

**African Traditional Religion: A receptive vessel for the preparation for the Christian
faith**

by

MICAH MHLUPHEKI NTHALI

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SUPERVISOR: PROF. JERRY PILLAY

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis:

**African Traditional Religion: A receptive vessel for the preparation for the Christian
faith**

is my own work and that all sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. Furthermore, I have not previously submitted it in its entirety or in part to any university for a degree.

Signed.....

Date.....

Micah Mhlupheki Nthali

Signed.....

Date.....

Prof. J Pillay (Promoter)

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ABSTRACT

South Africa has been characterised by affliction of colonialism, apartheid and the failure to love other races, a Christian country which oppressed and forced blacks to embrace western style of life imparted by the missionaries. Due to colonisation and missionary zeal, Africans were to live in pretence by a double standard which has now resulted in schizophrenic behaviour of betrayal of their own roots. Swazi beliefs and practices were not taken into consideration as they were regarded non-existent. The research study will introduce the Swazi African Traditional Religion of South Africa as the main source of Christianity and examine how it prepared so many millions of the Swazi people to embrace the Christian faith; make a contribution to nation building and social cohesion of the Swazi people of South Africa and other South African ethnic groups as well as the continental Swazi people; establish the relationship between Swazi African Traditional Religion and Christianity; make a contribution to the contemporary Church context; analyse the data captured during the interviews of both Christians and adherents of SATR in the fourteen traditional councils in order to formulate some findings; examine where Christianity and Swazi African Traditional Religion have their meeting points to merge the ideas and understanding and make recommendations to the FBOs, Government and sampled Traditional Councils for possible implementation and their benefit. The researcher will engage in field research methodologies where other multi-disciplinary applications such as history; anthropology; liberation, black and African Christian theologies will be considered and involved. The reason to use this multidisciplinary approach is that the study involves God, human beings, their religion, their environment, their patterns of social, cultural behaviour and their liberation as societies of the past, present and future. We will use mainly qualitative research method which includes participant observation, direct observation, and conducting interviews using questionnaires entailing structured and unstructured questions.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction to the Study:

The research study as a whole concerns the Swazi people of South Africa, their religion, and the foreign Christian religion from Europe. Firstly, as a Swazi Christian researcher, one subscribes to the belief that one is an African before being a Christian, as we are born into the Swazi culture and religion, and became Christians by choice or force. The Christian religion that arrived on the African continent was brought by colonists who came without resources and minerals such as land, cattle, gold, diamond, platinum, etc. The researcher has since come to understand that there is no difference between the Swazi ethnic groups, whether from South Africa or the Kingdom of Eswatini, except that South Africans operate under democracy while those in the Kingdom of Eswatini are under a monarchy.

The researcher will use the term 'traditional' in this research study, which does not mean to be insensitive to African scholars who maintain that 'traditional' suggests primitive, outdated, ancient, static or that it cannot change or be enhanced. The term 'traditional' is used by many South African ethnic groups in respect, recognition and acknowledgement of their ancestral religion which they honour so much that they either use the designations, African Traditional Religion (ATR), African Religion (AR) or African Indigenous Religion (AIR) depending on their regional locations or geographical setups in the country.

The use of the designation African Traditional Religion instead of African Religion or African Indigenous Religion in this research study should also not be seen as disrespecting those who regard the term 'traditional' derogatory. African primal religions are commonly referred to as 'traditional' religions; hence the designation 'African Traditional Religion' has become widely used especially here in South Africa. The designations will be used interchangeably in this research study because they mean the same. However, the researcher apologises in advance if the term 'traditional' is to be found insensitive.

Ndlovu (1997:1) points out that the colonial and apartheid past that governed South Africa for centuries and finally came to an end recently was succeeded by the latest democracy in Africa. However, this transition has, in some ways, tended to isolate South African

theological efforts from the work done in the rest of Africa. Therefore, the researcher would like to revisit the beliefs, practices, and ceremonies of their forebears who came from the Kingdom of Eswatini and settled in South Africa. The researcher's intention is to establish and develop a Swazi Community Forum (SCF) comprising Traditional, Religious, and Cultural activists from both the Kingdom of Eswatini and South Africa's Ehlanzeni District House of Traditional Leaders (EDHTL). Additionally, the researcher aims to involve Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs), in particular the Mpumalanga interfaith action for societal renewal (Mifafsor), the Zionists, and the fourteen sampled Traditional Councils of EDHTL. The purpose of this forum is to facilitate the sharing, exchange, and benchmarking of information in order to reconnect with the roots and the past. The Swazi Community Forum will serve as a platform for dialogue on traditional, religious, and cultural issues that are of concern to the Swazi people.

The Swazi people belong to a single Swazi ethnic group originating from the country of Eswatini. Due to wars and their nomadic lifestyle in search of better opportunities and peaceful settlements among stronger tribes, they eventually settled in the lowveld area, where the chiefdoms under research are currently located. Their ancestors became the first generation of Swazi in South Africa. The fundamental beliefs, practices, and ceremonies observed in Eswatini are now being practiced and celebrated in South Africa today. While some of these beliefs, practices, and ceremonies may have remained unchanged over time, others have evolved or been modified. This study, among others, aims to demonstrate that Swazi African Traditional Religion has historically served as a receptive platform for the introduction and preparation for the Christian religion since ancient times. Swazi African Traditional Religion is a recognized vessel, source, and foundation for the assimilation of the Christian faith. Late King Somhlolo played a significant role in this preparation. Between the years 1816 and 1836, he experienced a dream or vision in which he was warned against engaging in conflict with the Europeans. Instead, he was advised to embrace the Bible, which had been brought by the Europeans. He was also cautioned against prioritising money over the Bible.

Chapter one focused on introducing the research study by examining the religious beliefs of the Swazi people prior to the arrival of missionaries and the spread of Christianity. In line with Kwenda and other scholars, the researcher agrees with the definition of Swazi African Traditional Religion (SATR) as follows:

African Traditional Religion is not based on a body of beliefs that someone subscribes to or adopts; so that once you have agreed with those beliefs you then become a member of African religion. African Religion is based on belonging, on being born into a community, a group of people, a clan or a family. This is the basis of African Religion. The group of people we are considering includes those who are long gone, the ancestors, the Living Dead. It includes those who are living today, like us. It includes those who are yet unborn. Now, belonging to that wide community of people through your family group is the beginning of what it means to be in African Religion (Kwenda 1997:1 – 2).

South Africa has come a long way in its journey towards providing freedom and democracy to every citizen. It has transitioned from a colonial era that spanned nearly three hundred (300) years, followed by close to fifty (50) years of apartheid, to a period of freedom and democracy that has lasted just over twenty-five (25) years. The South African constitution (Act 108 of 1996) serves as a crucial legal framework that recognises and embraces the diverse cultures, religions, and languages of its communities.

The constitution acknowledges that past policies were designed to legitimise divisions and inequalities among these communities. In order to address these challenges, legal instruments have been established to ensure the stability of the democratic order. This includes the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious, and Linguistic Communities (CRL).

The CRL was enacted as an Act, with the following objectives:

- (a) To promote respect for and further the protection of the rights of cultural, religious, and linguistic communities.
- (b) To promote and develop peace, friendship, humanity, tolerance, and national unity among and within cultural, religious, and linguistic communities, on the basis of equality, non-discrimination, and free association.
- (c) To foster mutual respect among cultural, religious, and linguistic communities.
- (d) To promote the right of communities to develop their historically diminished heritage.
- (e) To recommend the establishment or recognition of community councils (Act 19 of 2002).

The actions of missionaries contributed to the imposition of a double standard that Africans were compelled to live with. If only the missionaries had engaged in meaningful consultation with the people upon their arrival, there would have been no need for them to behave in the manner they did. Moreover, through such consultations, the Westerners should have recognised that the Africans possessed their own religion bestowed upon them

by the Creator through their cultures long before the arrival of the missionaries in the land that God had allotted to them, instructing them to inhabit it and thrive. Chief Nangoli Musamaali upholds the following viewpoint:

Then the monstrous lie that Africans did not know God! The truth is the Africans recognized the power of God. They may not have congregated together every Sunday and been led into prayer by some bishop, nonetheless, they worshipped in their own way which was exclusively African. The joke then (albeit a real one) is, when the white man came to Africa, he had the Bible in his hands. Today, the African has the Bible in his hands and the white man has the land! So much for the missionary work in Africa (1986:10).

Hence, the constitution sought to address the imbalances of the past and achieve the following objectives:

(1) Heal the divisions of the past. (2) Promote equality. (3) Promote unity in our diversity. (4) Promote respect for, and protection of the rights of cultural, religious, and linguistic communities. (5) Establish a non-racial, non-sexist society based on democratic values, social justice, and fundamental human rights (Act 108 of 1996).

While South Africa is a country characterised by numerous faiths and cultures, its society is unified by a shared humanity and moral framework. Amidst its national diversity, there is a unity forged by universal human values that call for harmonious coexistence, healing from past divisions and inequalities, and the reconstruction of social and family values to strengthen the moral fabric of the nation. This unity allows the nation to become a reconciled nation. The majority of South Africans recognise the existence of a divine higher power, the Supernatural Being (Mvelinchanti), meaning He who was in the beginning.

South Africans express their cultural beliefs, ceremonies, and traditions in various ways. It is within this context that the researcher has undertaken this multi-disciplinary research, focusing on Swazi African Traditional Religion (SATR) and Christianity. This approach encompasses multiple fields of study, including history, anthropology, liberation theology, black theology, and African Christian theology. By incorporating these different disciplines, the researcher aims to provide a comprehensive and integrated contribution to the understanding of Swazi African Traditional Religion in South Africa. This multi-disciplinary approach is driven by the growing interest in reviving Swazi beliefs, customs, and traditions that were disrupted by the arrival of missionaries and the introduction of Christianity in Africa. It recognises that even Swazi individuals who adhere to other religious beliefs can

still maintain a connection to their ancestral traditional religion as part of the Swazi people in South Africa.

Through this endeavour, the researcher has created a platform where the Swazi African Traditional religious community, the Christian religious community, and African Christians who find themselves caught between Swazi African Traditional Religion and Christianity can interact, understand one another, and promote unity in diversity. This initiative also allows adherents of Swazi African Traditional Religion and African Christianity who have drifted away to fully embrace their chosen religions and avoid living a double-standard life of practicing Christianity when circumstances are favourable and reverting to SATR when they face challenges.

The Swazi African Traditional Religion is still looked down upon despite its many years of existence in the continent and with so many adherents. Swazi African Traditional Religion suffered stigma of heathenism, paganism, backwardness, primitiveness and so forth which is still attached to them. The democratic government, through its constitution, has chosen to embrace all religious groups as equals regardless of the number of their constituency they command. However, the African Traditional Religion inclusive of SATR has still not been accorded their rightful place. The reasons being that they have not really gained exposure, acknowledgement and recognition in their country and land of their forebears, yet they have so much to contribute to religious views and values that impact (even) on Christianity.

Mndende laments and attests to the problem we have also identified by saying the following:

It becomes so painful when people speak of democracy in New South Africa. Yet, this so - called democracy is based on the minds that had suffered from colonialism and racism. It is very painful when the black leadership itself sees racism as having destroyed only the economic side of the black people and turns a blind eye to the fact that Christianity nearly destroyed the identity of the black people. For African Religion, it is not enough to think that one is liberated when he or she can rub shoulders with a white person, live in a white suburb, speak colonial languages, drive an expensive car, and occupy a senior position in the workplace previously owned by whites....It is unfortunate that the oppressed had some false hopes after the 1994 elections whereby they dreamt of total liberation. The Bill of Rights proclaims freedom of religion in theory, and yet its implementation only refers to the religions that were shipped into the country like Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism, Baha'i etc. along with Christianity. The indigenous religion still must accept the colonial labels of "primitive" and "out-dated" unless it falls under the cloak of Christianity.

This is seen by the adherents of ATR as another form of colonization, which can only be erased by decolonizing of the African mind so that one can respect what his or her Ancestors did for him or her, and not to place his or her Ancestors on a lower level than foreign Ancestors. The freedom of African Religion could be achieved if the foreign religions of the Book could stand back and concentrate on their message to their own people and leave African Religion in peace. It is also a pity that our black government itself only pays lip service to those who were at the lowest level during the colonial and apartheid times, by continuing to oppress them. The government silences these people by marginalizing them in any religious participation in national activities. The leadership has taken over from their colonial counterparts by telling those who claim to be non-Christian that what they call African Religion are nothing else but culture. This becomes clear when ATR adherents are not part of the rainbow but are located somewhere outside the margins. Black people's continued practice of African Religion is clearly stated and audible, and there is on-going debate in churches about inculturation. The negative side of the new mission is that this debate is regarded by ATR adherents as another form of evangelization whereby Christians, instead of preaching inculturation among their members, mainly preach it to ATR people by saying that "the church has accepted African rituals, come and join us, you are now free" (2000:7-8).

Mndende suggests that adherents, practitioners, and the general African public of African Traditional Religion (ATR), including Swazi African Traditional Religion (SATR), must decolonize their minds. They need to acknowledge that even in post-apartheid South Africa, ATR remains marginalised. This struggle must be undertaken by Africans to understand why their religion remains hidden, unrecognised, and pushed to the sidelines. They need to question how their religion can be regarded as a vessel for the preparation for the Christian religion that discredits their ancestral African Traditional Religion and continues to disregard what their ancestors passed down through the generations. Recognising their blackness becomes the primary criterion for being adherents and practitioners of African Traditional Religion, serving as their tool to liberate themselves from discrimination.

Tlhagale, in agreement with Mndende on this matter, expresses the following:

The vestiges of colonial discourse are still with us, the implacable urge to universalize, the refusal to recognize and respect cultural distinctiveness, the failure to acknowledge the meaning of difference and that, while accepting that Christ is the supreme mediator, there are other cultural symbolic paths that lead to God's mercy (1995:6).

1.2 Research Problem:

Mndende (2000:4) argues that missionaries held a negative view of black religious practices, dismissing what Africans considered essential for their well-being. European

visitors mercilessly condemned and disrespected these practices. African diviners were derogatorily referred to as witch doctors. Africans were compelled to change their clothing, cosmetics, songs, and even the structure of their homes from round to square. Christian missionaries condemned the African way of life, dismissing it as superstition and primitive practices. They lacked knowledge of the language and did not seek the truth from African elders who possessed knowledge of their own religion. The missionaries aimed to colonise the hearts, minds, and bodies of Africans, seeking to impose comprehensive changes on African belief systems, behaviours, and conduct, in order to exert control over land, cattle, resources, and more.

Dryness (1990:11) and Kwenda (2002:160) support Mndende's perspective, emphasising that early missionaries actively discouraged and ultimately prohibited certain practices in their mission to convert African people. Bediako (1995:25) notes that traditional local customs and institutions such as ancestor veneration, tribal ceremonies, authority systems, polygamy, girls' initiation, circumcision, and dowry were not supported but instead opposed and demeaned. African Traditional Religion was not taken seriously and denied recognition as an independent religion; it was often reduced to mere culture, devoid of religious significance. Africans had to pretend to be Christians to enjoy the benefits offered by missionaries, while secretly maintaining their true faith in African Traditional Religion.

Thorpe (1991:3) agrees with Dryness and Kwenda, highlighting that despite the fact that many Africans never fully abandoned their ancestral practices and continued to observe their rituals, African scholarship emerged to study African Traditional Religion. However, a challenge arose when scholars viewed African Traditional Religion as a preparatory stage for Christian evangelization. Many people and other religions regarded African Traditional Religion as invalid, dismissing it as mere culture practiced by primitive heathens who lacked knowledge of God.

The researcher, in exploring the religious orientation of the Swazi people, sought to address the question of whether African Traditional Religion still served as a receptive vessel and preparatory ground for the growth of the Christian faith. This notion became problematic for adherents and practitioners of African Religion, as they interpreted it to mean that ATR was not a legitimate religion and therefore did not have its own constituency. Even if it did have a constituency, it had to be validated by the Christian religion. The missionaries and colonisers, who used Christianity as a measure of true spirituality, insisted that adherents of

African Religion must qualify elsewhere, outside of their own religion of birth. This did not sit well with the adherents and practitioners of African Traditional Religion.

South Africa has been marked by the afflictions of colonialism, apartheid, and the evils of racism. Christians, following the example of missionaries and colonialists, oppressed black people and imposed a Western way of life on them. The result was a state of pretense and a double standard, leading to a schizophrenic behaviour of betraying one's own roots. African traditional religious beliefs and practices were condemned by Christians, forcing both SATR adherents and Christians to hide their true religion, go underground, and even face extinction.

The researcher has formulated the following secondary questions: (i) Why was African Traditional Religion, including the Swazi religious orientation, not given exposure, recognition, and acknowledgement in South Africa, despite its significant contribution to religious views and values, including those that impact Christianity? (ii) Is inculturation, an ongoing topic of debate within the church, a tool to bridge or widen the gap between these two faiths?

The researcher has attempted to address these questions due to the growing interest in African Traditional Religion today. The researcher aims to contribute to the ongoing debate about why African Traditional Religion was considered a receptive vessel for the preparation for the Christian faith. The missionaries regarded African Traditional Religion, including SATR, as invalid because it lacked Christian teachings and sacraments. However, they also recognised and advocated for the validity of African people's traditional religiosity, provided it was confirmed by these Christian elements. African Traditional Religion, including SATR, nurtured spiritual yearnings, insights, and sensitivities among its followers. However, South African SATR was not fully understood or accepted. Instead, it was judged, looked down upon, and its contributions were not embraced by the Christian religion. Therefore, the researcher also sought to investigate how the religious and cultural practices and beliefs of the Swazi people (Emaswati) in South Africa contributed to the Swazi people and the Christian religion, as well as African Christianity.

The researcher concurs with Thorpe (1991:1) that African Traditional Religion, including the African Swazi religious orientation, is intricately intertwined with African culture. It is a valid

religious orientation deserving consideration by those living in societies with different religious orientations. Thorpe further states:

Africa is not only one of the largest continents on planet earth; it may well prove to have been home to the very first human beings. Its size and history demand attention and respect. Since religion and culture are, in many ways, two sides of the same coin, those who seek to know about the people of Africa would do well to begin their inquiry with a review of the religious aspect of traditional African life (1991:1).

Mbiti highlights:

There are several ways by which the Christian relates to his culture. Some Christians withdraw from their culture, as if they could completely disown it, while others depict an attitude of hostility and regarding it as temptation to sinfulness. There are those who embrace culture uncritically, as though culture were perfect and always right concurring with those whose view regards Christ as having come to 'save' the whole person, his culture, history and environment. The Church has a duty to guide Christians in reaching a working view relating to their culture (1976:279).

The researcher's aim has been to understand the conditions, orientations, actions, and practices of the South African Swazi African Traditional Religion (SATR), in order to provide acceptable answers regarding the experience of being a Christian during the day and an ATR adherent and practitioner during the night, secretly consulting diviners. While some individuals and families embrace a combination of these two belief systems, others exclusively identify as traditionalists or Christians. Additionally, individuals with African tribal heritage may choose to align exclusively with larger world religions like Islam.

The choice of religious denomination often depends on familial history and personal circumstances. Bhengu (1996:49) attests to the difficulty of integrating Christianity into the African context. African Christians have lived on two levels in our continent: the traditional African worldview level and the Western Christianity level. Many Christians maintain connections with deceased family members.

Therefore, it is the researcher's purpose to encourage Swazi African Traditional Religion practitioners and adherents not to feel embarrassed as followers and to investigate whether it is acceptable or unacceptable to consult diviners as a Christian. The researcher also aims to correct misconceptions about Swazi African Traditional Religion, such as the notion that Africans worship the living dead, whereas African Traditional Religion actually encourages the veneration of ancestors while recognising the worship of a singular higher power, God.

Thorpe's explanation on ancestor veneration provides further insight into understanding the meaning of this term and the distinction between worship and veneration in the context of African Traditional Religion:

Veneration of the ancestors has been described as a central feature of African religion. Over practically the whole of the continent, except for certain tribes, what is known as the ancestor cult is one of the most prominent features of traditional religion (1991:115).

Kruger et al. (1996:33) agree with Thorpe (1991:115) and affirm that the concept of veneration is attributed to ancestors who are considered deserving of being spirit beings and are held in deep respect, deference, esteem, and honour. However, they are not worshiped, adored as divine beings, or paid religious homage. Similar to how an important person, such as a chief, cannot be approached directly without observing proper protocol and courtesy, the people cannot approach God directly with their requests but must go through the appropriate channels. Ancestors, who are believed to be aware of the needs of their descendants, serve as a fertile ground for the preparation for the Christian faith and have transcended mere earthly existence, being closer to God and residing in a realm of spiritual realities.

Beyers and Mphahlele (2009:1) argue that the belief in ancestors holds central importance in traditional African thought and serves as an essential pillar of African Traditional Religion practiced across Africa (Stinton 2004:133–134). The existence of the deceased is expressed in various ways, and Swazi people acknowledge this expression, recognising that ancestor veneration and worship are not unique to Africa alone (cf. Bae 2007:1). Swazi Africans do not believe that Africans worship ancestors; instead, they venerate them and remember them in a profound manner that evokes their presence.

1.3 Research Aims and Objectives:

Though some of what the researcher has discussed in the previous paragraphs pertains to research aims and objectives, in this section, the researcher aims to consolidate and outline them clearly. The objective is to shed light on how the Swazi African Traditional Religion of South Africa has remained unrecognised, unacknowledged, and devoid of its rightful place for people to gain knowledge and a fair understanding of it. By doing so, the researcher hopes to encourage the acceptance and embrace of its contributions by the Christian religion.

Within the South African context, we specifically focused on the Swazi African culture and religion to determine whether it was practiced prior to or after the arrival of missionaries. The researcher's intention was to highlight the convergence of the old and the new, whether it occurred before or after the missionaries' arrival. The researcher paid particular attention to the influence of Christianity on indigenous Swazi Africans and their religion, as well as the influence of African traditions on the practice of Christianity in South Africa. In this study, the researcher aimed to position African Indigenous Religion as a framework within its specific context. The researcher chose the Swazi religious system from a wide array of possibilities, considering the abundance of religious systems and their respective cultural settings in Africa. Through the utilisation of existing knowledge, the researcher carefully extracted and compiled elements that appeared to have religious significance, thereby bringing valuable and meaningful insights to the research topic at hand: African Traditional Religion: A receptive vessel for the preparation for the Christian faith.

For the six chapters comprising this research study on Swazi African Traditional Religion and Culture, we have formulated six research objectives, as outlined below:

- Examine the religious orientation of the Swazi people before the arrival of missionaries and the spread of Christianity.
- Explore their history, religious and cultural orientation to understand their contributions to nation-building, national unity, and social cohesion among the Swazi South Africans, as well as the broader South African and continental context.
- Establish the relationship between Swazi African Traditional Religion and the Christian faith.
- Investigate the contributions of Swazi African Traditional Religion to the contemporary Church context.
- Analyse the data collected during interviews and formulate research findings guided by the research topic for potential implementation.
- Explore the points of convergence between both religions to merge ideas and understanding of SATR and Christianity, and make recommendations to Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) such as Mpumalanga interfaith action for societal renewal (Mifafsor) and Government: Ehlanzeni District House of Traditional Leaders (EDHTL), along with its sampled fourteen Traditional Councils.

Elion and Strieman (2001:33-35) pointed out that contemporary African religious beliefs, such as SATR, encompass a variety of customs. The African Independent Church (AIC) movement has served as an umbrella organisation for many churches that originated from mainstream constituted churches. These breakaway churches have chosen to reform and establish their own African identity, incorporating African customs and beliefs into their religious practices. Examples include the Uniting Dutch Reformed Church and the African Mission Methodist Church of Africa. Some individuals and families choose to belong to both religious systems, while others align themselves exclusively with either traditional African beliefs or Christianity.

Adherents of African Independent Churches (AICs) believe that Christianity can only be meaningful if it is practiced from an African perspective. For those Africans who prioritise African Christianity, African customs, rituals, and beliefs form the cultural foundation of their religious expression. The Zionist movement, which largely consists of African Independent Churches, along with the Apostolic (Gospel) and Pentecostal churches, seeks to experience the free movement of the Holy Spirit, which is a significant aspect of services common to all African Independent Churches practicing African Christianity. These services typically involve prayer, singing, casting out of evil spirits, healing, and preaching. Some of these churches also facilitate public confessions, where individuals share their troubles with others, guided by the belief that speaking about their troubles is a step towards finding solutions, leaving the rest to God (Mvelinchanti).

The Swazi African Traditional Religion adherents also belong to various Christian groups, including Catholic and Protestant denominations, as well as nationalistic Zionist churches, all of which contribute to the research problem. In addition, we focused on the Swazi rites of passage, such as birth, puberty, adolescence, marriage, and death, as well as their belief in a Supernatural Being and other religious and cultural related issues, which will be addressed in detail in the next chapter.

Currently, the Zionist Church Movement is the largest within the umbrella body of the African Independent Churches (AIC), attracting adherents who, due to a legacy of low literacy levels, struggle to follow hymns or read from the Scriptures themselves. Some individuals join these churches because they seek to be moved by the Holy Spirit, seeking a more spirited and less formal worship experience than what is found in mainstream churches.

In certain Zionist Churches, a drummer beats a small drum, covered in ox skin, in the center of a circle where congregants run around, their pace guided by the will of the Holy Spirit. This practice revives, invokes, and strengthens their religious beliefs and cultural practices. Healing is also sought through the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the use of holy water mixed with ash (siwasho) or specific herbs. The Zionist churches maintain strong connections to the doctrine and teachings of the Bible.

Certain principles from the Old Testament, such as the right to have multiple wives, as exemplified by King David and King Solomon, have been seen as aligning with Swazi African traditional life and belief. Some member churches of the African Independent Church Movement and the Zionist Church Movement have followed this example. Animal sacrifice, while communicating with the venerated ancestors, has also been part of traditional life and belief. The distinction between African Independent and Zionist Churches is not rigidly defined.

The researcher believes that, what was considered good before the arrival of missionaries continues to be practiced today, albeit with some changes to remain relevant. Harmful practices have been discouraged and eliminated, while positive practices have been shaped for the sustenance of the Swazi religious tradition, and the revival of customs, beliefs, and traditional cultural practices in order to strengthen and encourage adherence to the ancestral religion. The Christian faith recognised the values and insights present in Swazi African Traditional Religion (SATR), leading them to lay a foundation and build upon it, positioning SATR as a receptive vessel for the preparation for the Christian faith.

The adherents of Swazi African society strongly believe in the importance of family, considering it meaningful when practiced in accordance with African way of life. The responsibility for reviving and strengthening African society lies with the head of the family, the father, who is also tasked with performing rituals that form the cultural and religious foundation of the family and clan. In the African context, it is customary for the wife to live with her in-laws after marriage and care for the extended family, embracing the African concept of the clan and community. This practice serves to revive and strengthen their cultural and religious identity, fostering unity and harmony within the family.

The topic under consideration also involves the traditional religious leaders who view their role as a divine calling from God. They believe that a careful, humble, and sympathetic

study of Swazi African Religion can offer valuable insights for African Church leadership and Swazi African religious leadership. It is through these traditional religious leaders that Swazi African Traditional Religion becomes a receptive vessel for the preparation for the Christian faith, allowing African people to receive God's final revelation through Jesus Christ.

In the exploration, the researcher has examined what Swazi African Traditional Religion is, its components, and how it contributes to the traditional religious orientation of the Swazi people. Referring to Swazi African Traditional Religion without considering culture is a challenge, as African Traditional Religion is deeply rooted in the culture of each specific nation. The researcher firmly believes that the religious orientation of the Swazi people, like that of any other African Traditional Religion, is deeply ingrained in every family. Therefore, as members of their families, they are already practitioners of this religion, which does not seek to convert them but rather forms an integral part of their identity and heritage.

Thorpe, in support of the above view says:

For Africans religion is all-embracing: agriculture, social life, the political structure, economics – everything is imbued with religious significance. It follows that there are no irreligious people in a tribal community. To be means to belong. And there is no thought of conversion or change from one tribal religion to another. Having been born into a society, one automatically participates and shares in its religious life. For African people religion is a necessity and not an option. It provides them with ways of coping with the mysterious realities in their immediate environment – natural forces, Ancestral spirits and powers felt to be functioning through the social institutions of the tribe or community. ATR always relates, in an organic and vital way, to the world in which it exists. Its adherents believe that human beings are not the only organisms that matter in the world. African people therefore relate closely to their natural environment and seek to establish harmony with it (1991:107).

Lang emphasises what Thorpe maintained when he says:

Wherever the African is, there is his religion: he carries it to the fields where he is sowing seeds or harvesting a new crop; he takes it with him to the beer party or to attend a funeral ceremony; and if he is educated, he takes religion with him to the examination room at school or in the university; if he is a politician, he takes it to the house of parliament. (1991:24).

Mndende (2000:2) highlights that the term "African Traditional Religion" was given to indigenous African religion by others and not the people of the continent. Prior to colonisation and the arrival of missionaries, African people did not have a specific name for

their religion. It is a foreign term to Africa and does not exist in any African language. The name was bestowed by academics who studied these religions, as the African people themselves do not categorise their existence as religious or secular. It is worth examining the label that has become associated with the beliefs and practices of indigenous Africans. Idowu (1973:136), in agreement with Mndende, notes that throughout history, people have worshiped without a need to label their religion or their God. The act of labeling became the concern of individuals who came from outside of Africa, assuming roles as observers, investigators, the curious, detractors, or simply busybodies in Africa.

The arrival of missionaries in the land marked the beginning of assigning names and labels to the religious and cultural beliefs and practices of the Swazi African Traditional Religion. In other words, Idowu (1973:136) confirms that the name or label was not significant to African people; what mattered was their knowledge of the God they worshiped, the Supreme Being. It was the inquisitive missionaries who took upon themselves the task of naming the people's religion, which proved to be detrimental for adherents of African Traditional Religion, as they were coerced into becoming converts of a foreign Christian religion.

1.4 Literature Review:

The researcher was motivated to conduct a research study on Swazi African Traditional Religion due to the lack of specific literature addressing the orientation of the Swazi South Africans within the broader context of African Traditional Religion. While there were various books available on African religious systems, the researcher aimed to review the relevant and contextual literature focusing strictly on the historical, religious, and cultural perspectives of the Swazi people in South Africa.

In this study, the researcher has selected certain books for the following reasons: Firstly, some authors' viewpoints directly or indirectly align with our own perspective that African Traditional Religion, African Christianity, and the Christian faith intersect in the lives of African individuals. Secondly, these works have exerted significant influence on Swazi African Traditional Religion, African Christianity, and the Christian faith in South Africa. Thirdly, the writers represented divergent viewpoints, providing a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. Lastly, certain works have contributed valuable insights to our research topic: "African Traditional Religion: A receptive vessel for the

preparation for the Christian faith." The following are some of the selected literature pieces relevant to this research:

1.4.1 Thorpe, SA, in his book "African Traditional Religion" (1991:2-5), clearly emphasises that African Traditional Religion holds value not only for the African continent but also beyond, and therefore it should be given a platform to showcase its beliefs and practices. This allows those who are born as children of Africa and those who are brought into African religion and culture to benefit from it. Religious phenomena exhibit certain commonalities, not only within Africa but worldwide.

The research has relied on the work of others, extracting and correlating elements that appear to have a religious nature. The author asserts the intertwining of African religion and culture, emphasising the need to explore this connection, which aligns with the focus of the research. Thorpe states:

Nevertheless there is justification for calling attention to some features which many ATR's seem to have in common, such as belief in a Supreme Creator, belief in spirit mediators, and recognition of evil as that which disrupts and disturbs both social and personal harmony and well-being... Even belief in a transcendent creator prior to the influence of Christian missionaries among the Zulu and Shona has been called into question by some scholars. (1991:4).

In summary, Thorpe (1991:5) maintains that it is accurate to describe the approach to African Traditional Religion as both unified and diverse on the continent. Contrary to popular belief, it is not static but rather dynamic, growing, and developing, as evidenced by the emergence of numerous new religious movements in Africa today. Some individuals, such as Western Christian missionaries, have argued that the African worldview cannot be classified as a religion per se. However, this viewpoint depends on one's definition of religion.

Thorpe (1991:5) highlights that if the definition of religion focuses on creeds, dogmas, organised structures, hierarchical priesthoods, or elaborates temple worship, and then African Traditional Religion does not fit this description. However, if one's definition of religion centers around a spiritual quality that enables people to orient and live their lives, as is the case here, then African Traditional Religion indeed qualifies. The definition of African Traditional Religion must encompass more than just a positive orientation that

defines life goals and aspirations. It must also acknowledge and address the negative, disruptive, and undesirable aspects.

Thorpe maintains the following:

The corollary, of course, is that what happens outside a person (warfare, floods, land-grabbing) can likewise move into the very heart and core of an individual. People are closely bound to one another and to their environment so that a basic religious principle for ATRs is one which fosters harmony and well-being. Therefore, any statement which attempts to define ATR should include at least two dimensions – the horizontal and the vertical, since ATR is on the one hand very much a part of the society in which it is found, thus oriented to this world and has a clear horizontal dimension. ATR is also permeated by an awareness of the spiritual, invisible dimension of life. Trees, rivers, streams, rain are more than merely things to be utilised, as they have a spiritual quality which unites them to human beings in a greater cosmic whole. The ancestors or living dead continue to be a spiritual part of this greater cosmos even after they have ceased to exist as a physical part. The creator and even creation itself belongs to this vertical or spiritual dimension of ATR (1991:5).

In her study, Thorpe covered various religious orientations, excluding the Swazi religious orientation, which is the focus of this research. For instance, Thorpe explored the religious orientations of the San or Bushman, Zulu, Shona, Mbuti, and Yoruba peoples.

1.4.2 Elion, B, & Strieman, M, in their foreword to "Clued on Culture - A Practical Guide for South Africa" (2001), echo Pityana's viewpoint that, for the first time in South Africa's history, the constitution recognises the cultural and religious diversity of its national society, ensuring equal privileges for all religions. This signifies a significant departure from the past. Therefore, those who practice their religion or observe cultural rituals must do so while respecting the rights of others. Understanding and appreciating the significance of others' religious and cultural lives is crucial, as cultural diversity thrives in an environment of tolerance and mutual respect.

A further responsibility for citizens entails observing all the rights and practices enunciated in the Constitution, Act 108 of 1996. South Africa is a state founded on the values of 'human dignity, the achievement of equality, and the advancement of human rights and freedom...' (Act 108 of 1996). Therefore, the relationship between values and religious beliefs must be mutually reinforcing.

Elion and Strieman (2001:7- 8) argue that certain ethical values and norms indicate that religion cannot be confined solely to the performance of rituals; it is primarily a matter of

lifestyle. The intention to do good lies at the heart of all religions and should shape one's value system. As people are connected at their core, rituals associated with rites of passage often have deep roots in the people's cultural heritage.

Kruger et al (1996:32) highlight Africa's triple heritage as African Traditional Religion, Christianity, and Islam. African Traditional Religion has been influenced by both Islamic and Christian religions, and in turn, it has exerted influence on these two world religions within an African context. African Traditional Religion has not remained static, despite the term 'traditional' implying otherwise. Christianity and Islam have coexisted with African religion on the African continent for many years. Both religions are recognised and accepted as part of the religious heritage, while retaining distinct identities. They also form an integral part of their respective global communities. The risk of confusion, therefore, appears to be minimal.

The focus of this research study was on South African Swazi African Traditional Religion (SATR) and Christianity. It sought to answer the main research question of whether SATR served as a receptive vessel for preparing for the Christian faith. Additionally, the study aimed to explore why SATR was not exposed, acknowledged, and recognised by the very missionaries who viewed it as *praeparatio evangelica*. It also examined how the ongoing debates on inculturation aimed to bridge the gap between these two religions, correct past mistakes, and pave the way forward.

1.4.3 Cassidy, M & Verlinden, L. *Facing the new Challenges* pointed out what Mbiti maintained:

By tradition, African people are deeply religious, and each society has evolved its own religious life. ATR has influenced all areas of life in the traditional setting. While this religious life is not uniform throughout the continent, there are nevertheless sufficient features in common to speak of it in the singular as 'African Religion.' The meeting of the Christian faith and African Traditional Religion is taking place in individuals, families and communities. The process of continuity means that the Christian faith establishes links with areas of African Traditional Religion which largely resemble Christian teaching. At these points, the same or similar ideas meet and merge into each other without conflict and people feel 'at home'. For example, the concept of God is common in both Christianity and African Traditional Religion. The biblical God is not unknown to African people. For thousands of years, they have known Him as creator and sustainer of all things. For this reason, the preaching of the Gospel and the translation of the scriptures use African names for God in each area of the continent. The concept of God is a point of continuity. Similar examples of continuity are concepts

concerning the origin of man, spiritual realities, moral values and the continuation of human life beyond death (1976:309).

Mbiti (1976:311) argues that Jesus Christ came to fulfill, rather than destroy, Swazi African Traditional Religion. However, not everything in Swazi African Traditional Religion is applicable to the lives of Christians or the Church. There are demonic elements within Swazi African Traditional Religion that should be discarded, while the beneficial aspects can be preserved and used to enrich life. Many of these useful elements serve as educational aids in communicating the Christian faith and help in understanding the Bible within an African context. They also contribute to our understanding of pastoral issues and the Indigenous Knowledge System (IKS) of Swazi South Africans and the Kingdom of Eswatini. The following beliefs relating to God, spirits, human life, death, and the afterlife hold significant relevance to the Christian faith.

Mbiti suggests that many practices in Swazi African Traditional Religion can be associated with church life. These include prayers, symbols, artistic expressions, ceremonies, and rituals, particularly those related to birth, adolescence, marriage, procreation, and death. Christian life should also address these essential aspects to ensure that adherents feel the practical relevance of their faith. The core emphasis of African Traditional Religion is the celebration of life. People commemorate events such as birth, naming ceremonies, initiation, marriage, and the beginning of the rainy or harvest season with religious activities. If traditional life fills these moments with celebration and festivals, the Church should also infuse these events with joy and jubilation.

Mbiti also highlights the significance of traditional prayers in African Traditional Religion, as they serve as windows into people's deepest spirituality. These prayers express spiritual longing, aspirations, expectations, and the connection between humanity and God. They reveal individuals at their most vulnerable spiritual state, standing before God. The forms, content, fears, and expectations conveyed through these prayers, as well as the frequency and occasions on which they are offered, and the context in which they are used, are crucial elements of prayer life that should be embraced in the Church. By incorporating these elements, Christians can demonstrate that their prayer spirituality is authentic and lived out.

According to Mbiti, African Traditional Religion encompasses countless sacred places, objects, and symbols. These include shrines within family compounds or communal areas,

groves, rocks, caves, hills, mountains, rivers, trees, various symbols, colours, numbers, and personal objects carried or kept at home. All of these aspects indicate the inherent need to situate religious life within specific points of reference and to engage with them holistically. African Christians understand that their faith cannot remain solely internal; it must also find external expression and reference points. As Soyinka (1976:3) suggests, they seek to externalise and communicate their inner intuition. Many Independent African Churches are pioneers in this regard, instinctively embracing such practices rather than being driven by theological conviction.

Sacred places, objects, and symbols play a crucial role in expressing a community's beliefs, not primarily through words, but through actions and art forms. Kruger et al (1996:55) highlight that rituals rich in symbols effectively convey a community's beliefs through acts and artistic expressions. In African society, the use of taboos surrounding certain words, for instance, imbues them with powerful symbolic value. Art forms like masks used in ritual performances also carry significant symbolism. When the well-being of a community is disrupted, the affected societal group, including their ancestors, come together to share a communal meal as a symbol of reconciliation and common solidarity. In modern westernised society, words often lose their meaning, while symbols enable individuals to arrive at accurate interpretations and lead more meaningful lives.

1.4.4 Olowola, C. *African Traditional Religion and The Christian Faith* pointed out that:

The purpose of this book is to provide a constructive critical approach to African traditional religion from the standpoint of Christian faith. In the past the majority of works on the religious beliefs of Africans were written by non-Africans, and many contained ignorant and derogatory criticisms which have been rightly rejected by Africans. More recently, books on traditional religion have usually been written by African scholars, who for their part have often been uncritically zealous in defending the African religious system. What Christianity in Africa now requires more than ever are studies by African writers which provide a fair and accurate presentation of African traditional religion, together with a critical evaluation in the light of the revealed Word of God, the Bible (1993:8).

Olowola (1993) having given the purpose has not attempted a comprehensive presentation on African traditional religion, rather, a general sketch by giving attention to principal elements of African cosmology such as God; the spirits; and sacrifice. In traditional religion, God is seen as the Creator, the spirits as God's agents, and man as someone who must properly relate to this supernatural order by means including sacrifice. Olowola maintains the six fundamental beliefs which apply generally to most examples of traditional

religion throughout Africa which are as follows: that this world was brought into being by the source of all beings as the Supreme Being; that the Supreme Being brought into being a number of divinities and spirits to act as His functionaries in the orderly maintenance of the world; that the death does not mark the end to human life but opens the gate to the hereafter, hence, prominence is given to belief in the continuation of life after death; that divinities and spirits together with the ancestral spirits are in the supersensible world but are interested in what goes on in the world of man; that there are mysterious powers or forces in the world and that their presence makes man live in fear; that if men and women are to enjoy peace, they would live according to the laid-down directives of the Supreme Being as His agents (1993).

1.4.5 Mawusi, K. *African Theology* maintained the following:

This book is a theological research done as a comparative study of African Traditional Religion in comparison to Christianity. Since Africans, in most part, are seen around the world as pagans without any concept of the true God until white missionaries got to the continent, this study is an effort to change that mentality. This book is a result of my research as a theology student to find out what both the Traditional and Christian religions have in common. Those who will approach this book with an open mind will realize that, Africans when it comes to their spirituality, are more spiritual and prayerful than the average Christian in the West. Readers will find to their surprise that there are some similarities or commonalities within these religions, which most Christians are not even aware of. Since the people who brought the notion of this one God Christians hold on to so dearly, - the Hebrews, were originally Africans, readers should not be surprised when they come across the facts that, most of their traditional religious sacrificial traditions are in the Christian book of life we call the Bible, yes, this may come as a surprise to most Christians; but the truth is, we cannot deny their similarities and probably their origin in the Christian tradition because of their African background. Hopefully this book will open the door for dialogue between Christians and non-Christians about God's presence in every culture (2015).

1.4.6 Maluleke, T S. *Half a Century of African Christian Theologies: Elements of the Emerging Agenda for the Twenty-First Century* points out that:

African culture and African Traditional Religions (ATRs) have long been acknowledged as the womb out of which African Christians insisted that the church of Africa and its theology must bear an African stamp. This insistence were beyond theological and ecclesiastical matters as other African thinkers also attempted to construct "African philosophy", "African literature", "African art", "African architecture". The question we asked earlier about Africa, African Christianity, and African theology can and has indeed been asked of African culture and ATRs, namely: "are there such animals?" Given the vastness and diversity of the continent's peoples, this is justifiable. However, African church

leaders and theologians have not allowed this question to dampen their spirits. Unlike European imperial historians, explorers, and missionaries of the previous centuries, African theologians have generally been wary of generalisations about “Africa” and “African culture”. Generalisations are still made, but mostly on the basis of well-focused contexts of research. In that way, therefore, serious attempts have been made to ensure that the terms ATRs have not been allowed to degenerate into meaningless generalizations and clichés. Christianity in Africa cannot be understood without reference to ATRs as an excellent preparation for the gospel (2005:477- 478).

Is inculturation, a topic continuously debated within the church, a tool to bridge or widen the gap that exists between the two faiths? The understanding of the church making moves towards accepting that divination and traditional healing are an essential part of African Religion and world view that cannot be thrown away, suggests that the church extends some invitation to work with African Religion and African culture hence the introduction of the process of inculturation which seeks to address the gap that separates and marginalises in order for integration and assimilation to take place between African Religion and the Christian faith. This exercise is a gradual acquisition of the characteristics and norms of a culture and group by a person, another culture and so forth. Inculturation is the term that Catholic leaders and theologians have used in recent decades to denote a process of engagement between the Christian gospel and a particular culture such as Swazi in this case. The term is intended conceptually both to safeguard the integrity of the gospel and to encourage sensitivity to various cultural contexts.

1.4.7 Mndende, N. *The pride of Izizikazi* pointed out the following:

Though Africans were forced into this new religion Christianity, they did not stop practising their ancestral rituals. Some missionaries like Callaway and Cook, and some anthropologists, noticed that Africans gave importance to these rituals. These individuals became sympathetic towards the rituals and started to see some traces of religion in the practices of ‘these people’, but nevertheless had to use Christianity as a measuring rod to reach true spirituality. Its own practitioners have not documented African Traditional Religion as it is an oral tradition, with an emphasis on practice more than written scriptures. African scholarship emerged after it clearly became evident that most Africans had never disassociated themselves with their ancestral practices. This led ATR to fall into the hands of western scholarship which used foreign terms to define the indigenous practices and beliefs. The religion had to be defined, not on its own terms, but based on Christian dogmas such as scriptures, special days of worship, the trinity, resurrection, eschatology, etc. Failure to comply with these criteria meant failure to be classical as religion or being denied having any belief beyond this world. The major problem that exists is that these scholars agreed that ATR existed and still exists even now, but it is regarded as a preparation for Christian evangelization. Mndende concurs with Okot when

advising that these external layers should be removed before African Traditional Religion is suffocated (2000:5).

While many authors have written about African Traditional Religion, this research study focuses specifically on the South African Swazi African Traditional Religion, addressing a significant gap in the literature. Swazi African Traditional Religion is often classified with other primal religions from around the world. However, it is important to note that grouping Swazi, Xhosa, Ndebele, and Zulu people together as Nguni speakers does not imply that their cultures and religious practices are identical throughout the continent and their respective ethnicities. While there are variations in religious practices among different ethnic groups and regions, there are still notable commonalities that bind them together.

The categorisation of Swazi African Traditional Religion as a primal religion and its association with Nguni speakers highlight the need to contribute to the existing knowledge gap. This research study specifically focuses on the South African Swazi Traditional Religion, which has its own unique culture and emerged independently in the relatively isolated Ehlanzeni District Municipality of Mpumalanga province. It lacks immediate apparent historical connections to other major religions such as Christianity and Islam. By addressing this knowledge gap, the study aims to shed light on the Swazi religious orientation, which not only aligns with the broader topic of African Traditional Religion but also provides insights into the religious phenomenon among the Swazi people.

As South African Swazi individuals, it is crucial for them to focus specifically on the Swazi phenomenon. This allows them to represent and showcase their faith, enabling others to gain knowledge and a fair understanding of it. By doing so, the researcher hopes that its contributions can be acknowledged and embraced by people of other faiths, including Christianity. The researcher believes that African Traditional Religion (ATR) serves as a receptive vessel for the preparation for the Christian faith. ATR has undoubtedly influenced the religious views and values of Christianity, offering valuable insights. This serves as an encouragement for Africans to reconnect with their roots and reclaim their rightful place, as originally ordained by the God of Africa. Africans should strive to avoid the shortcomings exhibited by Adam and Eve after their fall and dishonoring of the Adamic Covenant, which represents the second covenant God made with humankind (Genesis 3:9ff). In light of this, we pose the question: If African Christians openly and freely express this return to their

roots; will they be spared condemnation and judgment from other religions, particularly from the Christian faith?

The key emphasis here is for Swazi African Traditional Religion and Christianity to work together and serve God's people without being accused of syncretism, which was a common claim made by many missionaries. We believe that the issue of syncretism has been persistent throughout history. God had to warn the Israelites about it as they stood on the verge of entering the Promised Land. In the fifth book of Moses, it is written: "You shall not do at all what we are doing here [in the camp] today, every man doing whatever is right in his [own] eyes" (Deuteronomy 12:8). All individuals, regardless of whether they are African or not, need to understand that God requires obedience to His commands and ordinances. Man cannot and will not find God through their own searching. Instead, it is God in Christ who reaches out to humanity. The heart of the matter lies not in a list of names and concepts of God in African societies deemed acceptable by scholars. Rather, God is personal, close, and capable of establishing an intimate relationship with all of His creation, including humankind, on His own terms.

Further reading of relevant literature, including those with differing perspectives, has been undertaken to gather material and develop arguments for various chapters of this research study. While focusing on African Traditional Religion, we have reviewed current and notable works such as Chitakura (2017), Turaki (2019), Thomas (2015), Musa (2015), Mbiti (1975), Bolaji (1973), Delius (2007), Ndlovu (1995), Vilakazi (1999), Thompson (2000), McConnell (2013), Kenneth (2013), Fischer (1997), Carsten (2004), Geertz (1973), Tierney (2007), Kurewa (1975), Beidelman (1982), Mawusi (2015), Bediako (1995), Bediako (2004), De La Torre (2013), Gutiérrez (2003), Olowola (1993), Kruger, J.S., Lubbe, G.J.A. & Steyn, H.C. (1996), and Cone (1986). By incorporating these diverse sources, we adopt a multi-disciplinary approach to this study.

Mndende (2000: 7) highlights that many Black theologians who claimed to fight for the total liberation of black people from racism overlooked a crucial aspect—the liberation of the soul, which serves as the foundation for all human liberation. In addition, the researcher aims to include the perspectives of Black African and Liberation theologians, specifically focusing on what God is saying to the Swazi people in South Africa and the broader African continent, particularly the Kingdom of Eswatini. Black theology and Liberation theology seek

to offer theological reflections on the meaning of God, who is revealed in the person of Jesus Christ within specific historical and cultural contexts.

In the researcher's view, the specific country that Black theology addresses today is South Africa. Black theology approaches its subject matter with an awareness of the situation it seeks to describe, recognising the dynamic relationship between the reality being examined and the theological description provided. Liberation theology presents Black theology as a contextual and Christological theology, where Jesus Christ, as the embodiment of truth, holds the central position in the pursuit of liberation. As the Bible states, "If the Son liberates you, you will indeed be liberated"(Acts 15:2 - ASB).

In addressing the research gap concerning Swazi African Traditional Religion, the researcher acknowledges the possibility that previous researchers may have made attempts to study and explore this subject, primarily within the broader scope of primal religions. It has been commonly understood that traditional religions in Africa fall under the category of primal religions. However, it is important to recognise that primal peoples worldwide exhibit significant differences, and this understanding is crucial. Therefore, this study focuses exclusively on the Swazi African Traditional Religion in South Africa, specifically the religious practices of the Swazi people in the Kingdom of Eswatini.

African religions are shaped by a combination of external historical influences, such as interactions resulting from migrations and warfare, as well as internal religious dynamics driven by visionary figures and leaders within their respective communities, including prophets and healers who played significant roles in shaping religious beliefs and practices.

Mbiti points out that:

African Traditional Religion reflects God's witness among African peoples through the ages. It is a valuable and indispensable lamp on the spiritual path. But, however valuable this lamp has been, it cannot be made a substitute for the eternal Gospel which is like the sun that brilliantly illuminates that path. Yet, it is a crucial stepping stone towards that ultimate light. As Christianity develops in our continent, answering African needs and being firmly rooted in our culture, it will derive great benefits from the work already done by African Religion. African Religion has taught us the basic religious vocabulary, by means of which we may stammer, but we nevertheless say something behind that stammering; the Gospel teaches us how to speak with maturity and confidence. For which we thank God (1976:313).

The Bible, in Acts 17:26 (ASB) states: "And He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their lands and territories." This was done so that people would seek after God and perhaps find Him, even though He is already present with each individual, even if they were unaware of it due to their departure from the spiritual, social, cultural, and religious positions that God had ordained for them.

They were designated to inhabit the African continent as the rightful custodians of their original allocated space, with the mandate to live and multiply according to the religious and cultural traditions and customs prescribed by God. For instance, the communal way of life, which held great significance for African people, as it allowed them to share their joys, blessings, sorrows, and burdens while upholding the cherished African adage, as emphasized by Mndende:

I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am (1999:9).

God has established a moral order for His people to recognise His constant presence and active involvement in their lives. The researcher has observed that the drifting away from the place where God, the Creator, intends for Africans to be situated has been caused by external forces and influences originating outside of the African continent. These forces and influences have made Africans feel like wanderers and strangers in their own land, resulting in many Africans adopting Christianity during the day and reverting to African Traditional Religion under the cover of darkness.

These external forces and influences fail to grasp that it is within African culture that God desires Africans to love, worship, and obey Him. God does not want Africans to be alienated from their culture, but only from sin. African culture serves as the medium through which the gospel is received, disseminated, understood, and transmitted, enabling Africans to hear the gospel, believe in it, and inherit its promises. When the gospel and culture intersect, the Christian faith is engendered, resulting in the formation of Christianity.

The moral order is exemplified by the concept of Ubuntu or Buntfu in Siswati, which entails having a positive attitude towards other human beings, showing respect for the poor and needy without harbouring negative sentiments. Ubuntu promotes the principle of treating others as one would like to be treated. Africans, particularly African Christians, need to reconnect with their roots in order to find a way forward.

Furthermore, the researcher has observed that one of the issues facing African Christians, as mentioned in the preceding paragraphs, is that some members of established churches secretly consult traditional healers and diviners, despite their apprehension about being seen doing so because it contradicts their Christian beliefs. This raises the question: Does God approve of such conduct among African Christians?

The failure of Christian missionaries lies in their inadequate addressing of certain cultural challenges faced by their newly converted followers. Adamo (2001:34) asserts that this is primarily due to the lack of relevance of Western hermeneutics in addressing pressing problems within the African context. Consequently, African Christians resort to clandestine consultations with African healers and diviners due to the inefficacy of medical science and missionary Christianity in diagnosing and prescribing remedies for certain cultural and psychological issues.

When African or Western Christians from one culture attempt to express their Christian faith using foreign English or Siswati forms, the gospel fails to take root and establish itself indigenously. Syncretism has been a persistent issue among God's people throughout history and continues to be a growing problem in our continent and the world today. Understanding what syncretism entails and how to address it is crucial.

Gehman (1989) defines syncretism as the merging of two opposing forces, beliefs, systems, or principles to create an entirely new entity where neither of the original elements remains. It is akin to reconciling quarrelling siblings or attempting to unite incompatible elements. It is important to note that while cultural adaptation or inculturation has the potential for syncretic outcomes; it is not necessarily synonymous with syncretism.

The assimilation of cultural ideas and practices within a local Christian community does not have to be syncretistic. If these ideas and practices align with the scriptures and do not contradict the fundamental message and worldview of the Bible, syncretism is not an issue. On the negative side, syncretism denies the uniqueness of revelation or exclusive faith. It is rooted in the belief that all theology is relative and biased. Opoku explains that:

Real syncretism is always based on the presupposition that all positive religions are only reflections of a universal original religion and show therefore only gradual differences" (Anderson, 1970:12).

On the positive side, syncretism, as mentioned earlier, is an attempt to unite, harmonise, or blend the diverse beliefs of one religion with conflicting beliefs of another. It ultimately represents unfaithfulness to either religion. The problem lies not in the adaptation of elements from one religion or culture into another, but in incorporating incompatible and irreconcilable aspects from one into the other.

Opoku continues to say:

The syncretistic approach may be defined as 'the view which holds that there is no unique revelation in history, that there are many different ways to reach the divine reality, that all formulations of religious truth or experience are by their very nature inadequate expressions of that truth and that it is necessary to harmonise as much as possible all religious ideas and experiences so as to create one universal religion for mankind (Anderson, 1970:12).

The Christian Church was faced with the challenge of appearing to contradict the African way of life on one hand, while seemingly opposing certain government policies on the other. How can one effectively evangelise in such a context? One approach could be to strive to be as unoffensive as possible, focusing on individual Christian goodness. Another approach would be to engage in purely social projects, as the government now assumes responsibility for most schools, hospitals, and other social services.

The departure from the moral order has resulted in Africans losing their sense of control over themselves and their environment. This has led to various evils, taboos, disasters, and calamities that are occurring today, such as climate change, floods, xenophobia, same-sex marriage, homosexuality, pornography, abortion, the HIV and AIDS pandemic, gender-based violence and femicide, greed and corruption, distorted religions, leaders lacking integrity, truth, and compassion, and most recently, the coronavirus or COVID-19 pandemic, power outages, and poverty. All of these issues disrupt social harmony and invoke God's wrath. They need to be identified and eliminated if we desire the well-being of our nation. From the standpoint of the Swazi African Traditional Religion (SATR), to address all these evils, the ancestors, as custodians of the community and its ongoing welfare, need to be appeased and asked for forgiveness. This is necessary to protect and sustain the well-being of our society and restore the African people's pursuit of respect, peace, love, unity, good health, and longevity.

Black theology, with its emphasis on solidarity and respect for life, humanity, and community, firmly believes that it is possible to rediscover, restore, and enhance the sacred elements of the African community that existed before the arrival of missionaries and colonisers on the continent. Its goal is to bring these elements into full practice within the authentic contemporary community of the Swazi people in South Africa. Black theology asserts that people are truly human because of their connection to others, their coexistence with others, and their commitment to others. This highlights the authenticity and value of Black theology.

1.5 Research Methodology:

A research of this magnitude must employ both qualitative methods for prose and narrative, and quantitative methods for statistical comparison. This study will utilise field research methods, which include both qualitative and quantitative approaches, such as participant observation, direct observation, structured and unstructured or intensive interviewing. Though the researcher mentions a mixed method in this study, and the researcher will not change employing field research methods because the two methodologies, mixed and field, constitute both qualitative and quantitative approaches that have been applied in this thesis. Rubin and Babbie support this notion, stating, "Commonly used qualitative research methods include participation observation, direct observation, and unstructured or intensive interviewing. The term field research is often used to include all these methods of qualitative and quantitative research" (Rubin and Babbie, 1993:358).

Throughout the study, the terms field research and qualitative research will be used interchangeably to fulfill the following research objectives:

- Examine the religious orientation of the Swazi people before the arrival of missionaries and the spread of Christianity.
- Explore their history, religious and cultural orientation to understand their contributions to nation-building, national unity, and social cohesion among the Swazi South Africans, as well as the broader South African and continental context.
- Establish the relationship between Swazi African Traditional Religion and the Christian faith.
- Investigate the contributions of Swazi African Traditional Religion to the contemporary Church context.

- Analyse the data collected during interviews and formulate research findings guided by the research topic for potential implementation.
- Explore the points of convergence between both religions to merge ideas and understanding of SATR and Christianity, and make recommendations to Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) such as Mpumalanga interfaith action for societal renewal (Mifafsor) and Government: Ehlanzeni District House of Traditional Leaders (EDHTL), along with its sampled fourteen Traditional Councils.

Fieldwork or research involves the process of collecting original or empirical data by going out into the field. The researcher's plan is to conduct field research and interview ordinary individuals from the ground to gather information. These methods have been the subject of debate since the 1980s. Denzin and Lincoln (1998) define qualitative research as a multi-method approach that adopts an interpretative, naturalistic perspective, studying phenomena in their natural settings and seeking to understand them in terms of the meaning people attribute to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998:3).

On the other hand, quantitative research is described as a rigorous inquiry into aspects of the social world, producing formal statements or conceptual frameworks that provide new ways of understanding the world. It offers practical knowledge for those working with issues related to learning and adapting to the pressures and demands of the social world (McLeod, 2001:3; Swinton & Mowat, 2006:31).

In both of the above definitions, this research seeks to investigate the phenomena under study, namely: Was African Traditional Religion a receptive vessel for the preparation for the Christian faith? This study aims to explore the connection between African Traditional Religion and the Christian faith. The secondary or sub-questions are as follows:

- Why hasn't African Traditional Religion, including the Swazi religious orientation, gained exposure, acknowledgment, and recognition in South Africa, despite having significant contributions to religious views and values that even impact Christianity?
- Is inculturation, a topic continuously debated within the church, a tool to bridge or widen the gap that exists between the two faiths?

While the researcher has defined the two methods above, the researcher intends to primarily focus on the qualitative method for this study. The use of questionnaires in this

study will be considered a quantitative strategy, while interviews and observations will be regarded as qualitative techniques. The interviews will be structured and analysed to allow for open-ended responses and facilitate an in-depth study of individual faith.

This message holds significant importance in social research as it "helps us find rights, judge which sources of data are most valid for what we need to know, ask critical questions about public issues and reports, and derive our conclusions with some degree of certainty. Even when we seek answers in other researchers' findings, we will still need to conduct research of our own to assess which of the published reports to trust... Measuring the social world is a complex process. Social research is concerned with the things that are changing even as we measure them, and that change even more because we measure them. In fact, much of the time, we study how things are to provide useful information that will help us change the things we are studying" (Lune et al., 2006: ix).

The field of systematic and historical theology incorporates qualitative methods, including interviews and narratives in its nature and application. This study will focus on traditional councils, namely Mbuyane, Empakeni, LoMshiyo, Gutshwa, Msogwaba, Mdluli, Emjindini, Mlambo, Siboshwa, Hhoyi, Mhlaba, Mawewe, Luggedlane, and Matsamo, all within the context of the Ehlanzeni District Municipality. "It is often not practical or possible to study an entire population, so it is necessary to make general findings based on a study of a subset of that population."

A subset of a population is known as a sample (Melville and Goddard, 2001:34). One member from each of these traditional councils will be interviewed. Additionally, the traditional leader who is the chairperson of the council will be included in the study to demonstrate how Swazi basic beliefs and practices can be utilised as transformational, developmental, and therapeutic tools to enhance the relationship between Swazi African Traditional Religion and the Christian faith. This aims to support SATR's claim as a receptive vessel for the preparation for the Christian faith.

Sampling is an empirical survey research method that relies on a representative portion of the whole population. Therefore, the techniques used to select the sample are crucial for ensuring the validity of the research findings. This research is appropriately situated within the field of systematic and historical theology, as Swazi African Traditional Religion and the

Christian faith bring about changes in people's attitudes towards religion, culture, beliefs, and practices.

The other method to be employed in this research is quantitative, which will utilise numerical data to facilitate comparisons. These methods, which have been the subject of debate since the 1980s, will be explained and prominently featured in the research to enable meaningful comparisons.

"Qualitative methods of research emphasize depth of understanding, attempt to tap into the deeper meanings of human experience, and tend to generate theoretically richer observations that are not easily reduced to numbers. On the other hand, quantitative methods emphasize the production of precise and generalized statistical findings. When we want to verify whether a cause produces an effect, we are likely to use quantitative methods" (Rubin and Babbie, 1993:30).

The research will commence with an investigation of literary works to establish the historical basis of classical civilization. The main perspective will involve assessing and examining whether African Traditional Religion can serve as a receptive vessel for the preparation for the Christian faith. The feasibility framework will help position the research within the context of its limitations, and the focus will be narrowed to the specific problem to be addressed. The research scope, initially broad, will be narrowed down to specific related materials. A bridge will be created to connect the topic to the present time, ensuring effective research implementation. The research will be conducted in the fourteen traditional councils of the Ehlanzeni District House of Traditional Leaders (EDHTL): Mbuyane, Empakeni, LoMshiyo, Gutshwa, Msogwaba, Mdluli, Emjindini, Mlambo, Siboshwa, Hhoyi, Mhlaba, Mawewe, Luggedlane, and Matsamo. These councils are deeply rooted in indigenous soils and encompass spiritual, psychological, social, anthropological, historical, economic, agricultural, cultural, religious, theological, and political dimensions that permeate the research as a whole.

A brief historical overview of the origins of these traditional councils and chiefdoms will be provided and compared to the phenomenon being studied. Expanding the scope of the research would require several decades to complete. Therefore, the sampling has been narrowed down to ensure the research focuses on manageable parameters. To ensure accurate data collection, the interviews will employ an ethnographic probing approach,

while well-structured questionnaires will elicit information from the aforementioned traditional councils. This will help determine whether the phenomenon under investigation has been neglected or influenced by the religious and cultural influences of missionaries. The impact of Swazi beliefs, practices, ceremonies, and festivals from African Traditional Religion on the mindset of Christians will be assessed to determine whether African Traditional Religion indeed serves as a receptive vessel for the preparation for the Christian faith.

1.6 Research Design:

Bless & Higson-Smith maintain that:

"A research design has two meanings. It can be understood as the planning of any scientific research from the first to the last step. In this sense, it is a program to guide the researcher in collecting, analyzing, and interpreting observed facts. This process is often referred to as research management or planning. A second, more specific definition of a research design, which is adopted here, directly relates to testing hypotheses. It specifies the most appropriate operations to be performed in order to test a specific hypothesis under given condition. It outlines a procedure by which the co-variance of a stable time-order can be demonstrated. The critical question faced by scientists is: What steps should be taken to prove that a particular hypothesis is true and that all other potential hypotheses are false? To achieve the objectives of social research, scientists require a carefully thought-out strategy. Constructing a good research design involves answering several fundamental questions about the research. These questions pertain to the focus of research, the unit of analysis, and the time dimension of the problem at hand. Social research can be used to explore a wide range of topics in the social world, though with varying degrees of success. It is helpful to classify these topics into different categories, as they may require different types of research design. The focus of research can be understood in terms of three categories: conditions, orientations, and actions. For the purposes of this research study, our focus is on orientations (1988:63-64)."

Bless & Higson-Smith point out that:

"Orientations pertain to the attitudes and beliefs of the subjects, which is why we are interested in exploring religious and cultural views, beliefs, and practices under the orientations category (1988:64). In most cases, these three categories are not mutually exclusive, and social research needs to be sensitive to all of them simultaneously. Social research is concerned with studying things that are changing, even as we measure them, and that change further because of our measurements. In fact, much of the time, we study how things were in order to provide useful information that helps us bring about changes in the subjects we are studying (Lune, Pumar, and Koppel, 2006: ix)."

