in exorcism. Good as exorcism is intended to be for patients, it is more than very good for prophets—they know it is their moment of popular recognition, of dramatic triumph in the war of good and evil.

As masters of the materiality of witchcraft, prophets greatly enjoy exorcism. It is wildly exhilarating for young men on the rampage. It shows youth at the height of their manly powers. Praised for being like hunters of old, they are held to be the heroes in the vanguard, driving out evil; safely behind and urging them forward stay the women, their bodies deliberately vibrating with the music, for the glory of God. Exorcism brings

prophets generous gifts from supplicants; it makes them loved, even sexually, and makes the church famous and popular. It is not surprising, therefore, that a great deal of diagnosis is devoted to the discovery and exposure of fabricated objects in reconnaissance for exorcism.

During diagnosis, the prophet tells of a journey in which, with the aid of angels and God, the prophet does reconnaissance around and on behalf of the patient. Each prophet usually has a special angel of his own, but on the journey he may consult angels speaking the patients' language and ethnically identified with them. It is not an ordinary journey, but a spiritual one, and the reconnaissance, uncovering hidden fabrications, is in advance of the prophet making any physical visit to the scene, a visit he might make in exorcism.

It might be thought that the prophetic journey is the same as that of the shaman in many parts of the world. If perhaps a variation on well-known shamanic practice—and the prophet does get nearer the exalted world to hear the Voice—the prophetic journey is, however, distinguished by a significant difference in the regard for the familiar. Shamans are famous for going beyond, to the land of the dead or to some alternative world usually invisible or even unknowable. By contrast, when inspired, prophets report that they make their way spiritually round a familiar world—that is, familiar to their patients, not themselves usually—and they expose it as dangerous and threatening because fabricated things are hidden, or yet to be understood in that familiar world. “Smelling out,” using extrasensory powers and a heightened sense of the uncanny, prophets defamiliarize the familiar, in diagnosis and exorcism. The familiar becomes mere appearance, not true reality.

Following the phenomenologist and sociologist Alfred Schutz and his insight into the stranger, I bring into my argument the concept of the natural attitude that is the attitude of common sense in everyday life (Schutz 1944). It is the natural attitude that patients take for granted. For that very reason—the patients' sense of life going on as usual despite their troubles—the prophet subverts the natural attitude; he has to shock, to expose and disturb what the familiar actually hides. This is all in the name of truth—the revelation of the patient's naivety; and renewed awareness is the aim. The prophet presents a monologue that undoes the natural attitude by introducing the stranger's approach of defamiliarization.

At first in such a monologue, what the prophet visualizes is fleeting and puzzling—“wonders” (*dikgagamatso*). Or rather, what he says he sees and what his posture conveys is his vision, *pono*, of fleeting fragments and

his hearing of puzzling bits. His is an experience of the uncanny. He continually remarks on the remarkable and the surprising, even shocking, "I am amazed, and I ask . . ." Prophets say that they themselves become light, quick, and weightless in diagnosis.

Telling a story in fragments, not as a whole all at once, the prophet exerts leverage upon patients. He presses them to go from their natural attitude toward detachment, toward more of the stranger's approach to themselves and the significant things and others around them. In turn, and from one story fragment to another, each reported object from the patient's everyday, familiar world—an object such as a tool box or a pillow—becomes something fabricated, a threatening topic of defamiliarization, in the dialogue of diagnosis. The reconnaissance and later exorcism reach into the intimate interior of the patient's everyday, familiar world. Uncovered is the occult danger in the near object. I am tempted to say that the prophet resembles the Surrealist whose art, seeking the renewal of the image, reveals the mystery in familiar objects; the revelation is shocking, and it is according to Magritte's principle of the visible thought: everything visible conceals something visible—visible to the seer. Against misrecognition comes the shock of recognition.

To say that the prophet is the father of all suspicion would be wrong. Feeling that they are victims of undue affliction, or fearing they might become such victims, patients are already suspicious when they arrive for a diagnosis. Given their suspicion, the prophet is the one who works upon their understanding of the world as it is as usual; he defamiliarizes that world, breaks it down, even to bits, and reveals malicious fabrication. The implicit promise goes beyond diagnosis to prescription: the prophet is expected to find a remedy for restoring the everyday world to what it should be, as usual, or even more desirable than usual—blessed with Christian goodness from the heavens above.

