

**FROM RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION TO  
RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE: AN ANALYSIS OF  
ILLNESS AND HEALING IN AFRICAN RELIGION  
AND CHRISTIANITY**

BY

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, to the  
Department of Religious Studies at the University of Cape Town under the supervision of  
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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work could not have been a success without the help of the following people and institutions. I wish to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Kwenda and Prof. Chidester my supervisors, for their guidance, support, care, understanding and stimulation. Thanks to the Centre for Science Development (CSD) and the A. W. Mellon Foundation for their generous financial support which made it possible for this work to be done.

I also like to thank the following Christian groups for sharing their theology with me during the field work: His People (UCT), Apostolic Faith Mission (Gugulethu), and Methodist Church (Rosebank).

Likewise I would like to say to the adherents of African religion who shared their African theology for the success of the research "*A ene pula, motho ke motho ka batho ba bang. Le ka moso.* Let the rain fall. It is true a person is a person through others."

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# ABSTRACT

In southern Africa, comparative religion was conducted on frontier battlefields. Comparisons were not merely intellectual exercises. They were entangled in the European conquest and subjugation of Africans. Initially, European observers denied the existence of any indigenous African religion. The enemy had no religion. Under colonial control, however, Africans were recognised as having a religion that could be inventorised and analysed. (Chidester, 1996:219)

This enigmatic quotation gives an explicit background to the problems that this thesis tries to tackle. In South Africa the field of religion has been contested for a long time. There have been imbalances in the way religions have been treated. To be precise, Christianity has been treated with respect while African religion together with other religions has been looked down upon. With this note this thesis is an endeavour towards developing religious tolerance in South Africa. It contributes to the wider discussion on religious discrimination and religious tolerance.

The title of this thesis, "From Religious Discrimination to Religious Tolerance: An analysis of illness and healing in African religion and Christianity" explains itself. Since this thesis focuses on South Africa, the title suggests that there is religious discrimination in South Africa and that there should be transformation towards religious tolerance. It also highlights the significance of respect for all religions and their belief systems. To illustrate the existence of discrimination and the need for tolerance the thesis uses the example of Christianity and African religion. Discriminatory and derogatory terms that have been used to refer to African religion, such as, superstition, culture, tradition, traditional, and African religions, are exposed.

To be precise, the thesis deals with three problems. The central one is that of comparison, that a comparative study of religion is based on apartheid principles. It focuses on discrimination against African religion and its practices. The second problem is that of the discriminatory terms mentioned above that have been used to refer to African religion. Especially African 'Traditional' religion because it derives the religion as static as if it belongs to the past, as non-existent. The last problem is that of how to move from religious discrimination to religious tolerance.

In resolving the problems mentioned above, the thesis moves from the vantage point of the theory of the social construction of reality. Reality is socially constructed and it is dynamic. As part of a socially constructed reality, religion requires continuous changes to help it adapt in a world that is in a continuous transformation. This implies that since South Africa is in a new dispensation which is democratic, it should do away with its past which was apartheid induced, the past that resulted in religious discrimination and only one religion being tolerated. The theory of religion as a social construction of reality calls for reconstruction of perceptions of other religions, like African religion.

That is to say, a new comparative method has to be employed, one that moves away from apartheid paradigm. Hence a phenomenological method which is qualitative has been employed in the thesis. Field-work was conducted in Cape Town among the adherents of African religion [Sotho-Tswana, amaZulu, and amaXhosa] and Christianity [Methodists and Born-again or Pentecostals]. Fourteen people were interviewed; six from each religion and two western healers.

The methodology used is relevant for the thesis because it does not pretend to give causal explanations in terms of physical laws. This has an important role to play in introducing religious tolerance because it analyses all religions as they are and it also allows people to

be empathetic and descriptive and not criticise other religions. Likewise, the thesis argues that the term 'Traditional' when referring to African religion has to be abandoned because it betrays the reality of the religion. It should be African religion. For religious tolerance to exist, we need an integrated approach for dealing with problems in education, such as curriculum transformation in tertiary and non-tertiary institutions, and laws, such as legislation against discrimination.

This idea of understanding all religions as they are is a complete break with the past; it is the creation of a new reality that serves the interests of every person in South Africa because every person's religion will be regarded as equally important. On this note, this thesis shows that there is hope for the future, even though the world we live in is full of confusion as perhaps never before.

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to all those people who are concerned with the well being of every person in the entire universe. That is, teachers, parents, religious leaders, political leaders, children and every South African who is dedicated to contribute to nation-building and well-being of all people. This is also a monument to my late twins Buhle and Bontle who passed away during the writing of this thesis. Not forgetting my wonderful husband, Sibusiso Masondo.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Only if we delve into the study and practice of religions can we understand one another, and then is a mutual fecundation possible. (Fu, 1989:482)

South Africa has been, for a long time, under white minority rule. During this time western culture, tradition, custom, law, and religion were forced upon all people. Western standards were used as normative or to determine the authenticity of anything. And since the ascent of the National Party to power in 1948 South Africa was deemed a Christian state<sup>1</sup>. As a result, religion was used to put people on a ladder with whites at the top and Africans at the bottom. Chidester (1992:89) backs this up by arguing that religion was used to differentiate people along with racism. With this system Africans have suffered a lot because "they were seen by missionaries as people without a religion thus without a right" (Chidester 1996:14). Thus as a result, their religion was either seen as magic, superstition or simply non-existent.

In this manner Africans experienced the worst form of discrimination which Bar-Tal calls "delegitimation: the denial of categorised groups of humanity" (1989:171). In South Africa, Africans were dehumanised and were seen as sub-humans, an inferior race. Allport takes this further in his definition of discrimination as "any behaviour which denies individuals or groups of people equality of treatment which they may wish" (in Berger, 1966:10). Thus one can see that discrimination is still practically observable in relation to African religion. This religion is perceived by many as "traditional, primitive, inauthentic:

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<sup>1</sup>This is clearly stated in the 1983 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa.

superstition, witch-craft" (see, Appendix II: A, F, III: A, and Schimlek, 1950, Olupona, 1991, Idowu, 1973, Evans-Pritchard, 1965). Many authors continue to treat African religion not only as handed down from generation to generation but as static.

Even though scholars like Olupona, Idowu and Evans-Pritchard deny that it is static, when reading their works one detects that it is in their subconscious that African religion is "static"<sup>2</sup>. A question may arise why is it called 'traditional' or 'primitive'? We will deal with this later.

This argument shows that African culture and religion have been down played for so long. Because those who wanted to be in power due to their competitiveness perceived what is African as inauthentic, and as a result people were socialised in that reality. Therefore

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<sup>2</sup>Olupona (1991:1) argues that "religion does not change but the society changes". This implies that the author assumes that African 'traditional' religion itself is static the only changing phenomenon is the society itself. But in his perception does this also apply to other religions?

Idowu argues that "African 'traditional' religion is that which is handed down from generation to generation . That which continues to be practised by living men and women of today as the religion of the forebears" (104) And goes on to argue that changes in religion occur externally and these changes affect theology (14). If it is like that why does the author continue to call African religion 'traditional'. There is confusion here.

Evans-Prichard maintains that "he uses the word because it is being used and so far it has not caused any confusion in anthropology" (18). But throughout his book one sees that the author argues that all faiths are the same (15). His problem is linked with the reality of the time which supported the idea that, everything African was primitive.

According to Bar-Tal, "For competitive society when a group maintains contact and/or relation with another group, each of them tries to achieve superiority over the other group. Groups compete among themselves and through comparison, strive to view themselves as more successful, developed, or more moral and human. ...Delegitimization provides solid grounds for superiority in comparison to the delegitimised group as it lowers the value of the latter group extremely. It indicates that the group has very negative characteristics to the extent that it should be excluded from the commonly accepted group" (1989:177-8).

religious reality was such that people would side-line any one who practised African religion and culture. This is clearly evident in what one of my informants said,

when people see you going to an inyanga or a sangoma or seeing you practising your culture and religion, they would say you are evil and worst of all regard you as a witch, superstitious, idiot and traditional. (Appendix I: B)

Such criticism of people who practice African Religion comes from people who have been influenced by a western form of Christianity and western culture and its practices. Hence one would not only blame such people, one should trace back to the European world to find out their perception of a religion.

For Europeans, religion is Christianity. They use Christian characteristics to define a religion. Thus when they arrived in Africa they met something different, something outside their world-view. They regarded such a religion as 'primitive or traditional'. Because for them, "the simpler the technology and the social structure, the more degraded the religion and indeed any other conceptions" (Evans-Pritchard, 1965:107).

Hence in the 19th century for many people and scholars like Jevons in his book entitled, The History of Religion, he regarded religion as "a uniform evolutionary development of totemism, animism, being rather a primitive philosophical theory than a form of religious belief" (in Evans-Pritchard, 1965:5). This implies that people around this time to use Evans-Pritchards analysis,

were seen as bad and stupid because they have had bad institution and had bad institutions because they are ignorant and superstitious, and ignorant and superstitious because they have been exploited in the name of religion by cunning and avaricious priests and the unscrupulous classes which have supported them. (ibid, 15)

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The 19th century mentality on religion was taken by westerners to Africa but it was changed. It was African religion that was inauthentic, primitive, undeveloped, magic, simple and uncivilised. Christianity was perceived as authentic and modern and essentially rational (see Chidester 1996). That is to say the European world-view of rationality was used to explain religion. This is the reason why there were changes on whether African religion exists or not. It was a constant shift of denial and acceptance of the existence of African religion. And in the end, around 1917, it was said that it exists but it is "primitive African religion" (Ranger, 1984:251-2).

One can see that the 19th century philosophers positively and negatively had an impact in the study of religion. They contributed a lot to knowledge. If it was not for them we would not have the bulk of knowledge that we have at our disposal. They also left a misconception that modernity is linked to religion, Christianity in particular. And other religions especially African religion are 'primitive'. Evans-Pritchard argues that some of the philosophers saw African religion as 'primitive' because "they saw it as a weapon that could be used to down play Christianity" (1965:15). Despite this reason, Evans-Pritchard fails to show that the underlying factor is that these philosophers perceived Africans as barbaric, primitive, stupid, and unscientific also. Clearly one cannot expect something rational from someone who is stupid.

Missionaries also held the same views with the scholars mentioned above. The only difference is that missionaries wanted to dominate Africans. They wanted to convert them to Christianity, and for them conversion meant becoming a European before accepting the Gospel. Chidester has this to say about them,

In the history of missions large scale mass conversion to Christianity was in fact linked to the destruction of the independent African economical, social and political life. (1992:38)

In conclusion, one can argue that the contributions of missionaries, some early philosophers, and some scholars today have impacted negatively on the study of African religion. They resulted in many distortions about Africans and their world-view and they were used as a justification for their eventual subjugation. Christianity and its western baggage was used as an interpretative tool to understanding African religion and its cultural practices. And as a result, African religion was misinterpreted and undermined. Evans-Pritchard aptly says that,

many Anthropologists whose theories have been influential have not been near a 'primitive people' relied on information by Europeans explorers, missionaries, administrators and traders. This evidence is highly suspect. Much of it was false and almost of all of it was unreliable and by modern standards of professional research casual, superficial, out of perspective, out of context and to some extent this was true even of the earlier professional anthropologist. (1965:6)

It is, however, important to note that the contribution of these people to the study of religion should not be underestimated. Their conclusions and analyses were influenced by their social and intellectual reality, a European, scientific world-view. According to Berger reality is, "a quality appertaining to phenomena that we recognise as having a being independent of our volition. It is taken for granted" (1966:16). This reality is socially constructed and it is shared by people. It is taken as God-given by ordinary people. Everyone who deviates from the norm is sidelined and is regarded as an outsider or an outcast. And, as a result, people are "obliged to suspend such doubts as [they] routinely exist in everyday life" (Berger, 1966:38). This implies that people end up not questioning things because they regard their life as unquestionable. Those who risk being sidelined are sometimes captive to what their society regards as real. They find it hard to rid themselves

of the shackles that society imposes on them. (see Idowu 1973 , Olupona 1991, and Evans-Pritchard, 1965).

The dominant religious paradigm in South Africa is a western Christian perspective. This view is used to measure all other religions. And as a result African religion was inauthentic and reduced to a "tradition". Hence the name African 'traditional' religion. Therefore it is important to change this reality of perceiving anything including religion from a western milieu. Because reality is not static; it changes. That is the reason why Berger argues that,

everyday life presents itself as a reality interpreted by [people], and subjectively meaningful to them as a coherent world. People take it as given. (1966:33)

However, the April 1994 elections in South Africa signalled an end to that reality of exclusion by introducing the concept of power-sharing, the bill of rights, and religious freedom. This political transition marks an acceptance that there are many religious perspectives and they are all valid.

The April 1994 elections, mark the beginning of a new reality of a struggle to "find" and reform the destroyed aspects of people's lives. In Nankivell's words "the concept of equality goes hand in hand with justice" (1978:39). In other words, justice should be seen

to be done in the new era. The notion of religious freedom and religious tolerance<sup>3</sup> should be exploited to create a climate of dialogue<sup>4</sup> and co-operation among all faiths.

There has to be a recognition among all religions that they can learn from each other. And the development of an ethic of working together for the common good of all humankind, where all the religions would be seen and understood as they are. This implies that stereotypical names that have been used to describe other religions like African religion, such as [superstition, traditional, or culture] would have to cease.

According to Villa-Vicencio (1988:44-64) such prejudices in South Africa occurred because of a Christian superiority complex. Thus it is the aim of this research to show that all the religions, including African religion, have equal value and they have to be taken seriously. This means that we should construct a new reality which fits the new South Africa, the reality of respect for every religion, studying the religions from within and correcting the wrongs that have been done to any religion. The role of people concerned will be of importance, people like scholars, and those in the media, universities, schools, colleges, and religious denominations or groups.

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<sup>3</sup> Tolerance in this context mean to accept other peoples beliefs as they are, not to discriminate against them.

<sup>4</sup> Dialogue refers to people learning from other peoples religions. Where in the spirit of communication about diversity of beliefs occur freely and people begin to accept and appreciate each other more. Dialogue here does not mean a melting pot where in other peoples beliefs would be crushed the aim being that they should be converted to other faiths. It basically mean understanding other faiths as they are and learn where possible.

## 1. PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY AND THE PROBLEM

The question of religious intolerance has been evident in South Africa for a long time. This is depicted in the manner in which different religions are treated. Christianity is seen as an authentic faith and other religions are not. That is the reason why African religion<sup>5</sup> is treated as an outdated religion.

This is a crisis that the whole world is now facing, the crisis of 'religious intolerance' and how to deal with it. The crisis stems from religious competition. Religious competition means to fight over which religion is the best and authentic. Competition in religion is not an expression that is ordinarily used as is in choral music, athletics and games, or business and politics. Using the word might invite perplexities, but we have to converse about it because it is the reality that we are faced with.

The problem stems from the definition of religion that is generated by the dominant perspective, which falsifies the religious content of other religions. It dictates that a religion should have

three categories verbal [worship and doctrine], practical [worship and cultus] and social...Expression in only two of these categories cannot be properly regarded as a religion. (Ellwood Jr., in Newman, 1989:200)

The implication of this is that any religion which does not fit within the scope of the definition is disqualified from being a religion. It is important to note that religion is not a

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<sup>5</sup>It must be understood here that when the writer talks about African religion she does not exclude other religions that have been discriminated against.

simple phenomenon. In fact, it is a very complex phenomenon. This is illustrated by Newman in that,

Defining religion is no easy matter, either for the lexicographer or the philosopher of religion or the student of comparative religion. Nevertheless, those who make it their business to defend religion as such and attack secularism have an obligation to make it as clear as possible to their audience what it is they mean by "religion". (1989:196)

Religion is a very broad term, but to be precise it is the way of life of people. To use Eliade's words "religion is an experience of existence in totality ...and the exemplary solution of every existential crisis" (1960:17-18). That is to say it is all encompassing and all the things other than the Ultimate being must be put under it.

On the basis of Eliade's words one can see that the concept of religion in South Africa has been distorted. This is clear from the field work conducted. Many of the informants do not see African religion as a religion, they regard it aggressively as a "superstition", a "culture", or "tradition" (see Appendix I and II). However, they see Christianity as a "religion" (see Appendix II).

Similarly, in academia we find the same problems. African Religion, in particular, has been studied largely from a western Christo-centric perspective. As a result many misconceptions were created about it. That is the reason why Mbiti argues that,

Many books and articles about African Religion have been written by outsiders. In these writings a number of wrong and derogatory things have been said. Even many Africans have been led to the same wrong terms and hold the same ideas. Let us put right some of these wrong things. (1991:18)

In addition, the way African religion is called African 'traditional' religion creates very serious conceptual problems. When one traces the history of the name one finds that it

was born of reaction and confrontation. It was introduced to differentiate most of African practices from Christianity and other religions. This was not done in an honest way but as a way of oppression and denying Africans a religion and power.

The term "traditional" has negative connotations, it implies primitiveness or backwardness. When referring to African religion it has been used to explain the religion as if it is based on the past practices which do not change with time. This implies that it has been used to denote African religion as static (Idowu, 1973 :14, Olupona, 1991:1, Evans-Pritchard, 1965:8, and Schimlek, 1950). Christianity has never been regarded as 'primitive' in South Africa. It is because for many scholars (like Schimlek, 1950) and other people (like Mrs L appendix A) regard Christianity as modern and authentic, and African religion as unscientific, uncivilised, and superstitious.

Such scholars and people adhere to the theory that sees religion as static and society as dynamic (Olupona, 1991:1, Idowu, 1973: 14). This is problematic because it is as if a person is saying the church does not change but the people inside undergo changes. But what is a church? A building used by Christians for their activities? The people who are Christians? Scholars who adhere to such a theory argue as if religion is not empirical.

This explicitly points to the view that western thinking is the foundation in analysing religion. For many western Christians, their religion does not change; the only thing that changes is culture and traditions (Miss L: appendix A). Such a belief is misleading because it sees Christianity as free of culture and tradition. In addition it claims that Christianity is modern. This depicts the problem of comparison. That comparative religion for a long time has been done on the basis of Christian standards and western culture. This implies

that, the comparative methodology that has been used is discriminatory, it had racist connotations.

It is the purpose of this research to deal with problems like these that lie in academia and that lead to the distortion of religion and cultural practices. Wallace explains this clearly by arguing that,

Like any other aspect of culture religious systems are in constant process of alterations. Either in response to internal pressures within the social systems, to environmental changes or to the impact of acculturation. (1972:496)

This research tries to show that African religion has been treated as if it were a bizarre museum item entirely different from other religious phenomena found in western cultures. Africans have been described by some sociologists and anthropologists like Evans-Pritchard (1965), Samuel Baker (in Evans-Pritchard, 1965), and some missionaries like Moffat, and others (in Chidester, 1994) as pagans or as people whose lives are dominated by superstition. It has been argued that they lack any theological ideas and that all the elements which make Christianity and other religions are lacking in African religion (Ayisi, 1988:71). Missionaries saw African religion and culture as largely based on magic and superstition. In fact, some of them went as far as to say that Africans were a people without a religion or knowledge of God (Setiloane 1976). This I believe impacted on the adoption of the name "African traditional religion".

Calling African Religion "traditional" has created many distortions that we are faced with in academia. This is because language creates a consciousness. When researching about any aspect or topic in African religion, some scholars look for static traditions not for a dynamic religion. That is the reason why African perception of illness and healing has been

so misrepresented. Because most of the books written on the topic have done so from a one sided view.

That is why many used western perspective to explain the topic (see Sibisi 1975)<sup>6</sup>. Such scholar's information shows how much knowledge we lost as a result of earlier prejudices about African religion and its practices, especially the topic of illness and healing. The most interesting observation that the writer detected is that many Africans, be they Christians or African religionists, from both rural and urban areas, continuously rely on African healing and healers (see appendices I and II:C, D, E).

The problem we are faced with in this research is that many of the scholars who research on African religion fail to recognise African religion as authentic and dynamic. Moreover they do not try to change the social construction of religion in the academy and change the name African 'traditional' religion to African religion. We do not dispute the fact that there are some scholars who see African religion as dynamic, but they have not attempted to challenge the name 'traditional'.

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<sup>6</sup>Sibisi, H. (1975) "The place of spirit possession in Zulu cosmology" argues that when the healers heal the person who is possessed by an *indiki* spirit (this is a spirit that has been disbanded by his/her family) they use "red emetics to eject the alien spirit and white emetics to arouse her own spirit" (50-51). This is problematic because it implies that healing is static. Likewise the author also fails to explain why the *indiki* possesses a person (50). There are some gaps here, because according to African thought and philosophy nothing happens without a reason and everything is seen holistically. Sibisi thus, fails to explain *indiki* within the African context. She uses western perspective. Spirit possession or any topic has to be explained within African context of a community. That is to say the moral, social, spiritual, physical and psychological aspects of the human person has to be covered.

In sum this thesis has three problems; (1) comparison is the central problem (2) discriminatory terms that have been used to refer to African religion, and (3) How we should move from religious discrimination to religious tolerance.

It is the purpose of this thesis to develop a model of understanding that is required in South Africa in order for religious tolerance to exist. This is necessary because the majority of scholars, religious leaders, and ordinary people have failed to come up with a model of understanding that accommodates every religion. Thus this research tries to show that every religion is worthy of respect. And down-playing other religions through the use of derogatory names should not be used when defining any religion because they all have many elements both outward and visible characteristics which are common in all the religions. For example, all religions have rituals, healing procedures, the problem of evil and its solutions. These can be different in practice and detail but the fact of the matter is that all religions have some similar institutions which make them religions.

In conclusion, the aim of this research is to show that the concept of religion is not as narrow as it has been used in this country where religion has been defined on the basis of a selection of generic traits such as, temples, priests, scripture and others. We have to move from that premise and define religion as the way of life for people. The term "tradition and traditional" should not be used negatively as it is used when referring to African religion. Far from any suggestion that it is static, African religion is dynamic, because it keeps on changing (see Ranger, 1972:21). The term African religion should not be used to refer to a static past that is lived in the present. Thus we will argue that all the religions, Christianity and African religion included, are traditional in the sense that they all have dynamic traditions. The term "tradition" should not be used to exclusively describe African religion because every religion has its tradition as well as its culture.

We will also show that no religion is more rational or enlightened than others. There are areas in almost all religions where there are no rational or scientific explanations but only those of faith, for example, faith healing. There is no good or bad religion. Modernity influenced all the religions but they are not modern. This is backed up by Benavides who argues that "religions are not independent variables but are rather the result of historical development" (in Fu, 1989:181). Sonn takes this further by stressing that "if one religion changes so has the other religion" (in Fu, 1989:477).

On the basis of this argument, this thesis will show how both religions have been changing by focusing on the topic of illness and healing in African religion and Christianity.

In trying to demonstrate that African religion is not static and that there has been discrimination against people who practice and the religion itself fieldwork on illness and healing was undertaken among sampled adherents of both African religion [amaZulu, amaXhosa, baSotho, baTswana] and Christianity [Methodists, Born-again]<sup>7</sup>. It is important that we say here why the writer decided to narrow her informants to only the ones she has chosen. The writer acknowledges that it would have been more convincing if she could have included the African Independent churches. But Independent churches are

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<sup>7</sup> It is important that the writer mentions at this stage that, when she deals with the information of the Christian groups mentioned above, she will not mainly focus on the official theology on paper from conference, because the information is mainly depended on the people interviewed. There is a distinction between the theology on paper and the theology in practice. Likewise people are influenced by socialisation agents like, family, education, media, peers and others, and as a result one finds out that many a time people who belong to the same congregation do not practice what is officially preached from the pulpit. This imply that what is Methodist or Born-Again to another person is not. That is what is officially preached on the pulpit is not practised similarly by the adherents of the churches mentioned. This is raised here to avoid any invitation of dubiousness from people who belong to the groups under study.

recognised as dynamic religions. Even though there is discrimination against them, it is not as severe as discrimination faced by African religion.

This exercise will show that it is discriminatory and undermining to call African Religion or any religion "traditional". It will be shown that dialogue between African religion and Christianity, if supported and led by scholars, the government, religious leaders, and others, can lead to religious tolerance in South Africa.

## 2. THESIS

The term "traditional" has long been used as a euphemism for labels "uncivilised", "primitive", "pre-literate", "tribal" or "non-western". In fact, until recently many anthropologists world-wide spent most of their time studying "traditional" societies and describing the "traditions", "culture" or "customs" (in this context these three terms are used interchangeably) which were assumed to control the behaviour of people in this category. In the social sciences in general, "tradition" has been contrasted to the notions of "reason", "rationality", and "science" (Shils, 1981). Thus the lives of "traditional" people are seen as "bound by the cultural horizons set by (their) tradition", in contradistinction to "modern" people who are conceived as "culturally dynamic, oriented to change and innovation" (Eisenstadt, 1972:1) [Spiegel and Boonzaier, 1988:41].

African religion and Christianity have been seen as different. Christianity is seen by many people as authentic and modern, while African Religion is seen as a "tradition" or simply static (see Schimlek 1950). Thus in this research we will argue that both religions have got some similarities they are not modern but have been influenced by science or modernity. Likewise, these religions keep on changing with the times because religion is socially constructed.

It will be argued that the mere fact that African religion is called 'traditional' is discriminatory because it is as if Africans live their past in the present in a static manner. Some scholars like Pannikar have tried to come up with new definitions to the term but

with no success. Their argument on the term when relating to African religion is not sufficient. That is the reason why this thesis opts for the term to be thrown away. The anti-thesis is that we can not redefine the term.

Tradition does not mean a merely mechanical repetition of what has been but the living transmission [traitum = handing over] of the crystallised experience of what has happened. It does not mean stagnation but continuation and growth. We talk about tradition, that is, about transmission, only when something is actually given, handed over, communicated and not when it is merely preserved. (Panikkar in Fu, 1989:479)

On the basis of this argument, it will be argued that we should stop calling African religion 'Traditional' because this has got negative connotations. This exercise, even though it is artificial because there is no word that directly translates as religion in African languages, would be fruitful. Even though it might produce some misrepresentations they would be less dangerous than the ones that are found now.

The mere fact that African religion is called a tradition implies that every element of this religion will be regarded as "traditional". That is the reason why the religion is disregarded and misinterpreted. This is clearly depicted in the manner in which the religion is seen as a mentality and an inventory. A mentality in the sense that people just pick and choose what they believe is vital and make sense in the religion, phrases like *ubuntu*. An inventory because, the religion is seen as a store-room of unused oral material on ancestors, witchcraft, and so on. This clearly shows that the term 'traditional' implies that African religion is dead.

The effect of referring to the religion as "traditional" has also affected the area of healing. African healers are called 'traditional healers' which implies that their healing methods are 'out-dated' or 'irrational' 'superstitions' and 'magic' (Schimlek, 1950). Even their diagnosis

of illnesses as due to witchcraft is looked down upon. The fact of the matter is that there are many people who believe in and have been helped by these practitioners. When patients try to explain to western medical practitioners that they have been bewitched, this explanation is not accepted (see Appendix I: D E and F). Moreover this work will dispute the dominant Christian view that there are no similarities between African religion and Christianity.