In the category of conditions, the researcher intend to explore the state of the subjects in the research, specifically the religious orientation of the Swazi people in South Africa before the arrival of missionaries and the spread of Christianity. The category of actions was also explored, referring to how the research was to be conducted. This was a focal point of the research as well. The actions were directly observed by the researcher, who participated in the research as a Swazi person and community member known to all the sampled council members and their traditional leadership. The researcher also resides in the same district of Ehlanzeni where the research study was focused and conducted. The chosen period aimed to reflect the significant transition in the history of Swazi African Traditional Religion (SATR) in South Africa, investigating and evaluating the events prior to and after the arrival of missionaries and the spread of Christianity.

The interviews were conducted using a religious-cultural probing approach, and well-structured questionnaires were used to gather accurate data from the sampled members and councils. This enabled the researcher to determine whether the phenomenon under scrutiny and inquiry had its original beliefs and practices changed, remained the same, or were enhanced by the religious and cultural influences of the missionaries. The researcher assessed the impact of Swazi African Traditional Religion on the mindset of the people, focusing on its religious and cultural aspects. The researcher obtained access to the fourteen traditional councils with the permission granted by the Chairperson of the Ehlanzeni House of Traditional Leaders, Inkhosi BS Khumalo, from the Gutshwa Traditional Council. This was made possible due to the trust and rapport the researcher maintains with the traditional leaders and their councils. The researcher personally attended and conducted the interviews following the fieldwork plan, approaching the identified councils and delegated members for interviews. The researcher was able to successfully conduct all planned interviews with the fourteen sampled Siswati-speaking traditional councils. This sample size was adequate for the study and allowed for cross-verification, where facts were carefully scrutinised and validated.

The researcher interviewed the following fourteen sampled Swazi African Traditional Leaders and their Councils situated in the district of Ehlanzeni. Melville and Goddard (2001:34) maintain it was often not practical or possible to study the entire population, so it became necessary to make general findings based on a study of a subset of that population which is known as sample. The following are the sampled fourteen traditional councils: The

Mbuyane, Empakeni, LoMshiyo, Gutshwa, Msogwaba, Mdluli, Emjindini, Mlambo, Siboshwa, Hhoyi, Mhlaba, Mawewe, Lugedlane and Matsamo Traditional Councils.

1.7 Outline of Chapters:

The research study met its objectives by addressing specific aspects in each chapter as follows:

Chapter one, focused on the objective that examined the religious orientation of the Swazi people before the arrival of the missionaries and the spread of the Christian faith guided by secondary and primary questions that follows: What was the religious and cultural orientation of the Swazi people before the arrival of the missionaries and the spread of Christianity?, and African Traditional Religion: A receptive vessel for the Christian faith or not?, respectively. The chapter dealt with the research problem where we investigated why SATR was not acknowledged, recognised etc.; research aims and objectives for guiding and reaching the purpose of the research; literature review of the material to be used; research methodology that addresses how to do it; research design on the finished product the researcher would love to see in the end and outline of chapters where the researcher focus on what we aim to achieve in each chapter.

Chapter two, focused on the objective that investigated the historical, religious and cultural orientation of the Swazi people, (*Emaswati*), in order to examine and establish their contributions to the building and promotion of nationhood, national unity and social cohesion of the Swazi people of South Africa in particular and those in the continent in general. The Swazi African Traditional Religion has been constituted by the following pillars, beliefs or commonality concepts, namely: the Swazi belief in God (*Mvelinchanti*), the Creator; the Ancestors; the religious leaders which included the elderly; chiefs and diviners or traditional healers; the sacred places which included the home; the kraal; the rituals which included the format of all rituals such as the ritual of appeasement; the kinship rituals; the societal ritual; the sacred texts; the special day of worship; the moral order; the life after death; the rites of passage such as birth; initiation; marriage; death; burial; bereavement; thanksgiving and African calendar which informed the Swazi people on various seasons and activities guided on what was done, when and how for the well-being of the communities.

Chapter three, focused on the objective that examined how the Christian faith was prepared by the African Traditional Religion in order to be embraced by so many millions of African Christians, and the relationship that exists between the Swazi African Traditional Religion in South Africa and the Christian faith. Statistics South Africa: Community Survey (2016) states that, most South Africans identified themselves as belonging to a faith group. About 43.4 million South Africans identified themselves as Christians, whilst 2.4 million identified themselves as adherents of the African Traditional Religion inclusive of the Swazi religious orientation. The main aim of this chapter was to look at the connections between Swazi African Traditional Religion and the Christian faith and establish why the Swazi African Traditional Religion as a receptive vessel was not given due recognition.

Chapter four, focused on the objective that traced and investigated on what contribution African Traditional Religion can make as an offer to the contemporary Church context. This was done to witness that Jesus Christ of Nazareth came to fulfil and not to destroy the Swazi African Traditional Religion in South Africa. We understood that we needed to be careful, humble and sympathetic in this area of African Religion as it yielded valuable insights and brought forth the religious values, beliefs, insights, practices and vocabulary on which the Christian faith has been planted upon and was thriving under today. It was through these traditional leaders or chiefs that African Religion has become a receptive vessel for the Gospel of Jesus Christ so that God's final revelation of Himself may be received and used by all African peoples including the African Church leadership.

Chapter five, focused on the objective that examined the relationship of Swazi African Traditional Religion as the main source for Christianity as well as the research methodologies, findings and analysis which reflected on the relationship between these two religions; and on how this relationship should be enhanced on what to do now for future development and responsibilities guided by objectives. In doing so, the African Christians discovered hidden truths about their own beliefs, traditions, ceremonies and practices but ignored by the missionaries and colonisers who did not validate and took them forward so that both religions, SATR and Christianity, contribute meaningfully to nationhood, national unity and social cohesion of the Swazi people in South Africa as well as the South African nation in general. Both religions believed that all humanity was connected at one source, and that source was God (*Mvelinchanti*) in the language of the Swazi people. The researcher also believed that this research study created a spiritual yearning, spiritual

insights and sensitivities which received their ultimate satisfaction in the Gospel. The findings significantly impacted on the association of the Swazi African Traditional Religion and Christianity.

Chapter six, focused on the objective that investigated the meeting points of Christianity and Swazi African Traditional Religion in South Africa where ideas and understanding were merged, the research findings formulated and recommendations made for possible implementation and showcased Swazi African Traditional Religion (SATR) as a receptive vessel for the Christian faith; and the references were reflected at the end of this research study and gave light to what literature was used. The researcher made recommendations that redressed the imbalances of the past which included the question on religion and culture to Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) particularly the Mpumalanga interfaith action for societal renewal (Mifafsor); Ehlanzeni District House of Traditional Leaders (EDHTL) and its sampled fourteen Councils. Mifafsor is a newly launched organisation constituted by all Mpumalanga faiths and bodies, namely: Hinduism; Islam, Rastafarian, Bahai, Swazi African Traditional Religion, Christianity and Ecumenical Bodies which represent the whole Christian world or universal Church such as the South African Council of Churches including Mpumalanga; African Independent Churches (AICs) and South African Catholic Bishops Conference (SACBC).

The researcher now turns to the next chapter two where the researcher looks at the history, religion and culture of the Swazi people and establishes their contributions to the building and promotion of nationhood, national unity and social cohesion among the Swazi people in South Africa and the broader African continent.

CHAPTER TWO

SWAZI CONTRIBUTION TO NATION BUILDING AND SOCIAL COHESION

2.1 Introduction:

This chapter focuses on the objective of investigating the historical, religious, and cultural contributions of the Swazi African Traditional Religion (SATR) to the building and promotion of nationhood, national unity, and social cohesion among the Swazi people in South Africa and the broader African continent. The aim is to establish the connection and relationship between SATR and Christianity, which missionaries often disregarded. The researcher examines how the commonality concepts within SATR have contributed to the nation-building and social cohesion processes. By promoting the recognition and acknowledgement of SATR, we seek to highlight its unifying role and encourage its acceptance and embrace by the Christian faith. This chapter aims to provide a deeper understanding of SATR and its contributions to the South African and African nations the researcher aspires to build.

The missionaries discovered the truths about the Swazi religious beliefs, traditions, and practices but chose to dismiss and conceal them. They presented the Swazi African Traditional Religion as a heathen, primitive, and mere cultural practice, in order to promote their own popularity and the acceptance of their new Christian religion. Consequently, many of Christianity's views and values are compatible with those of the Swazi African Traditional Religion. The actions of the missionaries kept SATR marginalised, downplayed, and at the risk of extinction for a significant period of time, but it survived due to its resilience.

It is evident that when both Swazi African Traditional Religion and Christianity embrace each other, they can make a positive and constructive contribution to the harmony, unity, cohesion, solidarity, patriotism, and oneness of the South African nation and those of the continent. Both religions believe that they share in the common origin of humanity which comes from one God (Mvelinchanti), the creator. By recognising the compatibility of Christianity and SATR as valid religions means that they can mutually influence each other's practices, views, and values.

The central question of this chapter is: Was Swazi African Traditional Religion a receptive vessel for the preparation of the Christian faith? The sub-questions: How did Swazi African Traditional Religion contribute to the building of nationhood, national unity, and social

cohesion among the Swazi people in South Africa and Africa in general? Why did the Swazi African Traditional Religion struggle to gain exposure, acknowledgement, and recognition in South Africa? These questions guide our exploration and lead us to the answers we seek.

These common aspects, when thoroughly explored, begin to reveal how the Swazi belief in God or the Creator (Mvelinchanti), the ancestors, the religious leaders (including the elderly, chiefs, and diviners or traditional healers), the special day of worship, sacred texts and places (such as the home and kraal), and the rituals (including the format of all rituals: the ritual of appeasement, kinship rituals, societal rituals, and the special day of worship), moral order, life after death, and rites of passage (including birth, initiation, marriage, death, burial, bereavement, thanksgiving ceremonies, and the African Calendar) have all contributed to the building and promotion of a strong, united, and cohesive Swazi nation. Before delving into these commonality concepts, it is important to define both culture and religion, as Swazi African Traditional Religion (SATR) regards these aspects as inseparable and mutually reinforcing.

Bhengu provides the following definition:

Culture is a sum of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes and meaning of objects. Some of the basic elements of culture are language, non-verbal codes, relationships, worldview, and patterns of thinking, activity orientation, reward systems and conflict management strategies. Common characteristics of culture include rules governing behaviours, a survival mechanism of dynamism ...Culture tends to identify a person more strongly with a particular group...Culture, therefore, has great potential to foster intolerance. The South African society, by and large, is an example of cultural intolerance (1996:26).

Dickson (1984:47) agrees with Thorpe and points out that culture encompasses various elements such as language, morality, art, and material creations generally used to ensure the continuation of life. In other words, the culture of a people encompasses everything that ensures the well-being of the community. In certain societies, including the Swazi, all aspects of social organisation, such as the role of chiefs, interpersonal relationships, morality, the stages of life (birth, puberty, marriage, and death), as well as practices related to medicine, architecture, warfare, and traditional education, are inseparable from religion in traditional African society. Swazi African Traditional Religion maintains that religion and culture cannot be separated, as religion is an integral part of the lives of the people.

Dickson maintains that:

The culture of a people embraces its economics, politics, legal systems, and all other societal systems and arrangements set up to ensure the welfare of the community' are all certainly, in African society, encapsulated in religion and culture as these are inseparable. Religion is not treated as an isolated entity but dealt with in a broader context as it permeates all sections of an individual's life and that of a collective, which is the society, as each and every member of the African society has been born into the African Traditional Religion'(1984:47).

Thorpe defines African Traditional Religion as follows:

For African people religion is a necessity and not an option. It provides them with ways of coping with the mysterious realities in their immediate environment – natural forces, ancestral spirits and powers felt to be functioning through the social institutions of the tribe or community. ATR always relates, in an organic and vital way, to the world in which it exists. Its adherents believe that human beings are not the only organisms that matter in the world. African people therefore relate closely to their natural environment and seek to establish harmony with it (1991:107).

Thorpe attests by saying, that:

Closely interwoven with African culture, African traditional religion is a valid religious orientation worthy of consideration by people living in societies with other religious orientations. African Religion belongs to a category of religious approaches worldwide which may be described as primal religions. These religions are often grouped together because they have come into existence independently in relatively isolated areas of the world and have no immediately apparent historical relationships to one another, nor to the major world religions such as Christianity, Islam, Hinduism or Buddhism (1991:1).

Thorpe (1991:107) reminds African people that their religious traditions have been passed down orally from one generation to another, emphasising that for them, religion is not a choice but a necessity. African religion encompasses all aspects of life, including agriculture, social interactions, political structures, and economics, as everything is imbued with religious significance. This is why there are no irreligious individuals in African communities, as everyone participates and shares in the religious life of the community by virtue of being born into it. What scholars such as Bhengu, Dickson and Thorpe are saying is that no matter people's ethnic group they come from or belong to, their culture is a sum of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes and meaning of objects that encompass various elements that are used to ensure the continuation of life.

Despite the multitude of complex cultures and languages across Africa, there are fundamental beliefs that are shared among those who belong to African Religion (AR). The commonality concepts of African beliefs, as mentioned in the previous paragraphs, seek to explore how Swazi African Traditional Religion contributed to the establishment and promotion of nationhood, national unity, and cohesion among the Emaswati in South Africa and beyond. It is important to note that the views and beliefs of Emaswati in South Africa may not be identical to those held by other Nguni-speaking groups or the Swazi ethnic group originating from the Kingdom of Eswatini. However, certain key concepts are shared among all these groups, as well as other primal religions.

The religious orientations of Emaswati, emaXhosa, emaZulu, and emaNdebele constitute the African Indigenous Religion (AIR), with the support of two million indigenous black people in South Africa as adherents, according to the Statistics South Africa: Community Survey 2016. The African Traditional Religion, inclusive of the Swazi religious orientation, has existed since ancient times as a religion of the African people. The survey also revealed that Christianity has a following of forty-three million believers in South Africa alone.

2.2 The Historical Background of the Swazi people of South Africa:

Since it was deemed necessary to conduct research on the Swazi people in South Africa, a brief history of their origins was provided. The fourteen Traditional Councils or Chiefdoms that were sampled and interviewed in this research share a common ancestry with the Swazi ethnic group. This clearly indicates that these Chiefdoms have deep roots in Swazi African culture and the beliefs of the Swazi people in South Africa. Consequently, they provided answers to both the main research question and sub-research questions as follows: Was Swazi African Traditional Religion a receptive vessel for the preparation for the Christian faith? How can Swazi African Traditional Religion of the Swazi people in South Africa contribute to the building of nationhood, national unity, and social cohesion among them and in Africa in general? Why has Swazi African Traditional Religion not gained exposure, acknowledgement, and recognition in South Africa?

The Swazi people, being part of the Nguni tribes, are deeply religious and originated from East Africa, where similar Swazi traditions, beliefs, and cultural practices are found. Delius (2007:111 - 127) asserts that Bonner's work on the Swazi people highlights the emergence

of these chiefdoms and notes that the Dhlamini ruling group, pressured by the Tembe people in the northeastern region known as the Delagoa Bay area, gradually moved southward through Mozambique and eventually settled in Swaziland in the 15th century.

The majority of the original inhabitants of the Kingdom of Eswatini resided outside the kingdom, while some remained within its borders. They were in constant movement, driven by their desire to expand their territory and the conflicts arising from dynasties. The history of the Swazi people indicates that predominantly, the Swazi resided in the Kingdom of Eswatini, which had a population of about 1,185,000, while those who migrated to and were born in South Africa over the years amounted to approximately 1,297,046. The Swazi population in South Africa was slightly larger than that in the Kingdom of Eswatini, according to Wikipedia: Religion in Eswatini (2010).

Adherents of the Swazi African Traditional Religion believe in the Supreme Being (Mvelinchanti), who created the earth and everything in it. They worship this deity without the need for sacrifices. The pre-colonial societies in the region were divided into two broad camps: the Emakhandzambili, who were the earlier settlers such as the Mahlalela or Emalangeni, and the Emafikamuva, who were the later arrivals such as the Ngwane's or Dhlamini's. For the purposes of this thesis, the following factors were the focus of our study:

- (i) The fourteen Swazi Chiefdoms or Traditional Councils that have been sampled are located in the province of Mpumalanga in the Lowveld area within the Ehlanzeni District Municipality; and
- (ii) The general history of the Swazi people from the identified and sampled Chiefdoms or Traditional Councils.

During the 19th century, the Swazi Chiefdoms emerged in the Highveld, Middleveld, and Lowveld of the former Eastern Transvaal, originating from the area that later became Swaziland. King Sobhuza and Mswati II were instrumental in the establishment of these Chiefdoms. The expansion of the dynasties led to frequent conflicts between the Ngwane or Dhlamini and other developing political entities such as the Mthethwa, Ndwandwe, and later, the Zulu.

Bonner viewed the Swazi migration as a strategic retreat to a safe place in the north, paving the way for the dispersal of Swazi groups (Emaswati) among the Koni, Kutswe, Pulana, Pai,

Ngomane, and Ndzundza Ndebele inhabitants. A few Swazi, including Zulu with a small number of supporters, migrated to Piet Retief (Mkhondo), Wakkerstroom, Ermelo (Msukaligwa), and Caroline (Mbhuleni) in the western region, now known as the Gert Sibande District, as well as Barberton (Emjindini), Nelspruit (Mbombela), and Lydenburg (Mashishini) in the Ehlanzeni district.

Simelane and Bhembe highlighted a statement made by the late King Sobhuza II of the Swazi nation in Swaziland during a meeting held at Ka-Lobamba on September 8, 1968 (Inyoni). He addressed the missionaries and their foreign religion, stating:

The absolute truth is that in whatever the Swazi people do, no matter what misbehaviour or whatever, the truth always tells you that you are now doing a wrong thing. We do not need people to teach us about faith. Even churches, their task is to remind us just as we stoke firewood to rekindle the flame, so that the pot must continue to be hot. We were born with faith, and we will die with it. It is not a difficult thing; it is a quite easy thing. I remember at school when we were still little boys. I do not know how old I was, but I know that I was a little boy, when we were visited by white missionary ladies who were from America and other places. One of them preached to us telling us what faith is and what the Bible is all about. She told us about a certain man who went to Queen Victoria. He then asked: Can you please tell me about your very, very, very small country compared to the whole world that you have ruled? Tell me what is your secret or type of the powerful portion which enabled you to rule almost if not the whole world. The answer Queen Elizabeth provided was to take a Bible and show it as the secret they always used. So, the Bible enabled the English to colonise the world-over. The Bible is the big Book which *King Somhlolo* advised the *Swazi* people to live according to it and leave all the other not so important earthly things you live by (2000:161).

The above quotation by the late King Sobhuza II clearly indicates that the Emaswati people had their own religion long before the arrival of the Christian faith and other religions in their kingdom. It highlights the efforts made by missionaries to introduce their Christian religion, which people found to have similarities with their own beliefs. This suggests that the Christian faith was influenced by the fundamental beliefs and practices of the Swazi African Traditional Religion (SATR), indicating that SATR played a significant role in preparing the groundwork for the Christian faith as it exists today. In light of this, the missionaries worked tirelessly to ensure that the Swazi African Traditional Religion received no exposure, acknowledgement, or recognition.

Delius points out that:

King *Mswati* in the 1850's and 1860's established his administrative capital (*lilawu*) at *Hhohho* in the far northern *Swaziland* bordering *Swaziland* and South Africa; and the royal villages at *Embhuleni* (Caroline); *Emjindini* in the west of Barberton and *Emekemeke* in the east of Barberton. These centres served as military outposts, with *Emekemeke* and *Emjindini* made exceptions as they became residences for *Mswati's* wives, and the *Swazi* Chiefdoms coalesced around them. The *Shongwe* group under Chief *Matsafeni Shongwe* and his successor *Matsamo* came to settle in the later Jeppesreef or Schoemansdal area around 1856 - 1865. From 1865, Chief *Mhola Nkosi's* ancestors aggregated around *Emjindini* in the later *Ehlanzeni* District, and there, the royal village was built under *Mswati's* wife who was known as *Yangase*. The *Monile Nkosi* Chiefdom, also known currently as *LoMshiyo*, emerged in 1866 when *Mswati* established the *Mekemeke* residence named after his wife. In the same period, several *Swazi* groupings constituted by four Chiefdoms settled around Nelspruit now named *Mbombela*. The three Chiefdoms were that of *Msogwaba Nkosi*, *Dantshi Nkosi*, and *Bhevula Nkosi*, which fell under *Inkhosi* (Dhlamini) royal families. All of them claimed a common descent from the *Swazi* Kings, *Sobhuza* and *Mswati* (2007:115).

Chief *Msogwaba Nkosi's* lineage originated from the *Emjindini* royal residence, where *LaMakhubu*, one of *Mswati's* junior wives, bore him a son named *Shishila*, who was the father of *Msogwaba*. *Shishila* was nicknamed *Yedwa*, meaning "the only one," as he was the only male child among King *Mswati's* children at the *Emjindini* royal kraal. After *Mswati's* death around 1868, *Shishila* and his followers moved away from *Emjindini* due to disagreements with the royal council (*liqoqo*) over regency and succession politics. They settled in various places, including *Lydenburg*, which *Shishila* named *Mashishini*. Following *Shishila's* death, *Msogwaba* relocated the community to several areas in *Nelspruit*, now named *Mbombela*, including *Plaston*, *Alkmaar*, *Vischspruit*, and other southern portions of the *Crocodile River*, known as *Umgwenya* in *Siswati*.

Chief *Dantshi Nkosi* descended from the royal line of *Ndlaphu*, *Sobhuza's* junior son and *Mswati's* half-brother. The relationship between *Dantshi* and his brother *Mancibane* deteriorated after their father *Ndlaphu's* death during *Mswati's* reign. Evidence suggests that *Dantshi* and his supporters were expelled from *Swaziland* due to this crisis. They initially settled in *Barberton* but eventually migrated to *Nelspruit* in the late 19th century.

Delius pointed out that:

Chief *Bhevula Nkosi* was the son of *LaNhlabatsi*, *Somquba's* junior wife at *Ka-Hhohho*. *Msuthu*, *Sobiyana* and *Ngungunyana* were his half-brothers and *Somquba's* sons from the senior house of

LaSimelane. *Somquba* himself was *Mswati's* elder half- brother who was stationed at *Ka-Hhohho*. His relations with *Mswati* deteriorated soon after the 1845 rebellion against the latter succession to the throne, and by 1849, he had fled with his family *Bhevula* included and followers to Lydenburg where they interspersed with the *Koni (BeNguni)*, *Pai (Emambhayi)* and *Pulana (Emapulane)* as well as the *Pedi (BaPedi)*. Ziervogel's work which maintained that, although the *Pai* were nominally, if not actually, subjects of the *Swazi*, they must have been subjugated by *Somquba* after he fled from *Mswati*. The history of the *Pai* now becomes the history of the *Swazi* of *Somcuba*. This view was supported by Bronner as he maintained that *Somcuba* was becoming a greater threat to *Mswati* as he recruited local *Sotho*, *Pai* and *Mapulana* into his forces. *Mswati* pursued *Somquba* between 1853 and 1855 and gave him a crushing blow. Thereafter *Msuthu*, *Sobiyana*, *Ngungunyana* and *Bhevula* together with other survivors, sought protection from the *Pedi* and lived amongst them. The growing tension between *Msuthu* and *Sekhukhune* by the end of the century forced *Bhevula* and his *Swazi* adherents to settle on the northern side of the Crocodile River in the White River and Nelspruit areas. The *Sibhulo Khumalo Swazi* Chiefdom in Nelspruit (*Mbombela*) claimed descent from *Myakayaka Khumalo* of *Zulu* extraction. Both, as evidence suggested, *Myakayaka* and *Mgangeni Khumalo* were related to *Mzilikazi Khumalo*. After *Myakayaka's* death, his son *Mthayisa* and his supporters settled near *Bremersdorp (Ka-Manzini)* where they sort of passed, qualified and validated as *Swazi* (2007:117).

Over time, *Mthayisa* was posted to *Ka-Hhohho* by *Mswati* as one of his headmen (*tindvuna*) for the northern raiding parties. *Mswati* facilitated this because *Mthayisa's* half-sister, *Sisile*, a daughter of *Mgangeni Khumalo*, became *Mswati's* senior wife for diplomatic reasons. Their union resulted in the birth of a son, *Ludvonga*, who succeeded his father as the new king in 1868 but died under mysterious circumstances in 1874. By 1879, *Sisile* was strangled under secret orders from the new king, *Mbandzeni Ka-Mahlukohla*, which forced *Mthayisa* and his followers to flee *Swaziland* and settle in *Barberton (Emjindini)* temporarily before moving into the *Kutswe* territory between *White River* and *Nelspruit*. *Sibhulo Khumalo* assumed leadership of the *Khumalo* tribe after *Mthayisa's* death.

The expansion of the *Swazi* people into these *Lowveld* areas led to cultural and linguistic assimilation between the *Swazi* immigrants and other tribes such as the *Koni*, *Pai*, *Pulana*, and *Kutswe* groups, including the *Ngomane* groups known as *Emakhandzambili*.

Delius points out that:

The history of the *Ngomane* was also shaped by relationships of dominance and dependence with *Swazi* intruders and neighbours. Through a series of attacks and raids, the growing *Swazi* state gained some control and the allegiance of the *Ngomane* Chiefdoms under *Matjembeni I* and *MjeJane* in the 1830's to 1840's. *Kongwane*, *Matjembeni I's* successor, was put to death by the *Swazi* in about

1845, after which the *Ngomane* were obliged to pay tribute in the form of elephant tusks, buffalo horn and ostrich feathers. The *Swazi* offshoot Chiefdoms, notably the *Shongwe* under *Matsafeni* and his successor *Matsamo*, served as pawns in the subjugation of the *Ngomane* to the *Swazi* Kingdom. The *Zulu* also raided the *Ngomane* under chief *Mgubho* in the late 19th century (2007:119).

In the eastern part of the Transvaal, the Shangane Chiefdoms were established, including two Mkhathswa Chiefdoms in Nkomazi. Soshangane Nxumalo, who broke away from the Ndwandwe and invaded southern Mozambique in the 1820s, built his Gaza Kingdom in the 1830s and 1840s. He passed away on October 11, 1858, triggering a succession dispute between his two sons, Mawewe and Mzila, from 1858 to 1864. After bitter wars between these brothers, Mawewe eventually settled with his followers in the Shongwe and Mahlalela Chiefdoms in Nkomazi, and Mswati blessed their settlement.

This new homeland gave greater significance to the label Mkhathswa. Among Mawewe's followers were his half-brothers, Bhongeya and Ndlemane. After Mawewe's death, Ndlemane served as regent for Hanyane, Mawewe's son and heir-apparent, who later took over and forced Ndlemane and his supporters to move slightly further northward into *Ngomane* territory. This move established another junior branch of the Shangane, the Mkhathswa Chiefdom in Nkomazi.

The impact of this relocation and the imprisonment of Hhoyi were particularly felt by the *Ngomane* and Mahlalela Chiefdoms. Ntiyi, the son of the *Ngomane* Chiefdom and heir-apparent to the Ka-Hhoyi Chiefdom, was taken prisoner, and Mova became regent during Hhoyi's captivity in southern Mozambique by Mzila with the connivance of Ntiyi's estranged brother, Dlabu, and Chief Matsafeni of the Shongwe Chiefdom. It was only when the acting regent Mova paid a ransom to Ngungunyane that Hhoyi was released from captivity.

The Mahlalela or Malangeni people were considered true *Swazi* or Bemdzabuko under Sobhuza because they were found ahead of the Emakhandzambili, who already occupied the covered areas. The Mahlalela royal lineage was originally seated at Eshiselweni, but before or during the 1800s, they occupied the extreme northeastern corner of Swaziland, bordered by southern Mozambique to the east. Their heartland became Mbuzini, a place of goats, where one of Mahlalela's successors, Chief Mlambo, was buried. Sidhloko I and Lomahasha were among the prominent successors of Mlambo in the 19th century, and it was during this period that the Mahlalela Chiefdom began to face challenges from the emerging *Swazi* state throughout the century.

The Mahlalela Chiefdom, under Chief Lomahasha, like other Swazi subject Chiefdoms, was compelled to participate in King Mswati's military campaigns and became part of Mswati's army during Mawewe's conflict with his brother Mzila in 1862. Mawewe and his followers also provided local support to Mswati during the unsuccessful campaigns against the Pulana in 1864. This demonstrates that the Swazi monarchy attempted to maintain a balance between dominance over Swazi subject Chiefdoms and dependence on them.

2.3 Christianity and Swazi African Traditional Religion:

The researcher will now discuss the reasons why the missionaries did not embrace the African Traditional Religion (ATR) and why it remained unexposed and unacknowledged. The disdainful view towards ATR, which still persists today among many, including educated Africans, stems not so much from long-held ideas about the religion, but rather from a lack of knowledge and a misunderstanding of it. Dopamu emphasises the importance of making corrections by saying:

Preconceived erroneous notions can easily be corrected in the face of requisite understanding and realisation of truth; so also can correct information remove abject ignorance on any given subject. The aim ...therefore is to present ATR in its correct and true perspective (1991:19).

Mndende (2000:5) points out that the African people's continued practice of their ancestral rituals, despite being forced into the new religion of Christianity by missionaries, can be attributed to the fact that they saw no value in what the missionaries were offering. This lack of value stemmed from the missionaries' own incorrect understanding of ATR, inherited from earlier writers who had interpreted African ways of life and practices through their own lens. However, some missionaries, such as Callaway and Cook, as well as certain anthropologists, ethnographers, explorers, traders, and travellers, recognised the significance that Africans placed on their rituals and showed sympathy towards these practices. As Hassing observed in Lang:

The study of African religion in the now somewhat remote past suffered partly because of lack of real knowledge and factual information, and also because of the often inadequate, notions of the earlier writers. The result was sometimes an inadequate, negative, or even false picture which saw little that was good in African religious life and thinking (1991:20).

The missionaries approached Christianity as a standard by which they measured true spirituality. They consistently classified African Traditional Religion (ATR) as culture rather than fully recognising it as a religion or theology. At best, they viewed it as *praeparatio evangelica*. Addressing this issue comprehensively is one of the important research questions we aim to explore in this chapter.

Mndende also highlighted that the lack of documentation of African Traditional Religion by its own practitioners, coupled with its oral tradition that emphasised practice over written scriptures, contributed to the failure to acknowledge, recognise, and expose ATR. The missionaries employed foreign terms to define the indigenous practices and beliefs of the local people. The religion of the land was not defined on its own terms but was interpreted based on Christian dogmas such as scriptures, designated worship days, the trinity, resurrection, eschatology, and more.

'Since the African Traditional Religion was not documented by its own practitioners and the fact that it was an oral tradition with an emphasis on practice more than written scriptures, maybe was another reason they failed to acknowledge, recognize and expose African Traditional Religion (ATR). The missionaries used foreign terms to define the indigenous practices and beliefs of the indigenous people of the land. The religion of the land had to be defined, not on its own terms, but based on their Christian dogmas such as scriptures, special days of worship, the trinity, resurrection, eschatology, etc. And because African Traditional Religion failed to comply with these criteria, it therefore meant failure to be recognized and acknowledged as a religion. By defining the ATR based on their Christian religion meant widening the gap that already existed between ATR and Christianity as they chose to follow a process of discontinuity between the two religious systems. This meant that there was no common ground in the concepts concerned' (2000:5).

The researcher will now outline and explore certain Swazi beliefs and practices that have connections with Christianity. This is an attempt to address the sub-research question: How did Swazi African Traditional Religion contribute to nation-building, national unity, and social cohesion, particularly among the Swazi people in South Africa and Africa as a whole? These shared aspects represent fundamental beliefs present in both traditions: the Christian religion and the African Traditional Religion, specifically the Swazi African Traditional Religion. These beliefs have been inherent since the inception of this African religious system. Christianity, upon its arrival in Africa, found that the African people were already practicing these basic beliefs, which continue to contribute to the harmony, unity, cohesion, solidarity, patriotism, and oneness of the South African nation. Dopamu supports this notion, stating:

We find that in Africa, the real cohesive factor of religion is the living God and that without this one factor; all things would fall to pieces. And it is on this ground especially – this identical concept that we can speak of the religion of Africa in the singular (1991:23).

Christian faith is a universalistic religion with a mission to embrace people worldwide, whereas African Traditional Religion (ATR) is particularistic, rooted in specific groups like the Swazi African people of South Africa. However, these two religions have encountered each other and have begun to interact. The universal Christian faith has now found its place within the religious framework of regional and Swazi African Traditional Religion. This process has occurred through the medium of African languages and cultures, which have also been the primary carriers of Swazi African Traditional Religion. The traditional concepts and local languages are now being stretched and adapted to accommodate the Christian faith, articulate its teachings, propagate its message, and make sense of it.

Within Swazi African Traditional Religion, which shares constructive and positive commonalities with Christianity, the question arises: Why did the Christian religion, upon its arrival in Africa, fail to give exposure, recognition, and acknowledgement to the Swazi African Traditional Religion of South Africa? In response to this research sub-question, it becomes evident that the justifications provided by the missionaries in their response to this question were starting to unravel. The following are the basic beliefs of African Traditional Religion that the Christian faith has built upon.

2.3.1 The Swazi belief in God or the Creator (Mvelinchanti):

The belief in the Creator is an integral part of Swazi life and is also present in many other cultures that adhere to African Traditional Religion. Swazi African Traditional Religion encompasses the religious beliefs and practices of the Swazi Africans that have existed since ancient times. It is not a stagnant religion but a living one that Africans have embraced and practiced throughout the ages. The beliefs and practices of the African Traditional Religion among the Swazi people were transmitted orally and through praxis from their ancestors, who taught them about the two worlds: the invisible and the visible. Swazi adherents believe in Mvelinchanti, the Creator of the universe, who is also known by various names that reflect His attributes such as greatness, holiness, benevolence, and more.

Swazi African Traditional Religion strongly emphasises communication between the Creator and the living through what we refer to as ancestors. Swazi adherents undoubtedly believe in the existence of ancestors, as they engage in activities related to this common belief through rituals. The Creator, ancestors, and rituals are shared beliefs and practices among all followers of African indigenous religion. Despite the challenges posed by colonialism and apartheid, the Swazi African Traditional Religion, though unrecognised and unacknowledged by the ruling regime of that time, has persisted as a valid and divinely established entity that continues to play a role in this era of South Africa and Africa's history.

The role played by Swazi African Traditional Religion aligns with the objective of investigating its influence on the building of nationhood, national unity, and social cohesion among the Swazi people in South Africa. It also aims to address the main research question: whether Swazi African Traditional Religion in South Africa serves as a receptive vessel for the preparation for the Christian faith. Kasenene highlights:

According to Swazi Traditional Religion, the existence of the universe, human beings, animals, plants, order in the universe and *Mvelinchanti*. He is the ultimate reality who was there from the beginning and will always be there. He was not created, since he was there before anyone else or anything else existed. He brought himself into existence after which he created the universe and everything in it. Although the Swazis do not know how *Mvelinchanti* created the universe, they believe that whatever exists derives its existence from him and everything is sustained by him. The beliefs about the Supreme Being are clearly expressed through the attributes given to him (1993:12).

The researcher agrees with Kasenene's viewpoint in the above quotation and acknowledges that adherents of Swazi African Traditional Religion believe in the existence of a Supernatural Power or God (*Mvelinchanti*), who initially revealed Himself to the first generation. While they understand this Supernatural Power as the Creator and Sustainer of creation, the specifics of how the universe was created remain unknown. Africans, being communal by nature, do not believe that God created individual human beings, but rather a community without preferences, as God divinely created and loves all equally.

As God's first generation in creation, the community is entrusted with laws and observances to live in harmony with the Creator, with fellow human beings as equals, and with nature as the provider and sustainer of life. Unfortunately, the first generation failed to adhere to

God's laws and observances, leading to their demise. However, this first generation became the first ancestors.

Mndende explains:

The death of that generation meant the beginning of intercession between the living and the Supernatural Power as the first generation is believed to have joined the spiritual world where the Creator resides. In other words, the death of the first generation marked the beginning of ancestors. The ancestors, then, are the messengers of the Creator; they are the supervisors of the physical world. The ancestors look after the welfare of the living, mainly through the elderly, who in turn teach the youth both orally and through rituals, and the process continues from generation to generation (1999:1).

Mbiti agrees with Kasenene and explicitly states:

All African people believe in God. They take this belief for granted. It is at the centre of African Religion and dominates all its other beliefs. But exactly how this belief in God originated, we do not know. We only know that it is a very ancient belief in African religious life (1982:40).

The attitude towards the Supreme Creator resembles the respect accorded to African rulers. According to African tradition, certain protocols must be followed to gain access to a person of authority. Only approved mediators can assist ordinary individuals in establishing contact, and this contact occurs through the observance of protocols that demonstrate respect. The attitude of respect for authority extends to spiritual matters and necessitates the involvement of intermediaries when addressing the divine. It is important to note that the role of intermediaries is not merely utilitarian. The manner in which they are approached is significant, as reverence for intermediary beings is understood as reverence for God.

Contrary to the claims made by those unfamiliar with Swazi African Traditional Religion in South Africa, such as non-Africans, Swazi Africans do believe in and worship God (Mvelinchanti), rather than solely focusing on ancestors. Ancestors play a crucial role within African Traditional Religion and remain an integral part of the religious and cultural consciousness of Africans. Removing ancestors from the African belief system would undermine the African worldview, as ancestors hold a central position.

Kruger, Lubbe, and Steyn (1996:33) maintain that the Swazi African people (*Emaswati*) believe in a Supreme God, in a realm of spirits, and in the sanctity of a unified society hence the building and promotion of their nation, unity and cohesion as Swazi nation in

South Africa, with other nations in South Africa and Africa as a whole. In the African understanding, God is above all worshiped through obedience to the specific imperatives and everyday relationships of the normal course of things. Although the Supreme Being was not generally thought of as a judge in personal and ethical matters, He may withhold rain or cause crop failure which will inevitably lead to hunger. At such times God may be approached through ritual and prayer but the need for intermediaries to facilitate communication would prevail even then. These intermediaries are the Ancestral spirits, also referred to as the living dead, or the shades or lesser deities.

As mentioned in previous paragraphs, when a person is born into the African Traditional Religion, they become part of the family and clan cycle, which encompasses both the living and the deceased. In other words, from childhood to maturity, individuals actively participate in all ritual practices and performances of the African Traditional Religion. These practices take place at home within the clan, where the child receives primary religious education. Thus, the home serves as the environment where the child consistently engages in religious activities under the guidance and supervision of their family and clan.

What the researcher tries to demonstrate is that nationhood, national unity, and social cohesion can also be achieved through a communal African Traditional Religion, which is inherently focused on building and promoting a unified community, clan, family, and individuals. From the moment of birth, Africans are guided and trained with the aim of attaining a fulfilling and complete life. However, individuals are fully aware that they have not lived in isolation but as part of a community. Given the communal nature of life, individuals naturally become integrated into a network of mutual relationships within the community. Therefore, the essence of life revolves around maintaining dynamic relationships with one's extended family, clan or ethnic group, ancestors, nature, and God. Instead of being seen as a sacrifice of individual freedom, this existence within the community is recognised as essential for personal security and wholeness.

Ocaya cautions foreigners about the distortion caused by their preconceived, misleading, and unfounded ideas regarding the African Traditional Religion, of which they have no true understanding, and states:

The falsehood of the assertion that for African peoples God is willing to stop a little and look around an African community. To do this a person, who is not indigenous to Africa, ought to suspend his preconceived ideas about African religions. If I am to advise such a researcher, I would strongly urge

him to acquire some knowledge of a couple of African languages. This would be an asset in finding out quickly how rich African religions are about the notion of God. For the traditional African God is forever near and influences the daily events of life (1998:84).

Idowu, in agreement with Ocaya regarding the distortion caused by preconceived, misleading, and unfounded ideas about the African Traditional Religion, states:

In these religious systems, the idea of a God is fundamental; they believe in the existence of a supreme, primordial being, the lord of the universe, which is his work...and withstanding the abundant testimony of the existence of God, it is practically only a vast pantheism – a participation of all elements of the divine nature which as it were diffused throughout them all...Although deeply imbued with polytheism, the blacks have not lost the idea of the true God: yet their idea of him is very confused and obscure...God alone escapes both androgenism and conjugal association; nor have the blacks any statue or symbol to represent Him. He is considered the supreme primordial being, the author and the father of the gods and genii...However, notwithstanding all these nations, the idea they have of God is most unworthy of His Divine Majesty. They represent that God, after having commenced the organisation of the world, changed Obatala with the completion and government of it, retired and entered into an eternal rest, occupying Himself only with His own happiness: too great to interest Himself in the affairs of this world. He remains like a negro king, in a sleep of idleness... (1976:140).

The Swazi African Traditional Religion, akin to Christianity, acknowledges an omnipresent God, the Supernatural Power (Mvelinchanti), who is constantly involved in the affairs of His created life and the earth. The Supernatural Power permeates everywhere, and its nature is beyond the comprehension and explanation of both science and human beings. Just as this creative power is present throughout creation, it is believed to hold a special place in the spiritual realm where creation originated. Followers and practitioners of the Swazi African Traditional Religion perceive this spiritual world as a sacred place, governed by commandments, observances, and taboos that regulate the well-being of the physical world. The Supernatural Power, God, is the originator and enforcer of all the laws that govern life, which must be strictly adhered to.

Mbiti (1982), in agreement with Kasenene regarding the beliefs about the Supreme Being as expressed by various nations across the continent, asserts that the Creator, the Supernatural Power, God, is referred to by different names depending on the specific nation. Each nation has its own names attributed to the Creator, and the attributes associated with the Creator, as perceived by different ethnic groups in the continent, have resulted in diverse names for these attributes.

The researcher has compiled a list of different names associated with the Creator, from various countries and ethnic groups in the Southern African Developing Countries (SADC) region. These names are as follows:

South Africa, Swaziland, Mozambique, Namibia, Lesotho, Botswana, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Angola. The Swazi African Traditional Religion found in both South Africa and the Kingdom of *Eswatini* which is the place of origin for *Emaswati*, and which refers to the Creator amongst other names as *Mvelinchanti* whereas in Mozambique is called Xikwempu, Mulungu; in Namibia – Karunga, Mukuru, Ndjambi Karunga, Pamba ; in Lesotho – Molimo (Modimo); in Botswana – Modimo, Urezhwa; In Malawi – Chiuta, Cauta, Leza, Mulungu, uNkurunkuru, uThixo; in Zimbabwe – Mwali (Mwari), Unkulunkulu, Nyadenga; in Zambia – Mulungu, Chilenga, Chiata, Lesa (Leza), Nyambe, Tilo and in Angola is called Kalunga, Nzambi, Suku. All these names are associated with greatness of all, benevolence, sustaining power, showing that the Creator existed long before creation (1982:40).

The African people, including the Swazi, acknowledge the existence of a Supreme Being who is considered responsible for creation. This Supreme Being is believed to have made all things, both seen and unseen, which is why different names are attributed to the Creator, emphasising the concept of the First Appearer or Exister. The names given to the Supreme Being suggest that the Swazi people had an established belief in a Supreme Being prior to the arrival of missionaries. In essence, God is the source.

2.3.2 The Swazi belief in Ancestors:

Within the Swazi African Traditional Religion, those who have passed away are also referred to as ancestors. These ancestors serve as mediators between the living and the dead, residing in the spiritual realm. According to the Swazi African Traditional Religion, death is understood as a partial physical separation from the living, and ancestors sometimes reveal themselves to their family members through dreams and visions. The ancestors are considered not truly dead but rather asleep, as their spiritual essence remains awake to guide, direct, speak, and protect the living members of their family and clan in the physical world.

Mbiti (1990:82) explains that ancestors continue to be involved in the daily lives of their descendants, up to four or five generations, after which their memory fades and they are considered truly deceased. The spirit of the deceased then becomes an impersonal spirit residing in the spirit world.

Mndende (1999:3) asserts that ancestors are understood as an acknowledgment that every human being is composed not only of flesh, bones, and blood but also of spirit or soul. While the physical body dies and decomposes, the spirit or soul remains eternal, and the bones in the grave symbolise life. Ancestors are seen as an integral part of the community and human relationships, particularly within the clan (family circle), are believed to be everlasting. People are born and pass away, but once a relationship is established, it continues indefinitely. In light of this, ancestors or the spirits of the departed play a vital role as intermediaries between God and human beings.

Kruger, Lubbe, and Steyn hold the belief that:

Ancestral spirits appears to be most prominent in southern and central Africa. It is generally believed that only those who have married and produced offspring to remember them, become ancestors when they die. Those who have not done so rapidly fade away and are forgotten. It remains the responsibility to remember its own Ancestors until they fall into oblivion. The relationship which exists between the living members of a family and those who have died, is a reciprocal one: On the one hand, the Ancestors enjoy the respect and honour of the living by being included and remembered in family functions and in decision-making processes. On the other hand, the living family members rely on the Ancestors for protection and prosperity. While the Ancestors are very much remembered, and at times even feared, it would be a distortion to say that they are worshipped (1996:34).

The question of being remembered or not holds no significance because in Swazi African Traditional Religion, rituals are performed collectively by the family and clan. Individualism has no place in this religion. The researcher agrees with the authors' perspective that ancestors are not worshiped but rather respected and treated with deference, esteem, and honor. Since ancestors are involved in all actions that affect the well-being of the community, sacrifices are offered in their honor to avert disaster, seek blessings, express gratitude, or pay religious homage. They are certainly venerated and considered worthy of deep respect, reverence, and sacredness. One's behavior in this world determines their position in the spirit world.

Kruger continued to point out the following on nature spirits:

In addition to the Ancestral spirits, Africa also knows a relatively widespread belief in nature spirits. The whole of nature and all of life are in terms of African thinking, permeated with spiritual power. However, in a more particular sense, local manifestations of spiritual force and energy are to be found in certain mountains or hills, in specific rivers or lakes, or in special stones. In some areas a tendency

towards *totem* can be found in that tribes may be given the name of a particular animal or element of nature. Certain snakes are also often viewed as ancestral representatives (1996:36).

The researcher agrees with Kruger (1996:36) and colleagues, as there are individuals, families, or clans who have taken their second name after an animal, such as an elephant (Indlovu), and are recognized as (Ndlovu), which becomes their respected clan emblem. The researcher also concurs with the authors regarding snakes. When snakes are seen in compounds, they are neither killed nor chased away, as they are considered to be ancestors visiting to check on the family's well-being, inspect those they visit, ensure protection, and remind the family and clan of their presence among them. Children may even play with the snakes without causing any harm, and when the visits are over, the snakes disappear. This act is believed to be a visit from the ancestors, either to oversee the family or to bestow blessings upon them.

Stinton (2004:135) highlights that ancestral spirits oversee the continuation of traditional life and ensure harmonious relations between people, as they were created by the Creator (Mvelinchanti) to fulfill this role. Ancestors communicate their displeasure to their descendants by manifesting symptoms of illness or misfortune in the earthly realm. They also provide guidance and luck to one's family, administer justice to wrongdoers, and protect the crops.

In Christianity, which primarily focuses on the figure of Jesus Christ, faith encompasses both the believer's act of trust and the content of their beliefs. Christianity, as a religious belief system, does not embrace the concept of ancestors, as it does not regard them as having divine nature. Instead, Christianity acknowledges mediators between God and humanity, but recognises that they do not possess the power to mediate salvation. Together with their descendants, Christians worship God.

2.3.3 The Swazi Religious Leaders:

The Swazi religious leadership, comprised of the elderly, chiefs, and diviners, also known as traditional healers, plays a significant role in building and promoting the Swazi nation, national unity, and social cohesion as custodians and practitioners of the Swazi African Traditional Religion. The Swazi religious leadership ensures that unity and harmony prevail within families, clans, and the community at all costs. The elderly, both men and women,

hold leadership positions in the Swazi African Traditional Religion, as it does not discriminate based on gender but recognises the contributions of both sexes.

2.3.3.1 The Swazi Elders:

Through their life experience and wisdom, the elderly have the ability to discern when harmony is disrupted and ancestors are displeased. They possess the knowledge and solutions to address such situations as nation builders. Mndende asserts that "there is no general trend of gender differentiation as that depends on gender roles in different ethnic groups. What is common is that each elderly person has a role to play, sometimes depending on the birthright, age, and gender of the individual" (Mndende, 1999:4). The important point here is that both males and females are accepted as leaders in the Swazi African Traditional Religion, although their roles may differ. In cases of clan problems, the elderly of the clan, as leaders based on kinship, take the initiative to resolve the issues. If misconduct is believed to be a result of an unperformed ritual, the kinship leadership assumes responsibility. The Christian religion also mentions elders in the first letter of Paul to Timothy, stating: "The elders who perform their leadership duties well are to be considered worthy of double honor (financial support), especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching the word of God concerning eternal salvation through Christ" (1 Timothy 5:17-ASB).

2.3.3.2 The Swazi Chiefs:

The Swazi African Traditional Religion recognises chiefs or traditional leaders (emakhosi) as cultural, political, and religious leaders, along with their traditional councils (tinkhundla). The research study has focused on some of the Ehlanzeni Swazi Traditional Leaders or Chiefs (emakhosi) and their Traditional Councils or Chiefdoms (tinkhundla) for the interviews, as mentioned in the previous chapter. The chief (inkhosi) acts as the highest court of appeal in resolving disputes within the community and as a member of their clan. However, the chief does not hold religious leadership in such situations. As mentioned in the previous paragraphs, harmony is essential in performing rituals to achieve the required holistic therapy and contribute to the building and promotion of unity and cohesion among the Emaswati nation.

Mndende (1999:4) confirms the importance of harmony and balance within society. When these are disrupted by natural forces such as drought or pestilence, the chief assumes the

authority to call upon the people to seek forgiveness, plead, and collectively invoke all ancestors, regardless of their clans, to hear their cries and resolve the situation. Thorpe (1991:107) agrees that disturbing harmony and wholeness is considered evil and should be identified and eliminated. Ancestors and other spirit mediators act as custodians for the ongoing well-being of the community, playing a vital role in maintaining this desirable balance. Traditional diviners and healers serve as visible representatives of the ancestors, having been specially chosen for the task of mediating between the spiritual and physical realms. Rites, rituals, sacrifices, and prayers serve as the means to establish and maintain a harmonious relationship between the visible and invisible aspects of the African community, contributing to nation-building. The researcher concurs with Mndende that drought or pestilence is a result of the disturbance of harmony and balance in society, and it is through collective unity, rather than individual efforts, that a cohesive community and nation can be developed. During such times, God may be approached through rituals and prayers, but intermediaries, such as ancestral spirits and the living dead, are necessary to facilitate communication.

In the Christian religion, there are recorded instances of kings such as Saul, David, and Solomon being anointed by God to lead His people. These leaders always sought guidance from God Himself on how to lead His people. God expressed regret over making Saul king, stating: "I regret that I made Saul king, for he has turned away from following Me and has not carried out My commands" (1 Samuel 15:11-ASB). When God gave David three choices, he was faced with a dilemma. The options were seven years of famine in his land, three months of fleeing before his enemies as they pursued him, or three days of pestilence (plague) in his land. David was greatly distressed and unable to make a choice. Instead, he entrusted the decision to God, pleading for His mercy. The Lord sent a pestilence (plague) that lasted for three days, resulting in the death of seventy thousand men from Dan to Beersheba (2 Samuel 24:12-15).

2.3.3.3 The Swazi Diviners / Traditional Healers:

Mndende (1999:4) highlights that diviners (tangoma) are individuals, both men and women, who are regarded as special people called and directed by their ancestors to fulfill their primary responsibility of maintaining and restoring the health and well-being of the community. Diviners receive their calling from their clan ancestors, often through dreams or visions. They then undergo special training under their guidance, where various methods of

healing the sick are revealed to them. Once trained, they are commissioned to carry out their main duty, which is to heal and restore health comprehensively. It is important to note that their calling does not involve killing, destroying, or causing harm to others, as no person has the right to do so. According to Kruger et al. (1996:48), a diviner's role is to discern the cause of misfortune, whether it is the work of witches or the wrath of ancestors.

The Swazi African Traditional Religion strongly condemns evil deeds, as they are despised by the Creator (Mvelinchanti) and the ancestors. Therefore, any person claiming to be a diviner but involved in evil deeds, either physically or emotionally, has falsely presented themselves to fulfill their own wicked and selfish desires. This distinction also applies to herbalists (inyanga) who use natural remedies (mutsi) and to sorcerers (batsakatsi) who utilise certain concoctions of mutsi for sinister purposes.

Traditionally, a diviner (sangoma) is primarily concerned with healing through the use of herbs and medicines, while a mediator (inyanga) primarily focuses on divination (kuphengula). It is primarily the sangoma who serves as a religious mediator and maintains a continuous relationship with the ancestors. Throughout the life of a sangoma, they are believed to be in direct communication with the ancestors and the entire spirit world, which grants them insight into the ancestors' expectations. Equipped with special powers bestowed by the ancestors, a sangoma can interpret dreams, investigate the causes of misfortune, and prescribe actions to remedy a situation.

It is important to note that SATR, in its pure form, has been mistakenly labeled as the religion of witchcraft, which will be discussed further in the next chapter. As mentioned earlier, SATR maintains that the ancestors would never send anyone to commit evil deeds against other human beings, as doing so would disrupt harmony and the noble mission of nation-building, unity, and cohesion. SATR promotes doing good and behaving well as the primary concerns of the spiritual world, which we should all strive for in order to receive prosperity and protection from the ancestors.

The elderly play a crucial role in training diviners to become professionals. During the performance of diviner's rituals for the ancestors, an animal sacrifice is made using the clan's sacred assegai. However, it is not just anyone who performs this task, but a specialist assigned with the religious duty of killing sacrificial animals to ensure the success of the ritual. Throughout the sacrifice, the clan elderly utter ritual speeches to the ancestors,

calling for their response to the initiand's plea. The involvement of the clan is essential for the ritual's success, and it is during this time that the diviner demonstrates their special gift of communication by interacting with the ancestors. The ritual performance is guided by the ancestors and directed by the clan elderly, as the diviner cannot fulfill the instructions alone without the experience and wisdom of the ancestors.

2.3.4 The Swazi Sacred Places:

The Swazi African Traditional Religion recognises the existence of sacred places, which are integral to their belief system and contribute to the promotion and protection of their nationality, unity, and cohesion as a harmonious and united nation. While there are certain places that hold more sacredness than others, the supernatural or spiritual power can be found everywhere, as all space has been created by God. Some of these sacred places serve as sites for ritual performances. It is important to note that sacred places may vary among different ethnic groups, and although Emaswati, emaZulu, ema Ndebele, and emaXhosa belong to the Nguni family, their views and beliefs may not be identical, as mentioned in the previous paragraphs.

However, the shared key concepts among these groups have allowed the researcher to form a general understanding of the basic religious outlook of this subgroup of the Nguni-speaking people. They are fortunate to have or share similar sacred places, such as mountains, specific rivers, graves, cattle kraals, the main hut, shrines, forests, and more. However, their interpretations and beliefs may differ. The sacredness of all spaces created by God is equal, although some places are designated as more sacred and special through the power of consecration using specific words for ritual purposes.

The Swazi religious belief regards a home as one of the sacred places, which is considered an ideal place of worship. A home holds greater sanctity because it is the environment of a clan, encompassing houses or huts, ancestral graves, and a cattle kraal. Interactions within the home create a well-balanced, harmonious, and educational environment for children, serving as their first institution for socialization. Within the homestead, there is a special hut known as the main hut (lidladla), typically used for cooking and sometimes for sleeping during family and clan functions. The seating arrangement within the main hut is determined by its structure.

The hut is divided into two sections by a fireplace (litiko). Upon entering the hut, the right side is where women sit, while the left side is reserved for males. The eldest male sits next to the entrance on the left, with younger males sitting towards the far end, opposite the door of the main hut. It is important to note that the seating arrangements for both men and women are based on their age. On the women's side, behind the door, there is a designated area where a woman in labor (umhelo) stays. This space is used for religious and social practices during childbirth, and it is where the placenta (indlu) and the umbilical cord (inkhaba) are placed and buried. This ritual makes the main hut (lidladla) even more sacred. The clan stays in the main hut for several days until the sacrificial animal is killed (kuhlatshwa kwenkhomo) and the feast commences.

Mndende (1995:5) agrees with the belief that the home is a fundamental place of worship, emphasising that the home is regarded as one of the sacred places. The home holds greater sanctity because, as an environment of the clan, it includes clan houses or huts, ancestral graves, and a cattle kraal. The environment is adorned with sacred symbols, such as clay pots (tindziwo) associated with traditional healers (tinyanga), and the rondavel, which symbolises the feminine principle in traditional society. Additionally, the sacred spear, mentioned in previous paragraphs, is symbolic of the masculine principle and ritual practices.

It is crucial to note that from the first day of preparations for this ritual, typically around five days before the sacrifice, the clan ensures that the great hut is emptied of all items. This creates space for grass to be scattered on the floor, where the clan members will be sitting and sleeping together as a form of cleansing and preparation for the significant day of the sacrifice. People are not permitted to enter the great hut wearing shoes until the ritual is completed.

Mndende (1999:6) asserts that during this period, every member of the clan must abstain from sex and any form of argument. They should solely focus on and engage in the preparations for the ritual. The scattered grass used for sitting purposes is only removed and burned after the bones of the sacrificial animal have also been burnt, symbolising the conclusion of the ritual. This highlights how the ritual performances of Emaswati contribute to nation-building, national unity, and social cohesion among the Swazi people and the nation as a whole. These ritual performances convey the true story of the Swazi people—

their identity, origins, history, heritage, and their future as Emaswati in South Africa and the continent.

Similarly, the Christian religion also has sacred places and signs, such as the Church sanctuary, the cross, or the fish symbol, representing the Age of Pisces that marked the rise of Christianity over the past two millennia. Additionally, the flame or candle symbolises Christ's presence, and alpha and omega represents various aspects of Christian faith.

2.3.5 The Swazi Kraal:

The cattle kraal is considered one of the sacred places in Swazi African Traditional Religion. According to Mndende (1999:6-7), the cattle kraal is an enclosure made up of wooden poles and tree branches, serving as a sleeping place for cattle. It is exclusively under the control of male individuals and is where the slaughtering of sacrificial animals takes place. Women who are born within the clan participate in ritual activities inside the kraal, while those who marry into the clan do not partake. In other words, married women only participate in the rituals of their biological clans, not their matrimonial homes. The kraal, similar to the great hut, consists of different sections, including the cattle kraal entrance, the sitting area, and the opposite side of the cattle kraal entrance.

The cattle kraal holds significant importance in African tradition as it is believed to be a place highly charged with the presence of the ancestors. It is where the elderly communicate with and seek guidance from the ancestors. The horns of the sacrificed animal are nailed to the poles at the entrance of the cattle kraal, symbolising the seriousness of the clan's problems that require immediate attention. Whenever there is unusual behavior or persistent illness in a family member, resembling the symptoms of someone in need of a ritual, the head of the homestead usually consults with the ancestors at the entrance of the cattle kraal to identify what is lacking and needed. In the case of illness, once all necessary rituals have been performed and medication provided, if the problem persists, the elderly return to the cattle kraal entrance to communicate with the ancestors until they grant their request for healing.

Regarding the sitting positions in the cattle kraal, similar to the main hut, the kraal is divided into two sections representing the male members of the clan and the community. Clan members sit on the right-hand side of the kraal according to their seniority, while community members sit on the left-hand side, also based on seniority determined by birth and initiation.

Towards the back on both sides of the cattle kraal entrance are the young males (emajaha). These young males differ in status, defined by their seniority based on age and maturity. The youngest boys sit at the back, as they have no special place in the cattle kraal due to their immaturity and being under the strict supervision of their parents.

The young males demonstrate discipline and respect when assigned their sitting positions according to their seniority by the elderly, as everyone understands their status, role, responsibilities, and expectations, as prescribed by indigenous law. Respecting these prescribed rituals is crucial, with respect being fundamental in Swazi religious beliefs and practices, regardless of a person's social status or wealth. The researcher is aware that the religious beliefs and practices of Emaswati are silent on physical circumcision. This suggests that the discipline and respect exhibited by the young males mentioned earlier stem from their teachings in indigenous law by the elderly. The absence of physical circumcision also contributes to nation building, unity, and cohesion among Emaswati.

This is where Emaswati sharply differ from the Nguni family groups such as the Xhosa and Ndebele people. The initiation ritual in Swazi African Traditional Religion focuses on teachings and counseling about culture, tradition, practices, procedures, customs, beliefs, and the indigenous law. These teachings are spiritual rather than physical and are undergone by boys and girls who are twelve and thirteen years old. The teachings are conducted by males and females who possess the necessary age, maturity, and extensive knowledge of the indigenous law of Emaswati.

The Nguni people (Emaswati, EmaZulu, EmaNdebele, and EmaXhosa) are governed by indigenous law (umtsetfo wesintfu), which encompasses the customs and behavioral patterns that govern families, clans, and communities. Every individual is expected to respect and abide by this rule of law. For instance, in a kraal, it is the law that a young person should not speak to an elderly person if the elder is standing; the young person must either kneel or bow as a sign of respect. Failure to adhere to this practice results in the young person being reprimanded and chastised. Such community institutions regulate the social life of the Swazi African people and contribute to the development of children as good citizens who understand their heritage, contribute to their nationality, and are committed to the national unity and social cohesion of Emaswati in South Africa and the continent.

2.3.6 The Swazi Rituals:

The rituals performed by the living for the deceased in the spiritual world are extraordinary practices. These communal religious rituals serve specific purposes such as thanksgiving, rites of passage, appeasement, divination, and addressing special requests from the ancestors. The Swazi people believe that rituals reestablish the connection within the community and between the living and the ancestors who are physically departed but spiritually alive in the spiritual world.

This means that there is a relationship between the physical world the living currently inhabit and the spiritual world, which is the realm of the ancestors after death. In these ritual ceremonies or religious gatherings, the community expresses various forms of worship, promoting unity, healing, the development of a devoted nation with patriotic sentiments, principles, and collaborative efforts. This contributes to the overall characteristics of the Swazi people and all the nations on the African continent.

Thorpe (1991:104) suggests that both unity and diversity are inherent in African religion. However, in general, African religion, which encompasses the essence of being human for African people, follows a life-affirming and life-sustaining pattern. Religious practices and beliefs across the continent have developed within distinct cultures, often isolated from each other by significant distances or geographical barriers. Consequently, there are considerable differences, as discussed in the preceding paragraphs, resulting in unity and diversity reflected in languages, art, music, and the broader African culture. The rites, rituals, sacrifices, and prayers performed by traditional diviners and healers serve as means to maintain a harmonious relationship between the visible and invisible African community, encompassing both the living and the deceased.

Mndende (1999:12) explains that a holy meal is given after sacred words are uttered to the ancestors by the elderly. During this holy meal, the kraal transforms into an altar, becoming spiritually imbued with sacredness. Communication with the ancestors represents the pinnacle of all rituals, as it demonstrates the success and acceptance of the ritual. The remaining meat is then shared as food among those who attended the ritual, including neighbors and friends who are considered outsiders but have come to partake in the ceremony with the clan. The conclusion of the ritual is marked by the burning of all the

bones of the sacrificial animal, signifying a successful collaboration between the living and the deceased in unity and harmony.

2.3.6.1 The Swazi Ritual of Appeasement:

The elderly, serving as religious leaders, announce the reason for a ritual. The ritual of appeasement occurs when the Supernatural Power, the Creator (Mvelinchanti), the ancestors, and humanity have been disrespected and wronged, leading to disharmony within the community. Ignoring warnings from the elderly and ancestors can result in punishment from the ancestors, which may manifest as sickness and misfortune. No medication can alleviate or resolve the situation, and the only remedy is a public confession or acknowledgment of the offense. Subsequently, a holy meal is shared, provided by the offender and their clan as a symbol of admitting the wrongdoing and disrespect committed. This clearly contributes to the development and promotion of nationalism, national unity, and cohesion among the Swazi people, the community in which these practices take place, and the nation as a whole.

As the offender or culprit undergoes healing, they not only reconcile with themselves but also with the clan members, the entire community, and the spiritual world. Engaging in this process signifies the person's commitment to transformation, and their actions contribute to their own nationalism, national unity, and cohesion, as well as that of their family, clan, and the broader community, including the spiritual realm of the deceased and ancestors.

The Christian religion also has a rite of reconciliation, involving penitence, communal confessions, cleansing rituals using fire, absolution, praise and thanksgiving, healing oil, and the sharing of peace. Optional rites may include a libation rite, where beer, blood, or water mixed with mealie meal is poured from a calabash onto symbols representing the ancestors and the spirits of those who died unjustly, whether as victims or defenders (for example, during the apartheid era). Other cleansing rituals may involve the use of blessed water or a live goat while reciting prayers. These rituals serve to symbolically cleanse and heal.

2.3.6.2 The Swazi Kinship Rituals:

Thorpe (1991:47) highlights that ritual actions also play a role in maintaining social congruence and well-being. Hammond-Tooke, as cited in Thorpe (1991:47), categorises

ritual actions as either kinship or community rites. Kinship rituals are connected to family matters and have strong ties to ancestral spirits. These rituals are performed at various stages in the life cycle, including birth, initiation, marriage, and death. Additionally, rituals of thanksgiving and appeasement, which we will discuss in detail later in this chapter, are part of this kinship ritual framework.

In the Swazi African Traditional Religion, as in some other communities, the crying of a sacrificial goat or ox before it is slaughtered is seen as a sign that the ancestors have accepted the offering in the spiritual realm where they reside. When the animal does not cry, it is released, indicating the rejection of the ritual by the spirit world. This rejection may be due to the wrongdoing of the person leading the process or because the ritual itself was not properly conducted from the beginning.

The absence of a cry could also be a result of one or more family members breaking taboos prior to the ritual or disharmony within the family, leading to the sacrifice not being accepted. During the ritual process, all differences are set aside, and forgiveness and reconciliation are embraced. Conflict, grudges, power struggles, and similar issues within the clan must be resolved for the ritual practice to proceed.

