

AFRICAN RELIGION AND RELIGION EDUCATION

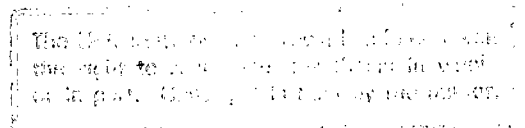
BY

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to:

My late father Mzimkhulu, for his unfailing spiritual and material support.

To you Njokweni, Mtatela, Ngxib'inoboya, Lamyeni, I say, what you told me, I will do till I meet you again.

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ABSTRACT

The concept of religion in South Africa has been distorted by religious and racial prejudices. This problem is particularly evident in public schools. South African schools have taught Christianity as the only authentic religion, in fact as the only truth. Black parents have not been given a choice of religion for their children. The white government has decided for them.

Based on the assumption that Christianity is the only legitimate religion, the state has suppressed African indigenous religion at every level of society, but especially in the schools.

The thesis examines the indigenous beliefs and practices of the black people in South Africa which were suppressed by Western culture and Christianity. It reveals all the distortions about African Religion by the outside researchers in order to uproot the black people from their way of life so as to colonise them. As a result all the black children are taught to regard Christianity as a "Religion" and their own religion as "culture", the implication being that blacks had no religion until the white man came with Christianity.

The thesis also investigates the feelings of the black people about recovering their indigenous religion by having it as a subject in schools. The results reveal that the majority of blacks never dissociated themselves with their religion. Although most are Christians in principle, deep down they practise their own religion. It has also been discovered that there are great lamentations amongst most blacks over the "loss" of some of the indigenous practices. Most have felt alienated from their heritage and identity. It is therefore the interest of the blacks in South Africa that African Religion be taught in schools.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Western researchers on the beliefs and practices of the black people in South Africa reported back to Europe that the black people had no religion or that they were full of superstitions. They reported that nothing could help the black man out of barbarism except Western education and Christianity. They regarded themselves and their lifestyles as a form of salvation for Africans.

The missionary, Henry Callaway, indicated the broad scope of Christian education:

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 provident in their concerns ... to teach them to sit 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 a missionary's teaching (Benham 1986: 58).

The above extract shows that besides the "absence" of a religion, according to Westerners, there was also no education and the blacks were uncivilised. But they forget the fact that this "teaching" of Callaway also broke the communal life of the blacks. To Callaway to eat off a plate is civilisation, but to most Africans that is individualism, breaking away from the traditional way of life. That encourages breaking the ties with one's people or background.

The introduction of Christianity seems to have come to fill in the gap of "religion" among the so called "heathens" or "pagans". Western education also seems to have come to tame the black man so as to live like a white man and be subordinate to him.

This study attempts to trace the meaning of African Traditional Religion and the roots of the educational influences which were at work in it in order to rediscover and preserve through oral testimony the nature of indigenous religion and education in South Africa.

1. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Religion in South Africa means nothing else but Christianity. Outside Christianity there is no salvation and no knowledge of God and there is no civilisation. Most Christians even claim that Christianity is not just a religion but the truth. As a result, Religious Education is Christocentric. There is no room for legitimate expression of traditional religious beliefs and practices. This approach has produced a dualism in the African child as the indigenous religion taught at home also functions in the mind of the child.

The introduction of Christianity to Africans has resulted in ethnocentrism where the traditional religion is judged according to Christian standards. As a result religious bigotry, "a holier than thou" attitude (Ndlovu 1991: 31), has been experienced. Most blacks in South Africa are Christians in principle, but a large percentage of them have retained their links with traditional religious beliefs and practices.

African Traditional Religion was not regarded as a true religion by missionaries, hence it was called heathenism, a religion of the uncivilised. On the basis of its supposedly "heathen" character, it was not included in the Religion Education syllabus. This type of education has resulted in a religious dualism which has affected black children, since both religions are regarded as important by those operating in two educational contexts, that is, the home and school.

Therefore, this research proposes that African Religion should be taught at schools as a subject and as a religion in its own right. This approach will enable the students at school to know their background and to remove the cognitive and affective dualism caused by colonisation through Christianity which led black children not to differentiate between Western civilisation and Christianity.

Moreover, everybody is speaking of a new South Africa which is believed to be non-racial and democratic. Freedom of religion is the promise of all the leaders of political organisations. So there is a hope that the black people will be free from religious slavery and will be allowed to practice their beliefs and rituals without any mockery from the so-called "Monotheistic Religion".

2. AIM OF THE STUDY

This study has the following aims and objectives. First, it is to make pupils understand what African Traditional Religion is, as a religion independent from Christianity.

It is also to evaluate the responses of teachers, pupils, and parents to the introduction of African Traditional Religion in the Religious Education syllabus.

The benefit of this study is to remove dualism in our children, which is caused by the introduction of Christianity as if it were the only authentic religion. It is also to orientate the African child toward his or her own culture and heritage. Though thinking in terms of making them aware of their indigenous religion, it is also important that they learn tolerance of other religions.

The study also makes it possible for the parents to have hope of recovering their traditional heritage which is fading away because of Westernisation.

3. METHOD TO BE USED

As the topic needs the views and attitudes of many people, the method used is the social scientific method of qualitative analysis. Though questionnaires were used, emphasis was on interviews. The people involved were from different categories, such as teachers, parents, senior school students, education students at the University of Cape Town, knowledgeable people from the Xhosa society, both traditional and Christian.

The reason for concentrating on interviews is because of the problems encountered during my research. The mistrust of the traditional people against school people led to the refusal of many people in answering questions or, if they answered, one person answered all the questionnaires. This fact proved that the answers are invalid. Questionnaires were only used for those aspects of African Religion which the informants seemed to be interested in.

Besides the questionnaires and interviews, the phenomenological approach to religion was also used. This is the only method which proved to be neutral as it deals with the aspects of a religion in general. The dimensions of religions as applied by Ninian Smart (1983) are used as a form of a phenomenological approach.

Moreover, the assessment of the process of introducing African Traditional Religion into the syllabus of Religious Education was practically implemented at four primary schools in the Western Cape: at Homba, Cecil Road, Kirstenhof, and Andile Primary Schools.

4. THE GENERAL OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

The second chapter will examine the introduction of the nature of African Religion. The descriptions of the missionaries and government agencies will be discussed.

Chapter three will be devoted to the nature of pre-colonial religious education. The steps taken in Religious Education by other African countries, such as Kenya, Zambia, Tanzania, Malawi and Zimbabwe, will be briefly considered.

The fourth chapter will reflect the responses from the parents on their views on recovering African Religion by teaching it at schools.

Chapter five will reflect the responses from the teachers about teaching African Religion. The chapter also includes the feedback from teachers who actually taught the religion in the pilot project.

Chapter six deals with the responses from the pupils and senior students on how do they feel if African Religion can be taught in schools.

Chapter seven, the concluding chapter, will contain a brief restatement of the problem followed by a summary of the main findings and conclusions concerning the teaching of African Religion in schools. This will also carry the main recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER 2

AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION: A DEFINITION

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years the majority of Africans in most countries of Africa have felt strongly that African Traditional Religion should be included in the syllabus of Religious Education in schools. The same trend can be observed in South Africa. During the colonial period, schools were under the control of the missionaries who condemned the rituals performed by the black people; the only religion taught was Christianity. By the time the Nationalist government took over the schools, the Religious Education remained Christian.

Unlike the early converted Christians, many African Christians have recently been acknowledging their African beliefs and practices. As Manona (1981: 36) has shown, Africans have never actually disassociated themselves from their ancestors. This shift from ritual condemnation to ritual resurgence has caused many people to recognise the need for teaching African Traditional Religion in schools. Since the Religious Education presently taught in South African schools is exclusively Christianity, students at lower standards gain the impression that the word 'Religion' means Christianity. This notion makes children believe that there is only one religion which is superior to others, others are inferior or are not as important as Christianity. It is therefore important for children to understand that there are many religions in the world other than Christianity, such as Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and African Traditional Religion. While recognising the need to incorporate various religions into a syllabus my paper will concentrate on the introduction of African Traditional Religion in South African schools.

Before an introduction of African Traditional Religion into Religious Education, an explanation of what it is, is important. Such a discussion begins with the pre-colonial period, that is, before the coming of missionaries to South Africa. By pre-colonial or Traditional may be implied the practices which do not include Christian practices, so that the indigenous religion is without Christian influence. In modern times many blacks practise what is called African Christianity. African Traditional Religion should neither be Christianity nor African Christianity. This is important because the modern black child, born into a 'Christian' home and studying in a Christian school has a mixed understanding of his or her own traditional religion. For this reason, the nature of African Traditional Religion as it is, will be dealt with first, though the details of the aspects, such as specific practices (e.g. rituals for ancestors), will not be discussed in this chapter.

Information to explain African Traditional Religion will be taken from African writers, including theologians, education officers, songwriters and novelists. The intention is not to overlook Western writers but there is a feeling that African scholars are influenced by their African background of belief and are also participants in the ritual actions. It is also known that some of them are Christianizing African Traditional Religion in certain respects; these will be discussed later in the chapter.

The nature of African Traditional Religion will be explained through what Western scholars such as missionaries, travellers and Government agencies said about African Traditional Religion. To avoid vague generalisation my scope will be limited to the Xhosa culture as a particular lived experience of a tradition. For this reason only Western scholars who dealt with the Xhosa are discussed.

1.1 What is African Traditional Religion?

The peoples of Africa prior to colonisation did not have a specific name for their religion. The name attached to it was given to them later by those who studied the religion. Idowu (1973: 136) asserts

All down the ages, peoples have worshipped without being preoccupied with finding names for their religions. It is the outsider, the observer, the investigator, the curious, the detractor or the busybody, who first supplied labels.

This applied to the religion being practised by the black people in Southern Africa. African Traditional Religion as an academic study was pioneered by those who did not belong to the faith. Onunwa (1991: 109) explains that it was a project embarked upon by early European travellers, missionaries, colonial administrators and anthropologists. Their work was too subjective and unreliable, being based on racial and religious prejudices because they wrote so that they might catch the interest of the readers back in Europe. As a result the religion on paper is not the religion practised by its believers regarding its presentation and interpretation.

Even the indigenous African scholars who joined in the study later fell into the same trap because they were not dedicated to the indigenous religion; they were the converts of the early missionaries. What most of them did was to write to impress their Western audience by shaping their presentations of African beliefs and practices towards a Western theological pattern. Perhaps they were ashamed to be associated with the 'primitive' religion or with heathenism. So they opted for using Western categories in their descriptions of the religion of their people.

One example of such an African scholar who has written extensively on the religion is John Mbiti. He is one of the earliest African writers on African religion but his writings clearly show that he is writing on African Religion using Christianity as the foundation. Though he is honoured for his research, he is increasingly being criticised for using Greek philosophical concepts in describing African Religion.

1.2 Mbiti's Critics

Okot believes that Mbiti mainly addresses his work to the unbelieving Europeans in his attempts to show that the African peoples were as civilised as the Western peoples. (P'Bitek 1970: 41). This can be observed in Mbiti's parallels between Christianity and African Traditional Religion. Instead of showing the characteristic features of the religion as they are, he compares it with the biblical explanations in the Old and New Testaments. One example can be cited, the making of sacrifices and offerings to God. Mbiti (1975: 143) explains that the offerings are the concrete expressions of human intentions towards God and the invisible world. Mbiti also explains that offerings are done directly to God, an example of the Old Testament background. The sacrifice of animals in the African context is made to the ancestors. That is why before the animal is killed, a few words are said to the ancestors explaining the reason for or the aim of the ritual. Another example is the one of prayer where he states that "Prayer is the commonest method of approaching God. It is found in all African societies. People may pray privately, as individuals, or as heads of their families ... Anybody can pray to God at any time and in any place", (Mbiti 1975: 55).

From this extract Mbiti says nothing about these "prayers" and offerings to ancestors. This may be caused by the violent criticisms of ancestors by the missionaries, so according to Mbiti, all these were directed to the High God and not to ancestors. The way Mbiti describes God is foreign to the African understanding and as a result beyond recognition to the ordinary Africans in the countryside. He describes God as omnipotent, omnipresent, transcendent and eternal. All these are Greek terms applied to an African understanding of a deity. This description implies that the African deities have identical attributes to those of the Christian God. P'Bitek (1970: 41) believes that Mbiti dresses up African deities in Hellenistic robes and parades them before the Western world; Mbiti says that Africans hellenized God even before coming into contact with Greek metaphysical thinking. Okot P'Bitek sees such studies as a betrayal and the evidence of the colonization of the African mind.

Although much has been written of the religion, it is still written mainly from the outsider's point of view. There is a dire need to write it mainly from an insider's point of view though that may not be easy because of the changing times. This is because those who carry out research are the academics who have attended Western schools. The majority of these are not exposed in many things due to urbanisation or due to work commitment. For example, the majority of black women who have gone to school have not undergone the initiation (bathombe), and in most traditional marriages, the gall is not as important as it was in the past. Also due to the introduction of Western containers which introduced individualism (one person one plate), "izithebe" are no longer used for dishing out food for group eating which communality showed. Also the encounters of African Traditional Religion with Christianity have altered the former so that it no longer remains in pristine form anywhere in Africa.

2. DEFINITION

Dopamu (1991: 21) defines African Traditional Religion as:

African Traditional Religion comprises the religious beliefs and practices of the Africans which have been in existence from time immemorial, and are still adhered to today by many Africans which have been handed down by their forebears.

As has already been explained, African Traditional Religion has been researched by those who are not its adherents, and has also been based on Christianity/Judaism, there are some distortions in the explanations of many concepts. The same applies with the understanding of "Ntu". Jahn (1961: 101) describes Ntu as the universe force in which being and beings coalesce.

This understanding of Ntu is different from the way black people understand it. Oral tradition may be used to explain the term: 'Ntu' is used on three occasions. Firstly it may be due to the myth of origin which in fact applies to any religion. All the black people in Southern Africa believe that they have the same origin here in Africa, (Mqhayi 1931: 134). Mqhayi also argues that all black people in Southern Africa, though differing in language, are the generation of "Ntu" who is believed to be the original black nation. He further claims that "Ntu" does not refer to "man" as in Genesis where God said "Let us create a man ..." This Ntu does not, in other words, apply to people like Adam. (Mqhayi 1931: 134).

He concludes by saying that to black people throughout Africa south of the Sahara, a white person, the European is not called "ungumntu". That is why this "Ntu" is regarded as the black great-grandparent "sizibiza ngo 'Ntu' nje kungokuba ilelonagama sisuke sadibana ngalo, saza ke salenza oyena Khokho - wookhokho bethu, thina luhlanga lumnyama." (Mqhayi 1931: 134). So all the black people are the generation of Ntu.

Secondly, according to tradition whenever a person does anything the traditional way it is said "Uyenza isiNtu". This may be a ritual or traditional attire (unxibe isiNtu). Whenever one sticks to the tradition, one is described as having Isintu (unesintu).

Thirdly, Ntu is also connected to kindness (ubuntu). As blacks are believed to be the generation of Ntu, that is, they have the same origin, they have one thing in common which is intrinsic, that of clinging to each other, in other words, that of being communal. This feature of being communal makes one know that no-one lives as an island, one is part of his family and community, hence the saying "umntu ngumntu ngabantu" (a person is a person through persons). As a result of this, one shares whatever one has with others, hence "ubuntu", individualism is not encouraged. Anyone who is individualistic is described as being without ubuntu (akanabuntu).

The above discussion is an attempt to explain that "Ntu" as understood by black people refers to the tradition in relation to a black person. That is, "Ntu" is a stem used to distinguish the features particular to a black person like kindness, colour, beliefs and practices, attire and language.

The word "Traditional" may connote something that is static, something that came long ago, or something which belonged to the era of primitivity. Rosalind Shaw (1990: 343) claims that the first person to describe African Religion as being "traditional" is Geoffrey Parrinder in his book "African Traditional Religion". He uses the term in order to avoid the terms like "primitive" and "tribal" religion which are believed to have pejorative connotations. "It was largely he who gave the term 'African Traditional Religion' its hegemony within African religious studies". (Shaw 1990: 344) The term was then used by African scholars like Idowu and Mbiti.

To its believers African Traditional Religion is also 'traditional', not because it is fossilized, static and incapable of any adaptations to new situations and changes, but as a religion which originated from the peoples' environment and on their soil. It is neither preached to them nor imported by them. Africans are not converted to it, each person is born into it, lives it, practises it, and is also proud to make it his own.

Idowu (1973: 104) defines the word 'traditional' as meaning:

native, indigenous, that which is aboriginal or foundational, handed down from generation to generation, that which continues to be practised by living men and women of today as the religion of the grandparents, not only as a heritage from the past, but also that which peoples of today have made theirs by living it and practising it, that which for them connects the past with the present and upon which they base the connection between now and eternity with all that, spiritually they hope or fear.

This implies that the religion practised today is in continuity with traditional religion as used by indigenous people in Africa. People firmly believe that during the ritual occasions the voices from the past speak to the present generation and influence their lives. Uka (1991: 42) also argues that "traditional" does not refer to something that belongs to the past, to the archives, but as something that is undergirded by a fundamentally indigenous value system that has its own pattern, its own historical inheritance and traditions from the past." He also cites A.C. Bonquet who claims that "traditional religion is used for indigenous religion in Africa, is religion as it actually is today," (Uka 1991: 42). The religion is traditional in the sense that it is the indigenous religion of the black peoples of Africa handed down. In fact, any religion that is found today is related to its basic past to make it meaningful. Idowu (1973: 105) further explains:

Traditions now extant are deposits of earlier man's faith. At best, they can be the efficient cause of the faith of men today. Faith does not hang in the air: it is in the hearts of persons for whom it gives meaning to the past, informs the present, and establishes hope in regard to eternity.

Thus the word 'traditional' serves the purpose of distinguishing African Religion from any other religion that has been brought to the people through missionary zeal and propaganda.

This fact can be observed by the majority of Africans today. In spite of all the effects of contacts from outside, the indigenous religion remains their Real Religion.

But that does not mean that we dispute the fact that a religious tradition changes in different historical situations and circumstances but the core of the indigenous religion is still intact.

3. WHY AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION IS CALLED A RELIGION

Another difficulty in studying African Traditional Religion for academic purposes, is the use of foreign terminology. This can be observed in the use of the term "Religion" to describe what was practised by the black people in the pre-colonial/Traditional period. Those who studied it came with the notion of the term "Religion" - which to them meant the belief in a High God/Supernatural Being" and this God was none other than the Christian-perceived God. Other beliefs and practices which did not conform with those of Christianity were not regarded as religion. This clearly shows that the term was used to disguise racial and religious prejudices, hence the terms "Religion" and "Religions" were applied only to what conformed to preconceived criteria.

Harrison in Chidester (1992: 23) maintains that the first use of the term "Religions" in the English language is found in 1593 in the work of the Protestant theologian Richard Hooker. Hooker used the terms in order to distinguish between a Protestant and a Roman Catholic religion. Hooker saw the Protestant and Roman Catholic religions as different, though many people now see one religion, that is, Christianity.