In sum we will adopt some measures that will help in resolving the problem of religious discrimination in South Africa. Likewise we will develop a programme that can be used to help in cultivating the ethic of tolerance in relation to African religion because all religions are worthy of respect. Thus we will argue that both African religion and Christianity are dynamic, they have got traditions and culture in them and some of their views on illness and healing are similar, the differences lie on the histories and the cultures from which they emerged (Ayisi, 1988:71). This implies that Christianity is not better than any religion, including African religion, even though they have some differences they are all socially constructed. That is to say that both religions are not modern but are influenced by modernity.

### **3. LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS**

This study will only concentrate on the phenomenological traditions of African religion and Christianity. It will not focus on the theological, philosophical, and historical debates.

We will discuss the term "traditional" as discrimination against African religion or any other religion. This will be related to the topic of illness and healing. In discussing the topic of illness and healing we are not going to say extensively how illness and healing has

been in the past and what are the changes today. We are only going to emphasize the changes. Through this focus, we will examine some of the terms used for religion in the context in order to show that it has been discriminated against.

In **Chapter 1** we highlight the problem of the term 'traditional' as it pertains to African religion. We will also try to show that the religion is also traditional, that is to say all the religions. Arguing this way, we will show that it is not correct to refer to African healers as traditional and witchcraft as a superstition. **Chapter 2** investigates the history of discrimination against African religion. It uncovers some of the terms that have been used to describe African religion, and how these terms are linked to stereotypes. That is, terms such as superstition, culture, traditional religion, and African religions. In this part of the research fieldwork will be used to illustrate discrimination in relation to illness and healing.

**Chapter 3** deals with the privileges that Christianity has enjoyed in South Africa for so long. It has never been called by any other name like Christian religions or Christian traditional religion or Christianities.

In **chapters 4 and 5** respectively we deal with the realities of African religion and Christianity in relation to the causes of illness and their healing processes. In this chapter we will try to show the world-views of the two religions.

In **chapter 6** we come up with a comparative study between African religion and Christianity in order to show that both have got dynamic culture and traditions. We will play out a dialogue between the two religions. We will also try to argue that they are not supposed to be linked to development because they got mysteries like any other religion.

We will dispute the view that there can be no similarities between African religion and Christianity.

Lastly, **chapter 7** is a conclusion where we bring up the question of why we should no longer call African religion a "traditional" religion. The change of name will have a resounding impact on research in this area of study because scholars and researchers will no longer be limited by the stereotypes that go along with the word "traditional". This will bring us to the important issue that we need in this country, religious tolerance and liberation, that is to say, the R.D.P R. [The Reconstruction and Development Programme in the field of Religion]. §

#### **4. METHODOLOGY**

This research will use the phenomenological approach which is qualitative because it allows the researcher to be able to come up with rich information. The method allows the researcher to be a detached observer and not to criticise the beliefs of other people. This is a very important strength of the method because without understanding religions from within, how are we going to have religious tolerance? People will continue criticising other religions without the knowledge of the realities of those religions. According to Ryba this essence is not covered in scientific endeavours (1991:234). Thus the present writer saw it as vital to employ the methodology because it fulfils a "wish to understand religious things as believers understand them" (ibid., 234).

The present researcher is aware of the limitations of this method, which is that "it classifies and group widely divergent data in such a way that an overall view can be obtained of their religious content and the religious values the group contain" (Ryba, 1991:240). This

implies that the method has a tendency of unifying people into a definite group without taking into consideration the content of their beliefs. In this research we try to show that religion can be a social thing but it can be a personal experience as well. That is to say it depends on the social construction of reality. Thus the researcher tries to carefully illustrate that religion is flexible.

Despite of the shortcomings of the methodology, the researcher chose it because it fits with the definition of religion that is proposed here that "religion is the way of life". Therefore, this method is relevant to the present study because it helps us to understand and accept every religion. Moreover, this research is not a theological critique.

The voices of ordinary people are taken seriously. Data is collected and weighed in terms of the archival research. Archival work is vital because it gives more information and bridges the gaps where possible on the topic.

#### **4.1. THE NON-PROBABILITY AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE**

The method means that "the selected sample is not representative of the population because the units in the population are not given the chance to be included in the sample" (Ayim-Aboagye, 1993:87). This implies that the researcher decides to take what she thinks is a representative unit of the group, a typical informant, patient, healer, priest, place, or household.

#### **4.2. CHOICE OF INFORMANTS**

From 1 October 1995 field-work was started among the Black<sup>8</sup> and White people of Cape Town [amaXhosa and other language groups]. The number of people interviewed on African Religion is six, that is, four patients and two healers. The same procedure was used for Christianity by interviewing four patients and two priests. Likewise, two western doctors were interviewed in order to show that their healing forms part of the cultural practice of Christians.

#### **4.3. NUMBERS: 14 MEN AND WOMEN**

Fourteen people were interviewed, six men and eight women; six from African religion, six from Christianity, and two Western healers. Among Christians three were Methodist and the other three were Born-again. This done to show that there are differences within Christianity. All informants were above eighteen years.

#### **4.4. PLACE OF INTERVIEW:**

This was circumstantial, it was a choice of an informant. But generally home of the informant was used, because that helped them to feel free and relaxed. And it also helped for the researcher to observe their practices, sacred places, and among healers their patients and herbs.

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<sup>8</sup>This term is used in the political sense to include all those classified African, Indian and Coloured.

#### 4.5. TECHNIQUES OF DATA COLLECTION

The research employed open-ended interviews because from my experience many informants prefer open discussions and one gets more information this way. Moreover, the open structured interview is also used in getting the information. Questionnaires were not used because the researcher believes that one has to be with his or her informants, developing a good rapport with them so that they can feel free to give out what they believe in. The tape recorder was also not used. Although useful it tends to scare people off.

#### 4.6. SOME OF THE QUESTIONS USED:

Patients [Christians and Africans]

- 1) What do you regard as illness?
- 2) What do you regard as its cause?
- 3) Who is to blame for illness?
- 4) What mechanism, if any, is used to combat suffering?
- 5) Are there any special rituals performed to alleviate illness or to combat it?
- 6) Why is it that there is still suffering/illness even if people try to combat it?
- 7) When you are ill who do you consult?
- 8) Do you think African healers are effective in healing illnesses? Why?
- 9) How do they heal?
- 10) In your view do you think there are some changes that have occurred in African religion and its practices?
- 11) Is western healing effective in healing diseases? Why?
- 12) Do you see Christian faith and its practices changing?

African Healers [1-5 above]

- 1) Do you see western healing effective in healing illnesses?
- 2) Is African healing effective in healing illnesses? Why?

- 3) How do you feel since your healing process is not recognised legally by the state and other people?
- 4) Are there any changes that have occurred in your healing process and in the causes of illness?
- 5) How do you heal illnesses?
- 6) Do you see Christian practices changing all the time?

Western healers [1-5 above]

- 1) Do you see African healing as effective in healing diseases? Why?
- 2) Is your healing process effective? Why?
- 3) Would you support the legalisation of African healing? Why?
- 4) How do you see their healing process?
- 5) Do you see African healing changing all the time?

#### 4.7. VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF THE METHODS

With regard to the methods employed in this research Gordon argues that a reliable and validative research is the one that depends:

upon maintaining generally good interpersonal relations with the respondent and include (a.) being aware of the potential inhibitors which make the respondent unwilling or unable to give valid information, (b.) using both verbal and non verbal means to help the respondent to become more willing and able to give valid information, (c.) detecting symptoms of resistance in the respondent, and, refraining from pressuring the respondent for information before he is willing or able to give it. (1969:61)

This argument helped a lot in this research because a good rapport developed between the researcher and the informants. Understanding, patience, and a good sense of humour proved to be very effective tools of relaxing the informants and allowing them to say things they would otherwise not say. In some instances it was necessary to use leading and probing questions in order to verify and get vivid information where possible.

Since the traditional requirement of scientific method has been that the data should be reproducible, not having used the tape recorder and the questionnaire became a major drawback. This is where the problem lied because I was writing the information down and some of the examples and the experiences of the informants can not be repeated with the same meaning and vigour though the information may appear dramatic, personal, and clear in appearance.

Reliability is defined by Unger as "the relative capacity of measuring instrument to give a consistent result, either within itself or from one occasion to another" (1976:106-112). This is discouraging because when another researcher can use the same methods with the same informants he or she might come up with different results. Maybe because of the personality of that particular interviewer. And since culture keeps on changing, the informants might have different points of views then.

But since my aim was to get information on how the people in Christianity and African Religion view and perceive as the causes of illness and their healing and religious discrimination in relation to African religion. I think I was able to reach the goals of this research because I was able to get some relevant information.

## 5. TERMINOLOGICAL REMARKS

Throughout the study attempts will be made to explain important terms employed in the investigation. Here, I explain a few that are of particular importance.

- \* The term **culture** is used here to "a system of symbols and norms which guides a society or group by providing general images of the nature of the world, the purposes of life, and at least some of the basic principles by which life should be

lived" (Browning, 1987:5). Moreover, culture in this context is not seen as static but as dynamic and changing all the time.

- \* **Tradition and traditional** is defined by Shils (1981) as been contrasted to the notions of "reason", "rationality" and "science". This implies that the lives of Africans are seen as static while those of Christians are seen as dynamic and modern. On this basis I dismiss talking about African religion or any other religion as "traditional" [static], because the way every person from any religious background reason about the cause and effect of illness and healing is not "traditional" in the sense of static, but it is dynamic. This implies that Africans live their past in the present in a dynamic way. As a result tradition is used here as dynamic not static. Thus terms like African "traditional" healers are not used here we use African healers. To be precise this study argues that all religions have got dynamic traditions.
- \* *UTHixo* [Xhosa], *UNkulunkulu* [Zulu], *Modimo* [Sotho-Tswana], and God [Christianity]-they both refer to an **Ultimate Being**. But the differences are on the people who belong to the different cultures and who are socialised differently to relate to the Ultimate Being.
- \* *Izinyanya*, *Amadlozi*, *Badimo* [ancestors in African religion] and **Jesus Christ** [in Christianity]- these terms are used here to refer to **the mediators** between the Ultimate reality and the living. It is recognised that the way the terms are employed in the two religions is not the same.
- \* **Illness** in African Religion and Christianity is not understood in the same way. In African religion *ukugula golwala*, is understood holistically, when an individual is not well it is believed that all aspects of life, that is, moral, social, spiritual, psychological and the physical, have to be dealt with by using *imithi*, *dithhare* (herbs). When the person is ill all the community gets affected. However, in Christianity when a person is ill it is sometimes believed that it is because of germs or biological complications. Here the person is individualised. But there is a kind of holism when Western medicine is combined with Christian healing.

- \* **Born-again Christians** is a term used by some Pentecostal churches to refer to their members. In this instance the churches are His People Ministries and Apostolic Faith Mission.

## 6. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY: DISCRIMINATION, ILLNESS AND HEALING AS OBJECTS OF RESEARCH.

Positivism accepted only verifiable observations as 'truth' and automatically denied any ideas of religion or esthetic causality. (Peek, 1991:5)

Positivism affected the study of non-European religions like African religion and its healing procedure, and the result has been discrimination against the religion as we have shown above. Christian healing as a result was acceptable because it mixed faith healing with western scientific healing. And other healing systems like African healing seen as irrational. Here we will try to describe the phenomenon of illness and healing as seen in African and Christian religion. We will also try to examine the historical setting of the words culture and tradition in connection with illness and healing in both religions.

Due to the fact that many people and the missionaries failed to show that culture and tradition are also part of Christian healing, they only designated that to African religion. African healing is misrepresented and seen as a superstition and static (cf. Chidester, 1996; Schimlek, 1950; and appendix II:A, B, F). This enlighten us to the socio-cultural and historical background of the phenomenon to be investigated in both religions.

### 6.1. AFRICAN RELIGION AND HEALING

According to Setiloane (1976:43ff) this type of healing is based upon assumptions about supernatural and natural events. This is taken further by Foster who argues that the "natural event theory holds that illness results from natural forces and conditions", and

links the supernatural to "religion" and "magic" because illness is perceived as coming from the supernatural through the involvement of spiritual beings (1976:774-5). This healing involves a diagnosis of illness through the throwing of bones, whistling, touching the hand, and dreams<sup>9</sup>. Junod has this to say about the method of divination through the throwing of bones, he said,

the art of bone throwing is by no means a child's play, nor mere quackery by which astute soothsayers deceive their credulous followers. (in Peek, 1991:5)

The statement shows clearly that African healing has been taken seriously by some people even though others undermine it and regard the healers as deceivers. This again shows that many people do not understand African healing and religion. They study it using western and Christian standards. In South Africa this kind of healing is not legally recognised. At least one would argue that Christian healing is recognised because priests are allowed to practice their healing at the hospitals. African healers, on the other hand, are not allowed in hospitals. Even though patients ask to see them, that would not be allowed. This shows a narrow view of healing as if western healing and culture provide the only measure of healing the body.

Ackerckstein (1971:19) argues that 'traditional healing' is based on the supernatural causation of illness. This implies that a person who considers himself or herself to be ill always perceives the supernatural to be the cause, not anything else, and thus goes to the healer for help. This argument does not include the causes of illness as natural in African religion. It is perhaps because the descriptions of the patients illness only focuses on the

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<sup>9</sup>There are many other methods that are not included in this list.

psychological and social context and excludes the biological designation as some of my informants did (see Appendix I:A, B, D).

In order for healing to occur the cause of illness has to be identified. Healing occurs in the context of trust between the parties involved; the patient, the family, the ancestor as the protector of the individual, the healer and the Ultimate Being. The healing process depends on the illness and what the ancestors and *uThixo* says. The methods can include ceremonials, rituals, suggestion, naming, sacrifice, and divination (Setiloane, 1976:44-57). These ceremonials are not static they change. That is the reason why Peek argues that,

Divination systems are not simply closed ideologies founded on religious beliefs but are dynamic systems of knowledge upon which proper ordering of social action is based. (1991:2)

Healing as a result is holistic because the social, psychological, moral and the physical aspects of the body are dealt with (Shorter, 1985:1). This shows that in African healing no aspect of life untouched. Thus one gets a hint why African healing is chosen over other means of healing. This is made much easier because both the healer and the patient belong to the same worldview and have similar understandings on what the cause of illness is and how it can be healed.

The above discussion gives a preliminary idea of the causes of illness and how they can be healed, which are studied in this research. The most important thing in this discussion is that since people see 'spirits' as the cause of illness thus they also perceive healing obviously within the realm of the spiritual or supernatural and the natural. This will be shown clearly in the coming chapters.

## 6.2. CHRISTIAN RELIGION ILLNESS AND HEALING

Christian healing is a combination of religion and western culture. This is because they use western medicine and Christian tradition of healing and explanations about the causes of illness. The causes of illness are defined as supernatural [God and the evil spirit Satan] and natural [germ theory]. Thus in their healing process prayer, confession, fasting plays a major role. The individual in Methodist church and in Born-again churches will go to the priest talk to him about the illness and they will pray together in faith (cf. appendix II). Faith and repentance are very important because it is believed that sin is the driving force for suffering. This is clearly explained by Wesley who influenced the Methodist tradition, that:

religion in its proper nature was the therapy of the soul. It is therapeia psyches, Gods method of healing a soul which is diseased. Hearby the Great physician of souls applies medicines to heal this sickness, to restore human nature, totally corrupted in all its faculties. The healing encompassed such spiritual diseases as pride and self will, but the grand purpose was to restore not simply the soul but the entirety of the human nature including the body. (in Holified, 1986:17)

This statement shows that healing in Christianity occurs when the wrong is corrected, and in that way the medicine is used concurrently with ministry This is because the spirit is in a journey and it has to be holy (Wesley in Holified, 1986:19).

In the process of explaining the causes of illness the natural causes are not excluded but they are explained in scientific terms. Hence other Christians in the Methodist and especially among Born-again Christians the natural causes are also the result of the individual sin. They always quote one of the ten commandments which says,

Do not bow down to any idol or worship it, because I am the Lord your God and I tolerate no rivals. I bring punishment on those who hate me and on their fourth generations. But I show my love to thousands of generations of those who love me. (Exodus 20:4-6)

This general discussion gives an idea of how illness and healing is perceived in Christianity which is studied in this research. The most obvious ascertained thing from this description is that since most people believe that "spirits" and "germs" causes illness they also see the treatment and cure as obviously within the realm of the "supernatural" [God, Satan] and "natural"[scientific medicine which is believed is created by God to help the people]. That is to say culture and tradition are part of Christianity. This connection, like in African religion, is the one that is dealt with as it will be shown in due course.

### 6.3. 'TRADITION', 'CULTURE' AND 'RELIGION'

After we have given some explanations about illness and healing in both religions it is now vital to discuss how the phenomenon studied link to culture and tradition. Tradition is defined by Feierman as "the quality of reasoning about cause and effect"(1985:73). Panikkar (in Fu, 1989:479) takes this further by arguing that tradition means "the living transmission of the crystallised experience of what has happened. Not in a stagnant way but in a continual manner". Religion is defined here as the way of life of people. And culture is defined as "a system of symbols and norms which guides a society or group by providing general images of the nature of the world, the purpose of life, and at least some of the basic principles by which life should be lived" (Browning, 1987:5).

In South Africa many people have confused these concepts and ended up arguing as if African religion is the only religion that has traditions and culture. Likewise they saw the concepts as static when referring to African religion. From the definitions above one can argue that all religions have got the two aspects because they form part of the social construction of reality, of what religion is. That is the reason why Benavides (in Fu, 1989:181) argued that "religion is not an independent variable" it is made up of many

aspects of which culture and tradition are parts. These aspects are dynamic in order to fit the status quo of the time.

When missionaries came to South Africa they introduced western healing which is said to be "rational [scientific]" because it excludes "any explanation that goes beyond the apparent real world, by ignoring as irrelevant any theory that postulates any intervention in the inexorable workings of the laws of nature from outside the system" (Hammond-Tooke, 1989:145).

This is problematic because "in rigidly confining medical explanation within a scientific paradigm. Wider aspects, notably those normally associated with religion, are excluded and as a result, the really fundamental questions such as the meaning of life [why people suffer] and death are simply not addressed" (Hammond-Tooke, 1989:35). Some questions which Western medicine does not address are, "why me?", "why now?", "how did it happen?", "who is behind it?", and so on. In other words, western medicine has a narrow view of healing- it does not treat the patient holistically. This failure is based on the worldview that a person is a "member of animal kingdom, material bodies are subject to physical and chemical laws, and even the workings of the human mind are reduced to electrical impulses" (Hammond-Tooke, 1989:34).

This failure to understand a patient as a social entity renders Western medicine ineffective in some quarters, a number of people become very suspicious of this kind of arrogance. Any other explanation of illness is rejected as unscientific because it cannot be proved scientifically. It does not deal with the psyche and spirituality of a person. A person should be understood as a three dimensional being and the approach to healing should be holistic, in order to deal with all the aspects or dimensions in a person. Many Christians use it but

## CHAPTER 2

### HISTORY OF RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION AGAINST AFRICAN RELIGION

Discrimination is any behaviour which denies individuals or groups of people equality of treatment which they may wish. (Allport in Berger, 1966:10)

Discrimination against African religion and its practices in South Africa can be traced back the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck and subsequent white settlement in the Cape. Their mission was not solely commercial and militaristic, it included religious coercion on the side of Africans (Chidester 1992:38). Their attitude was informed by knowledge that was circulating in their mother-country that Africans were barbarians and savages that needed conversion. They then saw themselves as saviours of the heathens in South Africa.

In the process of this mission of conversion, African religion and practices was trampled upon. For it was perceived by missionaries and other people as barbaric, traditional, superstitious, inauthentic, and culture (see Chidester 1996, Appendix II: A, B, F, III: A). And in this process Christianity and western culture got uplifted as civilised and authentic. Therefore missionaries and other people who internalised western culture saw their duty being that of civilising and converting Africans to western culture and Christianity. This is clearly put by one of the missionaries, Henry Callaway, who said that,

Christian teaching must be supplemented by teaching of another kind, in fact, everything that is calculated to make them think and be systematic in their action and be provident in their concerns ...To teach to seat on chairs and eat off plates instead of squatting on the ground and eating with a chip out of a pot, to teach them to build square houses instead of round hovels are all parts of missionary teaching. (in Benham, 1896:58)

This statement sums up the attitude of missionaries towards Africans as a people and their way of life. The aim of someone like Callaway was to make Europeans out of Africans. In the process of doing that he had to obliterate all forms of religious and cultural expressions by the Africans. Missionaries wanted to disempower Africans, they denied them their right to religion and later around 1917 designated African religion a 'traditional' [static and barbaric] religion (Ranger, 1984:252).

Ranger takes this further by arguing that the acceptance of African religion in 1917 as a religion which is 'traditional' was a way of increasing control over African people (ibid., 252). Due to the fact that Africans were denied humanity, something that gives them identity. Therefore Africans were undermined and seen as old-fashioned. Likewise everybody who practised it was regarded as an idiot. People till today disregard African religion and anyone who practices it is sidelined and seen as indulging in superstitious nonsense (see appendix, I:B and II:A).

The impression that has been created in society is that everything European is good and acceptable and everything African is bad and unacceptable. Likewise this perception of reality argues that African religion is evil. Such unfounded discriminatory utterances has led to African religion not to be recognised even in this current dispensation. But we need to re-socialise our society that religion is not only Christianity, all religions are equal and worthy of respect and recognition. Let us now deal in detail with the stereotypes that African religion has been faced with till this current day.

## 1. STEREOTYPES AND THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF REALITY

Reality is a quality appertaining to phenomena that we recognise as having a being independent of our volition. It is taken for granted. (Berger, 1966:13)

The essence of the quote is that reality is a dynamic social construct. Which means that society defines what is real among themselves and take that as a norm. The problem with the construction of reality is that the dominant ideas in society are those of the ruling classes. The ruling classes have all the resources to promote these ideas. This leads to a perception that reality is God-given and anyone who deviates should be sidelined. In the process of defining what is real we sometimes distort reality in order to suit our purposes leaving the other groups disadvantaged.

Therefore stereotypes and prejudices become the order of the day. Stroebe argues that, "stereotypes are a biased perception or conception of an aspect of reality, especially of persons or social groups" (1989:5). He goes further to explain stereotypes as "beliefs or opinions about the attributes of a social group or its member" and prejudice as "a negative inter group attitude with some degree of favour or disfavour" (ibid., 8). It is important to note stereotypes and prejudices are not always negative but they become a problem only when they are discriminatory towards the other group. They form part of a socially constructed reality. And this reality is expressed in language, which is "capable to transcend the reality of every day life altogether" (Berger, 1966:54).

Moreover language as one of the agents of communicating reality, can sometimes be used by those in power for personal ends. Thus in the process other people get disadvantaged. Most of the words used to refer to the other groups are negative, because ,

For competitive society when a group maintains contact and/or relation with another group, each of them tries to achieve superiority over the other group. Groups compete among themselves and through comparison, strive to view themselves as more successful developed or more moral and human. Delegitimation provides solid grounds for superiority in comparison to the delegitimised group as it lowers the value of the latter extremely. It indicates that the group has very negative characteristics to the extent that it should be excluded from the commonly accepted group. (Berger, 1966: 54)

Religion is also socially constructed because as one of the cultural processes people always define what constitute a true religion and how it could be identified. In the process of defining other religions in South Africa got disadvantaged. This was because of the social setting that the definition came out, it was in the context of white domination. Wherein Blacks were seen as inferior and Whites superior. Hence the stereotypical names that have been used to refer to African religion.

It is vital to note here that words are sometimes used to differentiate people on a categorical basis. For instance Graumann argues that,

Those who are kept at a distance and accentuated as very different are also, as a rule, devaluated by means of derogatory words can be attained by their privative construction, as with, "non-Aryan" descent and "un-American" activities. It can be a word which is meant to convey the notion of fundamental lack, for an example, of culture, as in Greeks' and Romans' "barbarians" or of true faith and proper worship, as in the Christians' "heathens". (1987:191)

In most cases such stereotypical names have "privative construction" because people use them to define other groups of people as 'OTHER' (ibid., 191). This discrimination is done mostly due to the fact that the other group is threatened so they requires recognition over the other group. When one looks at African religion one detects that it is also seen as 'OTHER'. The term the "other, is the imaginary line" that is used to draw the line of difference between the opposing parties (Gilman, 1985:18). Gilman maintains that this line of difference is dynamic (ibid., 18). And since stereotypes mainly originate when ones self-

integration is threatened, thus one can argue that the dawn of a New reality which is impacted in the New Democratic South Africa demands all the religions to be seen in the true context. That is to say African religion has to be understood as is. Not as 'traditional' or anything that betrays it, but as a religion because that is what it is.

The terms used to refer to it indicates judgement on African religion. They are:

- \* Superstition
- \* Culture
- \* African religions
- \* African traditional religion.

These names are an extreme prejudice that Bar-Tal calls "delegitimation" which means a denial of a group humanity. The names imply delegitimation against African religion because they depict stupidity, demonic, inferior race, satanic, uncivilised, and primitive (Bar-Tal, 1989:171).

The above names show the effectiveness and power of language, because if one looks at the history of the names in our country one finds out that they came out of power struggle as we have argued and Whites wanted to disempower Blacks. That is the reason why Stroebe maintains that, "stereotypes and prejudice are often weapons in a fight over a scarce social resource, namely prestige and status with a society" (1989:15).

Let us discuss these stereotypes in relation to African religion in detail.

## 1.1 SUPERSTITION: SOTHO-TSWANA A CASE STUDY

The superstition of the Bachaping [Batlhaping], for it cannot be called religion, is of the weakest and most absurd kind, and, as before remarked, betrays the low state of their intellect. These people have no outward worship, nor, if one may judge from their never alluding to them, any private devotions, neither could it be discovered that they possessed any very defined or exalted notion of a supreme and beneficent Deity, or of a great and first creator. (Burchell in Chidester, 1996:180)

Religion in South Africa has been distorted by religious and racial prejudices. This is backed up by Prozesky who argues that

the history of mission in South Africa gives ample evidence of the fact that church and mission were identified with the West and its civilisation, as well as of the tacit assumption that Africa would do best by adopting the Western pattern. . . .As a result of this conviction South Africa was westernised at the same time as it was Christianised: indeed the Westernisation acted really as a precondition to the Christianisation, with the result that the church came to be seen as the bulwark of Western civilisation. (1990:30-1)

This implies that for the missionaries and some of their followers to be religious was to follow western culture and to be a Christian. This is evident from the way they treated African religion. They criticised the culture of the people and their organisation of things (cf. Chidester, 1994). They judged Africans from a western cultural and religious perspective.

That is the reason why they found no religion in Africa. And found a superstition which is defined as "living in the mysterious world of doubts and fears, in terror of the supernatural and ceaselessly occupied in coping with it" (Levy Bruhl in Evans-Pritchard, 1966:10). Which simply means Africans are ignorant and fearful of the things that are non-existent or the unknown.

On the basis of these arguments we will use the Sotho-Tswana as an illustration, the religion the so called Egyptians according to the missionaries. Because, like the Egyptians the Sotho-Tswana rendered divine honour to sacred animals (cf. Chidester, 1996:202). This is the evidence that shows that the missionaries and some of their contemporaries misinterpreted the Sotho-Tswana religion. They just jumped into conclusions without trying to observe and understand what was the role of these sacred animals. It really shows that they wanted to down play African culture and religion and uplift Western culture and Christianity as authentic. This shows that the "arts of civilisation and the blessings of redemption were so inextricably bound in the mind of the early missionaries" (Setiloane,1976:121).

