

**THE CONFUSION IN UNDERSTANDING SALVATION IN CHRISTIAN  
RELIGION BY AFRICAN CHRISTIAN PEOPLE AS IT RELATES  
TO SALVATION IN AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION  
HAMPERS THE BUILDING UP OF THE LOCAL  
CHURCH.**

**BY**

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## **CHAPTER 1.**

### **“The confusion in understanding salvation in Christian Religion by African Christian people as it relates to salvation in African Traditional religion Hampers the building up of the local church.”**

#### **1.1. Summary**

Before the introduction of Christianity in the African continent, Black African people had their own kind of religion, which differed between the different ethnic groups. Their religion influenced the way they lived. Each group had a unique pattern of religion, which slightly differed from other ethnic groups. Their religion was also incorporated into their cultures, and determined the way each ethnic group ought to behave in the family or in the community. The chief was the custodian of a culture of a particular ethnic group who resorted under his leadership. Religion was traditionally transferred from generation to generation, hence the name African Traditional Religion.

At the centre of African Traditional religion, is the worshipping of the spirits of the forefathers or ancestors who Africans belief and accept are mediators between themselves and God. With the introduction of Christianity in the African continent, the African Traditional religion was viewed by the Christian missionaries as something against Christian teachings, and had to be abandoned as soon as a person accepts Christianity as Traditional religion was believed to be in conflict with Christian teachings. Africans who accepted Christianity were obliged to abandon their traditional religion. The result was that only some of the elements of African Traditional religion were abandoned, and some were retained and are still being observed and practiced by African Christians in their everyday lives even if they have accepted Christianity.

Each ethnic group believes and accepts that their traditional religion if practiced correctly will enable them to achieve salvation. Practicing Christianity and African Traditional

Religion caused confusion among Africans who have accepted Christianity. It is difficult to relate to salvation in the Christian religion to salvation in the African Traditional Religion.

This situation seriously hampers the building up of the local church.

This research is intended to highlight the African Christian's confusion in understanding salvation in Christian religion in light of their idea of salvation as seen from an African Traditional religious viewpoint. The understanding of African Christian people is that, the local church cannot be built without placing Christianity in partnership with the African Traditional Religion. The African Traditional religion is an integral part of Black African's everyday life. Each facet of a Black African's life is bound to his traditional religious way of life or culture. An African child growing in this environment will uphold African culture, norms and standards as the only acceptable way of life. African Traditional Religion has been observed and practiced throughout African history even by Christianised Africans. Therefore Africans believe and uphold there is a divine salvation in their traditional religious way of life just as in Christianity which has its basics in the Jews traditional religious way of life, and cannot just be ignored in the building up of the local church. Mbiti (1975:14) maintains: "African Traditional Religion was not founded like other religions such as Christianity Islam etc. It evolved slowly through centuries as people responded to the situations of their lives and reflected upon their experiences."

Africans believe that their religious way of life is God's gift to them and there is a Divine salvation in their traditional religious way of life. Even if one practices Christianity one will never abandon his/her traditional religion.



## **1.2. Problem Statement.**

African Christian people familiar with salvation in the African traditional religion are very much confused when trying to understand salvation in the Christian religion. This confusion hampers the process of building up the local church.

African Christian people understand and accept that their divine salvation can only be attained through the way they live and how they practice their religion. The advent of Christianity brought about something new, which contradicted the understanding of divine salvation by Africans through their traditional religion. Christianity promise salvation to people on condition they accept Jesus Christ as their saviour and that they abandon their own religious way of living. The question is, “how can one distance oneself from what he/she is or from one’s identity?” That is to abandon the identity given to Black African by God through his ancestors, and through which he receives God’s blessings.

Although the introduction of Christianity brought a lot of confusion to African people, through the work and influence of missionaries, most African people accepted Christianity, but without abandoning their traditional religion or their traditional religious way of living. They rather mix Christianity with their traditional religion. Their religion is part of their culture, identity and life. Mbiti (1975:14) states that: “When African people are converted to other religions, they often mix their traditional religion with the other one to which they are converted.” Because of the confusion resulting from not understanding and not trusting salvation in Christianity, Black Africans who have converted to Christianity feel safe and blessed when they practice Christian religion in partnership with their traditional religion. For them, salvation in Christianity alone is not adequate for their complete security.

### **1.3. The importance of this research.**

The importance of this research is to identify, and if possible, phase out the newly converted African's confusion about salvation in the Christian religion, as it relates to salvation in African Traditional religion especially when coming to the building up of the local church. If the converted African people do not differentiate between salvation in Christian religion and salvation in African Traditional religion, the building up of the local church will be hampered.

### **1.4. Hypothesis**

“African Christian people must have a clear understanding of salvation in Christian religion and how it relates to salvation in African Traditional religion.” If Black African Christians have a clear understanding of salvation in the Christian religion, they will no longer be confused, and the building up of the local church will be able to go ahead unhampered.

- a). African Traditional Religion must be perceived only as an African culture or as an African way of life.
- b). African Christian people must not abandon their traditional way of life when they become Christians. (CF Mbiti 1975:30) “On Sunday they attend Christian church services, but at their homes within their families and communities, they practice their own way of life.
- c). Christian ethics cannot be accommodated within the African Traditional religious ethics, nor can African traditional religious ethics be accommodated within the Christian religious ethics.
- d). African Traditional Religion as an African culture cannot be viewed as stepping stone to Christianity as claimed by Mbiti (1975:30) “Culture which includes religion, is the channel

through which the Gospel is mediated. Culture is a means of conversion of African peoples to Christianity.”

e). There is a difficulty to build mutual understanding and interdependence between salvation in African Traditional and salvation in Christianity, because of some conflicting elements in African Traditional Religion and Christianity.

f). Christianity view African Traditional religion as pagan and primitive because of some elements which are in conflict with some elements in Christian religion. On the other hand, Africans loyal to their traditional religion, view the way how Christianity is presented to them as a religion and the way of life of the Western culture and does not fit into African culture especially on the condition that, one must abandon his traditional religion in its totality when accepting Christianity.

g). The basic meaning of salvation in a Christian perspective and African Traditional religion perspective, do not seem to correspond.

h). The loyalty of Black African people towards their traditional religious way of life, gives rise to the need for some means to be made and some assumptions be considered for the accommodation of African traditional religion in the building up of the local church.

i). Mutual understanding ought to be built between the African traditional religion and the Christian religion. According to Mbiti (1977:30) the African traditional religion and African culture can be used in conversion to Christianity, and ultimately to the building up of the local church.

## **1.5. Assumptions and suggested solutions**

### **1.5.1. Indigenisation of Christian religion.**

Christianity in Africa must not be seen as a school of thought based on Western world ideas, which does not recognise and accept the African way of life, which actually form the Black Christianity's way of life. Christianity must be presented as an alternative African way of

life. In order to do this, one has to compare religious elements in both religions and find out where they differ and where they agree, and whether one can accommodate the other one due to corresponding elements, in order for Christian religion to have a meaning to African people. Moyo (2001:6) maintains: There is a widespread desire for an African Christian ethics which correspond to the aspirations of the gospel of Christ among African Christians.” This desire needs to be met, or else the gospel and the Christian faith itself will become irrelevant in Africa, and the building up the local church would be difficult. A relevant contextual Christian ethic therefore is needed as a matter of urgency in Africa. Moyo (2001:12) goes further and says: “Cultural differences require that Christian ethics be conceptualised into a host culture.” The church must not despise African cultural elements when proclaiming the gospel in Africa. Black Africans will understand and accept the gospel of Jesus when preached to them within the context of their traditional way of life. Christianity ought to be relevant to the culture of Africa without loosing its message about Christ. Paul wrote to the congregation of Rome (Romans 1:14) “For I have an obligation to all people, to the civilized and to the savage, to the educated and to the ignorant.” Christianity need not make African people forget who they are, but should build reform and develop African culture without destroying it.

### **1.5.2 African Worldview**

Black Africans have their own traditional worldview, and they handle everything in their lives according to the way they view the world and life. Even religion is viewed in an African traditional worldview. Turaki (1999:10-11) indicates: “The African recipient was not simply a vacuum, but had an African worldview, heavily loaded with both religious and cultural values and perspectives.” Right from the beginning, Black Africans had been religious in accordance with their cultural values and perspectives. Africans understand and accept Christianity because they are religious by nature, and can be become Christians while not

abandoning their identity as Africans. Turaki (1999:10) states: “The African receives the gospel while standing on the platform of his African and religious and cultural heritage.”

### **1.5.3. Identifying common elements in the African Traditional and Christian religion.**

There are some elements in Christian and African Traditional religions which are common in character, and need to be identified, brought together and be compared. These actions will lead to the mutual enrichment and transformation in both religions. Theron (1996:14) says: “There are many elements in the traditional world and religion and which are closely related to the gospel and which can enrich and even change the Western form of Christian faith that was brought to Africa.”

### **1.6. Scope of this research**

This research will be limited to the determination of confusion in understanding salvation in Christian religion by African Christian people and how it relates to salvation in African traditional religion, especially with an eye to the building up of the local church. Misunderstanding the relationship of salvation between these two religions hampers the building up of the local church. The finding of the hypothesis and a solution to this problem will bring the research to its limit.

### **1.7. Where this study fits in the field of Practical Theology?**

This study is accommodated in the Philosophical Hermeneutical Tradition. According to Dilthey (1911:182) “Hermeneutic is a core discipline that could serve as a foundation for the entire domain of the humanities and the social sciences” In this part of practical theology, Dilthey’s hermeneutical formula rests on the concept of experience, expression and understanding and interprets cultural expression. Religion forms part of social sciences and humanities, and it is also a cultural practice and expression.

### **1.8. What kind of research is this?**

This research is an Explorative research where salvation has to be tested on its contribution towards the meaning of healing and deliverance. Heitink (1993:230) eludes that: “Explorative research is a mixture between research that seeks to describe and that seeks to test hypothesis. Explorative research always aims at the formulation of a theory of certain presuppositions, which might develop into hypothesis.” The test must give clarity in understanding salvation in Christian religion by African Christian people and how Christian salvation relates to salvation in African traditional religion in order to phase out the confusion, which hampers the building up of the local church and creates a desirable situation of mutual understanding between the African traditional religion and Christian religion.

### **1.9. Sources and literature available.**

African Christian church members of the congregation of the Uniting reformed Church in Southern Africa Mabopane West will be the main source of information. Quantitative research questionnaires will be formulated for them, and their answers will reveal how they relate salvation in Christian religion to salvation in African Traditional religion. Literature about African Traditional religion and Christianity will also be investigated.

### **1.10. Conceptualisation**

#### **1.10.1. Salvation**

Salvation means the act of saving, protecting, or preserving from the difficult situation one find oneself in. From the Christian perspective, salvation is the gracious act of God to deliver a sinner from the cursed situation of sin. From the African Traditional religious point of view, salvation is the result of the way of life developed by African Christian forefathers as a means of security in life.

### **1.10.2. Religion.**

Religion is a system of faith or worship. It is an outward manifestation of belief in a Supreme Being, a love and obedience to the Divine Being.

### **1.10.3. Christian Religion.**

In the Christian religion, the central figure is Jesus Christ as the mediator between God and humanity, while African traditional religion has its central figure in ancestors as mediators between God and humanity. In Christianity, salvation is achieved by faith in Jesus Christ. In African Traditional religion, salvation is achieved through leading a correct way of African Traditional life.

#### **1.10.4 African Traditional Religion**

African Traditional Religion is centered on ancestral worship. The ancestors are regarded as mediators between God and human and the ancestors negotiate with God in African Traditional Religion.

#### **1.10.5. Building up the local church.**

Building up the local church is the way of equipping church members to know who they are.

#### **1.11. Methodology.**

The method applied will be descriptive in nature. More focus will be on the description and an explanation of what salvation is in the context of Christian religion and an explanation of how it relates to salvation in African traditional religion and how the understanding will benefit the building up of the local church. The understanding of salvation in Christian religion by African Christians, and how it relates to salvation in African traditional religion which will be of advantage to the Building up of the local church, will be compared and tested against the nature of the act of building up the local church. The testing will assist the researcher to arrive at a verdict that is valid, reasonable, just and understandable (CF Heitink 1999:1764). The method will also be empirical in the sense that the researcher will have to obtain explanation and information from African Christians responding to questionnaires formulated for them. It will be empirical as the testing circle and regulative circle for practical thinking, which will lead the researcher to the actions informed by knowledge (CF Heitink: 1999:164). A regulative circle is empirical and generates knowledge to change the current situation of confusion, in order for Black Africans to understand salvation in Christian religion as it relates to salvation in African Traditional religion, and to create knowledge of how this situation will benefit the building up of the local church.