The Protestants identified their own religion as "Religion" and the Roman Catholic religion was seen as superstitious, magic, worship of objects (statues), and worship of the dead (saints).

When these European Protestants came to Africa they used the same prejudicial categories of classifying the indigenous beliefs and practices of the Black people in Africa as superstition, magic, worship of objects (fetishism, totemism, animism) and worship of the dead (ancestors). In this transference, Africans assumed the place that had been occupied by Roman Catholics in Protestant perspectives on religion that denied the very possibility that others might have a "genuine Religion", (Chidester 1992: 24) .

Some writers speak of "African Traditional Religions", but Idowu argues against the use of a plural form in African Religion. He further explains his point by asserting that the common Africanness, which is belief in God and ancestors throughout Africa, makes it possible to talk of "African Religion". One would see that in supporting his statement, Idowu is more concerned with the similarities of beliefs (God and ancestors) throughout the continent than with the differences (different ethnic groups) that are observable from region to region.

It is interesting to note that the use of the plural in African Traditional Religions has somehow a negative implication when used by outsiders. They concentrated mostly on the differences that are influenced by different cultures of Africa and conclude that the beliefs of one culture constitute a religion of that particular culture, hence African "Religions". But interestingly enough, no-one speaks of Christian Religions, though Christianity differs. For example, Christian practices in Europe are different from those in Africa, or the practices of the Roman Catholics are different from the Methodist or Presbyterians and of Anglicans.

So it may be assumed that the use of the plural in African Religion implies that the religious beliefs of African people are different and so are given many names. This will be dealt with thoroughly in the section on the role of missionaries in the second part of this chapter.

Ndlovu (1991: 32) explains that God reveals himself to his people in the context of their peculiar environment and culture. Therefore God is not and cannot be reduced to any one people's monopoly. Besides the belief in the Supreme Being, Africans also believe in ancestors as intermediaries between God and the living and also believe that communication with ancestors is through rituals. These three are what form the basic concept of African Traditional Religion. This statement is supported by Mbiti (1975: 124), Uka (1991: 39), Parrinder (1973: 183), etc.

But the question is: why do we regard African Traditional Religion as a Religion? Africans believe in a Supreme Being who is beyond human understanding, too far removed from human beings, and as a result they cannot communicate with him directly. But God's works are revealed through the ancestors who are the intermediaries between the living and God.

The living communicate with their ancestors through many rituals. There are rituals of incorporating the child into the community which is made up of the dead (ancestors) and the living; there are rituals connected with the rites of passage, thanksgiving, appeasing, funeral rites, etc. All these are essential in the life of a human being.

Ndlovu (1991: 30) defines religion as a realm of experience in which the experiencing subject (man) is related to a reality greater than and beyond himself. Van der Kemp defines religion as a reverence for God, or the external action by which that reverence is expressed (1804: 432).

In both definitions it is clear that man (a human being) is the centre. But man lives within a social structure and social relationships, so religion also involves the social aspect of life as it seeks to enhance social integration and social harmony. Idowu (1973: 74) claims that without man there can be no religion.

3.1 The Recognition of African Traditional Religion as a Religion

The problem here is that our interpretation of religion should be in line with the existing ones, though the term does not fit exactly in the African understanding. Therefore, for academic purposes one has to be more or less "next to" the definition since it is a common word used internationally for this subject. Otherwise in African context the word "Religion" is not used independently of other aspects of life. Therefore the definition of religion - that is to follow - is not exactly what this would mean in the African way of life. But the way Ndlovu (1991) describes "Religion" will be used, though it has advantages and disadvantages. Though Ndlovu, as a black academic, describes Religion in the African understanding, he uses "borrowed" terms like "eschatology and doctrine" which do not explain exactly the black man's interpretation of his or her way of life. All in all, though the definitions by Smart (1989) could be used for one reason or other, they should be used with care as they can distort or destroy the African explanation of the way of life. Ndlovu (1991: 32 - 3) argues that any religion can be considered a full religion if it consists of seven (7) dimensions which are generally recognised as marks of religion. These are more or less the same as suggested by Ninian Smart (1989) in his book 'The World's Religions'. The dimensions proposed by Ndlovu and Smart are: experiential, mythological, ritual, social, ethical, doctrinal and eschatological.

1. Experiential

Smart (1983:62) asserts that experience may involve some feeling of a majestic, terrifying, overwhelming, loving Being and a divine Reality. He argues that there are two kinds of religious experience, i.e. the Numinous and the Mystical. Otto (Smart 1983:63) defines the numinous as the experience of something which is "... a mystery which is fearful, awe-inspiring, and fascinating, and which, for all its fearfulness, draws you towards it". He further explains that the numinous experience is at the heart of religion.

In African Tradition, no-one is irreligious, everybody is a religious carrier. Every human being belongs to the whole community and to belong to the community involves participating in the beliefs, ceremonies, rituals and festivals of that particular community. Belief and action in African society cannot be separated because what one does is motivated by what one believes, and what one believes springs from what one does and experiences. African Traditional Religion involves the religious journey, that is, it is an experience through which a human goes. For humans life centres around a system of beliefs translated into actions or practices.

So Africans feel within themselves the role played by their ancestors in their religion. This feeling is also expressed in the form of "nqula", towards the ancestors and also the adoration. Otto (Smart 1927:65) sees worship as a form of expression of a feeling of reverence for the numinous.

2. Mythological

Smart (1983: 83) describes myth as "something which is told and enacted through a ritual like a kind of drama, and which exists in an unquestionable atmosphere. (Hooke (1963: 11) sees myth as a product of human imagination arising out of a definite situation and intended to do something. These two explanations show that myths are stories created to explain the invisible through the visible to give life to our faith through symbols. Myth is the food which feeds our sense of identity.

+ some examples as myth in Burundi and this meaning:

As religion deals with a reality greater than and beyond man's realm of the visible, the tangible, and the cognitive, in many instances religion has to delve into mythology. Ndlovu (1991: 32) argues that as a result, religion defies restriction to that which is strictly historical, factual and scientific. In studying African Traditional Religion, one finds that it has its own mythology, for example, both of origin and death.

The Supreme Being in African thought is an ultimate divinity beyond time, space or human control. As a result, no prayer or sacrifices are directed to Qamata. For example, the creation myth (cited by Chidester 1992: 6 - 7) explains that human beings emerged in the beginning from a hole in the ground (Mpondo, Southern Sotho, Venda and Tsonga) or from a hole in a rock at Lowe, near Mochudi (Tswana) or from a bed of reeds, breaking off from that original source of life (Zulu, Swazi, Xhosa, and Tsonga). The myth of the origin of death also explains how the spiritual world and the human world were separated: the myth of the chameleon and the lizard sent by God.

Myths found in African religion are not only for human origins but a "myth was also a medium for working out a particular understanding of social and political conditions of the present world, ... was a type of cultural work, a discourse for making sense out of the present in terms of a primordial past." (Chidester 1992: 7)

3. RITUAL

Rituals are extraordinary acts performed by people. Hooke (1963: 12) explains that a ritual constitutes a system of actions performed in a fixed way, at regular times, by authorised persons who possessed the specialised knowledge of the correct way in which these actions should be carried out. A ritual is accompanied by spoken words, chants and incantations whose magical efficacy is an essential part of a ritual.

As already explained, in African Traditional Religion the living communicate with the ancestors through many rituals. African Traditional Religion, like all religions, has its ritual observances and performances. These rituals are performed by certain persons responsible for formal rituals and ceremonies. The rituals in every African region or ethnic group are performed communally for a variety of purposes.

There are four major rituals which are common to all African countries:

1. Birth Ritual

This ritual incorporates the newborn baby with both the living and the dead members of the society. (Chidester 1992: 21, Parrinder 1954: 91 - 4; Mbiti 1975: 84 - 90)

2. Initiation

The initiation is performed at puberty which is the transition between childhood and physical maturity. Mbiti (1975: 93 - 4) defines initiation as a public recognition that the individual is now passing from childhood to adulthood. This is a deeply religious step where a sacrificial animal is killed whose blood binds the person to the departed members of his/her society. The forms of the ritual are circumcision for boys and a separate special girls' initiation. Mbiti (1975: 97) maintains that even where circumcision is not practised, there are ways of marking the transition from childhood to adulthood. This may be done on a family basis, or by the community at large. This may be brewing some beer and slaughtering a goat for the older men, who then ceremoniously welcome the young adolescents to their status. Girls' initiation is also done at puberty. During the initiation ritual it is observed that "the ritual follows a characteristic pattern that requires the seclusion of the initiates, instruction in the sacred wisdom of myths, rituals and ethnical norms, and a ceremonial coming out that marked the reincorporation of the initiate in a new status as an adult." (Chidester 1992: 22)

3. Marriage

Different rites are performed during this initiation to ensure the approval of the dead elders of the family to the marriage and also to ensure child-bearing. Mbiti (1975: 103) argues that rituals and ceremonies accompany or follow the occasion of the wedding. The aim being to pray for the welfare of the new couple, to bless them so that they will bear children and to give them instructions and rules on how to conduct themselves as married people.

4. Death

Death marks the physical separation of the individual from other human beings. Several rituals are performed, intended to send off the departed peacefully and to sever his/her links with the living. (Mbiti 1975: 115)

5. Social

Religion is part of the fabric of society; it is deeply integrated into social life, and it is impossible to isolate and study it as a distinct phenomenon. (Smart 1983: 149). Within the society there are different roles played by certain group, depending on age and sex. These different roles are discernible in ritual performances which have already been explained, and also in ethical observances.

For example, one would notice that in each ritual not everybody plays a role; some are included and others not. In the initiation ritual, for instance, those who have not undergone initiation are excluded, and those who have passed from it and the initiand, are included.

Africans are communal in everything they do. The family does not end with the nuclear family, in fact the African family includes all those who share the same surname. The African community is twofold, that is, the community of the dead and that of the living. The living also includes the whole clan which is made up of many surnames and so is the community of the dead (izihlwele). Everybody, irrespective of age or sex, is an active member of the ritual ceremonies.

The acquisition of religious knowledge, beliefs and practices occurs both formally and informally, from a very early age, until it is internalised. That is why in African Traditional Religion, the Western/Christian term 'believer' or 'unbeliever' does not exist as far as religion is concerned.

From birth the child is involved in rituals of birth, naming etc. By the time the child is growing it is included in the acts of worship and ritual ceremonies and so the process continues. In some clans the ancestors may reveal themselves in animals, for example the Majola clan where the ancestors reveal themselves in a snake called Majola/inkwakhwa. Jordan (1980: 169) explains that the majola snake reveals itself to young brides when they first conceive and continues to visit them now and again until they give birth. He further states that on the day of confinement it comes to watch over the baby, lying next to it and never leave it until the mother is able to move about again. This is to show that from conception the foetus is being incorporated with both the living and the dead.

This proves that in African Traditional Religion a worshipper is never in isolation but is part and parcel of his family and community. This is usually explained by the saying, "I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am." (umntu ngumntu ngabantu). Mbiti (1975: 175) puts it thus: "The basic African view is that the individual exists only because others exist." In this approach to life, there is a sharing of burdens, joys, blessings, sorrows, cares and responsibilities.

Oosthuizen (1991: 41) believes that in a traditional religious context, all the acts from birth to death and thereafter bind the person as a communal being to everyone around themselves, especially those who have passed on to the metaphysical world and those still to be born. The sacrificial meals are symbolic, emphasizing that the family/community has been brought together with the ancestors.

As a result of the importance of social life in African context, there are morals prescribed by the society to help people do their duties to society and enjoy certain rights from society. These will be discussed under ethics. As a result one cannot detach oneself from the religion of the group, for to do so is to detach oneself from the roots, foundation, context of security, kinships and the whole group of those who make one aware of one's own existence. Ndlovu (1991: 32) claims that African Traditional Religion has a very strong, deep-rooted social dimension. It is to a great extent, he asserts, concerned with human situations, relations and social integration.

6. Ethical

The ethical dimension of a religion or worldview is shaped by other dimensions, but it also helps to shape them. For instance, the social dimension is based on ethics and the breaking of these would lead to chaos. The question of respect for the elders in African societies is essential in as much that disrespect is believed to be punishable by the ancestors.

Ethics in African Traditional socio-religious context, refers to the code of conduct which governed and guided all social and religious actions and interactions in pre-colonial and pre-missionized African societies. (Mbon 1991: 101) The people believe that God is the author of their morality and its ultimate guardian. African Traditional Religion is very rich in ethics. These are prescribed observances as well as taboos, differing from age to age and to sexes. The concept of what is right and wrong is central in practising African Traditional Religion. African traditional ethics are communal and are regulated by a law-based on sacred sanctions which had their origin in the world of ancestors, (Uka 1991: 191). It is therefore believed that the departed keep watch over people to make sure that they observe the moral laws. (Mbiti 1975: 175). That is why people are believed to be punished by ancestors when they break these morals. The behaviour of the individual is right or wrong according as it affects the group - sometimes a chosen, nuclear group; at other times, a wider circle of extended families and friends, (Mbon 1991: 102).

7. Doctrinal

Part of the meaning of religions may be traced back to stories of the past and of the future; but because they are views of the world and of life as a whole, they soon take on a strongly doctrinal aspect. (Smart 1983: 196). Smart sees the function of doctrines as being the safeguarding of the reference which myths have to that which lies Beyond, transcending the Cosmos - such as about the supernatural Being, ancestors and life after death.

Even though African Traditional Religion has not produced books, certain beliefs are held very firmly. These beliefs are handed down from generation to generation, the essential pillars of African Traditional Religion. That is why Mbiti (1975: 26) believes that without them no religion can inspire its followers.

As has been proved evident, African Traditional Religion, like other religions, has systematic beliefs that provide the central frame of reference, for instance, the belief about the Creator, ancestors and the community (both the living and the dead). The belief in life after death is discussed as follows.

7.1 Eschatological/Life after death

As already explained, "eschatology" is derived from the Greek and it connotes the doctrine of the last things. It involves mainly the Parousia which is out of context as far as the African understanding of the afterlife is concerned. For the case of clarity about after-death eschatology is used here, but one should note that no second coming of Christ or Judgement Day is involved. Eschatology in this case involves life beyond the physical existence. Africans believe that when one dies one goes to the world of the ancestors/spirits (kwelemimoya) which is believed to be in the same realm with God. The soul is immortal, as a result ancestors are sometimes called the Living Dead. So when one dies one becomes an ancestor who is looking after the welfare of the living.

But African eschatology/life after death does not involve reward or punishment. Africans believe that God punishes in this life and also salvation is here and now. Misfortunes may be interpreted as showing that the sufferer has broken some moral or ritual conduct against God, the ancestors, the elders or other member of his society. In many cases the sufferer may confess before he or she dies (uyampola). But this does not deny the beliefs of misfortunes caused by workers of magic and witchcraft. When punishment comes in the form of misfortune a ritual of appeasement is done and the sufferer is healed and saved.

From the above discussion, if what Ndlovu says about religion is accepted, African Traditional Religion is a 'Religion' though the term is foreign. This also shows that Africans were fully/deeply religious even in the pre-missionary period.

Other disadvantages of the way Ndlovu describes "Religion" in the African way are that, he implies that religion is a rigid phenomenon in the sense that anything that falls out of the seven aspects is not part of the religion. He does not explicitly show it as a network of inseparable phenomena. He treats the aspects as separate things in one group of human beings or in a society and not as a single entity within one human being.

Most of these aspects imply that "religion" is more of the external practices than the internal faith which is shown by actions. Or these aspects do not clearly show that the outward action (social, ritual, ethics, etc.) is the reflection of the internal faith of each human being. Actions show the internal feeling of a person. This can be observed in the case of, for example, a ritual. According to the African belief, it is a person who needs a ritual, it is not the question of being experienced in it. If the birth ritual is not done, for example, or delayed, the child, not having experienced this ritual in other people, would show signs of the need for a ritual, signs that will be shown by biological dysfunctioning of the body. A child may wet the bed or do some other funny things like literally eating his or her fingers. That is not being influenced by the society.

3.2 Interpretation of African Religion by Missionary and Colonial Researchers

The missionaries repeatedly reported home that they had discovered that among the Xhosa of Southern African there was 'no religion'. The Xhosa people of the Eastern Cape were thought of to be completely without religion in so much that they had to borrow from the 'Hottentots'.

Van der Kemp (1804: 432) saw "no religion" among the Amakhosa. J.C. Warner saw Xhosa beliefs and systems as a regular system of superstitions which answers all the purposes of any other false religion.

But it is interesting to note that some missionaries saw in Xhosa religion a degeneration of a once true religion which they had lost, hence they have "superstitions". Robert Godlonton also admits that the remote tribes seemed to have preserved a notion of a deity in the name of UMDALI, the Creator, and also in their sacrificial offerings for rain. He believes that superstitions have degenerated from the beliefs and practices of an earlier, more noble religion.

This assertion of denial of religion in the indigenous people of the region negated their full humanity and "thereby contributed to the colonial representation of Southern Africa as an empty, open space for colonization." As a result of this denial of a true religion amongst the Xhosa people, their religion was described as paganism, heathenism and idolatry. The denial of a true Religion amongst the Xhosa people also had a colonising effect. The missionaries prior to the cattle killing of 1857 denied the existence of religion but after the cattle killing some of them recognised it. This shows that obedience to colonial rules implies the presence of religion.

Theal (1919: 4) describes the Bantu religion as consisting of a mixture of ancestor spirit worship and fetishism, in different proportions in different tribes. He further adds:

The first of the elements must have been brought from Asia, for it is widely prevalent there, and it is inconceivable that it could have had its origin in Central Africa.

Fetishism was developed after their arrival in this continent, particularly by the tribes that mixed their blood with that of the more degraded Negroes who were here before them. (History of South Africa 1919: Vol. 1: 425)

From this abstract it is clear that the Africans were not regarded as pure human beings or as full human beings who could not even call themselves Africans as they were defined as recent immigrants in Africa. Africans were regarded as barbarians, uncivilised, therefore they needed Christianity to remove their barbarism. Western writers justified the colonial system by preaching that Africans needed Western civilisation in order to survive, and in this case Christianity being equated with civilisation.

This can be observed in Saunders (1988: 28) writing about Theal. "Theal wrote of the Xhosa,"

no elevation in their condition would take place, faced by civilisation and the leavers of a higher life working in the minds of some of themselves, then they must conform to the law of progress.

As whites were superior, their conquest of others was justified. White expansion formed the vehicle of civilisation and its triumph over barbarism. That such expansion should occur was a law of progress, part of the way in which the principle of race worked in history.

