

Abstract

It is argued that the nature of religiosity is changing worldwide. Trusted distinctions are blurred and the trend is away from a symbolic-rich to a sign-rich religiosity. The shift correlates with increased emphases on metonym rather than metaphor, on experience rather than cognition, on imagination rather than emotion, and on knowing how models of knowledge rather than propositional models of knowledge. The ethnographic example is that of charismatic Christianity in Africa and America.

PART ONE

Introduction: The Shifting and Blurring of Religiosity

Since at least the 1960s, the religiosity of Africans and North Americans¹ has undergone significant changes. Firstly, there are changes that have resulted from blurring what was formerly distinct: African traditional religion and African evangelicalism; the sacred and secular; the international or global and the regional or local; imperialistic thrusts and indigenous initiatives; primitive technology and high technology; formal and popular religions. Some of this blurring has already been described in the literature, sometimes positively, sometimes negatively (Hackett 1989, Poewe 1988, Geertz 1983, Fabian 1983, Barnes 1989).

More important than the blurring of what was formerly distinct is the shift away from a broadly symbolic to a more sign-oriented religiosity. It is a shift from a predominant emphasis on metaphor to one on metonym. In the former, questions were centered on
problems of multiple meaning (for example, exegetical, operational and so on). Both the religious practitioner and the scholar shared this concern (Turner 1967). In the latter, scholarly questions and practitioners' interests are centered on problems of the experiential, especially religious experiences. Turner's brilliant scheme (1967), based on the cognitive and emotive aspects of symbols, is not very useful to a religiosity that has come to be centered on experiential and imaginative aspects as can be seen especially in sign-based religious renewal movements.

These trends require that we look carefully at: 1. what has become blurred and 2. what is regarded as known or what is beyond question and doubt.

i. What is blurred:

As noted earlier, the aspects of religion that are blurred are extremely diverse. Their combined effect is to create a global popular religiosity which is transcultural, eclectic, and fluid. Figure 1 depicts the blurring and indicates that it is a two-way process. Let me give examples. Spirits (especially ancestral ones) of traditional religions are blurred with the Spirit and the Holy Spirit of the Old and New Testament, respectively. Spiritual ecology is based on blurring such sacred neopagan concepts as witch, goddess, earth, sky, with secular political concerns for the environment (McDaniel 1990; van Binsbergen 1981:278 on ecological prophets; Daneel 1988 on spirit mediums and ecology, personal communication). The prosperity gospel and healing (though much maligned by mainline and evangelical Christians) blur New Testament notions of gifts and promises with material prosperity and physical health (Barron 1987; Harrell 1975). Ogun, the ancient West African god of iron, warfare, and hunting has become an international god of high technology. Furthermore, Ogun's appeal transcends ethnic, race, and class boundaries (Barnes 1989).
Imperialistic missionizing of the non-western world has become blurred with indigenous efforts to missionize the rest of the world. Thus the Nigerian, Benson Idahosa, has conducted campaigns in Sweden, Singapore, Malaysia, Korea, Australia, and the United States (Garlock 1981). Joseph Kobo of the Transkei runs an organization called LIFA (Light from Africa, also Nguni for Inheritance) with ties to white ministries in South Africa and the United States. The South Africans Paul Lutchman, an Indian, and Michael Kolisang, a black, run an interracial ministry called Jesus for Africa. Both have participated in crusades in Europe and America and have appeared on television there (Poewe 1988).

The South African interracial Christian Ministries Network has ties with England. And the South African, Theo Wolmarans, who has modelled his ministry on the American Kenneth Hagin and the South Korean Yonggi Cho, is exporting his indiginized version. In America, not only have the Church on the Rock (Texas), the Crystal Cathedral (California), and Calvary Assembly (Florida) been missionized, as it were, by the South Korean Yonggi Cho, but even St. Boniface (Florida), a 3,500 member Catholic church has been using adaptations of Cho's methods. The pastor and deacon of St. Boniface are leaders of the Catholic charismatic renewal.

The blurring of formal with popular global religion is spurred on by worldwide renewal movements centered on experiencing the divine, engaging in spiritual quests, and forming experiential gestalts as, for example, in narrative testimonies. The latter are then given global circulation through international networks of charismatic/evangelical Christians (such as FGBMFI, Women Aglow, YWAM, CfAN, and so on)\(^2\) which hold meetings but also circulate publications, tapes, videos, and films.\(^3\)

### ii. The Known as rooted in experience and schema

Globalization simplifies and diversifies world religions. It does not, however, increase religious uncertainty or relativism. A good argument can be made for the
generalization that the more global a religion becomes the more it will give expression to known things. This happening has much to do with the shift from a propositional model of knowledge to a knowing how model of knowledge, to be discussed in a later section. More importantly, it has to do with the emphasis, since at least the 1960s, on experience. Among charismatic Christians worldwide, the trend is to assume that experiences or experiential gestalts are signs of the activities of the "Holy Spirit."