In their holy hustling, young prophets deal in suspicion and guilt, they shock yet try to arouse hope and trust, and finally, at their most promising and caring, they work to undo evil and redress or remedy occult attack. It fits their youth-generated vision, in diagnosis, of malice, cunning, and entrapment that the streetwise charismatics have a blind spot. This dark limit in their diagnostic vision of a personal situation obscures what is highly illuminated in many séances by Tswana village diviners, most of whom are from older generations. Very frequently, when village diviners disclose malice and blame for witchcraft, they also reveal, for the same clients, their responsibility for failure in meeting obligations to others, particularly in relation to the dead.

As prophets, charismatics see and say almost nothing about duty and obligation; much about evil, *bosula*, and the dirty, *maswe*, virtually nothing about sin *sebe*. They remind patients of a fault, *molato*, such as the need to come back to the church, and they themselves feel at a loss, if they fail to attend services, and thus become distant from the Holy Spirit. "Rely on the law of the Lord (*ikanyeng molao wa Modimo*)," exhorts one of the young charismatics in a rare sermon. But, apart from the avoidance of beer, tobacco, and snuff (rejected for being offerings to the ancestors, as in many Apostolic and Zionist churches), young charismatics hardly attend at all to the moral discipline of the individual as a Christian person.

Prophets journey as seers and sniffer dogs from diagnosis to exorcism, on the same trail as other witchfinders of the past and present, such as the diviner or the *sangoma*. Prophets share and carry forward a common heritage of the occult hunt on the trail of discovery in search of malicious fabrication. A patient's own home is the main end of the trail. In the yard, by the four corners where traditional witchfinders place their potions of substances to protect the bounded home space against occult attack, prophets replace that untrustworthy treatment with faithful holy water, the substance of Jesus's dew. Like the body, the inner space around it has to be brought in harmony with the Holy Spirit. As in the diagnostic dialogue, so too in the occult hunt, divination and prophecy proceed, if somewhat uneasily, in tandem with and against each other.

#### PRAYER, CHRISTIAN PROTECTION, AND INNERMOST SINCERITY

That said, I must take care not to leave the impression of a view of the same again and again, and difference, never. On the contrary, my argument is that there is a reactive spiral in religious change; the return takes its turn along with the new, particularly in what I call Christian reformation.

For the new, one important difference from other witchfinders is much stressed by prophets themselves. In moral and spiritual terms, prophets distinguish their practice of *sereletsho*, protection, which is good, from others' practice of *buseletsa*, retaliation, which is evil. In retaliation, occult aggression is met by counteraggression intended to harm the original aggressor. By contrast, in protection there is no such counteraggression but mere defense, for example, by exorcism that drives away the demon. Although prophets say other witchfinders try to retaliate, I found they too claim to be protective and none are willing to admit openly, and when not drunk, that

they counterattack with more occult aggression, despite demands among their clients.

The point is that prophets insist—and in this they follow a strong lead by Eloyi's archbishop—that *buseletsa*, retaliation, is not Christian; that to try to retaliate, because it makes one more distant from God, weakens one's ability to pray and reach God: seek retaliation and you soon stop being a prophet; you lose your Power.

The example for a prophet is the way of Jesus. It is Jesus's way, as I mention above, about which Apostolics sing their hymn of the cooling dew, the very essence of Jesus, who opens the body to peace and quiet, free from pain. It is that cooling dew of Jesus that Apostolics seek in water become holy by blessing and which they spray to make themselves, their bodies, their vestments, their homes, and, above all, their church at one with Jesus and the Holy Spirit. With the same appeal to assuaging, prophets and the archbishop unpacked, for me, the appearance of their staff's trident of the cross, which has an arrow head. This deliberate copy of witchcraft spears and knives is meant to counteract occult aggression, lowering its fierce heat, they say, the way the cool water lowers the boiling.