It will also be hermeneutical which involves the concept of understanding, experiencing and expressing the problem of misunderstanding the relationship between the two religions in the building up the local church.

Explorative research is needed to explore the field of confusion in misunderstanding the Christian salvation and its relationship with salvation in African traditional religion when thinking about the building up of the local church.

Explorative research is needed with the aim of developing hypothesis Heitink (1999:230) says: “Explorative research always aims at the formulation of a theory or of certain presuppositions, which might develop into hypothesis.”

## CHAPTER 2

### UNDERSTANDING RELIGION

#### 2.1. Introduction

Religion originates from human's awareness that there are certain things he/she cannot do for himself/herself like questions about life and around himself/herself that he cannot answer.

Human being wants to know where he/she comes from, and what his/her destination is.

On the other hand, human beings believed that there must be someone somewhere more powerful than themselves and who can help them in all that they cannot do for themselves and can answer for them some questions they cannot answer. Humans therefore developed a means or process to enable them to communicate with the Superpower or Supreme Being.

The means or process developed was Religion.

Maile (1955:11) says: "Therefore religion became a way of man's life in an attempt to answer basic questions about life."

#### 2.2. Meaning of Religion

The word *religion* is derived from Latin word *religio*. (obligation, bond, reverence)(Concise Oxford, 1990) Ferguson, & Wright (1988:575), define it as:"the act of giving of proper honour, respect and reference to the divine. It is a belief in a God or Gods. Religion is a practice and not a theory.

It includes the way of living but it is related to the divine. It is a human activity in an effort to reach God." On contrary to this effort of a human to reach God, Barth stresses the point that God is sovereign and there is no possibility of knowing God at all by human effort. Barth (1956: 1V: 45) says: "Apart from and without Jesus Christ, we can say nothing at all about God and man and their relationship one with another, and therefore the non-Christian religions are false attempts to find God. Barth (1956 1V: 70) sees religion as: "purely

human's effort to find God. He says: "All religions including Christianity is by definition unbelief, or a man's futile quest to find God by means of his own resources" On the other hand, religion as a belief in God, is expressed in worshipping, in rituals, and in the way one ought to live his daily life. Ferguson and Wright (1988:576) describe religion as: "a practice and it includes a way of living, but it is related to divine." From what is said by Ferguson and Wright, religion is purely human's effort to get to God. Religion being human's effort to reach God now results in everyone creating own kind of religion. Africans also have chosen their own kind of religion known as the African Traditional Religion and they practice it in the way they live.

But according to Barth, it is God by Himself coming to human, and not human going to God. In the Garden of Eden, it was God who came to Adam and Eve. (Genesis 3:9) It was God who came to Moses while looking after his father in law's sheep and called him. (Exodus: 3:4-10), it was God who came to the prophets and other people in the bible.

Religion as human's effort to reach God, became a way of life developed by human to express himself/herself before the Supreme Being or God he/she beliefs exists somewhere above him/her. Tenny (1963: 711) defines religion as: "An outward expression of spiritual devotion. It became to be applied to the services and ritual and rules by which faith and devotion to deity were expressed." Religion is a system of faith and worship and an outward manifestation of belief in a supreme being, of love and obedience to God. It can also be explained as a symbol, which facilitates to establish powerful pervasive and long lasting moods and motivations in people by formulating conceptions of general order of existence.

Turaki (1999:70 – 71) indicates that: "Religion results from the spontaneous awareness of a living power. Wholly other and infinitely greater than himself, a power of mystery because unseen, yet a present and urgent reality, seeking to bring man into communion with himself."

Idowu (1963: 75) on the other hand explain religion as: “A means by which God as a Spirit and man’s essential self communicates.”

In his book, *Religion: A Preface*, Wilson (1982:23) mentions that there are four types of definitions of religion. One is a descriptive definition of religion. This kind of definition reduces religion to one’s religious persuasion, affiliation or experience. The second one is a normative definition of religion. This means that religion is defined according to when one feels it should be. Religion becomes a means that one’s emotional needs should be met. Wilson’s third definition of religion is called an essential definition. It defines religion as a man’s way of relating to the transcendent. He states it as a human’s way of relating to the transcendent or is a state of being grasped by an ultimate concern. The fourth type of definition of religion is the functional definition. This gives an idea that, not all religious practices present spiritual expression towards the Supreme Being. Religion is functional in terms of what it does. (Wilson 1982:34) in defining religion from the functional point of view says:”Religion is a means whereby human attempts to cope with a variety of existential human needs which arises out of his/her sense of vulnerability in an hostile world, his/her awareness of his essential solitariness, his/her desire to find some meaning in life, his/her attempts to express both sorrow and joy, it is purely human creation to meet an infantile need of humankind. ”According to what is said by Wilson above, a human being is constantly attempting to reach a situation of joy in life, to get the meaning of his/her life, wants to escape from alienation and wishes to be in a good relationship with other people and nature. Human found religion as the only way in life to enable him/her to achieve these. Platvoet (1987: 7) on the other hand define religion as:” a commerce between believers and unseen beings” That is the established relationships between believers and the unseen beings. The unseen beings are spiritual beings believed to exist and actively involved with people.

It is because of this reason that for every person, religion is essential, for it forms a person's culture, safety and identity. Thorpe (1991:107) says: "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."

There are different kinds of religions practiced by different groups of people. Mbiti (1975:30) says: "we now have three major religions in Africa. These are Christianity, Islam and African Traditional religions."

According to the above-mentioned definitions and explanations about religion, it is clear that a human being was not able to cope with some powers and mysteries around him/her, but believed and accepted that somewhere above him/her there is a Superpower or Supreme Being who can help him/her cope with life and all the mysteries of life, and create safety for him. Human being believed he/she is somehow related to the Supreme Being, and can depend on him. The only means and process to contact him, and invite his help, is through religion. That is why Mbiti (1975:12) indicates that: "African religion is the product of the thinking and experiences of our forefathers. They formed religious ideas, formulated religious beliefs, observed religious ceremonies and rituals, and they told proverbs and myths which carried religious meanings, and they evolved customs and laws which safeguarded the life of the individual and his community."

Religion enables human to come nearer to the Supreme Being. It enables him/her to cope with unexpected circumstances that arise to cause anxiety in life from time to time.

Religion creates a sense of security and determines a person's identity. A human as his/her way of life has developed it in an attempt to communicate with the Supreme Being that is God. Human believes God is the almighty. He can harm or save people. Through religion, a human can make God happy and in turn God will save him/her.

Concerning the nature of religion, Aylward (1998:51) says: “Religion is a belief in Spiritual Beings, a system of relations between human beings and a Supreme power, superior and external to human consciousness and the visible world.” With the correct practice of religion, a human being hopes to achieve God’s salvation.

### **2.3. Understanding of religion from the Christian point of view.**

#### **2.3.1. Introduction**

Religion is a human’s response to the situation of relationship between himself/herself and God. Human does not initiate religion, but God initiates it. In this situation of relationship between God and a human being, only responds towards what God has already started. It is God who wants to leave in relationship with a human. He created human being and wanted always to be in contact with him/her. Heyns (1978:128) says: “God spreek die mens aan – en die mens laat hom deur God aangespreek – en dit is die antwoord van die mens.” (God addresses a person, and the person let himself/herself be addressed by God – and that is the answer of the person. – „Own translation“)

The human’s response to the word of God became known as *religion*. God binds Himself to human and human let himself/herself bound to God. Through this relationship, God give blessings to human and saves the human from all evils. The relationship between God and human being was further strengthened when God became human in Jesus Christ and it is through Jesus Christ that a human is able to contact God in faith and in worshipping. (CF Heyns 1978:129). The word *religion* as commonly used in Christianity and in African culture, got different meanings in correspondence to the context in which it is used. From the African cultural point of view, religion is an effort made by human to reach God or be in communication with God through human’s ancestors. It also became an African way of life and culture.

### **2.3.2. Christian view of religion.**

Christian religion started with the life and the teachings of Jesus Christ. It was from the beginning based on the life of Jesus Christ. The Greek word in the New Testament translated with religion is: “*threskia*” meaning the outward expression of spiritual devotion. It is a manifestation of belief in God through faith in Jesus Christ. It became applied in services and rituals and rules by which faith and devotion to deity were expressed (CF Tenny 1964:711) The Collins Concise Dictionary defines religion as: “a formal institutionalised expression of Christian belief in Jesus Christ “ Religion is Christian’s act of an expression of belief in Jesus Christ. Religion explains the content of the life of Jesus Christ and the life of Jesus Christ. It also explains the content of religion .In other words, religion is seen as God’s created means of contact between him and human beings. The Christian religion teaches that human is sinful and for him/her to be restored from his sinful situation, he must accept Jesus Christ as his/her Lord and Saviour (CF 1 Corinthians: 11:24,25).

### **2.3.3. Christianity as a way of life**

Christianity became the way of life for all those who belief in Jesus Christ. (Kung (1974:126) says: “Christianity exists only where the memory of Christ is activated in theory and practice.” It is a fellowship with God in Christ. Strong (1907:21) defining religion from the Christian point of view says: “Religion is a reciprocal relation or communion with God and under control of the dwelling spirit of God.” According to Weiland (1968:71) “Religion is when a human in his/her powerless status appeals to God who has all power and who does everything according to his will, to listen to him/her by forgiving him/her.” Christian religion is Jesus teachings about the Kingdom of God; it is about reconciling humanity with God. Christians belief that there is no other person given to people who can save them besides Jesus (Acts 4:12). Christ’s death and resurrection are the focal points of all Christians’ confession. They belief and accept that it is not a human seeking God, but it is God who is

continually seeking his lost people. (CF Meiring 1996:130). Christian religion is a reciprocal relation or communion with God and humanity involving revelation and faith. Practicing Christian religion is the process of building up the Kingdom of God as goal in spite of our sins (C Strong 1907: 19 – 23).



## CHAPTER 3

### UNDERSTANDING SALVATION

#### 3.1. Introduction

Human's main objective in life is to find himself/herself saved from the situations where he/she cannot save himself/herself. The only way through which human can be saved is the communication between him/her and God whom he/she believes is the provider of salvation. Human believes there is sin that separates him/her from God and that God will punish him/her. It is from sin that a human wants to be saved as he/she experiences problems and misfortunes in life because of sin. In African traditional religion, when there is a problem in the family, people give sacrifices and offerings to God influencing God to save them from the bad situation he/she is experiencing. Mbiti (1975:60) says: "People make offerings and sacrifices to draw the attention of God to their needs". Both Christianity and African traditional religion view salvation as a term, which expresses the provision of God for human plight. Ferguson & Wright (1988:610) say: "Salvation has been thought of as something that people must earn or merit by doing actions that please God and win his favour."

#### 3.2. Meaning of salvation.

Salvation is a term with a broad meaning. The Greek word for salvation is "*soterion*" which denotes deliverance. Bagster and Sons (1794:396) defines "*soterion*" as deliverance, to bring to safety, rescue and healing. In the NT "*soterion*" means to rescue from unbelief, to save from final ruin, to be in the way of salvation, being placed in a condition of salvation by embracing the Gospel (Rom 11: 11), salvation is a deliverance by the Messiah." According to Bagster and Sons in their Greek Lexicon, "*soterion*" or salvation, is a deliverance from almost any kind of evil, whether material or spiritual. Theologically it denotes the whole process by which a person is delivered from all that interferes with the enjoyment of God's highest blessings. The meaning of salvation as deliverance denotes a deliverance from danger

or evil. It might be from defeat in battle, trouble, enemies, violence, death or any kind of disaster. Salvation is more attached to the creation or a building up of healthy relationship, which ought to be present between humanity and God and between human and fellow human being. Tillich (1933-1955 Systematic Theology Volume 11, Part 111: 192-193) explains salvation as “healing” and says:” It corresponds to the state of estrangement as the main characteristics of existence. In this sense, healing means reuniting that which is estranged, giving centre to what is split, overcoming split between God and humanity, human and world, human and himself/herself.”

In the OT, the word save, expresses God’s actions in delivering his people, saving Israel from their enemies (Psm. 3:8 RSV). It denotes God’s goodness on his people (Psm.53: 60), God’s gracious works towards his people and building up His people to a nation. In the NT it refers to the good work of Jesus Christ as the healer and saviour (1Tim.1: 1).

Brandon (1974:35) says: “Salvation has the idea of being delivered from something bad. Secondly salvation denotes a good situation that results from such deliverance.” The person to be delivered is in a situation of suffering. And does not have the ability to save himself/herself. So salvation involves a deliverer or a saviour. The saviour acts on behalf of the victim to help the victim out of the difficulty he/she finds himself/herself in.