In a world in which cultures and urban centres are becoming ever more homogeneous, the deep experience comes not from looking at different cultures but from a new experience with the divine. This was expressed, for example, in an interview with an internationally known prophet when he discussed a major turning point in his life.

He had been a mainline Christian and a successful administrator in secular broadcasting. His ambitious and heavy work schedule led to the usual poor health symptoms of severe headaches and stomach problems, the use of tranquilizers, and a general dissatisfaction with the direction of his life. These were the years of the charismatic renewal in South Africa. He wanted more life and started attending different churches, denominations, and new religions in search of it.

One day a woman friend said to him that he didn't need a different church or new religion but rather a "new experience with Christ." This duly happened. The "goose bumps" he got upon attending a charismatic service were taken to be the first sign that he was moving in the direction of a "new experience" with God. Then followed water baptism signifying his surrender "to Christ." Then came the anticipated, "strange experience" of baptism in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues, signifying his "sanctification and empowering." Then occurred "the happening of an even stranger thing" when "something said" to him, "go to that woman and say be healed in the name of Jesus." When he finally jumped up and went to her and did it, she was completely
"restored." And all this, he said in his interview, "just happened" (personal interview 1987). From this point forward his story takes on the structure of a testimony much like the famous one of Augustine published as Confessions.

It should be noted that the first step to the certainty of a sign-based religiosity is surrender to a schema. In this instance it is the First Century Christian Schema, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Hollenweger 1972). Once this surrender takes place, usually by way of known rituals, strong experiences become signs that express the concerns and activities in the individual's life of the Holy Spirit. The (Holy) Spirit, alive and active, is taken to be a fact and religious experiences are imaginatively explored in light of this fact. What is left open, subject to deconstruction and reconstruction, is the individual's life, especially the direction of his future and the reinterpretation of his past in light of that future. It is a future, however, that is now part of God's plan. The constellation of these events imbues the individual with a sense of peace and well-being.

The above mentioned constellation constitutes the charismatic Christian experiential gestalt. It consists of surrender, power, use of the passive imagination which heeds inner promptings, dreams, and visions, involuntary joy, spiritual illumination, insights through signs and signals, and love. As we shall see later, however, this experiential gestalt also has its (magical) counterfeit (Davis 1980).

The degree of doubt or certainty varies not only with the shift from symbol to sign but also with the degree of diffuseness and specificity of schema. Looking at Southern Africa for the moment, one can say that the more diffuse the schema, the more tendency there is for doubt and uncertainty. It has something to do with the increased creative activity to produce new liturgical symbols, icons, songs, dance and iconic leadership (Daneel 1988:113).
 Though Christian based, a diffuse schema inclusive of spiritual notions from diverse religious cultures, is more likely to be led by a founder who is still puzzling about where in the spectrum of world religions his independent movement shall fit. This was the case with Londa Shembe whom we interviewed before his tragic assassination April 6, 1989. At the time he was puzzling whether his Christian based Amanazaretha were closer to Judaism or Hinduism. Let me quote from a taped interview (1987).

Where do we really belong? Do we belong to the Christian way, the Jewish way, the Hindu way? You must understand there were Indians who were members of the church during the time of Isaiah Shembe (the founder) and even Europeans. Isaiah Shembe was a Christian. The Indians' visions, the things that they saw, that made them acknowledge that this was a holy power, were things that were relevant to their Indianness. They recognized the holy power because they saw it in Hindu terms. Most testimonies of Indian converts report that they were convinced when they saw flowers on Isaiah Shembe's chest.

And then Londa talked about visions he had about "things that are going to happen."

By contrast, South African Spiritual Churches had a somewhat less diffuse but broader Christian schema. Predictably, leaders of this group accepted that they belonged to Christianity but puzzled over, and created, diverse theologies expressive of Africanness (Setiloane 1979; Pato 1989).

Finally, the New Independent Churches founded by charismatic Christians in the 1970s and 80s, work with a First Century Christian Schema. They tend to restrict
experimentation to the invention of new theological themes. New themes tend to emerge from founders' experientially based insights and visions. The specificity of the latter schema and themes makes for very effective individual life plans. It is the source of the frequent material success of individuals who start new ventures (in business, art, politics, etc.) in response to inner promptings and revelations seen to come from God.

Charismatic Christianity Defined

For purposes here, charismatic Christianity is defined as a prevalent experiential, imaginative, and deconstructive form of religiosity. It is Christian to the extent that adherents respect the dialectical relationship between personal experience and a First Century Christian schema. As we shall see, this definition of charismatic Christianity highlights the metonymic mode of thought which charismatics enter in order to transform mundane experiences into religious ones. Let me explain the major terms of the definition.