This clearly demonstrates that the Swazi African Traditional Religion promotes nationhood, national unity, and social cohesion among Emaswati of South Africa and the continent. It emphasises communal worship goals of unity and harmony with God, relatives, friends, and neighbors, as well as purity, which cultivates inner peace. This unity, harmony, and peace foster improved communication, cohesion, nationhood, and solidarity among individuals within the community.

Mndende (1991:16-17) highlights that societal rituals involve the entire community, especially in cases of national disasters such as drought, pestilence, and famine. The Swazi African Traditional Religion, in promoting nationalism, national unity, and social cohesion, engages both the affected and unaffected members of the community. They approach their chief, who serves as a cultural, religious, and political leader and the highest court of appeal. Together, they assess the social order of the community and perform communal religious practices on a sacred mountain or designated place where such rituals are conducted.

According to the Swazi African Traditional Religion, upon arrival at the mountain, the community should sing and invoke their ancestors as a collective, specifically focusing on the community affected by the disaster. It becomes the responsibility of the community head or chief/traditional leader to ensure harmony within their community. All these processes and rituals are conducted in a communal manner involving both the clan and the wider community, who bear witness to these practices.

The Swazi African Traditional Religion can be defined as a comprehensive way of life for the indigenous black people of South Africa and Africa. This religion encompasses all aspects of life, including social, physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions. As previously mentioned, the ultimate goal of the Swazi African Traditional Religion is to unify human beings and maintain harmony within oneself, the clan, the community, and between the spiritual and physical worlds. In other words, it promotes nationhood, national unity, and social cohesion among the Swazi people of South Africa and the continent as a whole. Christianity also supports and promotes this way of life depicted by the Swazi African Traditional Religion among the people of South Africa and the continent.

Currently, we face life-threatening diseases such as the Covid-19 pandemic, HIV, and AIDS pandemic. In such times, communal prayers, forgiveness, reconciliation, and unity are crucial and should be prioritized. Through these actions, we can achieve individual and collective reconciliation with one another and with God, fostering harmony and good health.

The Bible (2016) states:

"If I shut up the heavens so that no rains fall, or if I command locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence and plague among My people, and My people, who are called by My Name, humble themselves, and pray and seek (crave, require as a necessity) My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear (them) from heaven, and forgive their sin and heal their land" (2 Chronicles 7:13-14: ASB).

2.4 The Swazi Sacred Texts:

Dopamu affirms that:

African Traditional Religion (inclusive of SATR) has no written literature or sacred scriptures or credal forms. It is essentially oral tradition. All we know of the religion, therefore, comes to us through oral traditions—myths and legends, stories and folktales, songs and dances, liturgies and rituals, proverbs and pithy-sayings, adages, and riddles. Some of these oral traditions are preserved for us in arts and

crafts, symbols and emblems, names of people and places, shrines and sacred places. Works of art are not merely for entertainment or for pleasing the eyes. But they usually convey religious feelings, sentiments, ideas or truths. To the Africans, these oral traditions are veritable vehicles of transmission of knowledge. As Idowu points out, these oral traditions are our only means of knowing anything at all of the peoples' interpretation of the universe and the supersensible world, and what they think and believe about the relationship between the two...But despite the limitations of oral tradition, it is certain that the basic and relevant message of ATR has been passed on unhampered from one generation to another by words of mouth(1991:23).

They also do not have a specific founder, as they emerged independently and in relatively isolated areas of the world. They do not have an immediate historical relationship with one another or with major world religions such as Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, or Buddhism. However, many of them have tribal founders, heroes, and heroines who are commemorated in sacred historical myths. Since they lack written creeds or dogmas, one cannot speak of orthodoxy or heresy in relation to them.

According to Mbiti (1976:8), African Traditional Religion, including SATR, is based on a daily practical routine of showing respect to the elderly, siblings, nature, and oneself. In the African communal way of life, practitioners of SATR are constantly reminded of all the components of their religion. Rituals, daily life, and social interactions are the contexts where respect for one another, morality, and practice intersect. Knowledge of clan names helps children invoke almost all of their ancestral ancestors and recognise their blood relatives.

2.5 The Swazi Special Day of Worship:

Mndende (1991:16-17) maintains that African Traditional Religion regards time as a creation of the Supernatural Power (Mvelinchanti) and, therefore, considers it disrespectful to think and designate one day as holier than the others. African Traditional Religion views all seven days of the week as sacred because Mvelinchanti determined time and boundaries when creating everything. Thus, the Swazi African Traditional Religion treats all days as equal, as God transcends time.

This indicates that African Traditional Religion does not designate a specific day for worship. However, it does encourage communal gatherings for worship during rituals, celebrations of special events such as the first fruits or other thanksgiving events, or when praying for rain. The specific day of the ritual is not significant in terms of holiness, but the

ritual practice itself is considered special and significant. This promotes the notion that all days are sacred, and individuals must tread carefully without disrupting the harmony that exists between human beings and the environment created by Mvelinchanti.

In the Christian religion, Sunday is generally observed as the Sabbath, the seventh day of rest dedicated to the Lord, as one of the special days of worship (Exodus 20:10: ASB). Other special days are included in the lectionary and may be observed even on weekdays, as every day is considered holy before the Lord. Examples of religious special days recognized or unrecognized by the government that Christians continue to observe include Palm Sundays, Holy Week services (including Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday), Ash Wednesday, Ascension Day, and others. Christian Churches are categorised as Mainline, African Independent, and Charismatic Churches. All mainline Churches, independent, and charismatics observe Sunday as a day for worship, except for the Seventh Day Adventist Church, which worships on Saturday.

2.6 The Swazi Moral Order:

Kruger et al. (1996:37) discuss God and morality, stating that morality should be viewed horizontally. However, this does not negate the vertical dimension in the moral challenge facing humanity. By acting responsibly and morally, human beings fulfill their divine role as co-creators with God. African ethics assume that individuals are constantly aware that they live and work in God's world as God's creatures. Therefore, God is present in all stages of an individual's life, including birth, puberty, marriage, and death.

The Swazi moral order clearly indicates that Africans are interconnected and mutually fulfilling entities. People are unchanging equals and simultaneous legitimate values, where their well-being is a precondition for the well-being of others. Both the Swazi African Traditional Religion and the Christian faith commit their followers to respect the worth of all individuals, regardless of their social origin, race, gender, age, status, or class.

Bhengu (1996:7) explains that in African tradition, the societal structure emphasises the need for harmonious exchange—a friendly act of assisting each other in both sorrow and joy. In Swazi culture, there is a concept known as a work-party (lilima). The head of the kraal, his wife, or a senior member of the kraal invites specific individuals to come and help. This act of assistance (luncedvo) does not require an explanation that food, typically in the form of beer (mcombotsi), will be provided. It is a common practice. The provision of beer is

not an incentive but rather a customary element. Work-parties usually occur during the cultivation of land, and access to land in African tradition is fundamental to Ubuntu/Buntfu.

The work-party (lilima) also takes place within the entire Nguni family group, including Emaswati. Community members, including those from families and clans, come together to work collectively, especially during the tilling of the land, planting of seeds, weeding, and harvesting. They lend a hand to enhance and strengthen the work force with the understanding that their efforts benefit themselves as well. Working together contributes to nation building, national unity, and social cohesion within families, clans, and communities. It promotes solidarity, ensuring that they remain unified and connected as one, regardless of the circumstances they may face.

Dopamu, in support of the moral order, points out that:

We have seen that God is the Creator of the universe, according to African belief. We have also seen that God brought the divinities into being to help Him in the theocratic government of the world. Africans, however, believe that for the orderly maintenance of the world, the divinities and ancestors have laid down norms and set patterns or codes of conduct. They know that in order to sustain the well-being of human society, certain things which are morally disapproved by the Deity must not be done...Things forbidden, things not done. It is realised that the action or conduct of any member of the community can affect the other members for good or for evil. These norms and codes of conduct can be seen as moral values. From the beginning, God has put His law in man's heart, and has endowed man with the sense of right and wrong. Man's conscience has always instructed him on this. Such things which are forbidden and must not be done are taboos. Taboos can be interpreted as prohibited actions, the breaking of which is followed by the supernatural penalty. The breaking of taboos is regarded as sin (1991:29).

Mndende (1999:9) emphasises that harmony within oneself, one's family, clan, society, nature, and the spiritual world forms the foundation of a healthy society and contributes to building a patriotic nation characterised by unity and cohesion. Respect is fundamental in achieving harmony for oneself, others (including the elderly), and the spiritual world. The assessment of what is right or wrong, moral or immoral is based on its impact on others. Community plays a crucial role in Swazi African Traditional Religion as an individual's display of humanness (buntfu) is dependent on their relationships with others. Disturbing harmony and showing disrespect are punishable by the Creator (Mvelinchanti) through the ancestors.

Bhengu (1996:8-9) asserts that the concept of buntfu or humanness can be best defined through old African sayings. These sayings include notions such as sharing in one's neighbor's sorrows and joys, recognizing that your neighbor's poverty is your own, acknowledging shared origins, life experiences, and a common destiny. The Swazi African moral order is characterised by the concept of Ubuntu/Buntfu, which involves having a positive regard for other human beings and providing physical, emotional, social, and spiritual support to those in need. It emphasises treating others as one wishes to be treated. Ubuntu/Buntfu raises questions like, how can a wealthy person enjoy a happy life while their neighbor is suffering? It teaches people that those who are fortunate should generously assist the poor and less fortunate without expecting anything in return.

The Swazi African Traditional Religion promotes collectivism, which significantly contributes to the creation of a caring, crime-free, and corruption-free society. This is exemplified by the philosophy of Ubuntu/buntfu, which encourages a culture of truth, reliability, integrity, indivisibility, goodness, righteousness, and respect for the rule of law. It emphasises the interconnectedness and unity of the Swazi nation, despite their diversity, in order to live harmoniously and respectfully as Emaswati.

Bhengu further explains that:

If a member of my neighbour's family has died; it is an African tradition to share the sorrow with my bereaved neighbour. We call this mourning (*kutila*). This means we mourn together, and I would make it a point that I help my neighbour in every possible way in his bereavement. In the same way, if my neighbour is having a wedding, it is my duty to see to it that I help in whatever manner I may be able. In doing this, I do not expect a reciprocal action from them and vice versa (1996:7).

The Swazi African Traditional Religion embraces Swazi expressions that highlight the principles of Ubuntu/buntfu. For example, "umuntfu akalahlwa" conveys the idea that a person should not be discarded like trash, emphasising tolerance, compassion, and forgiveness. "Umuntfu ngumuntfu ngebantfu" signifies that individuals realise their humanness (buntfu) through listening to advice and accepting criticism from others. This emphasises the social nature of every person's realisation of Ubuntu/buntfu through interaction with fellow human beings. These expressions contribute to the unity and cohesion of the Swazi nation.

The Christian religion teaches its followers to do good to others in order to receive blessings from God. The moral order, consisting of social norms and conventions, exists because it is supported by God and serves to maintain societal order. Different types of morals include punishment and obedience, fairness and equality, social contract, universal and ethical principles, and law and order. These morals are guided by expectations and rules. The moral order prevents society from disintegrating, alleviates human suffering, resolves conflicts in a just and orderly manner, and assigns praise and blame, rewarding the good and punishing the guilty. God approves of right actions because they are inherently right and disapproves of wrong actions because they are inherently wrong. Therefore, morality is independent of God's will. However, since God is omniscient, He knows the moral laws and, being moral Himself, adheres to them (<https://en.m.wiktionary.org>).

2.7 The Swazi Life after Death:

The Swazi African Traditional Religious belief in ancestors regarding life after death indicates that the soul is immortal, assuring that life continues beyond the physical world. The Swazi African Traditional Religion maintains that there is no reward or punishment in the afterlife; it is only in this life that reward or punishment occurs. The ancestors, serving as the mouthpiece of the Creator, Supernatural Being, or God (Mvelinchanti), are believed to be responsible for rewarding those who do good in this world. Conversely, those who disrupt harmony, show disrespect, commit evil acts against God's creation, including humanity, and neglect their duties in life face punishment.

Mndende (1999:15) explains that death signifies the physical separation of individuals from other human beings. The divine soul is believed to join the spiritual world from which it originated. Depending on the clan, a ritual called "kupheleketela" is performed by the clan sometime after the burial. The mourning period can vary from one to three years following the individual's death. Symbolically, this ritual represents the communal way of life of the Swazi African people, where the living spiritually accompany the deceased to the spiritual world to which they belong, and to remind the departed not to forget those they have left behind.

Another ritual performed is that of "kulandza," bringing the deceased back home. This ritual ensures that an individual, whether dead or alive, is spiritually present among their people

to protect the living. According to Swazi African religion, when someone passes away, they are laid to rest in a grave, signifying that their physical body rests there. The grave is respected as the Swazi religious orientation maintains that the person in the grave is not dead but rather asleep. Often, for various reasons, the living will visit the grave to communicate with the deceased, which is why people seek to know the location of their departed ancestors.

Kruger et al (1996:38) highlight that within the Swazi African Traditional Religion, different systems encompass myths about the origin of the world and human life. However, stories regarding the end of the world are absent. Scholars argue that this absence suggests the absence of a belief in heaven or hell in African religion, though it is problematic to impose such "foreign" categories. African religion does strongly believe in life after death, which forms the basis for belief in the ancestors and their role in human society. Whether dead or alive, the desire is to be in community with others.

2.8 The Swazi Traditional Rites of Passage:

The Swazi African Traditional Religion exhibits its connection with Christianity, as the rites of passage in both religions establish a link between these two religious practices discussed in this section. Mbiti supports the assertion made by Dickson:

African heritage is historical, cultural and religious. Therefore, we can say that religion is part and parcel of the African heritage which goes back many hundreds and thousands of years. African Religion is the product of the thinking and experiences of our forefathers. They formed religious ideas, they formulated religious beliefs, they observed ceremonies and rituals, they told proverbs and myths which carried religious meanings, and they developed laws and customs which safeguarded the life of the individual and his community (1982:12).

Therefore, the Swazi African Traditional Religion contributes to the construction and promotion of nationhood, national unity, and cohesion among the Swazi people, as well as the people of South Africa and the continent as a whole. This is achieved through the emphasis on the following common rites of passage, which were developed by our ancestors, as Mbiti previously mentioned. These rites of passage signify the transition of an individual's status and occur at birth, initiation, marriage, death, and thanksgiving for societal renewal. They are formal acts or procedures that are prescribed or customary in religious ceremonies.

Each of these four stages represents a transition from one phase of life to another. In this regard, the researcher will examine whether these rites were performed during specific periods or not prior to the arrival of missionaries and the spread of the Christian religion, as per the African Calendar. The researcher will address this question towards the end of this chapter under the sub-heading "Africa Calendar" to provide a comprehensive answer regarding the performance of rites of passage during specific periods.

Ocaya also agrees with Dickson's perspective:

Among the African peoples, the significant phenomena of life are witnessed not merely by routine conventional gatherings, feasting and dancing, but by activities pregnant with religious persuasions. Birth, puberty, marriage, procreation, death and life-after-death are not just natural occurrences. They are moments with great supernatural meanings in the traditional African religions. All seasons of the year and natural happenings do not take place as a matter of course, empty of content. They are the expression of God's overall power and influence in the created order. The reason why these events are not ignored is that the Africans are aware that the neglect of their recognition will inevitably draw down the anger of God (1989:84).

So, Ocaya provides a satisfactory answer that confirms the performance of these rites during specific periods in the African Calendar and before the arrival of missionaries and the spread of the Christian religion. He explains that these rites occurred throughout the seasons of the year, not due to mere human ability and wisdom, but as a demonstration of God's omniscience and omnipotence. God is the source of all power, and all nations exist because of Him. He is the only one who unites nations and speaks peace, enabling His creation to live and work together harmoniously and cohesively.

2.8.1 The Swazi African Birth:

The Swazi African Traditional Religion asserts that the purpose of performing the birth ritual (imbeleko) for an infant is to introduce them into the clan and the community of both the living and the departed ancestors. African Christian families also observe elements of the birth ritual, although not always in its entirety. During the ritual, an animal is slaughtered, and its blood symbolises the unity of the child's physical and spiritual worlds. The birth takes place in the hut (endlunkulu) where the mother-to-be was sleeping, and she continues to sleep there even after giving birth, as the hut is regarded as the place of the ancestors (bogogo/labalele/labaphansi). Once she is fit enough, she can join her husband,

but the husband must be disciplined and behave well for the sake of the child's life. Several processes take place from the day the child is born.

According to the Swazi African Traditional Religion, the entire childbirth process should be supervised by older women who advise the mother of the newborn (umtedlane) on traditional customs. The period of seclusion lasts for eight days and marks the birth ritual, during which the umbilical cord (inongo) is preserved until it can be buried in a religious manner by older women of the clan at the ancestral home, in a secret location.

Elion and Strieman (2001:42-43) state that the African Traditional Religion discourages the flushing away of inkhaba (afterbirth) because it is believed that such an act may cause the child to wander far from home. After the seclusion period, the infant is introduced to their new communities, both the living and the deceased. Different clans have varying rituals for welcoming the child into the world, but the important aspect is the act itself, which is performed by all clans. The father plays a pivotal role in organising the brewing of beer by women as a gesture of gratitude to the midwives.

The falling off of the umbilical cord and its burial symbolise the permanent connection of an individual to their ancestral land, which is commonly metaphorically referred to as one's place of birth, their ancestral home. Traditionally, inkhaba is buried near a river, and a tree is planted to mark the site. This ritual involves the entire community and reinforces the symbolism of cyclical connections between the spiritual, human, and natural worlds. It also represents the relationship between the individual, their clan, the land, and the spiritual realm. The burial site of inkhaba becomes a place where one must go to communicate with their ancestors and experience special dreams connected to their ancestors (labaphansi). When facing problems, one must sleep in the same main hut mentioned earlier, either on a goat's skin or on a mat (licansi), but never on a bed.

The birth ritual, known as imbeleko, serves as a public announcement that a particular clan has a new member who requires a welcome and introduction to the community of the living and the departed. The skin of the sacrificial animal is owned by the child and is kept for religious purposes. When the child encounters health problems that are spiritually related rather than ordinary biological dysfunctions, they sleep on the skin. The skin also symbolises the religious connection between the animal and the ancestors, as the animal served as a medium between the child and the spiritual world. Typically, a white goat is

sacrificed during the birth ritual, using a sacred assegai. The meat from the goat's leg is given to an older child or brushed against the mouth of an infant.

This traditional sacrifice generally takes place a few weeks after birth. The goat's skin is kept for imbeleko, which is used as a pouch to carry the infant on the mother's back, and for the child to sleep on if they fall ill. During this time, the father or grandfather says special words to the child, which are spoken for the ancestors to hear, acknowledge, and accept the child as a member of the family clan. From that point on, the child is protected by the ancestors, just as they protect the family, clan, and community.

2.8.2 Swazi African Initiation:

Thorpe (1991:113) asserts that membership in the community cannot be taken for granted. It is seen as a lengthy process that may begin even before birth. At puberty, individuals gain full membership in society by undergoing an initiation ritual, typically involving circumcision for males and sometimes clitoridectomy for females. Not all African groups practice circumcision or clitoridectomy, but enough do to warrant inclusion in a generalised pattern of ritual practices related to an individual's participatory membership in a given community. The researcher has been informed that circumcision of Emaswati was allowed at some point, but due to wars, it had to be halted so that the warriors could stay fit and be ready for battle when the time came.

The Swazi African Traditional Religion does not practice physical circumcision but instead practices what is known as "spiritual circumcision" when a child reaches puberty. This calls for an initiation ritual to mark the passage into adulthood. The ritual applies to both boys and girls between the ages of twelve and thirteen, although the specific format may vary among different ethnic groups, as mentioned in the previous paragraphs. For Emaswati, the initiation ritual is a deeply religious practice where a sacrificial animal is killed, and its blood binds the initiand to the departed members of the clan.

The ceremony takes place to signify the transition from boyhood to manhood and girlhood to womanhood. Among the Swazi people, young girls and boys attend lessons at traditional initiation schools for a period of two weeks to a month. During this time, they learn about the rituals of womanhood, female sexuality (without female circumcision), as well as manhood and male sexuality (without male circumcision). The seclusion period also involves counseling on the responsibilities of adulthood. After the ceremony, the initiates

are expected to take on household duties. There has been a measured resurgence of this tradition, as a determined effort to preserve cultural rituals despite changes in lifestyle.

In the Kingdom of Eswatini, where the Swazi people originate, communal rituals are performed on a yearly basis. Emaswati come together to celebrate life with their King and Queen Mother. The Swazi people in South Africa do not participate in all of these rituals, but they do celebrate life through the Ummemo thanksgiving ceremony for ancestors and God, giving thanks for the protection and welfare of the Chiefdoms and their subjects. This ceremony is part of their Swazi African Traditional Religion and includes some of the ceremonies observed by Emaswati in the Kingdom of Eswatini. These ceremonies are performed yearly by various traditional councils or chiefdoms led by traditional leaders. This indicates the respect, solidarity, communal understanding, and kind regard they have for one another as equals. During the Ummemo period, they exchange valuables and gifts as a sign of love, care, support, and commitment to living harmoniously within their Chiefdom's constituencies.

The ceremonies are attended by all, including adherents of the Christian faith, who also pay homage to the monarch, guided possibly by Paul's letter to the Romans (Romans 13:1f:ASB). The Ummemo ceremonies serve the purpose of building nationhood, national unity, and social cohesion among the Swazi people of South Africa. During these ceremonies in both Ehlanzeni and the Kingdom of Eswatini, various cultural dance groups perform.

(i) Umhlanga/Reed Dance: This colourful ceremony takes place in the Kingdom of Eswatini in late August or early September each year. It attracts young maidens from all over the kingdom. During the event, the maidens gather reeds from selected areas and travel to the Royal Kraal to honor the Queen Mother. The ceremony derives its name from this custom. The maidens dress in short-beaded skirts, colourful sashes, ankle bracelets, and bracelets. The royal princesses wear red feathers in their hair and lead the maidens in performing traditional dances before the Majesties, which is the climax of the event. This annual event is an integral part of the traditional ceremonies in Eswatini. The dance is accompanied by the cutting of reeds by married and unmarried women as a tribute showing loyalty to the King (Ingwenyama) and the Queen Mother (Indlovukati). The colourful Lutsango reed dance lasts for four days and is led by the King's wives (Emakhosikati).

(ii) Incwala Ceremony: This is the first fruit ceremony of the Kingdom and holds great sacredness in all Emaswati rituals, with the king playing a dominant role. The date for the ceremony is chosen by royal-appointed traditional astrologers in conjunction with the phases of the moon. It usually takes place in December or January each year and lasts for several days. During the ceremony, young men perform various rites, including traveling in groups to selected parts of the kingdom to collect the sacred branches of Lusekwane, a species of acacia shrub. On the fourth day, the culmination of the Incwala ceremony occurs. The king appears in his full ceremonial attire and consumes the first fruit of the season, symbolizing the time of harvest. The entire nation participates in the dancing throughout the ceremony, dressed in the colourful and distinct national dress known as emahiya, etc.

Parrinder (1962:85) states that the Incwala of the Swazi people concludes with a day of purification, during which clothes and utensils from the past year are ritually burnt. The older people consider this burning as purification and an offering to the ancestors, who are believed to acknowledge it by sending rain. If rain does not come, misfortune is feared, but if it falls during the ceremony, the people continue until the ritual is concluded, even if they become soaked.

(iii) Sibhaca Dance: The Sibhaca is a vigorous dance performed by teams of men throughout the Kingdom and in the Ehlanzeni district. It involves stomping the feet in unison, accompanied by traditional music and rhythmic chants. The men wear colourful quilts and adorn their legs with mohair implements. A typical Sibhaca session can last up to two or three hours, with a variety of different rotations, songs, and styles performed.

(a) Umbutfo: This is a group of men dressed in colourful Swazi attire. They sing and perform traditional songs, telling their story as they give thanks to their ancestors (Labalele/Labaphansi) and God (Mvelinchanti).

(b) Lutsango: This is a group of women dressed in colourful Swazi attire. They celebrate the occasion by singing and performing dance moves.

(c) Timbali or Tingabisa: This is a group of young girls dressed in colourful Swazi attire. They also perform their dance as part of the celebration.

The impact of Christianity on the South African Swazi people and community was limited. Despite the missionaries' attempts to eradicate Swazi African Religion, Culture, and Tradition, they were largely unsuccessful. The Swazi people became adherents of Christianity while retaining their heritage and incorporating their rituals, singing, dancing, and iconography from Swazi African Traditional Religion. Those Christian missionaries who failed to understand or appreciate the positive aspects of Swazi traditional beliefs, customs, and institutions were largely unsuccessful. However, some missionary efforts that adopted a syncretic approach, such as the Zionists Churches, which blend Christianity and indigenous ancestral veneration, were more successful, particularly in rural areas. Christian teachings on sexuality and marriage have also influenced family life, leading to the end of practices such as human sacrifice, slavery, infanticide, and polygamy (Religion in Eswatini - Wikipedia).

2.8.3 The Swazi Marriage:

Mndende (1999:14-15) explains that traditional African marriage rites and customs vary among ethnic groups. The purpose of marriage is to create alliances between two kin groups and to unite two individuals as one for procreation and the extension of relationships within the wider community. Various rites mentioned in the previous paragraphs are performed during marriage to seek the approval of the ancestors from both families and ensure fertility.

Children born within marriage are considered a blessing, as they are seen as gifts from the spiritual world. Thus, marriage itself must be blessed, and rituals and ceremonies accompany or follow the wedding occasion. These rituals serve not only to inform the clan but also to unite the bride and groom's clans. The two clans become one, sharing their joys, sorrows, and burdens together. What affects one clan, bride, or groom is felt by all.

The Swazi African Traditional Religion teaches us that the union of the bride and groom is symbolised by the mixing of gallbladder juices (inyongo) from sacrificial animals belonging to each of their families or homes. This mixture is poured in the sacred place at the back of the kraal, following the recitation of sacred words by the elders, who possess wisdom and life experience. The combined gallbladders represent the inseparability of the couple, as ordained by the Creator, God (Mvelinchanti).

The child born from this union is considered an irreversible product, unable to be returned to the mother's womb. Therefore, the Swazi African Traditional Religion discourages divorce and encourages both clans to make every effort to resolve any issues and maintain the marriage. The performed rituals acknowledge that the child, as the outcome of the union between the two clans, should not be separated. Solutions are sought to preserve the integrity of the marriage, contributing to the unity, cohesion, and nationhood of the Swazi people.

Although a married man and woman are seen as one entity, it is also recognised that the woman should maintain her individual identity. Hence, she retains her maiden name, such as LaKhumalo, LaMabundza, etc. The prefix "La" signifies femininity and allows the woman to keep her maiden name. According to the Swazi African Traditional Religion, a woman always belongs to her biological clan, regardless of her marital status. This is why she must be informed of and participates in clan rituals, as they are beneficial to her well-being. Before a marriage takes place, the Swazi marriage custom, particularly in the Zionists tradition, involves flying a white flag at the family home to indicate an upcoming wedding. This serves as an invitation for the community to join in the celebrations.

In the Swazi African Traditional Religion, marriage is referred to as "umtsimba," while in the Christian religion; engagement is followed by the marriage ceremony ("umshado") and reception at a later time. Dowry, in the context of the Swazi African Traditional Religion, is known as "Lobola", which establishes the ownership of children between the husband and wife, as explained by Berglund (1975:5). Once a part or the entire lobola (bridal payment) has been presented, the woman is considered under the care of her husband, and he has the right to have children with her. Lobola establishes the father's ownership of the children borne by the woman.

2.8.4 The Swazi Death:

It is widely accepted that the soul of the deceased rejoins the spiritual realm from which it originated. As a result, depending on the clan, a ritual is performed by the community sometime after the burial. The timing of this ritual may vary, ranging from one to three years after the individual's passing. Symbolically, this ritual represents the communal way of life of the Swazi African people, where the living spiritually accompany the departed to the spiritual world and serve as a reminder for the deceased to remember those left behind.

Another ritual performed is the act of bringing the deceased back home (kalandza/kudvonsa lihlahla). This ritual ensures that the individual, whether deceased or alive, remains spiritually present among their people to protect the living. According to the Swazi African Traditional Religion, when a person passes away, they must be laid to rest in a grave, indicating the resting place of their physical body. This ritual specifically applies to those who died on public roads as a result of accidents. It is believed that the soul of such individuals may linger at the accident scene, and to prevent further harm, the spirit of the departed may cause damage to passers-by, particularly motorists.

The researcher concurs with Bhengu (1996:7) that African tradition dictates that when a member of a neighbor's family passes away, one should share the sorrow with the bereaved neighbor, a practice known as mourning or "kutila." This implies mourning together and offering assistance to the neighbor in any possible way. Observing this custom demonstrates respect and reverence for both the living and deceased ancestors. Death holds great significance in the Swazi African Traditional Religion and therefore must be treated with the utmost respect. Mourning alongside your neighbor entails disciplining oneself by refraining from loud music, noise, and engaging in activities that would typically occur during happier times.

Failure to adhere to these customs may contribute, beyond any doubt, to the many social ills, evils, and calamities afflicting our country and continent. These may include climate change, floods, xenophobia, same-sex marriage, homosexuality, pornography, abortion, HIV and AIDS pandemic, the coronavirus or COVID-19 pandemic, greed and corruption, perverted religions, and more. These afflictions could be seen as punishments from the Creator (Mvelinchanti) through the ancestors. Consequently, it is necessary for the elders of the land to perform a ritual of appeasement, encouraging all wrongdoers to publicly confess their transgressions for their own healing and that of their community. This restoration process aims to foster harmony and respect once again.

2.8.5 The Swazi Burial:

The tradition of burial remains prevalent, with the deceased being laid to rest in their birthplace alongside their family and clan members. This communal burial allows them to continue living as ancestors of the family and clan. Adherents of the Swazi African Traditional Religion, which is practiced by family members, are required to perform certain

rituals. These rituals include animal sacrifices, gathering medicinal herbs for mourning, cleansing, and reintegration purposes, acquiring vessels for ritual washing, and notifying distant relatives who are expected to attend the burial.

The body of the deceased is carried to the grave by men, who also dig the grave. Once the burial is complete, thorns and stones are placed on top to prevent any disturbance to the corpse. This entire process typically takes place within a week of the person's passing. In cases where individuals are unable to attend the burial due to circumstances beyond their control, such as being in a distant land, hospitalized, or imprisoned on the day of arrival home, a stone is placed on the grave as a means of registering their name as an attendee.

During the burial, it is customary to bury the person along with some of their personal belongings that they frequently used, such as a blanket and/or pallet. The deceased are buried facing their homestead so that they can continue watching over their family, particularly if they are laid to rest within the compound. However, if the death was violent or accidental, the deceased are not brought into their home or homestead. Instead, they are buried facing away from home or outside the homestead to protect the living from a similar fate. Additionally, an animal is slaughtered to provide food for those attending the funeral.

The Swazi African Traditional Religion places great importance on death, burial, and mourning. It emphasises the need for dignity and respect during these processes to maintain harmony and reverence. The performance of these rituals fosters a sense of nationhood, national unity, and social cohesion among both the living and the deceased. According to Swazi religious beliefs, the deceased in the grave are not considered dead but rather asleep, which is why people often visit the gravesite to communicate with their ancestors. It is therefore significant for individuals to know the location of their deceased ancestors' graves.

When conducting a funeral in accordance with the Swazi African Traditional Religion, there are certain obligations that must be fulfilled. These funerals typically take place on Saturdays when all family members and relatives are available. The family is responsible for purchasing an animal for sacrifice, collecting medicinal herbs for mourning, cleansing, and reintegration rituals, acquiring vessels for ritual washing, and notifying relatives and friends who live far away. The burial ritual, known as umgcwabo in the Swazi African Traditional Religion, involves burying the corpse. In Christian Catholic and Christian

Protestant traditions, there is the option of burial or cremation, with cremation typically taking place within a week after death.

In contemporary times, there is a new foreign tendency, particularly among the youth, that goes against traditional taboos surrounding death. These taboos dictate certain behaviors that should be avoided when there is a death in the neighborhood or when one encounters a funeral procession, such as wearing a hat, showing disrespect towards the procession, or not pausing to allow the procession to pass. Nowadays, people attend funerals but disrespect the deceased and their families by causing disorder at the graveyard and graveside. This includes drinking alcohol, listening to music, engaging in unrelated conversations, making phone calls, and engaging in inappropriate behavior, all under the guise of honoring the deceased. Some individuals even engage in reckless activities such as spinning cars, firing guns, creating new dance moves, and ultimately showing a lack of respect for the deceased they claim to be accompanying. At home, after funerals, inappropriate behavior continues as people drink excessively, dress inappropriately, and engage in various disrespectful and disruptive activities, including what is referred to as 'after tears'—getting drunk to bid farewell to the deceased. Young women may behave inappropriately and disrupt harmony, showing disrespect to the deceased's family and community members. These actions are considered punishable by the Creator (Mvelinchanti) through the ancestors. Both the Swazi African Traditional Religion and the Christian faith do not endorse or accept such behaviors as they are not only embarrassing to the bereaved family but also disrespectful to ancestors, the community, and God. It is important to note that these individuals identify as African Christians based on their names, baptismal certificates, confirmation certificates, or marriage certificates.

2.8.6 The Swazi Bereavement:

In accordance with the Swazi African Traditional Religion, all mourners within the family or clan are expected to shave their heads and beards as a symbol of bereavement. Female mourners are expected to sit on the ground to display respect and acknowledge the spirit of the deceased.

This ceremony is conducted because the Swazi people (Emaswati) believe that the deceased continue to exist, albeit unseen by the living. The eldest member of the bereaved family becomes the primary mourner, taking on the responsibility of funeral arrangements at

the tribal home. If employed, this person may request additional leave to fulfill these obligations. The mourning period's terms and conditions are determined by the deceased's family within the tribal context, and it concludes with a special ritual. Emaswati also observe a ten-day ritual that takes place after the burial ceremony. This ritual involves cleansing rites aimed at releasing children or youth from the mourning period, which can last up to three years.

This protocol applies to most, if not all, African traditional and Christian adherents during the bereavement or mourning period. There is a specific protocol that must be followed by bereaved members of the family and clan, which varies from one family to another and depends on the clan membership. This protocol is undertaken by all family members of age, whether Christians or non-Christians, to ensure that the ancestors are not offended and to safeguard the family from misfortunes. Both the Old and New Testaments contain scriptural texts that mention mourning. For example, in the New Testament, Jesus' Sermon on the Mount includes the beatitudes: "Blessed [forgiven, refreshed by God's grace] are those who mourn [over their sins and repent], for they will be comforted [when the burden of sin is lifted]" (Matthew 5:4 - ASB). These passages indicate that Christianity, like the Swazi African Traditional Religion, recognises the significance of bereavement.

2.8.7 The Swazi Thanksgiving:

The researcher has chosen to discuss this topic because many African Christians have embraced both African traditional religion and Christianity. They were born into the Swazi African Traditional Religion and later christened in the Christian faith to align themselves with the Western world, which was perceived as more civilized and with superior beliefs, worshipping the God of foreigners rather than the African God who created them as Africans in the African continent with their own African religion that worships the one and living God, the Supernatural Being. When Westerners arrived in Africa, they had misconceptions and misunderstood African religion as witchcraft.

Some African Christians consult diviners when things go wrong or when they believe they have been bewitched. They seek help and solutions to overcome challenges. There are individuals and families who embrace a combination of these two belief systems, while others are exclusively traditionalists or "saved" Christians in their orientation. Through this thesis, the researcher aims to encourage individuals to practice and commit to what they

truly believe in, whether or not they are validated by relatives, fellow members, and families, as the Supernatural Being understands their souls better.

The festival of the first fruits (Incwala) is another form of thanksgiving ceremony celebrated by many African ethnic groups and their chiefdoms. For the purpose of this work, the researcher has identified fourteen Swazi Traditional Councils in the Ehlanzeni district, with whom the researcher conducted interviews to determine whether they express gratitude to the Supernatural Power and the ancestors for a bountiful harvest. The celebration is initiated by the chief or traditional leader in their respective chiefdoms. The chief or traditional leader has the honor of being the first person to taste the harvest and express gratitude to both the Creator and the ancestors. The community then follows in order of importance or status, adhering to the protocol presented by SATR. Christianity encourages thanksgiving at all times, whether in good or bad times. As it is written, "in every situation [no matter what the circumstances] be thankful and continually give thanks to God; for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus"(1 Thessalonians 5:18-ASB).

2.9 The African Calendar:

Mbiti (1990:17) suggests that Africans perceive time in a circular manner. Life is seen as a rhythmic progression through the stages and seasons of life. All individuals are subject to these phases, including birth, puberty, adulthood, old age, death, as well as the seasons of spring, autumn, summer, and winter. To facilitate the successful completion of this cycle, the ancestors and God, through Jesus Christ, act as guides on this journey. At the beginning of each stage, rites of passage are performed in both the Swazi African Traditional Religion and the Christian faith to initiate individuals into the next phase.

Motshekga (2012:40) explains that the African Calendar governs the relationship between gods, nature, and humanity. It is rooted in the macro-microcosmic universe, which comprises the spiritual (macrocosmic) and material (microcosmic) realms. These two universes are separated by the zodiac. The zodiac and the Ladder of Creation were used to measure time. Thus, the African Calendar has been rooted in the macro-microcosmic order since ancient times.

The Roman Imperial Church introduced and appropriated their calendar, which distorted the African Calendar of the indigenous African people on the African continent. The African Calendar consists of three calendars: the solar, lunar, and cosmic calendars. These

calendars have played and can still play a pivotal role in the lives and work of Africans if all African people were to embrace the African Renaissance program. This program emphasises the importance of reconnecting with African roots in order to revive and practice the way of life designed by God, the Creator, for African people. By doing so, they can understand the different seasons of the year and their significance as taught by their ancestors, who themselves knew the times for ploughing, harvesting, initiation, and other important events.

Motshekga (2012:28) emphasises the concept of human regeneration, stating that individuals are divine beings because they are composed of both a spiritual and material aspect. The material aspect serves as the vessel for the spiritual part of the human personality. Human development should encompass both the spiritual and material aspects of individuals. The emergence of secular humanism in the 18th and 19th centuries significantly undermined spiritual humanism, also known as Ubuntu or Botho, which nurtures holistic human development.

The current manifestations of Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBV & F), abuse of women and children, the killing of innocent people or femicide, the killing of people living with Albinism, rape, and alcohol and drug abuse are indications of the deepening moral degeneration resulting from the decline of Ubuntu/Botho or spiritual humanism. The researcher concludes that these and many other social ills will continue to hinder the development and promotion of nationhood, national unity, and social cohesion among the Swazi people of South Africa and Africa as a whole. Spiritual humanism is based on the belief that we are all interconnected and share the same essence with God (Mvelinchanti) and the ancestors (gods). The human body possesses both inner and outer energy centers that correspond to those of the macrocosmic (great universe) or microcosmic (little universe).

The human personality is unified and shares the same essence with God and the gods. It is said that the human being is a microcosmic reflection of the macrocosmic order, which means that humans are created in the image of God. Specifically, the spiritual body is made in the image of God, while the physical or material body is made in the image of the cosmos. As an example, Motshekga (2012:29) points out that the human brain has eight chambers corresponding to the Bull and Seven Cows of Heaven mentioned elsewhere in this chapter. These chambers correspond to the four male and female principles, which

lead to the nine-fold principle, and ultimately to the One or Master Architect of the Universe, known as God, the Creator (Umvelinqangi). These chambers are symbolised by the labyrinth, making the human brain a microcosmic representation of the nerve center of the universe.

Motshekga (2012:20) states that the above-mentioned concepts align with the Law of Analogy or the Law of Creation, which traces our origins back to the One or Spiritual Sun, also referred to as the Eternal Father of the Divine Light. According to this law, everything originates from the One. The union (Maria) of the moon (Maia) and the sun (Ra) gives rise to everything. It is expressed in the traditional saying that "the air carried it in its belly and the earth nursed it" according to Karaism, a spiritual philosophy.

Continuing on the topic of human regeneration, Motshekga (2012:29) explains that the Ogdoad unfolds into twelve parts of the body, which are connected to the Divine Spark or the Indwelling Spirit through the seven wheels of light. The physical or material body serves as the tomb or prison of the soul or spiritual personality (umuntfu). Upon incarnation in the physical body, the spiritual essence forgets its divine origins, virtues, and the forty-two moral laws that destiny requires it to follow during its earthly journey. The primary purpose of life is to liberate the soul, the spiritual essence, from its physical tomb or prison, and to establish a connection with the cosmos and its Creator, enabling the realisation of its fullest potential. This process is known as human regeneration.

Motshekga (2012:29) further emphasises the tools that can be utilised for human regeneration. These tools include solar yoga, chess, and spiritual music, such as jazz and gospel music. However, these intriguing tools will not be explored in this chapter or elsewhere in the work, as the researcher's intention was to highlight certain aspects of solar yoga. Solar yoga is a doctrine that aims to achieve union with the One or Eternal Father of the Divine Light. The process of solar yoga comprises three cognitive methods: purgation or purification, illumination, and union with the One or the Eternal Father of the Divine Light. The first and second methods serve as preparatory steps for the ultimate union with the One. Both methods facilitate the liberation of the Divine Spark or Indwelling Spirit from the base wheel of light at the bottom of the spine, allowing it to ascend and descend to and from the crown wheel of light (chakra).

As the ascending and descending energies converge at the heart chakra, they ignite into a sacred flame that illuminates the pineal, pituitary, and thalamus glands. This activation stimulates the eight chambers of the brain, which are connected to the nerve center of heaven. Through this process, solar yoga expands an individual's consciousness, enabling access to spiritual knowledge or gnosis that encompasses the physical laws governing the universe and humanity. Therefore, solar yoga plays a vital role in human regeneration by revealing one's divinity.

2.9.1 Solar Calendar:

According to Motshekga (2012:33), our continent Africa adheres to solar, lunar, and cosmic calendars, which regulate spiritual, cultural, and agricultural festivals. The Royal Ark makes it evident that nature and humanity originate from God, who governs them through the agency of fifteen gods or Spiritual Light Beings responsible for administering human destiny.

These gods or Spiritual Light Beings oversee the timing of birth, death, and the ascent to the supreme God, facilitated by the moon (Maia) and the sun (Ra), or the union (Mara) of the two. The fifteen gods transmit energy from God to the earth and humanity, facilitated by the four stations of the sun (two equinoxes and two solstices) and the four phases of the moon. It is therefore essential for human beings to be spiritually and morally aligned with God, the four stations of the sun, and the four phases of the moon. This alignment is achieved through religious and cultural festivals such as New Year, Easter, Rainmaking, Initiation, and First Fruits celebrations, among others.

The earth serves as the recipient and depository of lunar and solar energies that animate and sustain earthly life. It is a living organism that is interconnected, interrelated, and integrated into the macro-microcosmic order. As mentioned by the researcher in the previous paragraphs, individuals and the environment are integral parts of the earth and the macro-microcosmic order. Therefore, they rely on each other to foster harmony within communities, unity among community members, and respect for one another as human beings and for the environment. Consequently, individuals must observe and respect natural and ecological systems and laws to ensure harmony between deity, nature, and humanity. It is for this reason that the study of religion and ecology is encouraged.

The spiritual aspect of our beings originates from and is governed by celestial bodies that govern the four stations of the sun and the three seasons of the year. These stations of the sun and phases of the year regulate specific spiritual and cultural festivals. These festivals and their timing hold significance for the spiritual growth and well-being of the human soul. Just as we nourish our physical bodies with various foods and liquids, we also require spiritual and cultural observances for spiritual growth and well-being. The mentioned festivals are divided into solar and lunar festivals. Towards the end of April, the star of Sirius disappears and rises again at the end of June, followed by the star of Sirius B. These stars emerge before dawn to mark the beginning of the solar year and its corresponding festivals.

Motshekga (2012:44) highlights that the galaxy, also known as the center of the universe, consists of the Wheel of Heaven, which includes the Spiritual Sun at its center and the Bull and Seven Cows of Heaven encircling it. The Eight Beasts of Heaven symbolise the Bull of Heaven and the seven Pleiades or circumpolar stars that encircle the Spiritual Sun. Below these stars; we find the cosmic ocean represented by the Milky Way, followed by the Duat, which is governed by Sabanyadatja, the goddess of the underworld. Towards the end of March, the stars of Orion, Sirius A, and B disappear for three months, only to reappear towards the end of June. During this period, the sun appears at a fixed point on the ecliptic or celestial equator and travels towards the constellation of the celestial lion. By the end of June, when the stars of Orion and Sirius appear before dawn, the sun appears between the paws of the celestial lion, marking the summer solstice in the northern hemisphere. This phenomenon is known as the birth of Ra Harakhte, with the name Ra Harakhte representing the Light and Life of the Sacred Fire.

During the winter of the northern hemisphere, on the 25th of December, Ra Harakhte is reborn in the southern hemisphere. It is evident how the birth of Ra Harakhte was appropriated by the Roman Imperial Church and used to celebrate Christmas. This name, Christmas, signifies the birth of the Light and Life of God. From this, we understand that the Christ, unlike Yooshoo, which means Jesus in Greek, is a spiritual being rather than a human being. If we consider the double annual solstice, it means that a spiritual Christ or Ra Harakhte is born twice a year.

In the African mystery teachings, Ra Harakhte, known as the Christ, is born from the Goddess Hathara or ISIS, symbolized by the Holy Cow. Christ is also referred to as the

Light-Child. African Christianity has always revolved around the Sun-god - Ra, the Father or Aba of Lights, the Father of the Divine Light. For these reasons, the primal African Religion is called Karaism. The birth of Ra Harakhte at the end of June marks the beginning of the solar New Year in the northern hemisphere. This birth signifies the rise of the waters of the cosmic ocean in the Milky Way, announcing the dawn of ploughing from July to September.

Motshekga (2012:45) maintains that the sun travels for three months from the Tropic of Cancer to the equator, where it remains stationary for twenty-four hours and appears to be asleep on the equator before crossing to the southern hemisphere. This period, occurring from the 21st to the 22nd of September, is called the vernal or spring equinox, which, in spiritual terms, is the birthday of the Spiritual Sun. The vernal or spring equinox marks the first station of the sun on its journey south. On the 23rd of September, the sun seems to awaken in the southern hemisphere, marking the dawn of the African New Year in the south.

The sun continues its journey for another three months until it reaches the Tropic of Capricorn on the 21st to 22nd of December. On the 25th of December, it reaches its zenith in the heavens, signifying the birth of Ra Harakhte or Christ in the southern hemisphere. On this day, the sun performs a solar dance known as the Khekhapa as it prepares to begin its journey back to the northern hemisphere. This reminds us of our childhood experiences when, on Christmas day, we were awakened early in the morning by the elders as young boys to watch the sun dancing, not fully understanding the significance except that the sun was performing the Khekhapa or solar dance in celebration of the birth of Christ.

The sun reaches the equator on the 21st to the 22nd of March, marking the autumn equinox, which signifies the death of the Spiritual Sun as a sacrifice for the nourishment of humanity. This death has been celebrated as the Harvest Festival since ancient times. The harvest god, also known as the Sacred King Fura (or Faro), serves as the roots for the names Africa (Afuraka) and pharaoh. The harvest god is born in the northern hemisphere on the 23rd of March, marking the beginning of winter in the southern hemisphere and summer in the northern hemisphere, having crossed the equator and awakened in the northern hemisphere.

From the 21st to the 25th or 26th of March, the sun remains stationary at the Tropic of Cancer, appearing once again to be dead or asleep, and performs another solar dance,

signifying the birth of Ra Harakhte in the northern hemisphere. This is when day and night are of equal length. It marks the beginning of Easter, the death of Ra Harakhte in the south, and his resurrection in the northern hemisphere. This event was also appropriated by the Roman Imperial Church to celebrate the Easter weekend as the death and resurrection of Jesus, the Nazarene.

Motshekga (2012:35) maintains that the birth of the Spiritual Sun (Kara) during the spring or vernal equinox marks the start of the four-month ploughing season from September to December. In October, rain-making ceremonies are held to express gratitude to the Sun of Righteousness or Spiritual Sun (Kara) for the rain and fertility of the land. In November, the seeds planted in September and October germinate and grow, making November a month dedicated to environmental conservation and protection. The killing of female animals and the chopping of trees are forbidden during this time. Pregnant women are given maximum protection as Persons of God. In December, the first fruits ripen.

The first new moon in December signals the beginning of preparations for the First Fruits celebrations. The celebration officially starts during the full moon of December and reaches its peak from the 21st to the 25th or 26th of December. The newly born baby remains in seclusion with its mother for at least twelve days, and the mother and child make their first public appearance on the 6th of January. On the eve of this day, a night vigil is held in the temple of Kore (the Virgin Mother). This public appearance is known as the birth of the Aion, Son of the Virgin (Kore), in the Korean Temple. The Greeks referred to this festival as Epiphany, a name that is still used in the Christian lectionary, while the Abyssinians call it Timkat.

On this occasion, a black bull is sacrificed to express gratitude to the Bull of Heaven, an incarnation of the Spiritual Sun, for the first fruits and to mark the beginning of the harvest season, which lasts from January to April. Faru, the harvest god, symbolises the harvest produce and his death during the autumn equinox. The celebration of the death and resurrection of Jesus, known as Yeshua in Greek, also takes place during the Easter weekend, and the Roman Imperial Church appropriated this festival as well, aligning it with the autumn equinox and the symbolic death of the god Fura or Faro.

On the 1st of May, the risen god Faro is reunited with his mother Maia, which is why the day is known as May Day. During this day, all work is prohibited, and people stay at home,

drink beer (mcombotsi), play music, and dance to honor the reunion of the Queen of Heaven and Earth with her son. This festival also marks the beginning of the initiation period, which lasts from May to August.

On the 25th of May, the star of Canopus (Kanuba) appears before dawn to announce the birth of the Word of Light (Mbekara or Mberaka), often referred to as Nyambe or Khem. This phenomenon often signifies the opening of initiation schools. The timing is ideal as there is an abundance of food, the weather is cold, and wounds heal easily. Thus, the 21st of May holds both spiritual and political significance as it is observed as Worker's Day.

From the 21st to the 22nd of June, the sun reaches the Tropic of Cancer and performs another solar Khekhapa dance before embarking on its journey to the south. The Roman Imperial Church adopted this time to celebrate the feast of St. John in the Christian religion. The Solar Calendar emphasizes that the birth of Christ (Ra Harakhte) is a celestial phenomenon rather than a terrestrial one, distinguishing the spiritual Christ from the human Jesus. Hence, the original Christianity was a gnostic belief system rather than a secular one.

The sun, Ra, represents a physical manifestation or self-product of God but is not God itself. The four stations of the sun, the two solstices, and the two equinoxes correspond to the four Holy Beasts before the throne of the God of Light, also known as the Word of God. The four Holy Beasts, known as Kheru before the throne, are Mundi (man), Mutapa (the eagle), Amani (the bull), and Mwenemutapa (the lion). Thus, the sun and its four stations symbolize God and the four Holy Beasts. In Judaism and Islam, the four Holy Beasts have been appropriated and renamed as the cherubim in Judaism and the al-Karibuyan in Islam. These Holy Beasts also have corresponding names in Hinduism and other primal religions. It is for this reason that the solstices and equinoxes are venerated in primal religions, including the Swazi African Traditional Religion.

Motsekga (2012:46) argues that the exposition of the African solar calendar also reveals that African Traditional Religion, Judaism, and Islam have more in common than commonly believed. Further exploration and promotion of their similarities would foster religious tolerance, reconciliation, peace, and development. The researcher believes that delving deeper into Judaism and Islam would also cultivate the spirit of nationalism, national unity,

and social cohesion, contributing to the harmonious life we all aspire to achieve. It would make our continent and the world a better place to live in.

2.9.2 Lunar Calendar:

According to Motshekga (2012:35), the lunar calendar divides the year into three seasons of four months each: the ploughing (Akthe), harvest (Faro), and initiation (Shemu) seasons. The birth of the Spiritual Sun (Kara) during the spring (or vernal) equinox marks the beginning of the four-month ploughing season, spanning from September to December. The remaining seasons will be discussed later in this chapter.

Motshekga (2012:46-47) highlights that like the solar calendar, the lunar calendar is deeply rooted in both the spiritual and material worlds. The lunar calendar is spiritual and based on the Ladder of Creation, which connects the God of Light or the Word of God with the Earth and humanity. The Ladder of Heaven consists of the Bull - Ntare, the Seven Cows - Hatheru of Heaven, and the seven outer planets - Kabiri. This Ladder of Creation encompasses fourteen rungs emanating from the One Bull of Heaven - Ntare, resulting in a total of fifteen rungs. The God of Light or the Word of God transmits its energy to the Earth and humanity through the Bull of Heaven and the fourteen rungs of the Ladder of Creation.

The descent of this energy begins with the new moon's dawn. From this point until the full moon, there are fourteen days corresponding to the fourteen rungs of the Ladder of Heaven and the fourteen spiritual or light beings that serve as vessels of divine energy. It is this divine energy that energises the Swazi people (Emaswati) to contribute to the development and promotion of the Emaswati group, fostering national unity and cohesion. The fifteenth spiritual or light being is the Mouthpiece of God (Dzomo la Dzimu), known as Thau, Harama, or Mbaraka spiritually, all representing the Word of Light. On the fifteenth day of the waxing moon, the Word of Light transmits solar energy to the sublunary world. The gods take another fifteen days to ascend to the Eternal Father of Light, completing the lunar cycle in thirty days, which consists of fifteen plus fifteen days. Thus, a lunar month comprises thirty days.

The researcher has discovered that the moon spends thirty days in each of the twelve signs of the zodiac, resulting in a lunar year consisting of three hundred and sixty days, equivalent to twelve thirty-day periods. At the conclusion of this lunar cycle, the moon (Ma) and the sun (Ra) come together, giving rise to the five elements of ether, water, fire, earth,

and air on each successive day, thus extending the length of the lunar year to three hundred and sixty-five days. In this manner, Swazi African spirituality, or Swazi African Traditional Religion, is intricately intertwined with time and the cycles of the sun, moon, planets, and stars. This forms the essence of Swazi African Traditional Religion.

2.9.3 Cosmic Calendar:

Motshekga (2012:47) explains the zodiac on the cosmic calendar as both the boundary between the spiritual and material worlds and a cosmic clock used to measure cosmic time. To this end, each of the twelve signs of the zodiac is divided into three groups of ten stars, known as decans. Consequently, each zodiac sign comprises thirty degrees, which equate to three times ten stars. It takes the sun seventy-two years to traverse one star or degree, and two thousand, one hundred and sixty years (seventy-two times thirty years) to traverse all thirty stars. Thus, it takes the sun twenty-five thousand, nine hundred and twenty years (two thousand, one hundred and sixty years multiplied by twelve) to traverse all twelve signs of the zodiac.

This period is referred to as the Cosmic or Great Year. According to the cosmic calendar, significant changes occur every seventy-two normal years, every two thousand, one hundred and sixty years, and every twenty-five thousand, nine hundred and twenty years. The realignment of celestial bodies also takes place every two thousand, one hundred and sixty years. Natural disasters, climate changes, and shifts in rainfall patterns are all connected to these cosmic changes. Our secular education and the separation of spirituality, astronomical sciences, and physical sciences have left us ill-equipped to grasp a holistic understanding and management of the environment and human affairs.

The secular religion, which concerns itself with worldly matters, rather than spiritual or religious affairs, and the anthropomorphic religion we follow are responsible for the decline of spiritual traditions and moral values in societies. Motshekga (2012:47) highlights that our African icon, Nelson Mandela, rightly called for a spiritual transformation he described as the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) for the soul. This spiritual transformation could undoubtedly benefit from the spiritually rooted African Calendar. In agreement with Mandela's RDP of the Soul, Mbeki states:

The collapse of an acceptable level of morality in our society has resulted in the elevation of the self, and the serving of the interests of the self, to the point that this becomes a religion.

The self becomes the god which we must all worship. The new South Africa, born out of a broken and battered society, disfigured by the evil and corrupt apartheid system, cries out for hard political and socio-economic transformation which must be achieved if our country is to save itself from destruction. But it cries out also for spiritual power and resources to heal, to reconcile, to rebuild, and to restore its humanity.

South Africa is crying out for its soul. In the past we found that hope was the product of struggle. The renewal of hope today is found in the struggle to transform society. Political and Religious activists need the skills of conflict resolution and peace-making, of patient work to achieve reconciliation, of empowering those in need whether over-privileged or under-privileged, of striving for unity and success. Such involvement plants the seeds of hope. The quest to transform society embraces the experience of us all. There is an opportunity for us to empower and enact a greater humanity in South Africa (2000:96).

2.10 Chapter Summary:

In this chapter, the researcher has explored the significant commonalities, fundamental beliefs, and rituals that constitute the Swazi African Traditional Religion. Despite not being acknowledged or promoted by missionaries, this religion possesses valuable insights that could contribute to the Christian faith. These shared concepts and aspects serve as primary foundations of primal religions and play a crucial role in fostering nationhood, national unity, and social cohesion among Emaswati of South Africa and Africans as a whole. Some of these beliefs are also present in Christianity, highlighting the relationship between Swazi African Traditional Religion and the Christian faith and affirming its role as a vessel for preparing for Christianity.

Swazi African Traditional Religion possesses the nature of unifying people, with both unity and diversity being inherent characteristics. The common concepts, pillars, and basic beliefs linked to the principles of nationhood, national unity, and social cohesion among Africans, including Emaswati of South Africa, clearly indicate that this primal religion shared a common agenda of liberating itself and its followers from the constraints of colonialism and slavery. It aimed to exist according to the Creator's design through its culture, practices, beliefs, rites, and traditions.

The African Renaissance emphasises the importance of returning to African roots to revive and embrace the way of life intended by God, the Creator, for Africans. It includes an understanding of the different seasons of the year and their significance as taught by ancestors. The African Calendar guides the relationship between the gods, nature, and

humanity, rooted in the macro-microcosmic universe that encompasses the spiritual (macrocosmic) and the material (microcosmic) realms.

The researcher now turns to the next chapter where the researcher will delve into how Swazi African Traditional Religion paved the way for the acceptance of the Christian faith by millions of African Christians examining the relationship between these two religions.

CHAPTER THREE

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AFRICAN RELIGION AND CHRISTIANITY

3.1 Introduction:

The objective of this chapter is to examine the relationship between these two religions and explore how Swazi African Traditional Religion paved the way for the Christian faith to be embraced by millions of African Christians as a receptive vessel. According to Statistics South Africa: Community Survey (2016), a majority of South Africans identifies themselves as belonging to a faith group. Approximately 43.4 million South Africans identify themselves as Christians, while 2.4 million identify themselves as adherents of the African Traditional Religion, including the Swazi religious orientation.

Maluleke (2005:478) pointed out that scholars like Bediako and Turner argue that the remarkable growth of Christianity in Africa cannot be understood without considering African Traditional Religion as a receptive vessel for the preparation of the gospel. This clearly indicates the relationship between these two religions and suggests that without African Swazi Traditional Religion, Christianity may not have been able to survive and achieve the substantial numbers it has attained in the present-day context.

Barrett et al. (2001:239) noted that the growth of Christianity has led to the decline of Traditional Religion in this region, as indicated in the 2016 Community Survey. Therefore, the researcher acknowledges that the adherents and practitioners of African Traditional Religion constitute a relatively small percentage of the population, which is difficult to determine precisely. The rapid increase in the number of Christians and the decline in the number of followers of African Traditional Religion can be attributed to the following factors:

- (a) The efforts of missionaries from foreign countries, many of whom have been highly dedicated to their mission.
- (b) The work of African Christians who have carried out evangelization in nearly every village and region. They too have shown great dedication, with some even sacrificing their lives as martyrs for the gospel.
- (c) African Traditional Religion provided a space for people to receive the gospel and is thus regarded as a receptive vessel for the preparation of the Christian faith.

Thorpe (1991:4) maintains that the term 'African traditional religion' can be used in either the singular or the plural form. The plural form is used to emphasise the significant diversity that exists among religious approaches across the vast expanse of the African continent. This highlights the wide range of concepts and practices that distinguish the religious systems of various language groups or cultural communities from one another, indicating the existence of numerous distinct African traditional religions.

Mbiti ([1969] 1975:1) agrees with Thorpe and therefore adopts the plural form when referring to African Traditional Religions (ATRs). However, for our purposes, we have chosen to use the singular form since we are focusing specifically on the Swazi African Traditional Religion of the people of South Africa. Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge that some scholars argue that there are enough shared characteristics among African religions to justify using the term in its singular form. It is crucial to note that there is no single African religion, and attempting to impose a uniform framework on all ATRs is highly problematic. Therefore, our focus remains on the Swazi African Traditional Religion of the people of South Africa, representing the Swazi group within the country and not attempting to represent the entire continent.

Thorpe (1991:3) maintains that the term 'traditional' is used to distinguish the religious orientation of African peoples from other world religions that are also present on the continent. Using the word 'traditional' does not imply that these religions are or have ever been static. The religious orientations of African peoples were not static before or after the arrival of foreign religions such as Christianity and Islam on the continent. African religions, like religious systems worldwide, were influenced by external historical forces, such as interactions with other groups due to migrations and conflicts, as well as by internal religious leaders and thinkers such as prophets or healers within their communities. The adaptability of African Traditional Religion to changing circumstances across the continent suggests that changes have also occurred in the past.

Furthermore, Thorpe (1991:3) points out that the term 'African religion' without any additional qualification is also misleading, as Christianity and Islam have coexisted with African Traditional Religions on the African continent for over 1300 years. Parrinder (1968:99) confirms that Christianity was established in Egypt and Ethiopia early on, as was Islam throughout Northern Africa. Significant changes have taken place in Africa in the past two centuries in terms of religion. Christianity has had a considerable influence on Africa

and, in turn, has been influenced by African worldviews. As a result, numerous groups have emerged that blend elements of African Traditional Religion with Christianity. These groups are often referred to as 'indigenous' or 'independent' churches. Therefore, when using the term African religion, it encompasses these movements as well as other religions found in specific regions of the continent.

Thorpe (1991:4) highlights that some people, particularly missionaries, have suggested that the African worldview cannot be considered a religion in the conventional sense. However, this perspective depends on one's definition of religion. The definition of religion should not solely focus on creeds, dogmas, organizational structures, hierarchical priesthoods, or communal worship in elaborate temples. It should also encompass the spiritual quality that enables people, as African Traditional Religion does, to orient and live their lives. Therefore, African Traditional Religion indeed qualifies as a religion. The definition of African Traditional Religion encompasses not only positive orientations that define life's goals and aspirations but also acknowledges and addresses negative, disruptive, and undesirable aspects.

African Traditional Religion also comprises two dimensions: the horizontal and vertical dimensions. It is deeply intertwined with the society, in which it is practiced and is oriented towards this world, thus possessing a horizontal dimension. Additionally, African Traditional Religion is permeated by an awareness of the spiritual and invisible dimension of life. Each ethnic group, such as the Swazi people, conceptualises its own understanding of God and requires its own religious orientation. Therefore, to impose the notion of one God who is considered identical across all parts of Africa would be to impose a non-existent or unrealistic concept of God on each African ethnic group.

Mbiti himself ([1969] 1975:30) occasionally acknowledges that Africa is home to numerous ethnic groups and languages, each with its own systems of ideas and practices. He recognises the vast distances that separate the peoples of one region from those of another. When defining African Traditional Religion, it is important to understand that it was practiced throughout Africa prior to the arrival of missionaries. The fundamental principle of African Traditional Religion is the preservation of African culture, and its main feature is loyalty to the ancestors, along with the accompanying rituals that express this loyalty.

Bhengu (1996:48) argues that there has been significant confusion surrounding the religious practices and beliefs of Africans. Some authors have described Africans as pagans, heathens, or individuals whose lives are dominated and constrained by superstitions. African religion has often been treated by sociologists and social anthropologists as a peculiar museum artifact, distinct from other religious phenomena found in Western culture. Bhengu emphasises this point by stating:

Christianity is difficult to digest in the African context. What has been happening in Africa is that African Christians have been living at two levels: their traditional African world-view level and the Western Christianity level (1996:49).

Bhengu (1996:49) discusses these two levels of existence for both African Traditional Religion and Christianity on the continent. To answer the main research question on whether Swazi African Traditional Religion served as a receptive vessel for the preparation for the Christian faith, we must address these levels. The traditional African worldview level pertains to adherents and practitioners of Swazi African Traditional Religion who have remained loyal to their roots. The Western Christianity level refers to Africans who, during the day, align with Christianity but become members of Swazi African Traditional Religion at night.

The Swazi African Traditional Religion of the people of South Africa emphasises the fundamental truths that African people possessed authentic religious practices and beliefs prior to the arrival of missionaries. Furthermore, these beliefs were diverse and held profound symbolic value.

Thorpe (1999:104) highlights that over the past 200 years, African Traditional Religions have undergone significant modifications due to contact with major world religions such as Christianity and Islam. This implies that Christianity has influenced indigenous African followers of African Traditional Religion, while African Traditional Religion has also influenced the practices of Christianity in South Africa. Goba (1998:19) argues that there was a prevalent perception among missionaries that Africa lacked a preexisting religion, thus deeming it a "dark" continent. Africans viewed this perspective and the subsequent actions as using the gospel to promote the superiority of Western values and to justify European conquest and exploitation of Africa. Missionaries were seen not only as turning Africans away from their culture but also as undermining African culture through their arrogance in comparing African culture to their supposedly superior one. Consequently,

missionaries were viewed as participants or agents of Africa's colonisation, which was seen as a joke because when they arrived in Africa, they were landless and possessed nothing but the Bible, which they then gave to Africans while compensating themselves with land.