It is performed within the circumstances that cause suffering. Richards (1985:540) says. “Salvation portrays movement from distress to safety.” McKenzie (1968:45) says that: “Salvation is a victory and submission of your foes under your rule.” So, salvation is a sign of defeat against all that cause unhappiness in a person’s life. Salvation as a religious concept, different religious groups view it from their different religious perspectives. Salvation and religion goes hand in hand. Where there is salvation there is religion.

Salvation also refers to becoming a new being in Jesus Christ. It is the conquest of the Godless state through conversion and transformation for those who are converted. Paul to the

Corinthians says: (2 Cor.5: 17): “Anyone who is joined to Christ is a new being; the old one is gone, the new has come.” In this sense, salvation is reclaiming from the old and transferring into the New Being. It is a process of restructuring and building human being into a new being. Brandon (1974: 201 explains salvation as: “Deliverance or redemption of man from such fundamentally negative conditions as suffering, evil, finitude and death. It is deliverance from sin.” Africans Christians also regard salvation as being a deliverance from a difficult situation from which one could not deliver oneself. Van Reenen (1991: 290) says:”Salvation in African Traditional Religion is perceived as a resolution of cultural violation which have created social disharmony, re-establishes communal relationship and represents resolutions of social conflict.”

### **3.3. How Salvation and Religion relate to each other**

The relationship between salvation and religion is very important because where there is religion, there is salvation. The two work together. The one is the result of the other one. As mentioned above, human developed Religion as a system of faith and worship. It was developed as a means of contact and consultation with the Supreme Being. Human wanted to know about himself/herself, about his/her life, identity and safety, but realised that he/she cannot do these for himself/herself. He/she believed the Supreme Being above humanity could help him/her. Human therefore developed religion as a means to communicate with the Supreme Being. Idowu (1963:75) defines religion as: “a means by which God as a spirit and man’s essential self communicates.” The Oxford English dictionary (1978:410) defines religion as follows:”Religion is a recognition on the part of man of some higher unseen power as having control of his destiny and as being entitled to obedience, reverence and worship”

Human developed religion as a means of communicating with the Supreme Being whom he/she recognises as the higher unseen power and the almighty, in order to be helped and be

saved by Him. The relationship between Religion and Salvation is very important to humanity in the sense that it is God's action in saving human. He delivers a human from any difficult situation in which he/she finds himself/herself. By means of religion, humanity turns to the Supreme Being /God in his quest for Salvation. Maimela (1985:75) comments: "God revealed the divine self as the creator for the African people to whom they turn in their quest for salvation, joy, peace and prosperity in this life." To achieve God's salvation, human's religion must be a real manifestation of belief, love and obedience to God. The attainment of salvation by way of religion goes together with the performance of acts of worship. These are religious practices such as ceremonies, sacrifices, offerings, prayers, rituals and festivals. These are regarded as expressions of beliefs in practical terms. In his/her prayers, human considers God as father. Mbiti (1969:49) comments: "The sense of God's fatherhood is needed and experienced most in times of need such as danger, despair, sickness, sorrow, drought or calamity." The relationship between religion and salvation is experienced in the fact that humanity performs religion through the help of God, and God provides salvation.

According to Mbiti (1969:64) religious practices such as a sacrifice in African Traditional Religion refers to a case where an animal's life is destroyed in order to present it to God or to a spirit of the living dead. Sacrifice refers to the presentation of money, foodstuffs and other items to God, or to a spirit of the living dead. Pronouncing blessings or salvation is customary to religious life of people such as: "May God blesses you, God go with you, may God help you etc."

### **3. 4. Salvation in the context of African Traditional Religion.**

#### **3.4.1. Meaning of salvation in African Traditional Religion.**

African Traditional Religion is a religious way of life developed by African forefathers to serve the Supreme Being. Therefore African Traditional Religion (ATR) became part and parcel of African daily life and became their heritage. It is adapted from generation to

generation. Mbiti (1975:12) says: “African Religion is the product of the thinking and experiences of our forefathers. They formed religious ideas, they formulated religious beliefs, and they observed religious ceremonies and rituals. They told proverbs and myths which carried religious meanings, and they evolved laws and customs which safeguarded the life of the individual and his community.”

Every African person regards his/her traditional religion as his/her unique way of life; it is his/her Ubuntu or humanity, safety and identity. No African can exist without his/her traditional religion. You take it away from him/her, you have taken away what he/she is, his/her personality and identity because an African is an African because of his/her way of life, and that is his/her religion. The basic meaning of religion as described above is a belief in the Supreme Being. This belief compels one to behave the way one believes. African people behave the way they believe according to their traditional religion. Turaki (1999:70 – 71) says: “African Traditional Religion is a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful pervasive and long lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of general order of existence” Idowu (1973: 134) on the other hand says: “African Traditional Religion results from man’s spontaneous awareness of a living power. Wholly other and infinitely greater than himself, a power of mystery because of unseen, yet a present and urgent reality seeking to bring man in communion with himself.”

#### **3.4.2. The origin of African Traditional Religion**

According to Marett (1914: 98) “Primitive people would have become aware of mysterious forces which influenced their lives.” These powers were thought to be hidden in many objects associated with the life of the primitive people. Oosthuisen (1977:249) says: “These powers were later linked with spirits.” The primitive people came to a belief that spirits animated all objects. Spirits animated all objects like rivers, mountains, and trees.

With the development of the theory of animism by Taylor (1871:1917), animism came to be regarded as the origin of all religions. People later regarded these spirits as Gods because they were regarded superior to human since they survive after death and can move quickly from place to place.”Noss (1980:15) says: “all nature is possessed, pervaded, crowded with spiritual beings.” African Traditional Religion is a religion based on belief in the spiritual beings, and spirits of the ancestors. In primal religion, some basic elements are found which are fundamental to all other religious developments including the African Traditional Religion. Hopfe (1979: 16) says: “It has been surmised that primal religions represented about 75% of the total religious experience of humankind since the dawn of human history.” According to Taylor (1832: 1917) the primitive human first became aware of the possible existence of a soul through his/her observations of sleep and death and his/her own experiences of dreams and visions, and these observations and experiences led the early human to conclude that there was a superior existence of spirit resident within all things and he/she regarded this spirit to be powerful than his/her own.

### **3.4.3. How salvation is experienced in African Traditional Religion.**

Salvation in African Traditional Religion is experienced by Africans in terms of its meaning. It gives them a sense of security, it is their identity, and it is for them an act of deliverance from any kind of difficulty they may experience in life. It acts to help them solve any problem they encounter in life. It is their religion, it goes with them wherever they go and always live in its context as it builds up their culture. It determines their norms and standard of living. Salvation in African Traditional Religion refers to a good and acceptable way of life here and now. The African Christian people loyal to African Traditional Religion believe that salvation is not only meant for Christianity. God also prepared the way of salvation for African people long before Christianity, and it could be achieved through the African traditional way of life, e.g. Ubuntu. Turaki (1999:29) asserts that: “Salvation is not the

exclusive reserve for Christianity only, but there is the possibility of finding salvation outside of the church and Jesus Christ and in this case, in the traditional religions.” Turaki maintains that salvation derives its meaning from God as both Creator and Redeemer. This idea creates a belief in people that if God really prepared salvation also for Africans through their traditional religion, therefore African Traditional Religion prepared Africans to easily accept Christianity while on the other hand, retain most of their traditional ways of religious life. Mbiti (1975:30) says:” In many ways African Traditional Religion prepared the way for the conversion of African peoples to Christianity. But their conversion does not mean that they have abandoned all their former ideas and traditions.” Africans belief that God alone provides salvation because he is God of all religions and cultures of all people in the world. Noss (1980: 2) says: “All religions imply on one way or the other that human beings do not, and cannot stand alone, that they are vitally related with and even dependent on powers in nature and society external to themselves” So, their salvation comes through to them through the African way of practicing religion. They belief that salvation occurs when one lives and behaves according to African traditional way. The importance of African Traditional Religion becomes obvious in the fact that when the black African accepts Christianity or Islam, he does not abandon his/her traditional religious way of life because it is a source of his/her salvation and identity. Mbiti (1995:26) eludes that: “Even if people are converted to Christianity, they retain many of their beliefs since it is hard to destroy beliefs, and that Africans will never abandon their way of life, as this is their religion.” To know your identity, who you are, where you come from, what your destination is, are a blessing and a best thing to a person. The answer to these basic questions around the life of a person is realised in one’s religion. One’s religion will determine one’s relationship with God and with one’s fellow human being. Africans belief in God (Modimo) and that he is the initiator of salvation and bestows salvation to Africans through the intervention of their forefathers

(Badimo) who stand as mediators between them and God their creator. The ancestors are requested to intercede with Modimo (the highest) on behalf of the living. Africans also believe in the miraculous salvation that is being activated by their traditional doctors (dingaka tsa setso). The Traditional doctors use roots (ditlhare) and animal blood in involving ancestors in a process of healing and bringing luck to a person. Africans believe that God sustains his creation and people including Africans as well. Mbiti (1975: 40) says: “As a result of this belief, people speak of God as the Keeper, Upholder, Pastor, Preserver, Guardian, Caretaker, and Saviour. God is also known as the God who provides. Mbiti (1975: 47) sees God as the giver, the healer, helper, guard, and source of everything.” All Africans pray, to ask God to give them what they believe they need and come to their rescue because they believe God provides.

### **3.5 Salvation in the context of Christian Religion**

#### **3.5.1 Introduction**

Christianity is a system of religious belief in Jesus Christ. Christians are the people who believe in and follow Jesus Christ as the sole mediator between God and humanity. (1 Tim. 2. 5) “For there is one God, and there is one who brings human beings and God together, the man Christ Jesus.” People who believed in Jesus Christ were first called Christians in Antioch. (Acts: 11:26) The name Christianity was made by Christians to designate all that which brought to them of faith, life and salvation. The teachings, gospel and messages preached about Christ, together form the authoritative revelation of what Christianity is. Paul in (1Corinthians 15:1 – 2) says: “Good news which I preached to you, which you received, and on which your faith stands firm. That is the gospel, the message I preached to you. You are saved by the gospel if you hold firmly to it – unless it was for nothing that you believed.” For those who believe in Christ, for them Christian Religion means salvation.



### **3.5.2. Understanding salvation in the context of Christian Religion**

From the Christian point of view, the word salvation is used to denote deliverance from sin.

God sent the world His salvation through Jesus sufferings and death. (Eph: 2:13 – 18) Jesus

Christ is called the saviour, the mediator, and the redeemer. (John: 3:16)

Tillich: (1933:192 – 193) says: “Salvation as healing, means reuniting that which is estranged, giving centre to what is split, overcoming the split between God and man, man and the world, man and himself “ Salvation from its basic meaning, is a gift from God to humanity. It is therefore attached to the creation or the building up of a healthy relationship between God and humanity. It is a divine process of building up of the local church. It is not initiated by human, but by God Himself because of His love and grace. Paul in his letter to the Ephesians (Ephesians 2: 5 – 8) says: “Salvation is a gracious gift of God, received through faith.” A human was delivered from suffering from the distress by sin. From the beginning, after the fall of human, God started with the process of saving his people from an everlasting damnation brought upon them by sin. (Cf. Gen: 3:14 – 15) According to Ferguson & Wright (1988:610) “salvation is now understood in a new way. The sense of rescue or deliverance is still uppermost, but the reference is to deliverance from sin and from the wrath of God as the ultimate fate, which awaits the sinner. (Rom. 5: 9 – 10) Salvation is understood comprehensively as the sum-total of the benefits bestowed by God upon the believer. (Luk. 19: 9. Rom.1: 16) Schoeman (1980:43) in Systematic Theology 111 Unisa regards salvation being actualised in people’s lives in various degrees. He outlined the stages of salvation in men’s lives as: “election, calling, regeneration, faith, conversion, justification, sanctification and perseverance.” Election or predestination is God’s decision as to who must inherit salvation and as to who must be destined for damnation. God elect and through preaching, human is called. The word preached, works in human’s life through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and a human get a sense of having been called by God to live the life of salvation.

The relationship between calling and regeneration is proven by the fact that the internal calling is a confirmation of an outward calling by the word and therefore coincides with regeneration. (Acts 16:14, Rom. 11:29). From the abovementioned explanation, it is clear that a human being cannot save himself/herself, but depends only on the grace of God for his salvation. In (Titus 3: 4, 5) it is written: “But when the kindness and love of God our saviour was revealed, he saved us. It was not of any good deeds that we ourselves had done, but because of his own mercy that he saved us, through the Holy Spirit, who gives us new birth and new life by washing us.” Salvation is not something that one must earn or merit by doing actions that he thinks may please God and win his favour. It is only a gift of God and it cannot be separated from the person of Jesus. Salvation in the context of Christian Religion, emphasis is more placed on the spiritual salvation. The other two stages in salvation are: faith and confession. These two stages are described as fruits of regeneration. In the OT the word used for faith is ‘aman’ which indicates firmness and certainty, to be assured. Richards (1985:113) says: “aman” expresses: “firm conviction- conviction based on the reliability of what is believed.” In the NT it has a meaning of trust, especially trust in God.