Charismatic Christianity is prevalent because it seems to be occurring in all parts of the world. It is particularly lively, however, in those areas that are under pressure to change, are questioning their major traditions, are experiencing cultural and linguistic ambivalence, and/or are subject to considerable human transience (Harrell 1985, 1987; Johanneson 1988:559). It is worth mentioning that while many academics dismiss charismatic Christianity, the leading South African exponent of Marxist historiography, Charles van Onselen, argues that it has everything to do with his society being "involved in a low intensity civil war." Indeed, he argues that "the one line that stands between this society and utter barbarism" is "working and middle class African Christian woman" who is involved in some form of charismatic Christianity (personal communication, July 1989).

Charismatic Christianity is experiential because it is based, as charismatics would say, on a "personal relationship" between the human being and God so that the former experiences the latter directly through signs made manifest by the Spirit. The body, world,
and universe, in this sense, constitute a language of signs. It follows, therefore, that charismatic Christianity is a religion of and for the imagination. It is imaginative because it interprets this universe of signs (and de-sign) through the use of the imagination (especially the passive imagination of visions, prophecies, dreams, and discernment).\textsuperscript{7}

Given the important emphasis on the use of imagination, it follows further that charismatic Christianity is deconstructive. It is an attack on logocentrism and, therefore, philosophy and theology for opting only for reason when the human being is clearly constituted of sensation, emotion, intuition, intellect and, most importantly, imagination.

Charismatic Christianity is post-modern. It regards the whole universe and the whole of history (be it personal, natural, or cosmic) as consisting of signs. These signs are available to explore the meaning of life in a concretely meaningful way. In other words, these signs are metonymic. That is, signs are current manifestations of the creative activity of the Creator. In a high tech world not only the television or computer monitor, but also the human being, indeed the universe, are manifestations of signs or manifest themselves through signs. By contrast, pre-modern or traditional religions tend to emphasize icons. The latter are easily produced with low technology. Unlike signs, icons are representative of something and, therefore, metaphoric. They lack the persuasive power and certainty of signs (Leach 1976, see later).

Because charismatic Christianity is very much at home with seeing the universe as a language of signs, it is subject to criticism from both Christians and deconstructionists. The former are threatened by the fact that charismatics accept that signs point in all ways at the same time (through revelation, dreams and visions) which may result in heterodoxy.\textsuperscript{8} Indeed, many African Independent Churches (AICs), though takeoffs from Christianity, have for this very reason moved beyond it.
Among Amanazaretha the move beyond Christianity should not be regarded as a rejection of it. With Londa Shembe it is rather a matter of some startling and profound breakthroughs. For example, one of the worries of orthodox Christians is that a church prove its orthodoxy by remaining Christ-centered. The figure of Christ is therefore troublesome to some African Independent Churches. Londa Shembe resolved it this way: "It seems," he said, "that there was a commonly shared figure, in the Spirit, who answered in this name Christ" (interview 1987). Shembe’s thinking goes some way to allaying the worries of deconstructionists that charismatic Christians, being Christ-centered, ruin their openness by early closure when the thrust of deconstruction is precisely disclosure. In fact, charismatic Christianity is quintessentially paradoxical and, therefore, is far more open and far more closed than its diverse practitioners through time would allow it to be. Without the former (i.e., tendency to openness) it could not imagine the new, without the latter (i.e., tendency to closure) it could not deconstruct the old.

While charismatic Christianity is deconstructive of traditions and institutions, it is experienced as powerful because it offers a reconstructive (or potentially reconstructive) breakthrough. It is a religion of metonymic signs that manifest and make palpable the power which, given the charismatic Christian schema, is that of the Spirit. As Dr. Setiloane, an African theologian at the University of Cape Town said, "something really does happen."

Charismatic Christianity is a religion of change. In South Africa, founders of independent churches are quite explicit in their view that charismatic churches are there to change South African society. Thus, the nine biggest, most vigorous, and most recently founded independent churches are the center of a major social drama. It consists of the coming together of diverse ethnic and "racial" groups the members of which have lost faith in both, apartheid and its violent alternative. It is not only the case that these churches
attract those with ambivalent identities. Making identities, cultures, and language ambivalent is precisely what this form of Christianity is all about. As Johannesen (1988:559) astutely observes, it extends and cultivates ambiguity precisely because it is based on Spirit theology or "a language of no-place and of no-one." But while it makes uncertain and deconstructs all that is "of the world," it makes certain and reconstructs under one truth all that is "of God's Kingdom."

But what is it that allows a religion, whose spoken language is suspiciously anachronistic, to foment change. I would argue it is the insistence upon surrender--or at least a critical moment of surrender. Surrender in the sense of experiencing a happening does two things. One, it shuts out the noise of the world, at least momentarily. Two, it stops the "doer and shaker" from pushing ahead with his ambitions often at a time of high stress or crisis. It invites play of the passive imagination and attending to novel visual and verbal images that present themselves as though offered by another power. In other words, at the point of surrender the individual experiences or suffers a happening; he sees images and/or hears them verbalized. These are the turning points when a person's attitudes and perceptions may undergo radical changes without external threat.