To be explicit the denial of religion on the Bantu was a strategy used to conqueror them. The missionary interpretations of African way of life was based on cultural superiority and as the result this blinded them to discover that the Sotho-Tswana and other African people worship God but they worship Him differently from the way missionaries do.

#### **1.1.1. MISSIONARY DEFINITION OF RELIGION AND THE SOTHO-TSWANA RELIGION.**

"Booshuna [Batswana] nation" did not appear to have any form of religious worship. Lacking any notion of a good supreme being, they could not have religion. ...[They] observed certain customs such as male circumcision and all night dancing under the moon which suggest that they did not have religion, they did have superstition. Central to their superstition was the belief in the evil God (Barrow in Chidester, 1996:178)

This definition claims that religion has no culture, traditions, or mysteries. By reading between the lines one can argue that for Barrow and other missionaries Christianity is the religion and it is culture free. This is taken further by Hodgson and Broadbent who argue that, religion is the belief in God, to have a concept of immortality, have temples, outward forms of religious worship, have marriage institutions, proper domestic order, basic

institution that regulated human relations as well as between human beings and God (ibid., 182-183).

This definition analyses the Sotho-Tswana through Western and Christian standards. Because it says Religion is conforming to Western and Christian way of doing things. What is surprising in this broad definition that I picked up from the way missionaries criticised African religion is that missionaries claim that some of the religious traits are lacking among the Batswana people, this for me shows that they did not try to research in detail to find out how the Bantu people were doing their things like marriage, and their worship of God. Which brings me to the conclusion that missionaries were not in the position of accepting the Batswana as real people but as barbarians.

According to Moffat the Sotho-Tswana were without a religion because "they lived without revelation and because their savage ignorance disproved the existence of any natural religion" (in Chidester, 1996:187). Thus one can argue that cultural superiority was the order of the day among the missionaries. They came to convert the heathens in South Africa. It is my belief that even if they would have discovered something concrete about the Batswana religion they would not have accepted that as a religion but superstition. the reason being that they wanted to take over their wealth, land and everything valuable that is to it say to colonise the Batswana and other Africans.

Since the prerequisite of colonisation is to destroy the culture of the people you want to conquer, the missionaries did likewise and when the people resisted they said they have no religion and when they defeat them they said the Bantu [my emphasis the Sotho-Tswana] have religion but they do not worship God but ancestors and sacred animals (cf. Chidester 1996: chapter 5). The questions then arises how would these missionaries have felt if one

of the Sotho-Tswana people said you guys do not have religion you are superstitious as we are you always blame the devil for every thing that goes wrong in your life, and another thing is that you belief in Western doctors and in the bible there is nothing like your Christian religion is not authentic? Obviously they were going to come up with some reasons to answer this. But why did not they give the Sotho-Tswana a chance and time to explain why they did things the way they did? Why did not they live their cultural and racial prejudices and try to research the Batswana way of life?

### 1.1.2. ILLNESS AND HEALING AMONG THE SOTHO-TSWANA: MISSIONARY PERSPECTIVE.

In Western culture illness is referred to as the physical symptoms of the disease and requires scientific healing. It is mainly seen as caused by germs and biological complications. In African culture it describes symptoms of physical, psychological, moral, and social unwellness requiring natural medicines for healing. Illness is said to be caused by *uThixo*, ancestor, other spirits and witches. This view of illness was seen as superstitious by some missionaries like Moffat (cf. Setiloane 1976:108). Moffat said that,

Sorcerers and rain-makers<sup>10</sup>, for both offices are generally assumed by one individual, are the principal with which he [the missionary] has to contend in Southern Africa. They are ...our inveterate enemies and uniformly oppose the introduction of Christianity among their countrymen to the utmost of their power ... They constitute the very pillars of Satan's Kingdom in all places where such impostors are found. (in Setiloane, 1976:108).

Setiloane claims that, at least there were some missionaries like Cassalies who did recognise some of the activities of *dingaka* [African healers] as Religious ideas and not as

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<sup>10</sup>Not all African healers are rainmakers, there are different types of healers (for more information see, Setiloane, 1976).

superstition (ibid., 108). It is rare to find in the early missionary records African healing as genuine. Hence people like Junod have these positive ideas to say about African healing. He said,

the art of bone throwing is by no means a child's play, nor mere quackery by which astute soothsayers deceive their credulous followers. (Peek, 1991:5)

There are other groups of people who regarded African healing as non-existent and just a fooling of anxious people. That is the reason why Tailor termed African divination "games of chance" (in Peek, 1991:5). Hence African healers are not recognised by the law and many people see them as "witches and devil worshippers" (cf. Appendix II:A). Let us now see how the missionaries explain the causes of illness among the Sotho-Tswana.

### 1.1.3. THE CAUSES OF ILLNESS

#### 1.1.3.1. Witchcraft

Missionaries as it has been argued regarded the Batswana belief in witchcraft as superstition. This is backed up by Schimlek who argues that among the Bantu,

the great evil was superstition and witchcraft ... The haunting fear of witchcraft, the ever present feeling of the unseen powers working around them, could never be eradicated until in addition to a strong Christian conviction, some conception of the working of the natural laws especially the laws of health.... The curse of witchcraft is the penalty these people are paying for their failure to understand the working of the natural laws to perceive that the natural world is not man centered (1953:148).

This statement suggests that illness is not caused by witchcraft among the Bantu, their view of witches is non-existent. It also argues that natural cause are the main agents of the Bantu illnesses. In this argument the issue of civilisation comes back again. Because there were no hospitals in South Africa and the Batswana were wearing *ditshega* [the animal

skin used as clothes], and because of their sanitary system and also the food that they ate [different from that eaten by them] the Batswana healing system and idea of the causes of illness is not recognised it is regarded as caused by "dirt" (Comaroff, 1991:225). Let us take an example from Moffat who said,

The child as may be seen is carried in a skin on the mothers back, -with its chest lying close to her person. When it requires to be removed from that position, it is often wet with perspiration, and from being thus exposed to cold wind, pulmonary complaints are not infrequently brought on (in Comaroff, 1991:225).

One can ask a question did the missionaries really try to understand African Religion? If they did, why did not they do at least a comparative study with Christianity and live out comparing it with ancient people? This brings me to the issue of "superstition (fear)". That witchcraft and the *dingaka* practices are superstitious. An ordinary person can ask this question if the Batswana view of witchcraft is a superstition that means Christians view of The Evil Spirit is superstition. This argument is very vital it tries to show that it is important to understand why people do things and how they define things. Because for many Christians to say their religion has got some superstition it would be an insult because superstition means something else in their context [it means non-belief].

#### **1.1.3.2. Pollution**

Related to the topic of witchcraft there is illness as caused by the pollution of the individual. This is not merely a western definition of pollution. Thus is explained by Douglas (1966:3) as "danger-beliefs which threaten the transgressors. Thus as a result certain moral values are upheld and certain social rules are defined by beliefs in dangerous contagion". This definition shows that it is important to understand the world view of the people before you run into conclusions.

With the missionaries they did not understand the Sotho-Tswana view of pollution. They wanted to explain it the way pollution is understood in the West for instance environmental and physical pollution, this led to a great confusion. This is backed up by Douglas who argues that,

The nineteenth century saw in primitive religions two peculiarities which separated them as a block from the great religions of the world. One was that they were inextricably confused with defilement and hygiene. Almost any missionary's or traveller's account of a primitive religion talks about the fear, terror or dread in which its adherents live. The source is traced to beliefs in horrible disasters which overtake those who inadvertently cross some forbidden line or develop some impure condition. And as fear inhibits reason it can be held accountable for other peculiarities in primitive thought, notably the idea of defilement. (1966:1)

This statement suggests that the missionaries and some of their contemporaries did not get a clear picture of how pollution works. For them fear resulted in the belief of pollution. That is to say Africans confuse morality and hygiene. Even the idea of referring to African religion as primitive shows that they disregarded it as authentic. Primitive society is defined by Westerlund as

those that are isolated from the mainstream of Western civilisation. They are non literate and organised on the basis of either small local or kinship groups, with simple non specialised economies and technologies. (1985:28)

This implies that for the Batswana [and other Africans] even if something is caused by germs they will allude the illness to pollution or witchcraft. For an example maybe a woman's husband passed away and after some weeks or so she slept with another man, and after some weeks she gets ill and sores appears all over the body. It will be claimed that it is because she polluted herself by sleeping with another man during her mourning period and as a result the ancestors are punishing her.

Missionaries would say that there is no such thing, the woman is suffering maybe from chicken pox or it is because she is not washing her body properly (cf. Comaroff, 1991: chapter 8). It shows that since this world view is non-existence in their religion and culture, thus in other religions it is just fear of the unknown.

### 1.1.3.3. Illness as caused by Modimo, Ancestors and sacred animals?

According to some missionaries like Moffat the Batswana do not worship the Ultimate Being but the sacred animals (in Chidester, 1996:200-203). Moffat, regarded the name *Modimo* that the Batswana use to refer to the Ultimate Being as a fraud because he argued that they stole it from the missionaries (ibid. 194). As a result Moffat translated *Badimo* which means ancestors as demonic spirits. It is because *Modimo* is a Being who is high up there, and Moffat thought *Badimo* would be the opposite. This shows that these missionaries did not do their research well they just jumped into conclusions.

Since the missionaries since found animal emblems among the Sotho-Tswana, they concluded that these emblems like the ancestors are worshipped. They would argue that the Batswana believe that these animals as their god and would cause illness on them if they do not show respect to them. This is backed up by Arbousset and Daumas who argued that, if someone's emblem is a lion "they would not eat the flesh, though other tribes did so with relish they argued that, for the fear of eating an ancestor" (in Chidester, 1996:201). In addition to this Chidester (1996:201) argues that missionaries and some of their contemporaries did not end up by saying these animals are ancestral emblems, but they said they are seen among the Basotho as "gods or god-protectors". This implies that the missionaries would have argued that the Batswana pray to these animals for healing and as a result God does not feature anywhere.

If God does not exist among the Sotho-Tswana life who then do they see as the creator of the universe? Do they regard the sacred animals and ancestors as the creators of the universe?. These questions really show that in the frontier [contested zone] religion was really distorted. Because the Sotho-Tswana had a religion only when they submitted to colonial rule. And that religion was the worship of sacred animals which is similar to the ancient Egyptians. This shows that colonising the Bantu was the main thing here. By making an analogy with the ancient people these colonisers were using a strategy for ripping off the Bantu identity and confusing them.

## 2. A CULTURE AND A TRADITION

From all that can be ascertained on the religion of the Kaffirs it seems that those of them that are still in their heathen state have no idea (1) of a Supreme Intelligent Ruler of the universe, (2) of a sabbath, (3) of a day of judgement, (4) of the guilt and pollution of sin, (5) of a Saviour to deliver them from the wrath to come. (Gardner in Chidester, 1996:85)

For a long time in South Africa the definition of what is religion has been seen in the light of Christianity. Missionaries failed to define African religion as a religion because they saw it as something not similar to their religion. Thus regarded it as a culture or a tradition. Even today many Africans and white people regard African religion as a culture and a tradition. This is backed up by an informant who was interviewed. She said,

What many people call African traditional religion does not exist. It is an old fashioned culture and tradition. It is not a religion. They do not go to churches and they do not have a bible. Would you call this a religion? No! it is not. There is no religion like this. (Miss M, appendix II:B)

This statement clearly shows that in South Africa the concept of religion, culture and tradition has been confused. When one looks at what missionaries held and Miss M has said above one finds out that they argue as if religion, culture and tradition are not

involved in each other. Idowu dispute this fact, he argues that, "religion is part of a cultural system". He explains that in this way, that, "culture covers the whole of people's scheme of life and the way people do those things not in terms of time" and "religion gives a direction and completion to the scheme" (1972:5).

Idowu makes it very clear that every religion has culture and tradition embedded in it. The idea that Christianity rises above culture and tradition is found to be false and misleading. The use of the two terms with regard to African religion has been negative because it had the implications of backwardness. Thus African religion has been referred to as a culture and a tradition because it is backward, static and superstitious. This is explicitly illustrated by Hondius who had this to say about African religion that it,

Had no sign of belief or religion to be found among them [African] and it is for this reason they are called Carfres. (in Chidester, 1996:73)

Calling African religion a culture and not a religion has brought many misrepresentation of African practices. Many people who adhere to the religion have been seen as "stupid, witches, superstitious and evil" (Mr B in Appendix I: B). Thus people refer the causes of illness which are from ancestors and witch-craft as a stupid practice and the healing practised by African healers as inauthentic. This is because people have been socialised in perceiving everything African as evil and that which is western as good and authentic. People need to be educated that religion, culture and tradition are linked to each other so that misrepresentations like these would cease.

### 3. AFRICAN RELIGIONS

Each religion has to be understood as a separate, hermetically sealed compartment into which human beings can be classified and divided. (Chidester, 1996:4)

African people are divided into different groups, which many people call ethnic or tribal groups<sup>11</sup>. Apartheid South Africa reinforced such differences by dividing Africans into different places on language grounds. This was a divide and rule strategy of the white government. The aim being to control people and take their land, and this was going to be easy because Africans would be apart from each other. In order for the separation of blacks strategy to be a success, the use of pass laws, forced removals, racial segregation, and violent suppression of any mixing boundaries was introduced.

These different African groups for many people means that they have different religious practices, culture and traditions. Scholars and some people were misled by the different languages that Africans speak and thought that the religion is also different (see Ray, 1976:5ff, P'Bitek, 1970:170). Such scholars call African religion African religions. They compartmentalise African religion into different African groups. The shortcomings of such scholars lie in the fact that they fail to see that mainly the difference lies in the language. And if there are any differences they rotate on detail. Idowu airs the same view, he stated that,

...Through actual observation and comparative discussion with Africans from various parts of the continent will show first and foremost, that there is a common factor which the coined word negritude will express aptly. There is a common Africanness

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<sup>11</sup> In this research we call different African groups as African groups. They are, amaTsonga, amaZulu, amaXhosa, maPedi, baSotho, baTswana, maSwazi, maNdebele, maVenda.

about the total culture and religious beliefs and practices of Africa. This common factor may be due either to the fact of diffusion or to the fact that most Africans share common origins with regard to race, customs, and religious practices...With regard to the concept of God, there is a common thread. (1972:103)

Ray (1976:103) argues that African religion must be compartmentalised. In his book African religions Symbol, Ritual and Community he focuses on the Ndembu and the Yoruba, he claims that these African groups' religion is different. For an example he argues that the role of a diviner is different. That is,

Among the Ndembu: A diviner analyses the past

Among the Yoruba: A diviner forecasts the future

Ray's analysis is short-sighted, misleading and unfounded. Because every healer be it Western or African focuses on the future and the past, diagnosis is multi-faceted. His analysis is limited and does not take us anywhere. He just wanted to prove his point and he took what ever it could take to prove that African religion can be divided.

African religion is inclusive, it is called *isintu* [Xhosa and Zulu] and *setho* [Sotho-Tswana-Pedi], this is plural and it means one thing. While these terms are difficult to translate into English, they mean African practices. A question may arise why Christianity is not perceived as different when it has different types of denominations that hold a diversity of beliefs. Why is Christianity not called Christianities?

#### **4. AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION**

African religion is not a pathetic survival. (Ranger, 1972:21)

In all the stereotypes mentioned above the theory of African religion and practices as 'primitive' is a recurring issue. This is because it is believed that African religion belongs to

the past, and it survived with God's grace. The reason being that, Christianity and Western culture are seen as the only authentic practices. That is the reason why P'Bitek argues that,

Western scholarship sees the world as divided into two types of human society, one their own civilised, great developed, the other, the non western people's, uncivilised, simple and undeveloped. (1970:1)

P'Bitek's words shows Western and Christian superiority. This complex has permeated through all Christians of all race and other people. They have a misconception that,

The simpler the technology and social structure, the more degraded the religion and indeed any other conceptions. (Evans-Pritchard, 1965:107)

This implies that many people think that religion is linked to modernity. Especially Christianity is seen as modern. It is seen as rational, civilised and authentic. Hence African religion, as irrational, inauthentic, uncivilised and static. This is misleading because all the religions have mysteries and are influenced by modernity or any changes that occur. This is supported by Wallace who argues that ,

like any other aspect of culture, religious systems are in constant process of alteration. Either in response to internal pressures within the social system, to environmental changes or to the impact of acculturation. (1972:496)

The misconception held that African religion does not under go any change takes African religion as something timeless and static. As if it were a closed set of beliefs practices and social customs handed down from the past generation. This shows that people like imposing their perception of reality on other social groups. For an example, white settlers imposed their beliefs of modernity on African people. And they thought that such a reality would persist forever.

Thus we have to correct the misconception that African religion does not undergo change. Likewise the name itself 'traditional' has to be thrown away because it continues the misrepresentation that is existing every day in this world.

**Evidence from field-work shows impact of modernity and changes in African religion:**

- \* African healers mix western healing and African healing. They use pills or if the disease is not known to them they recommend that the patient should consult a western healer (Appendix I:E).
- \* African people argue that the rituals are not always the same but they change (Appendix I:E-F). The sacred places too have changed due to the establishment of urban areas. In the rural areas rituals are mainly done in the kraal and in the urban areas under a tree or at the corner of the house. The healers claim that if a person is in a flat the ritual can be done there at the balcony or at the corner in one's bedroom. And if a goat has to be slaughtered, the healer says he sometimes asks the patient to come and do the ritual at his place. This he recommends when the patient does not have a family around. (Appendix I:E)
- \* People accept the newly occurring diseases. For an example Cancer, Aids, infections (Appendix I:E-F). And healers argue that they can cure some of them.
- \* Healers use some western medicines like jeyes fluid, and methelated spirits.

**5. FIELD WORK TO ILLUSTRATE DISCRIMINATION AND STEREOTYPES**

The field-work undertaken came with the discoveries that many of the adherents of African religion are aware that African religion has been discriminated against. And they wanted something to be done to inhibit that. Other informants did not have such

consciousness, they used a conceptual framework that distorted African beliefs. For an example some called it a culture or a tradition (cf. Appendix I:A and C).

Many Christians interviewed discriminated against African religion (see appendix II A, B, F). But there were some Christians who saw African religion as it is (C, D, E). The problem that was detected throughout the interviews is that people use Western and Christian standards to understand African religion. Such an interpretation betrays African religion because it is not studied from within. Likewise people are socialised into a stereotype that sees African religion and practices as evil and uncivilised, thus fail to understand it better.

### 5.1. ILLNESS AND DISCRIMINATION

The interviews show that the causes of illness as perceived by Africans are seen as superstitious. The law does not cover the issue of witchcraft yet. Patients claim that when they have been food-poisoned [*ukudliswa*] the doctors turn them home. For an example one informant had this to say as an illustration.

She said she was suffering from stomach pains and went to an African healer who said she was food poisoned. And the healer gave her some herbs to drink, vomit and for an enema. She claims that she was not cured, and she went to a Western doctor who could not understand a thing that she was saying. She told her that, that was a superstition. The doctor diagnosed ulcers. And told the patient to stop eating oily, chilly and acid foods. The patient said she could not get better and went to another healer. She claims that this healer was able to help here. He diagnosed food poisoning too, gave her herbs to drink, *futha* [steam], bath, an enema and vomit. (Appendix I:C)

The illustration above shows that it is important for Western doctors to understand African world-view because healing is not only a physiological phenomenon but deals with

people's world-view. This does not mean that a Western doctor should do the work of an African healer but should try to understand people's fears.

Moreover language has been a problem for so long. For Westerners food-poisoning can mean eating rotten food and in African culture it mainly means witch-craft. The implication of this is to show that for a long time it has been supposed that a word in the language of one race can always, or often be found which stands exactly for a word in that of another race with a different cultural history. That is why some informants went to an extent of saying,

- \* Witch-doctors lie to our people. Their belief in witch-craft as the cause of illness is unfounded (appendix, II:A, B, F, III:A, )
- \* witch-doctors kill our people (Appendix II B)
- \* witch-doctors are possessed by the devil that is why they do evil things (Appendix II:F).

In summary, one can argue that illness and the causes of illness are not as simple as scientists claim. Illness is deeply rooted in people's world-view. And in order for any healing system to be effective people's world-view must be understood and accepted as it is.

## **5.2. HEALING AND DISCRIMINATION**

Healing plays an important part in every religion and culture. Always the wrongs have to be set right for healing to occur. Thus if other people's practices are discriminated against, how could they practise their healing procedures effectively? This is a problem that African people are faced with. Their practices are seen as superstitious and uncivilised.

And their healers too (Appendix III:A). Which clearly means that their healing procedures are a fake.

Since Africans believe that ancestors are mediators between and the living and they guide people to be a healer, many of my Christian informants got sceptical about that they said "how could a dead person direct a living person to cure people" (Appendix II:A & E). On the basis of this argument some evil. Which explicitly says that they argue that there is nothing like African healing.

Moreover one of the informants went to an extent of saying that, she goes to African healers at night because she is shy that people would think she is a witch because healers are called witches too (Appendix I:D). This is an extreme prejudice that dehumanises the practices of African people. The most painful thing is that Africans are shy to practice something that they believe is helpful to their well being. And this is also illustrated by the fact that African healing is not legally recognised as part of the healing practice of African people. It is important to mention here that the fact that African healing is chosen by many African informants shows that it is effective solving the problem of evil in their world-view. And it indicates why Africans continuously chose it over other healing practices.

This is a lesson for us in the new dispensation not to jump to conclusions about things; we should do an extensive study. Likewise this is a lesson that should be followed because as people we study history so that we should not repeat the mistakes of the past. This implies that we should try to develop multiple identities if we want to understand other religions better. This does not mean that one should be converted to that particular religion. But another important lesson is that when one does a research one should leave his or her prejudices behind. And must tell herself or himself that he or she wants to learn and

understand. Similarly if he wants to convert those people must try to learn the practices of those people thoroughly and understand them and avoid criticising without any apparent reason.

Another weakness that the present writer discovered in the frontier is the way the missionaries and their contemporaries explained what is and what is not religion. They treated religion as if it were Christianity only. And did not leave out Western culture in their analysis. One can argue that for them to be religious is to follow western culture, to do the way whites do things, to think the way they think, to worship God the way they do and to say good-bye to African culture. This is a problem because religion is very complex. De Gruchy defines religion as "a complex living reality in the world and in peoples lives not a set of working definitions and models which help us understand important aspects of the subject" (1991:1). This implies that religion gives people identity. It helps them define the world they live in and who created them. It is also the way people see the world in relation to their creator and helps them understand the world better. It is not culture free and tradition free as some missionaries would want us to believe. This definition of religion that is raised by De Gruchy implies that everyone has his or her own way of relating to the Ultimate Being and no one has the right to judge. Perhaps this might help since we are trying to build the nation. Thus it is important that the stereotypes that African healing is faced with be corrected so that Africans would practice their religion and culture freely.

## **6. SUMMARY**

In this chapter we have tried to show that African religion has been discriminated against. Terms that have been used to refer to it betray the reality of the religion. Discriminatory

terms include, superstition, culture and tradition, African religions, and traditional religion. We argued that the problem has been the way we have been socialised in South Africa. That is, under the apartheid government, western culture and everything that is white was taken as authentic and rational and what is African as evil.

This implies that Africans have been misunderstood, and they have been studied not from within their milieu. We have demonstrated this by focusing on health care, that it is not about physical ailments only but also about a particular world-view. Which means that it is important for any one who deals with any group of people to understand their world-view.

We also tried to show that language has distorted African practices, because many people used Western culture and language to explain African religion and culture. And we demonstrated how that distorted African practices. Thus we proposed that if only illness and healing are located around their own world-view, then we would be able to get an access to people's beliefs and we would be able to help them. Thus in this way the confusion that has been brought by missionaries would cease to exist. The reason being that,

the Christian missionary enterprise conducted "a Christ against culture" campaign. They saw the traditions [religion] of Africa as cultural forms, they judged them to be heathen, and they acted against them. They did not see that their own brand of Christianity was also embedded in a culture which should also have come under the judgement of the gospel. (Richardson, 1996:37)

## CHAPTER 3

### CHRISTIANITY AND ITS PRIVILEGES

With the unavoidable consciousness that Christianity exists in a world of religious plurality, the Christian attitude to other religions is a pressing issue on today's theological agenda. (D'Costa, 1986:3)

The history of Christianity in South Africa can be traced back to 1652 when blacks met the Dutch East Indian Company at the Cape of Good-Hope. The arrival of the DEIC had military, commercial and religious intentions. The evidence is put by Chidester who argues that the company went to an extent of erecting a slave school in the name of Christianity (1994:38). This shows that in the history of the mission, the conversion to Christianity was in fact linked to the destruction of the economical, social, political and religious lives of Africans. This is clearly illustrated by the erection of Captain Cook's monument in 1827 which proclaims that,

while it shall be deemed the honour of a Christian nation to spread civilisation and blessings of the Christian faith among pagans and savage tribes, so long will the name of Captain Cook stand out among the most celebrated and most admired benefactors of the human race. (D' Costa, 1986:1)

This implies that Christianity saw itself as the only religion. Likewise western culture was seen as the only acceptable cultural practice for all South Africans. Which indicates that any deviance would be seen as primitive and uncivilised. And any one who practised a different religion was seen as a heathen. Richardson backs this up by stating that,

the Christian missionary enterprise conducted a Christ against culture campaign. They saw the traditions of Africa as cultural forms, they judged them to be heathen, and they acted against them. They did not see that their own brand of Christianity was also embedded in a culture which should also have come under the judgement of the Gospel. (1996:37)

That is the reason why Pailin argued that,

British Christian attitude to other religions (pagans and savage tribes) during the 17th and 18th century reflected a strong, confident aggressive and often ill-informed type of Christianity. (D'Costa 1986:1)

The above quotes show Christian deligitimation against African religion. They also illustrate the superiority and know-all attitude of Christian missions in South Africa. That means Christians had an attitude that I term "my Mercedes Benz is better than yours". Which simply means that, they think that their faith is better than all the religions. This assumption is evident from the way they saw their role in South Africa, being that of converting Africans who did not have a religion. The fact that missionaries saw their task being that of converting Africans, explicitly indicates that they saw Africans as a people without a religion. This is nicely put in the words of Van der Kemp who said, "I never could perceive that they had any religion, nor any idea of the existence of God" (Chidester, 1992:37).

It is significant to mention here that the conversion of Africans to Christianity by the missionaries was not the sole role of the missionaries, conversion was linked to the overpowering of Africans. Chidester (1992:38) maintains that, "missionaries wanted to destroy the independent African economic, social and political life". This shows that the power struggle was mixed up with religious mission. Majeke argues that this has led the church into a serious crisis that it is facing today (Prozesky, 1990:33). The crisis of how to tolerate other people's beliefs.

Despite the crisis Christianity enjoyed many privileges. Successive white governments in South Africa supported Christianity. When the National Party came to power it consolidated that position by introducing National Christian Education. And Christian

ideologies were used hand in hand with apartheid in ruling South Africa. That is the reason why Prozesky argues that,

...South Africa was westernised at the same time as it was Christianized, indeed the westernization acted really as a precondition to the Christianization, with the result that the church came to be seen as the bulwark of western civilisation in South Africa. (1990:31)

On this note the apartheid government supported Christianity in all measures. Money was paid for building hospitals, Christian schools and others. But no funds were donated in aiding African healing or culture to develop. Thus Christianity got privileged over other faiths. This is evident from the fact that, the name Christianity itself has never been changed before. It has always been called Christianity. While other faiths like African religion changed names many times, the names that distorted the reality of the faith.