Confession is word translated from the Greek word “homologeō” meaning to acknowledge. Richards (1985:183) says: “To confess meant that one agreed with a charge brought against him; it was to acknowledge guilt before the court.” Confession is also understood as an act of lying down of an old person and the resurrection of a new person. This means repentance, sin confession and forgiveness of sin. Faith and conversion lead to justification and sanctification. Justification is a word found in the OT and in the NT. The Hebrew word in the OT is ‘hitsdik’, and it was used in the courts of justice, and had a meaning of a judicial announcement that the accused is discharged from the accusation. In the bible it is God’s judgement of the acquittal where the sinner receives a new attribute from God. In the NT, the Greek word for justification is “dikaio-o” with the same meaning with “hitsdik” in the OT.

God consider that a human being has fulfilled all that was required by law from him/her. The sinner is no more guilty before God. (Acts 13:39, Rom. 8:33). In general justification can be defined as: “Gods legal announcement of an acquittal of a human being from the accusation of breaking God’s law.” A human being is found no longer guilty on the ground of Jesus righteousness, that fulfilled all the requirements of the law against the sinner. Berkhof (1958:510) says: “Dikaio-o means to declare a person to be just and acceptable to God.”

Salvation on the other hand is sanctification. This word is also found in the OT and NT. In the OT it is translated from the Hebrew word “qadash” meaning to be holy. From its root “qad” it means to cut with the aim of separating. The root meaning of sanctification means to separate with the aim to dedicate to God. Therefore a person or a temple or a nation like Israel, was sanctified, built up as a nation and separated from other nations by God to dedicate her to Himself. A person is sanctified by separating him/her from sin and is dedicated to perform work for God. In the NT, the word used for sanctification is “hagiazoo” meaning to make holy. Berkhof (1958: 527) says:”Hagiazoo” or sanctification is used in the sense of separating from ordinary purposes for sacred purposes.” This boils down to the primary meaning of setting and separating apart in consecration and devotion to the service of God.

Perseverance is another word in the path of salvation. It means that God through the work of the Holy Spirit gives all those justified and sanctified a firm hold to remain steadfast to faith. Christians experience their salvation through the stages as explained here above. They are elected, called, are born again, have faith, converted from sin, are justified, and sanctified and persevere in their faith.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **Relationship between African Traditional Religion and Christian Religion in the understanding and achieving Salvation.**

#### **4.1. Introduction.**

The relationship between African Traditional Religion and Christian religion in the understanding and achieving salvation can be realized in the way each religion is practiced in an effort to achieve salvation. The relationship can be realized when the two are brought together to find out where they differ and agree as far as the understanding and the achieving of salvation is concerned.

Gehman (1989:220) says: “Despite the many differences between African Traditional Religion and the Christian Faith, there are many similarities and points of contact which can be used as bridges for the gospel.”

#### **4.2. Similarities**

As already mentioned in chapter 1.4.4, there are elements of similarities and points of contact between African Traditional Religion and Christian Religion in their efforts of reaching God and acquiring salvation.

##### **4.2.1. The belief in the existence of one God.**

There is a belief of the existence of one God in both African Traditional Religion and Christian Religion. God is recognised as the Creator and the Preserver of all things and as provider of salvation. Mbiti (1971:09) states that:”The Akamba recognise God as Mulungu, the creator and the preserver of all things.” God also has provided evidence of his existence to all people through creation. Paul in (Acts 14:17) says:”But he has always given evidence of his existence by the things he does, he gives you rain from heaven and crops at the right times, he gives you food and fills your hearts with happiness.” In African Traditional Religion, it is believed that God is involved in the maintenance of the world and people’s

life. Gehman (1989:192) comments: “For African Traditional Religion recognised the continued involvement of God in the maintenance and operation of the world. God is one who provides food, sunshine, rain, children, health and protection.” According to what is said above, God is the provider of salvation, he is regarded as a king and as a judge. As king he rules all the people in the world and as a judge he judges them and acquits them from their wrongdoings. He punishes those who contravene national traditions and moral life. Gehman says African people do call upon God for help in times of dire distress through worshipping him. Mbiti (1970:43) also agree to this because he regards worshipping as: “man’s act or acts of turning to God for help and security. During the time of difficulties like distress, illness, African people do seek for God in their prayers and sacrifices.” God is believed to be involved in the whole life of human being to save and protect him/her from all the unfavourable situations. Mbiti (1970:178) tells how different tribes in Africa call God. “The Illa describes God as the deliverer of those in trouble, the Abaluyia calls him the one who saves, helps and guides, and the Barundi have a name (Haragakiza) meaning the saviour.”

#### **4.2.2. The idea of reconciliation between God and humanity**

Reconciliation between humanity and God is also known in African Traditional religion more or less as it is known in the Christian religion. When one or the nation has done something wrong, it is regarded to have distanced himself/herself from God. Prayers and sacrifices are made to the almighty God so that the one who distanced himself/herself from God be reconciled with him.

In the general term, reconciliation means to become friendly with someone after estrangement, it is a re-establishment of friendly relations between two or more people or settle a quarrel. From the theological perspective, Ferguson and Wright (1988:54) say: “reconciliation arises from the universal sinfulness of mankind and man’s inability to deal with the problem posed by sin.”

The process of reconciliation is the action by which enmity between God and humanity, human and other human being is changed to friendship. (Cf: Matt. 5:23, 24) The idea of reconciliation is the turning aside the wrath of God against the sinner. Berkhof (1958:374) says: "It has the effect, therefore, of warding off the wrath God from the sinner." According to (2 Corinthians 5:19) the fact that God reconciled human beings to himself is evident that he does not reckon unto them their sins. Reconciliation only takes place when the demands of the law are met, and that God is satisfied. When human and God are reconciled, a sacrifice is needed as a means to appease God and the sin is removed. Berkhof (1958:379) is also commenting that: "Even among the gentiles sacrifices were brought not to men, but to God."

#### **4.2.3. God's Grace**

Both African Traditional Religion and the Christian Religion accept God's common grace. Through the grace of God, all people are blessed and saved by God. Gehman (1989:219) says: "But there is much more than a knowledge about God. There are many other evidences of God's prevenient grace operating among traditional Africans." In the background of what is said above, it becomes obvious that God's grace is known and accepted by both African Traditional Religion and Christian Religion. The word grace has been translated from the Greek word "Charis" meaning the kindness of a master towards a slave. From the religious perspective, Tenney (1963:322) defines grace as: "the kindness of God to man." (Luke 1:30) Grace is used to express the concept of kindness bestowed upon someone undeserving thereof especially a kindness bestowed upon the sinner by forgiving his/her sin by God himself through Jesus Christ. Paul in his letter to the Ephesians (2:4, 5) said: "by grace we are saved." Tenney (1963:322) further defines grace and says: "Grace therefore is that unmerited favour of God towards fallen man, whereby, for the sake of Christ who is the only begotten of the father full of grace and truth. He has provided for human's redemption (John 1:14)" Richards (1985:317) says: "The term grace, portrays the compassionate response of

one who is able to help another person in need.” It is the feeling of helping the poor. God is compassionate and loving. He loved human beings from the beginning, and will continue loving him. The term “Ubuntu” from the African people in their traditional life means a situation of showing mercy and compassion towards other people in the community. In (Matt. 22:39) Jesus said: “Love your neighbour as you love yourself” is a good example of gracious deeds. From the Christian point of view, God’s grace reached its climax with the crucifixion of the Son of God Jesus Christ. “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that everyone who believes in him may not perish, but must have an everlasting life.” (John 3:16)

#### **4.2.4. Worshipping God.**

Worshipping means to pay divine honour to deity in a religious service. It is used as a term of respect to God. Worship denotes a service of a servant to his/her master/mistress. Tenney (1963:899) explains the word worship as translated from the Hebrew word meaning to honour, reverence, and homage paid to superior beings or powers whether men, angels or God. It is used of the divine honours paid to deity whether heathen religious or the true and living God.”

Worshipping consists of preaching, prayer, offerings and sacrifices. In the NT, the word worship is translated from the Greek word “latreuo”. Bagster and Sons {1794:249) says:”latreuo” means: “to be in service as a servant, to serve, to render religious service and homage, to offer sacrifice and offering.” Worshipping is an honour paid to deity whether of the heathen religions or the true and living God. It consists of sacrifices and offerings to appease God or the spirits of the ancestors.

In worshipping, there is a community of people who love one another who shares and prays for one another. This happens in both Christian religion and African traditional religion. Africans generally live a participative life. Theron (1996:4) is of the opinion:“ life for the

individual only has meaning and only significant if it is participated life, part of this vital union, living in harmony with this unity, maintaining it and participating in it.” The Setswana slogan:”Motho ke motho ka batho batho ba bangwe” meaning a person is a person because of other people”, (own translation) reflects Theron” opinion. Mulago (1989:120) also comments: “For Black Africans, living means existing in the bosom of the community, it means participating in the sacred life.” Singing in worship is another common element in both African Traditional Religion and Christian religion. The similarities between African Traditional Religion and Christian religion, can serve as a preparation for the African people to accept the Gospel and develop in the building up of the local church. Gehman is of the opinion that: “While there is no hope of salvation in African Traditional Religion, there is preparation for the gospel. Through God’s revelation and conscience as reflected in African Traditional Religion, God has prepared Africans for the Gospel. They know much truth about God”

The similarities and points of contact between African Traditional Religion and Christianity enrich and supplement each other in the common understanding and of, and achieving of salvation in both religions.

### **4.3. Differences**

There are elements of similarities between African Traditional Religion and Christianity, but there are also elements of differences.

#### **4.3.1. Central figure in worshipping.**

In the Christian religion, Jesus Christ is the central point. He is regarded as leader and Saviour. Christian’s belief that without Christ, there is no salvation. God provides salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. (John 3:16) Luke in (Acts 4:12) says: “Salvation is to be found through him alone In the entire world there is no one else whom God has given who can save us” (Good News Bible). In the African Traditional Religion, the ancestors are the



intermediaries between God and humanity. There is a belief among the African people that an ordinary person cannot approach his/her most senior, maybe his/her chief by himself/herself, but must have an intermediate agent. In the same way, God can only be approached and reached by the help of the ancestor as an intermediate agent. Mbiti (1967:68) emphasizes this point by saying: “It is a widespread feeling among African people that man should not, or cannot approach God alone or directly, but that he must do so through the mediation of special persons or other beings.”

#### **4.3.2. Belief in powers**

Oosthuizen (1977:249) says: “There is a belief among the African people that there are powers manifesting themselves in different objects on earth like in rivers, mountains forests etc. Mbiti {1969:197) state that: “The whole psychic atmosphere of African village life is filled with belief in this mystical power. African people know that the universe has a power, force or whatever else one may call it.” These powers are then linked with spirits and these have influence on the lives of African people. Meiring (1996:2) is of the opinion that because of the belief in powers- “animism” or the veneration of spirits emerged.”

The powers as believed to be playing an important role in African Traditional religion, became a great influence on people’s lives, in every action taken in life, harmony with these powers should be maintained. (Cf: Theron 1996:140) “Therefore every action, practice or custom, be it religious or non-religious, there is a ritual action that aims at maintaining or restoring the harmony and balance of the powers in the cosmos.”

From the Christian point of view, there is no belief in powers manifesting in certain objects. Christian’s only belief in the power of God through Jesus Christ. In (Mathew 28:18) Jesus said unto his disciples: “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth.....” Christians believe that what is important, is to live in harmony and in obedience to God and

his word. Nothing is to be put in the place of God. (Exodus 20:4) “Do not make yourselves images of anything in heaven or on earth or in water under the earth.”

#### **4.3.3. The Concept of time.**

Traditionally African people mark time by events. Time is always explained and determined by the events happened in that point in time. Not much is prepared for the future since events that will take place in future are not known. Future is not very important. Meiring (1996:12) says that for traditional African: “Life is lived here and now, while the future will be important when it becomes the present. There is thus little concern with making provision for the future.” The concept of time has therefore an influence in African Traditional Religion. No preparations are made for the life in future because life is here and now.