The change of which I speak is, therefore, not that of high technology or urbanization and modernization of the Third World--though the Third World knows how to use these. Nor is it primarily social or political. It is rather cultural in nature. No respecter of ethnic boundaries, charismatic Christianity breaks down the constructions of apartheid and, in Canada, multiculturalism.

Charismatic Christianity and Models of Knowledge

What is happening in Christianity is analogous to what is happening to the thinking of social scientists, especially anthropologists, as they respond to increased pressure from
the non-Western world to understand and learn from "another's perspective." Rao (1988) talks of a shift from a propositional model to a knowing how model of knowledge. It is a shift from science as true description of a domain to science as a way of doing things. It is a difference that precisely parallels the division in Christianity between fundamentalism based on propositional knowledge with tight domains and boundaries and charismatic Christianity which is a way of doing things without postulating specific domains and boundaries. While the former bounds time, space, and beings, the latter loses them. Charismatic Christianity is based, as said earlier, on a language of no-time, no-place and no-one (Johannesen 1988). Its emphasis on holiness which is equated with dignity (Richardson 1967) gives back to the Third World an immaterial treasure it desperately craves.

According to Rao (1988) the propositional model of knowledge is to schema as the knowing how model is to actualization. Of interest here is Rao's characterization of actualization as "bringing about an embodying of a schema" (1988:347). He further divides actualization into doing (controlling the action process) and happening (suffering or experiencing it). Of these, the latter is of particular importance to charismatic Christianity. Extrapolating from Rao, actualization is important to charismatic thinking for two reasons. (1) It gives substance to our doing as that which makes gestalting possible. Which is to say, we are gestalting or structuring personal testimonies from happenings. (2) It requires thinking about doing in order to attend to the happening aspects of actions in the process of doing them. Which is to say, we are exercising the metonymic faculties of thought.

It is precisely because charismatic Christianity is a religion that actualizes a so-called First Century Christian schema (or among AICs a Spirit-based Old Testament schema) that it allows the individual (of ambiguous identity, of no-place, being no-one) to
use his imagination to create a gestalt of the happenings of his life. It restores at once a sense of wholeness and dignity: a new life.

Probing what happens (inside and outside of the self) while doing something is very much a matter of reading signs and signals, of engaging the symbolic faculties of metonymy in the context of the Christian schema. Thus a charismatic Christian in prayer heeds what is happening while he is praying. Likewise a charismatic Christian who lays hands on someone and prays over someone probes what is happening while he is doing it. And given the First Century Christian or Spirit-based AIC schema, what is happening is the doings of the Spirit. Charismatic Christians, therefore, really experience the workings of the Spirit in their lives. They are engaged in "reflective exploration" precisely because something is happening to them that is done by a creative power "outside of them."

PART TWO
The Symbolic Operations at Work in Charismatic Thinking: Metonym Defined

According to Leach (1976), the human ability to symbolize consists of using (1) symbol relationships which are arbitrary but habitual or conventional, and (2) sign relationships which are contiguous but in a relationship of a part to a whole, as well as signal relationships which are causal. In other words, he works with both metaphor and metonymy. Though largely ignored in symbolic or interpretive anthropology, the use of metonymy is particularly popular among charismatics.

By metaphor is meant simply that A stand for B by arbitrary association. The association can be habitual, conventional, private, or one of planned resemblance as in an icon. Metonymy includes sign, natural index, and signal. In the first, A stands for B as part for a whole; in the second, A indicates B; in the third, A triggers B so that the relationship between A and B is mechanical and automatic (Leach 1976). What makes the metonymic operation so powerful is the fact that, in practice, people do not carefully distinguish
among sign, index, and signal, so that A stands for and indicates B while B is seen to trigger A.

In *Confessions*, for example, Augustine did this with "the voice" episode (Blaiklock 1983:204). Likewise American charismatic Christians do this with "hearing a voice," having visions and speaking in tongues. African charismatic Christians are very particular about distinguishing "voice," "vision," and "dreams" as happenings, from willed thoughts as doings. Thus Londa Shembe, in criticizing scholarly writings about the Amanazaretha had this to say:

Scholars speak as if they know that the hymns were composed by Isaiah Shembe. Whereas some of them were revealed to him. He would hear a voice singing and then he would ask some people to write it down as that voice was singing...It was not Shembe who was composing, it was this voice that he was hearing. In fact, Isaiah Shembe described exactly how each song happened. He says, this one, it was the angels who were singing in such and such a place. That one, it was a dark voice singing (interview, 1987).

