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Independent Churches in Botswana: Their Objectives

It is indeed a historic event in the history and life of Independent Churches in Botswana for me to have been invited to talk on the objectives of the Independent Churches of Botswana.

To start with, the Independent Churches are religious denominations that believe in the spiritual powers of God, as manifested to them. They also believe in doctrines of the Bible thus: (a) biblical theology, (b) systematic theology, (c) dogmatic theology. We believe in the Bible as an inspired book of God and the authority behind the execution of our daily Christian duties. We believe also that we are messengers and servants of God, although we possess different spiritual identities in approaching the Bible, such as beliefs, practices, ceremonies and festivals, religious objects and places, values and morals, and the various types of religious leadership within our societies.

Prophetic Foundation

In many cases involving the formation of Independent churches, the Holy Spirit enables or directs a man or woman to found the church within the society he/she lives in. Such a gifted person would perform miracles through the prophetic gift he or she possesses, by preaching the Good News, healing the sick, and converting people to God for the eternal salvation of mankind. We believe that spiritual churches have been *formed through*

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the grace and love of God, right from the beginning of creation, and that their objectives are based on the following fundamental principles of life.

The Independent Churches exist:

1. To promote understanding, unity, co-operation, development, and self-help among the African Independent Churches throughout the continent of Africa and in the entire world.
2. To provide spiritual teaching and ministry training, with programs endeavoring to assist members of Independent Churches throughout Africa and the entire world.
3. To take part in developmental projects wherever they are situated, in order to support the aspirations of the community in general.
4. To encourage study and research about African Independent Churches, with the aim of helping members to identify their own specific contributions to Christian thought, witness and worship, and to communicate their understanding of these contributions to other Christian churches and bodies throughout the world.

Summing up our objectives as stated above, I believe many people in Botswana could witness to the contributions that Independent Churches have already made: well-modernized churches have been erected in various areas of the country as part of fulfilling our objectives with regard to developmental projects of the country.

Healing Practice

I have no doubt about the actions and commitments of Independent Churches in our country. We believe that the Independent churches are as good, as productive and qualitative as any religious groups in the entire world that are called to meet the total needs of the societies within which

they live. In the Gospel of St. Luke 10:9-10 we read that we should "heal the sick in that town and say to the people there, the kingdom of God has come near you." When we talk about spiritual healing, or healing by the Holy Spirit, our minds go as far back as creation in Adamic and Pre-Adamic periods. Creation made man basically spiritual (Genesis 1:26-27); there was no sickness in the Garden of Eden before sin; neither is there any sickness in heaven. When Adam and Eve were created, God gave man authority and dominion over every living creature, the ability to rule the earth; and God became the King of all creation. Therefore to qualify for healing we should believe in the Bible, God, God as Redeemer, the Holy Spirit, Salvation, Testimony, and the Church. These are basic beliefs because knowledge of each one leads us to an understanding of the next, and the understanding of all of them gives us the reasons and mandate for spiritual healing and for our daily lives. Nevertheless, the physical and spiritual healing manifested by spiritual churches in Botswana has so far not been recognized or accepted as a gift from God for the work in the African society. I would earnestly appeal to all people to recognize the Independent/Spiritual Churches locally and internationally in view of the meticulous service they render to combat diseases which have confronted and threatened the lives of people in the entire world.

We are convinced that a general study of healing in our country would show that about 50% of our people have survived death, insanity, etc., through spiritual healing practices. We, therefore, stand firm on the doctrine of healing that God himself has revealed to the Spiritual Churches, based on three kinds of philosophical understanding.

1. Revelation — which may be defined as that act of God by which God communicates to the mind of man, or to Spiritual Churches, the truth not known before and incapable of being discovered by the unaided mind of man.
2. Inspiration — defined as the divine influence which renders

Spiritual Churches infallible in the truth that they have already manifested before the society of God.

3. Illumination — defined as the divine quickening of the human mind in virtue of which it is enabled to understand.

Through these gifts spiritual churches have been equipped to understand Godly transmission in three different categories. Since there are people without these gifts who pretend to despise us and say that the people who belong to Spiritual Churches are not Godly people, let me refer them to St. Luke 10:23-24.

Then Jesus turned to the disciples and said to them privately, "How fortunate you are to see the things you see. I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see, but they could not, and hear, but they did not."

We are aware that the difficulties facing the Independent Churches throughout Africa have to do with a lack of skilled manpower and a lack of material resources. But these churches are, nevertheless, rich in spiritual resources.

Nowadays the Independent Churches find themselves in unfavorable conditions. We are churches without a long historical record or background. This fact reminds us of the quotation made by the late President Sir Seretse Khama in the *Botswana Daily News*, May 19, 1970: "A nation without a past is a lost nation, and a people without a past is a people without a soul." So far then, Independent Churches do seek recognition, acceptance, and participation in the society on a fraternal basis with other religious societies. We come as authentic religious groups, believing in all the doctrines of orthodoxy, rather than as movements that threaten other religious organizations within the society.

Although Independent Churches are working hard to meet the aspirations of the people by contributing to the ongoing development of the country, in terms of both spiritual and material needs, we are still hampered in reaching our objectives because of financial problems facing the church-

ches in our country. Moreover, we have no source of donor assistance as is true of other religious organizations in Botswana.

Our Call to Unity

We are reminded, finally, of the necessity of unity whenever we proclaim Jesus as our Saviour. All Christians should take into account the necessity of becoming more united in spirit, in every endeavor. Without a doubt, unity is the main source of the power we all need to fulfill our religious obligations. I call upon all the participants in this conference to work together in order to promote our religious unity with the entire world. In doing so, let us begin by promoting the entire religious doctrines and philosophical understandings that exist among ourselves as African peoples. Our discipleship should convince the world that although we came here from different geographical areas and different religious backgrounds, we all belong to one God and have one destination. So then let us work for some positive outcomes from this conference, as sons and daughters of one family.

Finally, I want to congratulate the University of Botswana for the inspiration it has given for sound grassroots development among the Independent Churches of our country. It is my hope that our deliberations will go far in molding and enriching Christian life from all Christian perspectives in our country and beyond.