#### **4.3.4. The idea of Sin.**

Anything done or said in contrary to the will of God is Sin. Berkhof (1958:377) defines sin and says: “Sin may be considered in its formal nature as the transgression of the law.” Barth (1956:253) says: “Sin in its character it is the rebellion of man against God.” Sin is the condition of estrangement from God arising from transgression of the law of God. Ferguson & Wright (1988:64) define sin as: “The missing of a mark or goal or the breach of the relationship to ungodliness, perversion or rebellion.” Sin originated in the free choice of a human. The fall of Adam and Eve is the transgression of God’s law on their free will. So, sin is a voluntary act on the side of a human being. Human being placed himself/herself in opposition to God. The first sin occurred because of temptation. Berkhof (1958:231) says: “Sin is an evil course which carries untold misery with it.” Traditionally, Africans do not in the first place see sin as a transgression against the law of God, but against other people and the community. Harm to others is seen as sin. Meiring (1996:18) says: “Accordingly, this human centred ethic fails to enable person to act autonomously and in obedience to God without reference to the community.”

#### **4.3.5. Sacrifice and Offering.**

Sacrifices and Offerings are some of the acts made during worshipping. They are popular in the African Traditional Religion. There are different kinds of sacrifices and offerings. These are made to appease God or the spirits of the ancestors in an effort to achieve blessings and salvation from God. Sacrifices were mostly made by the Israelites in their worshipping. Different sacrifices were made depending on the purpose the particular sacrifice was made for. There was a sacrifice for sin, thanksgiving, Passover etc.

In the NT, sacrifices were no more necessary because Christians see the death of Jesus Christ as fulfilling all that the OT sacrifices foreshadowed. The word sacrifice is translated from the Greek word meaning to appease, to expiate, to make an atonement or expiation for. (Cf: Bagster and Sons 1794:201) Ferguson and Wright ((1988:609) defines sacrifice as: “to put away the wrath of God.” African people took over the practice of sacrifice into their traditional worshipping in an effort to appease God and the spirits of their ancestors. When a sacrifice is made, the animal life is destroyed. Mbiti (1969:58) explains that: “Sacrifice refer to case where animal life is destroyed in order to present the animal to God, supernatural beings, spirits or the living dead.” Christians do not make a sacrifice. Their sacrifice is the death of Jesus Christ, and their bodies are offered to God as living sacrifices. Paul to the Romans (12:1) said: “Offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God.” Offering is a presentation of foodstuffs and other items to God, spirits and the living dead. But the spirits and the living dead in the presentation of both sacrifices and offerings are regarded as intermediaries between God and a human being. Mbiti (1969:59) says that the making of sacrifices and offerings is an act of renewing contact between God and a human being, spirits and a human to build fellowship. When these are done correctly, God’s blessings will come to a human being.

#### **4.3.6. Function of sacrifices and offerings.**

In African Traditional Religion sacrifices and offerings were made to keep an ongoing contact between human being and God, spirits and the living dead. If contact is not there between a human being and God or the supernatural being, human beings experience misfortunes and some kind of hardship. Sacrifices and offerings are also made when life is not going well in the family. The head of the family present the sacrifice and calls the names of the family's ancestors and will tell them about the misfortunes experienced in the family and will ask them to help. Sacrifices and offerings are also made when there is a success in the family as a thanksgiving. Sacrifices and offerings always go together with a prayer. Mbiti (1969:59) says: They pray to God when they make sacrifices, and at funerals, the prayers are intended to secure peace for the living dead while at harvest time, they express joy and gratitude to God.”

Occasionally the spirit of the ancestor will appear to an individual in a dream and ask for a sacrifice (e.g. to slaughter a cow, goat or a sheep). An ancestor can also appear to an individual, but saying nothing. In this case, a sacrifice is also made for the ancestor to rest in peace and no more haunting the family member alone. It is interesting to realize that all sacrifices made in African Traditional Religion, are all made to the benefit of an individual and not to glorify God or for forgiveness of sins. Mbiti (1975:59) says: Offerings which like sacrifices, are given for both communal and personal or family needs, include whatever people wish and are able to give” From the Christian point of view, sacrifices and offerings started during OT time. After the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt and entering Canaan, the Lord provided them with the system of sacrifices and offerings as acts of worship. Sacrifice involves the shedding of blood, mostly of animals. During the NT time, no sacrifices are made because Christians believe that the death of Jesus Christ fulfilled all that the OT sacrifices foreshadowed.

## CHAPTER 5

### BUILDING UP THE LOCAL CHURCH

#### 5.1. Introduction

Before explaining what the building up the local church is, it is necessary to know what the church is. There are different churches with different names, but at the end of the day, they are one church as long as they belief in Jesus Christ as saviour and Lord.

#### 5.2. Understanding the local church.

The word church has got different meanings though referring to one group of people described in different names. The church means the people of God. “But you are the chosen race, the king’s priests, the holy nation, God’s own people. At one time you were not God’s people, but now you are his people” (1 Peter 2:9) Paul on the other hand sees the church as the body of Christ. “All of you are Christ body, and each one is part of it. “(1 Cor. 12:12, 27) The meaning of the word church as the people of God is found in the OT and NT.

In the OT, the word indicating people is “qahal” meaning an assembly, a gathering. Bagster & Sons (1794:655) says: “Qahal” means: to call together, to assemble, it is a meeting of people, a congregation, assemblage of persons or a multitude of people. When qahal is qualified by the word Jahwe – qahal Jahwe, it means the people of God. In the NT, the word church means a congregation or a community. The Greek word translated by the word church is: “Ekkletoi” meaning the elect. “Ekklesia tou Theou” means the elect of God. Bagster explains Ekklesia on the basis of the verb “eklego”, meaning to pick out, to choose, to call out, to choose out as the recipients of special favour and privileges (CF Acts 13:17, 1 Cor. 1:27). According to the explanations above, the church is regarded as the public assembly of the citizens of the kingdom of God. The word Ekklesia is better explained on the basis as used in the Septuagint as a technical term to translate the OT concept “Qahal – Jahwe” – the people of God as Israel. In the NT the word “Ekklesia “became known as the assembly,

which God has appointed and assembled. The church was assembled together during the outpouring of the Holy Spirit during the Pentecost day. During that occasion, people confessed their faith in Jesus Christ and became the church bound to Jesus Christ as their head and their Lord (CF Acts 2:37, 38). Kung (1968:81) describes the church as the eschatological community of God. He says: "In this way, the new community of disciples comes to see itself as the eschatological community called and chosen by God." Kung also sees the church as the "Kuriake" which means it belongs to God. The church is the community of people gathered together by God, and God being their central figure and Lord. By taking over the term "Ekklesia," the early Christian community made its claim to be the true community of God (CF Kung 1968:83). This brings me to the conclusion that the church as the people of God is not ultimately a human structure, but a creation and act of God in Christ. Strong (1907:887) defines the church as: "The whole company of regenerated persons in all times and ages, in heaven and on earth. It is that redeemed humanity in which God in Christ exercises actual spiritual dominion (John 3:3, 5).

On the other hand, speaking about the local church, it is not referred to a section or a subdivision of the real church. The local church is the church in its entirety. It is not a small cell of the whole, it is the real church. Kung (1968:85) says: "The whole church can only be understood in terms of the local church and its concrete actions. The church is known by her attributes as the missionary, by her mutual love, social justice, purity of faith, charismatic and other good aspects considered to be relevant to the church. The church as the body of Christ, it is obvious that faith is an essential tie that binds the people of God to each other. (CF Eph. 4:4-6, 1 Cor. 12:12 – 27). It is a holy church, the people of God. Paul to the Corinthians speaks about the church as: "Those sanctified in Jesus Christ, called to be saints! Cor.1: 2). The Holiness of the church is the contribution by her union with Jesus Christ. The church is the domain of the Holy Spirit, which makes it Holy (1 Cor. 6:14 – 7:10, Rom 1:1, 7, 15, 25)

The church is also a Catholic church; her boundaries are not demarcated by place or time, but her faith in Jesus Christ. The church is also the apostolic assembly. She is the witness of saving events through Christ and the Holy Spirit. The church witnesses the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus (Acts 1:22). The apostolicity of the church refers to its foundation on the apostolic teachings. It is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets as the recipients of God's revelation (Eph.3: 4, 5). The church is also a Messianic community. It is the community which proclaims the coming of the kingdom of God (Luk. 11:20, 11:32) It is the church that the world senses God at work and calls it out as the people of God's own possession (Peter 2:9) Inch (1982:94) says: "The church is the signpost to direct the prodigal son home to a loving father."

### **5.3. The Church as Missionary**

#### **5.3.1. Introduction**

The church as missionary means that the church has been sent. The church started its missionary work the time when Jesus sent out his disciples to make all people his disciples (Matt. 28:19 – 20). Missionary work has to do with the crossing of boundaries. The work of the church as a missionary is mainly focussed on the building up of the local church. The church lives within the field and situation of mission work where it should share, serve, care and reconcile people with God, and man with his fellow man. The church as a missionary is not the church in the building, but the church with the people in the world. The pastor is not the pastor in the building, but the pastor to the mission in the world. God's mission work is the centre of the life of the church. God is in the world and speaks to His people through the church. He loves the world and wants the world to be saved (John 3:16). In her long

range planning, the church match best with the current strengths and the community and serve the community with the aim of building up the local church. Mission work by the church is God's mission (Nel 1990:9) says: "Building up the local church does not only has a bearing on the goal of the church, but it is directly subordinate to God's purpose for his church on earth." The church must continually asks herself a question: "What is God's calling to her as church to accomplish in mission? What Does God want the church to do?" The church's focus must be on the accomplishment and the achievements in God's calling to mission.

### **5.3.2. The understanding of mission**

The understanding of the church's mission work is to bring Christ to all those who have not yet heard of him as the king and saviour. God self is the initiator of mission work. It is God self sending the church to cross the frontiers or reach out to the world, to the unchurched, to those who have not yet heard about God's salvation in Jesus Christ. When the church have been planted and grown, it moves further to go and plant where it is not yet done. The fact that God is the author of the mission work, it is experienced in his creation. God created a human being to communicate his love and being to the world, so that the world can know him. But God put this important work initiated by him on the shoulders of the church. God do mission work through the church through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to reach out to the world, to the people who have never heard of the gospel and to be told the good news that Jesus is the Lord? Callahan (1997:124) says: The world is the centre of the mission work."



The church as missionary has been called to communicate the gospel through the Word and deed (CF Nel 1988:11). Jesus Christ was a missionary, and was the model for the church as missionary. Bosch (1980:241), Kritzing, Meiring & Saaiman (1994; 4) comment: The planting of the church...has always been an important goal of mission. It is a glory and manifestation of God's divine grace." Nel (1988:12) stresses the point that: "The building up of the local church is therefore rightly aimed at leading a congregation to an existence that attracts, and to functioning that makes possible an effective, efficient search for those who are lost."

#### **5.4. The Church as the representative of the kingdom of God.**

##### **5.4.1 The understanding of the kingdom of God.**

The kingdom of God is where God rules and where the will of God is done, it is God's area of activity on earth as the head of his kingdom. The word kingdom does not appear frequently in the NT as it appears in the OT. In the NT, the word kingdom of God was the central theme of the messages of Jesus Christ. John the Baptist also proclaimed about the coming of the kingdom of God or the nearness of the kingdom of God. (Matt. 3:2)

The word kingdom in the NT is translated from the Greek word "Basileia" dynamically meaning rule, reign, kingship as well as the concrete meaning of the realm; territory governed by the king (CF Ferguson & Wright 1988:367) is the kingdom of God. When John the Baptist and Jesus Christ proclaimed about the kingdom of God that was coming or was near, they were announcing the realization of Israel's hope that was the fulfilment of the covenant promises made to Israel in Abraham, it will be the new and the final order at the end of history that has arrived with Jesus Christ. Because of the fulfilment of the promises of

the covenant that are at hand, that the time has come, people are called to repent. “The right time has come, he said, and the kingdom of God is near.” (Mark 1:15, Matt. 3:2)

#### **5.4.2. The relationship between the church and the kingdom of God.**

The church is the representative of God on earth and has an important task to perform the work of informing the world about the kingdom of God. The church has been commissioned by God to preach the gospel, to tell the world the good news about the kingdom of God/(Matt 24:14). The citizens of the kingdom of God have built up the church as the representative of the kingdom of God. The citizens are those who by repentance and faith submit to the redemptive Lordship of Christ (CF Ferguson & Wright (1988:369) The keys and opening of the door of the kingdom of God is in possession of the church (Matt. 16:18, 19) The church is the oriented to the kingdom of God. With her preaching and sacraments, confession, and fellowship, the church is one of the embodiments of the kingdom of God as a saving act of God. God rules in his kingdom with his word, and it is this same word preached by the church.