From earliest times onward, there seems to have existed a recognizable experiential gestalt that is very much in line with the First Century Christian schema. Both the experiential gestalt and the schema have been restored, although with considerable variation, in the African Independent, as well as the New Independent Churches (NICs) worldwide. The restoration started, as said, with the charismatic or renewal movement that entered mainline and middle class churches in the Americas, Africa, Korea, and England.

While the experiential gestalt is widely expressed in the charismatic renewal, the AICs, NICs and, especially, John Wimber's Vinyard movement, the First Century Christian
schema is, in my opinion, particularly explicit in Augustine’s Confessions. The latter provides the narrative structure that is followed in the telling of testimonies among spirit-service-and-conversion-oriented evangelical Christians and Catholics to this day.

As we saw earlier, the experiential gestalt consists of surrender, empowering, the use of the passive imagination, spiritual illumination and insight, involuntary joy, and love. When this gestalt is not rooted in the schema centered on the Holy Spirit and on metonymic thought processes, it becomes counterfeit. In other words, it becomes based on techniques, induced states of altered consciousness or physiological pleasure, and metaphoric thought processes. This counterfeit, or magical, experiential gestalt consists of submission (not surrender), force (not power), manipulative techniques (not passive imagination), forced pleasure (not involuntary joy), ritually induced altered states or physiological orgasm (not spiritual illumination), and pornography (not love).15

It is quite clear that, since the charismatic experiential gestalt can not be forced, and since it is vital to this form of religion, it is very tempting to fall into or substitute the counterfeit experiential gestalt. That this occurs frequently was brought home to us by televangelists.16

The First Century Christian schema played a role in the lives of several early Christians, among them Tertullian, Irenaeus, Ignatius, Ambrose, and Augustine (Oosthuizen 1985). It is, however, particularly well preserved in Augustine’s Confessions. The effectiveness of Confessions is owing, in large part, to the careful patterning of the conversion (or commitment) process and drama.

Indeed, the whole of Confessions is a carefully structured anagogical testimony the skeleton of which is based on the effective use of metonyms.17 Following Synan (1975:25), metonymic events are called “heralding events.” “Events are heralded as a
demonstration of supernatural power and activity and are linked to biblical types and patterns."

There is, first, the premonitory curing of Alypius signifying that God worked through Augustine (p.137) and foreshadowing Augustine's own healing and healing of others. Such premonitory healing was experienced by every famous 20th Century evangelist from Bill Branham to Oral Roberts, to Kathryn Kuhlman, to Kenneth Hagin (Harrell 1975). It is usually the first event that starts these believers on a new path. Premonitory curing was described in all my 40 interviews with charismatic prophets and pastors.

Second, there is the phenomenon of the smiting word. Again in Confessions it happens first to Alypius (with Augustine the instrument) and later to Augustine himself (p.137). Alypius is cured of his love of the racecourse after listening to one of Augustine's lectures in which the latter used the racecourse as a convenient illustration. Alypius, however, was convinced that what Augustine said was said on Alypius's account alone. So common is this metonymic event that it has become part of most pentecostal and/or charismatic services.

One pastor whom we interviewed explained it this way. He distinguished expository from evangelistic preaching and exegesis from "a specific word for an individual." The latter contains a simple, single, and usually conflict resolving message. It can be "heard" from a "voice," it can be read, or it can be heard when preached. When it is the latter, someone in the congregation feels convinced that the whole sermon was specifically addressed to him or her. This happened, at different times, to the interviewee and to his wife. For him it was the occasion of a clear decision. For her it was the occasion of a significant physical healing.

Charismatic Christians speak of "smiting words," a dated pentecostal expression, in the context of another similar event. They call it jokingly, "Bible roulette." Most
charismatics whom I interviewed played "Bible roulette" at least once during their early pilgrimage, usually at a time of major conflict and decision. It is preceded by thoughts of the sort, "Lord, I'll open the Bible and wherever it opens, I will read, and I will trust you to speak to me." Then the Bible is opened and the passage "speaks to," provides a conflict resolving insight to the person. Such a passage is rarely forgotten. A variation of this event is described in Confessions at the point of Augustine's surrender.

While "smiting words" have very much to do with coincidence, with that point in a person's development where they are ready to hear precisely that which is being said, charismatic Christians emphasize the occurrence of this event when the person least expects it and is, in this sense, not ready to hear it. "The word," in other words, is all the more powerful now because God chose the time and setting. "It is God's appointment" with the individual. Above all, it is God's initiative and this, as we saw earlier, is the distinguishing feature of the charismatic experiential gestalt. It distinguishes it from a magical one and from, say, a scientist's breakthrough after a long dry spell.

Third, Augustine, as charismatics today, places events, encounters, and appointments so that they reveal God's plan for the individual. Thus Alypius' encounter with the market-police (p.139) who mistook him for a thief is described as being part of God's plan for Alypius. It gave a man of Alypius' future position a knowledge he could not afford to be without. Charismatic evangelical John Wimber calls such meetings, and the later meeting between Ambrose and Augustine, "divine coincidences" or "divine appointments" (Stafford 1986; Wimber 1985).