Mbiti maintains that:

African traditional religion seems to have a common language with Christian teaching. Subsequently, the encounter between these two religious systems has resulted in a rapid and living accommodation of the Christian faith among African peoples. Naturally the encounter has also produced its own problems; but for our purposes we shall concentrate on the more positive areas of the process. We remember, too, that the Holy Spirit is the supreme factor in evangelism in Africa. It is the Holy Spirit that calls and sends those who carry the Gospel to others, producing the response which results in conversion and accommodation of the faith (1976:309).

The imposition of foreign cultures and the suppression of indigenous religions forced Africans to abandon their own religious practices and conform to the customs of the colonisers. Little did they know that in African Traditional Religion, culture and religion are inseparable. It was not Christianity as a religion that came to judge and destroy, but rather the cultural practices brought by the missionaries and colonisers. The missionaries and colonists, who introduced Christianity alongside Western education and civilisation, were viewed as synonymous, as their agenda was to dismantle African ways of life, subjugate the people, and keep them inferior. Consequently, African Traditional Religious practices were condemned, forced into hiding, and ultimately faced the risk of extinction. Kruger, Lubbe, and Steyn (1996:14) highlight that African Traditional Religion is the oldest form of religion in Southern Africa and the continent as a whole. Among black South Africans, it continues to thrive as a significant religion or group of religions. Unfortunately, the missionaries misunderstood the practice of African Traditional Religion, erroneously labeling it as witchcraft.

The purpose of this discussion is to explore how African Traditional Religion facilitated the widespread acceptance of the Christian faith among millions of African Christians, despite the challenges faced by African Traditional Religion upon the arrival of the missionaries in Africa. The missionaries deliberately employed Christianity as a tool to dehumanise the indigenous black population of the country and the continent. They not only coerced them into abandoning their true identities but also compelled them to embrace the culture and

religion of the white colonisers. As a result, Africans were forced to adjust and adapt like chameleons in the name of civilisation.

Kruger, Lubbe, and Steyn (1996:14) argue that, in this context, the term "traditional" distinguishes the religious orientation of African peoples from other world religions found on the continent. However, this term can suggest something unchanging, as if it were a closed set of beliefs and practices passed down from one generation to another. Such an interpretation risks obscuring the dynamic nature of religion in Africa. Like any religious system, African religion has always been a source of both constant and evolving ways of experiencing humanity in the world.

Kruger, Lubbe and Steyn on terminology and main features of ATR maintain that:

Although religion forms an integral part of life in many cultures, early Western explorers and missionaries often failed to recognize it as such. It was simply assumed that the people with whom they came into contact had no religion. Where religious elements were observed and recognised, the term 'primitive religion' was employed. Only later was the term 'primitive' recognized to be unacceptable, since it implies backwardness, crudeness and stupidity. The term 'primal religions' appears to be more acceptable since it refers to that which is primary, first or basic. While perhaps not entirely appropriate, it seems to be closer to the point (1996:29).

In Chapter One, the researcher mentioned the terms "African Traditional Religion" (ATR), "African Indigenous Religion" and "African Religion" to be used interchangeably in this study because they have the same meaning. In Africa, primal religions are commonly referred to as traditional religions, and the designation "African Traditional Religion" has become widely used. As Kruger, Lubbe, and Steyn (1996:29) explain, these primal religions generally lack sacred scriptures or texts. Instead, they transmit sacred stories, wisdom, and laws through the immediate and living medium of oral tradition. For this reason, some authors refer to them as religions of non-literate peoples. They do not have specific founders, although many of them have tribal founders or heroes who are commemorated in sacred historical myths. Since they have no written creeds or dogmas, it is not appropriate to speak of orthodoxy or heresy in relation to these religions.

Kruger, Lubbe, and Steyn (1996:29) note that these religions are often grouped together because they have traditionally existed in relatively isolated areas of the world. They do not seem to have any apparent connections to one another and do not belong to the major religious families that originated in the Near East, such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam,

or the so-called Indian religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism. However, it is important to clarify the different components of this concept. African Traditional Religion reflects God's presence among African people throughout history. It has served as a valuable and indispensable spiritual path that has prepared the Christian faith in its present-day context.

3.2 The Christian faith and African Cultural heritage:

Mndende (2000: 5) maintained that upon the arrival of the missionaries, the African Religion was initially disregarded and not recognised. However, due to its similarities with the imported Christian religion, it could no longer be ignored. Some missionaries identified traits within the African Religion that they deemed important to build upon if their own religion (Christianity) was to be relevant to the indigenous African peoples of the continent.

3.2.1 The Christian faith:

Kruger, Lubbe, and Steyn (1996:14) argue that Western Christianity began to make its presence felt in South Africa from the seventeenth century onwards, eventually becoming the dominant religious force in the region. However, the entry of Christianity into South Africa was immediately entangled with European colonialist expansion. As the settlers moved further into the country, they brought with them a version of Christianity that was adapted to suit their own self-interests in this new environment.

Furthermore, Kruger et al. (1996:14) state that alongside this form of Christianity, Western missionaries began spreading the Christian gospel among the indigenous population. By the end of the period of colonialism in the 19th century, Christianity had firmly taken root among Africans, overshadowing African traditional religion due to the combination of European Christian beliefs, cultural influences, and political and military power. As the new century unfolded, a distinct form of Christianity emerged, blending European Christianity with African Traditional Religion. These churches, collectively known as the African Initiated Churches or African Independent Churches, started to gain prominence.

Throughout the 20th century, Christianity solidified its position in South African society. The most significant religious conflict of the last fifty years was between those who believed that Christianity supported racial segregation (apartheid) which only came in the middle of the 20th century and the majority of Africans who rejected this doctrine. Ultimately, apartheid

was overwhelmingly rejected. Towards the end of the century, Christianity was navigating a new reality where dominance, including religious dominance, was widely recognised as needing to give way to dialogue and cooperation at all societal levels.

When defining who a Christian is, it is important to recognise that accepting Jesus Christ and His teachings as preserved in Christian scriptures and upheld by one's chosen Church is paramount. Therefore, a Christian is someone who has embraced the Christian faith and made a resolute decision to follow Jesus Christ. The multitude of Christian denominations complicates the notion of what constitutes authentic Christian tradition. However, it is undeniable that the desire for cultural freedom and cultural identity played a significant role in the establishment of Independent African Churches during the arrival of missionaries and colonisers.

It is also important to understand that Christianity is a religion that, from its inception, aimed to transcend cultures. The gospel, rooted in the Old Testament, was not limited to Hebrew culture. Mugambi highlights this aspect by pointing out that:

In the establishment of Christianity there have been at least three significant aspects worth noting. The first is the Gospel message whose core is the teaching of Jesus Christ as recorded in the gospels and passed on in the tradition of the Church. The second is the western culture, in which the Gospel was expressed for a long time before the rise of the modern missionary movement and the spreading of European and North American denominations – which formed a part of missionary activity in tropical Africa. The third aspect is the African heritage in the totality of which the African converts lived before their encounter with Christianity. This third aspect includes the African religious beliefs that embodied the African traditional understanding of physical and metaphysical reality (2005:523).

It is important to clarify that the Christian faith is not a culture, contrary to what the missionaries may have claimed. However, the Christian faith can only be expressed and communicated through cultural means. The term "Church" is loosely defined as the community of individuals who have accepted the Christian faith and are consciously bound together by their commitment to implement the teachings of Jesus Christ in the world. The Christian faith affirms Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and each church lives out this faith according to its own understanding of the demands of the gospel. Ultimately, it is the personal decision of each adult whether to become a Christian or not.

As children of Christian parents grow, they are nurtured by the church towards eventual adult church membership. However, once they reach adulthood, they must make their own

decision as to whether they will remain Christians or not. This decision is influenced by the impact the Christian faith has on them as they mature. Unlike commitment to Christianity, commitment to the African religious heritage cannot be easily separated from one's overall cultural background. In African society, individuals cannot choose the ethnic community, into which they are born, making it nearly impossible to dissociate their religious heritage from their complete cultural identity.

Mugambi points out that:

There is no doubt that the appeal of the Christian faith among many African converts was genuine and profound. In Jesus they found new hope and clung to that hope in the face of great challenges which would otherwise have broken their lives, especially in situations of extreme oppression, exploitation and dehumanisation during the colonial period....Critical theological reflection was not encouraged because the teaching of the missionaries was expected to be accepted without question, as 'the whole truth, and nothing but the truth'...What should be the proper relationship between Christian identity and a Christian's cultural identity? The dominant missionary opinion in the past has been that Christian identity is identical with western cultural and religious heritage. We have seen that this is a mistaken view. Can Africans accept the Christian faith and still retain African cultural identity without leading a life of double standards as was the case in the earlier part of the modern missionary enterprise? This is a question many African Christians ask today. If it is true that the Christian faith changes all cultures, then the answer to that question must be positive (2005: 520).

The researcher concurs with Mugambi's perspective (2005:521) that becoming a Christian has nothing to do with adopting Western or any other culture. Conversion should not be confused with acculturation but rather with meeting the demands of the Christian faith. It entails the convert identifying oneself with Jesus Christ and all that He stood for, leading to a fundamental change in attitude towards God, oneself, and others. Conversion should prompt the convert to critically examine their own cultural background and review their personal life, moving towards a future guided by Jesus Christ. However, conversion does not require wholesale denunciation or rejection of one's cultural and religious heritage. The African cultural and religious heritage has been passed down orally from generation to generation, with the wisdom of the ancestors preserved not in written books but in songs and oral traditions.

For example, when the indoor period is completed and the child is allowed out of the house, the African tradition involves thanksgiving celebrations to acknowledge life and achievements, considering the child as a gift from the spiritual world. In this context, it is

expected that one expresses gratitude to one's ancestors for such bestowed gifts. At this juncture, African Christians often fail to acknowledge the truth and instead label the ceremony as a simple 'tea' gathering to thank God for the gift of a child. They hesitate to associate themselves with what is considered a primitive, non-literate, and uncivilized religion, despite it being the essence of their lives.

Sanneh (1989:174) points out that it is difficult to imagine that there was never any transfer of thought between the two religions. It is undoubtedly true that African Traditional Religion has, to some extent, influenced the Christian community. It is worth mentioning that even the translation of the Bible into vernacular languages has utilized indigenous terms and concepts. Barrett (1968:109) therefore argues that translation has led to deep theological meaning for the recipients.

The researcher concurs with Mbiti when it regards the African Traditional Religion, which includes the Swazi religious orientation of the people of South Africa that has served as a receptive vessel for the preparation for the Christian faith, when he states:

African Religion has no founder. It arose gradually as people reflected upon the human situation. In the course of its long history, African Religion made possible to be disposed towards the Christian faith. It is African Religion which has produced the religious values, insights, practices and vocabulary on which the Christian faith has been planted and is thriving so well today. The points of continuity between Biblical faith and culture and African Religion have been sufficiently strong for the Gospel to establish a strong footing among African peoples (1976:311).

Although African Traditional Religion has been self-sufficient for many generations, it has nevertheless remained open enough to absorb and benefit from the new elements brought by the Christian faith. This is the reason why an urgent dialogue has been proposed, as one of the findings we have made. In particular, the person and work of Jesus Christ, the Christian hope, the Church, and the Sacraments are seen as giving the final touches to the traditional religiosity of African peoples.

Manganyi and Buitendag (2013:13) argue that African Traditional Religion has a space to coexist within the Christian faith, yet the approach to worship differs. ATR existed as a separate religion before the arrival of missionaries, and it can continue to exist independently of Christianity today. Given that the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa guarantees freedom of religion, belief, and opinion according to Act 108:1996, it is essential to reexamine the position of ATR within the Christian faith. The ancestors may

have a role in life-cycle rituals, crisis rituals, and calendrical rituals, but they cannot be equated with the oneness of God.

The ancestors may play a vital part in creating a harmonious life for Africans, but they cannot share the same essence as God. Therefore, salvation is only through the Lord Jesus Christ, who became human, suffered for salvation, and will return as the judge of the living and the dead. African Traditional Religion, as confirmed by Kibicho (Mndende, 2000:6), teaches that there is complete salvation in African Traditional Religion independent of Jesus and His redemptive work. This highlights a fundamental difference and a discontinuity between the two religious systems, indicating that there is no common ground in the concept of salvation.

The researcher has used a multidisciplinary methodology approach; hence, the study acknowledges that God is the Creator of human beings, their religion, their environment, their patterns of social and cultural behavior, and their liberation as societies in the past, present, and future. He cannot be equated to the ancestors whom He created. The fundamental difference in this regard is that there is no common ground in the concept of salvation between African Traditional Religion and the Christian faith. This disparity can be addressed by both religions and theologies through urgently sought dialogue.

For Black Theology to become an effective weapon in its struggle to critique and transform present realities, it needs to employ analytical concepts that can delve into the depths of real events, relationships, structures, and so forth, of both Swazi African Traditional Religion and the Christian faith.

Similarly, for African Christian Theology to become an effective tool that seeks to reflect upon and express the Christian faith based on African thought, forms, and idiom as experienced in African Christian communities, it must always engage in dialogue with the rest of Christendom. Mosala (1989:4) further emphasises the importance of exposing fundamental social relationships using this method. In both the Christian faith and black theology, there are communities and networks of relationships that must be brought to the fore. Only through such an exposure of the underlying material relationships can the problems, for which the biblical texts provide solutions, be illuminated. This will enable black theology to become the kind of critical discourse capable of meaningfully contributing to the black liberation struggle.

3.2.2 African Cultural Heritage:

Mugambi (2005:516) explains that the term "Culture" refers to the totality of a people's way of life, wherein language is one of the most important aspects of their identity because it is the most common medium of communication. While language is not the sole component of culture, it becomes an international medium of communication when it transcends its initial development within a specific cultural group. For example, English, French, Portuguese, etc., have become international languages due to the influence of colonizers and missionaries from countries where these languages were practiced. Consequently, they are now spoken by many people outside of their respective countries, such as England, France, Portugal, etc.

Mugambi asserts that:

Each church portrays the culture in which it has developed. There is no church not culturally bound in this way. The modern missionary enterprise overlooked this fact when it introduced Christianity to Africa. There are no Christian cultures, but Christians in culture that can influence that culture greatly, for example, the Christian in the Swazi culture. It is lamentable that the modern missionary movement imposed western culture on the peoples who were evangelised on the assumption that western culture was Christian, while other cultures were dismissed as pagan and heathen (2005:518).

And this is where the missionaries went wrong and further blundered by negating, suppressing, and failing to expose, recognise, and acknowledge African Traditional Religion. They wrongly assumed that the African religion would naturally fade away when abandoned, while the Christian religion would thrive without hindrance. Little did they know that in order to grow and flourish in this new environment, they needed to engage with and embrace the receptive vessel that would ensure the conversion of new believers, as proselytising was at the top of their agenda.

This is one reason why Swazi African Traditional Religion was neglected, negated, and disrespected as an established religion of the continent by the arriving missionaries. The consequence of this theological mistake was that many African converts to the Christian faith were taught to believe that becoming a Christian meant adopting the new cultural norms and standards imposed by foreign missionaries while abandoning their own. Recognising their error, the Ecumenical Movement in the 20th century made efforts to integrate Christianity into the people's culture, leading to the correction of that mistake and the growth of the religion.

Mugambi highlights that conversion was determined by adopting Western behavioral norms, which involved abandoning Swazi traditional African customs. This has also contributed to the adoption of double standards among African converts. On one hand, they accepted the norms introduced by the missionaries, who failed to recognise the value in African culture. On the other hand, the converts couldn't deny their own cultural identity. They couldn't simply replace their denominational affiliation with their cultural and religious heritage. Yet, they couldn't become Europeans or Americans merely by adopting some superficial aspects of the missionaries' conduct.

Hence, Mbiti argues that:

African heritage encompasses history, culture, and religion. Religion is an integral part of African heritage, which spans hundreds and thousands of years. African Religion emerged from the thoughts and experiences of our ancestors. They developed religious ideas, formulated beliefs, observed ceremonies and rituals, shared proverbs and myths that carried religious meanings, and established laws and customs that safeguarded the life of individuals and their communities (1982:12).

Mbiti's message here is that a person's identity is shaped by their culture, traditions, norms, and standards within their ethnic group. It is impossible to separate religion from culture as they are intertwined. When culture changes, religion also changes. One cannot fully grasp African Traditional Religion without a deep understanding of African culture.

Mbiti attests to this when he says:

We cannot understand the African heritage without understanding its religious part. Religion is found in all African peoples. Their different cultures have been influenced very strongly by religion as it is found in each person. The earliest records of African history show that the Africans of ancient Egypt were religious people. Up to this day, Africans who live according to their traditional ways are also said to be religious (1982:12).

African Traditional Religion differs from other religions in that it does not aim to evangelise or convert individuals who are considered lost. Instead, one is born into this religion and remains part of it throughout their entire life. African Traditional Religion encompasses everything that shapes a person's identity. Mbiti further confirms this by stating:

Because African Religion developed together with all the other aspects of the heritage, it belongs to each people within which it has evolved. It is not preached from one person to another. Therefore, a person must be born in a particular African people to be able to follow African Religion in that group. It would be meaningless and useless to try and transplant it to an entirely different society outside of

Africa, unless African peoples themselves go with it there. Even within Africa itself, religion takes on different forms according to different tribal settings. For that reason, a person from one setting cannot automatically and immediately adjust himself to or adopt the religious life of other African peoples in a different setting. The people of Europe, America or Asia cannot be converted to African Religion as it is so much removed from their geographical and cultural setting (1982:12-13).

Mbiti emphasises that African Traditional Religion is intimately connected to African people who possess a deep understanding of their traditions and culture. It cannot be replaced, especially by individuals who are not of African descent, as they will not truly comprehend African Traditional Religion. Achebe and Maja-Pearce echo this sentiment:

African people did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans; that their societies were not mindless but frequently had philosophy of great depth and beauty that they had poetry, and above all, they had dignity. It is this dignity that many African peoples all but lost in the colonial period and it is this dignity that they must now regain, the writer's duty is to help them regain it (1964:157).

Both Achebe and Maja-Pearce sought to convey a crucial message, particularly to Europeans. They aimed to correct the misconception that African culture was only perfected upon the arrival of the white colonisers, suggesting that African culture was inherently inferior. Instead, they recognised and highlighted the importance and dignity of African culture, asserting that it was the Europeans who brought their own culture to Africa. They demanded that African people's dignity be restored and respected.

3.3 Swazi African Traditional Religion's Common Traits or Elements:

Numerous attempts have been made to describe African Traditional Religion, including the religious beliefs of the Swazi people, based on its main characteristics. Turaki identifies the key distinctive features of Swazi African Traditional Religion as follows:

- (i) Belief in a Supreme Being
- (ii) Belief in Spirits and Divinities
- (iii) The cult of ancestors
- (iv) The use of magic, charms, and spiritual forces (1999:69)

Kruger et al. (2009:35-39), on the other hand, identify the following three common traits of African religions that allow scholars to discuss African Religion as a unified entity:

- (a) Belief in a Supreme Being
- (b) The realm of Spirits
- (c) A unified community. Taking into account these various perspectives, it is reasonable to discuss the most common elements of African Traditional Religion, including Swazi African Traditional Religion, under the following headings.

3.3.1 The Swazi Belief in Transcendence:

Sundermeier points out that:

"Religion is seen as the communal response to the experience of the transcendental and its manifestation in rituals and ethics. This definition implies that the existence of the transcendental is accepted a priori, which is also the case in African Traditional Religion... Ethics do not originate from humanity alone and must be understood as an essential element of religion. African Traditional Religion, including the religious beliefs of the Swazi people in South Africa, has a specific understanding of the origin and function of ethics" (1999:27; Magesa, 1997:40).

Beyers (2009:3) emphasises the importance of maintaining a broad understanding of the transcendental, which can refer to a dynamic power and/or a personal god. This implies that rituals are an integral part of the social structure of religion and surpass our limitations of human knowledge, experience, or reason, particularly in a mystical or religious context.

3.3.2 The Swazi Belief in Transcendental in terms of Life Force:

Swazi African Traditional Religion, practiced by the Swazi people of South Africa, is deeply rooted in the belief in impersonal power. This dynamic understanding of the universe profoundly influences all aspects of human behavior. Turaki (1999:78) highlights how this power has been referred to by various names in the past, such as mana, life force, vital force, life essence, and dynamism.

Beyers (2009:3) discusses higher mysterious powers, known as the *mysterium tremendum* by Smith (as cited in Turaki 1999:78), which imbue objects with power that can have either positive or negative effects on individuals. Magesa (2002:35) asserts that the structure of African Traditional Religion is based on morality. Morality originates from God and flows through the ancestors. God is the Giver of Life, the Power behind everything. Magesa further explains that human life and traditions stem from God, and the transcendental is experienced as an immanent reality that provides the moral code for human life.

The African understanding of morality is rooted in a cosmological understanding informed by the African Cosmic Calendar. The universe consists of two spheres: the visible world and the invisible world. The visible world encompasses the creation we perceive around us, while the invisible world is the dwelling place of God, the Ancestors, and all spirits and powers. The denizens of the invisible world are referred to as the forces of life or vital force by Temples (as cited in Magesa, 1997:39). The ultimate power is God, the Creator and provider of ethics and traditions. God grants every living thing its own life force, its own power to sustain life. All living beings are interconnected through this life force. All living things draw energy for life from the same force, as discussed in Chapter Two under the heading "The Swazi Moral Order."

The interconnectedness through this life force has been emphasised in our discussion of community and continues to be explored in this chapter. The fundamental purpose of life in Swazi African Traditional Religion is to preserve and enhance this life force that everyone has received. Magesa (1997:52) explains that moral behaviour maintains and enhances the life force, while disobedience and disloyalty to the traditions passed down by the Ancestors weaken the life force. The entire purpose of African life is to ensure the vitality of this life force. A close relationship with God, the Ancestors, and other humans guarantees life.

Magesa (1997:53) concludes that the capacity of the life force is not only threatened by an immoral life but also by the malevolent actions of spirits. Spirits can be employed to bring harm to others and tap into the life force of others. However, the same spirits can also be invoked to protect one from the evil intentions of others. According to Magesa (1997:73), Swazi African Traditional Religion is centered on maintaining the balance between the two spheres of the universe: the visible and the invisible worlds. The preservation of this balance and harmony is humanity's greatest ethical obligation and determines the quality of life. Humans exist through their connection with the life force provided by God, the Supreme Being.

3.3.3 The Swazi Belief in the Transcendental in terms of a Supreme Being:

What is fundamental in the definitions of religion is the recognition of the existence of the transcendental and our human response to it. The transcendental also holds significance in Swazi African Traditional Religion. Mbiti (1970:3), based on his extensive research on the African perception of a deity, places God in the highest possible position. While perceived

as omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, transcendent, and immanent, God is more accurately defined as incomprehensible and mysterious. Mbiti (1970:26) points out that God is acknowledged as the creator (Mbiti 1970:45; 1990:39, 91). Although there are various myths related to the exact act of creation, it is seen as an activity in which God is the acting subject. God and His creation have no beginning and no end (Opoku, 1993: 70, 73). He is accessible to all humankind (Opoku, 1993: 70, 71). Setiloane refers to Modimo (the Supreme Being) as intangible and genderless. Its primary manifestation is as the numinous sky, and as a consequence it is associated with the direction of 'above.' Modimo is a singular Supreme Entity whose presence infuses all things but is not perceived directly through the senses (1986).

God is a spirit, as upheld by Sundermeier (1990:186), and it has been noted that an increasing number of scholars consider African Traditional Religion to be monotheistic. God does not require a name (Sundermeier, 1990:187). Giving someone a name is seen as an act of control over that entity. Therefore, in Africa, God is designated by an ancient term, sometimes borrowed from another culture, or a unique name according to Opoku (1993:71). By not assigning God a specific name, the dignity of God is preserved (Sundermeier, 1990:187). God continues to provide for His creation in order to sustain its existence.

Beyer (2009:4) raises the question of the theistic approach in African Religion. While a common Supreme Being is identified, known by different names in different cultures, and perceived personally, contact with this God is only possible through mediators or intermediaries. The manner in which the mediator is approached and venerated is an indication of devotion to God (Kruger et al., 2009:36).

God may be recognised as the creator (currently transcendent) and sustainer (immanently involved with His followers), but He is not seen as the focal point of all attention, as the mediators attract more attention. Mbiti (1970:12) refutes the assumption that God is solely absent and transcendental by indicating that God can simultaneously be distant (transcendental) and near (immanent). For Africans, Mbiti (1970:18) argues, this duality plays out for the most part of their lives. African people place God in the transcendental plane, making Him seem remote from their daily affairs. However, they know that He is immanent. Thus, for them, God is theoretically transcendent, but practically immanent.

Mbiti points out that the position God holds in African religion is not necessarily that of a Redeemer (1990:96-97). As there is no threat or condition from which humanity needs deliverance or redemption, African Traditional Religion sees worshipping God as imploring the Provider to continue His divine sustenance. God is not worshipped to gain redemption or salvation, but for His glory. Beyer discusses the impact of the Christian religion and states the following:

Western thought has influenced the way that religion (African Traditional Religion) is understood. Western philosophy supported the separation between the sacred and the profane. Modernism, focusing on human rationality, reduced religion to a set of correctly formulated dogmas and doctrines. Western thought, dominated by Christianity, created a hierarchical structure of world religions through a theology of religions...From an African perspective, religion emphasises the human effort to systematise, in society, the continuation of a religious experience relevant to a specific context. Tradition expressed in rituals and ethics, becomes the social expression of these religious experiences. African religion tends not to differentiate the transcendental from the earthly. African scholars do not present one unified understanding of religion. Some scholars would even argue that an African understanding is nothing more than an internalised form of Western perspectives. To characterise African Traditional Religion as a separate type of religion minimises the contribution that an African understanding can make to religion (2009:1).

The researcher agrees with Maluleke (2005:478), in urging all Christians to follow the admirable attempts of some among the first generation who took African Traditional Religion seriously without relinquishing their own belief in the 'superiority' of Christianity. These examples are worth considering, following, and promoting. In fact, the researcher could argue that the increasingly pluralistic context in Africa demands that we listen to other religions, particularly African Traditional Religion, including the Swazi religious orientation, more attentively and respectfully. The researcher should do so without ceasing to be committed Christians ourselves, and yet without a hidden evangelistic motive to proselytise. This will enable African Traditional Religion, inclusive of the Swazi religious orientation, to be exposed, recognised, acknowledged, and embraced as a valuable religion that can contribute, if not better, to the same extent as any other religion.

3.3.4 The Gospel and Culture:

Since the time of Jesus Christ and the early Church, the question of culture and faith has continued to confront every generation of Christians in new and demanding ways. Mbiti (1976:274) maintains that Christ and His gospel are God-given. He is a unique, holy, and

eternal being who was revealed in history and brings about new creations in Him. Culture, on the other hand, is man-made and shapes individuals culturally. Cultures exist in various forms, both good and evil, with universal elements present in all societies. It is a historical, changing, temporal, and transitory aspect of life that conditions people and the areas of creation it influences.

Mbiti asserts that:

The incarnation of our Lord was God's act of intercepting human and cosmic history. The gospel was revealed and made known to the world, in the context and language of the culture of Palestine, some two thousand years ago. Since then, the gospel has been proclaimed, propagated and accepted within the cultural milieu of the people of the world. When the gospel and culture meet, and if the Christian faith is generated, then the product is Christianity (1976:273).

The gospel permeates and traverses culture as it has moved from Palestine two thousand years ago to all parts of the world today. Acts 2 provides a classic account of how the gospel and culture became intimately connected:

"And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues... And at this sound, the multitude came together, and they were bewildered because each one heard them speaking in his own language. And they were amazed and wondered, saying... We hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God" (Acts 2:1-11).

In this passage, we witness the proclamation of the Gospel, its understanding, and its acceptance by people in their diverse cultures across the world. Thus, the Holy Spirit has entrusted the gospel to human cultures, including the Swazi culture. This divine arrangement has remained unchanged. African culture, including Swazi culture, is one of the cultures to which God has entrusted the gospel of His Son Jesus Christ, just as He entrusted it to Jewish, Greek, Roman, German, American, Indian, and other cultures around the world.

Mbiti (1976:275) believed that the African response to the gospel is expressed through conversion to Christ within one's cultural framework. The gospel has been, and should continue to be, proclaimed within our African culture—through languages, musical instruments, the joyful rhythm of our bodies, and the solemn symbols of our artists. It is within our Swazi culture that we grapple with the demands of the Gospel, and it is within our Swazi culture that we must propagate the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The claims made by many Christians that Christ supersedes culture are rooted in the incarnational model—the Word made flesh—in which Christ enters culture to transform it.

Shorter therefore concluded that:

The Christ who took human flesh is the Word in whom all has been created. This means that he is at the heart of all human cultures, that he is responsible for whatever is true and good in them and that he makes them vehicles of salvation. Christ is already present in non-Christian religious traditions before the Gospel is explicitly proclaimed. The incarnation of Christ is merely a further and final step in Christ's solidarity with human culture. It follows that the non-Christian cultures of Africa are not irrelevant to Christianity. They are not outmoded by the incarnation or by the proclamation of the good News about Christ. The cultures must be opened to the Gospel and the Gospel must be opened to African cultures. The incarnate Christ gives them a fuller meaning through his birth, life, death and resurrection as a human being and a member of a human culture. Africa remains African, not despite, but because of, being evangelised. However darkly or obscurely, the dialogue between the eternal Logos of God and human cultures has been going on since the creation of the world (1997:75-88).

Shorter (1997:75-88) points out that human cultural traditions need to be converted to Christ as they are not absolute, but God-in-Christ is. The reason cultural realities must be examined in light of God's call of love and Christ's cross is precisely because the implicit dialogue of Logos and Culture continues explicitly after the incarnation. It is one and the same process, intensified by the Christ-event, where the Word became flesh. The Logos has always challenged human cultural traditions. After the incarnation, this challenge became definitive and crucial. It became even clearer than before that God does not align with death or evil within any cultural tradition. The Christ-event issues a clear call to culture to remain true to itself and to evolve creatively towards the pleroma.

Padilla points out:

Christ is the historization of God. God has become a man. The logos has been made flesh. Therefore, in Liberation Theology Christ is to be found in every man. We meet Christ when we meet our neighbor. This is a quotation from Gutierrez: We meet him in our encounter with man. We encounter him in the commitment to the historical process of mankind. Christ is in the poor. Christ is in the one who hungers, and is thirsty, and is imprisoned, and needs clothes. Christ is in him. From a Biblical point of view however, all men bear the image of God. Jesus Christ is the model of perfect humanity. What he is, expresses God's intention for every man. But that does not mean that every man bears the image of Jesus Christ, or that Christ is to be found in every man. In the NT you find a tremendous contrast between those who are in Christ and those who are not. Christ is mediated through his word and through the Spirit, not through one's neighbor (1976:430).

Within Emaswati culture, God loves us and calls us to repent. Our culture also encompasses the love, worship, and obedience towards God. God does not desire us to be alienated from our culture, but rather to be estranged from sin. Our culture serves as a conduit for receiving, sharing, tuning in, and spreading the Gospel, which is the good news of Christ. Mbiti (1976:275) concludes that without culture, we would not hear, believe, or inherit the promises of the Gospel.

Mbiti argues that:

The gospel is not a cultural monopoly and yet, the relation between culture and the gospel demands that no single culture should imprison the gospel. The gospel was first revealed and proclaimed in the Jewish culture, but soon it was proclaimed in Greek, Roman and English cultures. So, it went on, until eventually it reached our African culture-the Swazi culture as well, and therefore it must go on, from culture to culture. We have no right to imagine that we can monopolise the gospel or keep it only to ourselves. The gospel is not a property of European or American cultures; neither should we make it the property of our African culture. The gospel belongs to Jesus Christ, and it refuses to be made the exclusive property of any one culture, ethnicity or nation, or region, or generation. Jesus is God with us – the reality of the love of God in human experience (1976:275).

So, Mbiti maintains that:

So then each culture must count it a privilege, to have the gospel as its guest. African culture must extend its hospitality to the gospel as an honoured guest that, hopefully, may stay for many centuries and millennia. Some cultures of the world have rejected the gospel while others have restricted its effectiveness. It is tragic when a culture, perhaps through no fault of its own, rejects the gospel, closes its doors to the gospel or turns a deaf ear to the gospel. Each culture is in the danger of doing this, sometimes dramatically and forcibly, sometimes slowly and imperceptibly. The gospel is a divine message coming into frail cultural vessels (1976:275).

There is no universally perfect form of Christianity that suits all people at all times. Every manifestation of Christianity carries impurities due to human sinfulness. Therefore, each cultural context has the right to develop its own unique form or expression of Christianity. No single form of Christianity should dominate over others. It is regrettable that African people were instructed by missionaries, through both words and actions, that they had to adopt cultural practices before they could become Christians. There is no theological justification for burdening individuals in this way. Even during the time of the Apostles, gentile Christians faced similar pressures from Jewish cultural traditions.

The book of Acts records the following statement: "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved"(Acts 15:2). However, the early Church rejected this approach (Acts 15:1-35). It is disheartening that Westerners who brought the gospel to Africa seemed to have followed this example. At times, Africans have been coerced or manipulated into adopting a foreign culture rather than embracing the gospel of Christ. In order to allow the indigenous culture to genuinely engage with the gospel on its own terms, free from external pressures, cultural imperialism had to be discouraged and possibly eliminated. While we can humbly and gratefully learn from other cultures and borrow aspects from them, we should not become cultural slaves, as it undermines our faith.

Mbiti states:

The only lasting form of Christianity in this continent is that which results from a serious encounter of the gospel with the indigenous African culture when the people voluntarily accept by faith the gospel of Jesus Christ. A Christianity which is heavily intertwined with an imported culture may indeed be very impressive, but it cannot be a sufficient substitute for this kind of Christianity that should grow out of the spontaneous free impregnation of the gospel in the fertile womb of African culture. Even imported Christian honey, maintained by Mbiti, however sweet, will not be a sufficient basis for a permanent home for Christianity in Africa (1976:276).

What Mbiti expresses here is that unless we cultivate an authentic Christianity that is truly indigenous to Africa, we will be building on a shallow foundation and living on borrowed time. Imported Christianity will never, ever satisfy the spiritual thirst of Africans. Our ancestral wisdom clearly echoes this sentiment in the proverb:

That which comes from charity is never sufficient to fill the granary (1976: 276).

Africa desires and needs a gospel that is relevant and native to its own context, as an excessive reliance on foreign Christianity will only spiritually emasculate or cripple us. Mbiti, in collaboration affirms and emphasises the fact that Africa possesses more than enough resources to develop a viable form of Christianity.

He states:

The only tools needed to evolve a viable form of Christianity are the Gospel, Faith and Culture...these three fundamental tools now in plenty in our continent. Why then have we continued living on borrowed Christianity when all the necessary tools are present with us? Thanks to God for His universal Gospel, thanks to the missionaries who brought it to our forefathers, thanks to the riches of

our cultural heritage by means of which this Gospel can be understood, articulated and propagated. But shame be to those who think falsely that God speaks only in English or French or Latin. God has a thousand tongues in this continent by which to speak to us about the mystery of His will and plan for the world. If God did not speak through African languages, there would not be today, the 180 million Christians on this continent (1976:276).

The Christian faith encompasses various forms of Christianity that have been shaped by diverse cultural contexts within our communities. These include the Mainline, Charismatic, Pentecostal, Apostolic, and Independent Churches. The Christian faith serves as an inclusive umbrella that encompasses these different expressions. It is essential to caution against the dominance of one form of Christianity over others or the belief that one form is superior to the rest, as they all fall under the umbrella of the Christian faith.

Sepota astutely highlights the extensive abuse of African Traditional Religion by colonizers:

From one country to the other, Christianity and western culture have been eroding African culture to such an extent that most Africans today find themselves on the horn of dilemma. Ever since the arrival of the missionaries and their contact with black Africa, most blacks have tended to believe that everything said and practised by Christians is perfect and unconditionally accepted. This maladjusted way of thinking has done and is still doing irreparable damage to African culture (1998:23).

Biko in support of what Sepota pointed out that:

The Christian black church failed to break free from the chains of colonization and the dehumanizing influence of white Christianity. Boesak (2017:207) argued that the black church persisted in practicing a theology that held the Bible captive to an enslaving hermeneutic and subservient to a Christianized, colonized mindset. In fact, Biko described the black church as a "poisoned well" from which oppressed black people were compelled to drink. Biko pointed out that while Christianity had undergone significant cultural adaptations from ancient Judea through Rome, London, Brussels, and Lisbon, when it arrived in the Cape, it was made to appear rigid (1978:56 - 57).

In South Africa, the use of the spear became synonymous with savagery, and the indigenous people's clothing, languages, customs, and religious beliefs were labeled as pagan and barbaric by the missionaries. As a result, black African people were divided into two camps: the converted (emakholwa) and the pagans or heathens (emahedeni). To be considered a true Christian, one had to abandon all elements of African spirituality. Biko noted the illogicality of this approach, as Western Christian religion was proclaimed to be

the only scientific religion, while African religions were dismissed as mere superstition, despite the glaring biological inconsistencies underlying the Western Christian religion.

Western theology went even further by preaching a theology of hell that frightened Africans with tales of eternal flames, gnashing of teeth, and grinding of bones, compelling our ancestors to believe that it was worth their time to be Christians. Biko argued that this theological discourse continues to keep black people within the Western Christian church even today, as they fear going to hell. Furthermore, Biko contended that Christianity was corrupted from its inception by the inclusion of elements that made it the perfect religion for the colonisation of people. Christianity became the ideal tool for perpetuating the subjugation of black people.

Drawing on the Black Theology of Liberation (BTL) in their own time, black theologians argued that in the African context, although the Western-European missionaries failed to completely strip Africans of their culture and traditions, they succeeded in distorting and instilling a sense of shame in Africans regarding their heritage. Africans were regarded as uncivilised, savage, and their beliefs were dismissed as mere superstitions (1978:56-57).

Mosala and Tlhagale affirm:

The missionaries' approaches in Africa were never satisfied in having the native in its grasp, but it turns to the native past with the intent of disfiguring and distorting it. Like Cone, Mosala & Tlhagale (1986:47) pointed out that those Black theologians in South Africa rejected white theology's interpretation of the gospel and sought to interpret the gospel of Christ in the light of the black condition. It is in this regard that Black Theology of Liberation as it emerged from Cone became extremely important in the black struggle for justice and liberation against apartheid and colonialism(1986:175-199).

Mbeki supports Biko's perspective and argues that:

The colonial exploitation of religion has existed for centuries, as the colonial forces that invaded Africa received support from various religions. Since they did not find priests, temples, scriptures, religious institutions, or Schools of Theology, the colonizers assumed that Africans were not spiritual people and had nothing to offer to the West. They were completely mistaken in confining spiritual strength to institutional religion. Some African individuals realized that they were being assimilated into Western civilization and a distorted version of the gospel that undermined the core principles of spiritual humanity advocated by great spiritual leaders throughout history. None of these leaders were products of Western civilization, including Hindus, Confucius, Isaiah, Amos, the Buddha, Jesus, or Mohammed. Colonial religion often stemmed from sincere yet misguided beliefs (2000:97; 1976:276).

Schreiter accurately describes the situation of the invaders by stating:

For too long, embracing Christ and his message in Africa usually entailed rejecting African cultural values. Africans were taught that their ancient ways were deficient or even evil and needed to be discarded in order to become Christians (1991: i-vii).

Ngugi wa Thiongo (in Moyo) is equally correct when he sarcastically remarks:

The European missionaries who came to Africa adopted an attitude of blanket condemnation of African culture in all its aspects. African converts were required to turn their backs on the whole of their tradition and the whole of their culture. Only then was it considered that the Christian faith had truly taken root in their souls. Although some people may feel this statement to be an overgeneralization, the experience of many African Christians throughout Africa shows that this was surely the case (2001:72).

After examining the history of Western missionaries in Africa, Dickson observed:

The history of their missions witnesses a wide range of exclusive tendencies. He feels that the most glaring illustration of these is the *tabula rasa* doctrine which maintains that the culture of those being evangelised cannot be looked upon in any way as a basis upon which to build. For the Christian religion to establish roots among the people, their culture, according to this doctrine, must give way altogether. The African Christian history scholars have given a few reasons for this attitude, some of which are as follows: 1. It might have been because the missionaries who came to Africa to bring the Word of God had a superior attitude towards the Africans to whom they were preaching the Word of God; 2. It could also have been due to the fact that some of them had an absolute and exclusivist understanding of the *sola Scriptura* slogan, although in practice, one could see that they themselves were using their own culture, science and many other sources of authority(1991:12f).

It was against this backdrop that many African Christian theologians reacted, believing that such mentality and views were the main causes of the crisis in African morality. As Pobe aptly puts it:

There was a 'working understanding' between the missionaries who preached the gospel and the people who were evangelized and received the gospel. They interpreted the gospel in their own different ways. However, the preachers of the Word of God in Africa did not allow for the integration of African culture and the Bible in their ethical views. This becomes evident in their stance when addressing issues such as polygamy, ancestral worship, dowry, and sorority (1992:8-22).

African Christians are sensitive to African culture while also striving to be faithful to the Christian faith. It becomes clear, therefore, that the Bible does not unambiguously prohibit

certain African customs and practices, such as polygamy. The Bible has now been translated into numerous African languages, allowing the basic elements of the Christian faith to become intimately linked with African culture through the translation of Scriptures. In this process of translation, the Biblical world is infused with African thought forms and concepts, and conversely, African cultural elements enter the Biblical world, creating a reciprocal process.

African readers find familiarity in parts of the Old Testament, such as the books of Genesis, Deuteronomy, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, Psalms, Proverbs, and the Synoptic Gospels in the New Testament. These books contain important cultural elements and values that parallel or reference African life, including respect for the elderly, parents, authority, justice, truth, friendship, hospitality, the value of children (the more, the better), marriage customs (such as the necessity of marriage, marriage gifts, protection of women and children, divorce customs, plural wives especially for leaders like chiefs and kings, and inheriting the wife of one's deceased brother), family coherence, corporate or communal life, festivals of celebration and commemoration, the centrality of God in religious life, the use of artistic and creative talents, mystical ties to the land, and more.

However, there are cultural elements that are not readily accepted in African life, as well as in the Bible, such as theft and stealing, sexual abuses including incest, homosexual relations, rape, and adultery, meanness, murder and homicide, lying, divorce, witchcraft and sorcery, cursing, disrespect, laziness, slander, and various taboos. There are historical and mythological parallels, ethical parallels, and parallels in worldviews, among others. In more recent years, African peoples have identified their political struggles with, and drawn inspiration from, the enslavement, deliverance, and exodus account of the children of Israel in Egypt.

This is a clear indication for African people to recognise that the Bible is not solely a book of their Christian faith. It provides them with a platform to express and reflect their cultural life, history, and experiences. It should not be limited to serving as an evangelistic tool, as the Church has traditionally done, but should also serve as the foundation for evaluating and critically assessing cultural elements and practices. The researcher agrees with the notion that unless African culture comprehends the message of the Bible, no other culture in the world will be able to effectively convey this message to the African people.

Mbiti (1976:275), argues that the Gospel cannot reach people without culture. However, despite being expressed and communicated within cultural boundaries, the Gospel itself transcends culture. Its transcendent nature stems from the fact that God is the author of the Gospel, while humans are the authors of culture. Culture grounds human beings in the earthly and human realm, whereas the Gospel elevates human beings to the heavenly and divine. It is not culture, but the Gospel, that ultimately governs our lives. Yet, the Gospel also transforms human beings into new people in Christ while embracing our cultural framework, rather than rejecting it. Therefore, the Gospel and culture are not inherently contradictory or conflicting, as it is humanity, not culture, that is flawed and in need of change. The Gospel has the power to transform individuals regardless of their cultural background.

Mbiti (1976:281) pointed out that, African culture must bring glory to God as the Gospel is intended for the whole person in the whole world (*oikumene*) and creation as it is evidenced by the following Scriptures from the Bible, namely: (Matthew 28:19 f.); (Mark 16:15); (Ephesians 1:9 f.); (2 Corinthians 5:17); (Colossians 1:15-20), etc. In the book of Revelation, we read about the final picture of the new creation, one in which, among other things, the people of the whole world, bring into the holy city – the New Jerusalem, “the glory and the honour of the nations” (Revelation 21). This then gives us a clear indication that the Church must take African culture and religion seriously. She should be able to cleanse culture because it cannot cleanse itself of its own impurities; it cannot rescue itself from decay and deformities as culture has its demons, which only the gospel is equipped to exorcise and disarm. So now, it becomes the duty of the Church, particularly through its leaders and theologians to guide the people in getting our culture evaluated, judged, and rescued from its demonic powers and sinfulness.

Martin points out that:

The relationship between Christianity and African culture has been construed in many ways. Some see Christianity and African culture as representing rival worldviews, resulting in an exclusivist affirming of one over against the other. This means either that African traditions and culture are rejected as unchristian or Christianity is rejected as a ‘foreign religion’. Others separate religion and culture- Christianity as a ‘religion’ is set apart from African ‘culture’ and ‘traditions’. Both are valid in their proper place, but should never be allowed to touch each other. Still

others have tried to integrate the two in configurations called 'African Christianities' (1995:1).

3.4 Christianity and African Independent Churches:

This study specifically focuses on Swazi African Traditional Religion, addressing the gap the researcher has identified. However, it is important to explain why it is necessary to examine Christianity and African Independent Churches (AICs) in general, as AICs are considered products of African Traditional Religion. This supports the assertion that African Traditional Religion has always served as a vehicle for preparing the ground for the growth of the Christian faith. The AICs, formed by African Christians, emerged as a result of proselytisation by Western Christian missionaries. Due to certain challenges related to race, African Christians distanced themselves from the missionaries and established the AICs, which have come to be recognised as valid expressions of African Christianity. Therefore, the interconnectedness between Christianity, AICs, and SATR has a long history and should be nurtured to ensure meaningful contributions to the life and work of the Church in the present context.

Manganyi and Buitendag (2013:1) confirm that African Traditional Religion is embraced within the African Indigenous Churches (AICs), and their members strive to be Christian without sacrificing their African identity as it was practiced across Africa prior to the arrival of Western missionaries. It is widely accepted that the African Initiated Churches were also formed in pursuit of a unique African identity and culture. This assumption is prevalent among many African theologians, with Maluleke (1994) being one example. African identity and culture are preserved within African Traditional Religion. This underscores the main objective of this research study, which is to demonstrate how African Traditional Religion has served as a receptive vessel for the Christian faith, enabling millions of African Christians to comprehend and embrace it. The concept of Buntfu/Ubuntu or communal living in African Traditional Religion is rooted in the belief that African life is lived within a community. African Christians continue to honor their ancestors and worship God while upholding their Christian identity.

Adamo (2011:1-10) emphasises the urgent need for dialogue between Christianity and African Traditional Religion, as the current form of Christianity embraced by Christians can be seen as hypocritical due to the continued adherents to African Indigenous Religion

(AIR), especially in times of crisis. This suggests that the influence of AIR remains strong, particularly during moments of emergency (Mercado, [2004], 2005:104). Even today, there are many who argue that Christianity still seeks the guidance of AIR priests. Despite the extensive efforts of Christian missionaries and their proselytising activities throughout Africa, African religions continue to exhibit vitality. This is evident in the worship of African deities, the reverence for ancestors, and the reliance on divination, magic, and other rituals, as noted by Bascom & Herskovits (1975).

Turner (1967:17) explicitly defines African Independent Church (AIC) as a church founded in Africa, by Africans, and primarily for Africans. This definition encompasses three essential features: the Independent Churches originate from Africa, were established by Africans, and although some of them do not exclude white members, they are largely tailored to the needs, worldview, and lifestyle of Black people. The use of the term "church" is technically accurate since all the leaders perceive their movements as churches of Christ and aspire to be recognised as such.

Furthermore, employing the term "church" as a general definition implies a tentative rather than an absolute theological assessment. Within the African Independent Churches, the preaching of the gospel and a focus on scriptural truths take center stage. The sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion are administered, and discipline is common to all these churches, even though moral standards often align closely with tribal law and traditional codes of conduct. However, for a more specific theological evaluation, one would need to delve into the practices of individual groups.

The crucial point to highlight in this section is that the African Initiated Churches (AIC) are an expression of Africans' endeavor to make Christianity relevant within their African context. Furthermore, these African Initiated Churches are connected to and compatible with Swazi African Traditional Religion and, consequently, reflect the African experience of Christians in the Swazi community. These churches encompass diverse streams, perspectives, and practices. Kraft discusses African Independent or Initiated Churches and their African Christian members, stating:

When Africans asked Europeans what the Bible means, they told them what it means in their context, as if this is all that it could mean. They have, however, failed to grasp the greatness of God and the extent of His revelation in the Scriptures, as

He desires to speak an appropriate word to every context, rather than merely imposing His word from Europeans onto Africans (1976:287). Therefore, the AICs must emancipate SATR and decolonize Christianity.

Kraft cautioned that:

Indigenising Christianity to make it relevant to the African context can be a risky endeavor. Orthodox Christians preferred to maintain things as they were, utilising the sacred forms of the foreign culture, Judaism. They were apprehensive about altering those sacred forms, believing that pagan Greek culture could not adequately convey the Gospel. Europeans were resistant to any changes from their established patterns that they had come to regard as sacred. They would rather see Africans who refuse to westernise perish than risk modifying the current forms to better express Christian meanings within African cultures. However, there is also a significant risk of syncretism. This risk can manifest in the following ways: (a) Making mistakes when adapting the Christian message to indigenous forms. Often, people experiment with using words and customs to convey Christian meanings, but these attempts may not be successful. Sometimes people are even irresponsible in their efforts to contextualise, and the risk of making mistakes is ever-present. (b) Refusing to adapt the meanings to new cultural forms. (c) Being conservative and unwilling to change the foreign forms of Christianity. Today, the greatest risk of syncretism arises not from those who are attempting to discover African ways of expressing Christianity (1976:289-290).

In Chapter One, we discussed the factors that influenced syncretism and committed to addressing this syncretistic problem in Chapter Three. Ejiwunmi (1976:219-220) identifies syncretistic problems on four levels: intellectual or theological, moral, social, and liturgical. The researcher believes that by applying these understandings, the researcher can address and overcome this problem.

3.4.1 Theological or Intellectual Level: Christianity may be offensive to the human heart at its core. To assert, as Peter did, that "Salvation is found in no one else. For there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved," expresses this offense. However, if we are to remain true Christians, we must state this humbly, graciously, patiently, clearly, firmly, and unashamedly. This does not deny the "knowledge"

of God, or rather, God-consciousness in all other cultures and religions. To do so would contradict passages such as (Acts 17:27-38; Romans 1:19-23).

The intellectual or theological level, which emphasises the uniqueness of the Gospel as depicted in passages like Psalms 24, begins with acknowledging God as Creator. It involves knowing Him as Holy, in contrast to man's unclean hands and false and deceitful vows. However, as man seeks after God, He enters the uplifted and open heart to dwell and rule. Man cannot and will not find God through his own searching, but God in Christ meets man. The crux of the matter lies not in the mere acceptance of biblical names and concepts of God in African societies, as enumerated in Shorter's book (1988:53-56), but in whether it is true that God is personal, near, and capable of an intimate relationship with His creation as a whole and with man in particular, on His own terms.

3.4.2 Moral Level:

Moral syncretism can be better addressed once the researcher has resolved this intellectual confusion. Despite differences in personality, value patterns, and technological competence, man is fundamentally the same everywhere. In these times, we can only revert to the apostolic prescription for the basic norms of Christian standards, as stated in the book of (Acts 15:29). (a) Renunciation of idolatry: rejecting gods that we can manipulate, manage, or turn into mere museum pieces; (b) Rejection of bloody, vicious, and violent behavior; (c) Proper utilisation, enjoyment, and preservation of the physical world; and (d) Embracing God-ordained, wise, grateful, meaningful, and purposeful sexual relationships.

The researcher believes that these minimum standards can and should be emphasized in any community and for anyone who claims to be Christian. By establishing this solid foundation, all other cultural and personal "moral structures" can be placed upon it, leaving no room for equivocation or mere arguments. This will ensure that the "building" stands strong for both the present and eternity.

3.4.3 Social Level:

Ejiwunmi (1976:220) further suggests that while average Evangelical Churches excel in "doctrine," they often fall short in true fellowship. African Independent Churches have met the needs of many individuals for immediate care and concern. Even the zealous and well-

grounded believers have sometimes sought and found genuine friendships and truly listening ears outside our churches. The prayerful, caring, open, and joyful community described in the book of (Acts 24:2-47) is rare in today's context. Similar to the woman suffering from hemorrhage, individuals often find themselves surrounded by an anonymous and preoccupied crowd most of the time, lacking the opportunity to touch the garment of the Lord. It may be beneficial to consider placing a ceiling on the size of individual congregations since large congregations often consist of lonely and lost individuals. Additionally, fostering more community or neighborhood fellowship groups, ideally inter-denominational in character, would help minister to people in their localities and protect them from falling prey to visionaries and religious charlatans of all kinds.

3.4.4 Liturgical Level:

One of the captivating aspects of African Independent Churches is the use of vibrant colours, excitement, vernacular language in words and music, and what appears to be an unstructured liturgy. The researcher firmly believes that simplicity, sincerity, and sound teaching should be the foundations of all genuinely biblical Christian organisations. However, there should also be room for change, spontaneity, and even intentional experimentation, as long as these are approached prayerfully and with pure motives. The researcher acknowledges that the issue of syncretism is an age-old and persistent problem. Just as God had to warn the Israelites about it when they stood on the brink of the Promised Land, in the book of (Deuteronomy 12:18), it is crucial for all people, African or otherwise, to be persuaded that God requires obedience to His commands and ordinances.

In our pursuit, we are guided by Black theology, which interprets the Bible in light of the specific situation and offers a fresh approach to theological discourse. It aims to be helpful in uncovering the truths about Swazi African Traditional Religion, the Christian religion from the West, and the African Christian religion, all of which encompass the people's past and present, as well as God's will for them in their community.

Kraft (1976:291) points out that in certain areas, Swazi African Traditional Religious cultures are already closer to embodying real Christianity compared to European cultures. African cultures possess a deeper understanding of certain aspects of the church that Europeans lack. The essence of God's people is to live in community and to be communal. European societies, on the other hand, are individualistic, lacking a culture of sharing and

self-centeredness. Their churches often function as mere organisations rather than communities of God's people.

When traditional African communities commit themselves to God, they immediately surpass European churches that have existed for centuries in terms of their communal nature. Additionally, African people have a better capacity to comprehend most of the Bible compared to Europeans. The book of Proverbs, for instance, demonstrates that much of the wisdom present in African cultures aligns with God's values. The organisational structures, reverence for tradition, thought patterns, close connection to the land, and religious attitudes towards life depicted in the Old Testament resonate deeply with Africans. The message of God in the Old Testament is consistent with that of the New Testament when people move beyond certain Western interpretations of the Bible.

Furthermore, African traditional moral and ethical practices often align more closely with biblical principles than those of the Western missionaries who occasionally condemn African customs. Patience, for instance, is a Christian virtue, and Africans generally exhibit more patience than Europeans, including European Christians. Generosity, politeness, hospitality, perseverance, concern for neighbors, willingness to share, spending quality time with people and making them feel valued, and fulfilling family responsibilities are all virtues that Africans commonly exemplify.

Kraft's perspectives clearly indicate how Swazi African Traditional Religion has prepared the ground for Christianity to remain relevant and contextual. This is evidenced by the thousands of African Christians who have embraced Christianity. It also underscores that without the Swazi African Traditional Religion serving as a receptive foundation for the preparation of the Christian faith, the religion would not have held the same significance for African people to embrace.

The African Initiated Churches cannot achieve liberation and independence from the Christian faith to the extent outlined by Kraft, highlighting the virtues of Swazi African Traditional Religion. It is important to acknowledge that there are unchristian aspects within African cultures, including the culture of the Swazi people. In response to this, Kraft (1976:291) poses a question: Can any of these cultures compare to the lack of Christian qualities in Western culture, such as failure to genuinely relate to people with patience, generosity, politeness, and sharing love? Barrett (1973:33) cites this "failure in love" as the

primary cause for the rise of African Independent Churches. Western societies may construct magnificent material structures, but they often sacrifice the well-being of individuals in the process. Even after 2,000 years of Christianity, it is difficult to conceive of a less biblical culture than European culture.

Lastly, Kraft (1976:291) points out that these African cultures possess more biblical and effective means of communication that have been adopted from the West. Throughout the Bible, God's message is conveyed through oral stories. While these stories have been written down, their intended mode of transmission is through storytelling rather than reading. Biblical figures, including Jesus, extensively used proverbs and parables. Africans already excel in this form of communication compared to Europeans. However, much of the Christian communication by Africans simply imitates European preaching styles and fails to incorporate the use of proverbs or parables.

Elion and Strieman (2001:34-35) highlight that the African Independent Church serves as an umbrella organisation for numerous churches rooted in mainstream constituted churches but have chosen to reform and establish their unique African identity. These breakaway churches are constantly evolving and shaping their own identities while incorporating elements of their original identity into the new framework. It is widely recognised that neglect, denial, lack of recognition, disrespect, and failure to accord African Traditional Religion its rightful place have contributed to the emergence of these breakaway churches.

Moila (1991:37) asserts that the gap created by missionaries between African Traditional Religion and Christianity upon their arrival deserves attention. There is now an existing relationship between African Traditional Religion and Christianity. Ongoing debates on inculturation as a means to bridge or widen this gap continue until both religions find common ground and work towards a harmonious coexistence in serving God's people and worshipping together.

Adogame and Jafta continue to point out that:

One must refrain from assuming that all AICs are virtually identical. This tendency is rife in extant literature on the AICs, whereby the phenomenon is treated in such a way as if the wide, complex variety can simply be pigeonholed as a single whole. The uniqueness of this religious genre should be seen in terms of the affinity and differences that characterise their worldviews, ritual and organisational structures. They share many features in common – the reason for their common typology – yet it will be oversimplifying this comparison without highlighting the fact that each of the

AICs has its own religious dynamic. While there are abounding affinities, they also reveal a significant complexity in terms of their foundation histories, the charismatic personality of the founders and leaders, their belief patterns and ritual structures, their organisational policies and geographical distribution. One of the less-polemical categories adopted to aggregate a large genre of independent churches in South Africa was Zionist. Sundkler popularised his broad distinction between two types of South African Independent churches, which he described as Ethiopian and Zionist. The latter gained some weight and credibility, not only because this indigenous religious creativity was seen to be heavily concentrated among the Zulu and Swazi peoples, but also as a result of the spiritual liberation and renaissance which the 'Zion' biblical concept represents for its members in a highly segregated context (2005:310 - 311).

Adogame and Jafta (2005:316) highlight that the earliest Zionist churches emerged in Southern Africa during the 20th century. The broader and more inclusive strand of AIC historiography pertains to churches that emphasise the guidance of the Holy Spirit (uMoya loNgcwele) and healing as central concerns. Examples of such churches include Daniel Nkonyane and Elias Mahlangu, both originating from the Zion Apostolic Church group led by the Afrikaner missionary Le Roux in Wakkerstroom, which is now part of Mpumalanga province. After a definitive separation from Le Roux in 1917, Mahlangu founded the Zion Apostolic Church of South Africa, while Nkonyane established the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion between 1912 and 1920.

Adogame and Jafta point out that:

Nkonyane assumed leadership in the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion, introducing certain elements in worship that have remained prominent features of Zionism up to the present day. These features include white robes, bare feet, holy sticks, and symbolism derived from the Old Testament. In 1922, Nkonyane changed the church's name to the Christian Catholic Apostolic Holy Spirit Church in Zion. This name change attracted a significant number of older and more contemporary emaZiyoni, who emerged and became part of the religious landscape in South Africa. Examples of the largest groups include the Zion Christian Church (ZCC), the Nazirite Baptist Church (Shembe), and the International Pentecostal Christian Church (IPCC/Modise).

The earliest group among the African Independent Churches was the Cherubim and Seraphim (C&S), which initially existed as an interdenominational society preaching faith in prayers, renunciation of the devil and all his works, including idol worship, and the rejection of charms (umutsi welutsandvo/intsandvwo), as well as the fear of witchcraft (batsakatsi). In 1925, the society was formally established as a church, largely due to the dissatisfaction with and ineffectiveness of Western medicine provided by the mission churches. A defining characteristic of the early AICs was their encounters with colonial and mission authorities. Through their pragmatic approach to existential questions, visionary reinterpretations of the Bible, and the influence of charismatic figures, the African

Independent Churches quickly gained local appeal and drew followers primarily from existing mission churches (2005:316-317).

Adogame and Jaftha (2005:321) argue that the religious worldview of the AICs reveals their unwavering commitment to the Bible as the ultimate source of knowledge. They uphold the centrality of God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and numerous angels within their belief system. The role of angels as mediators and intermediaries between the human and supernatural realms holds immense significance in AICs' church life and worship, although the number and importance of angels may vary among different groups. AICs' beliefs greatly influence members and underlie the praxis, rituals, worship, membership, and decision-making of the church. Each AIC has a distinct doctrinal focus, with practices and teachings grounded in biblical principles.

A significant aspect of the AIC worldview is their quest for spiritual power to overcome the myriad of evil forces present in the world. While members accept the traditional explanation for diseases, illnesses, and misfortunes, they reject traditional healing methods. This reflects the influence of Swazi African Traditional Religion adherents, who consider their religious heritage an integral part of their identity and life journey.

3.5 The AICs as expressions of African Christianity:

The works of Mbiti (1975) and Setiloane (1976) serve as classical examples that have helped Western missionaries understand that Western expressions of the Christian faith are not universally valid for Africa. These works have fostered some tolerance and sympathy towards the AICs. Another contributing factor to the development and establishment of the AICs has been the case studies conducted by various scholars on significant aspects of African Traditional Religious beliefs and practices. Hodgson (1982), for instance, provided an insightful account of the concept of God among the Xhosa people. Such detailed studies focusing on different African ethnic groups and tribes have facilitated the recognition that Africans hold strong religious beliefs, which must be taken into consideration when spreading the gospel message.

The 1970s marked a new approach to the study of the AICs. The works during this period recognised the AICs as valid expressions of African Christianity. Daneel (1987: 245-273) emphasised that the AICs are no longer subjects of mission but rather expressions of African Christianity. He achieved this by thoroughly discussing the major beliefs of the

AICs, such as Baptism, Holy Communion, Sacraments in general, Eschatology, Salvation, and more, comparing them to the corresponding Christian doctrines. The AICs demonstrate a clear understanding of these doctrines derived from the Bible, interpreting them through an African lens.

Moreover, the AICs have incorporated certain Christian beliefs and practices to transform African Traditional Religious beliefs and practices. For example, they have embraced the idea of ancestors assuming a role equivalent to saints in the Christian faith, incorporating it through the process of inculturation. Daneel (1971) provided a comprehensive history of the development of the AICs in Zimbabwe, tracing their roots from South Africa and highlighting how African beliefs and values were integrated into the theological development of the AICs in Zimbabwe. Similar to the missionary-founded churches, the AICs also formed associations for cooperative purposes. Daneel (1989) extensively discussed the ecumenical operations of the AICs.

In South Africa, West (1975:142-170) conducted a particularly insightful study on the development of the AICs in Soweto, exploring their ecumenical activities as well. These movements were examined as independent expressions of the Christian faith. Vilakazi et al (1986) conducted an exceptional study on the Amanazaretha of Isaiah Shembe, considering the church as a revitalisation of African society. It should be noted that this characterisation does not render the AmaNazaretha un-Christian since the founder, Shembe, was deeply devoted to Methodism. The researcher will also explore three other prominent Zionist groups later, affectionately known as ZCC of Engenas Lekganyane, EmaJeriko or Bongubo zibovu, and the International Pentecostal Christian Church, Modise.

Oosthuizen (1986) compiled a collection of articles from various parts of South Africa that provide detailed studies on different aspects of the lives of the AICs. These articles consistently portray the lives of the AICs as authentic expressions of African Christianity. The AICs offer a celebratory religion and employ a significant use of ritual symbols. Their liturgical systems are characterised by music, drumming, and dancing. The AICs place great importance on the appropriation of spiritual songs, hymns, and sacred language as a means of revelation, which forms a central part of their ethos and rhetoric.

Concrete objects hold a fundamental place in the cosmology and praxis of the AICs. Ritual objects that feature prominently in their religious practices include consecrated water,

candles, perfumes, incense, palm fronds, hand bells, staffs, spears, and consecrated oil. Other tangible objects encompass girdles, crosses, sacred numerology, invocation of psalms, and the use of esoteric language in prayers and hymns. For example, the Zionists (EmaZiyoni) refer to their staffs as weapons (sikhali), which are made of brass and wood. These staffs are common symbols of power used by the white robe members of the AICs, such as EmaZiyoni, to ward off demons and evil forces.

While numerous works have been published on this subject, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss all of them. The aim of this thesis is to provide an overview of the interconnectedness between the AICs, Swazi African Traditional Religion (SATR), and the Christian faith within the study context of the Mpumalanga province, particularly the Ehlanzeni district. The research study focuses on the fourteen identified Swazi Traditional Councils of Ehlanzeni, where a significant number of Swazi people in South Africa reside. As mentioned in the previous paragraph of this section, the researcher's attention will now shift to the prominent groups located in the identified Ehlanzeni district, namely the ZCC, Shembe, EmaJeriko, and IPHC or Modise church. The main research question the researcher will explore is: Was the Swazi African Traditional Religion a receptive vessel for the preparation for the Christian faith? Sub-questions include examining why this Swazi African Traditional Religion in South Africa was rejected by Christianity and exploring whether the inculturation process bridged or widened the gap that already existed between Swazi African Traditional Religion and the Christian faith.