God's law of progress as described by Theal is "Man must raise himself constantly higher, and he who cannot as well as he who will not confirm to that law must pass out of existence. (Theal 1919: 1)

From the above statements it is clear that the missionaries came with the assumptions that they represented a 'higher' civilisation and that no civilization existed in Africa. Okot P'Bitek (1970: 54) argues that Western values and customs were, to them, identical with Christian morality. He believes that missionaries came to Africa to preach their gospel as well as to civilize and in their way of civilizing they were at one stage with the colonising forces. He sees the missionaries as being important vehicles of Western imperialism which he claims lent to the churches its wealth, power and influence.

African religion as a result was purposely distorted and given many names which all end with ism, all of them derogatory. These are terms like paganism, heathenism, animism (belief in spirits), fetishism (belief in objects), totemism (belief in spirit residing in an animal). As a result the religion of the Africans was regarded as a false religion. To remove this "heathenism" Africans were forced to do away with their religion which resulted in lost identity. Everybody was to be baptised the Christian way and for one to have been baptised, one should have a Christian name which was in fact an English name and the African name regarded as a heathen name.

That is why you find Africans being called Peter, John, Joseph, Mary, Patience, Oscarine, etc. and in most cases not even knowing the origin or meaning of the name. This distortion is lamented by one African poet, cited by Zvabva (1991: 74):

Can all their religious beliefs be right, all right and mine wrong?

Can their God be only true God and mine false?

Missionaries and travellers emphasised the authenticity of Christianity and of Western culture. So if anything in African Traditional Religion contradicts with Christianity, it is false.

As a result of this distortion of African Traditional Religion and also of achieving their needs (the missionaries) of colonisation and Western civilisation, African Traditional Religion was not included in the Religious Education syllabus for South African students. Religious Education became synonymous with Christian Education where pupils from sub-standard A were taught that one who doesn't follow that will be thrown to hell where there is fire and Satan with a big fork.

As a result of cultural alienation caused by colonization, there has been a cry from most Africans calling others to return and maintain their culture which is mostly expressed by the performance of rituals. This has been shown in written literature in African languages for school children so that they should be aware of their roots. These are writers like A C Jordan in his *Inqumbo Yeminyanya* (wrath of the ancestors), Sityana in *Izixingaxi Zamaxhosa*. Others show their feelings in songs sung for competitions like Mike Ngxokolo in his song *Amasiko Nezithethe*.

Jordan sees the conflict between traditional beliefs and practices of the older generation and the neglect of these by the educated people. He portrays the disasters in the Mpondomise people which is due to the wrath of the ancestors.

Sityana (1978) in his introduction explains how hurt he is by the loss of our Xhosa customs and our language. As a result he has written about almost all the Xhosa rituals in order to revive them for the future generations.

Mike Ngxokolo in his song **Amasiko Nezithethe** also laments over the loss of our rituals. As a result he is calling upon people to keep their customs.

"The lamentation of colonisation" is also cited by Zvabva (1991: 76) where Kibicho states:

The worst type of colonial enslavement is the cultural-spiritual one where the colonised is given a distorted image of himself and of his God by his oppressors and he accepts that image, and continues with it unquestioningly despising himself, his culture and his religion and slavishly applying the culture of his colonizers.

Kibicho explains that he believes there is full salvation in African Traditional Religion which he claims to be independent of Jesus and his redemptive work.

The mission schools and churches are understood as being some of the agencies for indoctrination. Uka (1991: 332) argues that these (mission schools and churches)

spared no efforts in condemning everything African as worthless, pagan, primitive and poor. Consequently young educated Africans, through Western indoctrination not only lost interest in African beliefs but despised them as if they themselves were white men. In this way the vitality of the African traditional religion suffered a severe set back as the Africans themselves began to lose confidence in anything African.

Through mission schools and churches most of the Africans believed that anything that white man possessed and provided was superior to that of the African. Hence the Africans treated things African with contempt and felt no qualms in changing his name from African to English names; he had to change his religion and even his language in order to sound civilized, saved and educated.

The above lamentations show how painful it can be at times to be condemned for what we genuinely believe to be doing without any self-interest. So this shows that there is a need to include African Traditional Religion in Religious Education so as to accommodate the beliefs of all people of African and to restore the religious heritage of the Africa people.

To conclude I may argue that before an attempt is made to think of introducing African Tradition Religion, people should know what they are talking about.

This suggests that one should differentiate between African Traditional Religion and African Christianity. As already explained earlier, most writers believe that they are writing about African Traditional Religion but practically they are writing about African Christianity. This does not mean that African Christianity is wrong, but it suggests that the authors should be explicit on which stand they are written from. By assuming that one writes on African Traditional Religion whereas, one is writing about African Christianity causes the adherents of African Traditional Religion people to be like a tree without roots because they have been deprived of their religious heritage which is their background or root. This has been shown earlier where it was shown that the study of African Traditional Religion is based on Christianity not on the indigenous beliefs and practices.

It is therefore important for one to understand that African Traditional Religion be described as it is, not to compare it with the so-called "civilised Religion" as if one is defending it. This raises some suspicion that the one defending it believes it to be inferior, which is why he is defending it. Or he means to say it was as civilised as "your civilised Christianity" even before it came to Africa.

African Traditional Religion should be written as it is, not to compare it with Christianity in order to prove its authenticity. Otherwise African writers should write about the real nature of African Traditional Religion and not to try to impress the Western cultures by using Western terms that are not applicable in African culture. There seems to be no need to emphasise African Traditional Religion being monotheistic as if blacks are opposed to what Western scholars have said about it. Whether they describe it as polytheism, animism, etc. according to their Christian standards, there is only one fact: it is real to its participants.

To defend it, as Mbiti et al are doing by trying to compare it with Christianity, raises some suspicion that they have some fears about their belief systems or practices, as if they are not firm.

To be religious, according to Christians, is to believe and worship their Yahweh in their own way. This does not mean that Yahweh and Qamata are different, but what is different are the names. They regarded Qamata as a god inferior to Yahweh and even today the same perception still exists. This also reinforces not only cultural alienation but also undermines the language of the Xhosa and the people using it. As a result many Xhosa in this era of religious 'confusion' are ashamed to stand up in public proclaiming that Qamata is the God above ancestors, is the creator of the universe.

It is a pity that many Africans do not differentiate between Christianity and Western civilisation. A convert (igqobhoka) who has gone to school and learns and lives within Western technology, already associates himself with Christianity as it is called the religion of the civilized. These converts, more especially those living in urban areas, due to Western infrastructure have been forbidden to have their original sacred places, as in the case of the Xhosa, the kraal, and the thatched hut. Now the generation of these people are confused once they are told about their roots, their religion. They assume that they are automatically Christians, but the majority perform the African rituals in a Western way. For example, the birth ritual which is called "idina" (dinner) where after the baptism of a child, a party is held where a sheep is slaughtered. But some urban Xhosa perform the birth ritual in a traditional way.

It is with regret that most civilised or urban blacks, as a result of missionary brain-washing, regard the African Traditional Religion as primitive. They see it as signifying the period of darkness. They leave or ignore their tradition, but do not fit in the 'civilised' tradition. As a result they are neither one nor the other. That is, they do not practise their ritual practices, they look down on them, and by so doing they practise the teachings of the missionaries under the umbrella of being civilised.

But at the same time, they are not whites, they are colonised, not truly Christians, because, they may be observed to be dualistic, that is, they have both religions, or they become religious fanatics.

The word 'civilised' is confusing. Does it mean that God changes with time and reveals himself according to time? Or was time not created by God? In my opinion the decision made by God alone from the beginning is very important. The way He reveals Himself to Christians, Muslims, Blacks, and others is his own decision, therefore there seems to be no need to equate this with civilisation which is man-made. If the Christian religion is equated with civilisation, are we not transcending the civilised? This is because the "uncivilised", the "illiterates" - that is, the traditional people - still adhere to the traditional way of worship.

Moreover, some African Christians perceive Jesus as playing an important role by being at the top of the hierarchy, that is simply, Jesus is above ancestors as He is divine. This can be seen as Christianising African Traditional Religion. This seems not to solve the problem of dualism, and shows that these African Christians are admitting that African Traditional Religion is primitive, uncivilised, and needs Christianity on top to make it civilised.

This is because this superiority of Jesus does not apply when it comes to other religions that are found in South Africa. To further explain this point, one would never find a Muslim regarding Jesus as divine, nor a Jew (in Judaism) regarding the divinity of Jesus or Mohamed as a prophet in their religion, nor a Christian speaking of Allah or Mohamed or the Buddhist or Hindu speaking of a divine Jesus. The three so-called 'basic religions' are studied each on its own. Hinduism is also studied on its own. But that is not the case with African Traditional Religion, it has been made subordinate to Christianity.

If we accept the superiority of Jesus in our religion, why should we reject words like "barbaric", "pagan", "heathen" or "savage", etc., as these were used to describe blacks and their religion before the advent of Christianity (the civilised religion) in South Africa?

African Traditional literature on Religion should be rewritten from an insider's view if it is to be considered genuine. David Westerlund (1991: 23) argues:-

In my opinion, the striving for the 'inside view' should, continuously, be given the highest priority in the humanistic, scholarly study of African and other religions. Thus, the aim should be, as it were, to 'Africanize' African religion.

The cruel ideas of the Western scholars should also be removed from the academic study of the black people and their religion, such as those of Theal who, when he commented on the independence of the African societies east of the Kei in the 1870's, said:

In the nature of things, a pretty barbarous government could not be permitted to do whatever it pleased, even within the limits of its own territory, in opposition to the interests of a powerful civilised neighbour. (Saunders 1988: 28)

Dr Taban Lo-Liyong in his paper on "Indigenous Religion in Three West African societies AKAN, MENDE and YORUBA" delivered in Khartoum 1993, suggests that Africans must carry on with their traditions regardless of the interpretations of the missionaries. He further suggests that Africans should realise that they ought to return to the God of their ancestors, confess, atone, propitiate and receive their blessings so that they could henceforth lay a firmer foundation; they found themselves cheated; their search had been hijacked by disciples of another faith. He also asks how a race could accept its own condemnation by another race. (Taban Lo-Liyong 1993: 11). So the reason why African Tradition should be studied in public schools is to clear away misconceptions that have risen throughout the years as to what it really is, as it was named in all the isms Westerners could find fitting. As a result most of the educated Africans have been taught to misunderstand the Religion of their ancestors by some foreign writers and teachers. As a result most people claim to belong to Christianity because it is a religion of the civilised people though the majority still belong to the Traditional Religion at heart.

Secondly, a research done by Kili (1988) and Mxekezo (1991) has shown that there is dualism in the mind of the black child as he/she is taught traditional beliefs and practises at home, and at school, Bible Education as prescribed by the syllabus is taught. They have also both found that it is in the interest of the parents, teachers and students that traditional religion be taught together with Christianity. This, as both researchers believe, will remove the dualism in the children's mind.

CHAPTER 3

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

This chapter discusses past and present treatment of the concept of Religious Education in South Africa. A brief initial explanation is given of how education has been understood by those who brought Christianity and Western civilization to Africa. When dealing with Religious Education, special attention is paid to the integration of African religion into educational programmes in African countries.

1. WHAT IS EDUCATION?

Zotwana (1992: 10) argues that amongst Westerners there is a serious misconception that before their arrival the indigenous people of Africa were in darkness, with no education or religion. In fact, the introduction of the Western way of education led to the assumption that education implies literacy and attending the Western type of schools. Since there were no Western "schools" amongst the indigenous peoples of Africa, who were believed to be an inferior race, Africans supposedly had no education and religion. Just as the African was seen to be biologically less evolved than the European, so African society was interpreted to be similarly less evolved. (Loram 1975) Akinnaso (1992: 69) argues against this by stating that literacy is not a precondition for the existence of schooling and its experience. He further argues that during the nineteenth century a common theme was that any sign of African intelligence must be attributed to the intervention of whites. This implies that anything of value in Africa must somehow have originated with the white race.

Zotwana (1992: 1) argues against the misconception that Africans had no education and religion. // Indeed, he maintains that education and religion were the cornerstones on which the black nations were built. Everything depends on how education is defined.

Following Emile Durkheim, education can be defined as a process of socialisation. As Haingura (1992:54) has noted, Durkheim defined education as "the systematic socialisation of the younger generation by which the latter learns religions and moral beliefs of nationality and collective opinions of all kinds. In other words, education serves to integrate the individual into the wider community in which he or she is born."

In similar terms, the anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski defined education as a process of cultural transmission. According to Malinowski,

Education is bigger than schooling. In every society, however simple or complex, the child has to acquire not only skills and ideas, he has to be taught the moral values, the social attitudes, the religious beliefs of his/her community. (Haingura 1992: 52)

In South Africa, Neville Alexander (cited in Haingura 1992: 54) identifies the purpose of education in the same terms:

Education is the name we give to those formal and informal ways in which the older generation of a society pass on their accumulated knowledge to the new generations of young people. This knowledge does not only simply refer to know-how, but also the ways in which people are supposed to live their lives.

From the above definitions, it is clear that no society can exist without education. Education simply means the whole process of development through which a human being passes from infancy to maturity.

Haingura (1992: 54) asserts that education in a specific sense denotes those influences which are designedly brought to bear upon the young by the adult section of the community for the purpose of maintaining and, if possible, of raising the level of cultural attainments. Education, therefore, does not imply literacy, but rather the transmission of culture. Education embraces all aspects of the social structure, such as family life, political activity, and all ways of transmitting knowledge and shaping of values. Therefore, African society, like any society, as Malinowski has stated, had ways of teaching the child the valued skills, ideas, morality, social attitudes, and religious beliefs of the community.

2. PRE-COLONIAL OR TRADITIONAL EDUCATION

The focus in this section will be on education as practised by the traditional people without missionary or Western influence. Though the literature used here was written during the colonial period, it is greatly influenced by oral literature and written by African scholars who in one way or another are experienced in many aspects of traditional education. Their interest lies in the question of how the indigenous people during the traditional or pre-colonial period educated their children. Education in traditional societies also includes religion, since religion permeates all aspects of life.

In traditional societies there have always been educational institutions, such as Kwa Ntonjane (girls' initiation) and ulwaluko (boys' initiation) schools. In comparison with the present Western education, the only thing that was missing was written literature. Zotwana (1990: 10) argues that although Africans had oral literature, that literature was "written" in the hearts and minds of the people and passed from generation to generation. Literature did exist, therefore, and was very rich. This literature was comprised of folklore, praise-singing, songs, proverbs, and ties (amaqhina/qash-qash/rhayi-rhayi). (Mbiti 1975 24; Awolaku 1991: 131 - 132; Zotwana 1992). These forms of literature will be dealt with below, with special attention to their role in education and religion.

However, it is first necessary to observe that black education in South Africa during the pre-colonial period was both formal and informal. It was formal in the sense that there were times, for example in May-June in the Western calendar, that were set aside for educating males in their passage from childhood to adulthood. This was the initiation period, known as Isilimela when boys at puberty stage were sent to the initiation or circumcision schools. This special time for formal education also applied to girls where they had to go to Intonjane. These initiation schools were formal institutions where children were taught formally by the elders. Out of that educational process, they emerged as adults. Although many people assure that formal education means that a child goes to school every day, sits at a desk, listens to a teacher standing in front of the class, and then writes, formal education is a process in which a child is taught in a certain area by an adult. In formal education, the teaching is direct, and after a time the child is elevated to a higher status.

Education is also informal in the sense that the child learns by imitating adults. Education also occurs through the stories or folklore told by grandmothers at night while all the people are sitting by the fire, through all the ties (amaqhina), proverbs, and songs that comprise an oral literary tradition.

2.1 Informal Education

Since the life of an African was based on religion, the type of education, whether formal or informal, was not divorced from religion. The growing child was taught that a person does not exist as an island. A person lives amongst people. He or she exists in terms of the community. The extended family plays an important role in the life of an individual. There is a mutual relationship between the members of the clan. As a result, the child is considered to have more than one father, mother, sister, brother, uncle, aunt and cousin. Moreover, the terms father and mother in the African context do not refer to those of the extended families and clan only, but to any older person who is of the age of the actual mother and father. The respect a child shows to his or her mother, father, older sister, and brother applies to anyone of their respective ages. As a result, respect was one of the leading features of an African child as taught by the community. Any older person who saw the child doing anything wrong had an absolute right to punish that child in the absence of the parents. Accordingly, African children knew very well that one could not violate a taboo in front of any older person.

The chiefs, as guardians of law and those responsible for social harmony, were respected by the community. They were believed to have been chosen by God (Qamata). If we used Biblical terms, we might say that the chief was the 'anointed' one.

The chief, regarded as *umntu wegazi* (royal blood), is described by Mqhayi (1931: 33) as chosen by God; people were to obey him and he was expected to obey God. As the head of his nation, the chief was to prevent conflict amongst his people or to solve those that arose. Since the laws were understood as coming from God (Qamata) (Mqhayi 1931: 33), the local chief also organised the prayers in times of drought when people used to go up the hill when praying for rain. The rain was asked from God (Qamata) through the ancestors (*izihlwele*).

2.2 Formal Education

As noted, a discussion of formal education must include the initiation schools. Among the Xhosa-speaking people, the initiation schools exalt the initiated to the higher status of adulthood. In the initiation schools (*ukwaluka* and *intonjane*) sex education and morality are taught, but only by the experienced, that is, by those who have already passed through these stages. Moreover, Xhosa education unfolds in formal stages. One is taught about sex on reaching puberty; prior to that nothing is taught on this subject.

Though in these "schools" sex education, morals and taboos are taught, another aspect of life is included, that is, religion. In both rites of passage, cattle or goats are used as a medium of communication between the ancestors and their living descendants. Their sacrifice is required by the fact that when anyone climbs up the social ladder, he or she has to keep the ancestors informed, and at the same time give thanks to the ancestors for having kept them. In these "formal schools", therefore, both education and religion were taught and were inseparable.

The Xhosa people believe that these rites of passage, as a process of formal education, ought to be done for every child. If the ritual is not carried out, misfortune follows. As Soga (1930: 65) observed, if the Intonjane is not done, or not correctly done, the woman will become barren. Diviners will claim that infertility is caused by the fact that the Intonjane was not done or not finished. Soga further believes that this ritual will be the last to die as the Impi eBomvu (red people) take it seriously as a form of worship.

Ter Haar (1988: 4) asserts that among Africans the formal "curriculum" grew out of the immediate environment, and consisted not only of moral and civic instructions, but also in on-the-job training in skills for boys and girls in their respective roles. Therefore, formal education in traditional times was very practical and pragmatic. It aimed at preparing the children and young people to take up their responsibilities as adult members of society.

Practical skills, such as making mats, blankets, or pots, were taught to children. Soga (1930: 42) claims that initially people were able to make blankets out of animal skins, but that skill no longer exists because of land legislation and laws protecting the killing of animals.

3. ORAL LITERATURE

There was a variety of oral literature in African education in the traditional period. The following is a discussion of how that literature is related to education and religion.