## **1. RELIGION HAS ALWAYS BEEN CALLED CHRISTIANITY IN SOUTH AFRICA**

What is really this Christianity that we are talking about? Is it based on the message of the cross and the resurrection of Christ? And what is the importance of the cross? Is there any relationship between modernity and the faith? Why the name Christianity and not another name? We really should understand more about the religion here because many people use it as a model to understand other faiths. And why is it that people perceive Christianity as authentic? We will not answer all these questions, but an attempt will be undertaken to answer some. In South Africa there has been a general failure to look at Christianity critically. It has never been put under a microscope like other faiths. This has largely been due to its privileged status. Time has come for this to change, and there should not be any renegeing from that commitment.

The truth must not be hidden anymore. This must not be allowed to happen again. As people are so afraid to give Christianity names that distort it that should be same the towards other religions. Because all the religions are the same, because they all have the same function of giving meaning to life and have many elements that are common like rituals attitudes, fundamental representation or conceptions. Durkheim backs this up by arguing that these aspects can be "different in forms but have the same objective significance and fulfil the same functions everywhere". He goes on to say, "these are the permanent elements which constitute that which is permanent and human in religion" (1915:5).

This argument shows that no religion is superior than the other. This implies that it would be the betrayal of the truth if any one or the church would hide behind their principle and say *Christianity is the only authentic religion and no faith is like it*. That is the reason why De Gruchy came with the suggestion that "we ask for a responsible theology of the ecumenical movement for the sake of the truth and certainty of our cause" (1987:100). The truth that all the religions are authentic, no religion is better than any. The thing is that all the religions have some similarities and differences. Thus it is vital that no discriminatory names must be used to define any religion.

As we have mentioned before, in South Africa the issue of what is religion was spoiled by missionaries. Because they behaved as if Christianity is the ultimate reality towards knowing God. They decorated that by claiming that people should practice western culture if they want to be Christians. People were convinced that western culture and Christianity are rational, civilised modern and God given. That is the reason the name Christianity is respected, and no stereotypical names have been used to define it. The name has been as it is since it was planted in South Africa.

The name Christian has been used from almost 2000 years ago. It is found in the Bible where it was used in Antioch. In Acts 11:26 we read that the disciples were the first people to be called Christians, because they followed in the foot-steps of Christ. They preached about God, Christ's resurrection, healed the sick and explained the significance of the cross.

According to Bonhoeffer "the church must not be reduced to a religious society or to the kingdom of God" (in De Gruchy, 1987:6). The implication of this statement is that the church does not possess the ultimate truth. That is to say it is not the only voice of God. The reality of this statement is detected in the church, because it behaves as if there is only one Christianity while in reality there are many Christianities. The theologies, practices and rituals are sometimes not similar. For an example there are differences between Born-again Christians and Methodist churches. The healing ministry is practised in the Born-again churches, they lay hands on the sick and also fast. But in the Methodist church the healing ministry is not evident. Moreover using a contrast with the African Indigenous churches, their healing ministry is different, they [some] use water and medication [*iziwasho*]. All these are Christian denominations but some of their practices differ.

However the name Christianity has never changed to fit that reality. This shows that in South Africa it is easy to criticise other religions. For an example, African religion is called by many terms that betray the faith, terms such as culture, tradition, traditional, superstition, African religions (Appendices I and II). One can raise an important question: *What is the difference between African religion and Christianity that makes people see African religion as many religions in one and Christianity as one?* This does not suggest that the name should change because I believe that it should remain Christianity because even if there are differences within Christianity they point to the same reality. This is just

an illustration that depicts religious discrimination in South Africa. That Christianity is always treated with caution but other religions are not. Moreover Christianity is traditional in the sense that it has past traditions and cultures embedded in it. But these practices are not static. Why then is Christianity not called Christian traditional religion?

## **2. ILLNESS AS AN ILLUSTRATION OF CHRISTIAN PRIVILEGES**

With the unavoidable awareness that Christianity exist in a world of religious plurality, Christian attitudes to other religions should change. Christians have a superiority complex. Their religion is acceptable. The illnesses that are explained in a Western-Christian perspective are acceptable while the African cultural world-view in relation to illness is disregarded and dismissed as superstition. They are judgmental to illnesses that are not from their world-view. For an example, when a person has some pains in the stomach and an African healers diagnose that as witch-craft it would be denied by people who have a western mentality especially Christians. They would say is just ulcers.

This is bizarre because witch-craft has to do with evil spirits but Christians dismiss it as superstition (Appendix II:A-B). There is a lot of confusion. This is a clear indication that shows that social construction of reality is screwed up. That is the reality is the same but the world-view differs. It also indicates language in one culture is not the same as in another culture.

Western healers are also hooked in the milieu of germ theory and science that dismiss any explanation of a disease that does not belong to their world-view. It is vital to mention that even Christian view of evil spirits is dismissed. But at least Christian healing is allowed in hospitals. As compared to African healing which is not allowed at all.

Why should western-Christian illnesses be allowed in hospitals and other illnesses that are not from that world-view, like African view of illness and its causations dismissed? It is important that all views of illness be adhered to because healing occurs only when the correct diagnosis has been prescribed. And healing is not only based on the physical, the social, psychological, mental but the spiritual aspects of a person are also involved.

### **3. HEALING AS AN ILLUSTRATION OF CHRISTIAN PRIVILEGES**

Every society seems to have three basic approaches to healing. The first is through pharmacopia. Healing involve a wide range of medicine -plants, herbs, minerals and traditional wisdom regarding their use. ...The second set of healing techniques involves direct intervention with the body through performing surgery, treating wounds, setting broken bones, and so on. The third type of healing practice is ritual. (Chidester, 1987:174)

Western healing is perceived to be the only rational healing measure in South Africa. It discards any healing that gives beyond the apparent real world. It claims that other healings can not be proved scientifically. This type of healing even though acceptable has problems because it does not understand a person as a social entity. This basically shows that holistic healing is not entailed in western healing. It is a narrow view of healing.

In South Africa healing is empirically seen in the light of western healing and Christian faith healing. They are the only healing that are legally [because the state supports], morally, socially, and spiritually acceptable. Other healings like African healing are not seen as authentic. For an example hospitals do not allow African healers to aid their sick in the hospitals. While they accept Christian ministers or priests and members of their congregations are allowed to conduct their prayers. This is clearly illustrated in what one priest said, that, "I pray for the sick in hospital environment in the same way as I pray for them in other settings" (Wimber, 1986:274). Hence African healers interviewed claimed

that their healing is despised by western healers and do not even allow them to give out herbs to the patients (see appendices, I:E and F). This is a clear picture that shows how Christianity and western culture are preferred and accepted as compared to other religions and practices.

Likewise the government gives out lots of money to help in improving western healing while no money has been rendered to African healing to improve their healing procedures. That is the reason why one African healer went to an extent of saying that,

The government does not care for us. They think that, since some of us are illiterate, our healing is stupid and we just bluff people. If they continue supporting western healing financially so extensively, black people will continue dying because white world-view is different to black world-view. Therefore how can Black people be entirely healed by western healing?. (Appendix, I:F)

In sum one can argue that the government should really leave the democracy that it claims to adhere to. It should recognise constitutionally all the healing procedures that are supported by South Africans. They should support them financially. This will improve healing in South Africa.

#### **4. FIELD-WORK ILLUSTRATING CHRISTIAN PRIVILEGES**

When analysing the interviews undertaken for this research one detected that many South Africans are conscious about religious plurality in this country but fail to recognise that Christianity is like any other religion. Likewise it is important to mention here that there are other informants who believe that there is nothing like religious plurality the only religion is Christianity. This implies that they failed to deduce that Christianity is like any other religion. They believe that it is above all religions. This is clearly put in the words of a Christian interviewed who argued that,

Christianity does not ask much from us, but for us to believe in Christ and follow in His foot-steps. People fail to recognise that there is only one religion that will take us to heaven? It is Christianity. The others that people claim that are religions, they are not they are devilish and idolatry. That is why Christ said that, "I am the way the truth and the life". (Appendix, II:A)

Hence there are other African religionists even Christians who adhere to religious equality who argue that, Christianity has been uplifted for so long as if it is the only religion and this has to come to a stand still. Because there are other religions (Appendices, I:C, E, F, and II: C, E).

This section tries to show how both Christians and African religionist see the privileges of Christianity under the topic of illness and healing.

#### **4.1. ILLNESS**

Many adherents of African religion claim that their perspective on illness is not recognised as authentic. Moreover they maintain that when Western doctors are told that illnesses are induced by witch-craft and evil spirits, they dismiss that explanation as superstition or superstitious nonsense. This is backed up by what one Western healer interviewed said, "witch-craft as the cause of illness is unfounded. The thing is that some Africans are unhygienic" (Appendix III:A). This shows that westerners fail to acknowledge that there are differences in world-views and healing has to be undertaken from the same world-view.

Many Christian informants maintained that Western healing is effective more than any [it is vital to note that they do not disregard Christian healing] healing procedure (Appendix II:A, B, F). They do not see any of its draw-backs, they only detect weaknesses of African healing. This is clearly illustrated by what one Christian interviewed claimed. She said,

In 1995 she lost her dearest friend because of the toxic herbs that witch-doctors use. The informant claims that she used to advise her friend about the bad practices of the witch-doctors. The friend had stomach cramps for almost two years. She consulted a witch-doctor who diagnosed food-poisoning and gave her an imbiza [boiled herbs]. While on the other hand the Western doctors said, the friend had ulcers. The informant says, due to her friends lack of faith in God she drank the herb and her situation worsened. She vomited blood and her tummy was running. She was then taken to the hospital where she was diagnosed liver cancer. And she eventually died. (Appendix, II:A)

This quotation shows that there are same words in different cultures that can be used to define illness while they do not mean the same disease. That is to say there are different world-views that make the language different. That is the reason why food-poisoning from an African perspective is different from that in a Western-Christian milieu. This has to be recognised by people.

#### 4.2. HEALING

When I am ill and I want to go to an inyanga I consult at night because it is not socially and morally acceptable in South Africa that people go to African healers. I do that because I am afraid to be called a witch (Mrs N, appendix I:D)

From the research the present writer discovered that healing is indeed a difficult procedure in South Africa, especially for those who believe in African healing. Thus some Christian opposed the view that African healing is authentic (appendices, 11: A, B, F). They dismiss the reality of African healing on the grounds that it is primitive and superstitious. For an example one informant went to an extent of claiming that African healing "kill people it is not the same as Christian and Western healing" (Appendix 11:B). And the healers are perceived to be "stupid, witches, and traditional" (Appendices II:A and B, III: A and B). This shows the negative attitude that people have against African healing. It also illustrate that Western and Christian healing are privileged. Thus people must be educated to understand every religion, culture and tradition from within. This will help in religious and

behavioural tolerance in our country. Because from the field-work undertaken religious disharmony is the order of the day.

## **5. SUMMARY**

Throughout this chapter we have tried to show that Christianity has been privileged for so long. For an example the name Christianity itself is respected it has never changed to another name, the priest are allowed in hospitals while African healers are not, the categories of illness explained from both Christian and western world-view are accepted as authentic, the government funds western healing.

We argued that the time is dawn that Christianity acknowledges that no longer will other religions find their fulfilment in it, without Christianity itself realising that it will also find its fulfilment through the wealth and understanding of other religions. If this will be part of a new reality all religious aspects from all religions like, illness and healing will be practised on equal basis. No religion will be privileged than the other. All world-views will be recognised. Because it is every human being's unquestionable right to practice any religion s/he feels secure with. On this inter-religious journey of discovery, as T. S. Elliot put it,

We shall not cease from exploration. And the end of all our exploring. Will be to arrive where we started. And know the place for the first time. (in D' Costa, 1986:137)

## CHAPTER 4

# AFRICAN RELIGION: ILLNESS AND HEALING

"African religion is not a pathetic survival". (Ranger, 1972:21)

In the previous chapters it was demonstrated that African religion has been discriminated against for a long time. This chapter will try to show African religion as it is. That is, as a religion that is practised by people who believe in it and respects it. This will be done through the use of illness and healing as an illustration. That is how African people regard as the causes of illness and how these illnesses are healed.

According to Hammond-Tooke (1989) different peoples have different cosmologies or world-views. They are socialised into these world-views from early childhood, and it is through these that they find their identity and a sense of belonging. Chidester maintains that,

a world view is not simply a way of seeing, or a way of thinking, but a multidimensional network of strategies for negotiating person and place in a world of discourse, practice and association. (1989:16)

In the process of negotiation, one is led to "include" and "exclude",- when negotiating the category "human", implied are categories of the "superhuman" and "subhuman". In fact, one ends up drawing boundaries between "us" and "them" or "other". What that particular group does becomes its tradition that is handed down from generation to generation. This

tradition becomes central to the identity of the group. It gives them a sense of who they are, and gives an individual member a sense of belonging.

The drawing and rigidification of boundaries is a problem, it has led to a number of undesirable situations throughout the world. In South Africa, it produced the evil system of Apartheid. As a result African people were denied a Religion because they were barbaric and their reasoning capacity was low (cf. Chidester, 1994). They fitted in the subhuman category, which means their property could be appropriated without anyone feeling any pain or moral remorse because they do not belong to the present. The United States of America has adopted the same principle towards communism and anything that is not in the interest of capitalism. It is, therefore, clear that the rigidification of boundaries is very dangerous. Because at the end of the day people use their cultural prejudices to analyse other religions. And this is not correct because if we follow Durkeim's view of religion that it is something that gives one an identity thus one can see that all the religions are important to the people who adhere to them and other people should do likewise and respect them. On this note let us now see how Africans view their world in relation to illness and healing.

Fortune and misfortune in Africa is explained in terms of the supernatural powers or forces. Forces that are beyond anyone's control. African world-view is summed up by Hammond-Tooke that,

The traditional world view of South African Bantu speakers can be broken down into four broadly defined sets of theories purporting to explain the human condition. These are: the Supreme being, ancestors, witches, and pollution beliefs. All fall under the rubric of closed systems, as we should expect, and all have immediate relevance to the problems of health and well being. (1989:46).

Jacobson-Widding (1989) says that disease and illness in many African cultures, is seen in terms of the contradiction between culture and experience which is related to the definition of personhood. Africans subscribe to collectivist ideology, and one's personhood is fully realised within this context. In this context "...the concern of the collectivity to which one belongs generally has priority over the interests of the individual member" (Jacobson-Widding, 1989:103). Subscription to the official ideology of collectivism is a precondition for personal health.

### **1. MODIMO, THIXO, UNKULUNKULU: THE ULTIMATE BEING**

Many books have been written on African Religion. Many people gave the impression that God is not worshipped by Africans (A. B. Ellis., D. Westermann, P. Baudin, in Uka, 1991:25). And many others like Bouquet in (Uka, 1991:39) referred to him as high God as if there is another low God. This part focuses on the works of like Setiloane (1976) and Uka (1991), both of whom believe that God is One and Supreme and is an object of practical religion. It will be shown why human beings are said to be related to the Ultimate Being and how this relates to the spirits of ancestors.

In his discussion of the "concept of God in African traditional religion" Uka argues that all African people believe in God who is the almighty and creator of the world. Who is believed as all knowing, all powerful and all wise. He elaborates this point by arguing that the names given to this God reflect these attributes (1991: 43). This is taken further by Setiloane who did his research among the Sotho-Tswana. He gives different names of God but the one that is more relevant here is "*Modimo wa borra rona*" [God of our fore fathers], *Mme* [mother]. These two names show that God is the great ancestor and the blood mother [and father because He is also called *Ntate*]. That is the reason why the

ancestors are said to be the mediators between the human beings and God. Because it is believed that He is related to them. And when people do wrong he punishes but he also forgives. This is supported by Uka who argues that,

The African believes in Gods providence. It is God who provides sunshine, moonshine, rain, fertility, health and plenty. ...He also protects, guards, controls and saves His people. In short [they] see God as King, Ruler, Lord and Master of the world. They see Him also as Judge, their conqueror who delivers His people from their enemies. In addition to these attributes, Africans interpret afflictions as mysteries which only God can solve. Hence they think of God as capable of causing his people to suffer great afflictions through disease, misfortunes, poverty, draught famine, flood and death. Africans believe that these afflictions come to them because God allowed it to happen. Quite often, they seek to make amendments in prayers and sacrifices (1991:45).

The views raised by Setiloane and Uka explain the Africans view of the Ultimate Being. They try to show that even if there are no temples used for worshipping God, Africans respect and trust in their God. This is also evident from the informants. This belief in God facilitates a sense of community, thus an injury to one is an injury to all. Because their creator is believed to be their ancestor who is merciful, and ever loving so they have to be like him.

## **2. ANCESTORS (*BADIMO, AMADLOZI, IZINYANYA*)**

For Africans ancestors are not worshipped, they are served. *UNkulunkulu* is worshipped through them (Uka, 1991:28). Since they are created by *Modimo* thus they are used by him in communicating with the living, in other words, they are the messengers of God. Uka (1991:47) and Muphree (1969:33-51) argue that not everyone who dies qualifies to be an ancestor. One should be married, have children, be respected, and be old and must not die a bad death, that is, death through accidents, lunacy epilepsy suicide or through any form of violence. They are known to be protectors and guardians of morality. They

reward the good and punish the evil. They are always invoked in any healing process that takes place within the household, and in times of national crisis, royal ancestors are called upon to save the nation from famine or any other crisis.

The ancestors make visitations in order to remind people of that particular homestead to perform the rituals of the home. Their presence maintains the good health of people and animals. Ancestors offer protection against sorcery and witchcraft. After the death of a person a bring back ceremony *ukubuyisa idlozi* is performed a year later. Among amaZulu during this ceremony a beast is slaughtered and a lot of food is prepared. Senior male members of the homestead take a branch of tree to the grave. Certain words are spoken and this branch is taken to the main house or the sacred place in the homestead where the spirit is introduced. To demonstrate how this is done among the amaZulu Miss M's example will be used (appendix I:E).

Miss M says that it is very important after the death of a person to do this rituals in order to bring the protector of the home where he or she belongs. And she goes on to say that if this is not done, misfortune can be the order of the day, the family can easily be affected by the spells of witches and other evil forces because there is no protection. She claims that at her home the ritual was not done for her father who died in 1988 while he was on his way to attend a funeral in Transkei. Her mother developed painful sores throughout her body. This, she believed, was the work of the witches.

A diviner/healer was consulted about this matter. The healer told her that her ancestors had allowed her to be bewitched because she had not done what she was supposed to have done. She had literally shut out her husband from his home, and as a result he was not giving her any protection. The healer then advised that they *buyisa* (bring back) the spirit

of the departed man to his home. A bringing back ceremony was organised and they (Mrs M, the uncle, aunt and grand father) went with the healer to Queens Town where the father had an accident. This was done to literally take his spirit, which was lingering around not knowing where to go, home where it belongs.

This is how the informant says the ritual was performed: The healer started by pouring *imithi* [herbs]. And he asked the grandfather to talk to the departed members of the family. In his talk, the grandfather apologised on behalf of the family for not doing this earlier and went on to address the spirit of the father that, "we are here to take you home where you belong". He also apologised for not taking him in 1989. The soil was taken and put at the corner of my home where we do all our family rituals. The spirit was also told that he is now at home with his family he must look after them. And afterwards a goat was slaughtered.

On top of this ritual the family was washed with the gall from the goat to remove the *isinyama* [misfortune]. We were all given herbs to vomit and for an enema. Mrs M was given herbs that would help to remove the sores. The informant claims that after the ritual was performed everything went well and her mothers sores healed.

Uka sums African view of ancestors as follows:

As having the emotions as the living members of the community. They can bless their folk or affect them adversely, they can be jealous or fickle, they can bring peace or disaster. It is for this reason that the living take care not to offend them. To neglect the ancestors is to court disaster. Africans therefore, believe that communion and communication between those who are alive here on earth and those who have passed to the great beyond must be made in their quest for well being. . . . Ancestors are approached as intermediaries between men and God or divinities. They are remembered from time to time. Oaths are taken in their names. And when they are offended, they usually demonstrate their feelings by some vindictive action. They are only placated with abundant offerings. (1991:29)

It is very clear that ancestor beliefs and rituals are very important in the African way of life and doing things. Gumede (1990) makes a very interesting point in that Africans live their lives in all three tenses, the past, present, and the future. The dead continue to live and become responsible for the destiny of those who are still alive. That is why when they are beset with problems they always say, "*Badimo bare furaletse*" (the ancestral spirits have given us their backs), and as a result, we are vulnerable to disease and misfortune. The implication of this is that ancestors add an ethical dimension to the religion in that they are known to punish the evil and reward the good. African belief in ancestors is a resource that helps in dealing with suffering because the living always try to do good and not forget their ancestors. This is because,

they are present at all times, "brooding" over the homestead and following their descendants wherever they go, for, unlike the case with witch-craft, which operates only over short distances, ancestors are ubiquitous and follow their charges everywhere even into the urban areas. They are thus omnipresent, although there is also the idea that they live under the earth or in the sky. (Hammond-Tooke, 1989:63-4)

### 3. AFRICAN VIEW OF A HUMAN PERSON AND POLLUTION

Since the Ultimate being is viewed as the Creator and the Great Ancestor, Africans believe that human person is from the Ultimate Being. This is evident from the idiom that exist among the AmaZulu, BaSotho, Batswana and AmaXhosa which says 'a person is a person through other people'. That is to say since *Modimo* created the human being thus people have to work together, help each other in good and bad times.

A human being is referred to as *motho* (BaSotho-BaTswana), *umuntu* [amaZulu and amaXhosa]. And in this human person there is the spirit and the personality-soul, *seriti*. And the two constitute a person but after death they separate. Uka (1991:54) argues that

"the spirit is distinguished from humans in that they are invisible and are exceedingly more powerful". This is because *UNkulunkulu* is spirit and Africans also believe that the human also has the spirit from *Modimo*. The baSotho-baTswana call the spirit *mowa*, the amaZulu and amaXhosa *umoya*. This spirit is the one that lives after death.

Africans believe that a person must try to be pure all the time, to ensure his or her material and physical well-being. They believe that, that way they will be able to avoid being bewitched. *Seriti* and *mowa* must be in harmony all the time. Harmony between the two occur when people avoid acts like, not caring for the poor, orphans, widows and widowers, not remembering the ancestors, being a witch, respecting mourning duration, certain places [graves at 12 noon]. It is believed that such acts can cause vulnerability to misfortune which can include illness.

Some people like Ricoeur refer to the illness believed that is caused by pollution as superstition. For him the cause of illness is the filthy conditions that the Bantu lived in. Hence Douglas dispute this fact, she argues that in every society,

the ideal order of society is guarded by dangers which threaten transgressors. And these danger beliefs are as much threats which one man uses to coerce another as dangers which he [she] fears to incur by his own lapses from righteousness. . . . Thus we find that certain moral values are upheld and certain social rules defined by beliefs in dangerous contagion. (1966:3)

This implies that pollution beliefs define the morality of the society. And if one deviates from such norms his or her *seriti* and spirit will be in conflict and misfortune will be the order of the day. Let me give some few examples. Among Africans death is dirt (*ditshila*) as one of my informants has argued, it defiles every body who relates to the dead person. So this is a crisis that has to be purified. The deceased family is not allowed to have sex with any one until a particular time it maybe three months for any member of the family

and relatives and nine months for the husband and wife. And if one deviates from this rule it is believed that the ancestors will punish the person and maybe even the entire family.

This is called pollution. The meeting of different bloods is a crisis and on top of that the person is dirty because *uzilile* (mourning) but sleeps with other people before the ritual of removing the dirt is performed. The healing of such a pollution is done by consulting a healer to diagnose what the ancestors will require to forgive the transgressor. Maybe a goat, sheep or a chicken can be slaughtered as a sign of forgiveness. This shows that there is flexibility in the way rituals are done. It always depends on what ancestors require.

That is why Africans believe that the spirit and the *seriti*, the personality and power that exist in every person, bring luck, life, and respect to the body. The spirit is life and the blood of a human person. It is a gift from God. If a person does bad things like stealing or bewitching others, people will always say he or she does not have this spirit. The *seriti* too is something that makes an individual healthy respected and feared by the witches. That is why one informant said witches can cause one to lose her dignity by inflicting some insects in one's private parts or make one to be inhabited with an animal *tokoloshe* (people say it is a monkey) (cf. appendix I:D).

This implies that the *seriti* gives a person something worth living for. It marks who the person is as an individual and human being. That is to say it moulds the person's character. This shows that the *moya* binds the whole person together. And both the *seriti* and the *moya* works properly when there is nothing wrong or there is no deviation from the norms and values of the society. For instance, if one has bewitched someone, the person loses the *seriti* and the *moya* is said to be defiled and this person gets misfortune and is hated by the community. This implies that if the illness is caused by the wrong doing of the individual,

the *seriti* and the spirit come into conflict and they do not function to help the person to fight against misfortune. Thus it is clear that in order to maintain good health an individual has to try and be good.

#### 4. WITCHCRAFT

Africans believe in witchcraft. Witches according to Gumede (1990), are people who learnt the secrets of nature and then use their skills for anti-social purposes. Their acts are violent and destructive (see: appendix 1.A-G). These people no longer share the collective concerns of the group. All they want is to negatively impose themselves. As the result, the harmony of the group is disturbed. It is interesting that even within the group there is "exclusion-inclusion". Because witches are seen as outcast. Their acts result in suffering as the informants have claimed (see appendix I:A-G). It is believed that these people can change themselves into the forms of many things for example animals [snakes, monkey, *tokoloshe*], or trees [food poisoning-it grows inside the stomach] and can change themselves to be other people.

Those likely to be accused of sorcery and witchcraft are those at the periphery or the marginal ones, e.g., the poor and women, especially the widows. But even men as well. Some informants like Miss M (appendix I:A) Mr B (appendix I:B) and Mrs N (appendix I:D) argue that jealousy in most cases causes these people to bewitch. So since the marginalised are the have nots, it is believed that they envy other people.

Intermingling is very important among Africans because they believe that "*Motho ke motho ka batho babang*" (the person is a person through others). So when one does not

help others in terms of illness, funeral, or marriage ceremonies, the community always say one is a witch.

The belief in witchcraft provides a kind of solution to the problem of evil. It provides an acceptable way of thinking about the causes of illness and how to deal with it. That is to say, it gives people something to pinpoint as the cause of their suffering. Even though people like Schimlek (1953), missionaries like Moffat (Chidester, 1994) and some people today refer to it as superstition [ignorance and fear] but for the Africans it is a dynamic reality that exists and it helps them to cope with and understand their suffering.

## 5. MEDICINE AND AFRICAN HEALERS

The role of healers in causing illness is something that is ignored in scholarship. Setiloane (1976) agrees that there are those that are good and those that are bad but unfortunately he does not say what motivates those bad ones. This part will start by explaining in general about healers and later will show their role in making people ill.