3.5.1 The ZCC of Barnabas Lekganyane:

According to Elion and Strieman (2001:32), these African Christians belong to spiritual churches that incorporate either the influence of Christianity or the influence of African traditions in their practice of Christianity as indigenous Africans. The Zionist Christian Church (ZCC) is based in Moria, located in the Limpopo province, and has followers throughout South Africa and beyond. The ZCC primarily observes the period from Good Friday to Easter, and to a lesser extent, the September festival launch, which coincides with the African Calendar's ploughing season. The name "Moria" is derived from the Old Testament book of Genesis and signifies provision by the Lord. These churches typically incorporate teachings from both the Old and New Testaments. The Zionist Christian Church, being the largest, has a substantial following among the African Independent

Churches, as many members of these churches identify as Zionist, Apostolic (Gospel), or Pentecostal.

3.5.2 The Nazarenes of Isaiah Shembe:

The Shembe Nazareth Baptist Church (Libandla lemaNazaretha) is based in the KwaZulu Natal province and has followers throughout South Africa. The Nazirite Baptist Church (Shembe), also known as the Shembe Church or the Nazareth Baptist Church (Libandla LamaNazaretha), was established in 1911 by Isaiah Shembe in KwaZulu Natal (KZN). The Church promotes the idea of "Zulu-ness," with Shembe proclaiming the Zulus as the Nazirites of the Old Testament (OT) and presenting himself as their prophet. The teachings of the church are largely based on the Old Testament (2001:32). The AICs derive their theology specifically from the Old Testament (OT), indicating a connection between the Christian faith and the African Traditional Religion of the Swazi people in South Africa.

The Shembe Sabbath is observed on Saturdays, and its adherents wear white smocks or robes over their clothes, aiming to create a sense of equality between the rich and the poor. The Shembe festival, unlike that of the ZCC, takes place in July and includes spectacular public dances as part of the religious ceremonies. According to the African Calendar, July to September is the ploughing period. Circumcision is considered a covenant with Abraham in both African Independent Churches and African mainstream Churches. Key aspects of the services common to all churches practicing African Christianity include prayer, singing, casting out evil spirits, healing, and preaching. It is important to note that many emaZiyoni share a common ethos and denominator, as evidenced by the various titles adopted by the African Independent Churches (2001:33).

3.5.3 The Jericho Zionists (Bongubo Zibovu):

Most AICs can be easily distinguished from other churches by the spiritual attire worn by their members during church services or other rituals, although the specific colour of these garments may vary among different groups. The collective identity of emaZiyoni is often expressed through the symbolism of their white garments. However, it is worth noting that there are some newer emaZiyoni churches that opt for colours other than white. In particular, the Church of Jericho (emaJerikho) in the province of Mpumalanga, specifically in the Ehlanzeni district, and the neighboring Kingdom of Eswatini are known as the red-dressed Zionists (Bongubo Zibovu).

3.5.4 The International Pentecostal Holiness Church (Modise):

The IPHC operates as an AIC and was established in 1962 by its leader, Frederick Modise. The IPHC's belief is that justification or salvation cannot be attained through good works alone, but rather, it is achieved through faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ, His resurrection, and the justifying righteousness of Jesus Christ. Good works, however, are seen as a natural outcome of salvation. The IPHC falls within the Pentecostal tradition, which is characterized by its energetic and dynamic nature. Pentecostalism emphasises the work of the Holy Spirit and the believer's direct experience of the presence of God. Pentecostals believe that faith must be experiential and powerful, rather than limited to rituals or intellectual thinking.

3.6 The use of the Bible by the AICs in shaping African Christianity:

Members of the African Independent, Indigenous, or Initiated Churches originate from the Swazi African Traditional Religion, into which they were born as African people. Their Swazi culture has enabled them to embrace a culture in which God entrusted the gospel of His Son Jesus Christ, just as He entrusted all other cultures around the world. It is crucial to understand that they have been and continue to be vessels through which God communicates. While modern theology may not necessarily derive its content solely from the Bible or any scriptures, the Bible remains the primary source of AICs' theology in the 21st century.

To properly understand the theology of the AICs, it is important to acknowledge that their major characteristics are rooted in the Old Testament (OT), which they use as a basis for developing their theological beliefs. Biblical scholars from the Western world have developed various methods and approaches to interpreting the Bible, including the OT, and these methods align with those employed by the AICs. Kaiser (1975:5) discussed the fourfold sense of scripture, which suggests that scripture can be understood and interpreted in four senses: the literal sense, the allegorical sense, the moral sense, and the anagogical sense. Many AICs incorporate all four of these senses into their interpretation of scripture.

In the literal sense, many AICs believe in the literal account of Moses parting the waters of the Red Sea with his rod to allow the Israelites to pass through. As a result, they carry rods which serve multiple functions and purposes within their practices.

The allegorical sense is highly prevalent among the AICs. For instance, members are not allowed to play football because they perceive the ball as a symbol of the severed head of John the Baptist, who was beheaded by King Herod (Matthew 14:1-12: ASB).

The healing methods employed by the AICs involve both mystical and psychic experiences, highlighting the interconnectedness between Christianity represented by the Bible, African Traditional Religion as the religion of their family, clan, and tribe, and the AICs as African individuals who maintain connections with both Christianity and Swazi African Traditional Religion.

As AIC members often found themselves unsatisfied with their newfound religion, Christianity, they would sometimes return to their original religion, Swazi African Traditional Religion, to seek satisfaction. In secret, they would perform traditional and cultural practices, finding solace and fulfillment in them. To maintain their satisfaction and freedom, they decided to create a platform that could accommodate both the imported religion of Christianity and the indigenous religion of the Swazi people. This platform allowed them to adopt a new identity as African Christians, incorporating an adapted form of Western Christianity known as African Christianity, with the AICs serving as an umbrella organization.

The AICs comprise various types of churches, including Ethiopian, Spirit, and Messianic churches, which demonstrate their connection to both Christianity and Swazi African Traditional Religion. Through an examination of these churches, the researcher aims to explore their relationship with Christianity and Swazi African Traditional Religion, and ultimately address the main research question regarding the receptiveness of Swazi African Traditional Religion to the preparation for the Christian faith.

3.6.1 Ethiopian-type Churches (1890-1920): Daneel points out that:

Since political development and the knowledge that a colonial power had been successfully resisted in East Africa by Africans for the first time bred awareness that God concerns Himself with Africa in a special way. They originated largely as a reaction against white and white dominated mission churches. Such texts as Psalm [21], which say that: 'Ethiopia hastens to stretch out her hands to God, are interpreted as a sign that the oppressed Black people have a specially appointed place in God's plan of salvation.' This text is linked to the conversion of the Ethiopian chamberlain and it is claimed that Africa responded to Christ's message of salvation long before the European peoples did (1991:38).

This highlights the role of African Traditional Religion as a preparation for the Christian faith. It also signifies the connection between Christianity and Swazi African Traditional Religion, as evidenced by the inclusion of Ethiopian Churches under the umbrella of the AICs.

3.6.2 Spirit-type Churches (1920-1970):

Overall, the Spirit-type churches are of more recent origin compared to the Ethiopian type. This popular form of religion gained momentum and soon became a larger and more influential movement than the Ethiopian churches. The designations of South African Independent Churches, such as Zion, Jerusalem, Apostolic, Full Gospel, Pentecostal, and others, indicate a strong inclination towards Pentecostalism or a significant emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit. This demonstrates the connection between Christianity and African Traditional Religion, which contributes to the role of Swazi African Traditional Religion as a receptive vessel for the preparation for the Christian faith.

Daneel (1991:41) highlights Turner's belief that the diverse manifestations of the work of the Holy Spirit justify a subdivision into soteriological and revelational churches. The soteriological churches place primary emphasis on prophetically guided faith healing. Redemption is primarily understood as deliverance from diseases caused by demonic forces, particularly witchcraft (butsakatsi), wizards (batsakatsi), and evil spirits (mimoya lemibi). Due to their persistent focus on healing, one could also refer to them as therapeutic churches. In contrast, the revelational churches emphasize the revelations given to prophets through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit's guidance regulates church activities and the lives of individual members. Once again, this illustrates the connection between the Christian religion and Swazi African Traditional Religion, both of which are integral to the AICs.

Sundkler (1961:39), instead of referring to these churches as Spirit-type churches, prefers to call them prophetic groups, specifically Zionists (emaZiyoni). The name "Zion" often appears in their names, and they have incorporated indigenous concepts of a Kingdom of God where the holy city of Zion, whether symbolically or concretely, holds a central position. This underscores the role of Swazi African Traditional Religion as a receptive vessel for the preparation of the Christian Faith. Turner, on the other hand, prefers to label them as prophetic-healing churches, highlighting their dual emphasis on the revelation of

God's Spirit through prophets and a message of salvation in which faith healing plays a key role. Daneel (1991:53-54) states that these churches place primary importance on divine healing, adult baptism by immersion, and the belief in the imminent second coming.

3.6.3 Messianic Churches:

Daneel (1991:41) points out that some researchers argue that the so-called "messianic churches" should be classified in the same category as the Spirit-type churches. This classification is justified by the fact that both Messianic and Spirit-type churches are predominantly prophetic movements, with the distinction being that in messianic churches, the leader is elevated to a messianic status. In these movements, members often focus on the eminence of the leader, including their mystical powers, miracles, and mediation between God and followers, to the extent that the leader assumes Christ's position, either partially or wholly.

Daneel further explains that in extreme cases, where Christology is clearly usurped by a Black Messiah who is deified to some extent, we encounter Black Messianism, which can only be characterized as non-Christian or post-Christian. These instances demonstrate the interplay and connection between Swazi African Traditional Religion and the Christian faith within the African Initiated Churches, suggesting that the Christian religion was shaped and prepared by the African Traditional Religion of the Swazi people of South Africa to thrive in its current form.

Together with Mbiti, the researcher agrees with Daneel's argument (1991:41) mentioned above, as Christ can never be replaced by any human being since He is God Himself. The Bible remains irreplaceable, and while African cultural and religious backgrounds may bear similarities to the biblical world, we must be cautious about using references such as the "hitherto unwritten African Old Testament" or expressing sentiments that perceive the final revelation of God in African religious heritage. This highlights the compatibility between African Traditional Religion and the Christian faith within the AICs.

3.7 The Basic Understanding of God in the AICs:

The AICs hold a strong monotheistic belief. They view Jesus as the Son of God, who was sent by God to deliver people from their sins and grant them eternal life. According to the AICs, eternal life is obtained immediately after death, and there is no concept of waiting for

the second coming of Christ and the resurrection. At the time of death, individuals are judged and sent either to hell or heaven. However, the AICs perceive heaven not as a distant place, but rather as an integral part of the community. The founding members of the churches, who are considered ancestors, continue to be loved and venerated even after their passing. Many African Christians within the AICs find it unacceptable to label their deceased fathers or mothers as demons, as they were raised by them in challenging circumstances and provided them with all the good things in life.

Kealotswe argues that ancestors are an integral part of daily life and play a significant role in guiding the lives of the living. In the AICs, God communicates with people through prophets who also invoke the spirits of the ancestors. By preserving the tradition of prophecy from the Jews, the AICs create space for the integration of African cultural and traditional religious beliefs and practices. These beliefs and practices are considered traditional, as they incorporate various African elements that are often conservative and resistant to change (1993:262). For example, an AIC prophet, particularly a Jericho, shares similarities with a sangoma or traditional healer. Before diagnosing patients, the prophet requires inspiration from the ancestors, known as labaphansi, which is induced through singing and dancing. Nowadays, many AIC youths possess university degrees and are highly enlightened individuals. While traditional healers may not be highly educated, they possess a certain level of enlightenment and understanding, aided by the Holy Spirit.

Regarding the interaction between modern technology and spirituality, the AICs maintain that the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ can communicate with anyone, including those using modern technologies. They argue that modern technology is not a challenge to Christianity or African Traditional Religion but rather facilitates the easy communication of the gospel among adherents of both religions. They believe that the Holy Spirit comprehends and embraces technological communication, emphasising that God understands everything and has inspired humanity to develop technology, as encouraged by Him. Some AICs adhere to African beliefs, customs, and religious traditions that they find compatible with Christianity, while disregarding incompatible African customs that contradict the Christian faith. This clearly demonstrates the connection that exists between the churches, Christianity, and Swazi African Traditional Religion.

The AICs possess strong religious beliefs and practices that enable them to transcend the challenges posed by modernity and post-modernity. The researcher believes that this is

due to the fusion of Christianity and Swazi African Traditional Religion within their core. A significant aspect of their influence lies in their function as family churches, where members are intimately connected and know each other by name. This sense of community provides hope and courage to AIC members, irrespective of the social, economic, and political conditions they face. In the broader context of Africa, particularly in Mpumalanga, South Africa, and the Ehlanzeni district, members of the AICs consistently find solace and support from their fellow members, regardless of their specific AIC denomination.

In contrast to the Christian missionaries who disregarded African Traditional Religion, the AICs embrace both the Christian faith and Swazi African Traditional Religion as harmonious partners. Their bond, nurtured by faith, becomes even stronger than familial ties when confronted with the challenges of modern and postmodern times. The life and theology of the AICs serve as a unifying force in rapidly evolving communities and societies. While the African continent undergoes rapid social changes, the AICs remain steadfast in upholding the enduring essence of various African Traditional Religions, including the Swazi African Traditional Religion practiced by the people of South Africa, alongside the Christian faith. This clearly demonstrates that the African Indigenous, Initiated, or Independent Churches, together with the African Traditional Religion of the Swazi people of South Africa, serve as receptive vessels in preparing individuals for the Christian faith.

3.8 Chapter Summary: The main objective of this chapter was to establish the relationship between Swazi African Traditional Religion (SATR) and the Christian faith, aiming to understand why SATR was not recognised and acknowledged as a receptive vessel for the preparation for the Christian faith. The researcher has presented new information that suggests that missionaries and colonists eventually recognised certain elements of the Christian faith within SATR, leading some missionaries to view SATR as a valid and authentic religion of the local people. These shared traits include the belief in a Supreme Being (God), the existence of a spirit realm, and a sense of community. SATR has also contributed to the development of the Christian faith by affirming the belief in one God worshiped by both SATR adherents and Christians, and by emphasising the veneration of ancestors rather than their worship, focusing solely on the worship of God as the Creator of heaven and earth. This new information highlights the central role of SATR in preserving African culture, particularly the reverence for ancestors. African Christians find themselves navigating between the traditional African worldview and the Western Christian perspective.

Joining the AICs allows them to integrate these two aspects, recognising the value and significance of SATR as a spiritual path that prepared them for the Christian faith. This confirms that African Traditional Religion, including SATR, serves as a receptive vessel for the preparation for the Christian faith.

Now, the researcher moves on to the next chapter, where the researcher will delve deeper into the contributions of Swazi African Traditional Religion to the contemporary Church context.

CHAPTER FOUR

SWAZI CONTRIBUTION TO THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH CONTEXT

4.1 Introduction:

This chapter investigates the contribution of Swazi African Traditional Religion to the contemporary context of the Church. It deepens the argument by presenting the findings of the fieldwork conducted with individuals identified in Chapter One, primarily through questions and interviews. The researcher agrees with Denscombe (1998:110) and Rubin and Babbie (1993:342) in acknowledging that interviewing is a complex process that requires careful planning, adequate preparation, and sensitivity to the dynamics of interaction during the interview itself. In this study, the researcher administered the questionnaires to the respondents orally, rather than asking them to read and answer the questions themselves.

Having established the relationship between Swazi African Traditional Religion (SATR) and the Christian faith, the researcher now turns the attention to exploring the current perspectives that have emerged from the voices on the ground. The aim is to discover the specific contributions of Swazi African Traditional Religion to Christianity, further confirming its role as a receptive vessel in the preparation for the Christian faith.

The researcher utilised a set of twenty-eight integrated questions from Appendices 1 and 2, and extracted and consolidated the responses of the interviewees from fourteen selected traditional councils, employing both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. A multidisciplinary approach was adopted, incorporating Black theology, Liberation theology, and African Christian theology to understand concepts related to God, human beings, their environments, and their social conditions. Disciplines such as history, religion, cultural anthropology, and sociology were also utilised to enhance the understanding of African Traditional Religion and its relationship with the Christian faith. The interviews were conducted with members of the traditional councils, who are both adherents of African Indigenous and Christian religions, representing a portion of the twenty councils that constitute the Ehlanzeni District House of Traditional Leaders (EDHTL) in Mpumalanga. The objective was to gain insights into the contribution of Swazi African Traditional Religion to Christianity based on the experiences and perspectives of the local community.

This research aimed to gather information directly from the people on the ground to assess their knowledge and understanding of the contributions made by Swazi African Traditional Religion to Christianity. SATR has served as a receptacle for various forms of political, social, economic, cultural, spiritual, and religious subjugation. Through this process, SATR receives, rediscovers, and reinterprets what has been entrusted to it, in preparation for its own liberation and that of its adherents from the oppression and suppression imposed by missionaries and colonisers. This preparation enables the Christian faith to be heard and embraced by the African people, often referred to as "gentiles."

The research involved visiting the traditional councils and conducting interviews with the identified or sampled members and their leadership. Questionnaires were administered, and observations were made during meetings. The qualitative research interview questionnaire (Appendix 1) consisting of fourteen questions and the quantitative research interview questionnaire (Appendix 2) with fourteen questions were used, integrated, and consolidated. As recommended by Rubin and Babbie in the previous paragraph of this chapter and in Chapter One of this research, the researcher personally conducted all the interviews in the fourteen traditional councils. This first hand experience and observation proved valuable for the evaluation and analysis of the data in the next chapter. The researcher agrees with Reason (1994:10) in emphasising the importance of engaging with individuals as persons, co-subjects, and co-researchers in order to truly understand their perspectives. In all the interviews conducted in the fourteen traditional councils, the researcher personally asked the questions and recorded the respondents' answers. Following the collection of material from the sampled leaders and members of their traditional councils and chiefdoms, deskwork and various research processes were carried out, including the administration, collection, and analysis of surveys, data analysis from other sources, library research, internet research, and the writing of this work.

The interviewees, who were members from each of the fourteen traditional councils, were asked the fourteen questions from Appendices 1 and 2. The identified and sampled respondents shared their thoughts and views, providing insights into the Swazi African Traditional Religion's contribution to Christianity. This exploration aimed to determine their perspectives and understanding of how African Traditional Religion, African Religion or African Indigenous Religion can be considered a receptive vessel for the Christian faith, as well as to learn about the evolving relationships between these two religious systems over

the years. The researcher now shifts the focus to the voices of the interviewees from the ground, rather than relying solely on scholars, authors, or books, in order to gain an understanding of their perspectives on the relationship between African Traditional Religion and the Christian faith. Most individual interviewees embraced a combination of ATR and Christianity whilst some embraced SATR and others Christianity only.

4.2 Responses from the Questionnaires:

In this section, the researcher presents the similar and different responses from the respondents representing the fourteen traditional councils. The interviewees expressed their thoughts and views while addressing the fourteen questions posed to them. Their voices have been integrated to capture a collective response to the questions, whenever possible.

In this section, the researcher present the empirical data collected through interviews with respondents from the sampled fourteen traditional councils in Ehlanzeni District, specifically in the areas of Mbombela and Nkomazi. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, a detailed analysis of the data collected from these traditional councils will be provided in Chapter Five.

Permission to conduct the interviews and use the data for educational purposes was granted by the chairperson of the Ehlanzeni District House of Traditional Leaders. While the researcher has chosen not to disclose the actual names of the interviewees, the researcher will refer to their chiefdoms. The researcher gives assurance that the participants' responses will be used solely for academic purposes, contributing to the analysis and insights that will enhance our understanding of the subject under study. In other words, their answers will form the basis for developing the research focus to determine whether African Traditional Religion served as a receptive vessel for the preparation for the Christian faith. The following are the questions posed and the responses received:

Questions 4.2.1 to 4.2.14:

4.2.1 Who are you, which Council do you come from, and how would you describe yourself and the role you play in the Council?

All respondents in this section identified themselves as religious, spiritual, or cultural individuals, and many indicated that they practiced both the Christian faith and Swazi

African Traditional Religion. They viewed themselves as custodians of Swazi traditions, customs, practices, beliefs, religion, and culture, inherited from their ancestors. On a daily basis, they sought guidance and protection from these traditions, striving to live in harmony with the Creator, Ancestors, and the Community in which they coexist. Some respondents specified that they primarily identified as spiritual individuals practicing Christianity to uphold purity and holiness. Others stated that they solely embraced Swazi African Traditional Religion as custodians of the fundamental Swazi belief systems.

These custodians of Swazi traditions and customs understood their responsibility to preserve and promote the religious and cultural aspects of the Swazi people. They recognized the connection between their two religious systems, SATR and the Christian faith. For instance, **R2** shared, "I am from my Traditional Council. I am a Christian by religion and a cultural and spiritual person who is a headman (indvuna). My responsibility in my community is to serve as a custodian of Swazi culture and traditions, and to educate our young boys about the expectations and rituals they should be aware of as they transition into adolescence or puberty" (See Appendix 3).

The respondents acknowledged that all human beings possess spirituality, but not everyone chooses to adhere to a specific religion. People have the freedom to choose the religion they associate with and are known for as its adherents. Those who converted to Christianity from the indigenous religion of the people did so either under duress or coercion, but they did not cease to be adherents of their ancestral spirituality, SATR. As a result, many Africans find themselves caught between their African religion and the Christian faith, leading what can be described as a double standard life.

The respondents explained their understanding of being cultural, religious, and spiritual. They identified themselves as both cultural and religious because they recognised that their African culture and religion are intertwined. Their way of life is deeply rooted in their culture and religion. They also acknowledged their spirituality, understanding that God, the Creator, has infused His spirit within them, endowing them with divinity. This divine essence is an act of God that individuals have no control over; it is not a matter of choice. As adherents of SATR and the Christian faith, their spirituality allows them to understand that there is one God, the Creator of all things, who is always present, guiding, and protecting them, even though they have never seen Him. They also view their clan and ancestral lineage as mediators between the living and the deceased.

4.2.2 Can Swazi African Traditional Religion and Culture best work separately or together and play a role in shaping the Swazi people of South Africa and society in general?

Among the voices from the ground, **R1** expressed, "I am a cultural person. Culture can best work together because culture shapes religion and religion provides guidance on how to live harmoniously with others. It outlines the actions needed to maintain coexistence, not only within the Emaswati ethnic group but also within the South African nation and the African continent as a whole. These elements are naturally intertwined and inseparable" (See Appendix 3).

This perspective is echoed by **R9**, who stated, "I can confirm that our culture and religion as Swazi people are interconnected in such a way that practicing our culture is indeed practicing our religion. These aspects cannot be separated, and our culture sustains, explains, articulates, communicates, and celebrates our religion. Our ancestors have encouraged us to embrace this synergy throughout generations for the best possible outcomes" (See Appendix 3).

Another voice from the ground, **R11**, expressed, "Swazi African Traditional Religion, including culture, plays a role in transmitting values such as equality, human dignity, and respect. These values are vital in shaping the Swazi people and society in general, helping them understand their common humanity, equality before the law and God (Mvelinchanti), and the inherent respect and dignity with which they were created. This understanding is shaped by their religion and culture" (See Appendix 3).

Similarly, **R2** shared, "As respondents, we indicated that Swazi South African religion and culture cannot be separated, as they are intricately linked from the beginning. We emphasized the role Swazi African Traditional Religion and Culture play in shaping the Emaswati of South Africa and society as a whole" (See Appendix 3).

This viewpoint is affirmed by **R3**, who expressed, "Religion and Culture of the Swazi people ensure that their customs and traditions are practiced to preserve and promote the ethnicity and identity of the Swazi people. This encourages Emaswati to recognise and appreciate the importance of customs, traditions, and heritage, fostering unity as our ancestors, who now serve as intermediaries between the living and the dead, have become Ancestors themselves" (See Appendix 3).

R6 added, "The adherents and practitioners of Swazi African Traditional Religion and Culture serve as custodians of these elements, instilling good morals and positive values in the living. This helps shape the ethnicity of the Swazi people and establishes a foundation built upon sound values. It enables their spiritual, religious, and cultural lives to be deeply rooted in the knowledge, acknowledgment, and recognition of the Supernatural God, *Mvelinchanti*, who is the source of respect, faithfulness, responsibility, honesty, and a caring life" (See Appendix 3).

R5 adds, "SATR and Culture contributed immensely to the attainment of freedom and democracy in their country of birth by negating and resisting missionaries and colonists who were hell-bent on eradicating their religion and culture. The narrative of 'Africa for Africans' reinforced the survival of SATR as a religious and cultural vessel established by God for the land of Africa" (See Appendix 3).

Another perspective is presented by **R4**, who stated, "I hold a different view that culture and religion can be separated. Culture pertains to man, while religion pertains to God. This means that culture is sinful and unholy, whereas religion is a holy and acceptable way of life. Therefore, it is possible for them to be separated since one is considered evil and the other is considered good. However, the fact that God established these two aspects, religion and culture, implies that He had a purpose for their establishment and intended for them to work together to fulfill His revelation. Without one, there would be no culture or religion" (See Appendix 3).

This viewpoint is affirmed by **R8**, who expressed, "As a staunch Christian and a proud adherent of SATR and its culture, I do not engage in social ills such as selfishness, laziness, hatred, jealousy, greed, crime, corruption, and violence. Both of my religions prohibit me from committing evil acts because neither of them originated from a deity who is associated with evil. It is God's will to eradicate all forms of evil and promote that which is good, so that in the end, we may inherit the promises of the Gospel" (See Appendix 3).

R10 further supports this idea by stating, "Those who claim that culture is unholy and sinful while religion is a holy and acceptable way of life are driven by the belief that one aspect is evil and the other is good. However, they fail to recognise that both religion and culture were established by God as integral parts of the religious framework of the land. Their

purpose is to work together to bring about the completion of His revelation. One cannot be complete without the other" (See Appendix 3).

This perspective is further affirmed by **R12**, who said, "The proponents of the idea that culture is unholy and sinful were likely misled by the trading and colonising missionaries who arrived in the land with their own agenda. They were blinded by the missionaries' ignorance and arrogance, preventing them from seeing, knowing, and understanding that religion and culture in African tradition are intertwined. They were established to promote harmony, unity, compassion, and kindness among fellow human beings and all of humankind" (See Appendix 3).

Another perspective is shared by **R7**, who stated, "Regardless of what people may say about the separation of African religion and culture, I have made the decision to stand firm. I strongly believe that even if someone attempts to separate them, it will be ineffective because these two aspects were never intended to function independently. So, count me out of the idea of separation. It doesn't convince me. Swazi African Traditional Religion and Culture have played a role in urging the use of African culture for Jesus Christ, and we should never abandon it in shaping the Swazi people and society in general" (See Appendix 3).

R13 supports this viewpoint, stating, "Religion and Culture are inseparable aspects of my Swazi Traditional Religion. Even when I practice my second religion, Christianity, my traditional beliefs still form the basis of my worldview. There is no religion without culture, as culture shapes my religion" (See Appendix 3).

This position is further affirmed by **R14**, who said, "As the Christian population continues to grow, we are not exempt from the influence of our forebears' religion, Swazi African Traditional Religion. This gives us a reason to renew our attention to SATR" (See Appendix 3).

In summary, the responses to this question indicate that Swazi African Traditional Religion and Culture cannot be separated, unlike in the Christian faith. They play a role in shaping the Swazi people and society in general. Through the concept of a common God, who is recognised by primal religions and ethnicities as the Creator of all, the Swazi people are called to engage with the demands of the Gospel of Jesus Christ within their cultural framework. They are encouraged to propagate the Gospel while remaining connected to

their culture and understanding that God loves them and calls them to repentance. The respondents emphasise that they should not become alienated from their culture, but only from evil beliefs and practices (See Appendix 3).

4.2.3 Did the Swazi people believe in God or the Ancestors before and after the arrival of the missionaries in Africa and what was God called?

Moving on to the question of whether the Swazi people believed in God or the Ancestors before and after the arrival of missionaries in Africa, **R1** responded, "The Swazi people, since time immemorial, have known that there is a God, although they may not have known His appearance. They referred to Him as Mvelinchanti or Nkulunkulu, the Supreme Being who created everything. Throughout generations, God has been worshiped, and the ancestors have been venerated as mediators by families, clans, and communities" (See Appendix 3).

This perspective is supported by **R3**, who stated, "The Swazi people believed in God, the Creator of the universe, long before and after the arrival of missionaries in Africa. They referred to Him as Simakadze. They approached Him through their ancestors, whom the Swazi people believed to be His servants. The Europeans who came to Africa claimed that only they understood God, falsely attributing the worship of ancestors to Africans. They imposed their Western culture on the land's converts, presenting it as Christian religion" (See Appendix 3).

Another voice from the ground, **R12**, expressed, "The European teachings confused both our forebears and us, African believers. In many instances, they threatened, judged, and condemned us based on our pigmentation. They labeled us heathens because, as Africans, we refused to worship the God of the West. The missionaries propagated the lie that Africans worshipped and served their ancestors as gods, undermining African achievements, particularly those of black individuals" (See Appendix 3).

R14 also echoed this sentiment, stating, "The missionaries deceived Africans about their Western God, even though they themselves were uncertain. As Africans, we believe in one God of this universe, who is full of love and care. This God would not permit human beings to inflict pain and unnecessary suffering on others, solely based on their different skin colour. For Europeans, this meant that the resources allocated to Africans were wrongfully

obtained and undeserved, leading them to claim these resources for themselves" (See Appendix 3).

Adding to this discussion, **R2** stated, "All African tribes have their primal religion, and our SATR teaches us that our foreparents truly believed in the living God and worshiped Him alone. They referred to Him as Mvelinchanti, signifying that He came first or existed long before anything else, as He created everything out of nothing (ex nihilo). The Swazi people (Emaswati) did not worship their ancestors but held them in high regard, remembering them in a profound sense as they continued to be part of their lives" (See Appendix 3).

R8 affirms this viewpoint by saying, "God is also known to them as Mlentengamunye, meaning the one-legged being, which highlights His uniqueness as a Supreme Being. Although He created them, they cannot be exactly like Him. This view contradicts Christian belief, as Christians maintain that human beings were created in the image of God (imago dei), suggesting that they were created to be like Him" (See Appendix 3).

R4 emphasises that, "The God worshiped by us Swazi Africans, the Creator of everything, does not remain distant and disconnected from His people. He actively engages in our daily lives, for He is a compassionate God who struggles alongside His people and protects them from deceitful individuals who pretend to have good intentions towards us as African people. Such is the nature of the European God. Our African God resides with us in our villages and slums, and He is the giver and sustainer of life. No other God possesses this capacity except Him alone. The God in whom we believe cares for us always, as He neither slumbers nor sleeps but watches over us as His beloved creations" (See Appendix 3).

R5 affirms this view, stating, "Africans believed in a God who listened attentively when they communicated with Him, especially during times of drought, famine, and pestilence. Whenever they asked for His intervention, He never refused, but instead responded with rain, abundant harvests, and holistic healing in times of sickness and disease. He is the God who liberates in all aspects: socially, spiritually, and religiously. When He created humanity, He ensured that they were protected from evil forces that do not align with His attributes as the sole Creator of all nations, including the Swazi people of South Africa" (See Appendix 3).

R13 establishes that, "In the Christian faith, God is the head, whom we Swazi African Traditional Religion adherents believe in and regard as our Father. We approach Him

through our Ancestors and benevolent spirits. Christians approach Him through the Son, Jesus Christ, and the angels. The Holy Spirit, as part of the Trinity, is transcendent and serves as an enabler, reviving the deceased, ancestors, benevolent spirits, and angels who all work for God. He is the one whom all His creatures worship and believe in. No tribe or religion possesses its own exclusive God. As adherents of SATR, we understand that God is our meeting place as different ethnicities and religions" (See Appendix 3).

R6 strongly asserts, "It is absolutely unacceptable to refer to our ancestors as demons. As Africans, we should not remain silent in defense of our beliefs or join in the condemnation of our sacred faith without correcting the shame that is attributed to it. We need to educate those who perpetuate this embarrassment, for the so-called demons are our flesh and blood. They represent the first generation community that received all the laws and ordinances to live in harmony with the Creator, other human beings, and nature. Every ethnic group has its Ancestors, who form the family tree—the living dead or saints, as Christianity refers to them. They intercede on behalf of the living and act as intermediaries according to our Swazi African Traditional Religion" (See Appendix 3).

Another respondent, **R10**, stated, "Swazi African people remain faithful in their belief and worship of God. We hold our ancestors in high regard, remembering them deeply as integral parts of our lineage. While we remember them daily, our loyalty to them as physically deceased but spiritually alive relatives cannot be equated to the loyalty we have towards God. These two forms of loyalty are neither in competition nor in conflict with each other" (See Appendix 3).

This view is also supported by **R11**, who said, "Although the Swazi people and our ancestors did not have knowledge of the physical appearance of Mvelinchanti or how He created the universe, we firmly believe that everything we see or don't see exists and is sustained by Mvelinchanti, Mlentengamunye, Nkulunkulu, Lomdzala Wetinsuku, which all mean God, the Supernatural or Supreme Being, and the Ancient of times" (See Appendix 3).

One particular voice from the ground, **R7**, mentioned, "African societies, including the Swazi people of South Africa, have always held the notion of a Supreme Being who is responsible for our existence, workings, and continuity as creation. Despite the different names by which He is called, this Creator instilled in them knowledge and wisdom to recognise Him

and understand His expectations. They believe in Him and constantly worship Him, empowering themselves with the awareness of His presence in, around, and among us as His people" (See Appendix 3).

R9 stated, "As adherents of various primal religions, ethnicities, and tribes, we cannot deny the notion or concept of God, including within the Christian faith. The Christian faith initially originated from European ethnicities and later merged with African Christians who were rooted or born into their primal religions. In our case, this primal religion is SATR" (See Appendix 3).

To summarise the responses to this question, it is evident that the Swazi people have always believed in the God who is the Creator of all life. They were taught by their foreparents to worship and believe in this God, who is known as Mvelinchanti. The Swazi people recognize their ancestors as individuals who have passed away and joined God in the spiritual realm. These ancestors serve as intermediaries between God and the living. The Swazi people's religious and cultural orientation revolves around this active God, who exists beyond, between, and beneath heaven and the underworld. They venerate their ancestors as an integral part of their lives but do not worship them.

4.2.4 How can African Religion contribute to the building and promotion of nationhood, national unity, and social cohesion in South Africa and the continent?

In response to the above question, **R5** stated, "The religious and cultural orientation of the Swazi people contributes to the establishment and promotion of nationhood and the sense of national identity among the Swazi people of South Africa. It fosters patriotism and benefits them as they become a religious nation that prioritises their love for God, themselves, and others (community and nation). This belief in the Creator or Supernatural Power is significant for the future generations. Furthermore, it promotes a cultural nation that worships God, respects themselves, lives peacefully with others, and preserves their traditional way of life for the well-being of future generations" (See Appendix 3).

R12 confirms this perspective by stating, "Some of us recognise that our Swazi religious and cultural orientation contributes to the well-functioning of our families, while others attribute its contribution to the functionality of the broader Swazi community and society. It reinforces our core beliefs, such as the existence of God, the Creator, the Supreme Being, and the significance of Ancestors. These foundations and relationships between adherents

of SATR, the Christian Faith, and the AICs of African Christians are crucial for building a harmonious and cohesive nation that promotes unity, coexistence, and solidarity among its people" (See Appendix 3).

R8 expressed, "My religion and culture are responsible for fostering nationhood, national unity, and social cohesion through various religiously significant activities. For example, the birth of a child brings great joy to the entire family and clan, uniting them as one strong community. The child is raised within the community, where they are taught, nurtured, and guided" (See Appendix 3).

This view is also supported by **R11**, who mentioned, "Swazi African Traditional Religion and Culture support practices such as polygamy, which is culturally accepted, especially in cases where an earlier marriage did not produce children or only girls were born" (See Appendix 3).

R14 stated, "In both Christianity and African culture, the death of individuals deeply affects the community in which they lived. It is believed that the deceased continue to influence the lives of their living relatives, promoting peaceful and healthy relations among them" (See Appendix 3).

R13 adds, "Thanksgiving, whether it is clan-based or performed at the societal level, is seen as a gift from the spiritual world. It contributes to the building and promotion of the nation, unity, and social cohesion. Therefore, it is important to express gratitude to the ancestors, as they are integral to the family, clan, and community" (See Appendix 3).

This perspective is affirmed by **R10**, who said, "Religion and culture support various activities such as birth, polygamy, death, thanksgiving, and rituals. These extraordinary practices are performed by the living for the spiritual world, serving special purposes such as gratitude, rites of passage, appeasement, divination, and addressing specific needs as requested by the ancestors. The home, as a sacred place, is where Mvelinchanti resides, although He is present everywhere. It is also where rituals are frequently conducted" (See Appendix 3).

R6 expressed, "Religion and culture play a significant role in providing the building blocks for the reconstruction of nationhood, national unity, and social cohesion. They actively promote religious practices from initiation or adolescence into adulthood. The physical

changes of puberty mark a stage of passage where the community prepares adolescents, both boys and girls, socially, spiritually, psychologically, and religiously for the next phase of growth within the community—adulthood. This preparation involves a series of experiences designed to help them understand the implications of puberty changes. However, it is important to note that for the Swazi people, this does not include the physical ordeal of circumcision" (See Appendix 3).

Another perspective from **R1** stated, "The religious and cultural orientation of the Swazi people fosters relationships of trust and solidarity among adherents of SATR, the Christian faith, and the African Christians of the AICs. This challenges those who falsely claim that we, as Swazi Africans, particularly in South Africa, had no concept of God, genuine faith, or a higher standard of culture before the arrival of missionaries in our continent. Such claims are simply untrue" (See Appendix 3).

R2 observes, "The religious and cultural orientation of the Swazi people clearly demonstrates, through careful observation, that Africans had an organised society and their own industries prior to the arrival of missionaries. They had industries that provided farming and hunting tools, cooking utensils, and clothing, all contributing to the building and promotion of nationhood, national unity, and social cohesion among the Swazi nation" (See Appendix 3).

R4 emphasises that "the religious and cultural orientation of the Swazi people fosters social cohesion not only within the Swazi nation of South Africa but also between other South African nationalities. Our shared beliefs and practices serve as a unifying foundation for the Swazi nation, acknowledging that we are all under one God, the Supreme Being. This ensures the existing relationship between adherents of the Swazi African Traditional Religion, African Christians who have converted, and their culture, which forms the basis of their identity" (See Appendix 3).

R7 states, "The religious and cultural orientation of the Swazi people contributes to the achievement of national unity among believers, including adherents of SATR, African Christians of the Christian Faith, and converts to African Independent Churches. Their deep religious convictions are evident everywhere" (See Appendix 3).

R3 affirms, "The religious and cultural orientation of the Swazi people serves as a nation builder for the South African Swazi people and the continent as a whole. This is true for

adherents of the Swazi African Traditional Religion, converted African Christians who have embraced the Christian Faith, as well as African Christians who have established African Independent Churches. Despite their different affiliations, all these Africans maintain a relationship with one another" (See Appendix 3).

R9 states, "The religious and cultural orientation of the Swazi people contributes to fostering friendship and tolerance among the Swazi people, as well as with people from the continent and around the world. This includes adherents of the Swazi African Traditional Religion, African Christians who have converted, and African Christians of the African Independent Churches" (See Appendix 3).

In summary, it is evident that every ethnic group has its own culture and religion, including the missionaries from the West. Africans do not separate religion from culture; these aspects have remained intertwined from the beginning. The religious and cultural orientation of the Swazi people, in particular, plays a role in building and promoting nationhood, national unity, and social cohesion within the Swazi nation of South Africa. Their religious and cultural orientation is interconnected not only within themselves but also with the Swazi African Traditional Religion, African Christianity of the African Independent Churches, and the Christian faith of the missionaries and African converts who have not sought to break away from the Independent Christians. Their common belief in the concept of God, the Supreme Being, Mvelinchanti, as the sole Creator of all things, serves as their foundation. The relationship between religion and culture is based on the understanding that they exist because of this God, who established them in SATR as a vessel preparing them for the Christian faith. The relationship between SATR, African Independent Churches, and the Christian faith is rooted in the shared characteristics of God in their African belief, which are not entirely dissimilar to those in Christian belief. For example, the Swazi people believe in God's omniscience and omnipresence, describing Him as a higher force that lives with them, listens to them, and remains present in their struggles and hardships.

4.2.5 Was African Religion regarded a preparation for the Christian faith?

In response to the above question, **R1** said, "The majority of the respondents with regard to this question shared the same views while others offered different views as to why Swazi African Traditional Religion was regarded as a receptive vessel for the preparation for the Christian Faith (*praeparatio evangelica*). The Christian Faith was embraced by millions of

African Christians who contributed immensely to the life and work of the church. Since Swazi African Traditional Religion (SATR) has been regarded a preparation for Christianity in the continent it helped grew it phenomenally because Christianity was directly and indirectly nurtured by SATR and thrived on SATRs basic beliefs, rituals and rites” (See Appendix 3).

R4 said, "Swazi African Traditional Religion (SATR) is regarded as a vessel for the Christian Faith by many adherents, primarily because it is based on the teachings of the Old Testament, which Christianity also propagates. The Christian Faith delves into topics deeply rooted in Swazi African Traditional Religion. SATR celebrates life through various religious activities such as birth, naming ceremonies, initiation, marriage, and the start of the rainy or harvest season. The Church, in fact, should incorporate certain elements of African culture and creativity into its life and work. This can include contemporary expressions and activities such as literature, art, drama, music, dance, entertainment, press, radio, television, and more" (See Appendix 3).

R2 stated, "SATR nurtured Christianity and promoted the Christian Faith among its members by creating awareness that they are rooted in SATR and its culture. This allowed for the expression of the new religion. SATR was initiated by God, and its forebears were commissioned to carry it forward and integrate it into the lives of its adherents. Swazi African Traditional Religion can contribute to issues of culture, which encompasses a way of life, and leadership, which involves guiding in the light of the gospel. It can address matters such as hierarchy, respect, authority, human rights, and the roles and dignity of women and children" (See Appendix 3).

R3 said, "SATR offers its beliefs and practices for dialogue and integration into Church life. This includes incorporating practices like prayers, ceremonies, and rituals, especially those connected to birth, death, adolescence, procreation, and marriage. By embracing these practices, people can feel that their faith is relevant and meaningful to their lives. SATR also offers beliefs and practices related to concepts of God, spirits, ancestors, human life, death, and the afterlife, which can be relevant to the Christian faith in the present-day context" (See Appendix 3).

R12 added, "The majority of us, if not all of us, who remain in SATR or have crossed over to Christianity, continue to consult Swazi African Traditional Religion (SATR) as it is integral

to our identity. The shared aspects between SATR and Christianity affirm SATR as the original source and a vessel for the preparation of the Christian faith. However, it is important to subject elements of SATR to scrutiny, pruning those that may be considered demonic while preserving those that contribute to the building and enrichment of the Christian Faith" (See Appendix 3).

R6 said, "Christians have traditionally categorised SATR as part of culture rather than accepting it as a fully-fledged religion. This perspective, which views SATR as a preparation for evangelisation or soul winning, is not acceptable to most SATR adherents and practitioners. It implies that the Christian religion can lure adherents away from SATR, suggesting that SATR is a lesser religious system. SATR, however, is an independent and mature religion, just like Christianity" (See Appendix 3).

R8 establishes quite clearly that "Swazi African Traditional Religion offers the Christian Faith numerous beliefs and practices, community life, the philosophy of Ubuntu - collectivism as caring for one another and doing things together, and an existing relationship between Swazi African Traditional Religion and the Christian faith. It also gives birth to African Christian teachings" (See Appendix 3).

R10 said, "SATR offers teachings of cooperation, working together, and harmonious coexistence between religion and culture. It recognises the two religious systems without favouring one over the other, especially the one in which adherents of SATR are born into, which is their ancestral religion" (See Appendix 3).

R5 makes the point that "SATR, as the oldest religion on the continent, is referred to as a vessel for the production and construction of the Christian faith from the West. Although there is no single form of Christianity suitable for all people and times, SATR offers the Christian faith an opportunity to learn from the indigenous religion for its relevance to African Christians who have embraced Christianity" (See Appendix 3).

Another voice from the ground, in particular **R9**, said, "I hold a different view regarding SATR being a vessel for the preparation for the Christian faith. I believe that this perspective requires further refinement by black theologians who aim to demonstrate that Christianity originated in Africa and that Africa had a significant influence on Christianity" (See Appendix 3).

This view is supported by **R7**, who said, "There are those who completely reject the notion that SATR serves as a vessel to prepare for the Christian faith. They argue that such a perspective suggests that Christianity is merely an extension of SATR. Instead, they advocate for the preservation of authentic religious practices and fundamental beliefs, such as rituals and rites of passage, which can contribute to the Christian Faith"(See Appendix 3).

R11 mentioned, "The contribution of Swazi African Traditional Religion and Culture to the Christian faith lies in their belief that God is primarily known as the Creator in most African traditional religions. These beliefs are passed down through generation-to-generation myths. African Christians should be familiar with these myths as they serve as a starting point for introducing African traditionalists to biblical teachings about God"(See Appendix 3).

This particular perspective is echoed by **R14**, who stated, "SATR was considered a preparation for Christianity because it publicly acted out its religious beliefs, allowing others to learn about this ancient religion. It also taught Christians the value of communal living and the importance of sharing, in contrast to the individualistic tendencies often associated with the West, which is driven by greed and selfishness" (See Appendix 3).

One voice from the ground, specifically **R13**, mentioned, "The belief that SATR serves as a vessel for the preparation of the Christian Faith was reinforced by King Sobhuza's dream or vision, which included a coin, white men, and the Bible. This can be seen as a Christianised interpretation of Swazi Traditional Religion's belief in the role of dreams as a means of communication between ancestors and the living. King Mswati III further confirmed this by endorsing a Christianised version of Swazi indigenous beliefs and reminding Christians of his divine appointment as the headman, Indvuna, of the Swazi nation" (See Appendix 3).

To conclude, SATR is considered the first religion in Africa and is seen as a tool or vessel that brought the Christian faith to its present form. Without reference to SATR, Christianity in Africa would not make sense, as SATR acted as a preparation for the gospel of Jesus Christ. SATR contributed to basic beliefs that were believed to be divinely revealed and passed down through generations. The traditional life of SATR is rooted in community, and the Church, as a community of reconciled Christians, should also emphasize the importance of community, particularly in terms of family, relatives, neighbours, the departed, mutual interdependence, and support during times of need. Respondents

emphasised that reaching the individual with the Gospel alone is not enough, as the well-being of individuals is intricately connected to the well-being of the entire creation and the building of Swazi nationhood, national unity, and social cohesion.

4.2.6 Did Swazi African Traditional Religion has its original beliefs and practices changed, remained the same, or enhanced over the years?

One voice from the ground, particularly **R7**, stated, "Swazi African Traditional Religion has not changed but has been enhanced. It has passed down basic beliefs such as rituals, rites of passage, religious leaders or chiefs, the elderly, diviners, or traditional healers orally from one generation to another through the divine power" (See Appendix 3).

This perspective is affirmed by **R4**, who said, "SATR has not changed significantly but has been greatly influenced by major world religions, including Christianity. Beliefs and practices have developed within independent cultures, resulting in some variations, as suggested by African scholars" (See Appendix 3).

Similarly, **R1** indicated that "Swazi African Traditional Religion's original beliefs and practices have not changed significantly from their original form but have been enhanced, modified, or developed by African scholars. They view religion as an integral part of being human, following a life-affirming and life-sustaining pattern" (See Appendix 3).

R5 stated, "The beliefs and practices of Swazi African Traditional Religion exhibit characteristics such as unity in diversity, like any other human institutions. However, they have been subject to distortion, decay, and degeneration over the centuries. Swazi African Traditional Religion is a product of creation myth that has been orally passed down from one generation to another by the Supernatural Power" (See Appendix 3).

Another voice from the ground, **R12**, expressed, "Swazi African Traditional Religion, its Creator, Ancestors, mediators, and the common ritual performances have remained unchanged since their inception. Despite the challenges posed by colonialism, this indigenous religion has survived because it was established by God for the purpose of informing, recognising, embracing, and acknowledging its rituals by all" (See Appendix 3).

R2 mentioned, "The basic beliefs and practices have not changed at all. Even when people convert from African religion to another, they often retain many of their former beliefs since it is difficult to eradicate deeply held beliefs" (See Appendix 3).

R6 explained, "Some of our beliefs are similar to those in Christianity and other religions, while some are completely different. Beliefs have a significant influence on people, even if some of them are false. However, people tend to hold onto these beliefs firmly and act accordingly. Therefore, it is important to have a good understanding of our beliefs as they shape our behaviour" (See Appendix 3).

R3 maintained, "As African people, we have a set of beliefs and customs that are integral to our religion. While customs are not always religious, many of them contain religious ideas, and religion helps to reinforce and perpetuate these customs. They often go hand in hand" (See Appendix 3).

R8 stated, "The beliefs and customs have been explained and given meaning, as they encompass all areas of life and generally revolve around religious ideas and approved customs. In other words, our African beliefs form our African religion, although religion encompasses more than just beliefs" (See Appendix 3).

R10 added, "Beliefs and customs may have undergone distortion during the process of passing them down from generation to generation, as they were sometimes modified. Without beliefs and customs, there is no religion, and religion has the power to inspire its adherents" (See Appendix 3).

R11 pointed out, "There have been instances where beliefs and customs were misunderstood or culturally and religiously influenced by missionaries, resulting in the loss of their original meanings. For example, religious beliefs extend to other areas of life such as politics, economics, science, and so on. We all hold certain beliefs in these domains because they are essential in our daily lives" (See Appendix 3).

R9 made a significant observation, stating, "Many, if not all, missionaries have manipulated African beliefs and practices to align with their own way of life. They recognised the importance and significance of beliefs in daily life, and by studying them, they sought not only to understand the religion but also its adherents" (See Appendix 3).

R14 mentioned, "African music and songs encompass religious ideas and practices. During the performance of rituals, ceremonies, and festivals, music plays an integral role as it allows for the emotional expression of religious life and serves as a powerful means of communication in Swazi African traditional life" (See Appendix 3).

This view is supported by **R13**, who stated, "Practices have largely remained the same, especially in relation to music. Music helps unite the singing and dancing groups or music of the African nation, utilizing various musical instruments such as drums, flutes, rattles, whistles, and more. Through these musical expressions, many religious ideas are preserved and celebrated, showcasing the profound influence of music and dance in preserving and disseminating religious ideas over vast areas and extended periods" (See Appendix 3).

To summarise the views expressed regarding the question, it can be said that fundamental beliefs and practices common to all African Traditional Religions, including SATR, encompass concepts such as God, human life, burial, bereavement, spirits, ancestors, marriage, procreation, rituals, ceremonies, worship, celebrations, and community. These shared beliefs and practices have remained consistent to this day, leading to African Traditional Religion being spoken of in the singular form. They have existed since ancient times and continue to be followed by many Africans in the present day. These beliefs and practices are believed to have originated from the spiritual realm and have been passed down through oral tradition by both the spiritual and physical ancestors, who dwell with the Creator of the universe. While they may have been influenced and enhanced over time by various cultures and practices encountered, their original essence has been preserved. Importantly, African Traditional Religion has influenced the Christian faith by incorporating indigenous beliefs and practices.

4.2.7 Is there such thing as creation myth in African Traditional Religion and what is your understanding about it?

In response to this question, **R1** stated, "I strongly believe that there is such thing called creation myth as this is one of the basic beliefs of the African Traditional Religion" (See Appendix 3).

R4 added, "The Creation myth is a story which is believed to be true and has its origin in the far distant past history of a people such as the Swazi African people we are"(See Appendix 3).

R6 stated, "Myths are historical information transmitted orally to the people by processes peculiar to each community as these are man-made stories that play explanatory roles in the African understanding of reality" (See Appendix 3).

R2 expressed, "In most ATRs, God is known as the Creator and the beliefs in creation are conveyed through myths which are handed down from generation to generation. Those of us who are African Christians are familiar with these myths, since they are useful as a starting point for leading those amongst us who are African traditionalists to Christian teaching about God" (See Appendix 3).

R10 stated, "The myth is a direct expression of reality and not a product of our imagination as human beings, for example, as human beings we want certainty that all questions are answered and it is through myths that we can be able to do so as myths enable us to answer the unanswered questions such as, is ATR a receptive vessel for the preparation for the Christian faith? (See Appendix 3).

R8 established that, " Myths are part of a sacred way of life and have been divinely revealed to the first generation which is believed to have been directly created by the Supernatural Power, God, the Creator. This first generation of Africans was created as communal people for God didn't create independent human beings but a community without any individual preferences because what is divinely created is equal in love" (See Appendix 3).

R3 stated, "As adherents of SATR, we are taught that these stories came from our forebears who handed them down from generation to generation which explain the reality of life, concepts and beliefs of the ATR as well as give explanation of nature events such as creations, origin of things, history of the ethnic group such as ours, Emaswati "(See Appendix 3).

R9 added, "Indeed, stories are understood as one of the main sources for learning about traditional African religious belief and history. Myths tell us about our origin, migration, lineage and religion as a people and confirm that our ATR belief about God is that He exists and that He created the universe and man, and therefore Christianity must take into consideration this knowledge which we already have as African people" (See Appendix 3).

R12 pointed out, "Some African myths come from the desire of one ethnic group to assert their superiority over others, and this could be misleading, and such a group could leave many unanswered questions such as, what has happened to the saying that divinely created is equal in love? So the truth is, we are all equal since God created us all divinely and in love" (See Appendix 3).

R13 stated, "Myths are seen as vehicles conveying certain facts or truths about experiences of human beings in their encounter with the created order and its relations to the world. Myth tells of human experiences of the community as it exposes the fact that man's misfortunes on earth as well as his/her hardships are attributed to disobedience to the divine commands and moral codes of the Supreme Being as a point in his/her life" (See Appendix 3).

R7 expressed, "There are three kinds of stories that are contained by myth, and these are stories of origin, explanatory stories and teaching stories which each explain how things came to be through Supernatural Being, God. It is not an intellectual explanation but living chronicles in our minds as Africans. Our history, culture and experience as Africans are contained and expressed in mystery "(See Appendix 3).

R5 made the point, "Myth is a wholeness attained to the world as a whole because those of us who live in myth and are guided by it are engaged on many different planes with the whole of which the myth is an integral part. By teaching us and by regulating the way of our living and by gradually disclosing many layers of its meaning, myth reveals the knowledge of the whole to us which is not theoretical, or merely a partial intellectual knowledge, but it embraces the whole of life" (See Appendix 3).

R11 states, "For us Christians, African traditional myths about creation need that we make corrections by biblical revelation, meaning that while the creation myths imply that the world was created out of pre-existing materials, Genesis 1:1 teaches that: 'In the beginning God (Elohim) created [by forming from nothing] the heavens and the earth [ASB]" (See Appendix 3).

R14 affirms this view by saying, "The universe was created by God from nothing. It is neither eternal nor formed out of pre-existing things, nor sprung from necessity, but due to the immediate act of God. After the creation of the universe God was directly responsible for creating man. God did all of this by word of His mouth and this makes Him a sculptor and the life-giver [Hebrews 11:3-ASB]" (See Appendix 3).

In summary, there is such thing as creation myth in African Traditional Religion and we understand that the use of myths play a very important role in the African understanding of reality. They are the fertile ground for African philosophising, constituting expressions of the inner side of individuals and their relationship with others, nature and with the supernatural

Being, God. Through myths, the philosophical reflections of the people in the past, preserved and handed down to society, convey meaning only in the light of the present, and only when they establish a coherent relationship between the past and the present. A people's world view cannot be studied in isolation of their past and the past is as important as the present in deciding the future. African Traditional Religion as a receptive vessel is entrenched in the various creation myths and serves as a receptacle which contains, places and stores creations, origin of things, and history of the people in particular, the traditional African people, including the Swazi African people of South Africa. Indeed, ATR is a receptive vessel for the preparation for the Christian faith.

4.2.8 What is the meaning and significance of beliefs and practices such as ancestors, family, clan, home, kraal, community, and rituals as they are practiced by the African Traditional Religion of the Swazi people of South Africa?

R4 provides an answer to the previous question, stating that "The significance of rituals as practiced by the Swazi African Traditional Religion is that they revive relationships within the community and between the living and the ancestors, which means that the relationship between the physical world - the world we live in - and the spiritual world - the world after death - has to be revived. Unity and healing are achieved through the performance of rituals" (See Appendix 3).

This viewpoint is supported by **R1**, who says "Rituals are important as they are performed and practiced by the Swazi African Traditional Religion. They revive relationships within the family, community, and between the living and the dead, for the achievement of unity and healing, because the relationship we have between the physical world - the present world we live in - and the spiritual world we will live in after we die is important to be kept alive" (See Appendix 3).

Respondent **R3** emphasises the importance of the family, stating that "Family is the important producer of its members and has to perform some rituals in order to develop complete family members who are strengthened to play their significant role effectively. Also, every man is incomplete without the family as family plays a significant role in human life" (See Appendix 3).

R5 highlights the significance of the home in Swazi African Traditional Religion, stating that "A home provides security, control, belonging, identity, and privacy among other things, but

most importantly, it is a place that provides them with a centering - a place from which they leave each morning and to which they return each evening" (See Appendix 3).

R2 adds that "The significance of a kraal as practiced by the Swazi African Traditional Religion is a homestead, a site for ritual worship, and a defensive position, laid out as a circular arrangement which were traditionally constructed by women surrounding a cattle enclosure" (See Appendix 3).

R8 affirms the importance of Ancestors, stating that "The significance of ancestors cuts across African society and that these have been and will be part of the community. We know that the community is for both the living and the dead, and these carry on the relations as they communicate with the family and clan members through dreams, visions, and acts of snakes, etc" (See Appendix 3).

R10 adds that "According to Swazi African Traditional Religion, Ancestors are responsible for liaising between living family and clan members, acting as mediators between them and God as they now assume the role of being messengers. They are also responsible for the protection and welfare of their family or clan members, and the significance of family as practiced by Swazi African Traditional Religion is seen as constituted by both the living and the departed" (See Appendix 3).

R11 affirms that "Ancestors form part of the community and maintain human relations, especially within the clan or family circle. Once their relationship is established, it continues forever and must be kept strong at all costs. This is seen as a major tool for nurturing sound ethics, behavioral, and social values that need to be strengthened in order to play their significant role effectively" (See Appendix 3).

R6 emphasises that "As Africans, the concept of family holds great importance for both nuclear and extended members who live or coexist together. Without family members, there is no family. I am what I am today because of a family that has ensured my growth. Without family members, there is no family, and family contributes to the community to which we all belong. A person is a person through other persons" (See Appendix 3).

R7 states, "Clans are a basic structure in SATR and encompass both paternal and maternal blood relatives. They consist of many related families whose bond is strong. Clans are protected, guided, and cared for by the clan ancestors. It is therefore essential for us

Africans to live together as a collective, as our ancestors are not offended when we live together as family clans and as a community. Even where they are now, they live as a family, clan, and community" (See Appendix 3).

R9 clarifies that "Home is a sacred place, fundamental for worship, an environment for the clan, houses or huts, ancestral graves, and cattle kraal. It facilitates an interaction between these elements. Home is a well-balanced, harmonious, and educative environment for children, where the living engages in conversations about the welfare and solidarity of family, clan, and community" (See Appendix 3).

R12 adds, "Kraal is an enclosure where secrets, heritage, tradition, religion, beliefs, and practices are preserved or archived. It serves as a sleeping place for the ancestors, cattle, and people. It is a fortified space where marriages take place and where we can communicate with the deceased Ancestors" (See Appendix 3).

R13 highlights, "Community shapes a newborn child into a person who is more than just a lone individual struggling against the forces of nature. Each member of African society is closely linked to the community, creating a chain that binds individuals horizontally to other members of the ethnic group or tribe, and vertically to both deceased ancestors and future generations. We believe that individuals cannot exist alone, as our identity is derived from our sense of belonging" (See Appendix 3).

This particular view is affirmed by **R14** who states, "Belonging to a community, ethnic group, or tribe, to a family group, goes a long way towards combating the disease of loneliness, which threatens to destroy many Westerners who lead individualistic lives rather than communal ones. Loneliness is the most devastating disease of modern people as well" (See Appendix 3).

In summary, when considering the significance of ancestors, family, clan, home, kraal, and community, the respondents make it clear that none of these important aspects can exist without rituals. Rituals fulfill and complete human beings. No home, family, clan, or community can experience healthy relationships, unity in diversity, and cohesiveness without the existence and performance of rituals. According to Swazi African Traditional Religion, ancestors act as intermediaries between the living and deceased family and clan members who have their homesteads, including the kraal. Ancestors assume the role of messengers, mediating between them and God, while also being responsible for the

protection and welfare of their family or clan members. Both the living and the departed become part of the rituals for their health and welfare.

4.2.9 What do you understand about the meaning and significance of ceremonies such as Lusekwane, Mhlanga, Incwala, and Ummemo as practiced by the African Traditional Religion of the Swazi people of South Africa?

One voice from the ground, **R4**, explains, "Our understanding of the meaning and significance of Lusekwane is that it is a ceremony of the king in SATR. It takes place in the afternoon, where a black bull is ritually slaughtered by the Lusekwane boys using their hands. The remains of the acacia shrub used in this ceremony are made into ritual medicines that are given to the king during his inhlambelo bath. This ceremony is specific to the Kingdom of Eswatini and is performed by the king. In South Africa, ummemo is performed as part of the annual rituals carried out by traditional leaders (emakhosi) to express gratitude to their Ancestors (labaphansi). During ummemo, the subjects celebrate by feasting on an abundance of assorted food, meat, and drinks, particularly African beer (umcombotsi)" (See Appendix 3).

This particular view is affirmed by **R6**, who states, "The shrub known as Lusekwane, according to Emaswati, is collected from distant locations by young men to mark the beginning of the significant and primary cleansing ritual called Incwala in the Kingdom of Eswatini. This ceremonial place is part of Swazi religious and cultural activities, promoting solidarity, discipline, social cohesion, unity, valor, and loyalty in building the Emaswati nation in the Kingdom of Eswatini" (See Appendix 3).

R5 adds, "Incwala is a sacred ceremony essential for the cleansing and renewal of the king and his nation. It is primarily performed to celebrate kingship. The sacred branches or special shrubs are also gathered to construct an enclosure (inhlambelo) used by the king for bathing" (See Appendix 3).

R7 stated that, "*Incwala* as a platform to celebrate the first fruits, the king and his subjects join hands as a nation where the king becomes the first to taste the fruits, which is called *kuluma*, of the season's bounty which is only one part of this long rite. On the actual day, it is where the king expects the boys to show their strength by killing the bull with their bare hands where each of them jumps onto the bull with the hope of being the first to grab it, for the king to notice him." (See Appendix 3)

R3 said, “Similar to *Incwala*, is *Ummemo* which is done here in South Africa by Swazi people of the province of Mpumalanga, South Africa where chiefdoms, one after the other celebrates this event for thanksgiving and nation building ceremony of the Swazi people in the Republic of South Africa to the ancestors (*labaphansi*) of the chiefdoms that we believe are there in their chiefdom; and here all the subjects are invited to rejoice with the royal families as they sing, dance, feast together, perform their rituals and celebrate life.” (See Appendix 3)

R11 indicates that “The ceremonies performed in the *Kingdom of Eswatini* are attended by Swazi nationals inclusive of adherents of the Christian religion in the main and especially by AICs are obliged on the day to come and pay homage to the monarch guided most probably by the biblical texts, in particular Romans 13. These celebrations of life contribute to the building of nationhood, national unity and social cohesion of the Swazi people in the *Kingdom of Eswatini* and South Africa. It becomes important that we establish a centre for Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) so that the sacred religious, cultural and traditional heritage of the Swazi people of South Africa is preserved for the benefit of schools, churches and the public in general.” (See Appendix 3)

R14 said, “The annual *Lutsango* event is where reeds are cut by colourful married and unmarried women to perform tribute and to show loyalty to *Ingwenyama* and *Indlovukazi*. *Lutsango* reed dance is led by the king’s wives (*Emakhosikati*) and takes place for five days symbolising the unity of the nation in the *Kingdom of Eswatini* which is the first round of *Incwala* and is held at three o’clock in the afternoon, a day before the big *incwala* which takes place the following day.” (See Appendix 3)

This particular view is affirmed by **R12**, “The Swazi people of South Africa are not obliged to celebrate the King’s and Mother Queen Ceremonies as they take place in the Kingdom of Eswatini, though individuals attend on their own as these take place in Swaziland late in August or early in September each year. Though in some of the chiefdoms ceremony celebrations, in particular, *immimemo* performed in South Africa, delegates from the *Kingdom of Eswatini* do attend to motivate Swazi South Africans to know more about their history and heritage, thus capacitating them about their core basic beliefs and practices which constitute their religion, SATR.” (See Appendix 3)

R1 states further that, “The ceremonies are marked by religious prayers and services where amongst the Swazi people two main civil values of religious tolerance and religious dialogue between persons who hold different religious views are promoted for the unity, nationhood, and social coherence of the Swazi people.” (See Appendix 3)

This view is affirmed by **R8** who said, “The AICs stream of the Zionist Christians foster fraternal relations between Christians and adherents of Swazi religion and inter-church dialogue within the Swazi Christian community where adherents of Swazi African Traditional Religion, Mission Churches, and African Indigenous Churches.” (See Appendix 3)

R10 said, “Incwala ritual or the first-fruits ceremony is where the King undergoes a complex ritual process of cleansing, purification, and strengthening. The symbolic significance of this ritual practice is that a strong and fortified king represents a powerful, secure, and prosperous nation.” (See Appendix 3)

R13 adds that, “The king, in his capacity as a religious leader, performs several functions on behalf of the nation, which include the ceremonial eating of the first agricultural produce, rainmaking, and receiving messages from the national Ancestors.” (See Appendix 3)

Another voice from the ground, **R9**, said, “How the meaning and significance of ceremonies such as *Lusekwane*, *Umhlanga*, *Incwala*, and *Ummemo* addressed the main question: Swazi African Traditional Religion: A receptive vessel for the preparation for the Christian Faith. The Swazi beliefs and practices are all important as they build the nation, its unity, and neighbourliness, and ceremonies such as Incwala, which is a sacred ceremony of all *Emaswati* rituals, help the Swazi people celebrate life.” (See Appendix 3)

This view is affirmed in particular by **R2** who said, “The Incwala ceremony, which is held at a date chosen by the royal's appointed traditional astrologers in conjunction with the phases of the moon, normally in December or January each year. The first fruit ceremony of the Kingdom of Eswatini during which the King plays a dominant role, a ceremony which normally lasts for days where young men perform various rites. The Incwala ceremony culminates on the fourth day, where on this day, the king appears in his full ceremonial gear and eats the first fruit of the season, symbolising the harvest time, and the nation participates in the dancing all the time and is where everyone who participates dresses in

the colourful and distinct national dress known as emahiya (*woven cloth*)." (See Appendix 3)

To sum up, Umhlanga traditional dance is one of the celebrated ceremonies in the Kingdom of Eswatini, drawing up to forty-thousand (40,000) Swazi maidens who gather and dance for the Queen Mother. Thousands upon thousands of maidens dressed up in brightly coloured attire, singing and dancing together as they deliver the reed to the Royal Residence. Umhlanga, or reed dance ceremony, derived its name from this custom, which takes place in Swaziland annually and is the most colourful ceremony. It attracts young maidens from all over the Kingdom of Eswatini, as well as those from South Africa. The Reed Dance (umhlanga) is meant to bring together the unmarried girls and young women of the Kingdom of Eswatini to cut reeds for the annual repairs to the windbreaks (liguma) of the Queen Mother's village. These and other ceremonies form part of the Swazi African Traditional Religion, because a religion without its basic beliefs and practices is a religion unworthy to be followed. Most of SATR's beliefs and practices find commonality or share with the Christian faith because both religions are committed to building the nation, its unity, and its social cohesion.