3.1 Praise Songs

Dikeni (1992: 50) claims that praise songs were closely related to peoples' worship. Praise-singers believe that the power of praise-singing is a gift

from ancestors, so much that some praise-singers used to ask ancestors for the power before praise-singing. There is also a belief that praise-singing has the power to unite the nation because the words of the praise-singer come from ancestors. In other words, they are the mouthpiece of ancestors. This is explained by Dikeni (1992: 50), "Loo nto ithethwa yimbongi ayiphumi kuyo, yona ithunywa linyange lesihobe ukuba iyithethe". All these were oral, and it was only when Westerners came that these were written down and published. But since the publishers, such as the Lovedale Press, were under missionary control, some of the poems were rejected by them - which is why some of Mqhayi's poems on circumcision were not published. Poems were used for many reasons, of which two are discussed here.

3.1.1 To Praise Ancestors

Dikeni (1992: 70) maintains that there is a deep belief amongst the Xhosa that if one doesn't praise the ancestors when talking to them, one is like a child playing a child's game of stone (puca). This is also seen when the sacrificial animal in a ritual bellows or bleats, to show that the ancestors have agreed (icamagu livumile). Then praise songs are sung in order to evoke the ancestors.

3.1.2 Protest

When praise-singers are protesting against something of which the ancestors do not approve, they do not hesitate to sing.

Protest is illustrated by Mqhayi's poem of "Itshawe lase Bhritani" (The Prince of Britain) in which he shows the protest to the visit to South Africa paid by the Prince from Britain. Mqhayi (cited by Dikeni 1992: 70) says:-

Hay'kodwa Bhritan 'enkulu
 Yeza nebhophile neBhayibhile
 Yeza nomfundis 'exhag 'ijoni
 Yeza nerhuluwa nesisinandile
 Yeza nenkanunu nemfakadolo.

Tarhu bawo, sive yiphi na?
 Gqithela phambili Thole lesilo!
 Gqitha, uzubuye kakuhle;-
 Ndlalifa yelakowethu.

Hayi, the might Great Britain
 Here she comes with Bible and bottle
 Here she comes, a missionary escorted by a soldier,
 with gun powder and guns,
 with cannons and breechloader.

Forgive me, O Father, but which of these must we accept?
 Pass on, calf of the beast,
 Trampler who even now is trampling
 Pass on and return safely - eater of our country's inheritance.

(Translation in Chapman & Dangor 1982: 35)

This form of protest shows the antithesis which is involved in Christianity and colonisation. It also shows the opposition to the prince. He is given weapons used in war and the Bible. So the poet is warning people about the nature of the prince as he believes it to be dangerous. The poet claims that the Bible should not close their eyes while things are going bad; by the time they are looking at the Bible, "Ithi masingavalwa amehlo yibhayibhile kube kusunakala lo gama bona besajonge iBhayibhile" (Dikeni 1992: 70). This poem shows the ambivalence of the Prince of Britain. The statement also explains that though the Xhosa accepted Christianity by accepting the Bible, they are also aware of the aims of Christianity and Westernisation which was to colonise and Christianise them so as to leave their culture and religion which many indigenous people feel is the result of the disasters that are occurring now because our ancestors are "angry" ("ziqumbile").

3.2 Songs

Songs in the African context have messages which are connected to different aspects, such as religion, initiation schools, ezomngqungqo, diviners, at work, times of war, etc. The words of the songs are inspiring to the singers as well as the listeners.

For example, in rituals when things go well you would see the Xhosa people singing with dignity "Malibuyele ekhaya, YHo icamagu livumile." Everybody, young and old, knows very well that the ancestors have agreed. With diviners the same thing happens. One would find a diviner/s singing "He! thongo lam, khawundithethelele thongo lam" or "Yho! Ndikhathazwa lithongo" and other people would follow. Yapi (1992: 86) believes that the diviners' songs are associated with religion. He further explains that diviners are believed to be the fortunate people, able to communicate with the dead through dreams. As a result, when asleep they should not be woken.

3.3 Proverbs

Proverbs are full of wisdom and a large number of them reflect some religious beliefs. They are also used for ethical reasons. Mbiti (1975: 24) asserts that proverbs are set within a cultural and social environment of the people who have produced them and used them.

Proverbs also contain some warnings. For example "Inyathi ibuzwa kwabaphambili". Inyathi (buffalo) could be known as a dangerous animal by those who have gone ahead. That shows that only the elderly/the experienced know the dangers of life.

This implies that children should learn from the elderly as they are the experienced. Other examples are to warn those who are stubborn in their actions, like "Isala kutyelwa sibona ngolophu" or "Inkomo enotshobo ayinqandwa".

Proverbs were mostly used for ethical reasons. Social ethics were communal: what one man did, affected directly or indirectly, other members of his society or community. Harry Sawyer (cited by Mbon 1991: 102) expresses this point by saying: "The behaviour of the individual without exception is right or wrong according to how it affects the group: sometimes a closer, nuclear family group; at other times, a wider circle of extended families and friends." Mbon further explains that this was true if the act of the individual was one that offended the ancestor. Without going too far, some ethical issues were taught through proverbs which were understood as having a moral teaching.

Examples of social acts that would be offensive to the divine spirits and the society include stealing, cheating, murder, incest or any of the ancestor-sanctioned rules governing and guiding the social and religious life of the community.

3.4 Folklore

Another form of oral literature was the use of folklore and riddles or ties. In his discussion of iintsomi, Zotwana asserts that they are used for many reasons, such as national education, moral education, social life, and as a warning of the danger of neglecting the teachings of the elderly.

Folklore used to be told by grandmothers at night near the fire. Everybody gathered near the fireplace to listen to these stories. They were lessons to teach the young. Folklore taught the values of the society, thereby transmitting important cultural information from generation to generation.

As narrators are grandmothers who have experience in life, folklore increases their relationship with their grandparents because it is where they gain knowledge and experience. This develops trust, and disobedience to the elderly in the African context is believed to bring misfortune.

From the above discussion about the African literature, it is clear that the indigenous people of South Africa had education from the very onset. And since it was not written down it was deemed as no value for modern times.

Traditional African education was therefore replaced by a reduced form of Western education adapted to the African.

4. MISSIONARY EDUCATION

Like the other African countries mentioned in Chapter Three, Western form of education came with the missionaries in South Africa. The main aim of the missionaries was to evangelise the "natives". (Satyo 1992: 119; Tunmer 1968: 41; Haingura 1992: 134). They undermined the way of life of the black people of Southern Africa. In fact, missionaries regarded the black way of life as 'uncivilised' because it was not "European" and had to be changed before spiritual salvation could be achieved, Ashley (1979:2). In his analysis of the interaction between the Ngunis and the missionaries, Ashley (1979:2) argues that "the missionaries required abandonment of the traditional Nguni mythological universe with its own distinctive beliefs and forms, and emigration to that of the Christian and modern British."

As a result, they tried to break down African culture and imposed Western culture and work patterns. Christie (1985: 63) believes that they wanted to spread their Christian faith and their Christian doctrine was wrapped up in a whole set of Western attitudes and values. The missionaries were also interested in proving the superiority of the Western way of life, of its religion and education (Raum 1967: 89). Accordingly, they condemned indigenous religions and educational customs.

Mission schools were developed under various religious denominations. They saw education as a way of achieving their own aims of converting people to Christianity. In order to be able to preach the gospel the missionaries saw the need to educate the black so as to make them able to read the Bible, (Satyo 1992: 119). So besides literacy, Religious Instruction was one of the subjects taught.

Education was first denominational. Many denominations from different parts of Europe and also from America sent missionaries to the different parts of South Africa. As the missionaries had no knowledge of the Bantu languages, they had to study these and put them into writing, translated the Bible, and published hymns. Africans were mainly taught reading, writing and arithmetic which were then called "the three R's". More than that they were also taught manual labour as part of the curriculum.

The missionaries helped to break down African culture and they imposed Western culture and work patterns. (P'Bitek & Christie 1985: 63). They tried to do that by rejecting all the beliefs and practices of the indigenous people as they believed them to be contrary to Christianity and regarded them as heathenism or paganism. (Raum 1967: 89). They believed that African culture was evil and had to be destroyed if blacks were to achieve civilization and salvation.

For the missionaries, Religious Education was deemed synonymous with Christian education. Pupils were required to recite Bible extract, dramatise them and learn about the whole content of the Bible. Kili (1988: 58) asserts that Religious Education became identified solely with the teaching of the Christian Western faith, and therefore alien to the feelings of a significant section of the indigenous population. In all schools prayers were conducted in the morning and were based on the Bible.

Christie (1985: 62) believes that mission education actually divided the African people. She supports her view by explaining that most black people * didn't get to schools at all. Those who did get to school became an elite, privileged group. That is why amongst the Xhosa people, there are two groups, the amagqobhoka (converts) or school people (abantu basesikolweni) and Amaqaba which to the amagqobhoka means illiterates or the Red people (abantu ababomvu). The school people see themselves as being better than the red people, a division which was not there before. This division will be discussed in the next chapter.

To sum up, mission education was rooted in Christian values and also attempted to teach attitudes like patience, humility, piety, discipline and the value of hard work. (Christie 1985: 75). Mission education had segregation on lines of colour, (Christie 1985: 74). Christie makes an example of Lovedale where black and white students slept and played sports separately. She further explains that though they ate in one dining hall, they ate at separate tables.

This clearly shows that though missionaries came to Christianise the Africans (Satyo 1993: 119), this was not the only aim: colonisation was part and parcel of their mission, (Christie 1985: 63). Since the Western type of education came with the missionaries, it is clear that Religious Education would automatically become Christian as it was their religion, which they believed to be superior.

So in South Africa up to today, Religious Education is still exclusively Christian education.

5. PERIOD OF TRANSITION

Groups of Afrikaners in South Africa were opposed to the schooling system introduced by the British. They saw it as a way of forcing the English language and culture on them, and destroying their own language and culture (Christie 1985: 50). They opened their own alternative schools based on Christian National principles. The Christian National Education theory was created by the cultural arm of the Broederbond and the Federation of Afrikaans Cultural Societies (F.A.K.) at a conference held in Bloemfontein in July 1939 (Hexham 1979: 13). Bunting (in Hexham 1979: 13) argues that this Christian National Education was created essentially as a technique for indoctrinating the young.

The state education policy and the Christian National Education understood Religious Education to be instruction which is chiefly based on Bible history and also instruction in Christian doctrine.

A proposal made by the Christian National Education stated that:

As far as the national ideal is concerned we believe that the children must be educated through the medium of the mother tongue in their own people's culture (volkskultuur) and in everything that belongs to his own so that as an adult he, in his own turn, will make

his contribution to the language, culture, character, and calling of his people (volk). The aim of education must thus be the purposeful forming of the individual from a state of non-adulthood to adulthood, in accordance with generally accepted norms and principles as they have found their own expression (neerslag) from Christian-Western civilization and the Christian national life and world-view of the Afrikaner. (State Educational Policy and C.N.E.: 32)

In 1948 the National Party won the election. Consequently, the National Party had to adopt the style of the Christian National Education as it was exclusively a Boer understanding of life in South Africa. The C.N.E had official support.

The following year the Eiselen Commission was appointed to make plans for the education of the 'natives' as an independent race. As an aspect of the National Party of apartheid, the Eiselen Commission recommended a radical reorganisation of African education. It proposed that 'Bantu Education' should be brought under the control of the government, and should be used to rebuild and extend 'Bantu culture'. It believed that on the basis of cultural differences, people should be separated in education and in other spheres of life.

The Commission also recommended:

- (a) the religious instruction should be made a compulsory subject in all schools, including primary, secondary, and training schools;
- (b) that a definite time allotment be made for instruction in this subject apart from the time taken up by the opening exercises;

- (c) that inspectors and supervisors be expected to regard this subject as a compulsory school subject, to inspect the work done in this connection, to hear lessons and to report on the quality of the work being done;
- (d) that principles be expected to ensure that the subject is treated throughout the school on an equal footing with the other content subjects as an internal examination subject;
- (e) that, in consultation with religious bodies, a threefold curriculum should be drawn up:
 - i) for the lower primary school
 - ii) for the higher primary school and
 - iii) for post primary education. (Jones 1970: 61)

As a result of the Eiselen Commission report, the Bantu Education Act was drawn up and passed in 1953. And so, Bantu education was born, as a separate education system for Africans, to meet the development plans of apartheid. The nature of the education system changed and the missionary schools were generally forced to hand over control to the state or face closure. The education system was changed from being denominational and Black education was also placed under state control. All education appointments, syllabi, examinations and school buildings were to be controlled exclusively by the state. Moreover the state was determined to ensure that in line with the apartheid policy the vast majority of black children would receive a schooling that did not equip them for anything other than unskilled manual labour.

Religious Instruction had two objectives clearly stated by the white government for the blacks in South Africa.

1. Primary Objective

"To lead the pupil by instruction and example to meet and to know the TriUne living God, who is his Creator, Redeemer and Lord. This is prescribed in the first commandment in the Law (Matt 22:37, Deut 6:5). (Greyling 1967: 178)

2. Secondary Objective

To train the child to fruitful life of real godliness (Matt 27:39, Lev. 19:18). The child's relationship to other living persons is revealed. Greyling (1967: 178) believes that the subject which helps educators to establish this situation clearly is Religious Education. Religious Education, according to Greyling, is nothing else but Christian teaching about a relationship with God and also with one's own fellow human beings. He believes that the child should be taught that the only way to meet God is through Christ. This can be seen in his statement:

When the teacher has led the child to meet God in his Saviour, Jesus Christ, through the merciful inflow of the Holy Spirit into the child's spirit, the child is reborn and will become converted towards a better knowledge of and faith in God, a relation of love and devotion towards his neighbour and an attitude of respectful dominion over Gods's earth and God's nature. (Greyling 1967: 185)

From the above extract one would observe that Christianity is seen as the sole truth, the only way to see God. In this type of Christian Religious Education, there is no freedom of religion, only religious bigotry. By religious teaching one would understand it as instruction chiefly in Bible history and instruction in Christian doctrine.

The syllabus for the lower primary school was first published in late 1954. Since then there have been several revisions, the latest having been done in 1963. One of the primary characteristics of the syllabus is that Religious Instruction, reading, writing, arithmetic, handicrafts, gardening, and singing are taught as subjects.

In the syllabus for Form I, it is stated that the subject matter is chosen "exclusively from the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament." In the standard seven syllabus of the same Department of Bantu Education, it is further stated that the content of the subject, that is Religious Education, is essentially a prophetic word, derived from the Scriptures, the purpose is to show the educand the way to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. (Kili 1988: 58 - 9) .

The nature of the education system also created divisions amongst the people in South Africa. The education which was basically Christian and yet racial, raised some suspicions in the black man in South Africa. This was caused by the statement of the leaders, for example, Dr. H.F. Verwoerd, the then Minister of Education, who said:

It is the policy of my department that the [Bantu] education should have its roots entirely in the native areas and in the native environment and native community The Bantu must be guided to serve his own community in all respects. There is no place for him in the European's community above the level of certain forms of labour. Within his community however all doors are open. For that reason it is of no avail for him to receive a training which has its own in absorption in the European community while he cannot and will not be absorbed there. Up till now he has been subjected to a school system which drew him away from his own community and practically misled him by showing him the green pastures of the European but still did not allow him to graze there. (Rose 1970: 66) .

Dr. Verwoerd concluded by stating that the Bantu child was to be taught that he/she was a foreigner when in white South Africa. Verwoerd's statement also makes it clear that he viewed the approach taken by the mission schools up to the time he was speaking as having been detrimental to Bantu interests.

Racial segregation is also shown in Article 15 on Native Education (Tunmer 1968: 41) on the question of Christian National Education. This article clearly states that the duty of the white man in South Africa is to Christianise the natives and also helps them culturally.

This further claims that the aim for native education "should be to inculcate the white man's view of life, especially that of the Boer nation, which is the senior trustee", (Tunmer 1968: 41). The article further states that the mother tongue should be the basis of native education, but the two official languages should be learnt as keys to the cultures from which the native will have to borrow in order to progress. The Boers believed that the culture of the indigenous people is not enough without the support of Boer culture, hence Africans had to borrow in order to be better or to be nearer to theirs. This shows how the whites undermined the indigenous people they found in South Africa. As a result the indigenous people were forced to be under the white man's rule and religion. This is shown by the article, "Owing to the cultural infancy of the native, the state, in cooperation with the Protestant churches, should at present provide native education". (cited by Tunmer 1968: 41). This statement proves that black education was designed by the whites, using Christianity as the basis, setting aside the black man's own religion. That is why, to date, Religious Education in all black schools - irrespective of to which religion they belong - is exclusively Christian. The Christian National Education suggests that it is specially Christian to adopt a life-view which recognises the existence of separate nations, peoples and cultures as part of the eternally unchanging will of God.

This shows that the whites like some missionaries see no religion amongst blacks, and see their religion as the one to be taught in black schools though "native education should not be financed at the expense of whites." (Tunmer 1968: 41)

To conclude: Africans had education but this was displaced by a Western type of education. Missionary education, which was mainly British, was introduced mainly to Christianise the Africans and to prepare them for hard work. This resulted in divisions amongst the indigenous people (Philip Mayer 1961: 29; Christie 1985: 65 - 66).

Missionary education was displaced by Bantu education which emphasised the use of mother tongue. This caused a great deal of confusion among black children. This is because the use of mother tongue in Religious Education has caused a misunderstanding in some issues from the Bible. First of all, when the child reaches a stage when the subject is done in English, there is the problem of translation first. For example, as Religious Education is done in Xhosa in lower classes, some names translated in Xhosa cause confusion when used in English.

For example, Jacob of the Old Testament and James of the New Testament are both called "Yakobi" in Xhosa. So the child sees no difference between Jacob and James. Moreover, in some names the meaning is lost, as for example one would not see the relationship between Jairus and Yayiro as Jairus is called Yayiro in Xhosa.

It is therefore necessary that Religious Education in Black schools be reviewed as a great deal to be changed in order to make it relevant to the African child.

6. RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN AFRICA: THE CASE OF ZIMBABWE

The concern for the introduction of African Religion in the school curriculum has been initiated by other countries in Africa, such as Kenya, Zambia, Tanzania, Malawi and Zimbabwe. Kenya was the first country to realise the pluralism of its religions and the need for the indigenous religion to be taken into consideration in African schools. An African heritage course is offered only to Christian students and taught by a Christian teacher, and also Islamic Religious Education is offered only to Muslim students by Muslim teachers. This may imply that an African Religious Education syllabus is a subsection of both Christian and Muslim syllabi, or that Africans are either Christians or Muslims. Moreover, no mention is made of African Religion being taught by African (traditional) teachers. This also makes an assumption that there are no people who practise only African Traditional Religion. African Religion is not treated as a religion on its own, it is mixed with other religions, whereas those religions are not mixed, they are taught in separate schools. In fact the whole Religious Education syllabus is basically Christian-orientated. This can be seen in its aim which is "to develop in children the faith in Christ which unites them with all other Christians and gives them a new outlook on life". (One in Christ 1980: VI) In fact it has also been stated that Kenya is a Christian country and "the children are entrusted to the teacher by the parents to be taught the religion of the parent's choice, which in the case of this course is Christianity". (One in Christ 1980: VI)

All other countries - Zambia, Tanzania and Malawi - adopted this Christian Religious Education syllabus and made few additions but it remained Christian-based. However, in the case of Zimbabwe, African religion was included in the syllabus as a religion in its own right. Recent developments in Religious Education in Zimbabwe merit closer attention.