African healers are referred to as the agents of the Ultimate Beings. Setiloane (1976:57) says that they help people by giving them assurance that things will be well in times of crisis and points out to them the meaning of life and their own existence. They help the people through the interference of the ancestors and *uThixo*. They explain illness as the works of sorcerers, ancestors, spirit possession. Death is usually explained as *tiro tsa Modimo*, *izenzo zikaNkulunkulu*, which literary means the works of God (ibid.: 57).

Before the healing process begins, the healer speaks to the spiritual forces, asking them to open the way so that he or she can see the spiritual world properly. For an example, the

one of the healers observed had a bucket full of a herb called *ubulawu*. *Ubulawu* when stirred produces a foam. This herb was stirred while the healer was waiting for answers from the ancestors. This way the healer is asking them to point out what is wrong with the patient. After the initial step he then revealed to the patient what the ancestral powers said was the problem. He then would propose the method of dealing with the problem. It is widely believed that all medicines that healers give to people are revealed to them by the Ultimate being through the ancestors (cf. Appendix I. A-G). This shows that when a person goes to the healer he or she knows that *uThixo* and the ancestors are the ones who send them to the specific healer.

Healers can also be bad. There are stories of healers who get attracted to their patients and want to marry them. Patients are vulnerable because they know very little or nothing about herbs. This healer would manipulate the patient by giving them love potions (among the baTswana is called *moratiso*). This particular concoction is aimed at making the patient fall in love with the healer. There are many people that the present writer knows personally that underwent such an experience.

For some people *moratiso* is believed to react negatively and it can cause madness; it can act as a poison. After trying and failing with *moratiso*, he or she would then bewitch the patient so that it would be difficult for any healer to know where to start healing. In some cases healer would see a young man or woman and then wish that they get married to his or her son or daughter, *moratiso* would be used to enhance that process.

Healers are business people, they sell their herbs to people who come with money. Some healers have no morality, they knowingly give herbs to bewitch or poison other people. That is why one of my informants said that,

I am afraid of witches but the problem is that they sometimes use these healers to bewitch us. That is why I do not want to go to the healer that lives around where I stay because people are jealous they might influence him or her against me. (Appendix I:C).

A question then arises of how do Africans regard this illness as the cause of the ancestors, *Modimo*, witches or the wrong that the individual has done? From my own analysis, it depends on what other healers will say: perhaps he or she might say that it is because the ancestors are angry with what an individual has done or what the family has done. This implies that for healing to take place the wrong has do be corrected. Perhaps it is what the ancestors want in order to make the patient aware that he or she should become a healer. The healer will then help the patient into becoming a healer. In African religion healers are believed to be helpers of the community, but they can also be used by the ancestors to prove a certain point. But this does not exclude the possibility that the healer might be a witch or might be engaged in acts of sorcery.

## **6. SPIRIT POSSESSION**

We have tried to show the role of the ancestors and how one becomes an ancestor. We also argued that there are certain rituals that must be done for the dead person or else his or her spirit will just roam in the air without a place to go. These spirits can possess ordinary people because they are alien. They are not one's ancestors and therefore do not belong to the home. This is taken further by Sibisi(1975) who argues that even the ancestors can possess a person, but this only occurs among healers. We are not going to focus on ancestral possession because it is believed that they only punish and do not kill (Kuper, 1986:62). We will focus on the alien spirits and spirits that are sent by witches. It will be shown how they cause illness and how healers deal with this kind of illness.

### 6.1. ALIEN SPIRITS

These spirits can be dangerous because they are angry due to the fact that their family has abandoned them. So they want a place to stay. Obviously, when they catch someone, they are going to possess that particular person. Sibisi says that among the AmaZulu this kind of possession is referred to as *indiki*. This spirit can cause illness to a person, "it resides on the chest" (Sibisi, 1975:50). It is believed that a possessed person cries in a foreign voice. Sibisi does not show other malfunctioning that such a spirit can cause. The spirit can make a person steal or kill. The possessed person is in extreme danger of being knocked down by cars, trains or of jumping off the cliff or from a high rise building. The fact that the spirit cries inside the possessed person shows that it is in grief and maybe wants revenge.

Moreover Sibisi does not explain why the person gets possessed by an alien spirit. Since Africans believe that nothing happens without a reason, *indiki* is said to be caused by the absence of the protector of the individual, the ancestor, because it is believed that when ancestors require rituals they must be done or else they get angry. Or it might be because of pollution and as a result the person's *seriti* and spirit are weakened and can not protect the individual from this spirit. The healing according to Sibisi involves,

being treated by a diviner who was once possessed by *indiki*, involves a period of initiation into the spirit cult, of three months or less. During this period the treatment attempts to exorcise the alien spirit and replace it with the ancestral male spirit, which would protect the patient from future attacks. The *indiki* initiate uses red emetics to eject the alien spirit, and white emetics to arouse her own spirit. (1975:50-1)

From this healing procedure one can see that *indiki* does not just possess a person. But Sibisi fails to explain some important causes, such as the absence of the ancestors or the performance of some immoral act, that has resulted in the crisis.

## 6.2. WITCHCRAFT: ANIMAL AND ALIEN SPIRITS

One of my informants, a healer (cf. appendix I:G), tried to explain about this kind of spirit possession but could not say what its name is. Sibisi terms it *ufufunyane*. In Setswana it is called *mafomfonyane*. It is claimed that a person who is possessed by *mafomfonyane* cries a lot, gets mentally deranged. He or she becomes like a mad person, tears his or her clothes, and also wants to commit suicide (Sibisi 1975:53). This phenomenon always has a witch behind it. Soil from the graveyard together with animal fat and blood is mixed with herbal concoctions to bewitch a person. The soil together with the blood can be put on the gate of the victim and after she or he passes she will get *ufufunyane*. As in *indiki*, the person can cry with the voice of another person, maybe a male or female. Sometimes that person can also be made to have an invisible animal like a monkey or a dog which he or she always walks with and has sex with. This person is always disliked and cannot get married. This is because in African religion life and death do not mix, it becomes a big crisis if the two are combined. That is why this spirit also kills as the healer interviewed has argued that there was one man who was possessed and before he exorcised the spirit he has to know where the spirit comes from. Mr B says that in order to get the answers from the patient he always calms down the spirit by giving the patient some herbs like *isibhara* (the sneezing herb) or herbs for drinking for about a week. On the day of an exorcism, the drums are beaten to provoke the spirit since it hates noise. The healer says that the patient is whipped until he or she cries and the spirit talks inside a person. The healer claims that the spirit just said, "I will kill this person" (see. Mr. B. Appendix I:E). At last it was able to tell Mr B the whole story about how and when it possessed the patient and the person who sent it.

The treatment includes exorcism and sometimes the installation of benign spirits which are not ancestral spirits and which are controlled by the healer (Sibisi 1975:52). But what

happens if the healer dies? That means that this person will be possessed again. A solution is given by Mr B who says that the patient is taken for two weeks to stay with him. During the stay of the patient with him, he tries to understand the nature of the spirit thoroughly. He waits for the patient to cry sometimes he would beat the patient so that the spirit would start talking.

After the spirit has been exorcised, the patient is cut with a razor blade to extract blood that is mixed with soil from the grave. This is mixed with water that the patient used for a bath. All these Mr B says will be buried together in a hole in a veld. The patient is given very strict instructions before going away. This work is done very early in the morning. A hole deep enough has to be dug. The mixture is then poured in the hole and these words are said: "My name is X, I have relocated and this is my new residence, if you want me, you will find me here". Then this hole is closed like a grave and some branches are put over it. The patient then leaves the area without looking back. Looking back would result in the spirit following and possessing him or her again.

## 7. NATURAL DISEASES

Many scholars do not mention anything about the illness as a result of natural causes. For example Setiloane (1976:44) holds that among the Sotho-Tswana illness is "caused by *Badimo* or sorcerers". This is rejected by Warren who says that among Africans there are diseases that occur naturally (in Ayim-Aboagye, 1993:104).

Perhaps this neglect of natural diseases is because illnesses that are caused by spiritual beings are regarded as more serious than natural ones. Or maybe it is the way the individual has been socialised. Likewise it is also the way the healers diagnose the illness in

most instances. But natural illness do exist among the BaSotho, baTswana, amaZulu and amaXhosa. The BaSotho believe that if a woman sits on the floor without a mat she will have a problem with the womb or the bladder (*senya*). When you catch flu they say it is because you do not take care of yourself by keeping the body warm [*ukuzifudumeza*]. Sometimes when you do not get children they say it is because of the *serame* (cold) that you did not protect yourself against. Thus the family will use a warm stone to warm a woman or rub her with their fingers. For flu they will use aloe to clean the stomach and *mamepe* (honey) and lemon to drink. But if there are no remedies at home they also can go to the healer for help.

## 8. SUMMARY

One can argue that Africans believe that every illness in their life is caused by something. But there is a sense in which people carry all the blame for any suffering that happens to them. It is interesting to note that when misfortune befalls one it is either because the ancestors are angry for not receiving their due, or it is the work of the witches and sorcerers and they could not offer protection because one had not done a particular service to the ancestors. Either way, a human being comes out a loser. But at least their belief in witchcraft, spirit possession, ancestors, African healers, the conflict of the *seriti*, spirit (*umoya*), and person helps them to understand and explain the illnesses that exist in this complex world. It helps them cope with the complexities of life. They also get meaning of life from their belief system. But the belief in illness as caused by the spirits is not seen as the only cause. Natural causes are also part of the African world view as it has been shown. However, individuals are blamed because it is said they are careless by not caring for themselves.

## CHAPTER 5

### CHRISTIAN WORLD-VIEW: ILLNESS AND HEALING

Christianity presents a complicated and perplexing set of beliefs, institutions, ceremonies and personalities. As a result, there are many different churches, some of which use the same doctrines but worship God differently. As we have shown with African Religion<sup>12</sup>, the same is true with Christian religion, even if there is diversity of these churches the difference is at a surface level. The Christian groups that have been chosen to illustrate the way in which Christians perceive illness and healing are the Methodists and the Born-agains from His people and Faith Mission. All the groups are in Cape Town. The people interviewed include the clergy, teachers, and students at the university of Cape Town.

It is important to mention that the theology of the people interviewed is sometimes not the same as the official theology that is on paper or that is established at conferences by the leaders of the groups. This may be because there is difference between theory and practice. What is preached may not always be similar to what people practise. Due to socialising pressures, like peers, family, education, media and others, religion preached from the pulpit sometimes is not practised in the same way by the congregants.

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<sup>12</sup> In African religion we focused on the amaZulu, baSotho, baTswana, and amaXhosa. That is, we generalised about the religion. What the present writer discovered is that, in some instances the differences just lie in the language. But in the case of healing, there is not rigidity but dynamism. The healers do what the ancestors say, but they also rely upon their own creativity.

In Christianity, as in African Religion, there are things that Christians share in common which give them identity like sharing problems, praying together, and their belief in Christ as their Lord and saviour, even if different churches differ on what such beliefs entail and on how they should be expressed in word and deed. There is also the difference of opinion on what sin is.

For instance among the Born agains illness is defined in terms of sin and salvation. But it depends on whether a person is a "real Christian" according to them. That is to say if a person is a so-called "real born again" illness is then seen as a test and something that has to happen to keep the child of God going. This is because life for a Christian is a fight between good and evil, of which at the end the good prevails. They always give the example of Jesus who was persecuted and persevered. For those who are "lukewarm" Christians it is believed that it is because of sin that they are suffering. The same can also be found among the ordinary Methodists. But the major thing that John Wesley, the founder of the church, emphasised is that the "way of salvation is love"(Hollified, 1986:9). That is to say, Wesley saw suffering as a matter of one's character. But he interpreted some illnesses as a rebellion (ibid. 15). It is indeed difficult to differentiate between the two because the theology is similar. But the slight difference is that the "Born agains" emphasise sin as the cause of illness (see appendix II: A, B, F). Hence some Methodists put their emphasis on natural causes, such as, germs or biological disorders, rather than sin. This chapter deals with how Christians (Methodist and Born agains) deal with illness and what they perceive as its causes (see the diagram 1).

**Diagram 1: A and B:** Methodist and Born-again views on the causes of illness and how they are healed (see appendix II).

**A: Methodists**

<b>1. Causes of Illness</b>	<b>Lay people</b>	<b>Clergy (Appendix E)</b>
A. God, Jesus	Punishment and Test	same
B. Satan: Evil Spirits	Satan through evil can cause illness *Witchcraft (see appendix c, d) can be used by God to convert a person.	same
C. Sin and Individual	acts of evil that pollutes the body	same
D. Natural	Just occur, biological, germs-(appendix c)	same
<b>2. Healing</b>		
A. African healing	yes (appendix c, d)	yes
B. Western healing	yes (appendix c, d)	yes
C. Christian healing	prayer, fast, repentance work for God more	same
D, Rituals	slaughtering animals (appendix c) prayer, fasting	same

**B: Born-Agains**

<b>1. Causes of Illness</b>	<b>Lay People</b>	<b>Clergy (Appendix F)</b>
A. God, Jesus	punishment for sin, lesson (appendix a) disobeying God, curse (appendix b)	same
B. Satan: evil spirits	possess people especially evildoers, can be used by God to convert His people, (appendix a, b)	same
C. Sin and individual	engaged in immoral acts (appendix a, b)	same
D. Natural	germs, biological (appendix a, b) environmental pollution	same
<b>2. Healing</b>		
A. Western and Christian healing	Yes	Yes
B. Rituals	fast, prayer: laying of hands on the sick	same

## 1. GOD AND JESUS

God is viewed as the creator of everything on earth. As a result, Christians believe that they must try by all means to worship Him and never to sin against Him. Sin is defined by my informants as wrong doing and an offence against God, something that God disapproves of (cf. appendix II: A-F). Christians believe that since He is the creator, the father, and the provider, He also punishes the wrong doers.

This belief is entirely held by the Born-again who hold that "illness is from God because people are sinners and are continuing sinning"(cf. appendix II: A). But they also acknowledge that illness can occur naturally (cf. Appendix II: A, B, G).

As a response to illness Christians believe that after death all the suffering of this world will be forgotten in the joy of the new life. This explanation is evident in all churches, but among Methodists and Born again churches it is widely used. This is aptly put by Jim Reeves in his song "This world is not my home, I am just a pass a by", and a popular Zulu chorus which says "*Singabahambayo thina kulomhlaba, siy' ekhaya ezulwini*" (which literally translates "We are travellers or visitors on this earth, our final destination is heaven our home). This belief is further strengthened by the Book of Revelation.

They also believe that God suffers alongside people in the tragedies of this world. Born-again take this further by praying and fasting to thank God to give them strength to deal with suffering, which they believe is part of this world, because, they would argue, is only through suffering that people learn to know God more and grow. In a world without suffering there would be nothing to strive for or against (appendix II: F).

In this instance, they would use Jesus Christ as an example, that he was tortured to death and rose again and out of his death, which is darkness, came hope and light. So they believe that in this life they have to suffer like Christ and they will conquer the way He did through His and God's help (cf. appendix II: A, B.). Thus one can argue that since they believe that God creates they also see Him as a destroyer of those who do not respect and worship Him. But at least they have some explanations to console themselves in dealing with suffering and illness.

## **2. MEDIATORS: JESUS, HOLY SPIRIT AND ANGELS**

In Christianity, like in African religion, we have people who are mediators between the living and God. But this does not mean that people do not converse directly with God. Jesus as a mediator is clearly put in the book of John (14: 13-14) when he says, "anything you ask in my name it will be given to you".

This implies that Jesus can heal and can punish through illness. A lay Methodists interviewed argued that the verse means that if someone has been angered by another person and he or she prays to Jesus that person can be punished (appendix II: C). It is important to mention here that the informant emphasised that this does not refer to revenge but the protectiveness of God for His children. The underlying factor is that Jesus can cause illness and He can cure it.

Some lay Black Methodists believe that angels are mediators between God and the living. They would argue that angels are the people of God who were following His word on earth and are now on His right hand in heaven (appendix II: C). This is clearly illustrated by what is usually said in funerals that,

when a person is dead he or she is going to sit on the right hand of the Father like Jesus. The living would beg the dead to go and prepare some places for the living who would die at any time. People will beg the dead to negotiate with God on their behalf. That God should not be angry with them. Another vital illustration is seen when Christians preach, they would talk about God of Abraham, David or Moses. These are the dead people. Now they are angels, messengers.

The view that angels are mediators and are created like human-beings is not part of an official Methodist theology, because it is an official theology that angels are made by God and they are not created similarly to human beings. This shows that some Black Christians mix African theology with Christian theology, because African theology sees ancestors as mediators. From these statements it is explicitly clear that some lay Methodist believe that the angels can be sent to inflict pain on the living. They can be sent to heal as well.

The Holy Spirit is also seen by Christians as a comforter. Thus the Born-again see the spirit as the mediator between God and the people. They believe that not anyone can get the gift but only the staunch believers who are born-again. It is officially held by Christians that the Holy Spirit is a gift from God and it is a comforter. Thus in times of illness it intervenes through the healing power from God and it consoles the sick. This implies that the Holy spirit can be sent to inflict illness by God in order to remind a person who is His child to love Him more, and in the same breath God can send the spirit to heal people.

### **3. A HUMAN PERSON**

It is a commonly held Christian belief that the world and all that is in it was created by God. He then created humans so that they would praise and worship Him, and also look after all that God created. A human being, like in African religion, is believed to have a spirit and the flesh which are the gifts from God (Moltmann, 1979:3). It is also believed that sin that Adam and Eve committed made humans to be distinct from God.

Hence "Christ through the cross broke the mask and humans recognise his or her truth and first becomes true person" (ibid. 20). As a result, the spirit and the flesh have to be kept holy. A person should dedicate his or her life to God to rule every aspect of life. People would then lead their lives according to the Word of God in the Bible. That is to say by striving to be like Christ even though humans are naturally sinners (Rev. R, appendix II: E). If people are defiled due to sin it is believed that God can punish the individual with illness because humans have the free will to choose between good and evil (appendix II).

The popular belief among Christians that a human being has to "try" and do good all the time in order for his or her spirit and flesh to be in harmony shows that in Christian terms there is an acceptance of illness as part of the world but it is up to the individual to try and find inner strength to deal with it. As part of their life, the community tries to make the world a better place. This does not rule out the continuous battle to be holy. It is argued mainly by Born-againists that if one is holy one would be able to accomplish and endure suffering (appendix II: A, B, G).

#### 4. SIN

As it has been shown above, sin is defined by Christians as "something that is not approved by God" (cf. Appendix A-G). This part will point out things which God disapproves of in relation to illness. According to Nolan,

Sin is a moral word. When we call some wrong doing a sin we claim that it is not the result of chance or fate but that somebody is morally responsible for it, somebody is to be blamed for it. Sin implies guilt....When we say that something is a sin we are not only saying that God is involved, we are also saying that human beings are guilty or in some way responsible for it. (Nolan, 1989:32-3)

This statement suggests that illness is caused by doing something that is not allowed according to Christian standards, a Christian then feels guilty because he or she knows that they have done something wrong. For instance, selfishness, ignorance and arrogance are believed to lead to suffering and illness because God does not approve of them. Love is seen as a key to salvation. One should take care of the poor, the sick, and share everything where applicable. If one does the opposite, it is believed that God can punish one by inflicting illness on that particular person.

Among the Born-again and some Methodists, for healing to take place, "one has to repent, pray and fast. And try to live a generous life"(cf. appendix II: A, B, C, E, G). From the observation during the fieldwork it was clear that for many Methodists fasting is not practised, although it is part of their official theology.

From the above it is clear that for Christians awareness can help people to endure and sometimes free themselves from illness. Awareness of other people who are beings created by God and the world they live in.

There is another dimension to sin which my informants touched upon, that of doing nothing while the situation necessitates that one does something. Cox (in Nolan 1989:41) calls this the "sin of omission, a sin of being less than human". Nolan goes on to say that, "not caring, not deciding, not taking the responsibility and avoiding the issue by saying it is not my business", also constitute the sin of omission (ibid. 41).

It is believed that by being involved in such acts an individual can pollute him or herself. As a result, it is claimed that God responds by inflicting illness on the individual and generations to come.

For healing to take place the wrongs have to be corrected. An individual has to own up the wrong by confessing his or her sin. This is part of the cleansing process, making an individual pure. After having done that one has to ask for forgiveness from God. Since God is holy He would have nothing to do with anybody or anything that is not pure, clean and holy. This vividly shows that for Christians, striving for holiness is the key towards fighting illness.

## **5. SATAN: EVIL SPIRITS**

The Christian view of the world is that it is good and bad. They believe that God made the world good but due to the interference of Satan, the evil one, the bad element came into being. The presence of evil in the world made life difficult, especially for those who love God (cf. appendix II: A-G). This is well explained in Psalm 18, where life is explained as a fight between good and evil. Because God is their strength, rock and their provider they know that the evil one will be defeated at the end because through Christ evil was defeated (Mrs L. appendix. II: A).

The evil spirits are another dimension of sin, they are the powers of evil, because the Bible refers to them as false gods, demons, and the devil.

Therefore, one can argue that these evil spirits in Christianity refer to everything and everyone who practises things or establishes systems that God does not approve of. For an example, the apartheid system in South Africa, many people would argue that it is sin and those who are guilty of it will be punished unless they repent and change their ways. Why? Because God is against anything evil. He also does not favour injustices and the oppression of others (Dan 7-9, 1 Kings 21). To be more precise, Satan "represent

organised evil, evil embedded in the structure of society" (Caird, 1956:84). This will sound superstitious but when one understands how the evil spirits are understood within these religions (Christianity, African religion) one gets a clear picture that it is not, but their way of explaining the problem of evil.

In addition, not only are the forces of evil to blame for people's suffering, the individual also take some responsibility. This is because personal and collective sins are viewed as the same. Because it is individuals who open themselves to exploits of evil. Rev. R, a Methodist Minister (appendix II: E) says that, people test God by blaming ignorance for sins committed. He further says, "since our God is a jealous God and will not allow us to perish, He will send sickness, as a form of punishment". This is observable in what many Christians say when they are suffering. They always think of their faith being put to a test or of God strengthening them through trials and tribulations or simple punishment for the sins that one had committed knowingly or unknowingly.

Christians like using the example of Job to illustrate how suffering comes as a test. Job was very faithful and obedient to God. Then Satan got jealous and asked God if he could test Job's commitment to Him. God agreed, but Job withstood all suffering and God intervened and blessed him.

In this instance rituals play a major role in combating evil. The Born-again would perform rituals like, prayer, night watch (pray for the whole evening after a fast) and a serious fast to help the ill to communicate with God. It is another way of withstanding suffering showing how much they are serious about their Christian life. The duration of the fast would depend on the seriousness of the matter at hand.

Even though it is not part of the official Christian theology to slaughter and consult African healers, Black Methodists interviewed said that, they do consult African healers to diagnose where they went wrong or what caused their problems. They also perform slaughtering rituals to God and their dead as a sign of appeasement, they called the dead Angels (see Appendix II C, D, E). This shows that indeed there is a difference between the theology preached and the one practised.

Suffering, in Christianity, is individualised as compared to the African community. But, at least, there is some sense of belonging as compared to the Methodists. Because many of them took personal care for the sick not only just in church but even outside. This does not exclude some of the Methodists but it tries to show that there are some differences on emphasis or on the way people show their care. Rev. R backs this up by saying that, in his church there are many people and sometimes it is even difficult to know all of them. Moreover, some even do not come and tell him their problems. But, at least, as Christians they know God is with them and He can do away with their problems (Appendix II E).

From this context one can argue that it is a popular Christian theology that evil powers have no power; it is only the people who allow them power. But, at least, this belief empowers the believers to try and strive for perfection and also to try by all means not to commit sin. It also tries to mobilise them to endure and find strength in their suffering by not regarding evil powers as powerful but as weak because God is powerful.

## **6. SIN AND SPIRIT POSSESSION**

Some of my informants except two who are Methodists (Mr M and Miss N, appendix II C and D) did not want to talk about spirit possession. This could be attributed to the

unresolved conflict in their minds about being African and Christian at the same time. Since in their religion (African) spirit possession is said to be caused by witchcraft, and popular Christian theology sees witchcraft as a superstition, they could not be open about this topic.

Among the Born-again there is a belief that evil spirits and Satan can possess a person, especially someone whose Christian life is not stable. These evil spirits can cause people to believe in magic, steal, and engage in other anti-social acts.

Born-again believe that African healers are possessed by the evil spirit (cf. Mrs L, Miss R, and Rev M appendix II: A, B, F). Sometimes when non-converts come to church and in the process of the service start crying aloud as if they are in a trance this is seen as being possessed by the evil spirit. The reason why this person cries is that the spirit is confronted by the power and majesty of Christ. This is referred to as, spiritual illness because the persons spirit has been under the control of the evil one.

Christians believe that they need to pray to exorcise evil spirits. Born-again would pray in tongues<sup>13</sup> until the person cries or sometimes faints and they will leave him or her to wake up and tell the congregation what was happening. And it is believed that when a person wakes up, and stops crying God has fought the evil one. Some of the soul-winners will take this person outside counsel him or her and will visit them at home to see to it that he

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<sup>13</sup>Christians believe that people who speak in tongues are those who are empowered with the holy spirit. It is believed that it is the language that is understood by God and the believers involved.

or she becomes spiritually strong and if the evil spirit is still there, they will continue praying.

## **7. SIN AND NATURAL ILLNESS**

From the field-work, it was discovered that many of the Christian informants today no longer believe that God is always at the centre of humanity's relationship with illness (Appendix II). He is seen as now competing with other resources. He is usually shifted to the background. People explain some of their illness as caused by natural forces, like germs or biological complications, and not as a punishment from God (see diagram 2 A and B). Some people refer to these as the work of the evil forces under the guidance of Satan (Rev. R and Pastor M, appendix II E and F).

The underlying factor is that God is not always seen as the one who punishes people. His major role is seen as a healer who uses western doctors, priests, and fellow Christians. Thus many Christians use both Christian and western healing measures for curing the illnesses, whether the illness is seen as natural or supernatural. In the words of Shorter,

Healing is more than prayer because: in practising medicine and applying physical remedies for illness, in this one is entering into the absolute and overall healing action of God. Prayer for healing recognise this. It also directly channels that healing action in such a way as to confirm, reinforce, and even surpass the physical remedies we apply. This overall healing action has been entrusted to Jesus Christ. (1985:136)

**Diagram 2 illustrating both Boon-agains' and Methodists' perceptions on typologies of illness and their Causes (see appendix II)**

**Diagram A : Methodists**

<b>Types of illness</b>	<b>Causes</b>
Stomach pains (appendix II d)	infection due to viruses
Flue (appendix II c and d)	infection
Cancer (appendix II c and e)	inherited (appendix e), biological disturbances (appendix c)
Bareness (appendix d)	can be inherited and a curse from God
Hey fever (appendix d)	infection
Aids (appendix c)	punishment from God

**Diagram B : Born agains**

<b>Types of Illness</b>	<b>Causes</b>
Flue (appendix a and b)	viruses and germs
Bone problems (appendix a)	accidents or just occur
Accidents (appendix a)	same as above
Ulcers (appendix a)	eating fatty foods, infection
Madness (appendix f)	punishment from God, psychological disturbances
Tuberculosis (appendix a)	filthy places, punishment from God
Cancer (appendix a)	it can be a punishment from God
Bareness (appendix b)	biological disorder, punishment from God
Aids (appendix a)	plaque-punishment from God

## **8. SUMMARY**

In this chapter we have tried to show how Christians perceive their world in relation to illness and healing. We have argued that Christians believe that illness can be caused by the anger of the spirits (God and Jesus) against the individual for not doing something or for committing sin. And, as a result, the evil one can be used by God to draw the person to God. In this instance we tried to show that the individual is blamed and is always asked to correct his or her ways in order for healing to take place. We also tried to show that some

Christians today do not always see God as the cause of their suffering. More often they just regard their illness as natural (see diagram 2 A and B).