4.2.10 How would you respond to the notion that the African society had their operative calendar which formed part of their religion and played a role in their daily lives?

Responding to the above question, **R6** said, "African society had their own calendars using the spiritually rooted African Calendar that was orally told, as Africans never had a paper calendar which indicated time when cultural, spiritual, and agricultural festivals had to take place. It was regulated at the end of Inhlaba, marking the beginning of the solar New Year, announcing the dawn of the ploughing season from Kholwane to Inyoni months." (See Appendix 3)

This particular view is affirmed by **R3** who said, "The African Calendar was operative and did form part of the African Traditional Religion; hence, the adherents observed all events and activities as dictated by the calendar. When it was time to till the soil, plant the seeds, and during harvest time, as well as when it was time to honor the rites of passage and so forth, African people were guided by the calendar which the Creator, Mvelinchanti, ordered to be in place." (See Appendix 3)

R9 establishes that, "The African Calendar alerted our foreparents that it was time to engage in agricultural activities and when the cultural festival itself had to take place for the thanksgiving ceremony, to thank God for the harvest He had made possible for them. African Calendars regulated the agricultural festival, and this took place at the end of June, marking the beginning of the solar New Year, announcing the dawn of the ploughing season from July to September months." (See Appendix 3)

R12 points out that, "The Swazi African Traditional Religion is constituted by both the religious or spiritual and cultural activities derived from the basic beliefs and practices. The calendar helped the people of the land to observe all events designed by God when He created all in the beginning, for the proper guidance of His creation. This we believe because of the consistency of the phases of the moon, which attests to the presence of a Higher Power in an ordered universe." (See Appendix 3)

R1 said, "The adherents observed all seasons as dictated by the Calendar, for when it was time to till the soil, plant the seeds, and during harvest time. It should be known that the Calendars were separated into three, namely: solar, lunar, and cosmic. Africa is governed by these three calendars, and these constitute the African Calendar, which is also part of SATR." (See Appendix 3)

R4 expands on this view, stating that, "African society, prior to the arrival of the missionaries, had their own African Calendar, which regulated the cultural festival naturally set by God, who is responsible for regulating all the festivals, including the agricultural festival. God, through the three-in-one calendar, indicates what happens where, what, and when it is happening. The Swazi African Traditional Religion observed all events and activities as it focused on them." (See Appendix 3)

This particular view is also affirmed by **R11** who said, "African society had its Calendar constituted by solar, lunar, and cosmic calendars, while the missionaries themselves came from the Western world, where they used the Gregorian calendar. The Western world, where the missionaries and colonists came from, used the Gregorian Calendar as both the civil and Christian Church calendar, which was instituted by a certain Christian Pope." (See Appendix 3)

R13 said, "Agricultural life celebrates the First Fruits Festival during December and January according to the African calendar. During these months, the traditional and religious

leaders, members of our council and the community need to converge collectively to celebrate life as they give thanks to the Supernatural Being (Simakadze) for the season of the first fruits. The religious and traditional leadership council needs to help serve the needy, poor, disadvantaged, and marginalised in life, demonstrating that SATR will help revive the values of Ubuntu/Buntfu, which include compassion, caring, cooperation, loving, giving, etc., values that the two religious systems - SATR and Christianity - are also known for or about." (See Appendix 3)

R10 stated that, "The Ploughing Festival of Emaswati, which takes place during September and December months according to the African calendar, is important to keep in life. During these months of ground preparation (imbodlisamahlanga), traditional leaders, religious leaders, traditional councillors, and community members need to converge to respond to the Lord God's mandate to work the earth and take care of it on His behalf. It is His earth, and humans are custodians on a stewardship basis. They need to give thanks to the only Creator, God, for the season of preparation as they till the ground and ensure that the soil is fertile by the time they put seeds in the ground, so that the ground is readily available to receive the seeds with warmth for speedy germination in November month." (See Appendix 3)

R8 adds that, "The Seed Planting Festival needs to take place during September and October months according to the African calendar, because it is when the tilled soil has become fertile enough and is ready to receive and germinate fresh, nutritious, and healthy produce. During this appropriate time, traditional leaders, religious leaders, traditional councillors, and members of the community need to gather and plead with God through their Ancestors as mediators to pass on this message of a plea for a successful sowing and abundant crop harvesting season through the African prayers they offer to God. They can then, in faith, look forward to the good news of seed germination and an abundant crop harvest. The leftover seeds are then distributed among those who are disadvantaged so that they too can grow something to alleviate poverty while waiting for communal gain." (See Appendix 3)

R7 said, "The Harvest Thanksgiving Festival must take place during January and April months according to the African Calendar. It becomes a time of joy, where all stakeholders, including adherents, should pause and look back to see, know, and experience the first fruits of working together as the Swazi ethnic group and nation. The traditional leaders,

religious leaders, their councillors, and members of the community are the ones to harvest communally. After one-tenth (10%) of the harvested crop has been set aside, the rest is distributed among those who are disadvantaged and poor in life. The 10% also becomes helpful to those who may run short of foodstuff due to unforeseen circumstances." (See Appendix 3)

R5 states that, "The Swazi African Cultural Festival, which is one of the events celebrated in the Kingdom of Eswatini, should be emulated after having seen it performed in the Kingdom of Eswatini. I have also observed many ceremonies and celebrations that the Swazi people of South Africa do not observe, except for Imimemo, which are cultural thanksgiving ceremonies celebrated annually by the chiefdoms of Mpumalanga. I have come to understand that we, the adherents and practitioners of SATR and the communities of Emaswati of South Africa, especially the youth, will benefit educationally, socially, and economically by simply observing these and other Swazi activities. See Appendix 3)

R2 indicates, "SATR's proper understanding and promotion of the African Calendar have led to the revival of different activities, ceremonies, festivals, prayer events, and increased awareness of the different seasons of tilling the soil, ploughing, sowing seeds, harvesting, as well as initiation periods. Our continent, Africa, is governed by solar, lunar, and cosmic calendars, and these African calendars regulate the spiritual, cultural, and agricultural festivals. The Swazi Agricultural, Cultural, and Spiritual Festivals are important events in the African calendar of Emaswati for their upkeep, identity, and sustenance." (See Appendix 3)

R14 points out that, "SATR, as a vessel for the Christian faith, has brought a proper understanding, promotion, and revival of the sacred heritage of the Swazi people of South Africa. This includes identifying, establishing, preserving, developing, and promoting their heritage sites in consultation with the religious leaders, chiefs, traditional healers or diviners, as well as families of the deceased leaders. SATR should support the development of spiritual and cultural heritage routes and recognize marginalised indigenous African cultures, languages, and religions. It is important to preserve, develop, and promote the Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) of Emaswati of South Africa in order to rediscover Swazi African Traditional Heritage. Additionally, establishing a centre for Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) will allow the sacred religious and cultural heritage of the Swazi people to benefit our schools, churches, and the public in general." (See Appendix 3)

In summarising this question, most respondents affirmed that the African society has been orally informed by their parents, who were also informed by their foreparents, that prior to the arrival of the missionaries in Africa, they had their own African Calendar. This calendar was all about the relationship between the gods, nature, and humanity. The African Calendar, rooted in the spiritual-material universe, forms part of the Swazi African Traditional Religion (SATR). This calendar encouraged African people to observe all religious, spiritual, and cultural events and seasons, and to continue honoring and being guided by such events, seasons, and rites of passage, etc. While the African Calendar is no longer in use as it was before, the events and seasons still exist to inform and provide guidance. The African Calendar is governed by solar, lunar, and cosmic cycles and is not merely about the measurement of time for time's sake, but it regulates the spiritual, cultural, and agricultural festivals. The Western world used a different calendar known as the Gregorian calendar, named after Pope Gregory XIII in 1582. This calendar, used by Christians upon their arrival, was purposely enforced to phase out the African Calendar of the land. The Gregorian calendar currently in use has three hundred and sixty-five days (365) plus an extra day every four (4) years (leap year), except in years divisible by four hundred (400) and not divisible by four (400).

4.2.11 What do you understand about the following practices in Swazi African Traditional Religion: the Rituals; ritual of appeasement, kinship ritual, societal ritual; the Sacred texts; the Special day of Worship; the Moral Order; Life after death; rites of passage, birth, initiation marriage, death, burial, bereavement, and thanksgiving.

R11 points out that, "The understanding of the ritual of appeasement (lisiko lekushweleta) is that it is performed to quell the anger of God. This also applies to the Ancestors. If the elderly members of society are provoked or disrespected consciously or unconsciously, they are usually given enough warnings to ask for forgiveness. However, if they neglect these warnings or signs of caution, the offenders are punished by their Ancestors through various illnesses, misfortunes, etc." (See Appendix 3)

R4 adds, "Our understanding of kinship rituals (emasiko asekhaya) is that these rituals are focused on individuals within the clan, especially for their holistic healing, physical health, and spiritual and emotional well-being. These kinship rituals play a significant role in the lives of individuals." (See Appendix 3)

This particular view is affirmed by **R5**, who said, "In my understanding, societal rituals involve the entire community, including families and clans. These rituals are particularly important during national crises or disasters such as drought (somiso) and famine (nendlala). During such times, concerned individuals suggest communal religious practices, often performed on a mountain. The chief or king arranges a day for the community to appeal to God and the ancestors. Rites of passage, such as burial and bereavement, are also part of these rituals. They ensure that the deceased is buried at a sacred place and that mourning is conducted with proper rituals." (See Appendix 3)

R12 said, "My understanding of sacred texts is that the Swazi African Traditional Religion does not have specific sacred texts. Instead, the religious practices focus on ritual participation and observation rather than relying on a text as a sacred authority. The religion is based on a daily practical routine that involves showing respect to God, the elderly, siblings, nature, and oneself." (See Appendix 3)

According to **R14**, "The special day of worship for the Swazi African Traditional Religion is thought of as a daily exercise. Time was created by God, and therefore, regarding one day as holier than the others would be disrespectful, as God exists beyond time. There is no special day of worship because worship is worthy every day. What is regarded as special is the ritual practice." (See Appendix 3)

R2 said, "Our understanding of the moral order is that it discourages individualism and promotes collectivism. Individualism is regarded as inhumane, while the communal way of life is emphasised. Human beings are encouraged to share their joys, blessings, sorrows, and burdens, showing how they care for one another as advocated by SATR." (See Appendix 3)

Speaking about death and life, **R9** said, "We understand clearly that death marks the physical separation of an individual from other human beings. The soul, which is divine, is believed to join the spiritual world from where it originated. The existence of ancestors serves as proof that the soul is immortal, living forever and ever. According to SATR, life after death is seen as a continuation of life from this world. There is no explicit notion of reward or punishment in the afterlife, as these are believed to occur during one's earthly life. The Ancestors, who are seen as the mouthpiece of the Creator, reward good deeds in this world." (See Appendix 3)

R8 points out that, "The birth ritual is performed after the birth of a child to introduce the gift brought by God to both the community of the living and the departed. The burial of the umbilical cord (*inkhaba*) signifies the permanent connection of an individual to their Ancestral land." (See Appendix 3)

One voice from the community, **R10**, said, "During the ritual performance on the mountain, the community sings and invokes all their clan ancestors together. As calamities affect the entire community, it is the responsibility of the community head to perform the ritual of appeasement when individuals or collectives have greatly wronged and disrespected God." (See Appendix 3)

R1 said, "Our understanding about rituals is that they include the format of all rituals (*emasiko*) to enable people, the living to perform extraordinary practices for the spiritual world. The meat and African beer (*umcombotsi*) are regarded as holy meal and are partaken by all the blood related members in the clan, where each member is given a piece of roasted meat (*licatsa lenyama leyosiwe*) and a sip of *umcombotsi* by one of the clan elderly responsible for that job." (See Appendix 3)

R3 said, "The understanding we have as well about the ritual of appeasement (*emasiko ekushweleta*) which is about acknowledging wrongs done, evil and sin committed that may have been caused by being disrespectful to God, *Mvelinchanti*, the Ancestors (*labaphansi*) and humanity (*neluntfu*) leading to disharmony in the community." (See Appendix 3)

R7 said, "My understanding about the rites of passage have been that they are ordained by God (*Simakadze*) for various responsibilities. For example, marriage has a responsibility of procreation and extension of the relationship to the wider community. Different rites are performed during marriage to ensure the approval of the Ancestors of both families and also fertility. The mixing of the two bile's from the two families symbolise the unification of the couples, their families, their clans, their Ancestors as well as their communities. It is God Himself who joins the couples together and ordered that what He put together, there should be no man that will put asunder. So, as much as God abhors divorce, SATR and Christianity forbid and discourage it, respectively." (See Appendix 3)

R13 said, "Procreation is very important in the African concept of marriage because it is in marriage where children must be born and a marriage which does not produce children was

considered to be problematic. This can sometimes lead to a bride being returned to her parents for such a reason.” (See Appendix 3)

R6 points out, “Most of us respondents indicate what we understand about the basic practices such as the assortment of rituals in the Swazi African Traditional Religion which made this religion a receptive vessel for the preparation for the Christian Faith for example, the ritual of appeasement, kinship ritual, societal ritual, sacred texts, and special day of worship, moral order, and life after death; as well as rites of passage, death, burial, bereavement, thanksgiving and African Calendar.” (See Appendix 3)

To summarise the responses regarding rituals, it is evident that they reflect the communal orientation of African society and require the participation of various members, not just the individuals on whose behalf they are performed. Initiation rites, for example, provide a meaningful transition from one status to another within the community. These rituals, as discussed in this question, have specific purposes, such as purification and facilitating status changes. Whenever the well-being of the community is disrupted, the societal group comes together to share a common meal, symbolising community solidarity. The ancestors, as spiritual members of their society, are always included in these rituals. Respect is fundamental in maintaining harmony, encompassing respect for oneself, other people, the elderly, and the spiritual world. Community plays a vital role in SATR. The concept of Ubuntu/Buntfu, which emphasises caring for other human beings, is central to the moral order. Indeed, SATR believes in life after death. There are no sacred texts or a designated special day of worship, as SATR regards the notion of singling out one day as holier than the others as disrespectful, given that time was created by Mvelinchanti.

4.2.12 What does it mean to be a believer in secular South Africa today?

Responding to this question, **R1** said, "Being a believer in secular South Africa today, where religious freedom and equality exist, means that despite certain religions being minor, unknown, not acknowledged, not tolerated, and disrespected, we have the opportunity to choose any religious tradition in addition to our birth religion. Personally, I have chosen to be a Christian in order to investigate the reasons why majority religions look down upon our Swazi religion as South African people. In a secular South Africa, the government does not dictate or align itself with a particular religion, as all religions, whether minor or major, are free and equal before the government. Therefore, in a secular South

Africa, I should not interfere with the government, and the government should not dictate to any religion, including my own." (See Appendix 3)

This view is affirmed by **R2**, who stated, "As African Christians, we are the majority compared to the traditional Swazi adherents. However, this does not mean that we are superior to any of the minor religions. It is the adherents of the majority religion, such as Christianity, who choose to disregard, ignore, and invalidate the existence of these minor religions as if they are disapproved by God and do not exist. This is evident in national events where mainline Churches dominate, while other faiths like Swazi African Traditional Religion (SATR) are not given a chance to practice their beliefs and rituals. They are regarded as backward and evil, despite being the religion of the people that provided the foundations for the Christian faith's meaning and acceptance." (See Appendix 3)

R4 expresses a personal opinion on this topic by stating, "I have the liberty and right to practice any form of religion, including SATR, as long as it does not harm or pose a danger to others. It is important to propagate a narrative that protects minor religions, including African Traditional Religions (ATRs) such as SATR. Their adherents are not yet free due to the perception that they are disapproved by God, as if God approves or disapproves of specific religions, acknowledges or disregards them, tolerates or rejects them. SATR is particularly important as it is the first and oldest religion of Africa, which also provided the beliefs and practices upon which Christianity built its relevance, meaning, and acceptance as a foreign religion." (See Appendix 3)

Likewise, this view is affirmed by **R11**, who said, "To be a believer in a secular state today means handling all religions and their institutions in an unbiased manner and seeking to ensure that the distinctive identities of all religious traditions are celebrated in a manner that facilitates the common religious and moral objectives of justice, social harmony, and the common good." (See Appendix 3)

R3 adds, "Belonging to minor, unrecognised, and not tolerated religions, such as African Traditional Religions, including our own as Emaswati, the Swazi African Traditional Religion, does not make us sinful. These religions provide us with the truth of life, a sense of beauty, and make us aware of what God and our Ancestors despise and desire in life. We are also taught not to despise harmony and unity but to desire God's goodness, as we all have one source, which is God, Mvelinchanti." (See Appendix 3)

R8 notes, “Christians in South Africa, in their majority, still enjoy the privileged position they had during the rule of the previous government, which purported to be Christian in our land. For example, they still have unlimited access to the media compared to other faiths, such as SATR. Christian Churches also have easier access to the government compared to leaders of other faiths, even in this secular South Africa.” (See Appendix 3)

Building on this view, **R6** adds, “The majority religions, particularly the Christian faith, must engage in a little empathy to understand the challenges that people of other faiths endure every day in our country. As Christians, I believe we are being disobedient to our Lord’s injunction that we should do to others as we would like them to do to us. Even SATR teaches this injunction as pronounced by the Creator Himself for His creatures to live in harmony and unity with one another. This shows the relationship or similarity that exists between these two religions.” (See Appendix 3)

R7 said, “In our secular country, South Africa, where religions are treated equally and the same, major religions should strive to engage with other faiths in the best and highest way possible because all religions have the freedom to worship and come from one source, God.” (See Appendix 3)

This particular view is affirmed by **R13**, who said, “As adherents of both SATR and the Christian Faith, we have freedom of worship in theory, which means that as people of these religions, major or minor, we are free to express our religious affiliation in a manner appropriate to our faith. We should not be overtly persecuted for not being Christians, adherents of African Traditional Religion, or for professing to be non-believers.” (See Appendix 3)

R10 adds, “Belonging to a religion, any religion, major or minor, is important, though religion is not necessarily a good thing. It depends because while religion can lead to great good, it can equally lead to unspeakable evil and suffering.” (See Appendix 3)

R12 takes it further by stating, “Religions, especially the major ones, have caused wars led by Christian missionaries and colonialists who took what did not belong to them from the African people of the land, using the gun and the Bible, while despising, ignoring, and not recognising the religion of the land, Swazi African Traditional Religion.” (See Appendix 3)

R9 points out, “Major religions such as the Christian faith dismiss minor religions, including African Traditional Religion, including Swazi African Traditional Religion, and other religious faiths as delusions. Their actions are not justified because even these minor religions come from one source, God, and their adherents connect with God through them.” (See Appendix 3)

R14 said, “I concur with the constitution of our country, which clearly articulates that in our freedom and democracy, freedom of worship or religious freedom and equality should not be compromised by favoring major religions at the expense of minor religions. All religions have the right to exist and should not be treated differently. South Africa is no longer a religious country but a secular one, where religions, major or minor, ought to be treated with respect and dignity in order to play their role in building a united, moral, just, cohesive, and patriotic nation.” (See Appendix 3)

R5 said, “It means some religions are not yet free because of their minority, unknown, not acknowledged, not tolerated and disrespected by the well-known majority traditions because their teachings were either unknown or seen to be perverted.” (See Appendix 3)

To sum up the question of what it means to be a believer in secular South Africa today, it is important to acknowledge that there is religious freedom and equality in the country, regardless of whether religions are in the minority or majority, as guaranteed by the constitution. However, some religions still face challenges as their adherents feel unrecognised, unacknowledged, not tolerated, and disrespected by the adherents and practitioners of major religions. As indicated in the above responses, many adherents and practitioners of minor religions, such as SATR, feel as if they are not ordained by God and are regarded as invalid and non-existent to the extent that they perceive their affiliation with these minor religions as committing an unforgivable sin against God.

4.2.13 Was Swazi African Traditional Religion disfavoured or approved by God and how does SATR believe in the existence of the Supernatural Power that created the universe, and how does the Supernatural Power look like?

In response to the above question, **R1** explains, “The Supernatural Power, God, who we Swazi people do not perceive with our naked eyes, but through His felt presence in the lives of the living and our Ancestors whom He created, and also through His work, which is evident in the existence of the Swazi African Traditional Religion. He greatly favoured,

approved, and designated it for the special task of preparing for the Christian faith.” (See Appendix 3)

R2 stated, “Most of us do not agree with the notion that SATR is disfavoured and disapproved by God. We believe that what God (Mvelinchanti) has created; He cannot discriminate against or disapprove, invalidating and rendering non-existent the religion He established. It is our belief that God does not view it as a sin to practice it. The fact that Swazi African Traditional Religion has existed for decades, remaining resilient, is proof enough that God has never disfavoured or disapproved it. If He had, it would have ceased to exist long ago.” (See Appendix 3)

One voice from the ground, **R8**, said, “God has approved the Swazi African Traditional Religion, and people can see that it is one of His favourite religions. It is the first religion He established in Africa for Africans, preparing the way for the Christian faith. When Christianity was later introduced, it found His people ready, enabling the new religion to adapt and propagate a relevant and meaningful message to the people of the land.” (See Appendix 3)

R5 indicates, “Indeed, one can conclude that the Swazi African Traditional Religion was not favoured and approved by God from its inception. If it had been favoured by God, who is the Almighty Creator, He would have protected it from the challenges it has faced. The difficulties it has experienced were not due to God's disfavour towards their religion as African people, but rather a way of training and preparing them to serve as a good example, being a receptive vessel set aside by God for the preparation of the Christian faith to thrive upon.” (See Appendix)

R11 concurs by stating, “Though the missionaries did not favour and approve of the African Traditional Religion, God did as the establisher of ATR, including SATR. He favoured and approved of it because SATR served as His tool to ensure that the Christian faith was well received and understood among Africans. The missionaries mistakenly referred to it as mere culture and not a religion, unaware that in SATR there is no separation between religion and culture.” (See Appendix 3)

R6 said, “The existence of Swazi African Traditional Religion itself signifies that it has been favoured and approved by God. God is always involved in the affairs of His people and the environment He has ordered for His people. Swazi African Traditional Religion was

favoured and approved by the same God who enabled the missionaries to bring Christianity to Africa. God was already present with His people, and they already knew Him through their own religion.” (See Appendix 3)

R9 emphasised the disservice done by missionaries to SATR, stating, “Swazi African Traditional Religion appears disfavoured and disapproved by God because the missionaries dehumanised the indigenous black people of the continent. They condemned its practices, forced it underground, and exiled it internally, associating SATR with heathenism.” (See Appendix 3)

R3 contested the missionaries' view with the following statement, “Swazi African Traditional Religion is favoured and approved by God. In fact, it was and continues to be favoured and approved by God because it is the first local or regional religion. Africa, as the cradle of mankind, is where God first established His people and their religion. Swazi African Traditional Religion may seem disfavoured and disapproved by God due to being regarded as invalid by the missionaries, who reduced it to mere culture and derogatorily labeled it as heathens and pagans, not understanding that in the African worldview, religion and culture are inseparable.” (See Appendix 3)

R13 adds, “Swazi African Traditional Religion appears disfavoured and disapproved by God because the missionaries referred to Africans as uncivilised. They forced a complete shift from their true humanity and compelled them to adopt a white man's lifestyle, like chameleons. The missionaries assumed that through baptism, they elevated black people from a supposed level of barbarism to an implied level of civilisation. Many lies were reported back to Europe, including the false claim that Africans did not have a religion but only superstitions.” (See Appendix 3)

R7 further claims, “Swazi African Traditional Religion appears disfavoured and disapproved by God because the missionaries portrayed their own religion, Christianity, as superior to SATR of the indigenous black people of the continent. They condemned and forced Africans to accept that they had no religion, only culture, which they associated with evil.” (See Appendix 3)

R4 points out, “Despite all that was said about SATR, the respondents maintain that Swazi African Traditional Religion is favoured and approved by God. Even when the missionaries coerced Africans into embracing the new Christian faith, they did not cease practicing their

ancestral rituals. This observance caught the attention of some individual missionaries, who sympathised with these rituals and began to recognise traces of religion in African practices.” (See Appendix 3)

R10 provides another reason for the acceptance of SATR, stating, “Swazi African Traditional Religion is favoured and approved by God because it had a significant influence on Christianity. Christianity originated in Africa and continues to exist. SATR is still considered a preparation for Christian evangelisation, which explains the growth of Christianity based on the fundamental beliefs and practices of African Traditional Religion. Hence, the topic of African Traditional Religion as a receptive vessel for the preparation for the Christian faith.” (See Appendix 3)

R12 makes an additional point, “We need to rectify the historical, gender, and racial imbalances associated with past religious biases. All religions should be approached in accordance with values that include sensitivity to the diverse nature of South African society, as well as the need for justice, healing, and reconciliation. Compassion and respect for human dignity and all forms of life, including the environment, should guide the practice of all religions.” (See Appendix 3)

R14 states, “All religions should be approached in accordance with values that promote a sense of common South Africanness, integrity, transparency, and trust in all relationships. Religions should also embrace the values of commitment to the autonomy of various religions within their parameters of accountability to the South African public. Moreover, a spirit of maximum cooperation between government, religious traditions, and the community should be fostered.” (See Appendix 3)

In summary, the respondents believe that Christian missionaries did not grant rightful acceptance and recognition to SATR, thus doing a disservice to its adherents. They emphasise the need to rectify this and acknowledge the contributions of ATR, particularly SATR, to Christianity.

4.2.14 Do African Religion and the Christian Faith have a meeting point, and why Christians in particular would profess publicly being children of God having been saved by the blood of Jesus Christ, and yet consulting with the diviners in secret when everybody is asleep or indoors in protection of their dignity and positions they have and occupy in Church and society and what do you think can be done for

religions, major or minor, to embrace one another in order to make a meaningful contribution to the lives of those, including their practitioners and activists who still yearn for a better life that is yet to come over twenty-six (26) years into freedom and democracy?

R2 provided a direct answer to the above question, stating, “We consult with diviners in secret when everyone is asleep or indoors because we want to protect our dignity and the positions we occupy in the Church and society” (See Appendix 3).

R4 explains why they consult with diviners, saying, “As a Christian myself, I admit that I consult diviners when my problems are not getting solved. Problems are not only spiritual but also cultural. Therefore, spiritual and cultural problems require spiritual and cultural solutions. Most of us do not want to abandon our African religion because religion and culture are inseparable. Instead, we prefer to maintain a connection with the beliefs and practices of SATR. In other words, when Christianity cannot provide the solutions we seek, we turn to SATR for help” (See Appendix 3).

R6 adds, “In this regard, the meeting point between Christianity and SATR becomes clear to me when I visit the diviner for assistance that Christianity may not offer immediately. I choose to consult in secret, under the cover of darkness, so that those who have abandoned their beliefs and practices are not labeled as heathens, which was a mistake made by the missionaries” (See Appendix 3).

R1 affirms the connecting points of the Christian faith and SATR, stating, “Swazi African Traditional Religion and the Christian Faith do have a meeting point. The process of accommodation is mutual, with people accepting the Christian faith but not coming to it empty-handed. Adherents of Swazi African Traditional Religion bring their religious insights and interpretations as they embrace the Gospel” (See Appendix 3).

R3 clarifies this further by stating, “The spirits of the dead and ancestors are two distinct aspects of SATR. As SATR adherents, we believe that ancestors are based on family and clan ties, while spirits can come from the wider community and society, especially the dangerous spirits of those who are not related to us by blood but based on humanitarian grounds. These spirits of the dead bring messages of evil from the greater and lesser gods. To counter such negative influences, specific dance rituals are performed to invoke

ancestors, who fight against these foreign spirits known as 'mijiwa' in the dialect language, although it is not an official Siswati language” (See Appendix 3).

This perspective is also affirmed by **R12**, who states, “The greater god is considered the supreme god, capable of sending both misfortune and good fortune from where it resides in the sky, where the spirits of the dead go and are rejuvenated. The lesser god resides in the western sky and is associated more with deception and evil. Together with the spirits of the dead, the lesser god is used by the greater god to bring misfortune. These highly ambivalent characters seem to be part of the divine. Both gods can cause harm or bring benefits to people. Individuals can approach both gods through a trance or informal prayer” (See Appendix 3).

R8 asserts that major religions, such as Christianity, and minor religions, like Swazi African Traditional Religion, have a responsibility to embrace one another. This can be achieved through practising tolerance and acceptance, recognising that each religion requires its own space to operate within. By acknowledging the diverse religions and cultures that make up the rainbow nation, they can contribute to nation-building, national unity and social cohesion among the Swazi people of South Africa, as well as other South African ethnicities and people across the continent of Africa (See Appendix 3).

R10 adds, “As a Christian who believes in life after death and publicly professes that Jesus' saving grace is available to all in need, I still find myself influenced by the religion I was born into, that of my forebears, Swazi African Traditional Religion. It has taught me that God, the Creator, is one, and thus, the God of Christians is also the God of the African religion. Both religions have a meeting point, which is God Himself” (See Appendix 3).

R7 highlights, "Rites of passage in SATR are central and encompass birth, initiation, marriage, and death. These passages represent stages of human development. When individuals transition from the spiritual world to the physical world, they must undergo initiation or orientation to understand what to expect and how to navigate this new world in order to survive. Once individuals have gained self-understanding and had their identities revealed, they feel the need to procreate, preserve, and uphold their identity through marriage and the bearing of children. This is because they know that they may soon be called back to the spiritual world to which they belong" (See Appendix 3).

R5 makes another important point, "Worship and celebration in the AICs involve the use of ritual symbols, such as music, drumming, and dancing, which characterise their liturgical systems. The appropriation of spiritual songs, hymns, and sacred language serves as a revelatory medium and is central to the ethos and rhetoric of the AICs. It is important to distinguish this from the misinterpretation and distortion of the gospel of Jesus Christ, where individuals are forced to consume grass, snakes, or petrol for healing and prosperity" (See Appendix 3).

R9 establishes that, "Community and human life are key to the welfare and sustenance of its members. God is the Giver of Life and the guiding force behind everything, and human life and tradition originate from God. Tradition contains the moral code and guidelines for ethical human conduct. The universe influences our behaviour and provides the moral code for human life and behavior. The cultural and religious beliefs and practices of SATR are bestowed by God as the moral code for Swazi human life. All Emaswati should emulate these beliefs and practices, whether in the Kingdom of Eswatini, South Africa, or elsewhere. By exchanging views and learning from one another, we can progress our culture and religion as the Swazi people of South Africa" (See Appendix 3).

R11 states, "Rituals of passage in the AICs include birth, baptism, marriage, anointing, death, and burial. These rituals serve to create significant and valid transformations throughout the life cycle. Additionally, the AICs observe rites associated with major festivals, seasonal changes, individual achievements, and the sanctity of women. They also profess Jesus Christ as the Lord and Saviour and view Jesus as the main ancestor who conquered death and is living with the deceased in the spiritual world, as He too is a spirit" (See Appendix 3).

R13 establishes the connection between religion and culture in the following statement, "As Africans, particularly us, Emaswati, of the Republic of South Africa and the Kingdom of Eswatini, our belief revolves around religion, specifically SATR, and culture. We aim to preserve and live our culture unapologetically because our religion and culture define our identity and heritage. Even if we become active participants in the Christian faith, our foundation remains firmly rooted in SATR, the religion of our ancestors. Everything we do in our new religion is guided by the understanding and perspective of our original religion. It is through this lens that we can comprehend both Christianity and SATR as religious systems

emanating from the same God, Mvelinchanti, the Creator of the universe" (See Appendix 3).

This viewpoint is further supported by **R14** who states, "Even though we are members of established churches such as the Presbyterian, Methodist, Anglican, and Catholic by day, we dance to the beats of the Zionist drums by night or seek guidance from diviners whom we have witnessed healing and exorcising evil spirits since childhood. We prefer not to abandon our churches but incorporate spirituality that is not distinct from that of the Zionists" (See Appendix 3).

To summarise the responses to this question, the respondents emphasise that major religions like Christianity and minor religions like Swazi African Traditional Religion have a responsibility to embrace each other. This can be achieved through practicing tolerance and acceptance, recognising that all religions and cultures contribute to the formation of a diverse nation. They assert that their African beliefs, particularly as Emaswati of South Africa and the Kingdom of Eswatini, revolve around SATR and Christianity as distinct religions, while also emphasising the importance of respecting and preserving culture.

4.3 Chapter Summary:

This chapter aims to address the research question: "African Traditional Religion: A receptive vessel for the preparation for the Christian faith?" The researcher gathered valuable insights from ordinary people in the fourteen chiefdoms and their traditional councils to understand how they perceive the relationship between the Christian faith and SATR. The respondents provided answers that support the notion that SATR, as the indigenous religion, welcomed foreign missionaries and served as a receptive vessel for the preparation of the Christian faith. However, this acceptance also brought about various forms of subjugation and the introduction of European culture.

The researcher has added a section to this chapter that discusses the contributions of African and Black scholars to the debates on Christianity and ATR. Through our examination, we have identified emerging similarities and dissimilarities between the two, leading to the following conclusions:

1. SATR received the gifts of resilience and revitalisation, allowing it to embrace new interpretations as Christianity interacted with its existing beliefs. This

- resulted in similarities between SATR and the Christian faith. The purpose was to liberate SATR and its followers from the ignorance and arrogance of missionaries and colonisers who sought to impose their own orders on what God had established. Ultimately, SATR serves as a receptive vessel for the preparation for the Christian faith, which can be received and embraced by all.
2. Religion and culture are inseparable, as they complement and shape each other. Culture plays a significant role in influencing and shaping religion, and without culture, religion cannot be valid and authentic. It is essential to recognize that there is no Christian culture but rather culture within Christianity. Similarly, in SATR, religion and culture are intertwined. The mistakes made by Western missionaries needed to be rectified in the present context by acknowledging that they often presented their culture as if it were Christianity upon their arrival in Africa. They mistakenly separated their religion from their culture, unaware that religion is influenced by culture. This recognition prompts ongoing discussions on inculturation, which should involve all religions, particularly SATR as the vessel for Christianity's acceptance by African Christians. Christianity has been enriched by numerous insights, beliefs, and practices from African contributions, embraced by its followers.
 3. The same God worshiped in the Christian faith is also revered in SATR and other religions, as they recognise the one Creator of heaven and earth. SATR clarifies that it venerates ancestors rather than worshipping them. For example, visiting a blood relative's grave and cleaning it does not equate to worship; it signifies remembrance and acknowledgement of the familial connection. These ancestors are not demons, as some claim, but rather regarded as saints in the Christian faith. It is the responsibility of the Church to explain and educate on such matters to remain relevant to its followers
 4. SATR urges the Christian faith to ensure that all the fruits of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23), or what ATR calls Ubuntu/Buntfu (Personhood), are embraced, particularly the fruit of love. Love does not rejoice in injustice but rejoices in truth, righteousness, and the triumph of what is right (1 Corinthians 13:6). African Christians established their African Independent Churches because they felt unloved and unaccepted by their fellow White Christians. They were dissatisfied with the individualistic approach to worship and

problem-solving, as they were accustomed to communal problem-sharing. SATR appeals to the Christian faith to adopt beliefs and practices that align with Christianity, focusing on nation-building, promoting human dignity, fostering harmony and respect, and prioritising family and community for the benefit of all members.

5. SATR also appeals to the Christian faith to observe and participate in seasonal celebrations indicated in the African Calendar. These celebrations include various agricultural festivals such as the First Fruit Festival, Ploughing Festival, Seed Planting Festival, and Harvest Thanksgiving Festival, as well as cultural and spiritual festivals. These festivals are integral to the Swazi African Traditional Religion and play a significant role in the daily lives of the Swazi African people. The Christian faith should strive to understand and appreciate the significance of these festivals, just as SATR does. Additionally, both SATR and the Christian faith should acknowledge the importance of rituals of appeasement, which seek forgiveness from God and fellow humans for any disrespect shown towards God, ancestors, and humanity. These rituals help restore harmony in the community and prevent potential punishment, such as sickness and misfortune.
6. SATR and the Christian faith have a joint contribution to make in today's context of religious freedom, democracy, and equality. It is important to mentor, tolerate, and respect even minor religions, while holding them accountable for any misinterpretations or distortions of the gospel of Jesus Christ, such as the practice of forcing people to eat grass and snakes or making them drink petrol for healing and prosperity. Recognising that African Traditional Religion and the Christian faith intersect, their relationship must be strengthened to address shared issues. For example, the Christian faith should openly engage with the practice of consulting diviners in secret, as tradition demands, to protect the dignity and positions of individuals in both the Church and society. SATR challenges the Christian faith to openly discuss and confront issues such as dual membership and the fear of openly consulting diviners, allowing its members to participate freely without fear of judgment.

The researcher now moves on to chapter five, where the researcher delves into the analysis of the data collected during interviews and present the research findings to address the main research question of this study: Was Swazi African Traditional Religion (SATR) a receptive vessel for the Christian faith in South Africa?

CHAPTER FIVE

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction: The objective of this chapter is to establish the relationship between SATR and the Christian faith by analyzing the data gathered during interviews and formulating research findings. These findings will guide the possible implementation of the research topic by the government of Ehlanzeni District Municipality's House of Traditional Leaders, as well as Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs), specifically Mpumalanga interfaith action for societal renewal (Mifafsor), and selected Ehlanzeni Traditional Councils. The aim is to demonstrate the existing relationship between Swazi Traditional Religion and the Christian faith. The researcher will allow dialogue between scholarly voices and the voices of the people on the ground. By doing so, the researcher will be bringing this study together and provides a concise answer to the research question that SATR served as a preparation for Christianity in South Africa.

5.2 Swazi African Traditional Religion as a vessel for the Christian faith: In tracing the relationship between SATR and Christianity to determine whether SATR acted as a receptive vessel for the Christian faith, the researcher now proceeds to analyse the data collected during interviews in order to formulate the research findings. The researcher's analysis is guided by the research topic, which explores whether African Traditional Religion was a receptive vessel for the preparation for the Christian faith. The researcher has discovered that SATR gradually gained recognition after being deemed invalid and dismissed as mere culture and heathen practices. Those who harshly criticised SATR were themselves influenced by Western culture and expected their teachings to be unquestioningly accepted as "the whole truth, and nothing but the truth" (Mugambi, 2005:520). Realising their misconception, the missionaries sought a connection with the religion of the people, Swazi African Traditional Religion (SATR), in order to remain true, relevant, and contextual to the Swazi people of South Africa and Africa.

Mbiti (1976:311) as a scholar, concurs with the notion that Swazi African Traditional Religion has been referred to as a receptive vessel for the preparation for the Christian faith due to some, if not all, of the following reasons: (i) Modern missionaries who came after the first generation of missionaries began to realise the significant contribution African Traditional Religion's beliefs and practices made to religious views and values that impacted Christianity. As a result, they acknowledged the rituals and as they sympathised

with them, they began to see some traces of religion in them. (ii) They learned that Swazi African Traditional Religion has no founder but arose gradually as African people reflected upon their situation as human beings. (iii) Over the course of its long history, Swazi African Traditional Religion disposed its adherents towards the Christian faith. (iv) Swazi African Traditional Religion has provided the religious beliefs, insights, practices, and vocabulary on which the Christian faith has been established and thrived. (v) The points of continuity between Biblical faith, culture, and Swazi African Traditional Religion have been strong enough for the gospel to gain a firm footing among African peoples. Mbiti declares that the pre-Christian African religious heritage is a *praeparatio evangelica* (preparation) for the biblical revelation, with the hope of creating not only an African Christian theology but also an African Christian identity (1970b:436). Mbiti places Swazi African Traditional Religion on an equal footing with the Old Testament as preparation for the coming of Christ.

According to Mbiti (1986:203), African Traditional Religion has prepared people to listen to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Mosala (1986:177) refers to Black Theology's exegetical starting point, where it expresses itself in the Bible as the revealed Word of God. The task of a black theologian is to recognise God's Word to those who are oppressed and humiliated in this world. African Christian Theology, as it reflects upon the Word of God, expresses itself in African thought, form, and idiom as experienced in African Christian communities, always in dialogue with the rest of Christendom.

Mbiti (1969;1975:277) points out that African Traditional Religion, as preparation, is convinced that traditional religious beliefs and practices serve a positive function in Christianity, and that ATR can and should be considered as such. However, the notion that ATR is a preparation for the Christian faith is questioned by Mndende (2000:5), a traditional practitioner who disagrees with this idea.

Ferdinando maintains that:

The concept of a preparation is mainly linked to the thoughts of Clement of Alexandria who conceived it, like the Old Testament prophets prepared Jews for the gospel, Socrates and Plato prepared the Greeks for it (2007:131).

Likewise, Mbiti perceives that:

African Traditional Religion prepared Africans for the coming of Christ. In this sense, African Traditional Religion takes over the role of the Old Testament such that is considered the God-given

preparatory and essential ground for seeking, the Ultimate. In a sense Christ can be called the fulfilment of some deep and persistent longings and apprehensions that everywhere in history manifest themselves; yet this cannot be the perfecting of what has gone before[1969] 1975:277).

Ferdinando argues, however, that:

This is far from saying that the religion has prepared its believers to accept the gospel or that it has salvific power. African Traditional Religion as a receptive vessel for the preparation for the Christian faith is presumably based on the assumption that African Traditional Religion had a positive tradition in which Christ was somehow at work. The African Traditional Religion like other religions such as Christianity has a connection in several positive and negative elements(2007: 126-132).

Nyamiti points out that:

When African theologians regard African Traditional Religion as such, it seems that they identify some of these positive elements of African Traditional Religion while the negative elements such as superstition, this worldliness, and anthropocentrism in African Traditional Religion are not identified and even remain unevaluated (1977:9-12).

Ferdinando (2007:128; 134) points out that the emphasis on radical continuity between the gospel and African Traditional Religions, including that of the Swazi people, risks understating the unique and extraordinary nature of the gospel. It seems likely that this concept has been motivated by a conscious and deliberate apologetic intent to view African traditional religion-cultural heritage as the key element in establishing an African Christian identity. It is evident at this point that the notion of radical continuity between the African concept of God and the Christian concepts and teachings of God are incompatible. African Traditional Religion is regarded as a receptive vessel for the preparation for the Christian faith because it is a valid religion, self-sufficient, and independent long before the arrival of the missionaries.

And Maluleke points out that:

However, the granting of preparatory status to the African Traditional Religion and African culture may be a veiled refusal to accept the latter on its own terms. What this debate demonstrated rather clearly, however, is that theological reference to ATRs and African culture comes at a price - as with other religions. ATR's must be taken seriously in their own right, beyond the preparatory framework. Some among the first generation of African theological writers made admirable attempts to take ATRs seriously, in their own terms, without relinquishing their own belief in the 'superiority' of Christianity. These are examples worthy of being followed. In fact, it is possible to argue that the increasingly pluralistic context in Africa demands that we 'listen' to other religions more carefully and more

respectfully, without ceasing to be committed Christians ourselves and yet without a hidden evangelistic motive (2005:478).

If ATRs are indeed fertile ground awaiting 'fulfillment' by Christianity, other African theologians have asked why they are so resilient. Maluleke (1997:11) pointed out that some African thinkers, both Christian and non-Christian, including Setiloane, Bolaji Idowu, and Samuel Kibicho, who called for the suspension of any evangelical or missionary motives, have argued that not only has Christianity brought nothing 'new', but that ATRs are 'superior' to Christianity. ATRs should not be viewed as equals to Christianity, let alone 'superior'.

The researcher agrees and believes that due to the wealth of information and knowledge contained within African Traditional Religion as an ancient religion of Africans, Swazi African Traditional Religion served as a receptive vessel for the preparation for the Christian faith. While African Traditional Religion coexists with other religions on the continent, such as Islam and Christianity, for the purposes of this thesis, the focus is solely on Swazi African Traditional Religion and the Christian faith.

Maluleke maintains that:

African culture and African Traditional religions (ATR) have long been acknowledged as the womb out of which African Christian Theology must be born. African Christians insisted that the church of Africa and its theology must bear an African stamp (2005:477).

The main and sub-questions the researcher posed earlier regarding African Traditional Religion, including the Swazi religious orientation, were as follows: Is African Traditional Religion a receptive vessel for the preparation for the Christian faith? And is inculturation, an ongoing debate within the church, a tool to bridge or widen the gap between ATR and Christianity?

The term "inculturation" refers to the divisions within the Church, different denominations, groups, and sects within the Christian faith, which present significant challenges for Christianity. Some of these problems arise from the fact that the Church was imported from abroad, while others were initiated by African Christians themselves who did not wish to remain under the domination of foreign missionaries.

Penoukuo (Missiology: Tutorial Letter 102 / 97:78) posits a strong connection between Christology and inculturation, which was inspired by St. Justin's concept of the seed-bearing Logos. For Penoukuo, inculturation is the primary issue facing the African Church. It is not a compromise with paganism, as some devout but culturally alienated Catholics wrongly assume. Nor is it a form of "theological apartheid," Penoukuo's term for culturalism. Racism is the refusal to love others in their differences, and that is not Christianity. Universal love must recognise and respect cultural differences. A lived faith demands inculturation and the recognition of others' right to an enculturated faith. Penoukuo sees inculturation as a direct consequence of the great commandment: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with your entire mind... You shall love your neighbour as yourself"(Matthew 22:37-39: ASB).

Maluleke (2005:477) suggests that those who advocate the position that both African culture and African Traditional Religion are part of the preparation for the gospel have been critical of both. Many missionary councils have completely condemned African Traditional Religion without thoroughly understanding it. The researcher agrees with scholars like Bediako and Turner when they argue that the remarkable growth of Christianity in Africa cannot be understood without considering African Traditional Religions as a preparation for the gospel. African Traditional Religion must be taken seriously in its own right beyond the preparatory framework, as Maluleke may have suggested. Although African Traditional Religion may vary in its outward appearance, it exhibits similarities.

Sarpong points out that:

The areas of convergence between African Traditional Religion (ATR) and Christianity are numerous and profound. It appears as if the African soil has been prepared by the good Lord from all eternity to receive the Christian message. Godliness has always been a part of African tradition. In fact, the attributes of the African God are so "Christian" that some ethnographers in the 19th century doubted their originality. While Africans also venerate or worship other spirits, human and non-human, and hold beliefs in totems, witches, magic, and taboos, these are considered as manifestations of God and His functionaries who carry out His will (1991:290).

What do African theologians from other parts of the continent say about ATR? Bolaji Idowu, John Mbiti, and Kwesi Dickson have analyzed and interpreted African Traditional Religion and highlighted its relation to the Christian faith. Lamin Sanneh and Kwame Bediako advocate for the importance of vernacularising the Bible and Theology. Kwame Bediako

and John Pobee have developed an African Christology that centers around the ancestors, who are regarded as the focal point of African Traditional Religion, and they draw parallels to Jesus, who is central to Bolaji Idowu, John Mbiti, and Kwesi Dickson analysed and interpreted African Traditional Religion and pointed to its relation to the Christian faith; Lamin Sanneh and Kwame Bediako argued for the importance of vernacularising the Bible and Theology; and Kwame Bediako and John Pobee developed an African Christology in terms of the ancestors who are regarded as the centre of African Traditional Religion, and likened this to Jesus who is regarded to be in the centre of the Christian faith.

And what do we say about African Traditional Religion? Martin (1995:19) raised key questions that informed the substance of their debate on Christianity and African Culture, including the following: What is the relationship between Christianity and African culture? Can they be separated? Does being an African and being a Christian require turning away from indigenous traditions and institutions? If so, should all traditions be rejected completely? What about European Christianity? What role does African Christianity, alongside other Christianities, play in reconstructing South Africa?

Answers to these questions were given at the Conference on Christianity and African Culture or Religion, where it was argued that the relationship between Christianity and African culture has been construed in various ways by missionaries. Some view Christianity and African culture as representing rival worldviews, leading to an exclusivist affirmation of one over the other. This has led some to think that African traditions and culture can be rejected as un-Christian, or Christianity can be rejected as a foreign religion. Others have suggested separating religion and culture, treating Christianity solely as a religion separate from African culture and traditions. Both perspectives are valid in their proper place but should not be completely isolated from each other. There have also been attempts to integrate the two through various configurations known as African Christianities.

Martin emphasises the importance of ATR by:

Reminding the conference of the African worldview that underpins the faith of prominent Africans, such as Archbishop Tutu, within the church. Mosala discusses the relationship between African and Black Christianities, asserting that "Black" and "African" are defined by a particular socio-political experience. He highlights the profound resonance that the experience of indigenous peoples in the Bible evokes within Black Theology (1995:19).

Martin (1995:19) highlights that the workshop on liturgy and spirituality was particularly popular at the conference, with participants acknowledging the significant and exciting challenges of "Africanising" liturgy and creating space for indigenous spirituality. Another well-attended workshop focused on contextualization theology, while others explored topics such as health and healing, which were seen as important thematic entry points into African religion and avenues for connecting with Christianity. The questions formulated and raised during the conference will shape the church's future journey and contribute to the current context of African Traditional Religion (ATR) within the Church.

Kwenda, Mndende, and Stonier (1995:133) respond to the question of whether it is possible to be both African and Christian. They argue that answering this question requires considering Christian understandings of culture, identity, conversion, and the concept of change in African debates. Regarding culture, they make two crucial points. Firstly, every religion is intertwined with culture, and it would be a mistake to suggest that only African Religion and Culture are interconnected. All religions have a cultural context that supports them. Secondly, in the missionary practice, conversion often involved embracing not only Christianity but also European or Western culture and values. In fact, many aspects of religious practices among Christians reflect Western cultural values. Considering the significance of religion and culture in shaping one's identity, it raises the question of what happens to individuals who have replaced their religion and culture with different ones. Do they completely abandon their old identity and acquire a completely new one, or do they synthesize a mixture of both?

If the researcher takes the missionary view of conversion to its logical conclusion, the researcher could argue that it is not possible to be both African and Christian. This is because Christianity was inherently associated with European identity. However, many African Christians have rejected this view for obvious reasons. They still want to maintain their African identity and have therefore sought to Africanise Christianity. Unfortunately, it seems challenging for them to do so without simultaneously Christianising African culture. There is nothing inherently wrong with Africanising Christianity. African Christians have the right to use available cultural resources to construct a viable identity for them. However, they have gone further and sought to deny non-Christians the right to have an African identity that is not Christian, which is a challenge that needs to be addressed in an appropriate platform. There are arguments that justify this denial, such as the idea that

African culture must change with the times, or that it is evil, or that it is incomplete and requires Christianity for completion. However, these arguments are not very convincing.

Kwenda et al. (1997:134) maintain that all cultures, not only African culture, need to evolve with the times and eliminate unwholesome elements. It is legitimate for cultures to be influenced by and borrow from one another in this process. However, there is no justification for attempting to destroy one culture in order to replace it with another. Like other cultures, Swazi African culture is constantly changing. But this change does not have to take a Christian form. African religion can and does evolve within itself, engaging in dialogue with, but remaining independent of, other cultures. There are at least four ways of expressing African identity in relation to Christianity and the West, namely: (i) being African and Christian with a touch of Western influence; (ii) being predominantly Western with some Christian elements; (iii) being African with a minor Western influence; and (iv) having a mixed African-Western identity without being a Christian.

These permutations show us that there is no simple way to discuss identity. Certain elements may dominate a person's identity, but achieving a pure and absolute identity is probably impossible. While some individuals have chosen to embrace both Christianity and their African heritage, many have decided to identify solely as African. Those who have chosen to be African adherents find spiritual guidance and satisfaction in their foreparents' religion, African Traditional Religion, which is sufficient to guide their conduct and fulfill them spiritually. They feel no need to convert. When necessary, they borrow from and creatively negotiate with other religious traditions, especially Christianity and Islam, and selectively assimilate modern practices.

The Swazi people in South Africa and those in the Kingdom of Eswatini share a common origin, as they all come from the Kingdom of Eswatini. This includes their forebears, grandparents, and parents, indicating the importance of maintaining a strong relationship with Emaswati in the Kingdom of Eswatini. Their beliefs, traditions, and practices all stem from the same source. Although there may be some differences among Emaswati, they ultimately share a common heritage. When Swazi African Traditional Religion adherents converted to Christianity, they publicly professed to be children of God and acknowledged Jesus Christ as their savior, experiencing a transformation as new creatures. Missionaries determined conversion based on adherence to Western customs after abandoning traditional African customs.

Certain religions, considered minor and unpopular, continue to face challenges in gaining acceptance. Their teachings are often doubted and suspected of being distorted. These religions have struggled to establish their identity and seek validation as legitimate faiths. Some leaders of minor religions, with their questionable behavior and practices, contribute to their own marginalisation by engaging in activities like consuming snakes, grass, petrol, and dangerous concoctions in the name of healing and prosperity. This compromises their beliefs and promotes immoral acts and heresy, distorting scriptures and undermining the principles of religious freedom and equality. It is important to note that the Swazi African Traditional Religion served as a vessel for the preparation and reception of the Christian faith.

5.3 Research Analysis: The researcher personally conducted interviews with council members, which yielded valuable information. This enabled us to explore whether SATR has maintained its original beliefs and practices, undergone changes, or been influenced by the religious and cultural persuasions of missionaries. In Chapter Four, we provided information about the beliefs, practices, and ceremonies of SATR to familiarise adherents and practitioners with the fundamental elements and common themes of Swazi African Traditional Religion, which also overlap with the Christian faith. In this chapter, we focused on the common themes and basic beliefs discussed and reflected upon in previous chapters. The researcher was convinced that the identified basic beliefs, practices, and ceremonies of Swazi African Traditional Religion would provide answers to the main research question: Was Swazi African Traditional Religion a receptive vessel for the Christian faith?

The following basic beliefs, practices, and ceremonies of Swazi African Traditional Religion (SATR) serve to strengthen the relationship with the Christian faith. The Swazi people believe in God, the Creator of the universe, who holds an integral place in their lives and religion. This belief was transmitted from the spiritual world, which is invisible to the naked eye, to their forefathers, who subsequently passed it down to them. Both Christianity and Swazi African Traditional Religion share the concept of God, who is regarded as a receptive vessel for the foreign Christian faith.

God is considered the Creator and the ultimate reality that has existed from the beginning and will always be present. In both SATR and the Christian faith, God is not a created being

but rather brought Himself into existence as Mvelinchanti, Simakadze, Nkulunkulu, and so forth.

The Swazi people affirmed their knowledge about God through King Somhlolo's dream or vision. Matsebula (1976), a Swazi historian, concluded that the interpretation of the King's dream or vision indicated Swazi African Traditional Religion as a receptive vessel for the Christian religion. The dream or vision of King Somhlolo (1816-1836) conveyed three meanings:

(i) It served as a warning to the King to avoid conflict with Europeans and instead embrace them.

(ii) The dream or vision advised the King to accept the Scroll (Book or Bible) brought by the European or white people as the Word of God.

(iii) It cautioned against valuing money (Coin) more than the Scroll. This is supported by the Gospel according to Matthew, which states: "But first and most importantly seek (aim at, strive after) His kingdom and His righteousness [His way of doing and being right—the attitude and character of God], and all these things will be given to you also."(Matthew 6:33).

The Swazi belief in ancestral Spirits, which establishes a reciprocal relationship between the departed and the living, is significant. By remembering, respecting, and honoring the ancestors during family events and decision-making processes, the living family members receive protection and prosperity. This brings to mind the attention of the Bible, particularly the book of Moses known as Exodus, where it says: "Honour your father and your mother, so that your days may be prolonged in the land the Lord your God gives you."(Exodus 20:12). Additionally, it reflects the belief in nature spirits, aligning with African thinking that recognises spiritual power permeating all of nature and life.

Momen (2009:357) points out that as Africans, we believe in preserving the deceased's clothes and belongings rather than burning or discarding them after the mourning period. Instead, these items are distributed among children or relatives, as the deceased continue to exist in the world of spirits, taking on the new responsibility of being an ancestor if they meet the qualifications. Our lives have been interconnected since the beginning.

For example, the first book of Moses known as Genesis attests to what SATR upholds: "The Spirit of God was moving (hovering, brooding) over the face of the waters." (Genesis 1:2-ASB). In Christian understanding, the Holy Spirit, as mentioned in the preceding sentence, is an ever-present source of power through which the spirits connect. It moved and hovered over the face of the waters at the beginning of God's creation when nothing else existed. This indicates the existence of God's spirit, the Holy Spirit, from the very beginning, suggesting that the rest of the spirits came into existence afterwards.

Mogoba and Meko (2007) asserted that African Traditional Religion, as a receptive vessel, has enriched Christianity by providing an avenue through which God can bring salvation to humanity. Africans generally believe that everything possesses spirits, which can be categorised as either good or bad. Good spirits include the Holy Spirit, guardian spirits, and diviner spirits, while bad spirits encompass ghost-spirits, born-to-die spirits, and spirits of witches. The belief in these spirits permeates the lives of African believers and calls for their serious consideration. African Swazi Traditional Religion promotes the influence of good spirits over the bad ones.

For instance, the spirits, also known as guardians and diviners, are believed to have originated from those who have died and joined the spiritual world. They are seen as mediators between the physical and spiritual realms. In the Christian faith, these spirits are regarded as angels and saints residing in the spirit world. This understanding demonstrates the relationship between Christianity and SATR, where SATR served as a receptive vessel for the preparation for the Christian faith. Christianity, in turn, serves as a conduit for the gospel of Jesus Christ, which came to save humanity from God's wrath. SATR focuses on God through the ancestors, while Christianity focuses on God through Jesus Christ.

The belief in Death and Life after Death revolves around the pursuit of life and its security. Adamo (2011:4) highlights that life in African indigenous tradition is viewed as a continuous process with a dynamic rhythm and cycles that encompass birth, death, and rebirth. This implies that SATR acknowledges an afterlife, which involves the ongoing relationship between the deceased and the living, but it does not signify the final end of humanity or the world (Ikenga-Metuh 1987:263). This belief is not contradictory to the Christian faith, as Christianity also speaks of the afterlife, specifically eternal life. Life after death in SATR is associated with the belief that the souls of the ancestors are never dead; they continue to exist even after physical death. This aligns with the Christian faith, as expressed in the

Apostle's Creed. Swazi African Traditional Religion maintains that life after death does not entail reward or punishment, as these are believed to occur during the present life. Christianity, on the other hand, emphasises rewards and punishment in the afterlife, particularly during judgment day.

The belief in Burial and Bereavement revolves around the practice of burial customs, which involve burying the deceased in their place of birth alongside their family and clan members. This communal burial allows them to continue living as ancestors of the family and clan. In Swazi African Traditional Religion, practiced by families, various rituals are performed, including animal sacrifices, collection of medicinal herbs, mourning, cleansing, reintegration, purchasing vessels for ritual washing, and informing distant relatives. Men are responsible for carrying the body to the grave, which is also dug by men. After filling the grave, thorns and stones are placed on top to prevent access to the corpse. Burials typically occur within a week after death.

During burial, certain personal possessions of the deceased, such as blankets or pallets, are also buried with them. The dead are positioned to face their homestead, enabling them to watch over their family, with their heads facing west. If the death was violent or accidental, the deceased is not brought into the home or homestead. Instead, they are buried facing away from home, outside the homestead, or in a community cemetery. This practice aims to spare the living from a similar fate. Additionally, an animal is slaughtered to provide food for those attending the funeral. We found that these beliefs and practices hold true for the majority of Africans in the two religious systems researched, regardless of gender or status. However, it appears that many individuals, particularly the youth and educated individuals, do not take these beliefs seriously, leading to the prevalence of unfortunate events such as climate change, the Covid-19 pandemic, HIV and AIDS, gender-based violence and abuse, theft, rape, killings, disrespect, injustice in public and private sectors, religious sectors, and numerous other social ills plaguing our society. As African people, it is crucial for us to re-examine African Spirituality.

Christianity also conducts burials, either in the morning or afternoon, but avoids midday burials. The specific burial practices vary depending on the location of the bereaved families. In rural areas, the deceased is buried within the homestead, compound, or public cemetery. The terms and conditions of the mourning period are determined by the family of the deceased within the tribal context. The mourning period concludes with a special ritual.

It is crucial within the Swazi religious orientation to observe a ten-day ritual that takes place after the burial ceremony. This ritual, known as the cleansing rite, is particularly significant for freeing children or youth from an extended mourning period that can last up to three years. This practice is observed by most, if not all, African traditional and Christian adherents during the bereavement period.

Bereaved members of the family and clan must adhere to specific protocols, which vary from one family to another and depend on the clan membership. These protocols are followed by all family members of age, regardless of their religious affiliation. By following these protocols, the ancestors are appeased, and the family can avoid potential misfortunes and illnesses. Both the Old and New Testaments contain scriptural references to mourning. For example, in the New Testament, the beatitudes of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount state: "Blessed [forgiven, refreshed by God's grace] are those who mourn [over their sins and repent], for they will be comforted [when the burden of sin is lifted]" (Matthew 5:4-ASB).

There are also passages that depict grief and mourning, such as "But his body [lamenting its decay] grieves in pain over it, and his soul mourns over [the loss of]" (Job 14:22-ASB). These passages clearly indicate that Christianity, like Swazi African Traditional Religion, acknowledges and observes mourning and bereavement periods as a vessel for the Christian faith.

The belief in Human Life or Transcendence encompasses rites that are integral to the social structure of religion. Beyers (2010:6) highlights that African Traditional Religion recognizes the existence of the transcendental as a priority. Africans, even without having personally encountered God, knew that there is a powerful force—God—who is the Creator of all. The religious orientation of South African Swazi and African Traditional Religion acknowledges that ethics originate not from humanity but from God, making it an essential component of religion.

God, as the Giver of Life, is the originator of morality, which extends to both the living and the deceased, as He is the driving force behind everything. Magesa (1997:40) further emphasizes that human life and tradition originate from God. Therefore, as living beings, we are interconnected with God through this vital force, and all living things derive their life energy from the same source—God—regardless of religious affiliation.

The belief in Rituals and Ceremonies revolves around the extraordinary practices performed by the living for the deceased. These ritual ceremonies or religious gatherings serve as a means for the community to express various forms of worship, promoting unity, healing, and the development of a devoted nation with patriotic sentiments, principles, and collective efforts. These events and ceremonies are integral to Swazi African Traditional Religion, which acts as a receptive vessel for the preparation of the Christian faith. The arrival of Christianity in the land introduced the missionaries to the existing beliefs, practices, and ceremonies, which they modified and built upon, resulting in shared aspects between the two religious systems.

According to Thorpe (1991:104), both unity and diversity are characteristic of African religion. However, in general, religion, which is synonymous with being human for African people, follows a life-affirming, life-sustaining pattern. The rites, rituals, sacrifices, and prayers performed by traditional diviners and healers serve to maintain a harmonious relationship between the visible and invisible African community, encompassing both the living and the deceased.

The belief in Marriage and Procreation centers around the forging of alliances between two kin groups when two individuals are joined together. Marriage serves the purpose of procreation and extending relationships to the broader community. During marriage, the approval of ancestors from both families ensures fertility and procreation. SATR emphasizes that children born within a marriage are considered a blessing, as they are seen as gifts from the spiritual world. Therefore, marriage must be blessed, as it is viewed as a blessing from the Creator. Rituals and ceremonies are performed to accompany or follow the wedding occasion. These rituals not only inform the clan but also aim to unite the two clans of the bride and groom.