Zimbabwe became independent on 18 April 1980. The new government immediately started reforms in education. Since the education system was taken over by the government the aim of the system was no longer religious, it became secular, hence the schools had to contribute to nation building and national development.

The new government considered Religious Education as playing an important part in developing moral attitudes. It emphasised that Religious Education should not be used for conversion.

In 1982 a meeting was held in Harare where there was a call for a return to the roots of African culture. The African culture was believed to be a culture "which determines the identity and ensures the historical and cultural continuity of the peoples of the continent". (Ter Haar 1988: 5). Cultural identity was emphasised and it was understood as a progressive force and a firm base. The Harare conference also maintained that the school must strengthen the African cultural identity. Culture is understood not as a dead heritage, but as a way of life, rooted in the past, in dynamic interaction with the present, and preparing a way for the future. It was later decided that culture should be included in the school curriculum at all levels. But there was a unanimous decision that a new curriculum should be provided for all levels of education as the old one still being used was the one which was introduced by the colonizer with its emphasis on European culture and values.

They also emphasized that the cultural and social conditions of the Zimbabwean people should be the starting point in designing the curriculum. Teaching should be relevant to the Zimbabwean people and should be based on their experiences.

It was felt that both religion and education represent important aspects of society which as a whole should undergo a fundamental change in order to suit the needs of a new Zimbabwe. Peter Griffiths believes that when teaching a pupil one does not face a blank page, (Griffiths 1991: 40). This means that when the child goes to school he/she already has a religious background. Griffiths further argues that the starting point for most of our pupils here will be traditional African culture and the values within the changing society of today.

He believes that the course will help the pupils to take this culture and wisdom of their people seriously and to reflect on the values inherent in them. He explains the values as the respect for elders and parents, the extended family relationships, particular aspects of societal life such as greetings, settling disputes, marriage, sickness and healing, the wisdom of proverbs and the transcendence of God, (Griffiths 1991: 42).

For secondary schools, Zimbabwe adapted its syllabi from those of the post-independence East African countries, which are basically Christian Religious Education with the emphasis on the Traditional Religions. The Zimbabwean teachers of Religion were interested and they requested further work to be undertaken so that they could adapt the methods and materials for Zimbabwe. As a result teachers were involved in studying the materials, teaching them to their classes, and were able to suggest adaptations.

Out of that project, a set of Teacher's Guides and a pupils' book were produced. The Ministry of Education later launched an official trial of the material and a book, "Developing in Christ", was taught in Form One in 28 schools. Later this curriculum started to be used fully for the first two years of secondary education. But it was emphasised that the teaching of Religious Education should recognise the fact that Zimbabwe is a multi-faith and multi-cultural society. The teacher should therefore make his pupils aware of the distinctive religious trends in Zimbabwe: Christianity, African Traditional Religion, Judaism, Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism. Emphasis should be placed on the fact that all religions are equally important.

Shoko (1991: 70) maintains that in studying religion, the understanding of culture is important, for religion is practised within a cultural context. He further suggests the major ideas which underlie Shona or Ndebele religious thought and culture as:

- a) The Supreme Being
- b) Ancestors
- c) The Spirits
- d) Religious functionaries
- e) Special topics such as spirit possession, illness and health, etc. (Shoko 1991: 70)

Shoko (1991: 63) believes that the end of colonialism and the birth of the independent nation of Zimbabwe has rendered the re-appraisal of Zimbabwean traditions, cultures and religious imperative. He further explained that there are various factors that contribute to the need to re-examine the traditional education systems. These are the increased awareness of the values of African Traditional Religion, the rapid social change characterised by pluralism and evolution in both African and Religious Studies.

The reforms in education were seen as undoing the effects of cultural alienation which came with colonisation, and to bring about a new education system that could give the people of Zimbabwe their self-identity and provide them with a sense of security and confidence which allows them an equal place among others.

Kibicho in Ter Haar (1988: 41) sharply criticises the attitude of regarding African Traditional Religion as a primitive religion. He further describes how African peoples and their religions were usually placed on the bottom rung of the imaginary evolutionary ladder, while the Western people and their religion, in casu Christianity, were right at the top of that ladder. Kibicho then concludes that in order to obtain a proper basis for the teaching of African religion, a proper theology of revelation has to be developed which requires a re-interpretation of the standard Christian idea of revelation.

Ndlovu (1991: 35) believes that upholding African Traditional Religion and its inclusion in the curriculum should have the following effects:-

- a) A strong sense of self-identity on the part of both pupils and teachers.
- b) A sense of pride of one's own background and cultural roots, which becomes good for the future growth of self.
- c) Belief in man as basically good.
- d) Fostering the inherent belief in man's "harmony with nature".
- e) African Traditional Religion is by its very nature a non-aggressive religion and can play an important role in the promotion of peaceful coexistence among people of different religious backgrounds.

- f) Promotion of the communalistic approach whereby a worshipper is never in isolation but is part of his family and community. This is summed up in the saying, "I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am." In this approach to life, there is a sharing of burdens, blessings, joys, sorrows, cares and responsibilities.
- g) The concept of sin as a breach of relationship at every level, i.e. between man and fellow man, man and natural environment, man and ancestral spirits, man and God.
- h) Spontaneity of prayers to God (through intermediaries).
- i) Religion as a way of life and not an occasional and sometimes casual event.
- j) The Three R's: Reciprocity, recrimination and reward.

In 1992 the third and the final publication came out. The government of Zimbabwe has approved the introduction of African Traditional Religion in its approved multi-faith syllabus for religious education. African Traditional Religion is perceived as helping to

- a) Revive and strengthen African tradition and culture
- b) Re-establish the people's self-identity
- c) Promote nationalism and national unity
- d) Encourage spiritual and moral development. (Ter Haar, Moyo, Nondo (ed) 1992: 4)

The present Zimbabwean government feels that people should not be separated from their culture. Therefore it sets out the task of undoing the effects of cultural alienation during the times of colonisation by approving the teaching of African Traditional Religion in schools.

Culture is seen as "what gives people their self identity and provides them with a sense of security and confidence which allows them of equal place among others." (Haar, Moyo, Nondo (eds) 1992: 44).

Emphasis should therefore be placed on the fact that all religions are equally important. African Traditional Religion therefore is to be studied side by side with other faiths like Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism.

7. CONCLUSION

In all African countries, the assumption that Religious Education is synonymous with Christian education has been contested. Because religious pluralism exists, it has been in the interest of the people that each religion should be studied and respected. Therefore, since religion is not limited to Christianity, the subject of Religious Education should include all the religions that exist in the country. Therefore African Religion is integrated, but it is also contained or locked in Christianity. Instead of recognising it in its own entity, it is confined in other religions. The need is not to confine it but to let it stand on its own.

Zimbabwe, therefore, has shown that all religions are equally important. As a result African Traditional Religion is studied side by side with other religions. It is therefore suggested that the South African government should consider the truth that South Africa is pluralistic and not exclusively Christian and should therefore consider the beliefs of all the peoples. The South African government should not display a false image of the religion of the peoples of South Africa by describing it according to power. It is described according to power whenever those in the upper hierarchy, westernized Christians, have made it taboo for anyone to speak of traditional rituals.

CHAPTER 4

RECOVERING AFRICAN RELIGIOUS HERITAGE: RESPONSES FROM PARENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

From the previous chapter, it is clear that the white government never recognised African Religion as a religion and most of the indigenous people were also made to regard it likewise. That is why most people, especially the educated and the urban, classify African Religion as culture. While Christianity is synonymous with Western civilization, African Religion is synonymous with African culture. As a result, the 'civilised' or educated blacks are classified under Christianity and the 'uncivilised' or uneducated are classified as being backwards or primitive because they still cling to the traditional religion.

However, the majority of the educated blacks in South Africa still resort to the traditional practices in times of crisis (Nxumalo 1981: 65). This disparity simply means that though African Traditional Religion is regarded as the religion of the uncivilised or as the culture of the blacks to whom most of the educated or Christianised refer as belonging to the time of "darkness".

However, there is obviously something important in traditional religion, because most blacks in South Africa practise at least some aspects of it from time to time.

As stated, most blacks practise the African Religion at home, while at school the children are taught Christianity. Manona sees Christian missionary education as a farce against African Religion (ancestor cult and conducting rituals). This poses a problem in the mind of the child who finds himself or herself between two world views.

Mxekezo (1991: 214) identifies a clash in the minds of students who are taught Christian Religious Education, because they see no agreement between the home and the school in this area. Therefore, it is necessary that parents, students and teachers be interviewed for suggestions on how it might be possible to address this clash of worldviews in the students. In this chapter, responses of parents will be considered. Subsequent chapters will deal with responses from teachers and students.

Although questionnaires were used, most reliance is on interviews, since it was noticed that in the unstructured interviews people are open - they freely discuss their views on the topic. But when it comes to written questionnaires, firstly they are reluctant to commit themselves to writing, even in the vernacular. Secondly, after discussion with those who did answer the questionnaires, it was discovered that their answers were very short and not open. Moreover, it was also discovered that in some questionnaires the writing and the answers are the same. Responses were not seen as valid, because it was clear that some parents had asked their children to answer the questionnaires. Reasons for this may be that the parents were not able to write, or that they mistrust educated people. This last factor may be supported by an informant cited by Mayer (1961: 32), "We Red people are suspicious of educated people because they are betrayers of their people, they betray other natives to gain advantage from the white men."

Therefore, to ask people to write down their responses may be interpreted as a sign of aligning oneself with the government whose laws "they make for us that they want to keep us down forever", (Mayer 1961: 48). Moreover, their religious belief is a crucial issue for one to try and take it to the white enemy to be undermined, since they believe it to be the religion of the blacks. In most cases, if not all, white interpretations of African Traditional Religion have tried to show that it is subordinate to Christianity or that it is a heathen religion. But this is not to say that no questionnaires were returned (because

approximately a quarter of them were returned) but, as already explained, some of them were not as open as the verbal discussion. The questionnaires were primarily used to determine which aspects of African Traditional Religion people were most interested in being taught in schools. As a result of the above experience, this research tends to be qualitative rather than quantitative. It is felt that concentrating on quantitative research more than qualitative would distort the results.

The people interviewed were selected randomly. The informants were drawn from different backgrounds. This decision was taken because, as explained, the AmaXhosa are divided into groups (converts and the Reds). Even amongst the converts one may find different observations, since there are staunch Christians and nominal Christians, as well as urban and rural Christians, and there are also the educated. Consequently, this wide scope necessitated having selected representatives from all these different categories among the respondents.

The first group of informants were from the Langa zones and flats. These mostly came to Cape Town for work, returning to their rural homes during their vacations at the time of their annual leave. Most of them do not perform rituals in emlungwini (the white man's area), since they believe that the place for ritual is "at home" in the rural area. Some are nominal Christians, others are traditional. In his research in Langa, Mafeje (1975: 166) describes the religious character of the township.

Strange as it may sound, virtually everybody is nominally a Christian in Langa. The only exceptions are the pagan migrants who nominally reside in the so-called "barracks" and less frequently in the "zones". They live, not in isolation, but in company of Christian fellow migrants usually from the same district in the countryside.

A similar group of informants is found in Khayelitsha, sites B and C. These are mostly recent immigrants, but some are permanent residents in Cape Town. Some of them visit the rural areas for ritual purposes, but many only go home during their annual leave. As in Langa, some are nominal Christians affiliated with main line churches or independent churches, but some are traditional.

The other group of respondents is made up of permanent residents from Gugulethu and New Crossroads. These were mainly urban-born Christians, both educated and non-educated. Since the traditional rituals are forbidden in urban areas, most of them are not experienced in rituals. Nevertheless, their strong feelings about African tradition emerged in interviews.

An enthusiastic response was encountered in discussions with the parents selected randomly from several of the townships in the Western Cape, viz. Gugulethu, New Crossroads, Langa (flats and zones), and Khayelitsha (sites B and C). Some parents, as indicated, were free when discussing the issue, but were reluctant to answer the questionnaires for various reasons.

Almost all of the parents interviewed, except a few Christians, supported the introduction of African Religion in the syllabus. Only a few wanted it to be taught together with Christianity. Another interesting observation is that many of the urban and some of the top people in Christian churches, claim not to perform rituals but believe in ancestors. This implies that although Western civilization has deprived the people, particularly the urban dwellers, of their sacred places, the 'heart' of an indigenous black person remains in the original religion or culture of his or her people.

But not all accept the introduction of African Religion. Some believe that Christ is the only way and African "Religion" is not a religion but a culture. Moreover, they feel that African Religion/ Tradition is impossible because of the Western civilisation. This implies that to them Christianity (Religion) is synonymous with civilisation.

Some conclusions may be derived from what the parents have said about their positive response to the introduction of African Traditional Religion in schools. Those who want African Traditional Religion to be taught alone without Christianity cite the following reasons (which they claim are the results of Christianity and Western culture) which are going to be discussed in detail:-

1. Division among the indigenous people
2. Loss of ethics
3. Loss of identity
4. Disasters (drought, social disruption, or social deviance (imikhuba) including incest, rape and homosexuality)

Though they are aware that the clock cannot be turned back, they still have hope that the basic teachings can be preserved if African Traditional Religion can be taught to their children.

2. DIVISION AMONG THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

As already stated in previous chapters, the missionaries in their way of Christianising the blacks, introduced the notion of superiority versus inferiority. The introduction of Christianity and Western culture resulted in the division of the indigenous black people.

These are the amagqobhoka (Christian converts) and the amaqaba (those who smear ochre in their bodies) or the abantu ababomvu (Red people). The amagqobhoka are those who have accepted Christianity and Western culture, (Mayer 1963, Pauw 1975, ; Mafeje 1975). McAllister (1991: 130) describe the school people as the progressive people, and are also described as "Christians or nominal Christians who send their children to school and are in general more westernised than the Red people", (Pauw 1975: 154). Mayer (1961: 29) explains "A Xhosa asked about the basic difference between Red and School people will often put the acceptance or rejection of Christianity first of all." Mafeje (1975: 168) further explains that with the School people education is equated with Christian civilisation. This is also revealed by the way the School people describe a civilised person, they would say "akaloqaba" (is not one who smears ochre).

Concerning the Red people, Pauw (1975: 154) describes the group as non-Christians, Xhosa traditionalists, and most illiterates. The Red people are also described as ancestor worshippers (McAllister 1991), or as pagans, (Mafeje 1975, Mayer 1961). The Red people are seen as the conservatives who still stand by the indigenous religion.

This "conservatism" is misinterpreted by academics. McAllister (1991: 131), for instance, sees this as an attempt by Reds to protect themselves from white domination. He does not see it as being loyal to one's religion or as a means of keeping one's identity. One may see this "conservatism" as a way to maintain one's welfare with the ancestors and to conduct sacrifices for the ancestors in public. The role of ancestors in African life is so vital that even though "pagan", sacrifices are still carried out. A considerable proportion, even the full church members, actually conduct sacrifices at their own homes, (Mayer 1963: 30, Mafeje 1975: 172, West 1975: 189, Pauw 1975: 159).

Pauw (1975: 159) also states that the urban Christians sometimes build a small temporary enclosure to represent the traditional kraal.

But above all, the School people see themselves as better than the Red or traditional people who are denigrated as illiterate, primitive and uncivilised. Mafeje (1975: 170) sees the School people as understanding Christian education as a civilising influence and a source of respectability. This implies that Christianity and Western education are taken as synonymous. Terms like primitive, uncivilised, uncouth, etc., used now by the School people to describe the Red people, are the terms used by missionaries, travellers and government officials in South Africa. This superiority of the school people is also supported by the way Mayer (1961: 4) describes them; "The school people are the product of the mission and the school, holding up Christianity, literacy and other Western ways as ideals."

But the criticism is not one-sided. The Red people also criticise the School people. Mayer (1961: 32) cites the following from a Red Xhosa:

In my opinion the trouble with the School people is that they do not know what they are. They are sometimes Xhosa and sometimes white men. Yet they will never be white men. The School people are like bats who are neither birds nor animals: they are neither Bantu nor white in their customs.

We Red people are as we were meant to be by Mdali (the creator). We Red people are suspicious of educated people because they betray other Natives to gain advantage from the white men.

The reason why the Red people describe the School people as "neither Bantu nor white in their customs" is, I assume, the way they perform their rituals, which is in a Christianised way, like the Christian opening prayer in many rituals or calling them iparty or idina (dinner). Some converts perform these traditional rituals in secret so as not to be seen by other converts.

Another criticism of the School people by the Red people which sees them to be as neither Bantu nor white is in connection with love affairs, drinking, and smoking. The Red man is able to enjoy his pleasures openly while the School man can only taste them in secret. "Secrecy augurs deceitfulness. The School people are a very wrong lot, because they do things secretly under the cloak of religion". (Mayer, 1961: 39).

The above criticism shows that the religion (Christianity) and Western culture brought to the black people was to divide them so as to confuse them, as their actions prove that they are neither traditional nor Western, as their secrecy on these three issues named above (love affair, smoking and drinking) are neither traditional nor Western. Even their way of performing rituals is not completely traditional nor completely Western (or Christian), but both.

In conclusion, Christianity has resulted in divisions among the Xhosa. The Red Xhosa, when keeping to their indigenous religion, are described as an attempt to resist white domination or reaction to conquest, and the School people are said to be progressive. This implies that for one to be progressive, in the Western interpretation, one has to do away with one's religion and to accept the white man's religion (Christianity came with the whites). This shows that the study of African Religion is based on Christian/Western standards or values. This may show that Christianity/Western culture is seen as the truth which the indigenous people must not resist.

At the same time this division has resulted in mistrust amongst the indigenous people where the "progressive" group is seen as betrayers by the "unprogressive" group. This has weakened the communal feature of the indigenous people, in other words a crack has been developed between the indigenous people - they speak of a 'hole'. The converts to Christianity are called amagqobhoka (people with a hole), which means that the converts were the quislings who originally 'opened a hole' in the Xhosa nation and let in the white-skinned enemy. (Mayer 1975: 30).

3. LOSS OF ETHICS

In all African families, there is a hierarchy based on age and degree of kinship (Mbiti 1975). The oldest members of the African families have a higher status than the youngest. Within that hierarchy there are duties, obligations, rights and privileges dictated by the moral sense of the society. Besides the family morals, there are also those which govern the welfare of the community. Mbiti (1975: 17) argues that what strengthens the life of the community is held to be good and right, and what weakens the life of the community is held to be evil and wrong. The ancestors are believed to be displeased by anything which causes trouble in a community. The informants cited by Mayer (1963: 154) argue:

Ancestor spirits are against anything that disturbs the peace of the community. To be acceptable to his ancestors a person must not be a menace to the public causing the people to be sore-hearted daily.