During interviews, charismatic Christians go out of their way to be precise about the sequence and fit of metonymic events in the actualized schema of their lives. Specific things prayed for, the time, place and occasion of their realization, their importance as a
link to the next event, are recalled with all possible accuracy. The testimonial structure, like that of Augustine's Confessions, is an important mnemonic device.

Fourth, the charismatic renewal has made explicit the transformation of failure into God's closing some doors in order to open others. We see this again in subtle form in Augustine's Confessions with the failure of his mother to find him an appropriate bride (p.146), with the failure of the commune (p.147), with the break-up of his common-law marriage (p.148), and so on. The importance of (a counterbalancing) victory, so common in charismatic circles, is also present in Augustine's work. He was converted and became a Catholic bishop—for this, and this alone, the door was open. Every charismatic prophet, evangelist, and minister whom we interviewed had examples of such "closures" and "openings" which served as sign posts along the path of their vocation.

Fifth, Augustine and present-day charismatics assign equal significance to listening to other people's testimonies especially prior to their own conversion and/or crossing of other ritual milestones. Augustine records several in Confessions starting with the story of Victorinus' conversion (p.186-194). Testimonies are full of metonymic signs so that listeners become sensitive to detecting them in their own lives.

Sixth, at the height of the conversion drama, between the point of "snapping" and the "light of confidence" emotions come thick and fast. Despite the great intensity of emotion, however, three intellectual heralding events stand out: 1. the crystallization of reality into two opposing forces (at the point of conversion); 2. the sharp mental concentration at the sound of a voice (at the point of "divine intervention"); 3. the instant recognition that the "smiting words" state his new being (at the point of climax).18

A South African "colored" who is a successful manager of an insurance company and later founded his own evangelistic ministry, described his calling to the ministry as
follows. Unlike Augustine, whose conflict was centered on lust versus spirituality, the interviewee's was centered on alcohol abuse versus the spiritual life.

I pick up where his story begins to resemble the conversion drama of Augustine. "Where I was staying, we did not have electricity. We had a wash basin, etc. My wife was already gone. I was there by myself and this whole thing started. And I knew now--I'm expecting something to happen--because my boss was to come and lead me to the Lord."

"And all of a sudden I'm having this battle inside me. Something telling me to go and have my last drink and somebody pleading please don't go. Yaa. (Show of strong emotion). You know, I had this battle and I went to the kitchen and when I came back...When I came back I felt this power coming over me, next to my bedside, pushing me down on my knees and forcing my eyes shut. I couldn't open my eyes. This power was just on me. And in this state, I couldn't open my eyes, I remembered my bible. Whilst my eyes are closed, I reach out feeling around for my bible. So I take it and as if someone is controlling my hand, I open up the bible. And I page it and stop. And my finger goes like that, you know (he gestures). And once my finger was placed on the bible my eyes opened up and I saw Isaiah 41:10. And I read. You know, that moment, that battle was gone. I did not have to read on. I knew this was God's appointment with me. I was so excited, man. The battle was gone."

This is like the divine intervention described by Augustine when he heard a voice saying "pick it up and read it." In his words:

"I seized it, opened it and immediately read in silence the paragraph on which my eyes first fell...I did not want to read on. There was no need.
Instantly at the end of this sentence, as if a light of confidence had been poured into my heart, all the darkness of my doubt fled away" (Blaiklock 1983:204).

Metonymic events, which are very much part of the charismatic theology about the work of the Spirit in the life of an individual, are literal happenings and therefore are associated with surrender and its consequent fruits. Thus as intellectual surrender follows emotional surrender, so increased blessings replace former despair; a sense of wholeness replaces the former sense of conflict; peace and victory replace dread and fear.

Concluding Remarks

While it is currently fashionable to puzzle about text and to generate texts from texts within anyone genre, it is also wise to remember that behind a genre there once was life. In Ardener's (1985:52) words "what was once life becomes simply genre" or "as experience is made text, life becomes genre."

As anthropologist with one foot in the fashionable thought-world of academia and another in the grass roots world of struggling human beings, I find it curious how much these two worlds move in opposite directions. And this goes on, despite the fact that it is the job of the former to study the latter. While academia seems preoccupied with text, genre, and the rarefied world of metaphor, many at the grass roots level have returned to experience, "life," and a language empowered by metonyms (Clifford 1986; Marcus and Fischer 1986; Geertz 1988).

The return from genre to life is particularly obvious in the form of Christianity that, for lack of a better term, has come to be called charismatic. But it is not restricted to it. The usual task, of course, is to explain the prevalence of this form of religiosity and to
describe its numerous and colorful supporting theologies including everything from spirit theology, to African theology, to contextual and black theology.