The belief in Rites of Passage relates to the four stages that mark a transition from one phase of life to another. Sundermeier (1990:67) highlights that rituals are an integral part of religion and cannot be denied. All religions incorporate rituals, and it is essential to understand them from a multidimensional perspective. By doing so, one gains insight into religion and its practices.

The belief in Worship and Celebrations focuses on the worship practices that unite generations and establish a relationship with the Christian faith. Swazi African Traditional

Religion places importance on celebrating life's events. People engage in religious activities to commemorate births, naming ceremonies, initiations, marriages, the beginning of the rainy or harvest season, and more. If SATR fills these moments with celebration and festivals, then the Christian faith should also infuse these events with joy and jubilation. Zionist Churches, with the assistance of drums during worship, are able to invoke the Holy Spirit and ancestral spirits to intervene, provide solutions, prophesy, exorcise demons, and heal those affected by evil spirits and both man-made and natural illnesses.

The Swazi Zionist Churches align with the traditional Swazi social structure and values. It is important to acknowledge the proactive liberal values that these churches instill. The Zionists have generally demonstrated open-mindedness and tolerance towards divergent religious traditions, solidifying their place within Swazi African Traditional Religion.

The belief in African Community centers around solidarity. Thorpe (1991:119) supports the notion of community solidarity and highlights its significance not only in SATR but in all primal cultures. The idea of belonging to a community, tribe, family group, and clan plays a vital role in combating the feeling of loneliness and emphasizes that individuals are not alone or isolated.

Bhengu (1991:119) suggests that Christianity could greatly benefit from learning from African Traditional Religion, which serves as a receptive vessel for its preparation. It emphasises the importance of community as the very essence of being. At the core of this African concept of community is the African philosophy of Ubuntu (Personhood). Recognising that human beings radiate a natural inclination towards seeking and forming relationships, this understanding represents an experience that Western learning has yet to fully comprehend.

5.4 Research Findings: The analysis of data captured during interviews aimed to establish the relationship between SATR and Christianity, leading to the formulation of research findings. The primary research question guiding this study is: "Was Swazi African Traditional Religion a receptive vessel for the Christian faith?" The research findings demonstrate the presence of God as the Creator and Sustainer of life. It has been discovered that ATR has served as a valuable and receptive vessel, providing nourishment to the Christian faith. The beliefs and pillars of ATR have added value to the research, validating the fact that African Traditional Religion acknowledges one Supreme Being who

created everything. These beliefs highlight the inseparable connection between religion and culture, as they share common ways of shaping identity.

ATR, like any other tradition, has been influenced by other traditions, suggesting that it hasn't remained entirely pure. However, this indicates the adaptability and resilience of ATR, as it retains control over its own practices while borrowing from other sources. ATR remains true to its core principles despite incorporating external elements. Although African Religion lacks scriptures and a canon, this should not imply that it cannot have its own form of orthodoxy.

Among other findings, it was discovered that ATR beliefs and practices have generated morals and values that have universal significance and are deeply rooted in the lives of the Swazi people in South Africa and Africans in general. These morals and values are learned through experiences, wise sayings, proverbs, symbols, stories, drama, and other forms of expression. They address profound aspects of life, such as justice, truth, good, evil, right, wrong, responsibility, humanity's relationship with nature and property.

These beliefs and practices encompass concepts related to God, spirits, and ancestors, human life, death and the afterlife, as well as prayers, symbols, artistic expression, ceremonies, and rituals. Particularly, the rituals associated with birth, adolescence, marriage, procreation, and death, which we explored in previous paragraphs discussing their connections, similarities, and differences. Overall, these beliefs and practices contribute constructively to the development of national identity, unity, and social cohesion among the Swazi people of South Africa and the broader African population. These findings respond to the main research question: "Is African Traditional Religion a receptive vessel for the Christian faith?"

It is crucial for Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) in Mpumalanga, along with the adherents and practitioners of Swazi African Traditional Religion (SATR) and cultural activists from the fourteen traditional councils and chiefdoms, to collaborate and unite with the Christian faith. This partnership will enable them to collectively advocate for the recognition and support that SATR deserves, as it currently lacks the acknowledgment it should receive. Recognising the Swazi African Traditional Religion does not negate the African identity of other black individuals who choose to practice Christianity within an African context. It is

important to understand that not all black people are Christians and that they have a right to voice their perspectives and beliefs.

There is a need to give serious attention to the study of African inculturation theology, African religious tradition, and culture. These areas form the foundation for meaningful interfaith dialogue, particularly in South Africa and Africa as a whole. Interviewees from Swazi African Traditional Religion have observed that even after South Africa gained independence, racism persists, including within religious circles. The struggle continues despite more than twenty-seven years of independence, freedom, and democracy, as African Traditional people are still not free to practice their traditions freely.

The researcher has observed the anti-colonialist rejection of the Christian faith, as argued by Griffiths (1990:139). This rejection is based on the understanding of Christianity as a political tool intertwined with politics, trade, and imperial expansion. The Bible, whisky barrels, and bullets have been used as weapons. Adherents and practitioners of Swazi African Traditional Religion perceive this continuation of oppression similar to what occurred during the apartheid era. In this new dispensation, indigenous religious beliefs, which were fought for survival upon the arrival of colonialists, are ignored and marginalised. The destruction caused by colonialists has been exacerbated by those who dictate the beliefs of the marginalised people, thereby silencing their voices.

Hence, the researcher calls upon the FBOs in Mpumalanga, particularly Mifafsor, along with adherents and practitioners of SATR, Christianity, African Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Bahá'í Faith, Rastafari, and other faiths, as well as the voices from the grassroots who participated in the research, to all collaborate in fostering nationhood, national unity, and social cohesion among the Swazi people of South Africa. This call extends to the Zionist Christians and Mission Churches from the district, as well as those from the Kingdom of Eswatini and other SADC countries in general.

This is also applicable to the South African Zionist Churches, which, as part of the African Independent Churches, have played a significant and proactive role in modern African societies. These churches have transitioned from peripheral and traditional sects to become mainstream institutions.

The researcher has observed that the African Independent or Initiated Churches, particularly the Zionist Churches, have promoted two primary values: the culture of

tolerance and dialogue among individuals with differing religious beliefs. An ethnographic study conducted by Ndlovu (1997:2) in the Kingdom of Eswatini reveals that Zionist Christians have fostered fraternal relations between Christians and adherents of Swazi religion. Additionally, they have engaged in inter-church dialogue with the Swazi Christian community. These observations also relate to the Swazi Zionists in South Africa. As South Africans, it is crucial for us to embrace proactive liberal values such as religious tolerance and dialogue between Christian and traditional beliefs of Emaswati.

Kwenda, Mndende & Stonier (1997:132) have pointed out that in response to missionary teachings, Africans developed their own creative approaches. This gave rise to various forms of African Indigenous Churches or African Independent Churches or Initiated Churches, including the Ethiopians, the different forms of Zionism, the Apostolics, the Nazarites of the Shembes, and a wide range of African expressions in encounters with other faiths. These new forms or adaptations, known as the African Initiated Churches (AICs), are the only kind of African religion in South Africa that is currently practiced independently of Christianity.

The research has been an eye-opener, providing the researcher with new knowledge about the religion of the people (SATR) and that of the West (Christianity). It has presented an opportunity for people of all ages, backgrounds, and religious affiliations – the elderly, the youth, the rich, the poor, adherents of minor and major religions, those in positions of power, the educated, and the illiterate – to embark on a journey of self-discovery. It encourages critical thinking about one's origins, the path taken, and reflection on the forces or powers that have sustained, protected, and provided strength in pursuing life's journey. Returning to their roots, is where the Supernatural Being, God, Mvelinchatu, has placed and preserved them, and allowed them to know their identity, find contentment, and live in harmony with the rest of creation and the Creator. By embracing the primal religion of our ancestors and the African culture we are born into as Africans, we become vessels for nation-building, national unity, and social cohesion among all of God's people.

The researcher has discovered that African Christians are faced with the challenge of understanding their relationship with and choosing between the ancestors and the risen Christ. However, they cannot simply choose one over the other. Instead, they embrace both, fully aware that the ancestors and Jesus Christ do not belong to the same category. The ancestors are regarded as spiritual beings that were once human but are now

deceased, whereas Jesus Christ possesses a divine-human nature, having died and risen again. The distinction between the two is profoundly incomparable. In African Traditional Religion, adherents exclusively communicate with their ancestors.

Tlhagale (1991:6) highlights that through their faith, they have come to understand that the ancestors also yearn for redemption and the saving mercy of God. Access to salvation has been made possible through the death of Jesus Christ. This is why Africans now pray for their ancestors during liturgical practices. It is important to note that it goes against tradition to claim that ancestors haunt individuals until they submit. According to tradition, if one does not heed the call or instruction of the ancestors, it is customary to offer a sacrifice as a means of appeasing or apologising for non-compliance. Ancestor veneration is not in conflict with the first commandment.

Prior to the introduction of Christianity, the concept of God among Africans may have been vague, if it existed at all. Some refer to this as a *Deus otiosus* - an inactive God. However, proponents argue that Africans did indeed believe in God, citing the various names used to refer to the divine being as evidence.

5.5 Chapter Summary: The researcher's responsibility was to search for the truth regarding the role missionaries played upon their arrival in the land. The researcher has verified the claim of arriving in a dark continent devoid of religion but with a perverted culture, only to find that it is untrue. Through investigation, the researcher has confirmed that the religion of the people of the land existed long before the missionaries arrived. The missionaries' religion came into existence because African Traditional Religion, as a receptive vessel, prepared the ground for learning, adaptation, and acceptance by those who were compelled to join them. In this chapter, we have also demonstrated the fundamental beliefs and practices of ATR that align well with those of the Christian faith, thus highlighting the existing relationship between SATR and Christianity. The intention moving forward is to facilitate an honest and equal conversation between these two religious systems about inculturation, their significance, and the roles they can play in fostering the development of a cohesive, unified, and compassionate nation characterized by equality, diversity, and tolerance for the common good.

Now, the researcher proceeds to chapter six, which focuses on the objective of exploring the points of convergence between the Christian faith and Swazi African Traditional

Religion. The aim is to merge ideas and understanding, present the formulated research findings, and provide recommendations for potential implementation that will serve to highlight SATR as a receptive vessel for the Christian faith.

CHAPTER SIX

MEETING POINTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction:

This chapter focuses on the objective of exploring the meeting points between the Christian faith and African Traditional Religion. The aim is to merge ideas and provide recommendations that address past imbalances. This includes addressing the question of religion and culture to Faith Based Organizations (FBOs), particularly the Mpumalanga interfaith action for societal renewal (Mifafsor), the Ehlanzeni District House of Traditional Leaders (EDHTL), and its fourteen sampled Councils. Mifafsor, as a newly launched organization, consists of representatives from various faiths in Mpumalanga, such as Hinduism, Islam, Rastafari, Bahai, Swazi African Traditional Religion, Christianity, and Ecumenical Bodies like the Mpumalanga Council of Churches, African Independent Churches (AICs), and the South African Catholic Bishops Conference (SACBC).

Walls & Fyfe (1996) observe that African Christianity (AC) can be seen in two capacities: firstly, as a new phase in the history of African religion, continuing the story that began with primal or traditional religions; and secondly, as a new phase in the history of Christianity, where the tradition is being expressed in intellectual, social, and religious contexts it had not previously entered. The objectives outlined in chapter one serve as key drivers towards the realization of the research topic of this thesis. The Christian faith and African Traditional Religion share many features that seem to contribute to the rapid spread of Christianity on the African continent. These two religious systems have become allies, albeit unofficially, and African Traditional Religion has paved the way for the incorporation of the Christian faith.

Mbiti (1975:191) points out that while conflicts arise between Christianity and African beliefs, people must also acknowledge that conflicts exist between the Christian way of life and the lives of those who solely adhere to African Religion. Part of the reason for this conflict lies in the numerous moral requirements imposed on African Christians by their missionary leaders. It is more of a clash between Western or European culture and African culture than a specifically religious conflict. Some areas where conflicts arise include traditional African rituals, particularly those associated with offerings for the deceased, African initiation rites, marriage customs, the role of sorcery, evil magic, and witchcraft in

African life, as well as methods of dealing with disease, misfortune, and suffering, which differ from Western practices.

Due to these conflicts, many African Christians have broken away from mission Churches and formed their own, where they can more freely incorporate traditional African customs into their Christian life. This has an impact on the form of prayers, music, hymns, songs, festivals, as well as the attitude towards dreams and visions. Additionally, the organization of these churches is modified to suit the preferences of the adherents, retaining much of the traditional world-view within many of these African Independent Churches.

At the same time, they are striving to integrate Christianity into the core of African life and bring hope where there was none. African Christians take Christianity seriously, blending it with the religious wisdom inherited from their ancestors and applying it to address the current needs of society. Christianity has given them the courage to resist oppression and domination by foreign rulers, as it upholds their belief in human dignity and emphasises love among all individuals.

It is essential to consider the future of African Traditional Religion, including the Swazi religious orientation, as both Christianity and Islam have spread throughout Africa. For instance, Islam has incorporated elements of African Traditional Religion in the one-third of the continent where it is prevalent. Christianity coexists alongside African Traditional Religion in the remaining two-thirds of Africa. In fact, many individuals follow a combination of African Traditional Religion and the Christian faith, while others adhere primarily to African Traditional Religion or a blend of the Christian faith and Islam. African Traditional Religion is an integral part of our rich heritage, as discussed in previous chapters. It has influenced our cultures and shaped the worldview of African peoples. Even in the face of modern changes, it is impossible for this heritage to be completely eradicated. As long as there is a trace of African culture, elements of African Traditional Religion will also persist. Since certain aspects of African Traditional Religion find a place within major religions such as the Christian faith, it means that these aspects will be adapted and retained within African churches.

The Swazi African Traditional Religion, like any other religion, enjoys the freedom of religion, belief, and opinion granted by Chapter 2 of the Bill of Rights under the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996. It is crucial to vigorously and

conscientiously promote this religion in order to help restore the African cultural and religious identity that appears to have been lost, thereby addressing the identity crisis faced by African people. Based on the perspectives and voices expressed in Chapter four of this research, we recommend that Faith Based Organizations (FBOs), particularly Mifafsor, African Christianity, and the African Independent Churches (specifically the Zionists), collaborate with Swazi African Traditional Religion in partnership with the Ehlanzeni District House of Traditional Leaders and the fourteen Traditional Councils in the sampled chiefdoms. This partnership aims to conduct further research, revive the fundamental beliefs and practices of Swazi African Traditional Religion, and foster nation-building, national unity, and social cohesion among the Swazi people of South Africa, as well as the general public in the district, province, country, and continent.

6.2 Outline of Chapters:

This section has established a platform for the Swazi African Traditional and Christian religious communities, as well as for African Christians who find themselves caught between Swazi African Traditional Religion and Christianity. They have consciously or unconsciously interacted, finding common ground and embracing unity in diversity. We now understand that there is no distinction between Swazi people in South Africa and those from the Kingdom of Eswatini, except that South Africans live in a democracy while the Kingdom of Eswatini operates under a monarchy. The research study successfully achieved its objectives by addressing specific aspects in each chapter as outlined below:

6.2.1 Chapter One:

This chapter focused on the objective of exploring the religious orientation of the Swazi people prior to the arrival of missionaries and the spread of Christianity. Through our findings, we have discovered new information that highlights the original work and sheds light on the valuable knowledge embedded in the Swazi religious and cultural orientation. This belief system was created by ancestors in response to the challenges faced at the time. Africans encountered numerous ever-changing challenges and developed an understanding of the universe, adapting their beliefs, practices, and ceremonies accordingly. Swazi African Traditional Religion has continued to contribute to this perpetual expansion of knowledge and understanding by revisiting the beliefs, practices, and ceremonies of ancestors who migrated from the Kingdom of Eswatini and settled in South

Africa. SATR has undoubtedly played a significant role in shaping the Swazi nation through their contributions.

Furthermore, the researcher has learned that African and Western perspectives on religion and culture differ. The African perspective views religion and culture as inseparable intertwined aspects that cannot be separated. Africans are seen as being born into their religion, and religion and culture are intertwined and expressed as a unified whole. Despite being forced into or choosing to embrace the new religion of Christianity, Africans did not abandon their ancestral religious and cultural rituals. They continued to place importance on these rituals, emphasising the significance of their identity and embracing their heritage without apology.

The rites of passage serve as a significant meeting point, adding value to the stages of life observed from birth to death and even beyond, as discussed in chapters two and four of the research work. The fact that individual missionaries began to recognise traces of religion in African practices is an important point that enhances this chapter. Although these observations were not documented in written form, the oral expressions highlight the ingenuity and brilliance of our ancestors' minds, as they placed greater emphasis on practical experiences rather than written scriptures. Their practices served as an inspiration for a generation of African scholars who emerged later, realising that most Africans had never severed their connection with their ancestral beliefs and practices, regardless of external influences.

6.2.2 Chapter Two:

This chapter focuses on the objective of examining the history, religious, and cultural orientation of the Swazi people to establish their contributions to the development and promotion of nationhood, national unity, and social cohesion among Swazi South Africans, as well as the wider population of the country and the continent as a whole. The Swazi African Traditional Religion is built upon several pillars and common beliefs, including the Swazi belief in God (Mvelinchanti), the Creator; the Ancestors; religious leaders such as the elderly, chiefs, diviners, and traditional healers; sacred places like the home and kraal; various rituals, such as appeasement rituals, kinship rituals, societal rituals; sacred texts; a special day of worship; a moral order; beliefs about life after death; and rites of passage encompassing birth, initiation, marriage, death, burial, bereavement, and thanksgiving.

Additionally, the African calendar informs the Swazi people about different seasons and activities that contribute to the well-being of their communities. These fundamental beliefs and pillars add value to the research and its findings, validating the authenticity of Swazi African Traditional Religion as a faith that believes in a Supreme Being, God (Mvelinchanti), who created all things. They also underscore the inseparability of religion and culture within Swazi African Traditional Religion.

This chapter explores the connection and relationship between Swazi African Traditional Religion (SATR) and Christianity, which missionaries often overlooked. It examines how the shared beliefs and concepts have contributed to the development and promotion of Swazi nationhood, national unity, and social cohesion. The aim is to raise awareness, recognition, and acceptance of Swazi African Traditional Religion, enabling it to fulfill its unifying role and gain its rightful place alongside Christianity. It is only through gaining a better understanding and knowledge of Swazi African Traditional Religion (SATR) that its value can be appreciated by South Africans and the people of the continent, ultimately contributing to the development of the South Africa we all aspire to. Chapter two provided valuable insights into the history of our Swazi people, our South African ancestors who originated from the Kingdom of Eswatini and their significant contributions to beliefs and practices upon their arrival in South Africa.

6.2.3 Chapter Three:

This chapter focuses on the objective of establishing the relationship between Swazi African Traditional Religion and the Christian faith. It examines how the African Traditional Religion prepared the groundwork for the widespread embrace of Christianity among millions of African Christians. According to Statistics South Africa: Community Survey (2016), a large portion of South Africans identifies themselves as members of a faith group. Approximately 43.4 million South Africans identify as Christians, while 2.4 million identify as adherents of African Traditional Religion, including the Swazi religious orientation. This chapter explores the connections between Swazi African Traditional Religion and the Christian faith, and sheds light on why the receptive nature of Swazi African Traditional Religion has not been duly recognised.

Chapter three significantly contributes valuable knowledge to this research study by tracing the relationship between Swazi African Traditional Religion and the Christian faith. The

chapter addresses several secondary and primary questions, including: How did Swazi African Traditional Religion prepare the way for the acceptance of the Christian faith by millions of African Christians? Is inculturation, an ongoing debate within the Church, a means to bridge or widen the gap between African Traditional Religion and Christianity? Regarding inculturation, it should be noted that the percentage of adherents and practitioners of African Traditional Religion is difficult to determine precisely, as it constitutes a relatively small portion of the population. The primary question centers on the role of Swazi African Traditional Religion as a receptive vessel in preparing for the acceptance of the Christian faith.

These secondary questions were explored to provide insights on how the main research question could be best addressed. In addition to these secondary and primary questions, a supplementary question was posed: What have we learned from each chapter and how has each chapter added value to the research and its findings? The chapter adds value by highlighting the rapid increase in the number of Christians and the declining numbers of African Traditional Religion adherents. This can be attributed to the dedication of European missionaries who arrived in Africa and worked among Africans, as well as the efforts of African Christians who evangelized within their own communities, often at great personal sacrifice, with some even becoming martyrs for the gospel. African Traditional Religion provided an opportunity for people to receive the gospel, making it a receptive vessel for the preparation for the Christian faith.

The question of inculturation (adapting Christianity to a non-Christian cultural background) as a means to bridge or widen the gap between Swazi African Traditional Religion and Christianity is significant. Inculturation involves the gradual acquisition of cultural characteristics and norms, adapting Christianity to non-Christian cultural backgrounds. The process of assimilation to a different culture can have social and psychological impacts on adherents of SATR and African Christians. Acculturation poses a serious challenge for the African Church. Therefore, it was necessary to examine Christianity and African Independent Churches (AICs) in general, as they are considered products of African Traditional Religion. This further supports the claim that African Traditional Religion has always served as a vessel for the preparation for the Christian faith, which has grown significantly. AICs were established by African proselyted Christians who, due to racial challenges, formed their own churches and became recognised as valid expressions of

African Christianity. They played a significant role in the religious and cultural orientation of the Swazi people.

6.2.4 Chapter Four:

This chapter focuses on the objective of investigating the contribution of Swazi African Traditional Religion to the contemporary Church context. It emphasises that Jesus Christ of Nazareth came to fulfill, rather than destroy, Swazi African Traditional Religion in South Africa. It is important to approach this aspect of African religion with sympathy, as traditional leaders and chiefs have played a crucial role in making African religion a receptive vessel for the survival of African Church leadership. The chapter presents new findings that highlight the contribution of Swazi African Traditional Religion to the contemporary Church context, adding valuable knowledge to this research work.

We had direct personal contact with each participant from each of the fourteen sampled traditional councils of Ehlanzeni District House of Traditional Leaders in Mpumalanga, who responded to a barrage of questions used for the scheduled structured interviews, including both the secondary and primary questions for this research. The participants boldly expressed that judging a book by its cover, as the missionaries did, would always be incorrect. The missionaries later discovered that they were wrong to conclude that Africans had no religion. This signifies that conviction is not solely based on appearances, but rather on actions, as actions speak louder than words. The church should extend beyond buildings, written scriptures, and hymn books, recognizing that the God of Africa coexists with the people of Africa. This insight adds value to this research, highlighting that the God Africans worshipped in the past and continue to worship has not changed and exists only within the people. Our understanding of God is derived from our everyday experiences, as shown in this chapter four of the research.

6.2.5 Chapter Five:

This chapter focuses on the objective of establishing the relationship between SATR and the Christian faith. It analyses the data captured during the interviews and formulates the research findings guided by the research topic, aiming for possible implementation. As the chapter reflects on the relationship between these two religions, it also looks at how this relationship can be enhanced to have a significant impact in the future. During this exploration, previously unknown truths about SATR's beliefs, traditions, ceremonies, and

practices, which were ignored by the missionaries, were discovered. These aspects of SATR have meaningfully contributed to nationhood, national unity, and social cohesion among the Swazi people of South Africa, as well as the South African nation as a whole. Both religions believe that all of humanity originates from God as a source. The findings greatly influence the association between Swazi African Traditional Religion and the Christian faith, and the references used in this research study shed light on the literature that was consulted.

6.3 The meeting points between SATR and the Christian faith:

The points of similarity already exist, and we have a working relationship and continuity on those issues. We aim to establish a connection between Biblical faith, Swazi culture, and tradition that is strong enough for the Christian faith to firmly establish itself among the Swazi Africans. SATR's common traditional practices and cultural beliefs, ceremonies, and festivals are compatible with the Christian faith. By putting into practice those aspects that unify the Swazi nation of South Africa and the continent, the meeting points between SATR and the Christian faith

Swazi African Traditional Religion in South Africa and the Christian faith in the Kingdom of Eswatini collaborate annually to perform and celebrate life together with the King and Queen Mother. Similarly, South Africans also celebrate life through rituals that differ from those observed in the Kingdom of Eswatini, such as the Ummemo ceremony. The Ummemo ceremony is conducted by various traditional councils led by their respective traditional leaders. While the Immimemo ceremonies occur annually, they are not performed simultaneously but sequentially, allowing each traditional council the opportunity to support one another as chiefdoms. This promotes unity in diversity, tolerance, and cooperation, contributing to the development of nationhood, national unity, and social cohesion within their chiefdoms.

The ceremonies are attended by all, regardless of whether they embrace Swazi African Traditional Religion, Christianity, or any other religion. The Ummemo ceremony serves as a means to remember and pay homage to their ancestral kinship. Participants come together to share African beer and food, reviving the culture, traditions, practices, beliefs, and ceremonies of the Swazi South Africans. Even under a democratic system and dual monarchy, it is deemed necessary to draw inspiration from these traditional practices and

cultural beliefs, ceremonies, and festivals that are compatible with Christianity. Emphasising what unifies the Swazi African people is of utmost importance.

Ndlovu (1997:3) highlights that both the King and the Queen Mother, as dual monarchs, serve as custodians and official representatives of Swazi African Traditional Religion. It is crucial to recognise that the Good Friday ceremony, celebrated by Christians, provides a meeting place for the two distinct religions: Swazi African Traditional Religion and Christianity. Furthermore, the Good Friday convention acts as a social platform for dialogue between Mission Churches and African Independent Churches. Such a platform is highly needed for the Swazi South African people, as it facilitates the dialogue between SATR as a vessel or source and African Christianity as a product of SATR. The genius of the Zionist Churches in the Kingdom of Eswatini lies in bringing together these three religious traditions: Mission Churches, African Independent Churches, and Swazi African Traditional Religion, in a public forum. This enables each tradition to coexist and learn from one another.

Since the Swazi people of South Africa do not have a monarchy, their cultural and traditional custodians are the Traditional Leaders or Chiefs. These leaders are entrusted with the responsibility of preserving the culture and traditions of Emaswati within their chiefdoms and overseeing the administration carried out by the Traditional Councils. It is important to note that ceremonies and structures such as Incwala, Umhlanga, and Emabutfo cannot be officiated without the presence of the King and the Queen Mother. Hence, the Immimemo ceremonies serve as a means for each chiefdom to come together annually, expressing gratitude to their ancestors and the Creator.

Ndlovu (1997:5) further explains that Good Friday is a day when Christians commemorate the suffering and death of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. It is a day to remember that Jesus died to reconcile the world to God the Father and to offer eternal life to all people, regardless of their faith. In the Kingdom of Eswatini, particularly under the leadership of the King and the Queen Mother, this special day is not only celebrated as Christians but also serves as an opportunity to bring together the two religions. The aim is to promote unity in diversity, tolerance, patriotism, and peaceful coexistence among Emaswati within their kingdom. This contributes to the development of the nation, unity, and social cohesion in the Kingdom of Eswatini and the continent as a whole. As Swazi people of South Africa, we should seize

this opportunity to learn and apply what we can in building the Swazi community in our own country.

During the subsequent days of the ritual, such as Saturday, Sunday, and Tuesday, the King, as the host, is expected to deliver speeches on each occasion. On Saturday, for example, church leaders from different denominations, with the majority being Zionists pastors and bishops, pay a courtesy visit to the King at one of his residences. This day is dedicated to addressing administrative, moral, or doctrinal issues that affect the smooth functioning of Indigenous Churches, as well as the Christian church in general. Typically, the King provides definitive rulings or recommendations on the specific matters discussed.

Church leaders also engage in discussions on selected moral issues arising from tensions between biblical ethics and Swazi culture, as well as conflicts among different Christian doctrines concerning specific Swazi customs. This discussion platform aims to clarify any perceived conflicts between religion and culture, fostering understanding among all Swazi Africans and Mission Churches. The topics of discussion may also include controversial issues such as the ordination of women, recognition of new and foreign religions like Islam and the Baha'i faiths, and the question of homosexuality. The primary purpose of these meetings is to promote inter-church dialogue, exchange of ideas, and a spirit of tolerance among all Swazi church leaders. King Mswati III once addressed the church leaders, emphasising the importance of mutual respect and understanding:

"This day is very important as the reverends educate one another, expressing their own opinions. This practice is somewhat similar to party politics or rival soccer teams, where each group represents and commends its own party. However, just like political leaders in western democratic countries maintain mutual relations with their political opponents, you too should not hold grudges against one another" (Lunyawo LwaJesu, March 30, 1991).

The music instrumentals clearly indicate that there are points of convergence between the two religious systems, SATR and Christianity. Easter Sunday is the main day of the Good Friday Ceremony, where Christians gather to worship alongside the King and the Queen Mother. The multitude of Zionist Christians is usually joined by several church leaders from Mission Churches. Although the church leaders from Mission Churches are considered "visitors," they are often given the opportunity to preach to the congregation. On this day,

the King delivers the final address following several sermons predominantly delivered by Zionist clergy.

The final day of the ceremony, Tuesday, is when the Zionist clergy meet with the King to discuss general administrative changes within the various Zionist denominations, particularly regarding deceased Zionist clergy, who are frequently described as "national heroes." The Swazi monarchy places great importance on the Good Friday Ceremony, and royal representatives are actively involved in its preparation and organisation.

Ndlovu (1977:7) highlights that despite the monarchy's commitment to the continued observance of the Good Friday festival as a royal function, a clear distinction is made between Swazi religion and the Christian religion. This promotes tolerance and unity in diversity. Despite the active participation of the monarchs in the ceremony, the Good Friday ceremony does not supersede the traditional Incwala ceremony mentioned earlier. Incwala always takes precedence over the Christian ritual. Thus, to the monarchy, the Christian Easter ritual does not replace Incwala.

For instance, when the Queen Mother addresses the Christians on Good Friday, she often reminds them that the Christian religion came to the Kingdom of Eswatini through the Swazi royalty. In fact, she credits the Swazi royalty for inviting the missionaries to the Kingdom of Eswatini. Above all, she emphasizes that it was the same Christian God who sent a vision to King Somhlolo, advising him to accept the Bible and reject money, as described in chapters four and five.

Ndlovu (1977:11) suggests that this interpretation of King Somhlolo's dream or vision can be seen as a Christianised version of the Swazi African traditional belief in the role of dreams as a means of communication between ancestors and their living relatives. Another example of a Christianised version of Swazi indigenous beliefs is when King Mswati III reminded the Christians that, as the King, he was divinely appointed to serve as the headman (Indvuna) of the Swazi nation. In response to Christian leaders who insisted that the King should be baptised to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, King Mswati III humorously remarked:

We the (monarchs) are God's headmen here on earth. When the headman is left behind, who will represent you in heaven? We have to inform the nation tomorrow (*Easter Sunday*) that it has been resolved by this assembly that your king will go to

heaven by virtue of his status as God's Headmen. (*Lunyawo LwaJesu, March 30, 1991*).

The King's comment reaffirms the Swazi traditional belief that the office of the King is sacred, and that the royal ancestors continue to guide the Swazi nation, even in the spiritual realm of the ancestors. The Swazi Easter ceremony strongly promotes indigenous Christianity and Swazi culture. This becomes particularly evident during the Sunday session known as "Lunyawo LwaJesu," meaning "In the Footsteps of Jesus."

Ndlovu (1977:11) points out that, although in practice, this session tends to affirm the supremacy of Swazi tradition over the Bible and Western Christian traditions; it nevertheless provides a platform for different Christian denominations to challenge one another. For instance, the suggestion that Christian morality should be rooted in Swazi tradition is often contested by church leaders belonging to evangelical Mission Churches. These clergy typically assert the supremacy of the Bible or God's law over Swazi traditions. This includes members of Evangelical Churches, Seventh Day Adventists, and Jehovah's Witnesses.

The "Lunyawo LwaJesu" session thus serves as the only forum during the Easter festival where Swazi individuals belonging to Mission Churches can openly criticise certain aspects of Swazi cultural nationalism and traditional religion. Consequently, the session often transforms into a lively debate, with Swazi Zionist clergy affirming the supremacy of Swazi tradition, while Mission Christians emphasise the lordship of Christ and the equality of all individuals before God. For instance, the topic for the 1992 debate at "Lunyawo LwaJesu" was the Ten Commandments and the challenge of observing biblical regulations regarding issues such as the Sabbath Day. Several Mission Church leaders spoke on this topic, each affirming the supremacy of the Bible over human customs. One particular speaker argued that conversion to Christ is a personal matter that supersedes Swazi customs, traditional beliefs, ethnic nationalism, and denominationalism, expressing:

"Before you, I present Jesus saving people from all their sins. I present Jesus as a deliverer and an advocate. Jesus delivers a person from the slavery of sin. Jesus delivers a person from the bondage of Satan, of death, of the demons [ancestral spirits]. Jesus is His name! Whether you are Mozambican or Swazi, a Zionist, a Catholic, a Methodist, or a Seventh Day Adventist, if you accept Jesus into your heart, if you accept Jesus as your saviour, you are God's child" (*Lunyawo LwaJesu, April 18, 1992*).

Although the preceding discussion clearly demonstrates that Swazi Zionist Churches support the traditional Swazi social structure and values, it is also crucial to acknowledge the proactive liberal values instilled by these churches. The Good Friday ceremony described above is evidently a royal function that instills fundamental Swazi cultural values, including sacred kingship, loyalty to the state, and the authority of the King and Queen Mother in religious matters. Beyond this normative social function, the Good Friday festival, through the Zionist Churches and the Swazi royalty, paves the way for promoting civil values such as tolerance. Over the years, while many Mission Churches have competed for converts and propagated polemical and divisive theologies in Swaziland (Kasenene 1987), the Zionists have generally been open-minded and tolerant of divergent religious traditions.

6.4 Recommendations: The researcher believes that the findings will have a significant and positive impact on the relationship between SATR, Christianity, African Christianity, as well as Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs), particularly the Mpumalanga interfaith action for societal renewal (Mifafsor); Ehlanzeni District House of Traditional Leaders (EDHTL) and its fourteen sampled Traditional Councils. The following findings are recommended to be forwarded to the Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs), particularly the Mpumalanga interfaith action for societal renewal (Mifafsor), Ehlanzeni District House of Traditional Leaders (EDHTL), and its fourteen sampled Traditional Councils for implementation.

6.4.1 To the Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs):

6.4.1.1 Revive SATR traditions, beliefs, customs, and cultural practices through dialogues and unveil the sacred teachings of Emaswati. This should be done by the Swazi African people who possess cultural and religious knowledge of these beliefs and practices, which hold significant religious meaning, especially those that promote the celebration of life by individual families and the community, in order to perpetuate and pass on the traditions to the next generation.

6.4.1.2 Promote awareness of the natural and man-made holy sites that hold religious significance, predominantly frequented by the Zionist Christians from Zionist Churches. These sites utilise numerous religious articles and objects. By educating the people of South Africa, particularly Emaswati, about the religious meaning and purpose of these prescribed objects and practices, FBOs can contribute to a deeper understanding and appreciation of their significance.

6.4.1.3 Foster a healthy relationship between Swazi African Traditional Religion and the Christian faith by exploring their wisdom and understanding how the religious orientation of Emaswati can contribute to nation-building, national unity, social cohesion, cooperation, and reconciliation among the people of South Africa, particularly adherents of SATR and the Christian faith. This includes examining proverbs that contain religious beliefs, ideas, morals, and warnings, which speak about God, human relationships, the nature of things, and more. These proverbs can be used as they are short, easy to remember, and skillfully crafted for the right purpose. Additionally, explore riddles that entertain and stimulate people's thinking for creativity, as some of them also contain religious ideas. Lastly, explore wise sayings that are often viewed from religious and moral perspectives, encompassing the world in general, as SATR is concerned not only about its South African Swazi group but also the continent and the world as a whole.

6.4.1.4 Educate the religious sector, FBOs, Ecumenical Bodies, Traditional Councils, Houses of Traditional Leaders, and the government about the inseparability of religion and culture in SATR, the separability in the Christian faith, and the oneness of God in all religions, regardless of the religious traditions that may exist worldwide. Emphasise that although God is called by many names, each with religious meanings, both SATR and Christianity share the belief in the Supreme Being (Mvelinchanti) who is the Creator of heaven and earth.

6.4.1.5 Promote the African Calendar, which is guided by solar, lunar, and cosmic calendars, to observe periods and revive various activities, ceremonies, festivals, and prayer ceremonies. Raise awareness about different seasons, particularly those related to farming such as tilling the soil, ploughing, sowing seeds, and harvesting. Also, highlight the importance of the initiation period. This research aims to regulate the spiritual, cultural, and agricultural festivals of Emaswati.

6.4.1.6 Establish an Inter-Denominational Forum (IDF) to spearhead and maintain the Good Friday Ceremony. This forum will bring together all denominations of Mission Churches and AICs, including the Zionist Christians of Ehlanzeni District Municipality, along with adherents of SATR from the fourteen Traditional Councils or chiefdoms that were interviewed. The forum will facilitate serious discussions on national matters and the future of the Church, fostering collective efforts in contributing to nationhood, national unity, social cohesion, and patriotism among Christians. It will also promote tolerance in diversity and

engage in nation-building debates between traditional or indigenous churches and mission or mainline churches. The culmination of these discussions will involve indigenous or traditional worship and prayers to address and eradicate all social ills, striving for holiness, harmony, and peace. The Traditional Leaders, Healers or Diviners, and Cultural Practitioners from the sampled Chiefdoms will be actively involved in these activities.

6.4.1.7 Establish a debating platform to discuss African Traditional Religion as a preparation for the Christian faith. Christianity in Africa cannot be understood without considering African Traditional Religion, including the Swazi African religious orientation, as a foundation for the gospel. This debate should aim to uncover the reasons why it is regarded as a receptive vessel for the Christian faith. It is important to verify and validate whether Swazi African Traditional Religion, like any other primal religion, provides a fertile ground and receptive vessel that awaited fulfillment by Christianity. Additionally, lobby the public to take these traditions seriously in their own right, recognizing the wealth of valuable information they possess that can enrich and benefit the Christian faith and African Christianity. These traditions have been laid on a religious and cultural foundation that offers insights to utilise and build upon.

6.4.1.8 Ensure the establishment of a religious parliament and religious council, in collaboration with the government, to strengthen the connections and relationships between Swazi African Traditional Religion, the Christian faith, and African Christianity. These bodies should engage in robust discussions and make decisions that can be translated into policy formulations and legislation. This support for SATR as a purported minor religion within the religious sector will contribute to nation-building, unity, and the social, religious, cultural, and spiritual cohesion of adherents, practitioners, and fellow citizens at the district, provincial, national, and continental levels.

6.4.1.9 Create an Interfaith forum that includes all the participants interviewed from the sampled fourteen traditional councils, as well as their traditional leaders who serve as chairpersons of their councils. Members of the councils, including headmen, headwomen, religious leaders, elderly individuals, chiefs, and diviners or traditional healers, should also be part of the forum. This forum should foster a strong sense of identity among the group and their respective communities.

6.4.1.10 Encourage debates among black Christians regarding the inculturation of African Traditional Religion into Christianity. It is important for them to recognise that not all black individuals are Christians and that these non-Christian perspectives should be heard and respected. Everyone has the right to hold their own beliefs.

6.4.1.11 Conduct research to establish criteria that would enable Swazi African Traditional Religion and other primal religions to be classified as religious systems. This recognition would allow for their study at lower levels, including within the life skills curriculum.

6.4.1.12 Empower the Interfaith forum to promote civic education and encourage the open declaration and promotion of their respective religious faiths. For example, SATR should feel comfortable promoting its communal way of life, community, cultural practices, and religious beliefs, which are guided by the Ubuntu/Buntfu philosophy.

6.4.1.13 Foster inter-church dialogue, mutual exchange of ideas, and a spirit of tolerance among all Swazi church leaders.

6.4.2 To the Government of Ehlanzeni District House of Traditional Leaders:

6.4.2.1 Engage in discussions with the FBOs and traditional councils, as the government has a constitutional and community role to play in ensuring community participation, fostering unity and tolerance, and promoting and defending democratic principles and moral values in the governance of society.

6.4.2.2 Facilitate conversations or dialogues on religious and cultural democracy, similar to practices in neighboring states and across Africa. These dialogues should involve the collaboration between churches and the government to address the challenges facing the country. Together, they can chart a religio-political way forward and promote respect and value for African Indigenous religion, culture, and tradition. It is crucial to guarantee freedom of thought and action, as well as uphold the principle of pluralism, for the government to be truly non-racial and democratic.

6.4.2.3 Coordinate and host a religio-cultural dialogue where the topics of discontinuities, continuities, and similarities in Swazi African Traditional Religion, the Christian faith, and government can be discussed. This dialogue aims to find common ground and develop a clearer understanding of these and other issues so that the two religious systems, SATR

and Christianity, as well as the government, can work together effectively as intended by the Creator.

6.4.2.4 Benchmark SATR's traditional practices and cultural beliefs, ceremonies, and festivals that are compatible with the Christian faith. Implement those aspects that contribute to the building and unification of the South African Swazi nation, as well as fostering unity among fellow South Africans and on the continent, particularly within the Kingdom of Eswatini.

6.4.3 To the Traditional Councils and Chiefdoms:

6.4.3.1 Establish bilateral relationships with faith-based organisations, interfaith groups, and cultural organisations in the Kingdom of Eswatini. The aim is to benchmark and exchange knowledge and information for the promotion of Swazi religion, beliefs, practices, traditions, and cultures, including the Siswati language.

6.4.3.2 Revive the sacred heritage of the Swazi people in South Africa by identifying, establishing, preserving, developing, and promoting their heritage sites. This should be done in consultation with the elderly, who are the religious leaders, chiefs, traditional healers, diviners, and families of deceased leaders.

6.4.3.3 Preserve, develop, and promote the Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) of Emaswati in South Africa to rediscover Swazi African Traditional Heritage. Additionally, establish a center for Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) for the benefit of schools, churches, and the general public.

6.4.3.4 Educate and promote the African Calendar for the revival of various activities, ceremonies, festivals, prayer events, and the awareness of different seasons by Swazi African Traditional Religion. The African Calendar, governed by solar, lunar, and cosmic calendars, is not merely about measuring time but also regulates spiritual, cultural, and agricultural festivals.

6.4.4 Swazi African Agricultural Festival:

6.4.4.1 Establish, launch, and annually celebrate the First Fruits Festival, which should take place in December and January according to the African calendar. During this festival, traditional leaders, religious leaders, council members, and community members gather

collectively to celebrate life and give thanks to the Supernatural Being (Simakadze) for the season. They also collectively offer their first fruits to the religious and traditional leadership of the fourteen sampled traditional councils. These offerings are intended to serve the needy, poor, disadvantaged, and marginalized, demonstrating their compassion and care for their subjects. Alternatively, the first fruits can be sold to the public, and the proceeds are cooperatively divided among the needy and poor. This initiative aims to revive the values of Ubuntu/Buntfu, which include compassion, caring, cooperation, love, and giving—values that both SATR and Christianity uphold.

6.4.4.2 Establish, launch, and seasonally celebrate the Ploughing Festival, which should take place between September and December according to the African calendar. During this festival, traditional leaders, religious leaders, traditional councillors, and community members come together to respond to the Lord God's mandate for humans to work the soil and take care of it as custodians and stewards. They give thanks to the Creator, God, Mvelinchanti, for the season of preparation as they cultivate the ground and ensure its fertility. By the time they sow the seeds, the soil is ready to receive them, fostering speedy germination in the month of November.

6.4.4.3 Establish, launch, and seasonally celebrate the Seed Planting Festival, which should take place between September and October according to the African calendar. This festival aims to germinate fresh, nutritious, and healthy produce. Traditional leaders, religious leaders, traditional councillors, and community members gather to plead with God, through their ancestors as mediators, for a successful sowing and abundant crop harvesting. They offer African prayers to God, seeking His blessings. In faith, they look forward to the good news of seed germination and an abundant harvest. Any leftover seeds are then distributed among the disadvantaged, allowing them to grow crops that can alleviate poverty while waiting for the communal harvest.

6.4.4.4 Establish, launch, and annually celebrate the Harvest Thanksgiving Festival, which takes place between January and April according to the African calendar. This festival is a time of joy where all stakeholders pause and reflect on the first fruits of their collective community work. Traditional leaders, religious leaders, council members, and community members gather to harvest communally. After setting aside one-tenth (10%) of the harvested crop, such as mealie-meal, the remainder is distributed among those who are

disadvantaged in life. The 10% allocation also serves as a safety net for those who may experience food shortages due to unforeseen circumstances.

6.4.5 Swazi African Cultural Festival:

6.4.5.1 Establish, launch, and annually celebrate the Swazi African Cultural Festival to observe the numerous ceremonies and celebrations of the Kingdom of Eswatini. Unlike in South Africa, where only Imimemo is observed, the fourteen sampled chiefdoms or traditional councils of Ehlanzeni District in Mpumalanga actively participate in cultural thanksgiving ceremonies. Through these recommended activities and ceremonies, the Emaswati of South Africa, especially the youth, can benefit educationally, socially, and economically by immersing themselves in their cultural heritage.

6.4.5.2 Annually honor deserving traditional leaders who have excelled in their role as custodians of their religion, culture, traditions, practices, as well as performing rituals and rites that contribute to the development of their chiefdoms, traditional leaders, and the Swazi people of Mpumalanga Province and South Africa.

6.4.5.3 Coordinate and promote a communal way of life in line with the philosophy of Ubuntu/Buntfu. This aims to foster pride in the Swazi people's cultural roots and heritage as a foundation for personal growth.

6.4.5.4 Promote cultural dances such as Tingabisa, Lutsango, and Emabutfo to preserve Swazi music and dance traditions. These dances serve as invocations to the ancestors, recognizing their presence in families, clans, communities, and the nation at all times.

6.4.5.5 Promote Umbutfo, a group of men dressed in colorful Swazi attire, as they sing and perform traditional songs to express gratitude to their ancestors (Labalele / Labaphansi) and God (Mvelinchanti).

6.4.5.6 Promote Lutsango and preserve the colorful Swazi attire of women as they celebrate through singing and performing their dance moves.

6.4.5.7 Promote Timbali or Tingabisa and preserve the colorful Swazi attire of the youth as they perform their dances and celebrate the occasion.

6.4.5.8 Promote Sibhaca dance, performed by a group of young men wearing emabhebha, which are made of skins. They adorn themselves with colourful attire such as emahiya around their waists, a colourful sash (mhizo) across the shoulders and chest, as well as beads (buhlalu) across the shoulders and chest. They also wear skin bangles around their ankles and beads around their necks as they celebrate the blessings bestowed upon them by their ancestors.

6.4.6 Swazi African Spiritual Festival:

6.4.6.1 Convene the African Spiritual Festival to celebrate the spiritual connectivity that exists between the living and the dead. Through music, worship, and dance, this festival showcases the belief that the deceased are present in spirit. Adherents of the Christian faith are also welcome to participate and discover common primal human truths across communities, traditions, and religions. The festival aims to promote family and community values such as collectivism, unity, solidarity, tolerance, love, patience, forgiveness, and reconciliation for harmonious coexistence.

6.4.6.2 Coordinate the formal activities of the Good Friday ceremony with the chiefdoms, beginning on Friday and ending on Monday. On Friday, Christians participate in a worship service with the Traditional Leaders and their traditional councils at one of the royal residences. During this ceremony, the political, religious, and traditional or cultural leadership address all the Zionist congregations, with Zionists music entertaining the assembly of Zionists Christians and African Traditional Religions adherents and practitioners. The music instruments clearly demonstrate the shared aspects of SATR and Christianity.

6.4.6.3 Convene a meeting where church leaders representing different denominations, predominantly Zionists pastors and bishops, pay a courtesy call to the Traditional Leaders. This day is dedicated to a colloquium addressing administrative, moral, or doctrinal issues affecting the smooth operation of Indigenous Churches, particularly Swazi adherents, the Christian church, and interfaith practices in general. The Traditional Religious Leaders and Diviners often make recommendations to the government based on the issues discussed.

6.4.6.4 Celebrate Easter Sunday as the main day of the Good Friday ceremony, where Christians from all churches, mosques, temples, and synagogues gather at a local stadium for worship. The multitude of Zionist Christians is joined by several church leaders

belonging to Mission Churches, who are given the opportunity to preach to the gathering. The final address, following several sermons primarily by Zionist clergy, is delivered by one of the Traditional Leaders. The following day, on Monday, the Zionist clergy and Mission Christians hold a brief prayer session with the traditional and political leadership.

6.4.6.5 Commemorate and promote tolerance of diversity between the church and the community, religious, cultural, and spiritual practices, traditional customs, and the royalty, SATR and the Christian faith, culture in Christianity, African Christianity and African Independent Churches, as well as political parties and civic structures in Mpumalanga, South Africa, and the continent.

6.4.7 The Ehlanzeni Swazi Community Forum:

6.4.7.1 Establish, constitute, and launch the Ehlanzeni Swazi Community Forum, bringing together Traditional, Religious, and Cultural activists from both the Kingdom of Eswatini and the Republic of South Africa, particularly from the Ehlanzeni District House of Traditional Leaders (EDHTL), the Mpumalanga Religious Sector, Interfaith Forum, Inter-Denominational Forum, Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs), Ecumenical Bodies and Interfaith Initiative, and the African Independent Churches (AICs), including the Zionists Churches from the fourteen sampled Traditional Councils of EDHTL. The aim is to facilitate the development of their adherents by benchmarking, sharing, exchanging information, and learning best practices and expertise from one another as we seek to reconnect with our roots as Emaswati.

6.4.7.2 Convene community dialogues to address the issue that, despite South Africa gaining independence, racism still persists, disguised in religious, political, cultural, and status-related attire. The struggle continues even after more than twenty-seven years of independence, freedom, and democracy, particularly for the African Traditional people who are still oppressed, especially those who pursue the missionary agenda, perpetuating the manipulation and victimisation of black people.

7. Conclusion: Whilst work has been done on African Traditional Religion, this research focused on the Swazi people of South Africa as an original work. The researcher has explored the points of convergence between both religions to merge ideas and understanding of SATR and Christianity, and make recommendations to Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) such as Mpumalanga interfaith action for societal renewal (Mifafors)

and Government: Ehlanzeni District House of Traditional Leaders (EDHTL), along with its sampled fourteen Traditional Councils. The research study calls for dialogue between Christianity and SATR in order to learn from each other and observe how SATR has actually made and continues to make impactful contributions to Christian beliefs and teachings as a receptive vessel for the preparation for the Christian faith in South Africa.

The researcher maintains that the understanding of a vessel in both African and Western concepts is that in African concept, ATR is entrenched in the various creation myths and serves as a receptacle which contains, places and stores creations, origin of things, and history of the people in particular, the traditional African people inclusive of the Swazi African people of South Africa, whereas in the Western concept it gives an understanding that ATR as a vessel or tool has been used to convert its adherents to be members of the Christian faith. May these learnings and discoveries ignite a greater desire to deepen the African contribution to Christianity, not only for African Christians but for Christianity world-wide.

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APPENDIX 1

QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

(Additional unstructured questions may be added during or after conducting participant observations and reviewing documents provided by persons, structures or communities being interviewed)

4.2.1 Who are you, which Council do you come from, and how would you describe yourself and the role you play in the Council?

4.2.2 Can Swazi African Traditional Religion and Culture best work separately or together and play a role in shaping the Swazi people of South Africa and society in general?

4.2.3 Did the Swazi people believe in God or the Ancestors before and after the arrival of the missionaries in Africa and what was God called?

4.2.4 How can African Religion contribute to the building and promotion of nationhood, national unity, and social cohesion in South Africa and the continent?

4.2.5 Was African Religion regarded a preparation for the Christian faith?

4.2.6 Did Swazi African Traditional Religion has its original beliefs and practices changed, remained the same, or enhanced over the years?

4.2.7 Is there such thing as creation myth in African Traditional Religion and what is your understanding about it?

4.2.8 What is the meaning and significance of beliefs and practices such as ancestors, family, clan, home, kraal, community, and rituals as they are practiced by the African Traditional Religion of the Swazi people of South Africa?

4.2.9 What do you understand about the meaning and significance of ceremonies such as Lusekwane, Mhlanga, Incwala, and Ummemo as practiced by the African Traditional Religion of the Swazi people of South Africa?

4.2.10 How would you respond to the notion that the African society had their operative calendar which formed part of their religion and played a role in their daily lives?

4.2.11 What do you understand about the following practices in Swazi African Traditional Religion: the Rituals; ritual of appeasement, kinship ritual, societal ritual; the Sacred texts; the Special day of Worship; the Moral Order; Life after death; rites of passage, birth, initiation marriage, death, burial, bereavement, and thanksgiving.

4.2.12 What does it mean to be a believer in secular South Africa today?

4.2.13 Was Swazi African Traditional Religion disfavoured or approved by God and how does SATR believe in the existence of the Supernatural Power that created the universe, and how does the Supernatural Power look like?

4.2.14 Do African Religion and the Christian Faith have a meeting point, and why Christians in particular would profess publicly being children of God having been saved by the blood of Jesus Christ, and yet consulting with the diviners in secret when everybody is asleep or indoors in protection of their dignity and positions they have and occupy in Church and society and what do you think can be done for religions, major or minor, to embrace one another in order to make a meaningful contribution to the lives of those, including their practitioners and activists who still yearn for a better life that is yet to come over twenty-six (26) years into freedom and democracy?

APPENDIX 2

QUANTITATIVE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

(Additional unstructured questions may be added during or after conducting participant observations and reviewing documents provided by persons, structures or communities being interviewed)

1. Where are you from and how would you describe yourself and the role you play in the Council; how many Councils are identified to be interviewed; and how many representatives or respondents are earmarked for interviews per Council?

2. How many South Africans according to Statistics South Africa: Community Survey (2016) identify themselves as Christians, and adherents of the African Traditional Religion inclusive of the Swazi religious orientation and what contribution can African Traditional Religion and Culture make as an offer to the life and work of the Church in the present-day context?

3. What do we say about Christian religion and the African Traditional Religion? Does being an African and being a Christian necessitate turning away from indigenous traditions and institutions?

4. What about is the European Christianity? What is the role of African Christianity, European Christianity alongside other Christianities in reconstructing South Africa?

5. Does such a person, who is regarded as an absolutely new creature in Christian terms, retain the old identity and acquire a completely new one, or synthesise a mixture of both?

6. What is the relationship between Christianity and African culture? Can they be separated? If so, are all traditions to be rejected wholesale?

7. How would you respond to the notion that the African Calendar formed part of the religion of the people, the African Traditional Religion, prior, during and after the arrival of missionaries as it played a role in the daily lives of the African people?

8. What does it mean to be a believer in secular South Africa today where there is religious freedom and equality, yet some religions are not yet free because of their minority, unknown, not acknowledged, not tolerated and disrespected?

9. What have we learned from each chapter and how did the chapter add value to the research and its findings?
10. Why are Christians in particular would profess publicly being children of God having been saved by the blood of the lamb, Jesus Christ, and yet consulting with the diviners in secret when everybody is asleep or indoors in protection of their dignity and positions, they have and occupy in Church and society?
11. What do you think can be done for religions, major or minor, to embrace one another in order to make a meaningful contribution to the lives of those, including their practitioners and activists who still yearn for a better life that is yet to come over twenty-six years into freedom and democracy?
12. What do you think the African Traditional Religion can contribute to the life and work of the Church of Jesus Christ who came not to destroy people's culture but to fulfil it?
13. Does African Traditional Religion believe in the existence of the Supernatural Power which created life and the earth, and who is this Supernatural Power?
14. What is your understanding about the African traditional religious leaders and what their roles are according to African Traditional Religion?

APPENDIX 3

TRANSCRIPT

4.2.1 Who are you, which Council do you come from and how would you describe yourself and the role you play in the Council? (R1 - 14): **R1** said, " I am from the Mbuyane Traditional Council. I am a religious and cultural man who is a custodian of the Swazi culture and traditions. I belong to a group of men called *emabutfo* which protect the chieftdom and its community; a headman (*indvuna*) serving the people of the chieftdom and responsible for the welfare of the council." **R2** said, " I am from Mpakeni Traditional Council. I am a Christian by religion and a cultural and spiritual person who is a headman (*indvuna*). My responsibility in my community is that of being a custodian of the Swazi culture and traditions and teaching our young boys on what they should expect when they reached the stage of adolescence or puberty." **R3** said, "I am from LoMshiyo Traditional Council, a custodian of the Swazi traditions, customs, religion and culture. I am a headwoman (*indvuna*) responsible for the welfare of my fellow human beings in this chieftdom and I play a role of being a unifier for unity and harmony to prevail." **R4** said, "I am from Gutshwa Traditional Council who is a religious and cultural person. As a responsible headwoman (*indvuna*), I strongly believe in the ancestors, as they mediate between the living and the dead. I am responsible for the day to day running of the council as a deputy to the chairperson, the head of council." **R5** said, "I am from Msogwaba Traditional Council. I am a member of the council who is religious and cultural person responsible for ensuring that the culture, religion, principles and values of the chieftdom are preserved. I am responsible for harmony and unity so that the Ancestors are not offended." **R6** said, "I am from Mdluli Traditional Council. I am a loyal, respectful and patriotic member who is responsible for the administrative work of the council serving all the subjects of the chieftdom, and its leadership." **R7** said, " I am from Emjindini Traditional Council. Whatever people may say about the separation of African religion and culture, I have decided not to shift from where I stand, because I have a strong conviction that even if they can be separated by whosoever, the separation will remain ineffective because none of the two aspects were meant to function independent of each other; so count me out of the idea of separation, it does not convince me." **R8** said, " I am from Mlambo Traditional Council who is spiritual and cultural because he never chose to be religious but made to be spiritual, as God infused His spirit in him as well as in other creation and made them to be spiritual beings. I play a role to inform and promote that SATR is spiritual for his Ancestors and God are spiritual, so, as an African

he was born into this spirituality”. **R9** said, “I am from Siboshwa Traditional Council. I am a religious and cultural person who follows what my clan Ancestors and God taught us about life in order not to offend and put them into disrepute and bring curses not only to myself but upon the chieftdom. My role is to keep harmony and unity, respect and dignity of all the subjects of the chieftdom as our culture and religion demands. I just don’t care about fellow believers who totally refute that, a person cannot attain salvation here and now and live a life of purity and holiness for salvation is beyond the grave, what I care about is that there is salvation here and now.” **R10** said,” I am from Hhoyi Traditional Council where I serve with other members of the council. I am a senior advisor to in the chieftdom. My role is to promote cultural heritage of the Swazi people of South Africa that, as adherents of SATR, we have no choice over our culture, our religion of birth and spirituality as we are born into them whereas with Christianity, people choose to belong or not; it becomes their choice since it is regarded as a foreign religion that was brought by Europeans.” **R11** said, “I am from Mhlaba Traditional Council. In our Swazi African society, there are no orphans as taught by our religion, traditions and culture. Our religion and culture teach us that we are all from the family of God, and God gives us guidance on how to navigate in life without offending any of our fellow human beings and our environment, so that harmony, respect, love, unity etc. are achieved even by those who may regard themselves orphans because their biological parents are no more, but should know even at that, that He who has created us all ,*Mvelinchanti*,in His likeness expects us all to love Him accordingly; and we can only know how to love Him as we practice our religion and culture which taught us how to love Him as our Creator and how to love our neighbours as our fellow beings.”. **R12** said, “I am fromMawewe Traditional Council. My role is to ensure that traditional activities and ceremonies in consultation with the headwoman are done according to our culture, practices, and beliefs guided by the traditional calendar of the chieftdom so that our ancestors and God are not offended.” **R13** from Luggedlane Traditional Council, said,” I am from Luggedlane Traditional Council. I am a religious and cultural person whopromotes and preserves the connections SATR has with the Christian Faith enabled SATR to draw attention that was unlikely in Christianity, as in SATR there is no line of demarcation between believers and non-believers since both are regarded as spirit beings and such a distinction is inconceivable. And **R14** said, “I am from Matsamo Traditional Council. I am a religious and spiritual person. People can call me names, a heathen, a pagan or an uncivilised person who is caught up by superstitious and primitive practices because I am an exclusive adherent of the SATR who attempts to stay true to my roots, and do not

depend on someone else to define me and my destiny because where I am, is where my God, my Creator and my Ancestors had placed me to be, and its where they expect me not to offend them and other people, but to do what my forebears and parents orally handed down to my family to always remember the old adage that says ‘ I am because you are, and since you are, therefore I am’ (*umuntfu ungumuntfu ngalabanye bantfu*) which means a person realises his or her Ubuntu/buntfu by listening to and taking advice and criticism from other human beings, which assists in grounding, rooting and deepening my belief in this religion I was born into.”