Our ancestors disapprove of wrong behaviours by juniors to seniors, both of their own family and of other families as well.

There are many things which the community regards as morally wrong and evil - to cite a few: robbery, murder, rape, telling lies, stealing, being cruel, showing disrespect.

Some parents see these vices as increasing amongst their children and the morally right and good are hard to find in this generation. They put the blame on "ukujika kwezinto ngenxa yokufika kwabelungu" (the change of things due to the arrival of whites). So they argue that if the Religious Education that came with whites can be removed and be replaced by the original one, "ezi zinto zisixakileyo noko azinakubheka phambili ngoluhlobo zihamba ngalo", in short "the rate of these bad things can be decreased". Parents claim that oppression which came with Christianity and Western culture has resulted in loss of respect from their children. Consequently they feel that if their children can be taught in public schools, the confusion caused by the enemy can be removed to a great extent and they (the children) can be proud of their roots.

In his letter the Rev. Mcetywa claims that African Traditional Religion has a major role in moulding the character of an African child to build his/her personality in order to make him /her develop full knowledge about his/her culture.

4. LOSS OF IDENTITY

Parents claim that their children have a confused identity. Language, attire, religious practices and beliefs are the things that determine the identity of a person. Parents feel that Christianity and Western culture have undermined these issues so as to separate the blacks from their culture. Questions of identity arise in many forms. Issues of attire, language, and ritual can focus identity, while disaster and misfortune can challenge it. In response to a widespread sense of identity loss, African Traditional Religion represents recovery.

4.1 Attire

One informant asked, "Where have you ever seen whites being udodana (Christian males group)?" When there is udodana (Christian males group), all those who belong to it, whether Methodist, Presbyterian, etc., wear a distinct uniform, usually an waistcoat, which is only sold in the mission homes. The same thing applies to the women's manyano. Chidester (1992: 103) asserts that "the first women's prayer unions developed out of the practice of regular devotional meetings held by missionary women or ministers' wives with "uneducated" adult African church women". He further states that sometimes those meetings combined prayer with sewing classes, since being "dressed" or "clothed" was an important outward sign of Christian conversion. This wearing of uniform applies only to blacks who really affirm "Christian conversion".

Although these groups have always been regarded as groups of Christian converts, they are not regarded as full Christians and are also formed for increasing the economy of the white government. Mayer (1963: 219) describes these groups as "half social and half religious gatherings" where a member pays a subscription and (in the case of women or girls) wears a uniform for the weekly meetings." This also shows that Christianity was also brought to the African people to promote the economy of the whites. Our parents were told not to wear their animal skins, they should buy Western clothes from whites. That is why each denomination had a particular uniform which in fact was, and still is worn by blacks. This point is also shown by the way Christmas, which is the commemoration of the birth of Christ, is treated. New clothes are bought for the day and a different type of food, the Western style of food is prepared. So on this day Christianity and Westernisation are celebrated.

Nowadays even the traditional clothes are sold in shops, and the worst of all, ochre, which is only used by the traditional people, is also sold in shops.

That is why there is a proverb in Xhosa which states "umona wasemlungwini ubandeza ichitywa ungaliqabi" (The white man's envy forbids us the red clay, although he does not paint himself).

4.2 Language

Parents complain that their children do not know their vernacular. They claim that the names and methods used in religious practices are neglected in schools. For example, the different names given to cattle during preparation for "marriage" in traditional practices no longer exist and yet at times a need arises for those practices. For example, in cases of barrenness in the female where 'ubulunga' is needed, the present Xhosa child will not have an idea of the inkomo yobulunga and ubulunga.

Parents also feel that it should not be taken for granted that their children know the Xhosa religion automatically when they are questioned on it in their vernacular examinations under general knowledge. They feel that it should be taught in the Religious Education period as that is where the subject matter will be dealt with deeply - not in language periods. They believe that this inclusion of their traditional religion will also revive their language which is disappearing gradually. They feel that Christianity and Western culture have deprived them of the original way of practising the traditions. Their children should be taught these things. They further claim that the Christianity they are learning at schools is just historical, whereas their religion is practical and within the scope of their children's experience.

4.3 Religious Practices and Beliefs

Some parents disapprove of traditional beliefs and practices being confused by being mixed with Christianity as they are by converts. They use the example of a birth ritual which is either called a 'party' or 'idina' (dinner). (Mafeje 1975: 172, Manona 1981: 34).

Other examples are those mentioned earlier, those of the converts who have a Christian opening prayer before a ritual. They believe their children do not know which is which and they feel that the way these were done in the traditional form should be taught so as to help the children to differentiate between this "mixture" and the "proper way" if possible.

4.4 Disasters

One informant from Engcobo in the Transkei (interviewed in Zone 24, Langa) claims that the present way of asking for rain is a mixture, that is why there is drought. He believes that when people go out to the mountain to ask for rain they now ask through Jesus and not through 'izihlwele' (ancestors). As a result, there is drought. He believes that if the original way of asking for rain can be taught in schools, even the "lost people" of this generation would be reminded of the proper way.

The same informants also explained that due to the Western type of education "abantwana bethu banzima" (our children are difficult), because they cannot chase the intsikizi which was used for bringing rain. The intsikizi (hornbill, *Bucorus cafer*) was run down, killed, and tied in a river, and it was said that it would rain, and the rain would not stop until the intsikizi was swept away. (Wilson 1936: 83)

This man argued that nowadays this is never done because there is no one to chase the intsikizi and also the Western laws do not allow the hunting or killing of animals and birds.

Most people feel that in these times things do not go well because the rituals are not performed in the way our forefathers were doing them. In many families, rituals like ukubuyisa (bringing back the dead), imbeleko (birth ritual), ukwazisa umzi (introducing the new house to the ancestors) and others, start with a Christian opening prayer. So, they believe, the ritual is not done for ancestors, it is done for Jesus whom they feel to be a Jewish ancestor, not theirs. As a result, the ritual does not succeed, and the ancestors show their wrath in all sorts of ways. Moreover, the rituals performed now are 'mixtures' in the sense that not only the African beer but brandy is used to a large extent. They believe that brandy is not a traditional drink, therefore the use of it in rituals destroys the meaning of those rituals as it is "utywala bomlungu" (white man's liquor).

Rev. Mcetywa in his letter dated 13/9/93 asserts that African Traditional Religion must be taught in schools so as "to eliminate the disaster caused by the Western system of education which produced pseudo-Africans with dual cultural backgrounds clashing in one person."

5. THE ROLE OF JESUS IN AFRICAN RELIGION

There is a controversy amongst many black people concerning the concept of the role of Jesus in African Religion. Some, the conservatives in particular, claim that Jesus plays no part in African Religion. His role is in Christianity.

Several reasons for the relationship between Jesus and African Traditional Religion were given by many people, both the conservatives and the Christians. They also gave many examples. For most Christians the relationship between Christ and the ancestors is not clearly defined. Some Christians see Christ as an ancestor as well. They claim that Christ is a universal ancestor. Christ is sometimes referred to as isinyanya or idlozi of all people. (Pauw 1975: 158) This comment is also cited by Nxumalo (1975: 68), where an informant says "He (Christ) is an idlozi (ancestor) to us, since those who are dead are amadlozi for us. Therefore Christ and those who have died are united together. We call them together in Christ." For Christ to be above ancestors, that is, a universal ancestor, is to some Christians a result of his resurrection. Christ is brought closer to the level of the dead (ancestors) than he is in Western Christian tradition and is not considered to be on the same level as God the Father. (Pauw 1975: 159)

Some nominal Christians say it is because "the Christians say that" ("Kutsho amakrestu") Christ is above ancestors. This shows that for them to regard Christ as above ancestors is just a theory, is superficial, deep down they keep to their tradition. Some acknowledge Christ and mention the Scriptures where Christ says, "I did not come to do away with the Law but to fulfil it." Most of them explain that in times of crisis one thinks of ancestors. When one escapes death or danger he or she first praises the ancestors for saving him/her, probably saying "amawethu anam" (my ancestors are with me). Secondly, one informant said that he never dreamt of Jesus but he often dreamt about his ancestors, the ones he knows and the ones he never saw (those who died before s/he was born or when he or she was young).

Thirdly, one informant from Gatyana (Willowvale) believes that Christianity has no effect on "us" (the Xhosa) because no child was ever sick as a result of not being baptised, but if the imbeleko is not done the child will be sick and will only be healed when it is done. To him the birth ritual (imbeleko) is for blacks and baptism is for white Christians.

During an interview with Dr. S. Dwane on 6 May 1993, he claimed that African religion centres on ancestors. He supports the idea of introducing African Traditional Religion in schools as he feels that children must know their culture and should be introduced to their ancestors. He further suggested that children should know about ancestors and all rituals involved so that they should have an understanding of why those things are done. He believes that the syllabus should give the whole picture of African Traditional Religion and this would help some of the children to get out of some of the fears that they have of African Traditional Religion.

Asked about the age at which he feels this African Traditional Religion can be introduced, he suggested that Sub A is the right class, as it is in Christianity. Rev. Mcetywa suggests that African Traditional Religion should take control from "dawn to dusk". He further argues that African Traditional Religion should leave no space for replacements. He also suggests that it should be introduced from pre-school level to post-graduate level. Dr. Dwane also believes that if African Traditional Religion is introduced at a later age, this will give an impression that it is not important.

Asked if Jesus should be introduced in African Traditional Religion Dr Dwane argues that Jesus be introduced when teaching Christianity. He suggests that in African Traditional Religion one should talk about what happens in their homes, e.g. ancestors, sacrifices, marriage, etc.

"Our aim should be to widen the children's knowledge of other religions, our aim should be to inform not to convert." He therefore sees no need of comparison between A.T.R and Christianity because they are different. By implication, he does not see Christ as having a place in African Religion, hence he (Christ) is to be introduced when teaching about Christianity.

Dr Dwane believes that because Africans have been oppressed for more than 300 years, this has damaged them. Some of them feel inferior and feel apologetic about it. His advice is that teachers of African Traditional Religion should be liberated and should not feel apologetic or feel embarrassed about it, otherwise they would cause damage. He also asserts that balanced teachers are needed as he believes that the attitude of the teachers is very important on this aspect. For African children African Traditional Religion is a very sensitive issue. It could be damaged if the practices of their parents are ridiculed.

6. WHICH ASPECTS OF THE TRADITION SHOULD BE TAUGHT?

The replies of parents when asked about the aspects of African Traditional Religion which they feel should be dealt with, are summarised below:

Most of them say 'inkolo yakwantu iyonke' (the traditional religion as a whole). But when grouping aspects in order of preference they are:

1. The role of ancestors
Everyone should know that they are living with us
2. Rituals
 1. Imbeleko - Birth ritual
 2. Ntonjane - Girls' initiation
 3. Ulwaluko - Boys' initiation

4. Umngqungqo - Marriage
 5. Ukuzila nokubuyisa abalele ukuthula - rituals connected with death like mourning and bringing back the dead
 6. Umcimbi womzi - homestead ritual
 7. Umsindleko - thanksgiving
3. Dangers of neglecting the rituals
 4. Ethics

When asked how they think their children should benefit from learning about them, most of them feel that their children will regain their identities and will be interested in practising them. They also feel that good luck and the love of ancestors will be upon them.

In conclusion, it has been shown that religion (Christianity) was introduced to the blacks of South Africa in order to exclude their beliefs and practices. Chidester (1991: 69) argues that in South Africa, religion, racism, and the emergence of a modern state have been intertwined in establishing rituals of exclusion. This is shown by the way the indigenous black people were forced to accept Christianity (in order to be progressive), to be educated and to imitate the white man's style. (Manona 1981: 34).

Chidester (1991: 69) also sees that religion has underwritten the 'crime against humanity' that came to be known as apartheid, the separation, exclusion, and domination of black human beings in South Africa. An informant cited by Manona (1975: 36) claimed that the missionaries prevented people from observing their customs. The informant further explained that "in the course of time people realised that they are suffering and are not making progress. Some black Christians feel that their nation is lost, "A nation that will be led astray from keeping the customs is lost". (Nxumalo 1975: 69)

As a result there is a change in attitudes of Christians towards their ancestors, a development that is apparently leading to the resurgence of the ancestor cult. (Manona 1981: 34) Father Mulago (cited by Nxumalo 1981: 65) explains that "good Christians" are often seen as "backsliding" when they are in a crisis, re-establishing contact with ancestors ...

This "backsliding" is observed among black Christians. Manona (1981: 38) sees this resurgence as "a rejection of the assumption that the cultures of Africa are inherently inferior to those of Europe and contradicts the supremacist notion that blacks were 'savage' or 'primitive' until white missionaries brought 'civilisation' and Christianity to Africa." Manona further sees this resurgence as the emergence of black awareness and pride in African culture which he also sees as a natural development for people who find themselves in a position of denigration and humiliation. Therefore they see that "African Traditional Religion is alive". (Nxumalo, 1981: 65).

The above discussion may be the reason why McAllister (1991: 131) sees the conservatism as a reaction to white domination, or as a reaction to conquest. (Wilson, 1936) One may not see it as referring to the traditionals as with them there is no "backsliding" or "resurgence", they still adhere to their indigenous religion.

As a result of the above discussion, many parents interviewed, both traditionals and Christians, being aware of the problems as a result of their loss" of culture due to Christianity, see the importance of introduction of African Religion in schools. They believe that their identity, their "blackness", would be revived.

Many parents are very keen to see the possibilities of recovering the African Religious heritage. They appreciate it more when that idea is initiated by abantu basesikolweni (School people), because they believe that it is from them that the confusion started. They claim that it is School people nowadays who have taken over from missionaries in condemning rituals at schools and churches. So they believe that if the School people "can speak the truth in public about themselves" things can change.

CHAPTER 5

TEACHING AFRICAN RELIGIOUS HERITAGE: RESPONSES FROM TEACHERS

In Chapter 3, it was made clear that the missionary education tried to break down African culture and that it imposed Western culture and work patterns. Christie (1985: 63) believes that the missionaries wanted to spread their Christian faith and their Christian doctrine was wrapped up in a whole set of Western attitudes and values. These missionaries were also interested in proving the superiority of the Western way of life, of its religion and education. (Raum 1967: 89). That is why they condemned indigenous religions and educational customs and they regarded them as heathenism or paganism. As a result the missionary education was basically Christian and also racial.

In his analysis of the interaction between the Nguni and the missionaries, Ashley (1979: 2) argues that the missionaries required abandonment of the traditional Nguni mythological universe with its own distinctive beliefs and forms, and enmical to that of the Christian and modern British.

Hammond-Tooke (1962: 63 - 4) also argues that the early missionaries saw the rites and ceremonies of the black people as incompatible with Christianity and insisted on converts making a clean break between the old life and the new. They forbade church members to attend "pagan" festivals.

Even after the National Party had won the election, there was no change in the nature of the so-called "Native education". Tunmer (1968: 41) cites the racial segregation shown in Article 15 of the Native Education Act. The article clearly states that "the duty of the white man is to Christianise the native."

The article has shown the aim of the native education being to inculcate the white man's view of life, especially that of the Boer nation, which is the "senior trustee". This proves that black education was designed by the whites, using Christianity as a basis, setting aside the black man's religion.

In the previous chapter it has also been shown that the introduction of Christianity and Western culture resulted in the division of the indigenous black people. The School people as already explained are the affiliates of the missions. Chidester (1992: 53) explains that within the School community, however, a class division emerged with the rise of an educated elite, who aspired to westernized values, lifestyles and citizenship. Gerhart (1978: 34) further explains that this group forms a natural leading sector of African society and is more conversant in European languages. She also sees this group as standing between the conquered, unassimilated mass and the white conquerors, on whose culture and achievements they sought to model their own fast changing lives. Though not cut off from contact with the traditional society, this African elite is in many ways alienated from traditional customs and norms. A belief in the superiority of European culture is basic to its world view, and its goals are "unabashedly assimilationist" (Gerhart 1978: 34). Amongst this African elite are teachers, doctors, lawyers, magistrates, etc.

1. TEACHERS AS CHRISTIAN SCHOOL PEOPLE

As School people are described as those who have accepted Christianity and Western cultures. Teachers - that is, those who impart Western education in schools - are without doubt School people. They are even regarded as an elite group within the School people. (Chidester 1992: 53; Pauw 1963: 179).

As School people, teachers are also called amakhumsha (the civilised: literally meaning "those who speak English"). Mafeje (1975: 168) explains that it is understood that those who have acquired European Christian culture and have been to school, are something apart from and above the pagans - an inevitable Christian teaching. Also as School people all teachers, as the educated group, are either nominal Christians or Christians.

At school the teachers are the group responsible for conducting morning prayers before the normal classes begin. The prayers are exclusively Christian. So this implies that the teachers should be Christian. This is, in fact, a prerequisite before any teacher is employed, she/he must submit a baptismal certificate to show his/her religion's affiliation. A baptismal certificate should be obtained from the missionary who should be able to attest to one's attendance in that particular church. In fact one should have a baptismal certificate from as early as infancy as the parents were obliged to baptise their children as early as possible. Failing this, one has to go to the church to be baptised to be able to look for work.

As a School person a teacher is required to be formally attired at school. Male teachers are required to wear ties and jackets, females were also required to wear decent Western clothes. As a result, when one is smart, people say, "So and so is smart like a teacher". This may explain the statement that the black elite is standing between the conquered and the white conquerors (Gerhart 1978: 34). Teachers, being trained in Western schools, and whose duties are to impart Western education and Christianity, are to be converts and amakhumsha (speakers of English). The only way to do this is to adopt the Western culture and religion, and to do away with "heathen" practices, that is, to be like a white man.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first covers the response of the teachers of Religious and Biblical Studies interviewed. The second covers the responses of the Std IV teachers who actually taught African Traditional Religion for the Project on Multifaith with ICRSA (the Institute for Comparative Religion in Southern Africa) at the University of Cape Town. The teachers interviewed are the Std 10 Biblical Studies teachers, and Religious Education teachers mostly from the Primary Schools. All these are from the Western Cape, mostly from the townships. The Std IV teachers in the project were also interviewed.

2. RESPONSES FROM THE BIBLICAL/RELIGIOUS STUDIES TEACHERS

This section is divided into three subsections according to the teachers' responses. The first section deals with the questions I was first asked by almost all teachers interviewed, "So you want us to go back to Qamata?" Some teachers would say that African Religion is not a religion but a culture and would associate it mostly with rural areas. The third response was the refusal of the headmistress of a high school at Khayelitsha to allow me to interview her and "her" students as she believed the questions would confuse her students as there is nothing called African Religion.