On the healing of illness that is caused by supernatural forces we discovered that Christians do the healing from a complex of sin, illness, and evil spirits. This implies that Christians would argue that God is a God of power who enables the believer to live in strength. Illness and weakness have no place and power. They are directly linked to the power of Satan. Thus we argued that there is a belief that is held by some people that illness is caused by the supernatural. But we also argued that others believe that it is just part of life. The healing of both the supernatural and natural illnesses is performed by employing both Christian healing (faith, prayer, fasting, repentance) and western healing (consulting a doctor, employing western remedies). I stress the role of western healing in Christianity because the churches dealt with here do not allow their followers to use western healing. This Christian avoidance of both African and western medicine is backed up by McAllen and Fife, (1986:180) who argue that many of the Christian churches adopted the Presbyterian mission of the nineteenth century which said "use no native medicine, employ no native doctor, drink no rum pray to Jesus for blessings and praise Him for recover". This view supports western healing and sees African healing as wrong.

We tried to show that like people who belong to African religion, Christians have their own resources and way of dealing with suffering and this empowers them to cope in this complex world.

## CHAPTER 6

# COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS: AFRICAN RELIGION AND CHRISTIANITY

In order to develop as an academic discipline, the study of religion requires a sense of its own history. It needs a perspective on those efforts that have been made in the past to reflect on and make sense out of religion as a human product, a human project, or a human problem. As Walter Dill Scott observed, the study of religion "cannot pretend to find its way until it can study its past in narrative sequence" (1974:730). . . . As we look to the future of religion in South Africa, the recovery of a history of comparative religion should be a priority for historical research and critical reflection. . . . A history [that] requires a shift away from the categories "religion" or "religions" as its primary units of study, because these are contested categories produced within the context of the very history under investigation. Alternative categories--discourse, practice and social relations, or classifications, orientation, and negotiation, or symbol, myth, ritual, and the production and consumption of invented traditions--can be explored in rewriting the history of comparative religion from a vantage point of South Africa. (Chidester, 1996:xii)

This quotation suggests that comparative religion should no longer focus on apartheid categories but look on all religions as vital to the people who belong to them. That is to say, the study of religion should focus on the similarities and differences objectively, without being caught within a web of cultural prejudices<sup>14</sup>. In the past, South African religion has been analysed from the western Christian cultural perspective while other

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<sup>14</sup>. In the past [missionaries, travellers and some of their contemporaries] and some people currently employed/employs comparative religion as a "rhetoric of control" (Chidester, 1996). Chidester takes this further by arguing that, the similarities and differences, that were produced by such a comparative religion on the frontier remained a contested field of knowledge and power(ibid.). This was/is because some people want to rule others and the best way to do that is to deny them a religion, something that gives them identity.

religions have been regarded as inauthentic. This thesis moves away from the apartheid paradigm of comparative religion.

A new approach to comparative religion must instil a sense of respect for all religions. Pye points out that,

comparative religion is an integral part of phenomenological method the purpose of it being to contribute to elucidate the meaning or essence of the phenomenon religion. This includes what religious concepts, actions, social associations and states of minds mean for the persons involved in them, that is the specific believers or practitioners concerned. (1972:18)

The aim of comparative religion is to get an inclusive understanding of the essence of religion in general. A. R Radcliffe-Brown argues that the main objective of comparative study is to arrive at valid generalisation about human behaviour "by the systematic study of similarities and differences" (1951:15-22). Hence in this context the real purpose of comparative study is to identify and interpret the similarities and differences. That is to say, the comparative methodology used in this thesis disputes the officially held Christian theology that denies similarities between African religion and Christianity. In this sense the ideology of separation between the two religions is contested.

According to Evans-Pritchard, it is not the case that comparative religion focuses on both the similarities and differences. He argues that the purpose of any comparative study is "to explain differences rather than similarities" (1963:17). The question arises, what should be done with similarities? Are they not important? This theory betrays the reality of religion, that religion is a way of life. It tries to run away from the reality that in all religions there is something similar. One can argue that this theory perhaps subconsciously perceives comparative religion as a melting pot of other people's beliefs. But a genuine comparative

study of religion does not perceive the study as a melting pot in which all diverse religions are liquefied into sameness; the differences are also taken into consideration.

It is vital to mention here that the purpose of comparative religion is not to depict the authenticity of any religion. It tries to show the reality of all religions that they occupy privileged, autonomous, and reality of the Ultimate. That is the reason why Oosthuizen argues that what makes any religion true is,

Enrichment, that is, the meeting of needs and the raising and meeting of further needs, is what in the long run authenticates any religious system, that is, gives it a feeling of reality and enables it to meet the specifically religious need of belonging to the ultimately real. Only where life needs cannot be met or are already met is the need to belong to the ultimately real the only real need to be met, and the "blessings" are authenticated by their power to provide that. Needs are very far from being simply material and have much to do with identity, with meaning and values.(1986:9)

This implies that comparative study is a reality and not a luxury. It has to be done to help people understand each other better. Likewise rooting out stereotypes that exist in our societies about other religions. One can mention here that it is the purpose of the Ultimate Being the fact that He created different people of different colours and in different places. He wanted people to be unique. Thus we can say people should then try to accept that reality by trying to understand other religions from within. This can be possible only if researchers or any person involved in comparative religion try to respect and take other religions seriously. A genuine comparative study of the religion has a potential of eliminating misrepresentations of other people's beliefs. This is because it compels scholars to understand people and their worldview.

Comparison in this context involves noting similarities and differences between African and Christian view of illness and healing. In this sense the significance of what is

comparable will not be overemphasised because what is dissimilar is also vital. This is taken further by Tarasar when she states that,

Fortunately, especially in a pluralistic society, few persons desire to be totally different or removed from other human beings. Even believing in our own story and accepting our own commitments, we do not find it pleasant always to be in opposition to others, or to stand alone in our beliefs. As human beings, we desire contact and relationships with others. We search for things that can establish links between us, and we begin by looking for areas of commonness. Without sacrificing the things which we value and which provide the foundation for our self understanding and identity, we seek those same values or threads of similarity in others, so that new relationships might be established. (in Thompson, 1988:205)

With this suggestion in mind let us now journey together in trying to get the similarities and differences between African and Christian religion in relation to how they perceive illness and healing. That is to say, we need to speak the "truth of love" about these two religions. This phrase captures the search for commonness. Moreover, it is used here to show that in the two religions that are under study we are trying to find what the people who belong to them see as the cause of illness and what do they do when they are ill. The truth here implies that both religions have got some similar and dissimilar ideas related to the topic of illness and healing but one should take them as truth because that is what the people who belong to the religion believe.

## **1. COMPARING THE TWO RELIGIONS**

It has been argued by Ayisi (1988:80) that,

in all matters of immediate concern the African is interested in the ancestral spirits, but believes that the Supreme God is Omnipotent. And like any other religion, African religion deals with the same spiritual matters.

When one relates this to our present study one can argue that the two religions' view on causes of illness and healing are similar but the differences lie in the procedures that may vary according to the ideological make-up of the people.

It is vital to re-emphasise in this chapter that the theology of the informants from the chosen groups (Methodists and Born-again) representing Christianity, might contradict the official Christian beliefs. This has to be taken into consideration in order to avoid misunderstandings. Likewise, this has to be realised by people who belong to African religion that through socialisation people can change their African theology and mix it up with other beliefs.

In terms of healing, people in the two religions believe that one has to make an appeasement. Hence these beliefs are not put into practice in similar ways as it will be shown below. The other difference that will be highlighted relates to the concepts that exist in the two religions. It has been discovered that in both religions one finds some words that refer to the same reality but from the cultural and religious context it is different, for instance, pollution and spirit possession.

In comparing the two religions we will use Pye's four main lines of approach which are, religious concepts, state of mind , religious action, and the study of religious groups. These aspects are of importance here because they are about religious significance and they relate to the phenomenological methodology employed in this study. According to Pye (1973:14) these four approaches are "ideally inseparable, because they deal with different aspects of a set of data which is, in life an integrated whole".

## 2. CAUSES OF ILLNESS

### 2.1. THE ULTIMATE BEING AND THE MEDIATOR

The Ultimate Being and the mediator<sup>15</sup> are seen as the ones who cause illness. In African religion the Ultimate Being is called (*Modimo, Thixo, and UNkulunkulu* and many other things)<sup>16</sup>, the mediators are the ancestors. In Christianity the Ultimate Being is called (God) and the mediators are Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and Angels. They are seen as the guardians and protectors of morality and, it is argued that they see to it that the good are rewarded and the wrong doers are punished.

In African religion people would say "*Abaphansi basifulathele*" and in Christianity "God and Christ are punishing me for the wrongs that I have done". This shows that both religions deals with the same spiritual matters.

### 2.2. OTHER SPIRITS

In both religions the causes of illness are not only seen as coming from the Ultimate Being and the mediators but there are also other spirits responsible. In African religion there are spirits like alien spirits, animal spirits, nature spirits, and witch familiars. Similarly, in

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<sup>15</sup> Mediators in both religions negotiate with the Ultimate Being for the living people. In Christianity it is Jesus Christ, this is illustrated in the word they say that "Christ is the only key to the kingdom of God". Likewise the Holy spirit which is the consoler of the people. There are other groups of Christians especially among some lay Methodists who believe that Angels are mediators [the researcher discovered this among both white and black Methodists], they are called messengers of God, which means they also mediate. In African religion Ancestors are the mediators.

<sup>16</sup>This does not imply that among the amaZulu, amaXhosa and the baSotho baTswana these are the only words for the Supreme being for more information see Setiloane(1976) [Sotho-Tswana], Chidester (1996) [Zulu, Xhosa and the Sotho-Tswana]

Christianity we have Satan who is called an evil spirit. This Devil can be anyone who does not conform to Christian norms. That is to say, a person who is not an insider is always possessed by this evil spirit. Christians believe that, Satan was once an Angel and He disobeyed God and now he competes with God, He is called Lucifer. People who do not conform to Christian norms; like thieves, gossipers, adulterers, fornicators, For instance, thieves, gossipers, people who commit adultery, and those without love; are called the children of Lucifer.

Both religions' views of who gets possessed are similar. It is believed that anyone, it depends on whether you are right with the Ultimate Being and the mediators'. In Christian terms to be right with God is to do good, take care of the poor, the sick, have love and also follow the word of God.

In African religion, the idiom *motho ke motho ka batho babang* (a person is a person through others) shows that the people are communal, they help each other in times of happiness and sorrow. Illness is not an individual thing it is a communal thing; care is the order of the day. This implies that love for others is seen as something very important, it helps people to be in good terms with the Ultimate Being and the ancestors. Africans believe that, they should also take care of their ancestors by doing rituals to them in order to avoid misfortune.

The nature of evil spirits is another dimension of sameness in this topic. Spirits in both religions are seen as both human and supernatural. In Christianity anyone who is possessed by the evil spirit, and unseen evil spirit. In African religion anyone who is a witch, the unseen evil spirits. The difference here is that, among Christians evil spirits are confided to

humans but in African Religion they also include non-humans like, animals, nature for an example lightning.

The belief in witchcraft, animal spirits, nature spirits and alien spirits in African religion, and evil spirits in Christianity might sound as superstition to the people who do not belong to the religion, but the people who belong to the religions do not see it that way, it is used to explain evil and sin in Christianity and the problem of evil and deviance in African religion.

### **2.3. HUMAN BEINGS: DEVIANCE AND POLLUTION**

The human person is, in both instances, seen as very special and ultimately belongs to the Creator. There is also a strong belief in the concept of a human person being constituted by body and soul.

Christians believe that a person is created in the image of God, and his or her body is the temple of God. This implies that people have to maintain the sanctity and purity of the body. Therefore, believers are encouraged not to engage in any acts that might defile the temple of God. These include adultery, fornication, greed, cruelty, revengefulness, and many others.

In African religion the concept of the body and the soul plays a major role in understanding a human person. Setiloane (1986:13) says that in African thought,

Physically perceived the human person is like a live electric wire which is ever exuding force or energy in all directions. The force thus exuded is called '*Seriti*'-'*Isithunzi*'. ...It is a physical phenomenon which expresses itself externally to the human body in a dynamic manner. It is like an aura around the human person, an invisible shadow or cloud or mist forming something like a magnetic or radar field. It

gives forth into the traffic or weltering pool of life in community the uniqueness of each person and each object. While physically its seat is understood to be inside the human body, in the blood, its source is beyond and outside of the human physical body.

Both religions believe that an individual should try by all means to keep his or her body pure. This means that they should keep the inner-spirits holy. The inner-spirits in both religions play a major role in illness because it is believed that when a person does wrong the two get into conflict. And the result can be punishment because there will be no spirit that will help in fighting the evil spirits. In Christianity the spirit that fights the evil powers is the Holy spirit and in African religion ancestors<sup>17</sup>.

The wrong-doing which is termed sin in Christianity and is defined as pollution or deviance in African religion *ubumdaka* (Xhosa), *golatlhega* (Tswana), *ditshila* (Sotho), *ukulahleka* (Zulu), when looked at from a distance appear similar. Both depict acts of wrong doing and emphasise the point of doing good and trying to keep the body clean. But for some Christians, pollution refers also to environmental and physical cleanliness (appendix II: G). Moreover, for Christians there are other moral issues that are seen as polluting the body, for an example, adultery, drinking, smoking, and jealousy. But things such as walking at the graves at 12 o'clock noon and mourning are not seen as pollution. They are seen as superstition by the official Christian theology. Although some black Christians regard these things as part of their reality, they are discouraged in their churches, especially among the Born again people (cf. appendix II: A).

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<sup>17</sup> Mentioning ancestors and the holy spirit playing the similar role of protecting the individual raises a question of whether ancestors are supernatural. Africans believe that ancestors are supernatural. The fact that they are now elevated in another world of spirits, where they are mediating with the Ultimate Being on behalf of the living.

The Christian slogan is "cleanliness is next to Godliness", which means be physically and spiritually clean before calling your self a child of God. Among Africans cleanliness is encouraged but there are places (graves), actions, days (mourning days or months), people (mourners) that are regarded as polluting, and other people are not allowed to mix with them because this might result in illness or misfortune.

For Africans pollution is mainly stressed in relation to acts of deviation because for them nothing happens without a reason. People are taught that they should be careful about who they mingle with, when, where, and what type of a person, and what time they visit graves. This shows that in both religions there are some similarities on the view of pollution and deviance and how it causes illness. The differences lie in emphasis and on the cultural upbringing of the people. Another causation of illness which is seen as a similarity is natural diseases. Both religions believe that there are diseases that occur naturally. The Ultimate Being is not seen as always in the centre of natural illnesses.

### **3. HEALING**

It has been argued by Chidester (1987:174) that "all the religions seem to have three basic approaches to healing". That is, healing includes:

- 1) medicines and traditional wisdom regarding their use
- 2) direct intervention with the body through surgery, treating wounds, setting broken bones and so on
- 3) and ritual, which creates a larger context of symbolic action within which the prescription of certain medicines, the performances of certain surgical interventions, and the natural healing of the body are felt to make sense and to perform their special healing power.

From the research undertaken among the people who belong to Christianity and African religion, it was discovered that Chidester's theory on healing approaches has substance. Hence we found out that healing approaches are similar but the way they are carried out is sometimes different.

Likewise we discovered that all the religious groups interviewed employ western medical healing. But Christians, especially the Born-again and the White Methodists, do not believe in African healing. They use both western and Christian healing. Other Christians, however, like the Black Methodists and some of their ministers, use African healing (see appendix II: C, D, E). The reason why some Christians do not believe in African healing is that the official Christian theology discards any use of such a healing (see appendix II).

### **3.1. RITUALS AND SACRIFICES**

Rituals play a major role in the two religions. But the way such rituals are performed differs. For illness to be cured it is believed that a certain ritual must be employed. This shows that in the two religions healing occurs when the wrongs are corrected.

The two religions have different rituals performed during the healing process. Here a distinction has to be made between the two Christian groups, namely, the Born-again and Methodists. The former emphasises prayer, fasting, night watch, but the latter does put emphasis on rituals (see appendix II: A, B, F and C, D, E).

The rituals depend on the severity of the illness. And the emphasis on rituals and the way they are conducted differs here. In most cases the Born-again believe that people who are

sick and those who will pray for them, should fast and pray to seek God's face<sup>18</sup> and favour. And they would pray in tongues and in agreement that the evil spell has to be broken by the power of Jesus Christ.

The sick is touched through laying on of hands. Laying of hands is an act of empowering the sick with the Holy spirit which is believed will heal the body. It is not part of the Methodist tradition to pray for the sick in their main services on Sunday. Groups within the church would visit the sick in their homes or hospitals and pray with them. Faith is encouraged on those who are sick to trust in the Lord for healing. It is vital to mention here that no laying on of hands is performed among Methodists.

When one compares this with African religion one discovers the absence of formal worship<sup>19</sup>, people just go to the African healers to find out what is wrong. The healer will diagnose the illness, and since nothing happens without a cause in African religion in many instances a cow, goat or a chicken is slaughtered to make peace with the ancestors and asking for forgiveness from the Ultimate Being (cf. Appendix II: A-F).

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<sup>18</sup> The present writer observed this when she was doing her field work among the "His people" group and "Faith mission" people in Gugulethu. Every Sunday in both churches the sick are prayed for. But I was able to observe a lot in Gugulethu "Faith mission" because I went there while there was a lot of action. The Sunday that I was there was a staunch church member who was very ill. She was prayed for and the church decided to ask every member who was willing to fast for a week [starting on Sunday 7'o clock that evening and eat every day seven o'clock]. And it was also decided that there will be a night watch on Saturday where they will pray all night long.

<sup>19</sup> People do pray to the Ultimate Being but in most cases informally. A person would just thank Him or ask for forgiveness without even kneeling down. They just talk that out like saying "Modimo help me to get well, Thixo forgive me for what I have done". Shorter (1975) discusses about prayer.

The healer does not use his or her power during the healing process. He or she appeals to the ancestors as well as to the Supreme Being. The same is true for Christianity the gifted person or the Priest always ask for God's help when healing. Sacrifice is a common factor between the two religions although it is done in different ways. To Christians, money, loving God, and service to the poor and destitute are some of the things that are seen as sacrifices. On the other hand, practitioners of African religion use mostly animals as sacrifices. Christians believe that, Christ was a sacrifice so there is no need for another one. Whereas some Black Methodist interviewed argued that they believe in slaughtering animals (see appendix II: C, D, E).

Africans believe that an animal has to be slaughtered if that is required. What is fascinating here, which is a similarity is that, in order to be healed the sick has to do something like; an introspection to discover where he or she went wrong and try to correct that. This is termed repentance in Christian terms, in African religion it is to correct the wrongs (*ukuhungisa izinto* in Zulu).

As a synthesis, it was discovered that in both religions even if the manner in which the wrongs are corrected differs. But the principal similarity remains: the wrong has to be found and corrected (cf. Appendix: II).

### **3.2. HEALERS**

Among Christians, Western medical healing is seen as an institution that God made to help His people. But the official Christian theology sees African healing as evil and superstitious (Schimlek, 1953, and Appendix II: A, B, F). Hence some Christians believe and practice African healing, and they also accept Western healing as an effective approach in healing some illnesses. Despite that, Africans believe that the only healing that touches all the aspects of their body is African healing. They like saying in *Sesotho* "ba

*lhaloganyanya ka mokgwa o rebonang dilo ka teng gape bare thusa*" (they understand our world-view and they really help us).

The implication is that healing is psychological as well as physical and if a person does not go to the healer she or he believes in, healing would rarely occur. It could be argued that the reason why many Blacks who believe in African healing do not get healed by western medicine as the healer Mr B has argued (appendix I: E). This shows that the religious state of mind and belief system is very important and people should not be forced to do things that they do not believe.

But the interesting thing here that shows some similarities is that people in both religions believe that God is the anointer of the healing systems (for African religion see Setiloane, 1976:48; for Christianity see Hollified, 1986:17). And their belief in the healers helps them deal with their suffering even if it is different.

### **3.3. WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SICK?**

There is another dimension that exist in the two religions, that is, who takes care of those who are ill? Is that an individual problem or a societal responsibility? It is clear from the above discussion that in both instances there is a sense of belonging. But there is a difference in the way that sense of belonging is practically expressed.

In Christianity care for the sick is only based on the insiders and those who are not, are not cared for. Among the Africans, on the other hand, there is no exclusiveness, everyone is cared for by the community, illness is a communal thing- 'an injury to one is an injury to all'. In relation to African religion, this means that when an individual is sick the community gets affected. When a person is ill everyone takes part, it can be by helping

with washing the sick person, bringing food, offering advice or paying a visit, but the community gets affected.

In the healing of the person the community also takes part in the ceremony, they help in preparing food for the people who would be attending the ceremony. This shows that everything in African religion is community based, with the obvious exclusion of those who are identified as witches.

This is where exclusion occurs but everyone is welcome. The issue of inclusion and exclusion is more evident in what the people who belong to both religions say when they are greeted:

**African religion:**

Sipho: Hey! how are you?

Dikeledi: Hey I am okay but Mr Mabaso my neighbour is not well man. I am frustrated!

**Christianity [especially western]:**

John: Hey! how are you?

Charles: I am fine. It is just that I have a lot of work to do. But the Lord is good!

This is a very good example of the distinction between the two religions. Whereas the former includes all the community in the problem the latter just personalised his problems. This is the field in which African religion can teach Christianity that is practised today about *ubuntu* "humanness". Since Biblical Christianity emphasises humanness and loving one's neighbour, African religion might teach Christians about Christianity through *ubuntu*.

But in any sense both views on healing help those who belong to the religion to cope and deal with their suffering and also to understand why they suffer. Since Christianity employs both the spiritual and western medical healing methods, one can argue that this helps in dealing with the healing process holistically; that is, the physical, social, moral, psychological and spiritual facets are all covered. The same applies to African religion. Belief in African healing helps in healing the body holistically because all the dimensions mentioned above are covered.

#### 4. SUMMARY

In this chapter we have tried to show both the similarities and differences between African and Christian perceptions of the causes of illness and how they are healed (see diagram 3 A and B and C below). We have shown that sometimes among believers there is the difference between the theology preached and the one practised.

We argued that in both religions the causes of illness rotate around the same spiritual beings even if the names and the way people relate to these beings differ but they are regarded as the causes of illness. For an example, the religious groups believe that there is a Being who is bigger than any Being in the entire universe. The Being can cause illness and healing. In Christianity that Being is God, in African religion, *Modimo*, *uNkulunkulu*, *uQamata*, and many other names.

It has also been argued that the individual is seen as the cause of his or her illness because of the wrongs that he or she has done. In this manner it was discovered that the Ultimate being is not always seen at the centre of causation of illness. For an example, in terms of

natural illnesses we have shown that in both religions the Ultimate Being is not always blamed other forces take responsibility.

The role of mediators has been seen as a similarity among the two religions, in Christianity Jesus, the Holy spirit, Angels and in African religion Ancestors. We have shown that all these mediators are seen as supernatural beings. Among the Born-again and the Methodist there is a difference that has been discovered in terms of who they refer as their mediator between God and the living. They all agree on Jesus and the Holy Spirit, but disagree on angels. We have argued that the view that angels are mediators is not part of the official Christian theology, but some lay Methodists believe that they are.

In terms of healing, we have shown that all the religious groups interviewed employ western medical healing. There are other healing procedures that they use. For example, the official Christian theology discourages its members to use African healing, but some Black Methodists, including the clergy interviewed, maintained that they use African healing.

Again, we have shown that the two religions differ on the emphasis they place on of rituals. We have argued that among the Born-again rituals (prayer, fasting, and laying on of hands on the sick) are emphasised as compared to the Methodists. Among people who belong to African religion, rituals are also emphasised, but the way they are done differs from the way Christians do them. Hence the Born-again do not believe in African healing.

We argued that the difference is that in Christianity prayer is formal and there is no slaughtering of animals. On the other hand, Africans believe that in one way or the other one has to kill an animal for communicating with the ancestors or as a way of asking for

forgiveness. The prayer is informal in most cases because a person just prays while he or she walks like saying "Oh! *Modimo* be with me!

Moreover, we also discussed the role that the community plays in healing and we argued that in most cases Christianity is exclusive because it only focuses on their church members who are ill, whereas in African religion illness is a communal thing. We concluded that the roles of both western and African healers are seen by the people who belong to the religion as the work of the Ultimate Being and as a result it is vital for people to understand these roles, the way the people who belong to the religion understand them in order to avoid falling into prejudice. This implies that in order to understand Christianity or African religion, or any religion for that matter, one has to understand their world-view from within and leave out his or her cultural prejudices because they are the ones that inhibit us in our efforts to understand other people better.

The motto should be "every religion and culture is important and is worthy of respect". By doing this our future generations will learn a lot and South Africa will be a better place to live in, because through learning other people's religions and accepting them tolerance will prevail.

**Diagram 3 A, B and C: A summary on the comparative study of both African and Christian religion perceptions of the causes of illness and healing (see appendix II)**

**Diagram: A**

<b>African religion</b>	<b>Christianity</b>
<b>CAUSES OF ILLNESS</b>	
1. <i>uQamata, uNkulunkulu, Modimo</i>	1. <i>God</i>
2. Ancestors	2. Jesus, Holy spirit, Angels
3. Witches	3. Satan
4. Other spirits: alien, nature, animal and others	4. Other evil spirits: Satan incarnates
5. An individual: deviance	5. An individual: sin
6. Natural causes	6. Natural causes
<b>HEALING</b>	
Both African and western healing	western and Christian healing. Some black Methodists also use African healing
<b>CARE FOR THE SICK</b>	
The whole community (communal)	the entire church community (individualised to those who are their church members)
<b>RITUALS</b>	
Slaughter animals	Some Black Methodists slaughter animals, prayer, fasting, night watch

**Diagram B: Differences:****Religious leaders: causes of illness**

<b>CAUSES OF ILLNESS</b>	<b>BORN-AGAINIS</b>	<b>METHODISTS</b>	<b>AFRICAN RELIGION</b>
Angels	No	No/ Yes	No
Ancestors	No	No/ Yes	Yes
Witch-craft	No	No/ Yes	Yes
<b>HEALING</b>			
African healing	No	No/ Yes	Yes
<b>CARE FOR THE SICK</b>			
	individualised to their sick members	same	communal
<b>RITUALS</b>			
slaughtering animals	No	No/ Yes	Yes
Prayer	Formal	Formal	Informal

**Diagram C: Ordinary People: Causes of illness**

<b>CAUSES OF ILLNESS</b>	<b>BORN-AGAINIS</b>	<b>METHODISTS</b>	<b>AFRICAN RELIGION</b>
Witch-craft	No	No/ Yes	Yes
Angels	No	No/ Yes	No
Ancestors	No	No/ Yes	Yes
<b>HEALING</b>			
African healing	No	No/ Yes	Yes
Christian healing	Yes	Yes	No
<b>CARE FOR THE SICK</b>			
	individualised to their sick members	same	communal
<b>RITUALS</b>			
Slaughtering	No	No/ Yes	Yes
Prayer	Formal	Formal	Informal

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSIONS: TOWARDS RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Unless decisive action is taken to eradicate the acute problem of religious intolerance and religiously fuelled hatred the human race may further endanger peaceful coexistence and jeopardize the elementary question of survival on this fragile planet of ours. (Andryek in Tahzib, 1996:33)

#### 1. RELIGION AND THE NEW DEMOCRACY

The new democratic South African dispensation requires a drastic change in the way people perceive other religions. The milieu is clearly depicted in its constitution which says,

The Republic of South Africa is one, sovereign democratic state founded on the following. . . . Human dignity, the all movements of equality, and the advancement of human rights and freedoms. . . . The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, **religion** (*emphasis mine*), conscience, belief, culture, language and birth. (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108:1996)

The principles about religious tolerance that are highlighted in the constitutions need to be implemented practically in the field of religion. The draw back of the constitution is that, it does not give directions on how religious tolerance can be practised. This needs urgent attention because religious discrimination is ~~life~~ in South Africa. Therefore, concrete and

practical steps need to be taken in order to realise some of the issues raised in the constitution about religious tolerance<sup>20</sup>.