4.2.2 Can Swazi African Traditional Religion and Culture best work separated or together and playing a role of shaping the Swazi people of South Africa and the society in general? (R1 - 14):

R1 from Mbuyane Traditional Council said, “I am a cultural person. Culture can best work together because culture shapes religion and religion gives guidance on how to live harmoniously with other people and what should be done to maintain co-existence with them for the building of *Emaswati* ethnic group as well as the South African nation and that of our continent, Africa since these are naturally meant to be and work together as they are inseparable.” **R2** from Mpakeni Traditional Council said, “As respondents we indicated that religion and culture of the Swazi people of South Africa cannot be separated since both are inextricably linked together from creation. We indicated the role Swazi African Traditional Religion and Culture play in shaping *Emaswati* of South Africa and society in general.” **R3** from LoMshiyi Traditional Council said ““Religion and Culture of the Swazi people ensure that customs and traditions are practiced so that the ethnicity and identity of the Swazi people is preserved and promoted so that *Emaswati* may cometo recognise and acknowledge the importance of customs, traditions and heritage, and are encouraged to stay together as in the days of our forebears who now serve between the living and the dead as they have attained the status of being Ancestors.” **R4** from Gutshwa Traditional Council said, “I hold a different view that culture and religion can be separated since culture has to do with man and religion with God, meaning that culture is unholy and sinful whereas religion is holy and acceptable way of life and how then could they not be separated as one is evil and the other is good ,but that God established these two aspects - religion and culture, it shows that He had a purpose for these aspects to be established and to work together to bring the completion of His revelation and therefore concluded that without the other there won't be culture or religion.” **R5** from Msogwaba Traditional Council said, “SATR and Culture contributed immensely to the attainment of

freedom and democracy in their country of birth by negating and resisting missionaries and colonisers who were hell-bent to put their religion and culture to extinct by pushing the narrative, Africa for Africans, as people of the land and thus strengthening its survival as religious and cultural vessel that God had established for the land, Africa.” **R6** from Mdluli Traditional Council said, “The adherents and practitioners of Swazi African Traditional Religion and Culture are custodians of these elements or aspects, playing a role of inculcating and infusing good morals and positive values in the living so that the ethnicity of the Swazi people is shaped and founded upon sound values which enable their spiritual, religious and cultural lives to be entrenched in knowing, acknowledging and recognising the Supernatural God, *Mvelinchanti*, who is the source of respect, faithfulness, responsibility, honesty and caring life.” **R7** from Emjindini Traditional Council said, “Whatever people may say about the separation of African religion and culture, I have decided not to shift from where I stand, because I have a strong conviction that even if they can be separated by whosoever; the separation will remain ineffective because none of the two aspects were meant to function independent of each other, so count me out of the idea of separation, it does not convince me, Swazi African Traditional Religion and Culture played a role to urge the use of African culture for Jesus Christ and never, no matter what, should abandon it in shaping the Swazi people and society in general.” **R8** from Mlambo Traditional Council said, “As a staunch Christian and a proud adherent of SATR and its culture, I do not subscribe to social ills such as selfishness, laziness, hatred and jealousy, greed and all forms of crime, corruption and violence because both my religions forbid me from doing evil because none of my religions were founded outside the holy God who is alien to evil and it is His will to eradicate all that is evil and not good so that in the end we inherit the good and everlasting promises of the Gospel..” **R9** from Siboshwa Traditional Council said, “I can confirm that our culture and religion as Swazi people are interwoven together such that as we practice culture, we are indeed practicing our religion as these aspects cannot be separated and our culture sustains, explains, articulates, communicates and celebrates our religion, as our forebears encouraged generations over time for best results ever.” **R10** from Hhoyi Traditional Council said “Those who sponsor this view that culture is unholy and sinful whilst religion is holy and acceptable way of life are driven by the conviction that whilst one of the aspects was evil, the other was good. They were forgetting that the two aspects, religion and culture, were established by God in constituting the religion of the land with a purpose of making them work together to bring His revelation to completion. They did not understand that one without the other would not be complete.” **R11** from Mhlaba

Traditional Council said, “Swazi African Traditional Religion and Culture play a role of transmitting values such as equality, human dignity, respect etc. which values are so important and special in shaping the Swazi people and the society in general to know that they are human beings and that they are equal before the law and God (*Mvelinchanti*) and also that they were created with respect and dignity which is shaped by their religion and culture.” **R12** from Mawewe Traditional Council said, “The proponents were probably misled by the trading and colonising missionaries who came to the land with a different agenda. They were blinded by the missionaries’ ignorance and arrogance such that they could not see, know and understand that religion and culture in African tradition was one thing which was established to promote harmony, unity, compassion and kindness to their fellow human beings and humankind at large.” **R13** from Lugedlane Traditional Council said, “Religion and Culture as aspects of my Swazi Traditional Religion stay with me even when I practice my second religion, Christianity because my traditional thought is still the source of my basic world-view. There is no religion without culture as culture shapes my religion.” **R14** from Matsamo Traditional Council said, “We the growing Christian population are not exempt from such influences as our Christian religion faces our forebears religion, Swazi African Traditional Religion, as never before, giving some justification why we African Christians today must renew our attention to SATR” (See Appendix 3)

4.2.3 Did the Swazi people believe in God or the Ancestors before and after the arrival of the missionaries in Africa and what was God called? (R1 - 14): **R1** from Mbuyane Traditional Council said, “The Swazi people, since time immemorial knew that there was God though they did not know how He looked like but they knew Him as a Supreme Being called *Mvelinchanti* or *Nkulunkulu*, who has created everything and ever since, He was worshipped by generations after generations and that their Ancestors were mediators who were venerated by their families, clans and communities.” **R2** from Mpakeni Traditional Council said, “All African tribes have their primal religion and our SATR teaches that even our foreparents certainly believed in the living God and worshipped Him alone and they referred to Him as *Mvelinchanti*, meaning, He who came first or was in existence long before there was anything else as He created everything out of nothing (*ex nihilo*). The Swazi people (*Emaswati*) did not worship the Ancestors but venerated them, that is, remembering them in a deep sense as they continued to form part of their lives.” **R3** from LoMshiyo Traditional Council said, “The Swazi people believed in God the Creator of the universe long before and after the missionaries had arrived in Africa and they called Him

Simakadze. They went to Him through their Ancestors, whom as Swazi people believed to be His servants; and the Europeans who came to Africa claimed that it is only themselves who understood God hence they put words in the African mouth that Africans worship their Ancestors whereas not. They taught the proselytes of the land their western culture claiming it to be Christian religion.” **R4** from Gutshwa Traditional Council said, “The God that is worshiped by us Swazi Africans as the Creator of everything, does not stay far away and aloof of His people as He is involved in our daily affairs for He is a compassionate God who struggles with His people and protects them from deceitful people who pretend to do and mean good to us as African people whereas not; and such is a European God; for our African God lives with us in our villages and in the slums, and that our God is a giver and sustainer of life, as no other God has this capacity but Him alone; and that our God in whom we believe, looks after us always as He neither slumbers nor sleeps but keeps on watching over us as His beloved creatures.” **R5** from Msogwaba Traditional Council said, “The Africans believed in the God whose ear was not blocked to hear when they communicated with Him always, especially in times of drought, famine, pestilences; and when asked to intervene He never refused but always able to respond by rain, plenty harvest and holistic healing each time when there were pestilences and sicknesses; the God who liberates holistically: socially, spiritually, religiously etc. because when He created humanity He ensured that humanity was free from evil forces that do not contribute to His attributes as the only Creator of all the nations of the world including the Swazi people of South Africa.” **R6** from Mdluli Traditional Council said, “It’s absolutely not okay to refer to our Ancestors as demons and we as Africans would say nothing in defence of our belief and rather disown it or join in their condemnation of our sacred belief and not correcting the shame we are told about. We need to inform those who maintain this embarrassment for the so called demons are our flesh and blood, the first generation community which was given all the laws and ordinances in order to live in harmony with the Creator, with other human beings and nature. Every ethnic group has its Ancestors, those who make up family tree-the living dead or those saints as Christianity calls them, who intercedes for the living, the intermediaries as called by our Swazi African Traditional Religion.” **R7** from Emjindini Traditional Council said, “African societies including us the Swazi people of South Africa, had and still have the notion about a Supreme Being who is responsible for our existence, workings and continuation as creation; no matter the different names they call Him; from creation, He, as the Creator instilled in them knowledge and wisdom to somehow know about Him and what He expects of them as they believe in Him and worship Him constantly

and continuously empowering ourselves with the discernment of His presence in, around and amongst us as His people.” **R8** from Mlambo Traditional Council said, “God is also known to them as *Mlentengamunye*, meaning one-legged being and this displays His uniqueness as a Supreme Being who, though, He created them; they cannot be exact like Him, which view is unchristian as Christians maintain that human beings were created in God’s image (*imago dei*), implying that He created them to be like Him.” **R9** from Siboshwa Traditional Council said, “We cannot deny as adherents of different primal religions and ethnicities or tribes the notion or concept of God including the Christian Faith because it first had and continues to have its European ethnicities which on arrival in Africa were joined by African Christians who were grounded or born into their primal religion which in our case is SATR.” **R10** from Hhoyi Traditional Council said, “Swazi African people remain loyal in believing and in worshipping God. We only venerate our Ancestors, remembering them deeply as those who are part of us, our lineage. Though we remember them on daily basis, our loyalty to them as physically deceased relatives but spiritually alive, cannot be equated to the loyalty we have to God; the loyalty we pledge aren’t the same as the two are neither in competition nor in conflict with each other.” **R11** from Mhlaba Traditional Council stated that, “Although we, the Swazi people and our forebears, didn’t know how *Mvelinchanti* looked like and how He created the universe; but certainly and firmly believe that whatever we see or don’t see its existence come from and is sustained by *Mvelinchanti*, *Mlentengamunye*, *Nkulunkulu*, *Lomdzala Wetinsuku* meaning God, the Supernatural or the Supreme Being and the Ancient of times.” **R12** from Mawewe Traditional Council said, “The European teachings confused our forebears as much as ourselves African believers because in most instances they threaten, judge and condemn us because of our pigmentation and called them heathens because as Africans, they refused to worship the God of the West which is why the missionaries lied to say that Africans worshipped and served their Ancestors as their gods, ensuring what was African in particular black was not a success story.” **R13** from Luggedlane Traditional Council said, “The head of the Christian faith is God in whom we as Swazi African Traditional Religion adherents believe in Him and regard Him as our Father and we go to Him through our Ancestors and good spirits. Christians go to Him through the Son, Jesus Christ and the angels. The Holy Spirit as part of the Trinity is transversal, also an enabler who quickens the dead, Ancestors, spirits of benevolence and angels work for God who is the one whom all His creatures worship and believe in. There is no tribe or religion with its God alone hence as SATR adherents we know that God is our meeting place as different ethnicities and religions.” **R14** from

Matsamo Traditional Council said, “They deceived Africans about their Western God whom they were not sure about themselves. As Africans, we believe in one God of this universe who is full of love and care; who cannot allow other human beings to inflict pain and cause unnecessary sufferings to other human beings especially because they have a different skin colour, which to them as Europeans meant that the resources which God had given to Africans were wrongfully allocated and neither did not belong to them nor deserve them hence they took them for themselves.”

4.2.4 How can African Religion contribute to the building and promotion of nationhood, national unity and social cohesion in South Africa and the continent?

(R1-14): R1 from Mbuyane Traditional Council maintained that, “The religious and cultural orientation of the Swazi people builds relationships of trust and solidarity between adherents of SATR, Christian Faith and the African Christians of the AICs because of their beliefs about God proving wrong those who categorically maintained that we Swazi Africans from the South in particular South Africa have no concept whatsoever of God, no genuine faith and higher standard of culture before the arrival of the missionaries in our continent which is a blue lie.” **R2** from Mpakeni Traditional Council said, “The religious and cultural orientation of the Swazi people clearly have shown the cultural level a little careful observation that Africans, prior to the coming of the missionaries, did have an organised society, their own industries which provided tools for farming and hunting, utensils for cooking and clothes to cover themselves which contributed to the building and promotion of nationhood, national unity and social cohesion of the Swazi nation.” **R3** from LoMshiyio Traditional Council said, “The religious and cultural orientation of the Swazi people is a nation builder of the South African Swazi people and the continent especially as adherents of the Swazi African Traditional Religion, the converted African Christians - the traditional Africans who remained with the Christian Faith as well as African Christians who went away to establish the African Independent Churches but all of these Africans remained in a relationship with one another regardless of their affiliation.” **R4** from Gutshwa Traditional Council said, “The religious and cultural orientation of the Swazi people builds social cohesion between the Swazi nation of South Africa and other South African nationalities because our beliefs and practices are one and therefore had to rally around these basics to unite as a Swazi nation which acknowledged that they are under one God, the Supreme Being and this therefore ensure the relationship that exists between the adherents of the Swazi African Traditional Religion, the African Christians who are known as converts and

their culture which is the basis of their being.” **R5** from Msogwaba Traditional Council said, “The religious and cultural orientation of the Swazi people contributes to the building and promotion of nationhood or the nationality of the Swazi people of South Africa to be patriotic which in turn benefit them as they become a religious nation that loves God first, then themselves and others (community and nation), believing in the Creator or Supernatural Power for its future generations; and benefit as they become a cultural nation that worships God and respects itself, lives with others peacefully, and practicing their traditional way of life for the future of its coming generations.” **R6** from Mdluli Traditional Council said, “Religion and culture as they provide building blocks for the reconstruction of nationhood, national unity and social cohesion actually promote religious persuasions from initiation or adolescence to adulthood. The outward markings by the physical changes of puberty is another stage at which a rite of passage whereby the community would prepare the adolescents-boys and girls socially, spiritually, psychologically and religiously for the next stage of growth in the life of the community – adulthood, which would be guided through a series of experiences contrived for that purpose, to learn the implication of puberty changes and this to the Swazi people, would not include the physical ordeal, circumcision.” **R7** from Emjindini Traditional Council said, “The religious and cultural orientation of the Swazi people contributes to the attainment of the national unity among believers who are the adherents of the Swazi African Traditional Religion, the African Christians of the Christian Faith and those of the African Independent Churches who are known as converts who are deeply religious which has been everywhere evident.” **R8** from Mlambo Traditional Council said, “My religion and culture is responsible for the delivery of nationhood, national unity and social cohesion promoting activities pregnant with religious persuasions such as birth of a child which is a great joy to the whole family and the whole clan as such brings them together, unify them as one strong family, clan and community as the child is born and raised in and by the community where he or she is taught, groomed and nurtured by the very same community “ **R9** from Siboshwa Traditional Council said, “The religious and cultural orientation of the Swazi people contributes to the friendship and tolerance among the Swazis and the people of the continent and the world in particular the adherents of the Swazi African Traditional Religion, the African Christians who are known as converts and the African Christians of the African Independent Churches.” **R10** from Hhoyi Traditional Council said, “Religion and culture promote all activities such as birth, polygamy, death, thanksgiving and rituals which are extraordinary practices performed by the living for the spiritual world for some special purposes such as thanksgiving, rites of

passage, appeasement, divination and special needs made sometimes on request by the Ancestors and home as a sacred place is where *Mvelinchanti* dwells, though He is everywhere ,and where rituals are often performed” **R11** from Mhlaba Traditional Council said, “Swazi African Traditional Religion and Culture promote activities such as polygamy which is culturally allowed as customs permit, especially if an earlier marriage did not produce children, or if the children born in an earlier marriage were only girls to take place.” **R12** from Mawewe Traditional Council said, “Some of us acknowledged that our Swazi religious and cultural orientation contributes to the functionality of our families with our families and our clans meanwhile others attributed the contribution to the functionality of their Swazi community and society by reinforcing their basic beliefs such as the existence of God, the Creator, the Supreme Being; Ancestors in that situation so that strong foundations and relationships between adherents of SATR ,the Christian Faith and the AICs of the African Christians are built. Their religious and cultural orientation contributes to harmonious living for the birth of a peaceful and cohesive nation that promote unity, co-existence and solidarity amongst its adherents and people of SATR, AICs, the Christian Faith and the lands.” **R13** from Lugedlane Traditional Council said, “Thanksgiving which can be clan based or societal done when an achievement has been made is considered to be a gift from the spiritual world which contributes to the building and promotion of nation, unity and social cohesion and therefore the Ancestors would have to be thanked as they form part of the family and clan as well as the community, they live in.” **R14** from Matsamo Traditional Council said, “In both Christianity and African Culture the death of individuals cause a great concern to the community in which they have been members and in which they have been living, believing that the deceased would continue to influence the lives of the living relatives to be peaceful and healthy relations with one another and themselves are encouraged.”

4.2.5 Was African Religion regarded a preparation for the Christian faith?

(R1-14): R1 from Mbuyane Traditional Council said, “The majority of the respondents with regard to this question shared the same views while others offered different views as to why Swazi African Traditional Religion was regarded as a receptive vessel for the preparation for the Christian Faith (*praeparatio evangelica*). The Christian Faith was embraced by millions of African Christians who contributed immensely to the life and work of the church. Since Swazi African Traditional Religion (SATR) has been regarded a preparation for

Christianity in the continent it helped grew it phenomenally because Christianity was directly and indirectly nurtured by SATR and thrived on SATRs basic beliefs, rituals and rites.” **R2** from Mpakeni Traditional Council said,” SATR nurtured Christianity and promoted the Christian Faith to be known since awareness was created for its members to know that they are embedded in SATR, and its culture which can be expressed in the new religion because SATR was initiated by God and its forebears were commissioned to take it further and make it part and parcel of its adherents. The relationship between culture, which is the way of life and leadership which is a way to lead in the light of the gospel both within and outside the Church can be offered by Swazi African Traditional Religion in a variety of issues such as hierarchy, respect, authority, human rights, role and dignity of women and children” **R3** from LoMshiyo Traditional Council said, “SATR offers its beliefs and practices as a result of the proposed dialogue related to Church life particularly practices such as prayers, ceremonies, rituals especially those connected with birth, death, adolescence, procreation and marriage needed to be embraced by Christian Faith so that people can feel that their faith has relevance and meaning to their lives; as well as offer beliefs and practices that relate to the concepts of God, spirits and ancestors, human life, death, and life hereafter as they are relevant to the Christian faith in the present-day context.” **R4** from Gutshwa Traditional Council said, “Swazi African Traditional Religion (SATR) is regarded as the vessel for the Christian Faith by many adherents more so because it based itself on the Old Testament teachings where the originality of things came from, which Christianity propagated them as the Christian Faith taught more about the issues that are rooted in Swazi African Traditional Religion. Swazi African Traditional Religion celebrates life through events of birth, giving names, initiation, marriage, at the start of the rain or harvest season with various religious activities; the Church as a matter of fact should also use some of the African cultural elements and creativity as an offer to its life and work,for example, contemporary areas of African the cultural expressions and activities such as modern literature, art, drama, music, dance, entertainment, press, radio, television, etc.” **R5** from Msogwaba Traditional Council said, “SATR as the only first religion in the continent,is the reason why it is referred to as a vessel for the production and construction of the Christian Faith from the west and its development to be the thriving force it has become though there is no divine form of Christianity which is hundred percent suitable for all people and at all times hence the offer by SATR for the Christian faith to learn from the religion of the land for her relevancy to its African Christians who have joined as adherents.” **R6** from Mdluli Traditional Council said, “Christians have always defined SATR and classified it under

culture, and not accepting it as a fully-fledged religion hence regarded by Christians as a preparation for their evangelisation or soul winning which is not acceptable to most of SATR adherents and practitioners as it suggests that the Christian religion can lobby SATRs adherents to move away from it as if SATR is a lesser religious system which is not an independent and matured religion just like Christianity” **R7** from Emjindini Traditional Council said, “Those who maintained a different view altogether about the notion that Swazi African Traditional Religion (SATR) as a vessel responsible to prepare for the Christian Faith because it suggested to them that Christianity is an extension of SATR hence a call to discourage the notion by suspending evangelisation but contributed the authentic religious practices and basic beliefs such as the rituals and rites of passage to the Christian Faith.” **R8** from Mlambo Traditional Council said, “Swazi African Traditional Religion offers Christian Faith so many beliefs and practices, community life, the philosophy of Ubuntu - collectivism as caring for one another, and doing things together and the relationship that already exist between Swazi African Traditional Religion and the Christian Faith as well as giving birth to African Christian teachings.” **R9** from Siboshwa Traditional Council said, “I maintain a different view than that of SATR being a vessel for the preparation for the Christian Faith to thrive upon simply because this view subjects SATR to be further redefined by black theologians who believe that their African roots could be used efficiently to convince Christians from the west that Christianity originated in Africa or that Africa had a great influence on Christianity.” **R10** from Hhoyi Traditional Council said, “SATR offers the Christian Faith teachings of cooperation, working together and living together simultaneously and harmoniously of the aspects of religion and culture as well as the two religious systems without developing love and emotional attachment to one especially the one in which adherents of SATR are born into as their forebears’ religion.” **R11** from Mhlaba Traditional Council said, “Swazi African Traditional Religion and Culture’s contribution to the Christian Faith is the belief that God is especially known as the Creator in most African traditional religion; their beliefs in creation are conveyed through myths handed down from generation to generation. African Christians should be familiar with these myths, since they are useful as a starting point for leading African traditionalists to biblical teaching about God.” **R12** from Mawewe Traditional Council said, “The majority of us, if not all of us members who remain in SATR or even crossed over to Christianity continue to consult from the Swazi African Traditional Religion (SATR) as it forms our being and our sharing our commonality aspects with Christianity affirms SATR as the only original source of the Christian Faith hence we refer to it as a vessel for the preparation for the Christian Faith; of

course allowing to offer elements that can be subjected to the pruning of those elements of SATR that may be demonic, and preserve those that are contributing to the building and enrichment of the Christian Faith.” **R13** from Lucedlane Traditional Council said, “SATR as a vessel for the preparation for the Christian Faith was confirmed by King Sobhuza’s dream or vision of a coin, whitemen and the Bible can be seen as a Christianised version of the Swazi Traditional Religion’s belief in the function of dreams as a vehicle of communication between the Ancestors and their living relative. King Mswati III also confirmed when he sponsored a Christianised version of Swazi indigenous beliefs when he reminded Christians that he was divinely appointed to serve as the headman, *Indvuna*, of the Swazi nation.” **R14** from Matsamo Traditional Council said, “Swazi African Traditional Religion (SATR) was regarded as a preparation for Christianity because it acted out its religious beliefs in public for all to know about this ancient religion and taught Christians how to live communally as people and the importance of sharing with others and not to promote individualism like the west because the west is governed by greed and selfishness.”

4.2.6 Did African Religion have its original beliefs and practices changed, remained the same, or enhanced over the years? (R1-14):

R1 from Mbuyane Traditional Council said, “Swazi African Traditional Religion’s original beliefs and practices have not changed that much from its original form but enhanced, modified, or developed by African scholars who gained the interest in the phenomenon under scrutiny and inquiry, Swazi African Traditional Religion, by stating that for African people religion is co-extensive with being human which follows a life-affirming, and life sustaining pattern.” **R2** from Mpakeni Traditional Council said, “The basic beliefs and practices have not changed at all, and when people are converted from African religion to another religion, they retain many of their former beliefs since it is hard to destroy beliefs.” **R3** from LoMshiyo Traditional Council said, “We African people have a set of beliefs and customs which are an essential part of our religion; though customs are not always religious, but many contain religious ideas and religion helps to strengthen and perpetuate some of the customs; and in turn the customs do the same to religion often go together.” **R4** from Gutshwa Traditional Council said, “Swazi African Traditional Religion has not changed but enhanced its principles in the past hundreds of years, as it has been greatly modified by the major world religions with which they have come into contact; and added that African Traditional Religious beliefs and practices throughout this continent have not changed but enhanced and developed in independent cultures which produced a somewhat different set of variations as suggested

by African scholars.” **R5** from Msogwaba Traditional Council said, “Swazi African Traditional Religion’s beliefs and practices’ characteristics such as unity in diversity like in any other human institutions which have been subject to distortion, decay and degeneration over the centuries. Swazi African Traditional Religion has been a product of creation myth being orally handed down from one generation to the other by the Supernatural Power.” **R6** from Mdluli Traditional Council said, “Some of our beliefs are like those in Christian religion and in other religions, though some are completely different. Beliefs have a lot of influence on people, but some beliefs can be and often are false; yet people stick to them firmly and act accordingly. Therefore, it feels good to understand our beliefs well because it is these beliefs which influence our behaviour” **R7** from Emjindini Traditional Council said, “Swazi African Traditional Religion has not changed but enhanced as it handed down basic beliefs such as the rituals, rites of passage, the religious leaders or chiefs and the elderly, diviners or traditional healers etc. orally from one generation to another by the Supernatural Power, God.” **R8** from Mlambo Traditional Council concurred and confirmed what others have stated already and said, “The beliefs and customs have been explained and given the meaning behind as they cover all areas of life and generally deal with religious ideas and customs which deal with what we normally approve of and do. In other words, our African beliefs are in fact our African religion, although religion is much more than its beliefs.” **R9** from Siboshwa Traditional Council said, “Most missionaries if not all of them have been manipulative of the African belief and practices to suite their own way of life because they knew that beliefs are very important and essential for every day and that by knowing or studying them they are able to understand not only the religion but its adherents as well.” **R10** from Hhoyi Traditional Council said, “They might have been distorted in the process of handing them down from generation to generation because they were sometimes with modifications and without beliefs and customs there is no religion and religion can inspire its adherents.” **R11** from Mhlaba Traditional Council said, “Having them been misunderstood as they were culturally and religiously persuaded by missionaries and took away its original meaning, for example, in religious beliefs there are beliefs in other areas of life like politics, economics, science, and so on where everyone holds certain beliefs, because we all need one or other kind of belief in our daily life.” **R12** from Mawewe Traditional Council said, “Swazi African Traditional Religion and its Creator, Ancestors or mediators and the ritual performances which are common and known to all believers of this indigenous religion of the Africans, since inception has remained the same despite the onslaught of colonialism which this religion had survived because it was established by God for a reason of letting

people know the rituals so that they are kept informed to be recognised, embraced and acknowledged by all” **R13** from Lucedlane Traditional Council said, “Practices have remained the same moreso because music helps to unite the singing, dancing group or music of the African nation which uses many various musical instruments such as the drum, flute, rattle, whistle and others; through these, many religious ideas are also retained and celebrated, indicating how powerful music and dance are in retaining and spreading religious ideas over wide areas and for a long period.” **R14** from Matsamo Traditional Council said, “Our African music and songs deal with religious ideas and practices and when they are performed, the religious rituals, ceremonies and festivals are always accompanied by music, as music gives outlet to the emotional expression of the religious life as well as a powerful means of communication in Swazi African traditional life.”

4.2.7 Is there such thing as Creation myth in African Traditional Religion and what is your understanding about it?(R1-14):

R1 from Mbuyane Traditional Council said, "I strongly believe that there is such thing called creation myth as this is one of the basic beliefs of the African Traditional Religion." **R2** from Mpakeni Traditional Council said, "In most ATRs, God is known as the Creator and the beliefs in creation are conveyed through myths handed down from generation to generation. Those of us who are African Christians are familiar with these myths, since they are useful as a starting point for leading those amongst us who are African traditionalists to Christian teaching about God." **R3** from LoMshiyo Traditional Council said, "As adherents of SATR, we are taught that these stories came from our forebears who handed them down from generation to generation which explain the reality of life, concepts and beliefs of the ATR as well as give explanation of nature events such as creations, origin of things, history of the ethnic group such as ours, Emaswati" **R4** from Gutshwa Traditional Council said, "The Creation myth is a story which is believed to be true and has its origin in the far distant past history of a people such as the Swazi African people we are." **R5** from Msogwaba Traditional Council said, "Myth is a wholeness attained to the world as a whole because those of us who live in myth and are guided by it are engaged on many different planes with the whole of which the myth is an integral part. By teaching us and by regulating the way of our living and by gradually disclosing many layers of its meaning, myth reveals the knowledge of the whole to us which is not theoretical, or merely a partial, intellectual knowledge, but it embraces the whole of life." **R6** from Mdluli Traditional Council said, "Myths are historical information transmitted orally to the people by processes peculiar to each community as these are man-made

stories that play explanatory roles in the African understanding of reality." **R7** from Emjindini Traditional Council said, "There are three kinds of stories that are contained by myth, and these are stories of origin, explanatory stories and teaching stories which each explain how things came to be through Supernatural being, God. It is not an intellectual explanation but living chronicles in our minds as Africans. Our history, culture and experience as Africans are contained and expressed in mystery." **R8** from Mlambo Traditional Council said, "Myths are part of a way of life that is sacred and have been divinely revealed to the first generation which is believed to have been directly created by the Supernatural Power which is God, the Creator. The first generation of Africans was created as communal people for there is this belief that God didn't create independent human beings but a community without any individual preferences because what is divinely created is equal in love." **R9** from Siboshwa Traditional Council said, "Indeed, stories are understood as one of the main sources for learning about traditional African religious belief and history. Myths tell us about our origin, migration, lineage and religion as a people and confirm that our ATR belief about God is that He exists and that He created the universe and man, and therefore Christianity must take into consideration this knowledge which we already have as African people **R10** from Hhoyi Traditional Council said, "The myth is a direct expression of reality and not a product of our imagination as human beings, for example, as human beings we want certainty that all questions are answered and it is through myths that we can be certain as myths enable us to answer the unanswered questions such as, is ATR a receptive vessel for the preparation for the Christian faith?." **R11** from Mhlaba Traditional Council said, "For us Christians, African traditional myths about creation need that we make corrections by biblical revelation, meaning that while the creation myths imply that the world was created out of pre-existing materials, Genesis 1:1 teaches that: 'In the beginning God (Elohim) created[by forming from nothing] the heavens and the earth-[ASB]." **R12** from Mawewe Traditional Council said, "Some African myths come from the desire of one ethnic group to assert their superiority over others, and this could be misleading, and they could leave many unanswered questions such as what has happened to the saying that divinely created is equal in love? So the truth is, we are all equal since God created us all divinely and in love." **R13** from Lugedlane Traditional Council said, "Myths are seen as vehicles conveying certain facts or truths about experiences of human beings in their encounter with the created order and its relations to the world. Myth tells of human experiences of the community as it exposes the fact that man's misfortunes on earth as well as his/her hardships are attributed to disobedience to the divine commands and moral codes of the

deities as a point in his/her life.”**R14** from Matsamo Traditional Council said, "The universe was created by God from nothing. It is neither eternal nor formed out of pre-existing things, nor sprung from necessity, but due to the immediate act of God. After the creation of the universe God was directly responsible for creating man. God did all of this by word of His mouth and this makes Him a sculptor and the life-giver [Hebrews 11:3-ASB]."

4.2.8 What is the meaning and significance of beliefs and practices such as ancestors, family, clan, home, kraal, community and rituals as they are practiced by the African Traditional Religion of the Swazi people of South Africa?(R1-14):R1

Mbuyane Traditional Council stated that, "Rituals are important and as they are performed and practiced by Swazi African Traditional Religion they revive the relationships within the family, community and the living and the dead for the achievement of unity and healing, because the relationship we have between the physical world, which is this present world we live in now and the spiritual world we will live in after we had died is important to be kept alive." **R2** from Mpakeni Traditional Council stated that, "The significance of a kraal as practiced by Swazi African Traditional Religion is a homestead, a site for ritual worship and a defensive position, laid out as a circular arrangement which were traditionally constructed by women surrounding a cattle enclosure." **R3** from LoMshiyo Traditional Council stated that, "Family as the important producer of its members has to perform some rituals in order to develop complete family members who are strengthened in order to play its significant role effectively as well as to know that every man is incomplete without the family as family plays a significant role in human life" **R4** from Gutshwa Traditional Council stated that, "The significance of rituals as practiced by Swazi African Traditional Religion is that they revive the relationships within the community and between the living and the Ancestors, which also means that the relationship between the physical world-this world we live in and the spiritual world-the world after death relationship has to be revived. Unity and healing are achieved through the performance of rituals." **R5** from Msogwaba Traditional Council stated that "The significance of a home as practiced by Swazi African Traditional Religion is providing security, control, belonging, identity and privacy among other things, but most of all it is a place that provides them with a centring-a place from which they leave each morning and to which they return each evening." **R6** from Mdluli Traditional Council stated that, "As Africans, the concept family means great for both nuclear and extended members who live or co-exist together. Without family members there is no family. I am what I am today because of a family that has seen to it that I become. Without members of family

there is no family and family begets community which we must all belong to for a person is a person through other persons.” **R7** from Emjindini Traditional Council stated that, “Clans are a basic structure in SATR and includes both paternal and maternal family blood relatives who are made up of many related families whose blood is thicker than water. The clans are also protected, guided and cared for by the clan Ancestors. It is therefore imperative for us Africans to live together as a collective for our Ancestors are not offended if we live together as family clans and as a community for even them where they are now do live as a family, clan and community perhaps most importantly, creating and sustaining their identity as they come in every shape and colour.” **R8** from Mlambo Traditional Council stated that, “The significance of Ancestors cuts across the African society and that these have been and will be part of the community as we know that the community is for both the living and the dead and these carry on the relations as they communicate with the family and clan members through dreams, visions and acts of snakes etc.” **R9** Siboshwa Traditional Council pointed out that, “Home is a sacred place which is a fundamental place of worship, an environment of a clan, houses or huts, ancestral graves and cattle kraal. Such creates an interaction between these. Home, a well-balanced, harmonious and educative growing place for children is where the living meets the dead and begin to have a conversation on the welfare, solidarity of family, clan and community.” **R10** from Hhoyi Traditional Council stated that, “According to Swazi African Traditional Religion, these are responsible to liaise between living family and clan members acting as mediators between them and God as they now assumed the role of being messengers. These are also responsible for the protection and welfare of their family or clan members and the significance of family as practiced by Swazi African Traditional Religion is seen as constituted by both the living and the departed.” **R11** from Mhlaba Traditional Council pointed out that, “Ancestors form part of the community and keep human relations especially within the clan or family circle and their relationship once established, goes on forever and kept very strong at all costs because it is seen as a major tool for the nurturing of sound ethics, behavioural and social values that needed to be strengthened in order to play its significant role effectively.” **R12** from Mawewe Traditional Council stated that, “Kraal as an enclosure and is where the secrets, heritage, tradition, religion, beliefs and practices are invested or archived a sleeping place for the Ancestors, cattle and people are fortified, married and a place where we can talk with the deceased Ancestors.” **R13** from Lugedlane Traditional Council stated that, “Community makes new born child to become a person in and through it, who is far more than just a lone individual who is struggling against the

forces of nature, but a part of a group - a whole that is more than the more sum of its constituent parts. As Africans, every member of society is closely linked with the community; and this creates a chain which binds each person horizontally to the other members of the ethnic group or tribe, and vertically to both the deceased ancestors and coming generations as we believe individuals cannot exist alone as we are because we belong.” **R14** from Matsamo Traditional Council stated that, “Belonging to a community, ethnic group or tribe, to a family group goes a long way towards combating the disease of loneliness which threatens to destroy many Westerners because they live an individualistic life and not a communal one. Loneliness is the most devastating disease of modern people as well.”

4.2.9 What do you understand about the meaning and significance of ceremonies such as Lusekwane; Umhlanga; Incwala; and Ummemo as they are practiced by the African Traditional Religion of the Swazi people of South Africa? (R1-14)

R1 from Mbuyane Traditional Council said, “The ceremonies are marked by religious prayers and services where amongst the Swazi people two main civil values of religious tolerance and religious dialogue between persons who hold different religious views are promoted for the unity, nationhood and social coherence of the Swazi people.” **R2** from Mpakeni Traditional Council said, “The *Incwala* ceremony which is held at a date chosen by royal’s appointed traditional astrologers in conjunction with the phases of the moon, normally in December or January each year. The first fruit ceremony of the Kingdom of *Eswatini* during which the King plays a dominant role, a ceremony which normally lasts for days where young men perform various rites. *Incwala* ceremony culminates in the fourth day, where on this day, the king appears in his full ceremonial gear and eats the first fruit of the season, symbolizing the harvest time, and the nation participates in the dancing all the time and is where everyone who participates dresses in the colourful and distinct national dress known as *emahiya (woven cloth)*.” **R3** from LoMshiyo Traditional Council said, “Similar to *Incwala*, is *Ummemo* which is done here in South Africa by Swazi people of the province of Mpumalanga, South Africa where chiefdoms, one after the other celebrates this event for thanksgiving and nation building ceremony of the Swazi people in the Republic of South Africa to the Ancestors (*labaphansi*) of the chiefdoms that we believe are there in their chiefdom; and here all the subjects are invited to rejoice with the royal families as they sing, dance, feast together, perform their rituals and celebrate life.” **R4** from Gutshwa Traditional Council said, “Our understanding of the meaning and significance of *Lusekwane* form part of

SATR as ceremony of the king which takes place in the afternoon where a black bull is killed by the *Lusekwane* boys by hands. The remains of this species of acacia shrub are made into ritual medicines which are given to the king in his *inhlambelo* when taking a bath. This takes place only in the *Kingdom of Eswatini* as it is performed by the king. In South Africa *ummemo* is performed as part of the rituals held and performed annually by traditional leaders (*emakhosi*) to give thanks to their Ancestors (*labaphansi*) and subjects celebrate by feasting as enough, assorted food, meat and drinks especially the African beer (*umcombotsi*), as possible.” **R5** from Msogwaba Traditional Council said, “*Incwala* is a sacred ceremony and is essential for the cleansing and renewal of the king as well as his nation. It is above all, performed to celebrate the kingship above all. The sacred branches or special shrubs are also brought in order to build an enclosure (*inhlambelo*) which the king uses for bathing” **R6** from Mdluli Traditional Council said, “This shrub known as *Lusekwane* by *Emaswati*, is cut and collected from far away distances by young men to mark the beginning of the important and main cleansing ritual called *Incwala* of kingship in the *Kingdom of Eswatini*. This lace of ceremony is part of the Swazi religious and cultural activities which encourage solidarity, discipline, social cohesion, unity, valour and loyalty in the building of *Emaswati* nation in the *Kingdom of Eswatini*.” **R7** from Emjindini Traditional Council said, “*Incwala* as a platform to celebrate the first fruits, the king and his subjects join hands as a nation where the king becomes the first to taste the fruits, which is called *kuluma*, of the season’s bounty which is only one part of this long rite. On the actual day, it is where the king expects the boys to show their strength by killing the bull with their bare hands where each of them jumps onto the bull with the hope of being the first to grab it, for the king to notice him.” **R8** from Mlambo Traditional Council said, “The AICs stream of the Zionist Christians foster fraternal relations between Christians and adherents of Swazi religion and inter-church dialogue within the Swazi Christian community where adherents of Swazi African Traditional Religion, Mission Churches and African Indigenous Churches.” **R9** from Siboshwa Traditional Council said, “How the meaning and significance of ceremonies such as *Lusekwane*; *Umhlanga*; *Incwala*; and *Ummemo* addressed the main question Swazi African Traditional Religion: A receptive vessel for the preparation for the Christian Faith. The Swazi beliefs and practices are all important as they build the nation, its unity and neighbourliness, and ceremonies such as *Incwala*, which is a sacred ceremony of all *Emaswati* ritual help the Swazi people celebrate life.” **R10** from Hhoyi Traditional Council said, “*Incwala* ritual or the first-fruits ceremony is where the King undergoes a complex ritual process of cleansing, purification and strengthening and the symbolic

significance of this ritual practice is that a strong and fortified king represents a powerful, secure and prosperous nation.” **R11** from Mhlaba Traditional Council said, “The ceremonies performed in the *Kingdom of Eswatini* are attended by Swazi nationals inclusive of adherents of the Christian religion in the main and especially by AICs are obliged on the day to come and pay homage to the monarch guided most probably by the biblical texts, in particular Romans 13. These celebrations of life contribute to the building of nationhood, national unity and social cohesion of the Swazi people in the *Kingdom of Eswatini* and South Africa” **R12** from Mawewe Traditional Council said, “The Swazi people of South Africa are not obliged to celebrate the King’s and Mother Queen Ceremonies as they take place in the *Kingdom of Eswatini* though individuals attend on their own as these takes place in Swaziland late in August or early in September each year. Though in some of the chiefdoms ceremony celebrations, in particular, immimemo performed in South Africa, delegates from the *Kingdom of Eswatini* do attend to motivate Swazi South Africans to know more about their history and heritage thus capacitating them about their core basic beliefs and practices which constitute their religion, SATR.” **R13** from Lugedlane Traditional Council said, “The king in his capacity as a religious leader performs several functions on behalf of the nation which include the ceremonial eating of the first agricultural produce, rain making and receiving messages from the national Ancestors.” **R14** from Matsamo Traditional Council said, “The annual *Lutsango* eventis wherereeds are cut by colourful married and unmarried women to perform tribute and to show loyalty to *Ingwenyama* and *Indlovukati*. *Lutsango* reed dance is led by the king’s wives (*Emakhosikati*) and takes place for five days symbolising the unity of the nation in the *Kingdom of Eswatini* which is the first round of *Incwala* and is held at three o’clock in the afternoon, a day before the big *incwala* which takes place the following day.”

4.2.10 How would you respond to the notion that the African society had their operative calendar which formed part of their religion and played a role in their daily lives? (R1-14): **R1** from Mbuyane Traditional Council said, “The adherents observed all seasons as dictated by the Calendar, for when it was time to till the soil, plant the seeds and during harvest time. It should be known that the Calendars were separated into three, namely: solar, lunar and cosmic. Africa is governed by these three calendars, and these constitute the African Calendar which also is part of SATR.” **R2** from Mpakeni Traditional Council said, “SATRs proper understanding and promotion of the African Calendar made SATR to revive different activities, ceremonies, festivals, prayer events and created

awareness of different seasons of tilling the soil, ploughing, sowing seed, harvesting as well as initiation period as our continent Africa is governed by solar, lunar and cosmic calendars, and these African calendars are about regulating the spiritual, cultural and agricultural festivals. These Swazi Agricultural, Cultural and Spiritual Festivals are important events in the African calendar of *Emaswati* for their upkeep, identity and sustenance.” **R3** from LoMshiyo Traditional Council said, “The African Calendar was operative and did form part of the African Traditional Religion hence the adherents observed all events and activities as dictated by the calendar, for, when it was time to till the soil, plant the seeds and during harvest time as well as when it was time to honour the rites of passage and so forth, African people were guided by the calendar which the Creator, *Mvelinchanti* ordered to be in place.” **R4** from Gutshwa Traditional Council said, “African society prior to the arrival of the missionaries had their own African Calendar which regulated the cultural festival, naturally set by God who is responsible for regulating all the festivals including the agricultural festival. God through the three in one calendar indicates what happens where, what and when it was happening. The Swazi African Traditional Religion observed all events and activities as it focused on them.” **R5** from Msogwaba Traditional Council said, “Swazi African Cultural Festival which is one of the events celebrated in the Kingdom of Eswatini need emulating after having seen it performed in the *Kingdom of Eswatini* where I also observed so many ceremonies and celebrations that the Swazi people of South Africa do not observe except for *Imimemo* - which are cultural thanksgiving ceremonies, celebrated annually by the chiefdoms of Mpumalanga. I have come to understand that we, the adherents, practitioners of SATR and communities of *Emaswati* of South Africa, especially the youth, will benefit in the recommended activities and ceremonies educationally, socially and economically by simply observing these and other Swazi activities.” **R6** from Mdluli Traditional Council said, “African society had their own calendars using the spiritually rooted African Calendar that was orally told as Africans never had a paper calendar which indicated time when cultural, spiritual and agricultural festivals had to take place and regulated at the end of *Inhlaba* marking the beginning of the solar New Year, announcing the dawn of the ploughing season from *Kholwane* to *Inyoni* months” **R7** from Emjindini Traditional Council said, ““Harvest Thanksgiving Festival which must take place during January and April months according to African Calendar becomes the time of joy, where all the stakeholders including adherents should pause and look back to see, know and experience the first fruits of working together as Swazi ethnic group and nation. The traditional leaders, religious leaders, their councillors and members of the community

are the ones to harvest communally; and after the one-tenth (10%) of harvested crop has been set aside, the rest is distributed amongst those who are disadvantaged and poor in life. The 10% becomes helpful also to those who may run short of foodstuff due to unforeseen circumstances.” **R8** from Mlambo Traditional Council said, “Seed Planting Festival which need to take place during September and October months according to African calendar because its when the tilled soil has been fertile enough and ready for receiving and germinating fresh, nutritious and healthy produce. During this appropriated time, traditional leaders, religious leaders, traditional councillors, and members of the community need to gather and plead with God through their Ancestors as mediators to pass on this message of a plea for a successful sowing and abundant crop harvesting season through the African prayers they offered to God, and then in faith look forward to the good news for the germination of the seeds for an abundant crop harvesting. The seeds leftovers are then distributed amongst those who are disadvantaged so that they too can grow something that can take poverty away whilst waiting for the communal gain.” **R9** from Siboshwa Traditional Council said, “African Calendar alerted our foreparents that it was time to do agricultural activities, and when the cultural festival itself had to take place for the thanksgiving ceremony to be done in thanking God for the harvest He had made possible to them. African Calendars regulated the agricultural festival, and this took place at the end of June marking the beginning of the solar New Year, announcing the dawn of the ploughing season from July to September months.” **R10** from Hhoyi Traditional Council said, “The Ploughing Festival of *Emaswati* which takes place during September and December months according to African calendar is important to keep in life. During these months of preparation of the ground, (*imbodlisamahlanga*), traditional leaders, religious leaders, the traditional councillors, and community members need to converge to respond to the Lord God’s mandate *to work the earth and take care of it* on His behalf; as it is His earth, and humans are custodians on stewardship basis; and need to give thanks to the only Creator, God, for the season of preparation as they till the ground and ensure that the soil is fertile by the time they put seeds in the ground, for the ground to be readily available to receive the seeds with warmth for speedy germination in November month.” **R11** from Mhlaba Traditional Council said, “African society had its Calendar constituted by solar, lunar and cosmic calendars whilst the missionaries themselves came from the Western world where they use a Gregorian Calendar The Western world where the missionaries and colonizers came from used the Gregorian Calendar as both civil and Christian Church calendar which was instituted by a certain Christian Pope.” **R12** from Mawewe Traditional Council said,

“The Swazi African Traditional Religion is constituted by both the religious or spiritual and cultural activities made out of the basic beliefs and practices. The calendar helped the people of the land to observe all events designed by God when He created all in the beginning for proper guidance of His creation. This we believe because of the consistency of the phases of the moon which attests to the presence of a Higher Power in an ordered universe.” **R13** from Lugedlane Traditional Council said, “Agricultural life celebrates First Fruits Festival during December and January according to the African calendar. During these months, the traditional and religious leaders, members of our council and community need to converge collectively to celebrate life as they give thanks to the Supernatural Being (*Simakadze*) for the season of the first fruits. The religious and traditional leadership council need to help serve the needy, poor, disadvantaged and marginalised in life demonstrating that SATR will help revive the values of Ubuntu/Buntfu which included compassion, caring, cooperation, loving, giving etc. which values the two religious systems-SATR and Christianity, are also known for or about.” **R14** from Matsamo Traditional Council said, “SATR as a vessel for the Christian Faith brought proper understanding, promotion and revival of the sacred heritage of the Swazi people of South Africa by identifying, establishing, preserving, developing, and promoting their heritage sites in consultation with the elderly who are the religious leaders, chiefs and traditional healers or diviners as well as families of the deceased leaders; SATR needs to give support for the development of spiritual and cultural heritage routes as well as recognize marginalized indigenous African cultures, languages, and religions; preserving, developing and promoting the Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) of *Emaswati* of South Africa in order to rediscover Swazi African Traditional Heritage; and establish a centre for Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) so that the sacred religious and cultural heritage of the Swazi people should benefit our schools, churches and the public in general.”

4.3.11 What do you understand about the following practices in Swazi African Traditional Religion: the Rituals; ritual of appeasement, kinship ritual, societal ritual; the Sacred texts; the Special day of Worship; the Moral Order; Life after death; rites of passage, birth, initiation, marriage, death, burial, bereavement, thanksgiving and African Calendar (R1- 14): **R1** from Mbuyane Traditional Council said, “Our understanding about rituals is that they include the format of all rituals (*emasiko*) to enable people, the living to perform extraordinary practices for the spiritual world. The meat and African beer (*umcombotsi*) are regarded as holy meal and are partaken by all the blood related members

in the clan, where each member is given a piece of roasted meat (*licatsa lenyama leyesiwe*) and a sip of *umcombotsi* by one of the clan elderly responsible for that job.” **R2** from Mpakeni Traditional Council said, “What we understand about the moral order is that, it discourages individualism and promotes collectivism because individualism is regarded as inhumane; whereas the communal way of life is placed at the centre whereby human beings share their joys, blessings, sorrows and burdens showing how they care for one another as advocated by SATR.” **R3** from LoMshiyo Traditional Council said, “The understanding we have as well about the ritual of appeasement (*emasiko ekushweleta*) which is about acknowledging wrongs done, evil and sin committed that may have been caused by being disrespectful to God, *Mvelinchanti*, the Ancestors (*labaphansi*) and humanity (*neluntfu*) leading to disharmony in the community.” **R4** from Gutshwa Traditional Council said, “Our understanding about kinship rituals (*emasiko asekhaya*) is that these rituals are clan-based rituals focused on individuals within the clan, especially for their holistic healing, physical health, spiritual and emotional healing of individuals as depended on these kinship rituals.” **R5** from Msogwaba Traditional Council said, “My understanding of the societal ritual is that it involved the community as a whole as it is constituted by families and clans, especially where there is a national crisis or disaster such as drought (*somiso*) and famine (*nendlala*) where concerned people about the disaster suggest a communal religious practice which is usually performed on a mountain through the chief or king who arranges a day to go there with the community to appeal to God and the Ancestors. The rites of passage which include burial and bereavement are performed when someone has died so that he or she could be buried at a sacred place, the grave as well as conduct the bereavement which takes place during mourning period where also are some rituals that the family must perform when starting and ending the period rites of mourning.” **R6** from Mdluli Traditional Council said, “Most of us respondents indicate what we understand about the basic practices such as the assortment of rituals in the Swazi African Traditional Religion which made this religion a receptive vessel for the preparation for the Christian Faith for example, the ritual of appeasement, kinship ritual, societal ritual, sacred texts, and special day of worship, moral order, and life after death; as well as rites of passage, death, burial, bereavement, thanksgiving and African Calendar.” **R7** from Emjindini Traditional Council said, “My understanding about the rites of passage have been that they are ordained by God (*Simakadze*) for various responsibilities. For example, marriage has a responsibility of procreation and extension of the relationship to the wider community. Different rites are performed during marriage to ensure the approval of the

Ancestors of both families and also fertility. The mixing of the two bile's from the two families symbolise the unification of the couples, their families, their clans, their Ancestors as well as their communities. It is God Himself who joins the couples together and ordered that what He put together, there should be no man that will put asunder. So, as much as God abhors divorce, SATR and Christianity forbid and discourage it, respectively." **R8** from Mlambo Traditional Council said," The performance of birth ritual is done after birth in order to introduce to the community of the living and the departed the gift that God has brought into the two communities. The burial of the umbilical cord (*inkhaba*) seals the permanent attachment of an individual to his or her Ancestral land." **R9** from Siboshwa Traditional Council said," Death and life after death we understand clearly that it marks the physical separation of the individual from other human beings. The soul which is divine is believed to join the spiritual world where it originated; and the Ancestors are proof enough to show that the soul is immortal, living forever and ever. Life after death is a continuation of life from this world as taught by SATR. Death and life after death doesn't entail reward or punishment as these are believed to take place in this life. Doing well as well is rewarded in this world by the Ancestors who are believed to be the mouthpiece of the Creator." **R10** from Hhoyi Traditional Council said, "During the ritual performance on the mountain people sing and invoke all their clan Ancestors together as a community and as the calamity involves the community, it is therefore the duty of the community head to take responsibility for the harmony and good health of his or her people by performing the ritual of appeasement which takes place when an individual or a collective has done awfully wrong to God and disrespected Him." **R11** from Mhlaba Traditional Council said," The understanding about the ritual of appeasement (*lisiko lekushweleta*) is that it is performed so that the anger of God is quelled. This also applies even to the Ancestors, if the elderly of the society are provoked and disrespected by members of society consciously or unconsciously, they are usually given enough warnings to ask for forgiveness, but if they neglect such warnings or signs indicating such caution, as a result the offenders are punished by their Ancestors through various sicknesses, misfortunes etc." **R12** from Mawewe Traditional Council said," And my understanding about sacred texts which were brought to our foreparents orally were in the minds and actions of the Swazi people as the Swazi African Traditional Religion had no sacred texts and focused on ritual participation and observance rather than on a text as sacred authority, but based on a daily practical routine of showing respect to God, the elderly, siblings, nature and oneself." **R13** from Luggedlane Traditional Council said, "Procreation is very important in the African concept of marriage because it is in marriage

where children must be born and a marriage which does not produce children was considered to be problematic. This can sometimes lead to a bride being returned to her parents for such a reason.” **R14** from Matsamo Traditional Council said, “The understanding of the special day of worship for the Swazi African Traditional Religion is thought of as a daily exercise as time was created by God, and therefore to regard one day as holier than the other, is disrespectful, for God lives above time; so, there is no special day of worship since worship is worthy every day, and what is regarded as special is the ritual practice.”

4.3.12 What does it mean to be a believer in secular South Africa today?

(R1-14): R1 from Mbuyane Traditional Council said, What it means to be a believer in secular South Africa today where there is religious freedom and equality, yet some religions are not yet free because they are minor, unknown, not acknowledged, not tolerated and disrespected. Yet, the new situation presents an opportunity that I can choose to be a member of any of the religious traditions in addition to my religion of birth. I have chosen to be a Christian so that I am able to investigate that which make the majority religions look down upon our religion as Swazi people of South Africa. Since my country is a secular South Africa, where government does not dictate or align itself with a particular religion because religions-minor or major are free and equal before the government of the day. Therefore secular South Africa means that I must not interfere with government and government must not dictate to religions, mine included.” **R2** from Mpakeni Traditional Council said, “We African Christians are in our majority than the traditional Swazi adherents; this does not mean that we are better than any of those minor religions who are in the periphery not because they are invalid but because adherents of majority religion such as the Christian Faith chose to unacknowledge, unrecognise and disregard or even ignore their existence as if they are not existing and disapproved by God. This is evident when the state holds national events where mainline Churches dominate and other faiths such as SATR not given a chance to practice their beliefs and practices as they are regarded as backward and evil, the religion of the people which gave meaning to the Christian Faith because it was built on these beliefs and practices” **R3** from LoMshiyo Traditional Council said, “We do not do sin by belonging to minor, not recognised, not tolerated religions such as African Traditional Religions in particular ours as *Emaswati*, the Swazi African Traditional Religion because they give us the truth of life, all sense of beauty, making us aware what God and our Ancestors despise and desire in life for us also not to

despise harmony, unity but desire after His goodness as we all have one source which is God, *Mvelinchanti*.” **R4** from Gutshwa Traditional Council said, “I am given liberty and it is my right to practice any form of religion, including my SATR, as long as it does not harm or pose a danger to others, but and to propagate the narrative that will protect minor religions such as ATRs, SATR included, whose adherents are not yet free because they are disapproved by God as if God has religions He approves and disapproves, He acknowledges and recognises, He tolerates and doesn’t tolerate. SATR is more important because it is the first and oldest religion of Africa which palso provided the beliefs and practices which Christianity built on for its relevancy, meaning and acceptance as a foreign religion.” **R5** from Msogwaba Traditional Council said, “It meanssome religions are not yet free because of their minority, unknown, not acknowledged, not tolerated and disrespected by the well-known majority traditions because their teachings were either unknown or seen to be perverted.” **R6** from Mdluli Traditional Council said, “The majority religions in particular the Christian Faith must engage in a little empathy to understand what people of other faiths must endure every day here in our country for we Christians are, I believe, being disobedient to our Lord’s injunction that we should do to others as we would like them do to us. Even SATR teaches about this injunction as pronounced by the Creator Himself for His creatures to live in harmony and unity with one another, and this shows the relationship or similarity that exists between these two religions.” **R7** from Emjindini Traditional Council said, “It is important that in our secular country, South Africa, where religions are treated equally and same,the major religions, should want to deal with other faiths at their best and highest because all religions has freedom to worship and come from one source, God.” **R8** from Mlambo Traditional Council said, “Christians in South Africa in their majority still enjoy the position that they had in the defunct government which purported to be Christian in our land, for example, they still have unlimited access to the media as compared to other faiths such as the SATR. Christian Churches still have easier access to the government than leaders of other faiths even in this secular South Africa.” **R9** from Siboshwa Traditional Council said, “Major religions such as the Christian Faith dismiss these minor religions such as African Traditional Religion inclusive of Swazi African Traditional Religion and other religious faiths as delusions. Their action is not accepted because even these minor religions come from one source, God and their adherents’ link with God through them.” **R10** from Hhoyi Traditional Council said, “Belonging to a religion, any religion-major or minor for that matter, is important, though religion is not necessarily a good thing, as it depends, because religion can whilst it lead to great good, it can equally lead to unspeakable evil and

suffering.” **R11** from Mhlaba Traditional Council said, “To be a believer in secular state today means handling all religions and their institutions in an unbiased manner; and seeking to ensure that the distinctive identities of all religious tradition are celebrated in a manner that facilitates the common religious and moral objectives of justice, social harmony and the common good.” **R12** from Mawewe Traditional Council said, “Religions, especially the major ones, have caused wars because they were led by Christian missionaries and colonialists who took what did not belong to them by gun and the Bible from the African people of the land whilst the religion of the land, Swazi African Traditional Religion was despised, unrecognised and unacknowledged.” **R13** from Lucedlane Traditional Council said, “As adherents of both the religious systems, SATR and the Christian Faith, we have freedom of worship in theory, which means that we are free as people of these religions, major or minor, to express our religious affiliation in the manner appropriate to our faith. We should not be persecuted in an overt way for not being Christians or African Traditional Religion adherents or profession of being a non-believer.” **R14** from Matsamo Traditional Council said, “I concur with the constitution of our country which clearly articulates that in our freedom and democracy, freedom of worship or religious freedom and equality, need not to be compromised by minor religions at the expense of major religions since all religions have a right to belong and not treated differently, as others may be seen to be favoured and approved by God or government which therefore becomes a big challenge because South Africa is no longer a religious but a secular country where religions major or minor ought to be treated with respect and dignity to be able to play their role of building a united, moral, just, cohesive and patriotic nation.”

4.3.13 Was Swazi African Traditional Religion disfavoured or approved by God and how does SATR believe in the existence of the Supernatural Power that created the universe, and how does the Supernatural Power look like? (R1-14):**R1** from Mbuyane Traditional Council pointed out that, “The Supernatural Power, God, who we Swazi people do not know by our naked eyes but through His felt presence in the lives of the living and our Ancestors He created and also through His work which is evident by the existence of the Swazi African Traditional Religion which He favoured so much and approved and set aside for the special task of being a vessel for the preparation for the Christian Faith.” **R2** from Mpakeni Traditional Council stated that, “Most of us respondents do not agree with the notion that SATR looked disfavoured and disapproved by God, because we believe that what God (*Mvelinchanti*) has created He cannot discriminate against to disfavour and

disapprove the religion He established; that God cannot regard it invalid, non-existing to an extent that its practitioners and activists felt like committing sin when practising it. It is proof enough that for decades of years of its existence, resilience and survival, God never disfavoured and disapproved the Swazi African Traditional Religion and if He did it is our belief, He would have long stopped it to exist and it could not have been so resilient.” **R3** from LoMshiyo Traditional Council stated that,” Swazi African Traditional Religion is favoured and approved by God and indeed, it was and continues to be favoured and approved of God because it is the first and local or regional religion. Africa as a cradle of mankind, it is where He first established His people and their religion as people of God. Swazi African Traditional Religion may look disfavoured and disapproved by God because it was regarded invalid by the missionaries and relegated it to mere culture, calling it with derogatory names such as heathens, pagans, etc. and not religion, not knowing that in the African worldview, religion and culture are inseparable.” **R4** from Gutshwa Traditional Council stated that, ”In all that was said about SATR, the respondents maintained that Swazi African Traditional Religion is favoured and approved by God because even when the missionaries forced Africans into the new Christian faith, they did not stop practising their Ancestral rituals, and this made some individual missionaries noticed that Africans gave importance to rituals and these individuals became sympathetic towards the rituals and started to see some traces of religion in the practices of Africans.” **R5** from Msogwaba Traditional Council stated that, “Indeed one can conclude that the Swazi African Traditional Religion was not favoured and approved by God from its inception because if it was favoured by God who is the Almighty and Creator, would have saved it from its sufferings-whereas all kinds of challenges they have experienced were not because God did not favour their religion as the African people but because in a way was training and preparing them to serve as a good example of being a receptive vessel set aside by God for the preparation for the Christian faith to thrive upon.” **R6** from Mdluli Traditional Council maintained that, “For the fact that Swazi African Traditional Religion exists, it means that it has been favoured and approved of God because God is always involved in the affairs of His people and the environment He ordered His people to be so that He could accomplish His mission for the world to experience His revelation; if Christianity was favoured and approved by God and enabled the missionaries to bring it to Africa, it therefore means Swazi African Traditional Religion too was favoured and approved by the same God who propelled them to bring it where He was with His people and found Him known already by His creation.” **R7** from Emjindini Traditional Council maintained that,”Swazi African

Traditional Religion looks disfavoured and disapproved by God because missionaries made their religion, Christianity, looked far better than SATR of the indigenous black people of the continent as they condemned and forced it to accept that they had no religion but culture which they associated with evil.” **R8** from Mlambo Traditional Council maintained that, “God has approved the Swazi African Traditional Religion, and people can see that African Traditional Religion is one of His favourite religion, the first religion He established in Africa for Africans to prepare for the way for the Christian faith so that when it is introduced at a later stage, it should find His people ready to enable the new religion to adapt and propagate relevant and meaningful message to the people of the land.” **R9** from Siboshwa Traditional Council maintained that, “Swazi African Traditional Religion looks disfavoured and disapproved by God because missionaries dehumanized the indigenous black people of the continent because its practices were condemned and forced to go underground and into internal exile as SATR was associated with heathenism.” **R10** from Hhoyi Traditional Council pointed out that, “Swazi African Traditional Religion is favoured and approved by God because this religion had a great influence on Christianity and as such Christianity originated in Africa; and therefore existed and still exists even now, and it is still regarded as a preparation for Christian evangelisation-the reason why Christianity grew the way it did as it is built on the basic beliefs and practices of African Traditional Religion, hence the topic - African Traditional Religion which is a receptive vessel for the preparation for the Christian Faith.” **R11** from Mhlaba Traditional Council pointed out that, “Though the missionaries did not favour and approve the African Traditional Religion, but God did as an establisher of the ATR inclusive of SATR because He favoured and approved of it because SATR was His tool to ensure that the Christian faith was well received and understood amongst the Africans though the missionaries referred to it as mere culture and not a religion, unknowingly that in SATR there is no separation between religion and culture.” **R12** from Mawewe Traditional Council pointed out that, “We have to correct the historic, gender and racial imbalances associated with past preference of religions biasness; and all religions be undertaken in accordance with values which included sensitivity to the diverse nature of South African society and the need for justice, healing and reconciliation; all religions be undertaken in accordance with values which included compassion and concern for human dignity and for all life, including the environment.” **R13** from Lugedlane Traditional Council pointed out that, “Swazi African Traditional Religion looks disfavoured and disapproved by God because missionaries referred to Africans as uncivilised as they were forced to make a total shift from their true humanity and to adopt a white man’s style,

and forced to adjust like chameleon. Swazi African Traditional Religion looks disfavoured and disapproved by God because the missionaries assumed that through baptism, they made blacks to move from assumed level of barbarism to an implied level of civilisation, as many lies were reported back to Europe, among them, that Africans do not have religion but only superstitions.” **R14** from Matsamo Traditional Council pointed out that, “All religions have to be undertaken in accordance with values which included common South Africanness, integrity, transparency and trust in all relationships and all religions be undertaken in accordance with values which included commitment to the autonomy of various religions within their parameters of their accountability to the South African public; and that all religions be undertaken in accordance with values which included a spirit of maximum co-operation between government, religious traditions and community.”

4.2.14 Do African Religion and the Christian Faith have a meeting point, and why Christians in particular would profess publicly being children of God having been saved by the blood of Jesus Christ, and yet consulting with the diviners in secret when everybody is asleep or indoors in protection of their dignity and positions they have and occupy in Church and society and what do you think can be done for religions, major or minor, to embrace one another in order to make a meaningful contribution to the lives of those, including their practitioners and activists who still yearn for a better life that is yet to come over twenty-six (26) years into freedom and democracy? (R1-7):R1 from Mbuyane Traditional Council as a response to this question said, “Swazi African Traditional Religion and the Christian Faith do have a meeting point as the process of accommodation is mutual, people accepting the Christian Faith but not coming to it empty-handed; Swazi African Traditional Religion and the Christian Faith do have a meeting point as adherents of the Swazi African Traditional Religion come with certain religious insights which they bring as they interpreted the Gospel.” **R2** from Mpakeni Traditional Council said, “Why most of us African Christians profess publicly being children of God, the Creator who have been saved by the blood of Jesus Christ, and yet consulting with the diviners in secret when everybody is asleep or indoors maintaining that we do so for the protection of our dignity and positions we occupy in Church and society.” **R3** from LoMshiyo Traditional Council said, “The Spirits of the dead and Ancestors are two different aspects of SATR and we SATR adherents believe that Ancestors are family and clan based whereas spirits can come from community and society at large especially the dangerous spirits of those who are not related to us by blood but on humanitarian

grounds. These spirits of the dead bring messages of evil from the greater and lesser gods. In order to counter such negative influence some dance ritual has to be performed where Ancestors are invoked to fight against such for in the main are foreign spirits and are called *mijiwa* in dialect language because it is not an official Siswati language.” **R4** from Gutshwa Traditional Council said, “As a Christian myself I admit that I do consult the diviners when my problems are not getting solved because problems are not only spiritual but cultural as well. Therefore, spiritual and cultural problems need spiritual and cultural solutions hence most of us would not like abandoning our African religion because religion and culture cannot be separated, rather we would prefer keeping in touch with the beliefs and practices of SATR. In other words when Christianity cannot give us what we want, we seek help from our SATR.” **R5** from Msogwaba Traditional Council said, “Worship and celebration as offered by the AICs engage in the use of ritual symbols where music, drumming, dancing characterise liturgical systems. The appropriation of spiritual songs, hymns and sacred language as a revelatory medium is central to the ethos and rhetoric of the AICs and not what we see people doing today of misinterpreting and distorting the gospel of Jesus Christ by forcing people to eat grass and snakes, and making their adherents to drink petrol for their healing and prosperity.” **R6** from Mdluli Traditional Council said, “In this regard the meeting point of Christianity and SATR becomes me as I visit the diviner for help that Christianity may not offer quickly. The consultation is done in secret when it’s dark so that those who abandoned their beliefs and practices may not be seen as heathens, the mistakes that the missionaries did.” **R7** from Emjindini Traditional Council said, “Rites of passage in SATR are central as well and are referred to as birth, initiation, marriage, death. These passages are stages of human development, as one is brought to this physical world from the spiritual world, one must be initiated or orientated in order to know what to expect in this new world and how to respond back in order to survive. Once one has understood oneself as one has one’s identity been revealed to him or her, he or she must seek some means to procreate, preserve and uphold this identity by getting married and produce children because he or she knows that soon and very soon he or she might be called back to the spiritual world where he or she belongs.” **R8** from Mlambo Traditional Council said, “Major religions such as Christianity and minor religions such as Swazi African Traditional Religion have a duty to embrace one another and that this could be achieved by practicing tolerance and acceptance of one another, acknowledging that they all need some space to operate from as different religions and cultures which constituted the rainbow nation making a contribution to the building of nationhood, national

unity, and social cohesion of the Swazi people of South Africa, other South African ethnicities as well as people of the continent, Africa.” **R9** from Siboshwa Traditional Council said, “Community and human life is key to the welfare and sustenance of its members. God is the Giver of Life, the Power behind everything and the way of human life or tradition originates from God. Tradition contains the moral code and prescriptions for an ethical human life. The universe influences all our behaviour such that we are provided the moral code for human life and behaviour. The cultural and religious beliefs and practices of SATR are provided by God as the moral code for Swazi human life which all *Emaswati* should emulate whether in Eswatini Kingdom, South Africa or elsewhere and exchange views and learn new things from one another that will take our culture and religion forward as the Swazi people of South Africa.” **R10** from Hhoyi Traditional Council said, “My belief in life after death as one of those Christians who are saved by the blood of Jesus Christ and who professes publicly that Jesus’ saving grace is sufficient and available to every person who is in need of it, though I still find myself caught up by the religion I was born into, that of my forebears, the Swazi African Traditional Religion, taught me that God, the Creator is one and so the God of the Christians is still the God of the African religion and both religions have a meeting point which is God Himself.” **R11** from Mhlaba Traditional Council said, “Rituals of the AICs of passage are birth, baptism, marriage, anointing, death and burial and this is so to create rigid and valid renewal in the life cycle; also in the AICs are rites associated with major festivals, seasonal changes, individual achievement and sanctity in as far as women are concerned. They also profess Jesus Christ as the Lord and Saviour and see Jesus as the main Ancestor who conquered death and is living with dead in the spiritual world for, He too is also spirit.” **R12** from Mawewe Traditional Council stated that, “The greater god is regarded as a supreme god who can send both bad and good fortune to us from where he is found, the catern sky, where these spirits of the dead go to and rejuvenated. The lesse god lives in the western sky and is more equated with that which is deceptive and evil. Together with the spirits of the dead, he is used by the greater god to convey misfortune. These highly ambivalent characters seem to be part of the divinity. Both gods are capable of harmful and beneficial actions against the people. Both can be approached by people in a trance or through an informal prayer.” **R13** from Luggedlane Traditional Council said, “Our belief as Africans in particular us, *Emaswati*, of the Republic of South Africa and that of the *Kingdom of Eswatini* revolves around religion, SATR specifically, Christianity and culture, preserving and living our culture without any apology, because our religion and culture are who and what we are, our identity and our heritage;

whether we become active participants of the Christian Faith, our foundation is firmly laid upon SATR as the religion of our forebears; whatever we do in this new religion we do it with the understanding and perspective of our religion of birth. And it is this religion which enables us to understand the Christian Faith and it is for this reason that we can understand both Christianity and SATR as religious systems from one God, *Mvelinchanti*, the Creator of the universe.” **R14** from Matsamo Traditional Council said, “We who are also members of the established churches the Presbyterian, Methodist, Anglican and Catholics by day, dance to the Zionist drums by night or go and consult the diviners whom we have seen healing and exorcising evil spirits since our childhood. We prefer not to leave our churches, but practice spirituality in no way different from that of the Zionists.”