Given the relative ignorance and, indeed, frequent deprecation of charismatic religion, however, it was felt that some of its more remarkable features of thought and practice should be highlighted. In the process it is hoped that such attitudes of thought as surrender, literalness, and metonym, will receive more favorable academic attention in the future.

It is also hoped that this paper will draw attention to the fact that we do not have good answers to the question of why experiencing the divine should once again be so important in today's high tech world. Nor are there adequate studies that show just how experiences are translated into religious experiences and beyond that, how religious experiences are translated into thought patterns based on imagination, surrender, literalness, and metonym. Finally, with but few exceptions, academia has not addressed the fact that mood, feeling, and emotion are as much subject to structure and structuring, I venture to say, as is language (Parkin 1985:138). Emotions are ordered by the imagination within a schema where they are instrumental in the ongoing efforts to reconstruct and deconstruct ways of life. It allows experiential charismatic Christianity to throw up diverse experiments of living--not all of them good.

If nothing else, the above analysis will have made clear that literalness, concreteness, reality and what is known to be true take on a new meaning. It is as if charismatic Christians have stood Marx on his head. The known is the "Spirit." Reality, beyond "creation," is the sum of the real consequences of "the work of the Holy Spirit" in the world through the lives of individuals. Worldly success, material wealth, physical health are real but they are a reality produced by the "Spirit" through the individual. Work is real but it is first of all "the work of the Spirit" guiding individuals to do "His" work. The
worker, the proletariat, the poor exist but they exist for change and are likely to be turned into middle classes. Imperialism has been turned into an indigenous grass roots, and yet global, religious movement. The secular has become a consequence of the sacred. And so the shifts, blurs, and inversions go on.

In short, while charismatic Christianity is still shunned as a subject of serious research, though I suspect not for long, we can ill afford to ignore it. It challenges our methods and theories. But most of all it challenges the very way in which we perceive, conceive and word religiosity.

FIGURE 1

Religious Blurring: a two way process

African traditional religion ------ Evangelicalism
[spirit-oriented, service-oriented, conversion-oriented; popular worldwide, especially 3rd world)

secular ------------------------- sacred
[spiritual ecology; prosperity gospel; healing, etc.)

local/regional ----------------- international/global
[export of Ogun; African Christianity; the Fivefold Ministry of itinerant prophets; CfN, etc.)

indigenous initiatives ------- imperialistic initiatives
[Idahosa, Paul Lutchman, Michael Kolisang = Africans missionizing the west; Bonnke = West German/African)

formal religions --------------- popular religion
[charismatic/renewal movement; spiritual quests; experiential gestalts; eclecticism, etc.)

pre-modern technology ---------- high technology
[transformation of Ogun; video, tape, tv communities; religious music, Friends First, etc.)

ethnic, race, national -- non-racial-ethnic, international
[renewal movements; charismatic evangelicalism)

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Notes

1. My own research comes from these two areas, Namibia 1981, 1983 (13 mos), Canada and U.S.A. 1986, 1989 (12 mos), South Africa 1987, 1989 (6 mos). One would otherwise include Latin America and South Korea.

2. FGBMFI = Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship International, YWAM=Youth With A Mission, CfAN=Christ for All Nations started by the West German Reinhard Bonnke when he was in South Africa. CfAN is very African (and is not to be confused with CfN, Dallas).

3 New Agers, by the way, use analogous structures and all the media.

4. Londa Shembe is the grandson of Isaiah Shembe, the founder of the African Christian Amanazaretha Church. The Amanazaretha are one of the many African Independent Churches which emphasize umoya or Spirit and healing. Londa Shembe was the well-educated, with a degree in law, leader of one of two factions of Amanazaretha. The other faction was led by his much older uncle, Amos Shembe, the brother of Londa's father Galilee Shembe, sons of Isaiah. Londa Shembe was brutally assassinated after a few months of marriage to a Catholic woman. While Inkatha the political party under Zulu chief M. Buthelezi claimed Londa Shembe as one of theirs, Londa was known to have strong ANC/UDF sympathies. Fieldwork was done 1987; return trip 1989.

5. African Spiritual Churches include the Evangelical Methodists, the National Baptist Church of Southern Africa, some of the Zionist churches, and so on. They are also loosely affiliated with the Institute for Contextual Theology. Nevertheless they prefer African Theology to Black Theology. A version of the latter is taught at ICT.
6. In the 1950s to 1970s a pentecostal style Christianity became acceptable in, and spread through, mainline churches. Called the charismatic renewal, it caused considerable strife within these churches. During the late 1970s and 1980s, splits led to the creation of innumerable independent charismatic churches and ministries. These independent churches and ministries are nondenominational and they are centered on the gifts of the Holy Spirit (as in 1 Cor.12), hence the designation charismatic. Independent churches and ministries were founded in accordance with the visions of itinerant and highly visible evangelists and prophets. Included here are such men as Bill Branham, Oral Roberts, Pat Robertson, Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland (and others now in disrepute) of America; Reinhard Bonnke of Africa and West Germany; Joy Dawson of New Zealand; Yonggi Cho of Korea; Ray McCauley, Ed Roebert, Fred Roberts, Nicky van der Westhuizen, Paul Lutchman, Michael Kolisang, Clive Dutlow, Derek Morphew, among many others, of South Africa (representing all ethnic groups including Afrikaner, Indian, Colored, and Black); Graham Kendrick, Roger Teale, among many others of Great Britain, and so on.