It has been clearly illustrated in this paper that there is a lot of religious discrimination in South Africa, especially towards African religion. It has been argued that religious discrimination is due to the social construction of reality in which people were socialised. That is, of perceiving everything African as inauthentic and Christianity and Western culture as rational. It was also shown that power struggle also played a major role. Whereby white people wanted to disempower Africans and in the process African people lost that battle, hence the discrimination they are faced with in all aspects of their lives.

The new democratic order demands that all South Africans should change their perceptions of reality to fit the democratic principles outlined in the constitution. In the field of religion, it means that all the people must accept and respect all religions as they are. It also implies that people should refrain from using any discriminatory words to refer to any religion, its practices, and its belief systems.

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<sup>20</sup>Tolerance refers to acceptance of other people's beliefs as they are. That is, understanding the religions of other groups from with [as they are]. that is why Buck says that in Latin it means "to pick up, to carry some objects (1988:2). We can illustrate to explain the words of Buck: it is obvious that in life it is difficult for any one to pick up any person injured whom he or she does not know. Sometimes the reason can be feeble like, is because I do not know that person, or I am afraid of blood. This is not tolerance. Tolerance demands one to carry that person despite the fact that you hate blood. A good Samaritan story in the bible is a suitable example here about a man who was beaten by thicves and got badly injured. It is said that people refused to help him including a priest. But at last a man who was tolerant of other people rescued this injured man (Luke 10 v 29-37)

It is an undeniable fact that South Africa is a religiously plural society, and that Christianity enjoys a privileged status. Christian standards are used as the bench mark with which all other religions are judged. This led to the perception that there can be no similarity between Christianity and African religion.

However, this research has demonstrated that there are some similarities and differences between the two religions. In the area of illness and healing, similarities and differences ranged from the way people do their rituals, their healing strategies, their perceptions on the causes of illness, the way they relate to the Ultimate Being, and others. Therefore, there is no need for religious discrimination to continue because in all religions there is something that keeps them together. As Durkheim puts it that in all religions there are,

many elements common to all (not simply outward and visible characteristics), fundamental representations or conceptions, rituals attitudes which inspite of the diversity of forms which they have taken have the same objective significance and fulfil the same functions everywhere. These are the permanent elements which constitute that which is permanent and human in religion. (1915:5)

With Durkheim's suggestion in mind, this chapter tries to come up with directions on what should be done to promote religious tolerance in South Africa. And in relation to the way African religion has been treated, as a 'Traditional religion', what precisely should be done for the religion to get the respect it deserves. And how people's perceptions can be transformed from a discriminatory to tolerance state.

We will start by discussing the reconstruction and development steps that could be undertaken to help in inhibiting religious discrimination. These steps, it is believed, would

also be relevant in helping to change people's negative perceptions of African religion and towards adopting the name African religion instead of African 'traditional' religion.

The present writer is aware that projecting about the future is a problematic and a dangerous thing to do, because one can not be certain about what will happen. Hence it is necessary and significant for such a step to be taken because it is for the good cause for all the people of South Africa and the entire universe. Perhaps under the current dispensation in South Africa we could be positive because the country is now in a new reality which is democratic. Future directions are thus vital because there should be reconstruction and development in the field of religion. This is clearly put across by Thompson when he argues that,

The search for the truth and goodness should take us everywhere, even to the persons and philosophies that appear to be in opposition to our own. Our first step must be positive, in that it opens up all possibilities, and negative, in that it discards all false presuppositions and prejudices. To accept even the possibility that there could be goodness in others or truth in their beliefs is a bold step that is a prerequisite to all other steps. It implies an attitude of respect, an acceptance of our common humanity, and a recognition of our own finitude. (1988:202)

This argument is very encouraging and enlightening for everyone who supports improvement in the way people perceive other religions. It suggests that a person who knows the truth and who is concerned about the growth, well-being, and good social relation of people would try by all means to support religious tolerance. Truth in this instance implies that people should not "empty the Ultimate being" as if He created only one religion (Cobb, 1990). It is not up to people to judge. We should accept other religions, and we should live with that. That is the reason why Abe said that,

God is not God (for God is love and completely self emptying), precisely because God is not self affirmative God, God is truly a God of love (for through complete self-

abnegation God is totally identical with everything including sinful humans). (in Cobb, 1990:16)

The view above will help people in cultivating tolerance. People would come to terms with who they are and where they are coming from. As a result, they will be able to love and understand others better. And if the support is gained from people we could be able to avoid war, mistrust, prejudice, misunderstanding, and religious propaganda. All in all, the spirit of tolerance would be cultivated

It is disturbing that in South Africa the only religion that has been accepted, respected, and allowed to be practised without any discriminatory attitudes has been Christianity. Others have been neglected and seen as outcasts. When coming to African religion the negativity has been severe. This is illustrated in the way it is called 'Traditional religion'. Throughout this paper it has been argued that the word tradition when used to refer to African religion has been negative as if the religion is static and belongs in the past.

The word 'traditional' in relation to African religion has resulted in misconceptions and disrespect that exist against the religion. It is the word that came in the frontier, born of reaction and confrontation. It was introduced to differentiate most of African practices from Christianity and other religions. And similarly, to show that Christianity is modern and enlightened than any religion. This is misleading because it is as if religion is linked to science or enlightenment. Religion is impacted by science it is not scientific and vice versa.

Thus the word 'traditional' is now a religious language in relation to African religion. Which implies that the religion belongs in the past. This shows the power of language. That is why Donovan maintains that, "language becomes religious language in being used religiously" (1976:6). From this argument one can argue that sometimes religious

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language can be powerful and it can be misleading to people. This implies that language as a socially constructed form of reality is powerful in structuring our violent ways of thinking and being. This basically shows that some words, in the way they are used, can discourage and inhibit tolerance and reconstruction in the field of religion.

For an example, throughout the research we have shown that,

- 1) In academia (academics, researchers, and others) there has not been an explicit focus on the religious practices of Africans. This shows that there are gaps in the study.
- 2) People from other religions disregard African religion and see it as 'pagan and non-existent'.
- 3) The people who belong to this religion have been experiencing discrimination and alienation. They are seen as uncivilised and are looked down upon and they are afraid to practice their religion openly.

This implies that there is no good reason for retaining the name if we adhere to the principles of religiosity, equality liberation and justice. The present writer is aware that such a step will not be easy but believes that, it is a reality that has to be undertaken. That is the reason why Donovan argues that,

. . . Those who study religion in other ways, historians, theologians, phenomenologists for instance object to philosophers wanting the right to ask critical questions about religions and their uses of language. They may of course, rightly complain if the questions are being asked and answered too hastily, without a full enough consideration of the subject. But if they do not care one way or the other whether religious language misleads people, arouses false hopes, or inaccurately represents reality, they are scarcely being true to their principles of taking religions as they find them. For there is little doubt that religious people themselves do care that their words be taken as the truth and would be offended about the suggestion that it did not matter whether their language was misleading and their claims dishonest. For they attempt to convert others by proclaiming their beliefs as facts, they argue against heresies and other religions, denouncing them as lies or distortion, they may even accept ostracism and death, rather than admit that they could be wrong. (1976:4)

Since reality is not static and South Africa is now in a new dispensation which has a constitution that supports human rights and religious freedom, the country is forced to comply with the principles of tolerance and throw away negative attitudes. As Buis (1975:5) puts it that, attitudes are "a learned predisposition to respond either positively or negatively to something". This shows that there is hope because attitudes can be changed, they are not inherent; they come through socialisation.

An example that illustrates that religious belief justifies attitudes and behaviour can be detected in what one missionary, MacCrone once said of a black farmer that,

By virtue of his religion, he justified his right to dominate the heathen by whom he was surrounded. They fell outside the pale, and their claims therefore, could never compete on equal terms with those of Christian groups. (in Buis, 1975:14)

The above arguments show the urgency that decisive action is required in South Africa to adapt to the new reality. There are measures for developing the economy, education, medical system, defence, and so on, but nothing on religion. That is why this research comes up with the steps that can be taken in the field of religion.

Wherein proactive measures are adopted and implemented because religious intolerance is an evil of all evils, it dehumanises people, both perpetrators and victims. Let us journey through the steps that can be followed to try to inhibit religious discrimination, prejudice, and intolerance.

It is vital to note that in every religion there is support for tolerance. African religion has a saying which goes like this, "*motho ke motho ka batho babang*" (person is a person through others) and "*umuntu akalahlwa*" which means you can not throw a person away. Christianity also has verses which say "love your neighbour as you love your self" (Luke

10:27), "do not judge" and "carry each others burdens". These statements of faith suggest that people should work together for the good of all humanity regardless of their religious affiliations.

They show that it can be possible to inhibit religious discrimination only if people who belong to different religions live according to their religious principles. Thus it has been the purpose of this research to come up with ideas on how such principles can be employed. Many South Africans are relaxed about religious discrimination, but during the apartheid era people could detect the evil of the system but the same is not detected in religious intolerance. Perhaps people perceive that since the law through the constitution maintains that, religious freedom is a human right they believe that, that can just happen without any practical steps taken.

The implication is that people fail to realise that the law controls the outward expression of intolerance but the psychological habits of thought and feeling are not catered for. Which brings us to the fact that for the steps proposed in this research to work effectively, we will require an integrated approach, wherein all aspects of the society are catered for. That is, educators, government, religious groups, political organisations, ordinary people at the grass roots and so on.

People will be taught that religious tolerance does not mean that people will lose their identity. Rather, dialogue helps people understand other beliefs better. Dialogue is a "conversation on a common subject between two or more persons with differing views the primary purpose being that, each participant to learn from each other to change and grow" (Swidler, 1989:338).

This shows that when one is in a dialogue there is necessary tolerance between the parties involved. The process is not a watering down of other peoples beliefs. It requires people involved to accept that others have beliefs that are not similar to theirs. It requires empathy, that is, putting one-self in other people's shoes. This is clearly illustrated in the saying that goes like this: "as you wish that men (and women) would do to you, do so to them" (Luke 6:31). How is this possible?

## **2. EDUCATION**

Education is a mother of success

Education is a good weapon in trying to solve any problem. It is true, it can be one of the slowest strategies but it always achieves its objectives. Thus, for religious discrimination also, education can play a major role in showing the community the reality of other religions.

For example, currently in South Africa the religion that is taught in schools is Christianity; others are not catered for. This poses political and practical problems because, it is as if South Africa is only inhabited by Christians. Since other religions are not taught at school, student have difficulty at university because they have no background in other religions.

Similarly for teachers, since other religions are not part of the school curriculum, this means that religions other than Christianity offered at the universities would not be taken by prospective teachers. This means that there would be no teachers to teach other religions than Christianity. This would be a vicious circle, but it can be redeemed by putting religious plurality in schools as a subject taught and credited. Since teachers are not skilled to teach such a subject, retraining would have to be organised.

For education to be an effective tool in developing religious tolerance, primary-socialisation agents, such as, the family, schools, universities, colleges, religious institutions, and political organisations have to be involved significantly in the process. There should be workshops organised that educate people on the matter. Workshops can be organised by interested parties funded by the government. The universities, schools, colleges, technikons, and other educational institutions should in their curriculum include the course on religious tolerance, and employ religious plurality in order to shape peoples perception on what other religions entail.

### **3. GOVERNMENT AND LEGISLATION**

The role of the government can be effective if it always practices what it preaches through the laws. That is, government officials also should not come up in the media discriminating against other people's beliefs. It should be noted here that this does not mean constructive criticism is not allowed.

Legislation that support religious tolerance should be developed and strictly adhered to. There should be laws that penalise offenders for prejudice on religious grounds. For an example, it is frustrating to see Black people who live in former White suburbs not allowed to practice their traditions freely. They are not allowed to slaughter because it is said it is cruelty against animals. Is this not cruelty against those who are denied to practise their culture and tradition? In this instance it should be stipulated that a person violated against has a right to sue. Any person who discriminates against others should be punished. It is time that a state representative is nominated to deal with religious issues.

#### 4. MEDIA

The media, as one of the secondary socialising agents, are important. They must be sensitised on religious tolerance and there should be programmes dedicated to this. Currently, a lot of time in South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) is dedicated to Christianity, the excuse behind this being that there are a lot of Christians in South Africa. This is what one of the readers of the Sowetan newspaper (24 July 1997:16) had to say about this matter;

South Africa is mainly a Christian country. But that is no excuse for downplaying other religions. I am not happy with the way the discussion on Rationalism and Hinduism was handled on the Sunday SABC3 religious programme, titled Guru Busters, last week.

It appeared as if the programme producer was out to attack Hinduism because the panel featured representatives of Rationalism. But there was no Hindu to defend that religion.

I am not taking anything away from the programme. It was informative and innovative but it turned out to be one sided.

In a democratic society such as ours the media's important role is to encourage diverse views on important issues. It has to encourage a culture of tolerance.

Thus one can argue that it is unfair if we move from the premise of the definition of religion adopted throughout the research that 'religion is a way of life'. There are other people who employ many religious practices at the same time. For example, in South Africa the majority of the population is Black and some of these Black people follow both African religion and Christianity at the same time. How then do we come with the analyses that Christians are many or adherents of African religion are many? Time slots should be equal.

Radio also has similar problems, but Radio Xhosa is gradually changing. It has programmes that focus on African religion and also allows people to phone in for questions and advice. This is a step that other radio stations could adopt.

Presenters should be trained on religious tolerance. There can be an in-service training programme. Or such a subject can be included in their curriculum as part of their training.

## **5. FIELD OF RESEARCH**

It is true that every research must produce an authentic picture of the people or the subject studied. In this research a number of works were highlighted having misrepresented its subjects. This is a cause for concern and research institutions should look at this matter seriously.

There are multiple reasons for misrepresentation but the major ones are not understanding other religions as they are, using one's own beliefs to understand other peoples beliefs, negative attitude, superiority complex, and always trying to prove that something is wrong. It is true that there have been researchers who tried to study religions as they are, by observing and empathising with people under study, but the drawback has been the social construction of reality in which they have been entangled, the reality of apartheid, where everything African was seen as inauthentic and irrational. As a result, African religion became a victim.

This shows that books must be rewritten on the subjects misrepresented. For example, chapters 4, 5, and 6 in this thesis, dealing with Christian and African world-views and the comparison between the two religions, are the beginning of an attempt to provide some of this knowledge on how to produce research that does not discriminate against other people's beliefs.

Researchers need to be thoroughly trained in religious tolerance. This means that constructive criticism is vital, but it has to be done within the parameters of the religion studied. That is to say, critics should not criticise for criticism's sake. This is a call for academics, teachers, students, parents, and religious leaders to start doing some work producing material on different religions.

Finance in this case is the issue, but there are many possibilities, the government, religious organisations, universities, and non-governmental organisations can contribute in financing research in this area. If people who are researchers on religious issues try by all means to improve their research skills to suit religious tolerance, we would achieve a lot. Because what they write always impact on society. We would not have discriminatory words used to refer to a particular religion and not be challenged, the word like traditional religion as used to refer to African religion. Let us now see what measures can be developed to deal with such a problem.

## **6. AFRICAN "TRADITIONAL" RELIGION AND RECONSTRUCTION**

All the steps proposed above are also applicable in correcting prejudices against African religion, especially the use of the word "traditional" in the name. As we have argued above that the word should be thrown away and it should be called African religion. Thus, it is important at this stage to come with the steps that can be taken to socialise people to understand that African religion, like any other religion, has practices that are from the past which are dynamic.

In this instance, educators, academics, media, religious leaders, political organisations and others can play a major role as they played during the apartheid era in correcting the evils of the system. They should try and equip themselves with theories of religious tolerance and reality. That, reality is dynamic and religion as part of reality is likewise.

Moreover, many times reality is constructed by the ruling class and such a reality in one way or another impacts negatively on the oppressed or under-class. Because the ruling class wants to maintain its power. As it was during the past regime which resulted in the discrimination against the religion of the then oppressed group, the Africans.

Another important area that needs to be looked at is the definition of religion that is not based on Christianity and its religious traits. Religion, in this thesis, has been defined as a way of life, as a way in which people explain the complexities of life around them. This understanding of religion should be developed and made available to people as a way of advancing the course of religious tolerance. The findings of this research is that there is a lot of religious discrimination against African religion. Christians have an incredible animosity against African religion. Likewise some academics continuously misrepresent African religion by perpetuating discriminatory terms, such as 'traditional', which betray the reality of the religion. We have argued that this term gives an impression that African religion belongs in the past. However, the findings of this research is that some Black Christians continuously employ African religion and its practises. Such findings show that there should be a shift from religious discrimination to religious tolerance. Reconstruction of people's perceptions is one of the solutions to the problem. Because reality is not static but dynamic, religion is part of a socially constructed reality that has to under-go transformation so that it can survive in this complex world.

## APPENDICES

The real names of the informants have not been used so as to protect them from being identified.

### QUESTIONS COVERED

- 1) How would you explain illness?
- 2) What do you regard as its causes?
- 3) Who is to blame for suffering?
- 4) What mechanisms, if any, is used to combat illness?
- 5) Are there any special rituals performed to alleviate illness?
- 6) Why is there still suffering even if people try to combat it?
- 7) When you are ill who do you consult? Why?
- 8) In your views are African healers effective in healing diseases? Why?
- 9) How do they heal?
- 10) In your view, have there been changes in their healing methods and strategies?  
Explain
- 11) Are western healers effective? Why?
- 12) In your view are there any changes in Christian faith and its practices? Explain

#### **African healers [1-5 as the questions above]**

- 6) Do you see western healing effective in healing the diseases? Why?
- 7) Is African healing effective? Why?
- 8) How do you feel since your healing is not recognised legally by the state?
- 9) Are there any changes that have occurred in your healing process? Explain
- 10) How do you heal illnesses?
- 11) Do you see Christian practices changing all the time? Explain

#### **Western healers [1-5 as above]**

- 6) Do you believe that witch-craft causes illness? Why
- 7) Is western healing effective in healing diseases? Why?
- 8) Is African healing effective in healing diseases?
- 9) Would you support its legalisation?
- 10) Do you think that their healing changes? Why?

## APPENDIX I

### 1. AFRICAN RELIGION

**A. Miss M**

**Age: 34 years**

**Occupation: Teacher**

**African group: Zulu**

- 1) Illness is when someone is suffering from a certain disease and in my religion it is called *ukugula*. We believe that illness can be caused by the anger of the ancestors because of the wrong doings of a person. We also believe illness affects the whole person.
- 2) Ancestors: When someone fails to perform rituals in a proper way or ignores doing them - sometimes it just occurs naturally. One can not forget the works of the witches who are jealous they do not want people to progress.
- 3) An individual
- 4) Doing rituals in a proper way
- 5) In many cases, yes, but it depends on what *amadlozi* want. We people we tend to forget them when they die we do not do relevant rituals for them. Among the amaZulu we have a ritual called *ukubusa idlozi ekhaya* [to bring back the spirit home]. The branch would be taken where the person died to the grave and to the home of the dead person. A goat will be slaughtered. This ritual is done mainly when the person died outside the homestead. If the ritual is not done this might bring a curse in the family. To give an example my father who is now an Angel in heaven, died in 1988 while he was on his way to attend a funeral at Cofimvaba in Transkei. They got an accident. My mother, my aunt and my grandfather went to collect the body in Transkei. They did not go to remove his spirit at the scene. After two years, that is in 1990 my mother got really sick. Soares appeared in her entire body western

doctors failed to cure her. We went to a sangoma she told us that the ancestors are angry because my father had no place in his own house. She advised us to do the ritual and go to collect the spirit of our father in that scene. As a result miraculously my mothers bad sores were cured.

- 6) It is largely because of the wrong doings of people, they do not remember their departed ones. This then results in illness.
- 7) I go to an *inyanga or isangoma*. You know they work for me. Even though many white people and some of our black people who have been influenced by western culture think that our religion, African religion is superstitious. They do not know anything about our *isiZulu or isintu*, that is why they talk like that.
- 8) Yes, they help in removing witchcraft related illnesses.
- 9) It depends on illness. But they always find out the cause and give you the necessary *amayeza* for drinking, vomiting or anema, bathing.
- 10) Yes, they do. These days some use mirrors to check what is wrong with their patients. In the past they some used *amathambo*(bones). Even the herbs the mixing keeps on changing they use salt, potassium permanganate, etc. The healer that I go to in the past used to use herbs only but today he mixes herbs wit salt and potassium permanganate. These people are creative, they change their healing methods because witches also keep on changing their methods.
- 11) No, definitely because their medication is alien from us as they have after effects quickly. They diagnose the illness and give medication required. From my point of view what makes the illnesses differ and what makes me think that we have Western and African illnesses is that, we are from different world-views what we eat in many a time differ. Since their meals differ from us, they affects us severely. For an example spices, acid drinks they cause ulcers. In the past before whites came here we had no such food.
- 12) I think it changes because today we have different Christian churches that did not exist before. These churches comes with new practices and they affect other churches.

**B. Mr B**

**Age: 30**

**Occupation: Teacher**

**African Group: Xhosa**

- 1) When one's psychological, physical and social being is not well. When one has a headache problem the entire body and the entire society get affected. We call that ukugula, we say andiphilanga.
- 2) Ancestors, witches, God, naturally, and pollution. Ancestors: when one failed to perform their dues to izinyanya, dues like, rituals, respect for parents, taking care of the needy and orphans in the family. Witches: by bewitching people; Naturally, we Africans also believe that there are naturally occurring illnesses that is why you sometimes hear people saying you can heal some illnesses using some home remedies; God can punish a person when they do not respect others or is involved in witchcraft; Pollution [*ubumdaka*], African Religion, we believe that there are sacred places, times, days and if one does not observe these days one gets ill and we say it is due to pollution. For an example when one is in a mourning period he/she is not allowed to have sex, if he/she does she gets ill. This is because that particular person has to remove the 'dirt'[pollution] through an appropriate ritual.
- 3) An individual, it sometimes depends on what the healer says is the problem or the cause.
- 4) Doing what the ancestors require of the person.
- 5) From my experience I think there are but in most cases it depends on what special rituals the ancestors want and what the *inyangi* believes should be done.
- 6) People forget their ancestors. And others are influenced by westernisation which regard our practices as superstitious. Thus our society discriminate against us and regard us as witches, evil, stupid and superstitious if we practice our culture, especially when we consult African healers.

- 7) Western medical practitioner and African healer
- 8) A lot they help in removing witchcraft like *tokoloshe*, but it depends what kind of a healer you get.
- 9) They always find out the cause and then proceed to heal or give advice as to what needs to be done.
- 10) African healers are indeed creative in healing illnesses and their healing methods keep on changing all the time. That is why even today there are healers who can heal aids patients. Aids is the new occurring disease. Others can heal cancer. Their medication or amayeza keep on changing
- 11) No, because of the medication that has side effects for me since their arrival our illnesses have increased and became a little more complicated.
- 12) Yes they do. In many cases these Christian churches they copy from each other. For an example in Methodist churches they do not lay hands on the sick but since we have Born-again Christians today some churches call for the sick and lay hands on them.

**C. Miss M**

**Age: 31**

**Occupation: Teacher**

**African Group: Xhosa**

- 1) It is when one does not feel well, is under pain. For an example having natural illnesses like stomach pains, headaches, fever and many more. Hence sometimes these illnesses can be from the witches.
- 2-3). The individual is always seen as the cause of suffering. The reason being that he/she forgets the ancestors thus they punish him/her. The individual is also expected to try by all means to be pure, that is to say not to pollute himself/herself. Witches are also

seen as agents of suffering, sometimes ancestors use them to prove a point to the living. You know these witches are so advanced they are scientists. Their style is creative, it affects the whole system. Likewise God is also involved He punishes the wrong doers.

- 4) Not forgetting ones culture and tradition. Taking care of the ancestors. They are living and they are also dead. Thus how could you ignore such people?
- 5) Rituals depends on the cause of the illness. If is the ancestors, witches, or pollution healers are consulted the wrongs has to be rectified for healing to occur. In many instances animals are slaughtered to appease the living dead. And the herbs are also used to cure the affected aspects of the body.
- 6) People are too much into western culture they have lost their real identity that is the reason.
- 7) I go to both western and African healers because both are effective in their own ways.
- 8) African healers are indeed helpful, if it was not for them many people would be suffering- some would be mad or be crippled.
- 9) They always find out the cause of illness and then give herbs that would deal with that particular problem. Medication is administered in a variety of ways, for example, vomiting, anema etc.
- 10) African healers are like any other healers, their healing methods keep on changing to suit the nature of illnesses they are dealing with. This also is due to the fact that witchcraft related illnesses keep on changing. They are effective even though they are seen by people who do not believe in it as unrealistic.
- 11) Yes and no, there are illnesses which they cure and those that they cannot, for example, food poisoning (*ukutyiswa*). They can not help in some instances with some viral infections like flu, soars, cancer, to be precise some western type of illnesses. For an example I remember the time when I was food-poisoned in an African context, that is bewitched the Western doctor said I had ulcers and I should stop eating spicy and oily food. As a result an African healer helped me because I had no ulcers I was bewitched.

- 12) Yes because they go to Western healers and this does not exist in the Bible. Some even use *ichibi* [water that has been prayed for]. Likewise some of my Christian friends they also go to the African healers, they use *imithi*[herbs].

**D. Mrs N**

**Age: 42**

**Occupation: Dressmaker**

**African Group: Tswana**

- 1) 1. Illness is when one is suffering when the body does not feel well [*go sa ikutlwi monate*]. That is to say this affects your happiness. You feel down, depressed, and fear that maybe you might die. It is because of the witches and these evil spirits [*moya emebe*] they play a major role in disturbing the harmony of the people and their families.
- 2-4) In many instances the ancestors are the key agents because they want to be remembered at all times. They require rituals which are done properly by pure people. Or else punishment can be the order of the day. Sometimes they allow witches to bewitch you but they help you through after you have tried to correct what is wrong.
- 5-6) Yes, but they depend on the healer and the ancestors. But people we do not do rituals properly and we tend to ignore *setso le setho* [culture and traditions]. Witches are mainly poor people who can not progress and through jealousy they bewitch other people. People today they do not want to go to the *Masangoma*, they follow western culture because they believe the *Masangoma* are evil they bewitch others. Thus suffering will not end.
- 7-8) I first go to an African healer because they are indeed effective in dealing with diseases that western healers can not heal. And later to the Western medical practitioner. To an African healer I go at night because I am afraid to be seen by people who will call me a witch. African healers are not socially and morally acceptable in our communities.