After prayer, diagnosis is the move that opens the occult hunt and is intended to be the reconnaissance for it, providing the guide, as it were, "the film" in advance. For other witchfinders, there is a mere struggle between foes, the witches, and friends, allies led by the witchfinder. By contrast, it is a Christianized, spiritual and moral war, having the hopeful trust in good winning over evil, that prophets wage as they journey with the Holy Spirit. One song, urging them on, is:

*Tsepha Morena oya golala.*

*Tshepa Morena oya kganya ga golo.*

Trust the Lord in all His Glory.

Trust the Lord in His Dazzling Magnificence.

Another song, often sung during exorcism and its hunt, exposes the evil and deceit in the ways of traditional witchfinders, which are false and untrustworthy:

*Ga gona nnete, ga gonna botshapegi.*

There is no truth. There is no trust.

Prayer, sustained by the continual invocation of the many, mighty, and redemptive names of God, of Jesus, and of the angels, Christianizes the common heritage of the occult hunt and makes it truly Powerful for Apostolics.



## COSMETICS IN COUNTERFABRICATION

There is a fundamental dividual understanding—an understanding of the person as partible and permeable by the substances of others—that motivates the Christian passion in the prophets' prescription of remedies for their patients. Bad fabrication calls for good counterfabrication—that is, in essence, the logic of the witchfinder of old. With Christian faith, that dividual logic gets reworked by regard for the substantial visible manifestation of the Holy Spirit as a holy presence.

A favorite song during exorcism is,

Shadows of the night have fallen.  
Pass the night in dew and open.

*Sholwane*, the word for dew, is in Birwa. According to the archbishop, the cooling dew in the song is Jesus, welcomed to stay the night, and open the body of each and everyone to peace and quiet, free from pain. *Fola*, to cool, is to heal, and Apostolics sing again and again during exorcism:

*Fodisa, fodisa badumedi.*  
Heal, heal the faithful.

In such healing, they seek to be cooled by Jesus, by his soothing substance, all together and as one.

The Apostolics do not focus their concern on the agony or torment of Christ in the crucifixion. They want the Holy Spirit to attend to their own pain, their bitterness in everyday life. They want the dew of the risen Christ, of Jesus at peace, in the cooling holy water. They do not make the holy presence evident by flagellation or by the return of Christ's stigmata on the body—and for Apostolics, of course, the cutting of the body through incision and with bloodletting is dubious or even un-Christian.<sup>12</sup> Incision with the injection of protective substances is the speciality of the Apostolics avowed enemies, the *sangoma* and other traditional healers.<sup>13</sup> Rather, the holy presence draws near in the material means of Christian cosmetics for making the body beautiful as a whole, in harmony with the bodies of others and with the Holy Spirit.

In my usage of *cosmetics* I follow Thomas Beidelman, who reminded anthropologists that in its classical derivation from *cosmos*, cosmetics conveys “the idea of making something orderly and therefore attractive and right” (Beidelman 1966:376). More specifically, as Christian, cosmetics beautify for an order of the world, a *cosmos*, in harmony with the Word and the way of Jesus, the Lamb of God. For the sake of such Christian *cosmos*, the

mixing up of things through *boitseanape*, occult expertise, must be undone; the fabricated evil must be undressed, its invisible fabrication, exposed.<sup>14</sup> Things get *thebetsa*, blocked and frustrated, by occult fabrication, and the aim of prescription is, according to the youngest of the prophets, Prophet Matthew, “to *bula*, open your things of life so that they *dithamalale*, should go straight and *disiame*, be well and good.” Most strikingly, blessed strings of wool provide the right fabric to redress the wrong one, the occult and evil one. The blessed strings serve in counteraction, *tsosalosa ditshika*, to loosen the veins (the strings) that witchcraft blocks.

Where the work of witchcraft maliciously fabricates the occult, Christian healing treatment must counterfabricate benevolently, the goal being the visible blessing of the Holy Spirit, of the Lamb of God in Heaven. So runs the underlying logic of Apostolic prescription as Christian healing by charismatic prophets, I argue.