#### **5.5. Building up of the local church.**

Building up the local church is a metaphor indicating what has to be done to the church so that the church is what it ought to be as a church of God. So the building of the local church metaphor is a process of bringing the local church to the level where it conforms to the meaning of what it has to be. It is to uplift the church to the point where it fulfils to its characteristics as a body of Jesus Christ and as a chosen nation of God.

Building up the local church metaphor is found in the OT and in NT. In the OT, the building up of the local church metaphor, means to build the nation of God namely Israel. God Himself does the building. The Hebrew word in the OT translated by building up is: “Banah” meaning to build, to erect. Nel (2004:2, 3) says: “God build his nation by making a covenant with them.” (CF Jeremiah 31:31 – 34) Bagster and Sons (1794:95) defines “banah” as to

build, to construct, to repair, and to restore. “Banah also means to build a house for anyone, means again to increase the family by obtaining children.

It also means to build the nation of God by adding to the nation of God those people accepting God as their God. It has a perspective of mission work Nel (2004:3) says: “Similarly, there is a missionary perspective in the imagery of building in the OT. The gentiles who turn to Jahwe, are built into the people of God.” “And if they learn well the ways of my people, and swear by my name, surely as the lord lives, as they once taught my people to swear Baal – then they will be established among my people. “ (Jeremiah 12:16, Ezekiel 36.)

From the beginning, God created everything, and at the end created man in his image. God build up the man by giving him his commandments and with the purpose that his name be glorified. The main objective of building up the local church is the glory of God, the complete establishment of God’s kingdom both in the hearts of believers and in the world. It was still for the sake of his name that he led the children of Israel out of Egypt to the Canaan. The building up of the people of God metaphor refers to the process of building up the church of Jesus Christ. In the NT, the Greek word translated with the building up is “Oikodomew”. It means to build a house, to build a village, repair, and restore reconstruct and to establish. (CF Bagster & Sons 1794:284). God is still the builder. This metaphor of building up the local church portrays the fulfilment of the building of the people of God in the OT. In the OT, God performs his work of building through his spoken word and which was passed through to his people by prophets and priests who performed the duty of reconciliation between God and his people (Esaia 58:1). During the NT times, God performed his work of building up the local church through his son Jesus Christ. Now God speaks through his son, reconciles the world to himself through his son Nel (2004:3) says: “He is the one by whom and through whom that the new temple of God will be built. He is

the one who builds his congregation.” (Matt.16: 18) Through him all things were made. (John 1:3) In him God regenerates his people by renewing them internally by his spirits and his Forgiveness on their sins through faith in Jesus Christ. This is God’s gracious work on man in building up his church. The word of God teaches that, regeneration is not the result of human endeavour, but a creative act of God’s spirit (John 1:3). Salvation from the Christian point of view is the act of God in building up his church (1 Cor. 6:20, 7:23). The building up of the local church is God’s process of equipping and training believers to become the true nation of God, to become what they ought to be in the eyes of God. When the believers are well trained and well equipped, they are in the capacity of training and equipping other believers to become what they ought to be as children of God. Nel (2004:3) says: “The congregation itself has to build. The believers are involved in the encouragement, strengthening one another, admonition, supporting one another, and building one another, and much more. ”Building up the local church is the act of developing the congregation that ultimately it becomes a missionary church. The church must be in the position to can cross the frontiers and perform the work which God has set the church for salvation of the world. Bosch (1980:17) says: “It is the task of the church in movement, the church that lives for others, the church that is not concerned of her, that turns her inside outwards the world.” The church as missionary moves towards the world and bringing the gospel to the whole world. God the father is the God of mission. He went out on mission to look for Adam – “Where are you?” (Gen. 3:9)

God sent out his only begotten Son to the world to proclaim the kingdom of God, thereafter, Father and Son sent the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit to convince the world that there is sin, and that there is forgiveness for everyone who believes in Jesus Christ. When believers were well trained and equipped with the power of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit now sent out the church on mission work. (CF Nel 2004) “in his mission work, God involves the

church.” The church self has been built up through God’s mission work, and now it is her turn because she is fit, matured and knowledgeable to cross the frontiers and bring good news to the world and by so build other churches to other parts of the world where there is no church. Through the process of building up the local church, God in his Trinity is glorified while the church is proclaiming his name through preaching, witnessing, teaching, worshipping, care of one another and through diagonal services. Christ sends the church as the father has sent him. (CF John 20:21)

### **5.6. The Purpose of Building up the Local Church**

Each and every building have been built with a particular purpose, and therefore unique. Building up the local church indicates the purpose with which the local church is being built. The way the building up of the local church is being built, gives an understanding of its nature and functions. The building work is god’s activity because through the church, God gives expression to his sovereignty over and in the lives of the people. The church is the revelation of the kingdom of God, it is God’s vehicle coming to the world, the church is God’s redemption plan for the world (CF Nel 2004:1,2) Building up the local church is God’s building up his kingdom in the world. In the building, God uses his church (people) through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit witnesses to the church that they are the children of God, and that they are the Holy nation. It is through the activity of building, that the church members comes to realize the different gifts given to them by God and be God’s co-builders. Pieterse, Dryer, vander Veven (2003:6) say: “” The distinctive nature of salvation can be determined by means of two sets of paired concepts: gifts and task. When believers actively dedicate themselves to the cause of salvation, they know God has given his task to them; God gives them the business of salvation to accomplish. The structural link between gift and task forms the basis of the gratitude with which believers perform their task, and in it they find their strength and courage to continue and preserve in the face of

setbacks.” God has fully engaged himself in the building up of the local church for the sake of his name and as a provider of salvation for all who are tasked with the building of the church namely his people. “Now then, give the Israel the message that I, the sovereign Lord has for them: What I am going to do is not for the sake of you Israel, but for the sake of my Holy name” (Ezekiel 36:22, 23). Israel was to serve the Lord as the model nation for other nations. The world should know God as the almighty out of the life and example of Israel.

Nel (2004:4) “The local congregation must reveal to the world that the only Triune is the only true God as he had revealed himself through his word.” This will happen when the local church mature and grow in its holiness and love for God. God build the local church to be the witness to the world that the world is convinced that the people outside feel compelled to be part of it and be built into it. The church is built to be perfect environment of God’s eternal kingdom. God is building up his church and involves people in the renewal of his covenant with his people through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

### **5.7. The content of building up the Local Church.**

God is building up the local church for the benefit of his people. God’s activity in building up of the local church is to equip and train members of the church to know who they are. They are the children of God. They must have the capability to identify themselves as the people of God, must know their destination, which is heaven. Members of the church must be enthusiastic to do what they ought to do as the church. God is building up the local church as a process of feeding the members of the church with knowledge to have vision and mission of what they are as a nation of God in Jesus Christ.

In the background of what the church is, the understanding of the building up of the local church is the purpose of building up the local church. One notices that the building up of the local church is God’s eternal plan that his name and kingdom be known to the world and that his people be saved.

## **5.8. Discipleship**

### **5.8.1. Introduction**

The building up of the local church refers to the church of Christ. It is the calling of people of different cultures to follow Jesus as their Lord and saviour with the aim of building up the kingdom of God.

Jesus preaching was focussed on the establishment of the kingdom of God and Jesus was doing this with great authority to win everybody for his kingdom (CF Matt. 7:28, 29) His messages about the kingdom of God, made people to follow him and became his disciples. Jesus emphasized the urgency of the coming of the kingdom of God. “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and belief in the gospel” (CF Mark 1:14, 15).

### **5.8.2. The Understanding of Discipleship**

Discipleship is a divine act of an individual inspired by the Holy Spirit in surrendering himself to Jesus Christ. Discipleship is an exercise of self-abandonment, and strife to be like Jesus as a teacher and master. Richards (1985:226) explains the character of a disciple: “He served the teacher in most ways, treating him as an absolute authority.” The disciple was not only expected to learn all that his rabbi knew, but also to become like him in character and piety. The Greek word for disciple is “mathetes” from the verb “menthano” meaning to learn. Thus a disciple is a pupil or a learner (CF Richards 1985:226) A disciple in this perspective is the one who wholly attaches himself to his teacher to get practical and theoretical knowledge, whether by instruction or experience. Tenny 1963:217) says: “Discipleship implies the acceptance in mind and life of the views and practices of the teacher.” The disciples of Jesus Christ were those people who accepted the teachings of Jesus Christ. The twelve apostles were the first to be his disciples (CF Matt. 10:1, 11:1.) Discipleship is an honest confession of a person that Jesus is the Lord, and giving self up to the fulfilling of God’s will. In accepting a call as a disciple, one is giving himself up in a spiritual situation because one is spiritually

touched and his life is transformed to a new life when called to follow Jesus as Lord and saviour. Dun (1992:2) says: “For any understanding of what the discipleship of Jesus Christ is and involves, must surely take its lead from the discipleship to which he actually called followers during his life and ministry.” Nel (1994:84) “Elkeen wat in verhouding met Jesus leef, is ook ‘n dissipel, en elk dissipel is lid van dieliggaam van Christus. In sekere sin sou gewoon gestel ka word dat Christenskap is dissipelskap en dissipelskap is lidmaatskap .”

### **5.8.3. Discipleship in the building up of the local church.**

The aim of building up of the local church is an important characteristic of discipleship. Those who listened to the teachings of Jesus Christ and accepted them showed a positive response towards accepting the kingdom of God and took recognition of the reality of God’s rule. Discipleship was an open community and everyone doing the will of God may become a member or a citizen and was in a position to go out to make other people also to become the disciples of Jesus Christ. In the building up of the local church, discipleship was more important because these disciples were intellectually trained and equipped to make other people disciples (CF Nel 1994:87, 95). Discipleship is characterised by mission work. Jesus great command was: “Go ye therefore, and teach all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the father and the son, and the Holy ghost (Matt 28:19). Discipleship became a carrying of good news, the gospel to the world. The disciples of Jesus became together as “Ekkleisia” and as called community of God. Discipleship is a characteristic of all those who believed in Jesus Christ, love each other, shared their food and belongings, and God added to their group those who were being saved (Acts 2:43-47) On the day of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, people listening to Peter and John telling them that God had made Jesus king and Lord whom they had killed. When they heard that, they were deeply troubled and said to Peter and John: “What shall we do brothers?” It was during this occasion that the church of Christ came into being (Acts 2:37-42).



## **CHAPTER 6**

### **THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH**

#### **6.1. Introduction**

The empirical perspective is of particular importance to the research in providing a research structure. It opts for the hard methodology of counting and measuring in order to formulate hypothesis. The empirical circle rests on the observation. It observes and experiences the environment about the happenings there.

#### **6.2. Understanding Empirical research.**

The Empirical perspective of the research is a process of comparing and and evaluating alternatives and testing them for an alternative seems to be preferable solution to what is experienced as undesirable happenings in a particular situation If the researcher experiences problem in the situation, the researcher has to judge the situation and seeks for a solution. When judgement is reached, the path of observation, experiencing, and decision to choose solution is completed. The experience gained in the past makes the research to continue observing the environment and gain another experience and further experience what is undesirable and desirable. The undesirable situation in our environment compels the researcher to consider and look for an alternative, which will be desirable and reasonable to the situation. The researcher has to compare and evaluate the situation and the alternative solution to an experienced problem in a situation.

The empirical perspective of the research contains inductive and deductive moments. Inductive has to do with the actual formulation of the Hypothesis while deductive is a drawing of conclusions from the hypothesis in the form of testable predictions (CF. G. Heitink 1999” 231). The test will give alternative solution to the problem that may have been experienced through observing the environment and which later led the researcher to the formulation of a hypothesis. That is the inductive and deductive moments in the research process. Comparing and evaluating facts carry out the testing to the hypothesis. In testing the

solutions, the researcher look into the relationship of facts that can be detected while observing the situation and see if they can proof the reality of certain effect of specific actions of people. If after empirical observation and testing, can be found that some acts can provide a desirable and acceptable situation, the hypothesis can be taken as a true solution to an existing problem.

The empirical research here is directed to a problematic situation where there is confusion in understanding salvation in Christian religion by African Christians as it relates to salvation in African Traditional religion. This situation hampers the building up of the local church.