- 9-10) Because they help us to cope in this complex world. Their methods keep on changing according to the nature of the problem. For an example healers keep on helping and updating each other on the different illnesses that exist and their ancestors advice them how they should heal. Today we have healers who can heal cancer, tuberculosis, infertility of any kind, some even claim that they can heal Aids.
- 11) No, because for me since in the past witch-doctors have been helping me a lot , when I got to western healers I came back having wasted my money feeling no better than when I went there. They can heal every thing only if you found an effective healer (*ba betsa gokula ba go beele kwa*) [she/he bits the illness]
- 12) To be honest it is difficult to say. I hate saying something that I do not know.

## HEALERS

**E. Mr B [Herbalist and Isangoma]**

**Age: 53**

**African Group: Zulu**

1-2) Illness is when the person is under pain and needs a healer to help. People today get confused about what illness they have, because whites came up with these words [cancer, TB, gastric ulcers] that are difficult. As a result our people are no longer believing that much in our medicine. That is why they do not get healed in the hospitals. The whites came with illnesses like ulcer, cancer an TB. In my understanding these illnesses are caused by witchcraft. Let us take all these three illnesses can be food poisoning and results in death if cured. A person can get a sore, lump, or a witch snake and the doctors would try to do an ex-ray they would see nothing. And the person would die.

In my view illness is a punishment and is also not. As a punishment people call it by not taking care of their Badimo. These people are very important they must be cared for. They are dead and living. they can see what you are doing, and what your wishes are. For instance some people just bewitch by talking evil about others and wish them bad luck. The *amadlozi* and God thus can punish someone and the family in

this instance. Some people pollute themselves by doing something that they know is wrong. Like for an example the people know that after the burial the deceased should be washed the dirt because death is *ukungcola* the result some of the family members especially the close ones refuse to do that. The result will be misfortune even if is not illness but one of his children or the individual himself.

Sometimes illness is not a punishment because there are some evil spirits out there that needs hosts to cling on. Thus if you have not been *qiniswa*[made strong] like, cut by a raiser washed by herbs. This can catch you easily. Since people are now following *ubulungu* [white culture] these spirits catch them easily because they are not made strong.

- 3) The individual is responsible and God, ancestors, evil spirits. People sometimes come to me when they are ill and I talk to Badimo they show what is wrong or what they want. What surprises me is that some of them will agree and they will not do that. They will only use the herbs that I give them. After sometime they will come back and say "*makhosi[sangoma]*, hey! I have got another problem on top of that one". And I will look again and they [the ancestors] will come with the same cry and the individual will say hey "I could not do that because of this and that". Or sometimes you will tell them how the ancestors want the ritual to be done, the people will perform that differently.

The witches also are a big problem but they want people to act as if they do not know that they bewitch them because they will get guilty when they see that you get healed. These people are really bad!. They can make your life miserable. Some can cause you to be hated by men or women by inflicting one with fleas in your private parts. Sometimes they can bewitch with an animal and make it be your sex partner and wherever you go it stands next to you. You will end up getting ill [soars on your private parts and not getting a partner]. This thing can even kill you.

What people do not understand is that there is a difference between the illness caused by the ancestor through the witch that one is healed when you correct the wrongs. The one by witches out of their jealousy it kills in many instances. But the ancestors and Unkulunkulu they always help unless is your time to die.

- 4) Rituals really depends on what the ancestors want and the cause of the illness. I also think the severity of the illness also counts. For an example the person will come to

me ill maybe possessed by *imimoya emibi* due to the anger of the *idlozi*. This one is very difficult because you have to try and exorcise the spirit and also talk to the ancestors to protect this person. In most cases these spirits kill people so they have to be calmed down by using first drinking herbs. And after some days, then exorcise. It also depends on what the ancestors say. But in some instances people would be asked to kill a chicken and the gall together with the blood be used to remove the spirit. After wards I would ask the sick to steam with the water mixed with that gall, blood and herbs. Later the steaming medicine would be thrown in the running dam in order to trick the spirit so that it should think that it is following that person. Afterwards the patient would be given herbs to vomit and a herb witch has swords like razors, needles and a knife and the patient would be cut, the blood would be smeared in that herb. The reason being they the spirits should never possess him/her anymore. All this together with the things that a person has vomited would be put in a hole. The person would say " I no longer stay at home I am Bla! Bla! I now live here. I any one is looking for me I am here. Lastly a person would be incisioned *ukuqiniswa* to prevent any more possession.

- 5) It is because people do not follow their *isintu*. They do not go to African healers to help them with their illnesses.
- 6-7) African healers are effective in healing the African body because we understand the worldview of Africans. And as healers we are messengers of Unkulunkulu who sent us in this world with His messenger [*isithunywa*] to help His suffering people. We undergo a thorough teaching through other healers or sometimes through your ancestors in order to gain the skill. That is why it is easy to African healers to heal an African body.

But when coming to western healers they can help our people but there are illnesses that they can not cure as much as we have those that we can not cure. Yes because are some illnesses that I believe came with whites and we African healers can help here and there. That is to say those illnesses we can not heal entirely and we need the intervention of Western healing. For an example I do recommend to my patience that they should consult western healers. Likewise I also give out pills that are related to the illness. This helps in speedy recovery because the illness is attacked in many ways. The information on the prescription I get from my friends who works at

the hospitals and some have their own surgeries so they sometime give me these medication and the dosage recommended.

No because they can not understand Africans world view, they undermine it and take it as if it is non-existent and barbaric. Thus how could they help our people?

- 8) This for me I term that, apartheid in its fullest form because our people not only blacks, whites too are dying like flies because we African healers are not involved in helping them. Some illnesses that kill our people are not only western they are African [they are caused by witchcraft]. Thus our people need the correct treatment and diagnosis in order to reduce the unnecessary high death rate.

It is painful that we are not allowed in the hospitals, this I think affect our Black people because some of them die before their time because of the immorality of the hospital authorities who do not want to accept us in the hospitals.

- 9) For me I think African healing and religion is not static as I have said earlier that some of us we change to fit the status quo. We also work hand in hand with western healers. Likewise we also do not see witchcraft as the only cause of illnesses we admit that some illnesses can be caused by viruses or are just natural. To be explicit the question of whether African religion and the healing strategies are static or dynamic, I think in many cases it depends on the place where a person comes from. It can be a rural or urban place. Those[some] who are in the rural places tend to be more traditional and they do not want to accept other explanations like natural causations of illnesses. And those who are from the urban areas are more enlightened and want to improve their healing strategies.

Likewise the way I heal now is not similar to the way I used to heal people. In the past I used to use *iziwasho* [the mixture of water, juice fluid, salt, spirit, aloe, they are mostly used in the independent churches and this mixture depends on what the holy spirit says should be used] and today I use herbs. And these herbs they change it depends on what my ancestor tells me in my dreams, they also show me the place where I should go to dig the herb. For an example the question of rituals, they are done in rural and urban areas. In the past it was the kraals. Today one can choose a sacred place where ever she/he is. Flats [balconies] are used for rituals, corner of the house, or inside the house.

- 10) To be explicit healing depends on what the person has, and it also depends on that persons ancestors. Before I give people *imithi* I first pray to my *Unkulunkulu* to open the way so that my ancestors could tell me about the cause or what the problem is that the patient is faced with. After they have told me I get instructions from them on specific herbs that should be given to the patient.

I am very careful about hygiene[due to Aids I ask people to come with their own razors] and dosage.

- 11) Christianity? As a Christian and an African I think it changes. Due to the fact that when it came in Africa it was purely Christian and today people mix it with their African practices. That is why I say it changes.

**F. MR N**

**Age: 48**

**African Group: Zulu**

- 1) It is when the body is affected by witchcraft and as a result it gets weak.
- 2) Anger of the ancestors [when people have done something wrong], *Unkulunkulu* [when a person has misbehaved and by treating others badly by bewitching others], witchcraft[ through greed and jealousy people bewitch others by inflicting pain, sometimes ancestors allow them to do likewise if the individual has done something wrong], pollution [is the dirt that comes when one did not observe the sacred day = mourning, place = the place where one meets the ancestor of the home, time = being at the graveyard at 12' o clock during the day, as a result that person would get ill. Likewise there are illnesses that comes naturally, some pains and flues.
- 3) An individual. Our black people have forgotten about their *amasiko*. The ancestors are not 'still dead'[dead as if they can not see or answer]. We believe that they the living dead, they are guardians of morality, protectors, they bring wealth, they can predict what will happen in the future through dreams or by telling one directly and punish where appropriate. Thus they have to be looked after, people need to slaughter animals for them. Thus how could African people think that they will live a happy life while they have forgotten their ancestors?

- 4) Doing rituals in a correct way and using strong herbs as a protection against witchcraft.
- 5) Not as such, but it depends on the problem that the individual has at that particular time.
- 6) Western healing is not effective in healing the African body because it concentrates on germs and deny the reality of witchcraft as the cause of some of the illnesses and misfortune. It is amazing that even though western healing fails sometimes to heal Black people and the government continues to support it financially. This shows that the government does not care about us, they think that since we are illiterate our healing is stupid. If the continue the way they are Black people will continue dying because western healing does not understand African world-view. That is why hospitals do not want us to help our patients when they are hospitalised. There is another thing that amazes me, that, white people think that since we are poor we are dirty and our illness is caused by dirt. This is not so, it is because they do not understand us.
- 7) Yes, it is good because we understand the African context
- 8) I feel bad because for me this contributes to the high death rate because people go to Western healers who fail to heal their illnesses and they end up dying or paralysed. For example, I had a patient who was food poisoned and she came to me late, she went to a Western doctor who diagnosed her as having cancer and now she is dead.
- 9) Yes, These illnesses are not the same as in the past. Nowadays there are new illnesses like cancer and aids that some of our healers can deal with. The healing procedures have changed too, in the past healers used herbs only but now we also mix in them things like potassium permanganate, salt, jeyes fluid and other lucky charms
- 10) Healing depends on the illness and the person. If a person is food poisoned for instance, I first check on my mirror what could be the cause of the problem, then I would explain to them what I saw, and then explain how this problem could be tackled. There is a whole procedure that would have to be followed. I would then give a bottle of my medication for this person to take and then after a week they will have to come where I work to have ablutions being administered by my aides. This

is very important because I use strong herbs and therefore I cannot allow people to do this in their homes, some *inyanga's* do it but I cannot bear the responsibility of a person who dies after using my herbs incorrectly. In the case of a person who has *ibekelo* (it is when a witch draws a line with a dangerous *umuthi* in the path of a person, this is like a speed trap. This would enter the body through the feet and then go up to the head. This one of the most common methods used by witches. they can put this thing at your gate and as you enter you take it in with you, and when you go out you take it again). A healer who knows what he is doing would have to go to the home of the patient and neutralise that *ibekelo* and then give the patient something to remove this from the body.

- 11) Yes I think so because in the Bible you do not meet any western doctors, today Christians believe in them. Likewise many Christians used to despise our practices but today we have many Christian patients. The problem with them is that they are shy about African practices they come to us late in the night so that they are not seen.

## APPENDIX II

### 2. CHRISTIANITY

**A. Mrs L**

**Age: 35**

**Christian Group: Born again**

**African Group: Xhosa**

**Occupation: Teacher**

- 1-2) Is when the body and the soul is not feeling well. It can be because of sin and God wants to take over the life of the sinner, natural agents like germs. Other natural illness can include; Flue which occurs due to germs, TB because of the filthy places where in people live, Cancer can be a punishment from God, Bone problems can occur through accidents or sometimes it just occur naturally, Barrenness it can be a curse or sometimes it just occur, Ulcers develop due to eating fatty and chilly food. And the healing occur when one consult a doctor and also has to repent of his or her sins.
- 3-4) An individual in many cases is blameworthy because God gave us ears, eyes to see and choose what is right. As a result Satan has taken control of our lives that is why we are ill. We have to go back to God He is our maker we belong to Him not Satan. God will continue punishing us as long as we continue living in sin.
- 5) Yes we repent first, then fast and pray.
- 6) I always go to the Western medical practitioner and also ask fellow believers for prayers. Prayer is a very important component of my beliefs and I believe that through prayer we can conquer sin and all illnesses. It said in the Bible that in the Kingdom of God there will be no illnesses and I believe that. I feel sorry for many people who prefer to go to witch-doctors. Witch-doctors are liars, they make things up and people believe them. There is nothing like African healing, it is just a culture

that is continuously confusing people. They worship ancestors which are evil spirits not God. It is a superstition.

- 7) I go to my Pastor. Ours is faith-healing. You do not have to do anything but to have faith that Christ would deliver you from your illness. Our healers do not do any of these things done by other healers, they do not administer ablution, anema, baths, or give out herbs or water, they only pray. Likewise I also go to the Western healer because I believe that they have been sent by God to help His people.
- 8) No they are not they only kill our people and they encourage people to be witches. Witch-doctors are wrong, they are misleading people. Their actions are inspired by the devil. The practice of slaughtering animals, for me, is cruel and unnecessary. Why should people rely on the blood of goats and axes when there is the precious blood of our Lord? This really puzzles me because people choose to that which is difficult instead of doing what is easy. Christianity does not ask much from us but, for us to believe in Christ who wants people to follow on his footsteps. People fail to recognise it is through Christ that one would enter heaven. No religion does exist except Christianity. That is why Christ said "I am the way the truth and the life". Other so called religions are devilish and idolaters. There is nothing like African traditional religion it does not exist it is an old-fashioned wrong culture. Why do not they have churches?

To show that it is not a religion, its healing practice kill people. The herbs are toxic they kill people. For an example in 1995 I lost a dearest friend of mine whom I used to advice about the bad practices of witch doctors, she had stomach cramps for almost two years and the witch-doctor gave her an *imbiza* [some herbs that are prepared and boiled for drinking]. The western doctors told my friend that she had ulcers and the witch-doctor said it was food poisoning. As a result my friend due to her lack of faith in God she drank the *imbiza* and her family said she became worse and she started vomiting blood and the tummy was running. She was taken to the hospital and she diagnosed liver cancer. She eventually died. Then how could you say witch-doctors are effective?

- 9) Christian healers = Pastors prays for the person exorcising all evil spirits and asking God to be with this person. As far as Witch-doctors are concerned, they give out herbs, make some incisions in their bodies; but I do not believe that this works

anyway because they do not believe in the living God. Healers claim that they have been lead by ancestors to get involved in the healing ministry. How could a dead person direct a living person to do something?

- 10) It does not, this is based on things of the past some of which are barbaric. If it was changing it would be able to help the people who believe in it.
- 11) Yes I think so, because when one is ill they help a lot. They give injections, pills, drinking medicines. But I wish if it was possible they could also pray for the sick so that their healing would be more effective.
- 12) No they do not. How could our practices change that would be against our beliefs. Our beliefs are the same as in the past. This for me shows that we are real Christians.

**B. Mrs R**

**Age:60**

**Christian Group: Born Again**

**Occupation: House wife**

**Nationality: Coloured**

- 1) Illness is when one is not feeling okay spiritually or physically and needs some prayers and doctors to healing.

It can be natural diseases like Flue which develops through infections and germs, barrenness, which occurs naturally.

- 2-4) It is caused by ones sins and God as a result punishes people. Satan can be used to punish the individual. If one does not confess his/her sins the illness will not disappear. Thus one has to pray to God for forgiveness. And the person has to go to the doctors for help. I believe that if the doctors helps that is to say God has accepted your prayers. Another important thing is that one must have faith in God when he prays for healing. And if one does not do all these I believe he/she becomes

blameworthy for any illness or curse that comes his/her way. Likewise the environment can result into illness, today we do not look after the environment.

- 5) The rituals that has to be done is that of prayer for forgiveness and ask God for healing. In the process of prayer maybe with your family or church members people should agree about every thing you pray for. Raise hands to accept healing. But everyone must have faith.
- 6) It is because of our sins [pre-marital sex, immoral life] and our disbelief.
- 7) Western healer
- 8) No, because they make illnesses worse.
- 9) They conduct a thorough check-up before giving you any medication. They are very professional.
- 10) I cannot say because I do not know how they do their work. The only thing I know is that their practices are primitive and where they work is usually dirty, then how can people expect to get well while they are treated from a filthy place.
- 11) I do not think there are the only thing is that they keep on killing our people.
- 12) There are no changes because we have to be consistent in praising our Almighty God. Those who employ changes in their Christian practices do not know what they are doing.

**C. Mr. M**

**Age: 29**

**Christian Group: Methodist**

**African Group: Xhosa**

**Occupation: Teacher**

- 1) Illness can be a curse from God to the people who keep on sinning. God thus punish them so that they can know Him better as the only God. It also occurs as a test of

faith on the individual. That is why people must be born again and be hot Christians illness will not be a pain it will be something you enjoy because you know that your life is right with God and through the blood of Christ all Christians are conquerors. Sometimes illness just occur because of nature like flue, and others like Aids, Cancer, Barreness, can be due to biological disturbances or a punishment from God.

- 2-3) The individual immoral life. God created man on his image and he wants us to believe in Him and not do wrong. But many people today are sinners and they cause their suffering. God thus as a jealous God He punishes them sometimes He allows the devil to inflict illness on people. But when one repents He forgives. Natural causes like germs.
- 4-5) The individual has to pray, fast for some days talking to God showing Him that you are sorry. Faith is important in these rituals because it is the key to forgiveness. Healers also must be consulted because God sent them to help us.
- 6) It is because of the sins that continue to grow every day in our lives.
- 7) Western healer and African healers.
- 8) They are because they tell one about what is the cause and the illness stroke one in detail and convincingly. The herbs that they use clean up the whole system. Likewise if the Angels of God, that is my ancestors want me to slaughter so that healing can occur the healer will say and I will be forced to do that, because it is part of my culture.
- 9) It mainly depends on what the illness is. but they give herbs, enema, and some vomiting stuff.
- 10) I think so because in my view culture is not static it changes and it affects every aspect of our lives. Today some of the healers use western medication with their herbs when healing.
- 11) Yes because always when new diseases comes they do some research and come up with effective healing strategies.

- 12) The faith has changed because when one traces the history of Christianity one finds out that it has changed a lot. Today we have churches that use African beer instead of wine for communion.

**D. Miss N**

**Age: 27**

**Christian Group: Methodist**

**African Group: Zulu**

**Occupation: University of Cape Town Student**

- 1) Illness is suffering because when one is not well she/he is in pain and his life is not in order.
- 2-3) In many instances the individual causes it by doing sin. But sometimes it occurs because of natural things like *amagciwane*[germs], infections. Like with me I get hey fever around September. I can not say it is a punishment from God. There are also evil people who can cause illness for instance, by cursing you. But in many instances the illness comes from God because He wants us to obey Him always.
- 4) By praying with faith, and confessing ones sins.
- 5) People themselves in many cases cause their illnesses because they continue doing bad things.
- 6) It is because many people have forgotten about God and their culture. They have forgotten about their dead people who always protect them on earth. You know at home we always slaughter for my father who died in 1985. We have to do that because he is now my Angel looking after me in heaven and if my family will fail to do rituals for him misfortune can be the order of the day. So the dead must always be remembered.
- 7) Western healers and sometimes to an African healer because they both work.
- 8) Yes, because some of my problems were solved by African healers. Their medication does not have after-effects like some of the drugs one gets from medical

practitioners. Another plus factor is that these people always try to deal with the root cause of the problem not only the symptoms. If you have a headache they would find out what causes it and then treat that your headache would be gone.

- 9) From my experience it depends on the illness of a person but they start by finding out the cause of the problem and then give you herbs that would help you.
- 10) Yes, they do not use the same medication all the time.
- 11) I think in some cases they are in many cases they are not. In western culture there is nothing like witchcraft, then how could western healers heal illnesses caused by it? Likewise in Christianity we have illnesses that are caused by the curse from God, and these illnesses we believe that they can be cured through prayer, repentance, fasting, and living a holy life. Thus how could western healers be effective in such illnesses?
- 12) Yes Christianity has many changes today in some churches you see people using African practices for communion. Likewise we see some ministers allowing their people to go witch-doctors of which in the past it was seen as a devilish practice.

## **CHRISTIAN LEADERS**

**E. Rev. R**

**Age: 31**

**Christian Group: Methodist Church.**

**African Group: Zulu**

- 1) Punishment from God because of sin or it can be seen as one way in which an individual's faith is tested by God. This happens because life is a fight between "good and evil". But illness also occurs because of natural causes like some people get them through inheriting them from the parents e.g. Cancer and Aids and it can be a punishment from God.

- 2-4) The individual, the evil spirits, God and nature and other people. Individual: when we put it in spiritual terms the individual sins leads to punishment from God. Evil spirits: they can be used by God to inflict illness on others. These spirits can be people who are evil who defile other people's lives. For an example witches, they fall under the category of evil spirits because they are jealous and can kill innocent people. Nature: in this instance people just say it just happened but others goes back and say is the punishment from god. Repentance and faith in Christ is vital here. It is not enough for one to believe in Christ but they should be part of the church by actively participating in its activities.

People should also have a pure life and love other people. And go to the doctors for healing because God made them to help in healing the physical body. But the individual has to be right with God first or else no healing will take place.

Other people: they can be witches and evil hearted people. Even in the Bible we hear about evil spirits

In all these instances the individual is supposed to take God as the key of his[her] life. One has to do an introspection on her or his life, confess sins, pray, and also fast. The person has to try and love others and live a greedy life. Faith is very vital in all these rituals. When one is on a fast for instance he prays asking for forgiveness and also thanking God for His grace. And the person also ask for healing. But these rituals depend on the illness. But in many instance I always pray with the people. And together as the congregation for the sick person. As an individual if some of my personal life is not going well I also employ slaughtering for my family who died [*abakithi abalele ukuthula*]. Culturally and traditionally Africans have to offer sacrifices in a means of slaughtering to their dead people. They protect us as Angels of God and they help us in many things so we should give thanks to them and to God.

- 5-6) Because of sin committed by people. Because the world we live in is a fight between good and evil as I have said it is up to the individual herself/himself whether she continues to stay firm in the Lord or will allow the evil one to control. .
- 7) To be honest I go to both western healers and African healer. Because for me they both work.

- 8) They have helped me with many things they are effective.
- 9) It depends on the illness of the person.
- 10) I think so, the fact that today some of them can cure cancer, and some claim to cure Aids it is a good sign that shows changes.
- 11) Yes definitely, they help a lot. But the problem is with some of their medication that has after effects.
- 12) Yes. Since culture and traditions keeps on changing to fit the status quo of the time the same is with every religion, Christianity per se.

**F. Pastor M**

**Age: 35**

**Christian Group: Born again**

**African Group: Tswana**

- 1) Illness is when the five aspects of the body are not well, physical, mental and psychological, family and the spiritual and need some prayer and some medication where possible.
- 2-3) It can be spiritual conflict, the individuals failure to obey God fully, the devil, and the illness can just be natural, like Cancer. But sometimes diseases like Cancer, Aids can be plaques that God promised that they will happen in the book of Revelation. Sometimes since we have secrecy in Christianity, people would have sex before marriage and expect everything to go well afterwards, that is sin. Cleanliness or purity is vital. This is clear that in many cases an individual is manly blameworthy.
- 4) Being holy, not committing sin even if is difficult, praying to God, caring for the poor and the sick, mainly do what is expected of you.
- 5) Fasting, Prayer and repentance.
- 6) It is because of the evil that prevails in our land. People have forgotten about God.

- 7) I first pray for healing from God and go to the western practitioner if necessary.
- 8) I don't think so, many of them are possessed by the devil they do evil things. How could an evil person heal God's body? There is nothing like African traditional religion is an evil practice.
- 9) I can not say precisely. But what I know is that they use dead peoples carcasses, animals body, herbs to heal.
- 10) I think it does not they do not do any research. How could it change?
- 11) Yes due to their ongoing research I think they are effective. Because they come up with new effective medication all the time.
- 12) I would say we it depends on what church it is, in our church we follow what the gospel require servants of God to do. Why should we change the Gospel of God?

## APPENDIX III

### Western healers

**A. Dr. M**

**Age: 32**

**African group: Ndebele**

**Christian Group: Methodist**

- 1) Is when the body tissues does not cope very well and needs some remedies to strike the balance..
- 2) Germs, body cells problems, genetic problems, sometimes the wrong eating habits of people, and psychological illnesses [like witchcraft, and sometimes people would blame God for their illnesses].
- 3) In many cases an individual for not caring for themselves. Likewise the illnesses just occur naturally.
- 4) Eating appropriate medication, and looking after oneself.
- 5) No, that is superstition.
- 6) Yes because through science we always research to develop new medication in order to help in healing the illnesses. For an example today we can heal tuberculosis, cancer, ulcers. It only depends on the stage of the illness.
- 7) No, because for me their healing has got many weaknesses. For an example, they believe in witch-craft as the cause of illnesses and that is unfounded, they are unhygienic. They are superstitious.
- 8) No it will increase death rate.
- 9) I think is bases on past practices that do not fit our lives today e.g. witch-craft.

- 10) No because many healers lie to our people. They just want money. Why if they heal effectively their people always come to us after they have failed.

**B. Dr. D**

**Age: 28**

**African group: Sotho**

**Christian Group: Methodist**

- 1) Is when the entire body , the physical, mental and psychological are affected by something and needs some diagnosis and medication for cure.
- 2) The disease can be caused by natural causes, germs.
- 3) It depends on the cause, but many a times is just natural or sometimes it is the individuals carelessness.
- 4) People have to look after themselves and when they are ill they should consult the doctor immediately.
- 5) With me as an African I do believe that there are illnesses that are caused by witchcraft but I hate it when people blame witches for everything. I have many cases that I came across with at the hospitals. You will find a patient having stomach problems and doctors would diagnose ulcers and we would give them medication and she/he will not get well. Since she/he did not get well the patient would consult an *inyanga* or *isangoma* they would diagnose food poisoning. And they would give that person some herbs to drink and that person would get well. You see we doctors should stop being stereotyped. We should start thinking western beliefs are not the only ones operative in the world that we live in. I believe that it is important so that we can be able to help Africans who believe in witchcraft.
- 6) Due to the ongoing research that is done all the time by our committed scientists we can detect newly occurring diseases. Likewise we can also come up with effective medication for the different illnesses that exist.

- 7) For me I think it helps in some cases and it worsens in other areas e.g. carelessness[boiling water in rusty tins, using one razor blade for many people], overdosage, and toxic herbs.
- 8) Yes because we have different world-views, and will help us decrease the death rate in our country. Because witch doctors would be educated on measurement of herbs, the significance of hygiene, testing whether herbs are toxic or not.
- 9) Yes, because in many cases when we have a new disease that confronts us you find some of them being able to cure them. If it was based only on past practises it would not be able to cure newly occurring illnesses. The fact that it still exist for me it is an evidence that shows that it changes to suit the status quo.
- 10) Yes because many of our patients when they get good healers they get cured. Many of my patients who believe in it argue that one gets healed when she/he has found a good healer who knows herbs. Thus how could we say it is not effective while the people who practice it say it is helpful for them?

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