7. I would contrast passive imagination with active imagination. By the latter is meant the critical questioning of images taken from experiences of the world, psyche, and people. Both forms of imagination play a role in charismatic Christianity although at moments of greatest openness and surrender (to the Spirit), passive imagination predominates.

8. Charismatic Christians, by contrast with New Agers who also emphasize imagination and narrative skills, use as said a First Century Christian Schema. This schema is as much their hermeneutic device as Catholicism was for Turner (1962) in Chihamba, the White Spirit (Rhodes-Livingstone Papers 33). Manchester University
New Agers are far more eclectic and take from numerous ancient western or current non-western myths.

9. Between 1987 and 1989 there was a lively correspondence between Londa Shembe and myself. In one letter, reverting back to casual academese, I had asked Londa how the Amanazaretha thought about Jesus, the American Black Christ, and the prophet Isaiah Shembe. That brought a very angry, distraught, and illuminating response from Londa. He wrote, "Karla surely you can see that Shembe can in no wise be called a prophet in the sense of say Jeremiah and Isaiah. We say Shembe is a prophet to you Westerners because the truth would cause you cultural and mental indigestion. We are simply being polite because it is not important to us that you should know the truth about us and about Shembe whom we cannot shame (letter March, 1988). Sundkler 1961, 1976 routinely refers to Isaiah Shembe as prophet, as do most other scholars. It should give us pause to ponder the injustice we do to the spirituality of those whom we research.

10. It would seem that western charismatic Christians are vindicating various religious views of non-western peoples. Thus Kenneth McAll (1982:96) talks about how "the unquiet spirits carry with them all the unresolved earthly battles of the flesh." In the chapter that deals with praying for the dead he reviews, as I do later, the views of the early church fathers who held to the importance of praying for the dead. Included are Tertullian, Origen, Ephraem, Cyprian, Ambrose, Augustine, Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nanzianzus (p.89). The views of Londa Shembe on praying for the dead are like those of McAll whose interests in this and the topic of the powers of "possession" grew out of his experiences in China. For Augustine on testimony, see later.

11. As we saw earlier, many of these breakthroughs are thematic, hence the phenomenon of the "prosperity gospel," "health and wealth gospel," and so on.
12. These churches include: Durban Christian Centre, Hatfield of Pretoria, Rhema of Johannesburg, The Christian Revival Centre of Chattsworth, Christian City of Johannesburg, Nicky van der Westhuizen Evangelistic Ministry, Maritzburg Christian Centre, Victory Life, and the New Covenant Fellowship/Bryanston). All 9 churches have over 800 members (where membership is emphasized) and between 1,000 to 5,000 people in attendance at Sunday services.

13. Contrast this happening with doing, in the sense of controlling the process by deliberately conjuring up and critically questioning images taken from experience.

14. Wuthnow (1988) recognizes a similar polarization in his book, The Restructuring of American Religion (1988) but calls it religious conservatism versus liberalism. Based on survey research, his categories do not allow him to recognize the very different streams of Christianity being practiced at the grassroots level. As well, to keep constant the distinction between fundamentalism and charismatic Christianity requires work at the grassroots, for many fundamentalist (and mainline) Christians attend charismatic meetings, especially those involving healing, without otherwise being charismatic. This is particularly common among South African blacks whose mainline black Christians, as well as diviners, sangomas, inyangas, and so on, attend AICs, especially healings, without otherwise belonging to AICs.

15. The opposition between these two experiential gestalts emerged from correspondence with Stanley Johannesen who saw a link of sorts between pornography and pentecostalism. It is not difficult to see how pentecostals could fall for the magical experiential gestalt.

16. Two points. First, one could just as well argue that the two gestalts are counterfeit of one another. In this paper, however, I look at it from the charismatic perspective. From this perspective the gestalt is entirely dependent upon "the grace of
God" not the "will and techniques of the human being." Second, the Bakkers and Swaggart, American televangelists, are the most prominent examples of having fallen for the "counterfeit" gestalt.


18. For Augustine these words had specifically to do with his conflict between his two wills, one carnal, one spiritual (p.191). The paragraph on which Augustine's eyes first fell read: "...not in the ways of banqueting and drunkenness, in immoral living and sensualities, passion and rivalry, but clothe yourself in the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no plans to glut the body's lusts..." (p.204).