2.1 Do you want us to go back to Qamata?

In Chapter 2 it was shown that the missionaries trying to Christianise the Xhosa came up with the notion of a High God. Their aim was not to research the beliefs and practices of the indigenous people, but to replace these beliefs and practices with theirs.

They came with the phenomenon "Religion" which to them was "Reverence for God". Van der Kemp (1804: 432) asserts about the Amakhosa of the Eastern Cape: "If by religion we understand reverence for God, or the external action by which that reverence is expressed: I never could perceive that they had any religion, nor any idea of the existence of a God."

The Christian concept of a High God was introduced to these people and their world view was regarded as primitive, heathen and barbaric. Their way of worship was called animism (ancestor worship) and their Qamata/um dali was regarded as a god. Callaway (1880: 12) argues: "It is therefore probable that this word ukqamata will, upon more extensive investigation, be found to be the name of an ancestor, in accordance with the religious legends of other tribes." Qamata or um dali is believed by many scholars (Eiselen and Shapera (eds) 1937: 263) as a being different from the Christian God, as Qamata is worshipped through ancestors and the Christian God can be worshipped directly or through Christ. Qamata was not known as the Supreme Being by the researchers. Wilson (1961: 269) argues that there is no proof that the Pondo, before contact with Europeans, believed in the existence of any Supreme Being, or beings, other than Amathongo. She further explains that the Pondo had two words, um dali (creator) and umenzi, which might suggest a belief in a creator, but there is no system of rites or complex of beliefs connected with these words. Therefore the indigenous religion was not taken as a religion but beliefs (iinkolo) of the traditional people. It was/is (by some people) taken as something which belongs to the past before Christianity as THE RELIGION was introduced.

The Religious Education taught in schools is as already stated Christian Education as Religion was made to be a synonym for Christianity. Anything besides Christianity is not a religion.

In all schools, moreover, the day's proceedings open with a Christian prayer. Greyling (1967: 178) explains that the primary objective of Religious Instruction is "to lead the pupil by instruction and example to meet and to know the Triune living God, who is his Creator, Redeemer and Lord." Article 15 of the Native Education Act (cited by Tunmer 1968: 41) states: "Owing to the cultural infancy of the native, the state, in cooperation with the Protestant churches, should at present provide native education." As a result the indigenous people fell under the white man's rule and religion, which is Christianity.

That is why when these teachers speak of African Religion, they relate it to Qamata, the uncivilised, the primitive God. This shows how the apartheid-comparative religion denied the authenticity of African religion, even occasionally refusing to designate African beliefs and practices as religion.

2.2 African Beliefs and Practices as Culture not Religion

The term "culture" seems to be interpreted on a racial bias. Africans are not believed to have religion but culture, therefore it is necessary for them to be Christianised in order to have a religion. The African beliefs and practices form what is culture, and Christianity forms a religion and is regarded by most people as culture-free. The fact that Christianity itself is based on the Jewish, Greek and Roman cultures is not taken into consideration. The Old Testament, for example, is all Jewish, and the New Testament is based on the Jewish culture. Matthew speaks of tithing, circumcision; Paul speaks of women keeping quiet in the church and being subordinate to males. All these practices are Jewish.

Moreover, John 1:1 speaks of the Logos, which is a Greek concept. John also uses the Platonic school of thought in his Gospel where he speaks of the two worlds, the seen and the unseen world. This school of thought believes that this world is the shade of the real world. John also portrays Jesus as speaking of the Real vine, bread, etc.

The punishment of a crime by crucifixion was something familiar to the Romans. Jesus Christ was not the first person to be crucified on the cross in the Roman Law, though the Christians now use the cross as a symbol of divine salvation and treat it with respect.

As the Christian understanding of religion is the reverence to God, some teachers understand African beliefs and practices as "culture" and not as a "Religion". Tylor (1871) defines culture as:

That complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.

Hammond-Tooke (1963: 51 - 7) when describing the important areas of culture, mentions language, beliefs, and practices. Schneider (Hanson 1975: 100) asserts "culture consists of people's definitions of their conventional concepts, beliefs, values, symbols, rules and norms."

From the above definitions or descriptions of culture, it has been made clear that man a human being is at the centre of culture. It has also been shown that language, beliefs, practices, values, symbols, rules, customs, morals, etc. are the components of culture.

Therefore, one may argue that religion is a subset of culture. Ndlovu (1991: 30) defines religion as a realm of experience in which the experiencing subject is related to a reality greater than and beyond himself. Experience may involve the beliefs, practices, rules, values, customs, morals, etc. So one may see religion as part of what Tylor (1871) calls "a complex whole ..." that is culture. Idowu (1973: 74) claims that without man there can be no religion. This also applies to culture: without man there can be no culture. The point to be raised here is that religion is not culture but a part of culture and is based on culture. So African Traditional Religion is part of the African culture, and Christianity is part of the Jewish, Greek and Roman cultures as explained before.

Introduction to Christianity was not only a religious experience for the black people, it was more fundamentally a political experience. Mazrui (1974: 32) argues that the infiltration of the Christian tradition and the culture of Western Europe into Africa used colonialism as its primary vehicles. The influence of Western civilization (which came together with Christianity) on the lives of the black people far from the original fountain of that civilization, resulted in cultural dependency and black submissiveness. This has resulted in most blacks in Africa acquiring cultural characteristics of the West through direct contact and interaction with whites. Mazrui (1974: 18) believes that this cultural dependency and black submissiveness to another culture results in the diminution of identity. Moreover, Christianity in Africa is the religion of the power elite in the majority of countries south of the Sahara. (Mazrui 1974: 93) . This shows how Western civilization has been equated with Christianity in Africa and its undermining of the black culture. So the teachers, being among the elite, automatically ascribe themselves to Christianity, and their beliefs, practices, values, norms, language, etc. which they now regard as their culture; to them the word "Religion" does not exist in African world view.

This implies that they perceive the West as the introduced new experience when experiencing the introduction of Christianity as a religion.

To show that to these teachers Christianity and Western civilisation are treated as synonyms, some responded that it is impossible to teach African Religion as "we cannot go back to wearing izikhaka (red blankets) and use ongquphantsi (huts)". This clearly shows that to them the Western attire and infrastructure form part of a "Religion". This goes back again to the divisions of the Amakhosa by Christianity and Western culture, as the converts are recognised by their attire, that is, they stop wearing izikhaka (red blankets) and buy Western clothes from the shops.

When discussing the subject of Biblical Studies, most of them explained that they teach it as a subject but with no spiritual drive. Most Std 10 Biblical Studies teachers see no need to teach a chapter on Bible and Faith, which they feel is too theological. This comment makes one believe that as people who are superficial in the religion, they find it difficult to explain. One teacher said, "I do not like to teach 'Faith in God the Holy Spirit', it is too abstract even for me, how much more so to my students. I would like it to be removed from the syllabus." They suggest that if the Department can allow them to teach the traditional beliefs and practices together with Christianity, they would do better. Mxekezo (1988) also argues that the teachers interviewed also expressed a desire that traditional religion be included in the syllabus.

The reaction of these teachers who see one as religion and the other as culture, shows that though there is a contradiction in terms, these teachers are dualistic. They admit performing traditional rituals, but explain that these are part of their culture; as for religion, they are Christians.

So the conflict is not only with the students, as Mxekezo has noticed, it is with the teachers themselves as they have two conflicting world views in their minds. They are nominal Christians because they perform traditional rituals for the ancestors and at the same time proclaim Jesus as God. So it is important that dualism be removed first from the teachers and then from the students.

2.3 Response of a Principal from Khayelitsha

Before any school was visited to interview the students and teachers, an appointment was made by phone and permission obtained from the principal, and the reason for the interviews explained. On 15 June 1993 the principal of one of the schools in Khayelitsha was asked for permission to interview her Std 10 students. Her surprising response was to refuse totally to allow the interview as she believed that it would confuse her students. In fact she totally denied that there was something called "African Religion". She said there is only one religion in the world and that is Christianity. She even denied her identity by saying that she does not practise African culture but that she practise Christian culture.

As Christianity and Western culture go together, and as this teacher admitted that she practise a culture which is Christian, this implies that she is practising Western culture. Moreover as there is no nation specifically called a "Christian nation" and no specific Christian culture except the Western (white) culture, she aligned herself with the whites and their lifestyles. This is an example of how missionaries indoctrinated the blacks in Africa. Nnaka in Uka (1991: 332) argues:

The missionary agencies for socialisation were the schools, hospitals, and churches. They spared no efforts in condemning everything African as worthless, pagan, primitive and poor. Consequently young educated Africans, through Western indoctrination not only lost interest in African beliefs but despised them as if they themselves were white men ... Through mission schools and churches most of the Africans believed that anything that white man possessed and provided was superior to that of the African. Hence the Africans treated things African with contempt and felt no qualms in changing his name from African to English names; he had to change his religion and even his language in order to sound civilised, saved and educated.

For one to claim that one is practising Christian (Western) culture, of course, shows that one is also undermining oneself as one is undermining or despising one's indigenous language, beliefs and practices, norms, morals, values, customs, art, etc. As a result of indoctrination this principal has detached herself from her people and has shown that she also despised them.

Njoya in Uka (1991: 331) also describes the missionary work in Africa as follows:

They separated converts from pagans. They wanted to save Africans from being Africans, as if to be themselves was the greatest sin. In their scheme of salvation, no distinction was made between sin and African custom. Sin and evil constituted such things as African homes, art, ethics, history, skills, play and beliefs.

So if the above are seen as sin and evil, those who are fundamental Christians detach themselves from them and associate themselves with the "good" and "true" civilisation which is Christian. By so doing the aim of their gospel is fulfilled as ... "the office of the gospel is to bring the heathen nations to be like Christian nations, because a true civilisation cannot exist apart from Christianity". (Uka 1991: 329). This shows how the black people were undermined and treated as subhumans by the outsiders. So for most of the black people, in order for one to appear as "human", as "intelligent", as "civilised", one has to live the Christian way and become a "pseudo-African" as seen by the Rev. Mcetywa. They are pseudo-Africans as they are against African culture, but they are still black Christians.

Another interesting issue is the fact that the above-mentioned principal felt that her students would be confused, as if they were a homogenous group of fundamental Christians. The students are from different homes and different backgrounds. Some are from Christian homes and some from traditional homes. For example, my brother's son from a traditional home was at that school. I did not understand how I could confuse them, perhaps when one is taught about foreign roots one is not confused. I was confused myself. I saw that as depriving children of a deeper knowledge and also as promoting indoctrination which some may see as confusing to the black child.

Some teachers feel threatened about the introduction of African Religion. Their fear is concerned with their posts as they claim that they are not trained to teach it but are trained for Biblical Studies, so that would cause them to lose their jobs. Seemingly their interest is not on what is being taught to black children, but on money.

3. RESPONSE FROM THE PILOT PROJECT

During 1993 the Institute for Comparative Religion in Southern Africa (ICRSA), situated in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Cape Town, implemented pilot projects for a multifaith religious education. Four schools in the Cape Peninsula from different racial and religious groups were selected.

As a result the schools, each had a different composition of students. Two schools were black Christian schools, one from New Crossroads and urban, the other at Khayelitsha, mainly consisting of pupils from rural Transkei, Ciskei and other parts of South Africa. The third school for the project at Tokai had primarily white Christian pupils and the fourth one in Salt River had primarily Muslim pupils. Though the pilot project was for a multifaith religious education, the focus of this report will be on African Traditional Religion.

During the second term the teaching of African Traditional Religion was practical at Std IV level. The content was based on the Imbeleko (birth ritual), "sacred people", "sacred places", "sacred objects" and death. Then, on 14 August 1993, ICRSA held a conference on "African Religion: Tradition, Innovation, and Education". The four teachers who were actually teaching this religion in their respective classes were invited to speak on their experiences in teaching African Traditional Religion.

3.1 African Traditional Religion as a New Religion

All four teachers at the pilot schools spoke with enthusiasm about the success of the teaching of this "new religion". Though this religion was taught by

teachers from different perspectives, for example a white Christian, a Muslim, and two black Christians, it was "new" to all of these. One black teacher from Khayelitsha thanked ICRSA for introducing this religion, saying: "It was something new even to me". In fact this teacher claimed that he did not know the term "African Traditional Religion". He used to call it 'Isixhosa', not meaning the language, but "the tradition". He then remembered that the imbeleko ritual was done for him but he couldn't associate it with religion.

This 'Isixhosa' was mostly associated with the rural areas or ezilalini. As a result both teachers from the black schools claimed that the urban pupils were astonished about this 'new religion' which is associated with them. The teacher from Khayelitsha argued, "Kids from the rural areas have helped us a lot because they were always contributing in our lessons. Questions that were being asked were mostly from those who are urban." Both black teachers developed an awareness as they both became positive in extending this in other classes. They believe that African Traditional Religion would be addressing the African identity because "We Africans in actual fact have lost our African identity" (a teacher from New Crossroads). This teacher sees this programme as something which links the school with the community. This implies that as far as religion is concerned there was no connection between the school and the community, but between the school and the "Christian" state. The aim of the exclusive Christian religious education was to uproot the children from their background. For instance, the Khayelitsha teacher thought the imbeleko done for him and his twin sister was a "braai", not as something connecting him with his ancestors. This is not strange as he is urban, and the "braai" is a common practice amongst the whites, and the urban blacks follow suit.

One may argue that actually this is not a "new religion" but it has been given a new name which makes it fit in this so-called universal term "Religion" whose origin is Latin: from "Religio". It is not something they are not practising. It is something they have been doing, but according to the Western standards it was not qualified to be given the Western term "Religion", but rather heathenism, paganism, or superstition.

Ashamed of all these labels, the educated classify their indigenous beliefs and practices as culture and not as religion. With the other two teachers, the white Christian and the Muslim, it was really something new. They were really interested and they both confessed to be learners with their pupils. They both affirm that their pupils were very excited about the project. The teacher who came from a white Christian school argues:

In the New South Africa, one cannot teach only Christian Religion when one has children from other religions as well. One has to develop a syllabus whereby we can look at the religions on the same level, the same basis, and from there we will be bringing up children and educating children who have a far better understanding, a far wider perspective of other peoples. I think that is very important for us all to do.

The assumption that all blacks in South Africa are Christians has caused the indigenous black religion to be regarded as something new as if it has just come after Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism, etc. This is shown by the statement by a Muslim teacher who said, "Needless to say, I was completely ignorant of African Traditional Religion and it was a learning experience, not only for the children, but for me as well. I participated, I learnt."

The above statement also shows how the white government undermines the humanity of the indigenous black people to such an extent that it deprived other people from other religious backgrounds to learn about African Religion, and even to know that such religion exists. The white government plants the propaganda that all blacks are Christian, which is not true.

4. CONCLUSION

As has been shown that firstly, the teachers were ignorant of the indigenous religion as a 'Religion', it becomes clear as to how Christianity was introduced as a superior religion and also a civilised religion. It also became clear that the indigenous religion was undermined and associated with being backward, primitive and rural. That is why some teachers regard it as culture, a tradition, or Isixhosa. Some did not want to associate themselves with these types of practices.

When this is explained to these teachers, the majority of them develop an awareness and become positive about introducing it in schools. But only the fundamental Christians see no need to introduce African Religion in schools as they feel it is an insult to Christianity.

The practical introduction of this 'new religion' in the Std IV class has proved its existence as one of the religions of the world. The interest shown by all four teachers shows how the Christian state has deprived its people of understanding other religions which are existing in the world. The Christian state has also deprived people of respect of other religions and also tolerance of other religions.

Chinweizu (1987: 73) suggests that the solutions to this problem are:

To shift intellectual gear from what Europe has done to us (How Europe underdeveloped Africa), to what we are doing to ourselves (How Africans maldevelop Africa), and to what we must do for ourselves in order to get out of our condition (How Africans can develop Africa).

Africans were labelled to be without religion, history and even without capacity to reason. (Lyons 1970: 87) As a result the West has played a dominant part in shaping our recent past and we have allowed ourselves to see the key to our affairs as lying in Europe or North America. Chinweizu (1987: 88) further suggests that the cure for this is to decolonise African history to reconnect us fruitfully with our entire pre-colonial past and so reduce the European intervention to its proper minitude. This decolonisation of our history will develop a sense of awareness to the fellow black who alienate themselves from their identities. Then teachers would act as bridges from the colonial history through decolonised history to the real personhood of the black man in Africa.

CHAPTER 6

LEARNING AFRICAN RELIGIOUS HERITAGE: RESPONSES FROM STUDENTS

Since the aim of this thesis is the introduction of African Religion in schools, it will not be complete if the views of those to be taught are omitted. The views of two groups of students will be dealt with in this chapter. The first will be Std 10 pupils from high schools selected randomly from the Western Cape, and the HDE students at U.C.T. The high schools are Ntlanganiso High School in Cape Town, Langa High and Luhlaza High at Khayelitsha and the second group will be the Std IV pupils who were taught African Traditional Religion during the second term of 1993.

1. RESPONSES FROM HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS AND H.D.E. STUDENTS

Research on the teaching of Religious Education in high schools was first conducted in Ciskeian schools by Kili (1988) of the University of Fort Hare, and Rev. Mxekezo (1991), the Inspector of Religious Education in Ciskei. They both find that the subject has received lukewarm attention from both students and teachers.

Some of the findings of Kili concerning the teaching of Religious Education are that a large percentage of students saw the need for teaching Biblical Studies along with the traditional concepts. (Mxekezo 1991: 159) About 90% (190 out of 212) students believe in ancestral spirits and approximately 95% (192 out of 212) students whose homes perform customary rites and who also think it is good to do these rituals. Mxekezo (1991: 155) further explains: "A large percentage of pupils felt that traditional religious concepts should be taught alongside Christian points of departure as the majority of them uphold a firm belief in the ancestor cult.

The majority of high school students interviewed are not at all satisfied with the present Religious Education syllabus. Several reasons are given; some say that it is exclusively Christian and is boring. This is the same observation as those of Kili and Mxekezo. Moreover they claim that the syllabus is not relevant to the present situation as it deals mainly with the history of Christianity. Most students condemn Christianity as they feel that it is a tool used by the colonisers to oppress the black people of South Africa. These responses are going to be dealt with in depth shortly.

1.1 Religious Studies as exclusively Christian

As already explained in Chapter 3 the educational policy in South Africa has long been dominated by Christian National Education. This type of education was, under apartheid, imposed by the National Party government on all public schools irrespective of religious affiliation. In fact, even before the National Party took over it was the same as the education system had been under the missionaries. The missionaries came with the assumption that they represented a "higher" civilisation, indeed, perhaps that no civilisation existed in Africa. Western values and customs were, to them, identical with Christian morality. (p'Bitek 1970: 54). By presuming the superiority of Western cultural values and social order over black (African) cultural values and social order, this schooling denied the cultural heritage and undermined the social order of African peoples. This Christian type of education was a means of forcing the majority of the African population to alienate themselves from their religions and cultural heritage.