#### SINCERITY, CARING, EMPATHY, AND VICARIOUS EXPERIENCE

For hustlers who, as prophets, are holy, sincerity matters, and it matters above all in prayer. In prayer, a prophet avows before God silently or in the hearing of his patient that he is pleading in good faith, without deceit; that his very breath is at one with the patient’s so that in his own diaphragm he breathes the patient’s suffering; he feels the other’s troubles in the inner depths of his own being. This avowal of empathy affirms that what is hidden and invisible to the patient—namely, the prophet’s intent in the very interior of his being—is known before God, who sees the invisible interior, to be truly for the patient’s sake.

Expressing this, one of the most prominent among the prophets, Prophet Andrew, prayed for a suffering woman:

Mighty Judge, God of Heaven, God of the Holy Ones, I bring closer your servant to make her holy with your Voice, Good Father, and to report the troubling situations before you, because we know you are *tshepego*, trustworthy and reliable, in the hands of the holy ones. I am not pleading with you like someone who is *tsietsang*, cheating and not in good faith. I call on you from my chest, *tsa letswalo* (from the very diaphragm, inner being), when troubles get to my very breathing.

What the prophet declares, in concluding his prayer, is that just as in heaven among the holy ones, God is trustworthy and reliable so too is the prophet, who is interceding for the patient, for God’s servant on earth.

There is a caring duty between the prophet and the patient. Each has to attend—listen, *reetsa*—to the other, and “to listen to oneself,” *iteetsa*, is also what the prophet asks of the patient. But Apostolic diagnosis, I want to stress from the start, does not overwhelm one sense by another, as if understanding were merely hearing *or* seeing. For Apostolics, to diagnose is to listen *and* to see.<sup>15</sup>

Among Apostolics, the Word is, of course, not reducible to any spoken word. Accordingly, for revelation of suffering and embodiment of the Word, Apostolics go beyond verbal monologue and dialogue to body language. There are moments during diagnosis when the prophet shuts his eyes, overcome in trance and evidently withdrawn, away from the exterior world around him. Often, while his eyes are still shut, his hands move reflexively from part to part of his body; his gestures and body language, sometimes writhing in torment, mirror the pain of the afflicted other who faces him; and he conveys his consciously great empathy with human suffering—he knows and says he knows the suffering of the other in himself.

Vicarious experience is divine passion among Christians everywhere, but exceptional in Eloyi is the passion for human empathy. Rarely in church ritual is empathy<sup>16</sup> for others and their mortal frailty so powerfully realized as in Eloyi during a diagnosis and, most strikingly, at its peak. Earlier, I highlight the evoking of moral passion in Apostolic services, when prophets, overcome in trance, undergo being what I would call devotional subjects. The passion of prophets in such moments, I argue, facilitates that other Apostolics have the ritual experience of a community of suffering.

#### THE HEALING TRADITION OF EMPATHY AND VICARIOUS EXPERIENCE

Is there any tradition of ritual healing that Apostolics could or did draw upon or were perhaps aware of, when they began to prophecy, with empathy, while undergoing vicarious suffering and the searing heat of the Holy Spirit? In other words, is the Apostolics' practice wholly exceptional in the southern African region, apart from churches? To ask is easy, but it is much harder, and possibly beyond our immediate reach, to answer.

In the regional cult of Mwali, which extends across the original areas from which Eloyi spread, adepts do undergo vicarious suffering when seized in trance by Mwali. But their suffering in highly dramatic fits is on

behalf of whole communities, and it is not for the sake of individual healing or the revelation on their bodies of the interior condition of others (Werbner 1989, 1997).

Beyond that, and for the nearest strong resemblance to Apostolics healing practice with vicarious suffering, I would look to the Transkei and the Ciskei in South Africa and to Xhosa ritual of affliction, one of the many variations on *ngoma* across eastern and southern Africa, and including *sangoma* (Janzen 1992, 1994). If a nearer or more closely alike example exists, I have not found it yet, although I am tempted to look, also, to perhaps the oldest healing tradition in Botswana. Among the Kalahari !Kung in the borderlands of Botswana and Namibia, sickness is an existential condition. It calls for the healer to suffer vicariously in pain and confusion, to go beyond his ordinary self, to endure the gift of charisma, the power of spiritual energy (*num*), as fierce internal heat running up and down the healer's trembling body, to see things with an extraordinary clarity in deep understanding, to lay on hands, and to draw the sickness into his own body and then to expel it into space (Katz 1982:100–102; on *num*, Katz 1982: 93–95).