### **6.3. The Empirical phase of this research.**

The main issue here is the finding, testing and evaluating the hypothesis on the research problem. In observing the situation of building up the local church, an undesirable situation is experienced. This situation is caused by the confusion in understanding salvation in Christian Religion by African Christians as it relates to salvation in African Traditional Religion. The confusion in understanding the difference between salvation in Christianity and African Traditional Religion is an obstacle in the building up of the local church because African Christians want to mix Christianity with African Traditional Religion. This becomes a problem for African Christian people to identify themselves as genuine members of the body of Jesus Christ, which is in fact the church. (CF 1 Corinthians 12:24 – 28) Barth (1956:1V:45) says: “Apart from and without Jesus Christ, we can say nothing at all about God and man and their relationship one with another, and therefore the non- Christian religions are false attempt to find God.” What is observed from our religious environment is a practice of religion from two different perspectives. One is from the Christian religious perspective and the other one is from the African Traditional religious perspective. The main objective of both Christian and African Traditional religious practices is to obtain salvation. From the Christian religious point of view, the salvation obtained leads to the building up of

the local church with Jesus Christ as centre. From the African Traditional religious point of view, the salvation obtained leads to the answering the basic questions about life. Maile (1955:11) says: “Therefore religion became a way of man’s life in an attempt to answer basic questions about life.” African Traditional Religion is on the other hand centred in the worshipping the spirits of the forefathers or ancestors. The relationship of salvations from the two religions is not well understood by Christians with African cultural background and the confusion in understanding this relationship, hampers the building up of the local church. The situation has become undesirable and unacceptable because there is an obstacle in the process of building the Christian church. It became necessary to draw up a quantitative questionnaire project with the purpose of finding out reasons for the confusion in understanding salvation and other elements in Christian religion by African Christian people as related to salvation in African Traditional religion, and try to achieve solution for the problem. In the questionnaire research project, there are two different groups of respondents. There is a group of Christians and a group of African Christian people not abandoned African Traditional Religion. The group of African Traditional Religion also call themselves Christians. They are full members of the Christian church, but remain loyal to many of the elements from African Traditional religion. From both these groups, each respondent disagrees or remains undecided or agrees to the questionnaire statement. The reaction of the respondent to the questionnaire statement will show the respondent’s understanding or is in confusion in understanding regarding: religion, salvation, meaning of church and the meaning of building up the local church in Christian religion as related to understanding in African Traditional Religion.

#### 6.4. Questionnaire Project Tables

The questionnaire project is based on 87 statements and 57 respondents. The statements are divided into four categories of understanding from Christian religion and African Traditional religion. Statements are as follows:

- Understanding religion in Christian religion.
- Understanding Salvation in Christian religion.
- Understanding meaning of church.
- Understanding the meaning of building up of the local church.

In what follows I will summarise and discuss the answers to the questions by first stating the question and then the explanation. (Q = Question)

##### Q2. What is your age?

Age	Frequency	Percent
21 – 35	20	35.09
36 – 45	21	36.84
46 – 75	16	28.07

The respondents in age groups 21 – 35 and 36 - 45 are in a bigger number than the age group of older people of 46 – 75. Group of young people is 36% and 37% to 29 of older people.

##### Q3. What is your gender?

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	31	54.39
Female	26	45.61

The males with 54% are more than females who makes 46% of the total respondents.

##### Q4. To which ethnic group do you belong?

<b>Ethnic Group</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Southern Sotho	3	5.26
Nothern Sotho	6	10.53
Tswana	45	78.95
Tsonga Ndebele & Zulu	3	5.26

The following ethnic groups were taken into account: Southern Sotho, Northern Sothos, Tswana, Tsonga and other: Zulu, Ndebele and Coloured. The Batswana are the biggest group at 79% than other groups mentioned.

**Q5. What is your highest qualification?**

<b>Education</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
1. No formal education	4	7.02
2+3. Matric + Diploma	28	49.12
4. Degree	21	36.84
5. Other (Standard 6, PTC Junior Certificate, Std 5	4	7.02

**Q6. How do you describe your employment situation?**

<b>Education</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
1. Unemployed	11	19.30
2. Part time employment	7	12.28
3. Permanent employment	35	61.40
4+5. Self-employed + Other Farmer, Contractor, Caterer Caretaker,	4	7.02

It is exciting to find out that 61% of the respondents are permanently employed.

## Statements

### Understanding religion in Christian religion by African Christian person.

The respondent's reaction on statement will determine his/her understanding religion in Christian religion. He/she will disagree or stay undecided or agree with the questionnaire Statement and that will reveal if there is a confusion in understanding religion in Christian religion.

#### S7. Religion is a human's response to a relationship between himself/herself and God.

	Frequency	Percent
Undecided	1	1.75
Agree	56	98.25

The majority – 98% agree with the statement. That means they understand religion clearly in Christian religion.

#### S8. God Himself initiates religion.

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	6	10.53
Undecided	1	1.75
Agree	50	87.72

88% support the statement, and only 11% disagree that religion is initiated by God.

#### S9. Religion is developed by African forefathers as a way to serve God.

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	29	50.88
Undecided	6	10.53
Agree	22	38.60

39% are confused in understanding religion in Christianity, and still believe their forefathers have started it, and 51% disagree with the statement and understand that the African Forefathers did not initiate religion.

#### S10. One enters relationship with God through Jesus Christ as mediator.

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	2	3.57
Agree	54	96.43

The majority – 98% believe in the relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Only two disagree.

**S11. One enters relationship with God through the blood of a slaughtered animal to appease the spirits of the forefathers.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	45	78.95
Undecided	3	5.26
Agree	9	15.79

79% do not believe in the blood of the animal to enable them into relationship with God.

Only 16% agree.

**S12 God created religion for man to worship him.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	9	15.79
Undecided	2	3.51
Agree	46	80.70

81% agree that God wanted man to worship him; he therefore created for him religion. Only

16% misunderstand this situation created by God.

**S13. African forefathers initiated religion as a means to enable them to worship God.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	26	46.43
Undecided	2	3.51
Agree	28	50.00

The difference between those who disagree and those who agree is not big 50% agree and 46% disagree. This shows the confusion that is there in African Christians in understanding religion in Christian religion.

**S14 Understanding salvation in Christian religion by African Christian people  
Salvation is the main object of religion.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	6	10.53
Undecided	2	3.51
Agree	49	85.96

88% agree that salvation is the main object of religion. Only 11% not fully believe.

**S15. God provides salvation to those who believe in Christ.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	3	5.26
Undecided	1	1.75
Agree	53	92.98

The majority - 93% agree that salvation is provided by God. Only 5% are still confused.

**S16. African forefathers provide their descendants salvation.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	35	61.40
Undecided	7	12.28
Agee	15	26.32

Up t 61% of the respondents disagree, 26% agree the forefathers provide salvation.

**S17. Salvation is a situation of deliverance from sin.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	3	5.26
Agree	54	94.74

95% agree with he statement, only 5% disagree.

**S18 Salvation is a situation of security for man in life.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	16	28.07
Undecided	5	8.77
Agree	36	63.16

63% agree and 28% do not accept that. The 63% are living in a confusion in their Christian life.

**S19. Salvation is God's act in building up a healthy relationship between Himself and Man.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	2	3.51
Undecided	2	3.51
Agree	53	92.98



More respondents – 93% agree and only 4% are still in confusion.

**S20. Salvation is a product of the African Christian forefathers’ thinking of the way one is accepted in a community.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	44	77.19
Undecided	5	8.77
Agree	8	14.04

77% disagree; salvation is not the thinking of the forefathers, only 14% agree.

**S21. Salvation is achieved through obedience to the ancestors’ instructions**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	42	73.68
Undecided	5	8.77
Agree	10	17.54

74% disagree, and only 18% agree, and obeys forefather’s instructions.

**S22. Salvation takes place through abandonment of African Traditional Religion**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	38	66.67
Undecided	7	12.28
Agree	12	21.05

67% disagree and only 21% agree

**S23. African Christians cannot abandon their traditional way of life when accepting Christianity.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	24	42.11
Undecided	2	3.52
Agree	31	54.39

67% disagree. You accept Christianity and you abandon African Traditional Religion.

**S24. Salvation is a sum- total of benefits bestowed by God on those who believe in Christ as their saviour.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	5	8.77
Undecided	1	1.75
Agree	51	89.47

89% agree salvation is a benefit from God.

**S25. Salvation is all benefits bestowed on human being by his/her ancestors on being accepted in a community.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	44	77.19
Agree	13	22.81

77% say no, salvation is not benefits from ancestors.

**S26. Christianity to Africa as a religion from the West, it is based on the Western religious way of life to achieve salvation.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	31	54.39
Undecided	9	15.79
Agree	17	29.82

54 % disagree; it is only 30% who agree.

**S27. In Africa Christianity must be accepted and be based on African Traditional Religious way of life to achieve salvation.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	29	50.88
Undecided	4	7.02
Agree	24	42.11

51% disagree; Christianity cannot be based on African Traditional religious way of life.

**S28. Salvation can only be activated by African Traditional doctors /healers.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	52	91.23
Undecided	2	3.51
Agree	3	5.26

The majority-91% disagrees, and only 5% agree and believe in traditional doctors/healers.

**S29. When African Christian has accepted Christianity, there are no more consultations with African Traditional doctors/healers.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	29	50.88
Undecided	2	3.51
Agree	26	45.61

51% disagree, there is a consultation, and 46 agree, there is no more of those consultations.

**S30. Christianity is just Western people's experience about God, and need not be followed by African people to achieve salvation.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	46	80.70
Undecided	2	3.51
Agree	9	15.79

81% disagree that Christianity is Western peoples' experience about God, only 16% accept that.

**S30. African Christians have long experienced the existence of God through their Ancestors.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	19	33.33
Undecided	7	12.28
Agree	31	54.39

54% agree that African Christians knew God through ancestors, and 33% disagree. The 54% are those still under confusion in understanding Christianity.

**S31. Christianity cannot be accommodated within African Traditional Religion because there is conflict between them.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	28	49.12
Undecided	5	8.77
Agree	24	42.11

The 49% of those who disagree are misunderstanding what Christianity is all about, and the 42% are those who are genuine Christian.

**S32. Understanding the meaning of Church**

**S33. Christians identifies themselves as children of God.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	2	3.51
Agree	55	96.49

The majority – 96% agree with the statement, only 4% disagree.

**S34. An African Christian identifies himself in securing his traditional religious way of life.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	25	44.64
Undecided	6	10.71
Agree	25	44.64

Those disagree and those agree are equal, both 45%. There is a problem in understanding what Christianity means as compared to African Traditional Religion.

**S35. During church services, time should be reserved for practicing African Traditional Religion as a token of the presence of African Christians in the service.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	38	66.67
Undecided	6	10.53
Agree	13	22.81

67% disagree the two cannot e combined, those still confused - 23% agree.

**S36. Along with the calling of the name of Jesus Christ in church services, names of the African Christian ancestors must also be uttered.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	43	75.44
Undecided	5	8.77
Agree	9	15.79

75% disagree to the calling of African Christian ancestors in church services, only 15% who are not understanding what Christianity is all about want the ancestors' to be uttered in the church services.

**S37. Only the name of Jesus Christ must be called in church services.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	9	15.79
Undecided	2	3.51
Agree	46	80.70

81% want only the name of Jesus be called in church services. Only 16% say no. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were ancestors of the Israelites, and the Israelites worshiped God through them.

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	24	42.11
Undecided	5	8.77
Agree	28	49.12

42% disagree and 49% disagree.

**S38. African Traditional Religion is a God's gift to Africans and should be practiced by African Christians in worshipping God through ancestors.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	35	61.40
Undecided	6	10.53
Agree	16	28.07

61% disagree that God should be worshiped through ancestors.

**S39. The church means people of God in Christ**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	5	8.77
Undecided	1	1.75
Agree	51	89.47

The majority – 89% agree, the church is the people of God.

**S40. The church is the community of African Christians practicing their Traditional Religion along with Christianity.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	30	53.57
Undecided	5	8.93
Agree	21	37.50

Those disagreeing are in the majority – 54% to 38% to those agreeing that the church is the community of African Christians.

**S41. The church is those people who through faith in Jesus have been forgiven their Sins.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	11	19.30
Undecided	2	3.51
Agree	44	77.19

77% agree the church are sin forgiven people in Christ. Only 9% disagree.

**S42. The church is African Christians who through mediation of their ancestors have been accepted by God.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	41	71.93
Undecided	6	10.53
Agree	10	17.54

72% disagree that God accept people though ancestors' mediation. Only 18% confused group believe ancestors can bring them near God.

**S43. The church is those people elected and sanctified by God.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	13	22.81
Undecided	6	10.53
Agree	38	66.67

The majority – 67% agree, the church is the elected and the sanctified people of God.

**S44. The church is African Christian people sanctifying themselves by sacrifices offered to the ancestors.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	48	85.71
Undecided	4	7.14
Agree	4	7.14

86% disagree with the statement, only 7% agree.

**S45. The church is the African Christians who have abandoned their traditional way of life.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	38	66.67
Undecided	4	7.2
Agree	15	26.32

67% disagree, they still hold them, 26% agree.