Article 15 of the C.N.E. on the Native Education (Tunmer 1968: 41) explicitly states that the white South African's duty to the native is to Christianise him and help him culturally, so there was no way to include the indigenous religion in the syllabus.

All this was based on apartheid as it was not the case with white children. For example, Article 1 of the C.N.E. says "All white children should be educated according to the view of life of their parents." So there was no problem with the white children as the religion of their parents was the same as what is taught in schools.

But with the black parents, what they practised at home was not accommodated at school. At school the child is taught about what happened in Jerusalem, Samaria, Galilee etc. The black children are not taught about what is happening around themselves. Moreover the white government did not see any need to consult the black parents on how they wanted the education of their children to be. This was of course not practical as Theal for example believes that "white expansion formed the vehicle of civilization and its triumph over barbarians". (Saunders 1988: 28) It was therefore also not possible for the consultation as "The Western values and customs were, to the whites, identical with Christian morality". (p'Bitek 1970: 54).

1.2 Religious Education is Boring

As already explained, most of the students complain that because Religious Education is exclusively Christian, they get bored during the period. They perceive it as indoctrinating and not challenging. It is not challenging as they feel it is dogmatically claiming that Christ is the only answer, salvation is only through him. They do not see the difference between the Religious Education period at school and the Sunday School. During the Religious Education period, there is no time for debate as only one textbook is used, that is, the Bible. Asked about other textbooks, such as the prescribed textbooks by Michel Barret, they claimed that these are other versions of the Bible as they interpret what is in the Bible.

What they mean, they explain, is that there is no provision for the comparative study with other religions, as if Christianity is the only religion of the world. One student in one high school said, "We have got questions that are difficult to ask as they are regarded as contrary to the teaching of the Bible, but deep in our hearts they are there. These are the questions related to the Bible but we are channelled to be stereotyped." Asked about these questions and to give a few examples, an example from Joshua where God, who is described as "merciful", "God of Justice", the "loving God", commanded Joshua to kill the whole nation.

Some of them feel that to be taught about the "European religion" and what happened in it, does not apply to them as they do not have a picture of Galilee, Jerusalem, Samaria, etc. They complain that what happens here (South Africa), in their homes in particular, is not taught. As a result some of them feel a bad educational experience in religion. They feel alienated in the educational system as far as religion is concerned. They feel dehumanized, "for one to be acknowledged, he/she should be a Christian, otherwise he/she would be labelled as a heathen", one student claimed. They are taking Biblical studies just as a passing subject, or as a sixth subject and not as a matter of faith or as a subject of interest.

1.3 Christianity used to oppress the Black People

Mafeje (1975: 175) asserts that the youth is:

ready to condemn Christianity as a diabolical scheme by the whites to enslave the black man and rob him of what legitimately belongs to him.

The students are of the opinion that Christianity was put in the forefront and yet other tools to destroy the black people were used. They claim that the whites bought three B's to destroy the indigenous people of South Africa. These three B's, they claim, are the Bible, Bullet, and Brandy. This may have the same perception as Mqhayi's poem quoted in Chapter 3, where Mqhayi was warning people about how dangerous the Prince of Britain was. The Prince was given the Bible and the arms used in war. Mqhayi shows it like this:-

Hayi the mighty Great Britain

Here she comes with Bible and Bottle

Here she comes, a missionary escorted by a soldier with gun powder
and guns,

With cannons and breechloader (Chapman and Dangor 198: 35)

This shows that Christianity was not only brought to convert the black people to Christianity, but also to destroy them (with gunpowder and guns: Bullet).

Okot (1970: 104) explains:

We hear echoes of the same battle cry from the fifteenth century onwards, when hordes upon hordes of barbarians from Europe disguised as Christians leapt from ships, Bible and gun in hand, to attack, plunder, murder and enslave the inhabitants of the whole world. The writers of that long period of Western domination set out to justify the colonial system by preaching that the world was sick and needed Western suppression (re-christened civilization), in order to survive.

Missionaries with the Bible to Christianise Africans were also the agents of military conquest. The missionary teachings undermined the political authority of chiefs and advocated the replacement of chiefs by the British rule in order to make way for "Christian civilisation". (Chidester 1992: 44).

Brandy was also used as a form of destruction of the black people in South Africa. Chidester (1992: 35) argues that the slaves were induced to learn the Christian prayers in slave schools with the promise of a glass of brandy and tobacco when they finished their task.

The brandy, one parent argued, is not the traditional liquor, as a result the rituals are not performed properly, as ancestors do not accept brandy, but it is brought into kraals by the School people, and they would consequently conclude that rituals have no meaning nowadays. They forget, he further argues, that they have introduced Western liquor in traditional customs; as a result, the ancestors have turned their backs on them.

Some students do not accept the Christian concept of Monotheism, they believe that if there is god, there are two gods, one of the whites and one of the blacks. They believe that it is impossible that there is one god who created the human beings, as that god cannot allow one group to oppress the other. They believe that the white man's god has been used to tame the black people. (De Gruchy 1979: 181)

Not all of the students of course, have this attitude against Christianity and African Religion. Some agree that they are interested in African Religion because they are not exposed to it as they are urban. And since they are black they would love to associate themselves with it.

Some are interested in Traditional Religion to be taught together with Christianity. So one would see that among students there is a love/hate relationship with Christian education, not one of total rejection. This can be seen in their responses that the majority want Traditional Religion only, some want both, and a few, Christian education only.

Another observation in the attitude of students is that the positive response to the idea of the introduction of African Religion in the syllabus depends more on politics than the actual need of practice or teaching it. It is black awareness of it as Christian oppression that has resulted in the black people having a need to recapture their identity which is destroyed by the introduction of Christianity.

But the majority of students interviewed are urban, and not exposed to religion or knowing the basics of the religion. Though politics cannot be divorced from the introduction of a religion, one would suggest the reason for the introduction of African Traditional Religion should be to restore identity and understanding and on politics. It should be identity and understanding because in the present-day politics some of the Western concepts are not there in African Religion. In African thought the authority which is believed to have originated from the ancestors through the elderly is fundamental and not questioned. The point to be made clear is that in African Religion the young people do not at all challenge the elderly, in other words, the youth would say, there is no democracy. The elderly have an exclusive authority on the education of their children, hence there are proverbs like "Inyathi ibuzwa kwabaphambili, Isala kutyelwa silona ngolophu" : Disrespect brings misfortune.

There are questions in some ethical issues which are not asked by the youth in African thought until one reaches a certain stage, for example one should not ask "Kokwenzeka ntoni?" (What will happen?), the person will be called "nguNokhontoni". So African religion should be taught as it is so that it does not lose its value.

2. RESPONSES FROM THE STD IV PUPILS FROM THE PROJECT SCHOOLS

Reports from the teachers in all the four primary schools of the project reveal that the introduction of African Religion received a very positive response from the children. With the white Christian and Muslim schools, this religion was something new. Everything was new to the pupils; as a result they were very much interested in making their own models.

The Cecil Road Primary School pupils even demonstrated the imbeleko ritual by making the model of a kraal, the sacrificial animal, the intlabi with the assegai, males and females, the child whose ritual is made, and the huts. The report from both schools says that pupils from other classes were asking why this is not done in their classes.

From the black schools, teachers reported that some of the students knew about these traditional practices but some did not. The Khayelitsha teacher explained that the pupils from the rural homes had no questions except to help the urban ones. For the urban pupils the rituals are associated with the rural areas or ezilalini. This understanding, one may argue, implies that these practices are determined by the geographical areas and not by human beings.

The urban black pupils, by implication, see themselves as different from abantu basezilalini (rural people). To be rural means to be backward; as a result the rituals are regarded as backward practices. Rural areas are even referred to by the children as EmaXhoseni (Xhosaland) and the urban area is edolophini (from Afrikaans: dorp). So "dorp" is civilised, Western, and iilali (rural locations) or EmaXhoseni, are regarded as uncivilised and traditional. So rituals are the practices of iilali.

Because of Westernisation, urban pupils see themselves as half white and half black. The geographical settlement has made them think that they are better off than their fellow rural counterparts, but at the same time there is black awareness. It became interesting when the white Christian and the Muslim pupils were asking why this religion is not taught in all schools, and also why it is not taught in the whole country. But that was not the interest of the most urban black pupils, as even to them it was a new religion.

It was not an interesting issue to some of them; as the Khayelitsha teacher explained that some of his pupils said that they do not believe in ancestors and also rituals are not performed in their homes. This shows how some of the urbans have alienated themselves from their roots.

Most black students, after some time being exposed to "African beliefs and practices" (African Religion) developed a great interest. Several children suddenly realised that there was much about their own religion that they did not know. This led to curiosity and new interest. This became more explicit at Cecil Road, for instance. There was only one black pupil who happened to become an expert as she had to explain things to her classmates and her teacher.

The need to describe and explain their own worship and ceremonies to people who worshipped differently heightened her own awareness. This girl developed a great interest in African Religion though no rituals were performed for her as the parents belong to the Jehovah's Witnesses. After speaking with the child's parents and asking them to help the child with the information of rituals as the Muslims would expect her to know these things, the parents, who also understand African Traditional Religion as culture, helped the girl a great deal". She also developed an interest to go to the rural areas "to learn more". She started identifying herself with ezilalini.

To the rural pupils it became interesting as they were taught what is practised at their homes. So they became aware that what their parents are doing at home, is important, is a religion. That is why the teacher from New Crossroads believes that the introduction of African Traditional Religion in schools will have a very positive response in the New South Africa as it connects the school with the community. This connection, one may argue, can bring a balance in the development of the child as what the school does, goes together with what the home does or has done. If these two educational institutions work together like the white Christian schools, they can produce a being with a distinct identity, which could eliminate any confusion in the urban black pupils' minds.

Some Christian parents had a fear that their children would be confused when exposed to other religions except Christianity. This fear was specifically based on the primary phase. But this assumption has been argued against by Stonier (1993: 34) where she quotes the experience of the Muslim community which does not experience confusion in their children. She asserts that many Muslim Sub A's sang Christian songs and choruses and even acted in nativity plays. But exposure to Christianity from an early age, she further argues, has not resulted in conversions from Islam to Christianity.

This experience has been confirmed by a colleague, Imam A. Rashied Omar, whose children are in Christian schools. He explains that his children are taught about Christ, but that has never changed them nor has rather created problems concerning what is being practised at home. These children are nurtured in Islam at home and also in the Mosque.

Stonier (1993: 35) suggests that children need to belong to a particular religious tradition and also participate in the rituals. She further suggests that children need Religious Instruction in their own faith. In lower primary, for example, in our syllabus proposal (End of the Tunnel 1993: 56 - 61) children are encouraged to describe their own experience of, for example, rituals and celebrations. Their sense of belonging, both to the family and to their own tradition should be nurtured and reinforced. This will make children become aware that there are other families and traditions within the wider community to which other people belong in the same way.

So instead of being confused, the introduction of African Traditional Religion into the school syllabus will promote in the black child a sense of belonging and security within his/her own tradition. Then the dualism also found by Kili and Mxekezo would be to some extent removed as what is practised at home will be taught together with what is already being taught at school. This will also expand tolerance with other peoples' beliefs and practices as all religions will receive equal status. This will also remove the feeling of alienation and dehumanisation.

Moreover the introduction of African Religion in the public schools may promote tolerance and respect among adherent of different religions. This is shown by the responses from the pupils from the white and Muslim schools.

They are keen to learn about the new religion and did not know that the black people of Africa had a religion before Christianity and Islam came. At the same time some of the urban black pupils do not want to learn about their indigenous religion. They would prefer to associate themselves with a "new religion" in Africa, that is, Christianity. This shows the effects of Christianity and Western culture in their way of indoctrinating the blacks in Africa. One may see Christianity and Westernisation as the cause because research has shown that their parents are nominal Christians. (Mafeje 1975: 167; Mayer 1963: 30) As a result of this there is a clash in the minds of students who are taught Religious Education. (Mxekezo 1991: 214) Mxekezo further explains that there is no agreement between the home and the school. At school the child is taught Christianity and Western values, and at home the child is taught the traditional practices and values. But one may argue that at home, since the parents are School people, the child is exposed to both traditional religion and Christianity together with Western values. It is therefore, the school which is rigid by teaching only Christianity and Western values and regarding the indigenous peoples as culturally inferior heathens destined by God to be the hewers of wood and the drawers of water for the superior masters, as a result their (the indigenous people) religion or way of life is undermined. Their religion is not seen as something important which can be taught or be included in the departmental curriculum.

Many blacks today, especially students, see Christianity as being used as a tool for white domination. De Gruchy (1979: 51) argues:

It is the contention of many blacks today, especially students in the urban townships and at the black universities, that Christianity has too often aided and abetted white power and domination in South Africa.

Therefore Religion (Christianity) is scornfully rejected by most blacks, as they believe that it is a drug which has been used to induce apathy towards apartheid. So students are of the opinion that African Religion be introduced so as to revive their identity and to recognise them as human beings.

The pilot project, due to its practical application of African Traditional Religion, has proved beyond doubt that pupils have learnt a lot about other pupils' beliefs and practices. The school has now broadened the pupils' knowledge, as far as religion is concerned, and not channelling them in one religion. Their interest in learning more about African Religion shows that they are not confused, as some parents thought, but have been broadened and made open-minded.

The introduction of African Religion in schools has developed confidence in those pupils who are the participants in the religion, and it has removed shame on proclaiming it. This is because the child's previous knowledge, that is, what has been learnt at home, is being brought to school, and is recognised as important also. That gives the child the identity and he/she becomes proud of his/her background.

Lastly, the response of all the pupils in the conference shows how apartheid has deprived all the children, irrespective of colour and religion, of knowledge about other people. This also shows how the white South African government tried to impose its culture on the African people. The white Christian pupils were not allowed to learn about the black, the so-called "heathen" beliefs and the blacks were pulled to this "superior" Christian religion and are made to be ashamed of their religion. This was made to show the "superiority" of the white person. This can also be seen in the response of the urban pupils who are in a white man's abode.

They are ashamed of "their" religion, as a result some are not interested in it, they are aping the white man's style of worship. As a result they are white-washed, that is, they are blacks living close to the white man's style. They are introduced into another world view (Western Christian) into which they do not fit exactly.

From the responses of the four pilot schools, ICRSA has proved that a multi-faith approach is so vital to schools as it has shown that pupils develop respect and tolerance of other peoples' beliefs, and also love to learn more.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSION

Research has shown the confusion and misunderstanding of the concept of Religion in South African schools. Christianity came and tried to displace the indigenous religion of the Black people in South Africa and most fortunately it did not succeed. It is the interest of most Black people, after realising that they are misled, to return to their traditional beliefs and practices.

The concept of Religion had been prejudiced to fit the needs of the West. The beliefs and practices of the Black people that were/are contrary to the West were condemned and regarded as superstition or false. The aim of the condemnation has proved to be none other than colonization and Christianisation. In order to be Christianised one had to adopt the Western way of life and to become like a white person.

As a result the white people, in order to "save" the black man from barbarism, had to design the education system of the blacks, which of course was Christocentric and Eurocentric. The black people were made to believe that what is Western is good and what is indigenous is bad.

Though the blacks were coerced in Christianity, they still mourn for their indigenous religion which is now clothed in Christianity. Research has shown that the proposal of the recovery of this "lost" or "suffocating" religion has received great appreciation from its adherents. Most people are of the opinion that this change could speed up so that they have space in the new government.

It was also with great pleasure to the traditional people to see an academic in favour of African Religion as an independent religion because it is the tendency of the black academics, they claim, to condemn first, their beliefs claiming them to be outdated unless Christ is fitted in so as to contextualise it. So this is a challenge to black academics to try and save their people from being marginalised and undermined. It is the duty of the academics to play two roles, the one of having love of their roots and their people, try to include them in the academic world of religion, not to pretend as if they are representing them. It is also the duty of the black academics not to pay lip service for their roots in order to impress the Western world or not to appear as "primitive" but to show to the Western world that blacks are full human beings with their distinctive religion.

Research has also shown that even the children taught Christianity only, feel outrooted and out of context. As a result dualism has resulted, and more than that confusion and anger towards religion can be observed in senior students. Dualism and conflict of religions, that is Christianity and African Traditional Religion, have been observed also, by Kili (1988) and Mxekezo (1991) among the black children. Though Christianity was introduced as the "superior" religion or as the authentic religion, the black children have the other side of the story. Instead of undermining their religion due to missionary and the Christian National Education, they have developed the love of their religion and had to question the "authenticity" of Christianity. It is their desire to learn about African Traditional Religion so as to recover their identities they find themselves robbed of by the Westerners.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. SOUTH AFRICA IS A PLURALISTIC COUNTRY

It should be borne in mind that South Africa is a pluralistic country. The propaganda that South Africa is a Christian country should be removed and be accepted that Christianity came in South Africa. It should also be acknowledged, in fact, it should be admitted that there was and there is still the religion of the indigenous black people in South Africa. Therefore religious ethnocentrism should be wiped out, more especially with Christianity which claims to be the only truth. More than recognising African Traditional Religion in the religious milieu, the South African government should allow freedom of religion, not to dictate and force people to follow a certain religion which it believes is suitable for the people, people themselves should decide which religion is right for them or which religion satisfies their needs.

2. PROPOSAL OF A MULTIFAITH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

As already stated that South Africa was mislabelled as a "Christian State", the education system was also Christian. Religious Education is Christian education which made the blacks to be like Christians and like traditionalists, or they are what Mafeje calls "nominal" Christians. These claim to be Christians and also accept their practice of African (Black) "culture". So one would recommend that a clear distinction should be made between religion and culture so as to clear the misconception that when one is admitting practising "culture", religion is bracketed out.

This distinction can only be possible if all the religions prominent in South Africa could be taught in schools so that children can learn more about other people's beliefs and practices. By so doing it would be made clear that every religion is based on culture. Moreover the South African citizens are promised by their political leaders, of a new South Africa which is to be "democratic" and there is a promise of Freedom for All. If these promises are not 'ideal', it is now that people should start learning about other people whose cultures are different from theirs.

A multi-faith Religious Education could be the solution to the Freedom of Religion, democracy, freedom for all and tolerance. A multi-faith syllabus will result in respect and dignity of each human being as a "person" irrespective of colour and faith.

3. CENTRALITY OF AFRICAN RELIGION

Multi-faith is not practised at home. Each child is nurtured in his/her faith. The home lays the foundation of the particular faith, so is the African home. From birth the child is nurtured in African Traditional Religion. The process will continue till death and will continue in the world of the ancestors through rituals. It is therefore important that the religion which is prominent in that particular nation should have a bigger share. That implies that, for example, for Black schools, the African way of life should have a greater share, or in Islamic schools, the Islamic way of life should be dealt with more, so are the Christian schools, the Hindus or the Jewish and the Buddhist. This approach will cause a child to have a foundation and a point of reference. But this approach should not be done in order to think that one's religion is superior than the others. The aim is to promote one's interest in one's background and to promote the awareness of one's identity.

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