What is striking in the Xhosa ritual is the healer's display of intuition, called *umbelini* (Buhrmann and Gqomfa 1981, 1982). It is an inner feeling, basically a gut sensation, sometimes running through the body, which is perceived to be in contact with the patient's interior. It has to go up the right way to clear the healer's mind (Buhrmann and Gqomfa 1981:193). The healer—known as *igqira*, a name that reflects Khoisan linguistic influence and may also reflect some influence of Khoisan healing practice in shamanic trance—immediately senses the pain of the patient and reveals it bodily. It is evident that “the tension and agitation [of *umbelini*, gut sensation] in their [the healers'] case is used as a diagnostic and therapeutic tool” (Buhrmann and Gqomfa 1981:199). The healer is also a visionary who dreams and has extrasensory perception of hidden things.

All of that closely resembles prophets' healing practice among Apostolics. In addition, the Xhosa healer, too, has the power of the voice, being a singer. But, and this is common among *ngoma* cults elsewhere, the singer has an ancestral drum and moves urgently in a round dance for communication with the ancestors, for knowing the ancestor within himself (Buhrmann and Gqomfa 1982).<sup>17</sup> The importance of Apostolic round dance, as I suggest in the Introduction, is great for moving the faithful in a distinctively Christian religious experience. The difference with the Xhosa healing tradition is thus most striking where the Apostolic is most profoundly Christian.

As a transnational church, Eloyi now extends into South Africa, but I cannot say whether Eloyi's founder and early Apostolics knew of such Xhosa healing rituals. Given the flow of labor migrants at the time of Archbishop Jakoba's early church, and his stay in the railway town of Mahalapye, some Xhosa influence is possible. I speculate here not to claim an answer but to open the question for further research. What is beyond speculation, however, is the Christianizing that imbues healing with new Apostolic realities whatever was borrowed or old, perhaps from the millennia of the Khoisan healing traditions.

### EMPATHY, TRUE KNOWLEDGE AND SUBJECTION

Diagnosis involves empathy, but it is not an egalitarian communion of minds or a sharing of fellowship in Christ. Instead, as the holy hustlers who are mediators and brokers of divine Power, prophets exact submission, artfully and persuasively but forcefully and with the deliberate intent of effecting a Christian recreation, of spiritually changing the patients' inner being, their minds, *tlhaloganyo*, as well as their bodies and their outward situations.

In all the consultations I observed, the patients, while themselves questioned, did not cross-examine the prophet, in turn, but at most grumbled in muted discontent. They preferred to respond, if they could, with polite deference. If they expressed some measure of doubt or puzzlement, they usually, at some intense moment, looked quite bowled over. My impression is that patients tolerate much fumbling on the part of the prophet, his missed targets and caricatures of their situation, because what is often uppermost for them is an eager desire to reach the later stage of prescription and treatment. It is not that patients are uncritical—they prefer some prophets over others, and they recognize some to be better at prophecy than others. A patient sometimes comes back to the same prophet for diagnosis over years, as did my assistant's wife, Martha.

Patients do sometimes tell a prophet where he is mistaken. Even more, they sometimes flatly contradict a prophet's assertion in some detail. But often enough, patients go on to say where the prophet is partially right, as it were, collaborating in his recovery from error by turning the error into a half-truth. The prophet dodges artfully, from fumble to fumble, and patients dodge along with him.<sup>18</sup>

Above all, Apostolics start from their understanding that man is distant from God;<sup>19</sup> that because the prophet, like the patient, has to be brought

nearer to God, a prophet cannot get everything right all at once; that with wholehearted support, quietly devoted in patients' cries of amen and loudly in the whole congregation's rising song and clapping, the prophet gets close enough for true revelation: the Word rises in him. The artful dodger is the holy hustler.

In the next chapter, I say more about the religious controversy and the skepticism around such hustling, exorcism, and Christianized witch-finding, and I relate my discussion to concerns about purity and power that divide the prophets from the archbishop and others in the church hierarchy.