**S46. Being an African Christian does not bring an end to your traditional Religion.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	13	22.61
Undecided	5	8.77
Agree	39	68.42

68% agree Christianity is not an end of your African Traditional Religion. 23% disagree.

**S47. African Christians believe solely in the shed blood of Christ for the cleansing of their sins.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	9	15.79
Undecided	5	8.77
Agree	43	75.44

75% agree in the shed blood of Christ, 16% do not.

**S48. The church is a community of African Christians believing in the shed blood of a beast for their cleansing from impurities.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	44	77.19
Undecided	6	10.53
Agree	7	12.28

77% disagree to the shed blood of a beast, only 12% agree

**S49. The church is those people sacrificing themselves to God through faith in Jesus Christ.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	4	7.02
Agree	53	92.98

93% agree, only 7% do not agree.

**S50. The African Christian Church is the African people sacrificing by a slaughtered animal to their ancestors.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	42	73.68
Undecided	6	10.53
Agree	9	15.79

74% of the respondents disagree, only 16% agree to the slaughtered animal to the ancestors.

**S51. Understanding the meaning of Building up the local church.**

**Building up the local church is to build up the nation of God.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	1	1.75
Agree	56	98.25

Almost all the respondents agree. Only 2% disagree

**S52. Building up the local Church is to build up the African Christian to become true Africans.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	35	61.40
Undecided	5	8.77
Agree	17	29.82

61% disagree that the building up the local church is not to build up African Christians.

30% are African Christians still confused in understanding building up the local church in Christian religion

**S53. Building up the local church is to equip and train the church o become the true nation of God.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	2	3.51
Undecided	3	5.26
Agree	52	91.23

91% agree building up the local church is to equip and train Christians to know themselves.

**S54. Building up the local church is to equip and train Africa Christians know their traditional religious way of life.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	32	56.14
Undecided	5	8.77



Agree 20 35.09

56% disagree, while 35% agree because of their misunderstanding in Christian religion.

**S55. Building up the local church is to bring the gospel to those never heard about it.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	5	8.77
Undecided	1	1.75
Agree	51	89.47

89% agree, the church building is a missionary work

**S56. Building up the local church is for African Christians go back to their original roots.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	46	80.70
Undecided	1	1.75
Agree	10	17.564

81% disagree that it is for African Christians go back to their original roots,

**S57. In the building up of the local church, Christians need not mix Christianity with African Traditional Religion.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	21	36.84
Undecided	5	8.77
Agree	31	54.39

54% agree, while 37 agree to a mixture of Christianity and African Traditional Religion

**S58. Building up the local church is when the proclamation of the word is based on African culture.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	37	64.91
Undecided	5	8.77
Agree	15	26.32

65% disagree, the proclamation of the gospel need not be based on African culture.26% agree,

it ought to be based on African culture. This is because of misunderstanding Christianity

**S59. In the process of building, Christianity is being shaped by African Traditional Religion.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	35	61.40
Undecided	2	3.51
Agree	20	35.09

61% disagree that African traditional Religion can ever shape Christianity while 35% agree because of their confusion in understanding, believe it can shape Christianity.

**S60. The African Christian church is built by integrating some elements from African Traditional religion into Christianity.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	16	28.07
Undecided	9	15.79
Agree	32	56.14

28% disagree and 56% agree because of the confusion n understanding Christian religion.

**S61. Building up the local church is building up African Christians knowledge about God.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	3	5.26
Agree	54	97.74

95% agree building up the local church is about the knowledge about God.

**S62. The process of building up the local church is enhanced when Christianity is interpreted in terms of African Traditional Religion.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	21	36.84
Undecided	9	15.79
Agree	27	47.37

47% agree, and 37% disagree with the statement.

**S63. The acts of paganism in African Traditional Religion hamper the building up of the local church.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	22	38.60
Undecided	17	29.82
Agree	18	31.58

39% disagree and 32% agree, paganism in African Traditional Religion hamper the process

of building.

**S64. African Traditional Religious elements coinciding with Christianity, is not paganism, but elements of African culture.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	10	17.54
Undecided	11	19.30
Agree	36	63.16

63% agree, and 18% disagree.

**S65. Building up the local Church is to bring the Gospel to African people in the Western Religious context.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	29	50.88
Undecided	11	19.30
Agree	17	29.82

51% disagree and 30% agree.

**S66. Building up the local church is bringing the Gospel to African people in an African Traditional context.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	21	36.84
Undecided	8	14.04
Agree	28	49.12

49% agree to the statement and 37% disagree.

**S67. The building up of the local church should be cultural in that Africans make it part of their lives and something from outside.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	19	33.33
Undecided	2	3.51
Agree	36	63.16

63% do agree and 33% disagree.

**S68. Man is God's co-worker in the building up of the local church through Christ.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	4	7.02
Agree	53	92.98

93 % agree that God work with man to build up his church. Only 7% do not agree

**S69. God communicates to African Christians through their ancestors the message that they are co-workers in the building up the local church.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	39	68.42
Undecided	8	14.04
Agree	10	17.54

68% disagree 18% do agree because they are still confused in their understanding.

**S70. Building up the local church is the process that gives understanding and nature of the church.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	3	5.26
Undecided	1	1.75
Agree	53	92.98

93% agree with the statement, and only 5% disagree.

**S71. Building up the local church gives the understanding of the nature and functions of African Traditional Religion among African Christians.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	33	57.89
Undecided	8	14.04
Agree	16	28.07

58% disagree and 28% who are confused n understanding the church do agree.

**S72 The building up of the local church is calling people of different cultures to follow Christ and abandon their cultures.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	27	47.37
Undecided	1	1.75
Agree	29	50.88

37% disagree and 51% agree. The difference is not big because of not understanding to follow Christ

**S73. Building up the local church is he encouragement to African Christians not to abandon their African Traditional Religion.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	21	36.84
Undecided	2	3.51

Agree 29 50.58

51% agree they abandon them. In other words mix Christianity with African Traditional Religion. 47% disagree.

**S74. Building up the local church is a person's self-denial and giving himself up to Christ.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	15	26.32
Undecided	2	3.51
Agree	40	70.18

70% agree and 26% disagree.

**S75. Building up the local church is African Christians awareness of self-determination in respecting the ancestors.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	41	71.93
Undecided	4	7.02
Agree	12	21.05

72% disagree and 21% agree it is self-determination.

**S76. African Christians still maintaining their African Traditional Religion are a threat to the building up of the local church.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	35	61.40
Undecided	4	7.02
Agree	18	31.58

61% disagree while 32% agree they are a threat.

**S77. Having African Christians in the Church is an advantage because of their contribution towards church projects that build up the local church.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	9	15.79
Undecided	8	14.04
Agree	40	70.18

70% agree while 16% disagree.

**S78. The building up of the local church is the respect to you father and mother as your Ancestors, and God will give you more days to live.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	31	54.39
Undecided	5	8.77
Agree	21	36.84

54% disagree and 37% agree because misunderstanding building up the local church in Christian religion.

**S79. Practicing African Traditional Religion in the building up of the local church promotes the acceptance of African Christians as fellow children of God.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	19	33.33
Undecided	4	3.51
Agree	34	59.65

60% agree, but 33% disagree.

**S80. African Traditional Religion is pure African Culture, and need not to be confused with the building up of the local church.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	21	36.84
Undecided	2	3.51
Agree	34	59.65

60% agree is an African culture while 37 disagree.

**S81. African Traditional Religion is a stepping-stone to Christianity in the building up of the local church.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	26	45.61
Undecided	8	14.04
Agree	23	40.35

40% agree while 46% disagree.

**S82. African Traditional Religious life is an African “Ubuntu” a person is what he/she Is because of other people” which is important in the building up of the local church.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	9	15.79
Undecided	5	8.77
Agree	43	75.44

75% agree while 16% disagree.

**S83. In building up the local church, an individual observes that he/she is God's child because of his/her faith in Jesus Christ.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	4	7.02
Undecided	1	1.75
Agree	52	91.23

75% agree while 16% disagree

**S84. An African Christian observes that he is an African because of his believe to his ancestors.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	38	66.67
Undecided	4	7.02
Agree	15	26.32

67% disagree and 26% agree.

**S85. The church is built by giving yearly offerings to God as thanksgiving for all that God did for the me for the whole year.**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	10	17.54
Undecided	1	1.75
Agree	46	80.70

81% agree with the statement and only 18% disagree.

## **6.5. Findings from Empirical Research**

In all, 81 questionnaires statements were given to 100 respondents. At least 57 of the 100 respondents returned the questionnaires. The 57 respondents was a random sample of members of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa, Mabopane West congregation. According to the answers of the respondents to the different categories of questions focussed on Understanding Religion, Understanding Salvation, Understanding the meaning of Church and Understanding the meaning of Building up the local church in Christian religion by

African Christian people as it relates to understanding in African Traditional Religion, was to reveal the respondent's understanding as an African Christian of the abovementioned situations in Christian religion especially understanding salvation in Christian religion as it relates to the understanding of salvation in African Traditional Religion.

From the different questionnaire statements, there are respondents' reactions, which according to my judgement reveal the positive understanding of the abovementioned situations in Christian religion. On the other hand, the reaction of the African Christian people who are still holding on to some elements of African Traditional religion, revealed their confusion in understanding the same abovementioned situations in Christianity as it relates to the understanding in African Traditional religion.

Regarding understanding religion in Christian religion, they believe their African ancestors develop it and it is centred on the worshipping of the African ancestors.

Regarding the understanding of the meaning of Salvation, they regard practicing African Traditional Religion, enables one to achieve salvation. Salvation is regarded as a security in man's life. In the understanding the meaning of church, they want that African Traditional Religion be practiced in the church along with Christianity. The followers of the African Traditional Religion regard the building up of the local church as the building up and teaching Africans to know their African Traditional Religion because it is their culture. Due to the fact that the African Christians with their African Traditional Religious background, the smooth and successful building of the local church becomes difficult. A solution had o be found.

## **6.6 Grouping of respondents.**

In order to group respondents into Christians group and "Other" group (mixture of Christianity and African Traditional Religion) we calculated an average of all Christian



questions and all African Traditional Religion questions to obtain a Christian score and an African Traditional Religion score.

The difference is calculated between the Christian score and African Traditional Religion score. This difference is normally distributed (p - value = 0.0768). Since the normality assumption is satisfied, the “T” test is performed to determine whether there is a significant difference between the average Christian and the average African Traditional Religion scores. The P - value < 0.0001 is less than 0.05 which is the level of significance, it is concluded that there is a significant difference between Christian and African traditional religion scores.

Tests for location:  $\mu_0 = 0$

Test	-statistic -	-----p. value-----
Student's t	t 12.04907	Pr > : t : < .0001

Test for normality

Test	--Statistic---	-----p Value-----
Shapiro – Wilk	W 0.962773	Pr < W 0.0768

Since there is a significant difference between the Christian score and African Traditional Religion score, we would like to group the respondents according to the difference.

Since the median of the difference between Christians and African Traditional Religious followers score is approximately 1.5, the decision is to classify a person as “**Christian**” if the difference is greater than 1.5 and with “**other**” (that means a mixture of Christianity and African Traditional Religion) if the difference is less than 1.5.

### 6.7. Testing for significant relationships

After dividing the respondents into different groups, I decided to tabulate it against the demographic information in order to determine whether there is a relationship between age, gender, ethnic group, education, employment and the grouping.

### 6.7.1. Testing according to age.

<b>Frequency</b>				
<b>Percent</b>				
<b>Row Pct</b>				
<b>Col Pct</b>	<b>21 – 35 years</b>	<b>36 –45 years</b>	<b>46 – 75 years</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Other</b>	10	12	5	27
	17.54	21.05	8.77	47.37
	37.04	44.44	18.52	
	50.00	57.14	31.25	
<b>Christian</b>	10	9	11	30
	17.54	15.79	19.30	52.63
	33.33	30.00	36.67	

#### Statistics for table of Group by age.

<u>Statistic</u>	<u>DF</u>	<u>Value</u>	<u>Prob.</u>
Chi – Square	2	2.5277	0.2826

Approximately 81% of the respondents in the “Other” group are younger than 45 years of age. Most of the respondents (68.75%) in the age group 46-75 years of age are categorised as “Christians”, while the other age group are more equally divided into the two groups.

According to Chi - Square test of independence, the  $p - \text{value} = 0.2826 > 0.05$ , therefore there is no significant relationship between group and age.

### 6.7.2. Testing according to gender

<b>Group</b>			
<b>Frequency</b>			
<b>Percentage</b>			
<b>Row Pct</b>			
<b>Col Pct</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Other</b>	18	9	27
	31.58	15.7	47.37
	66.67	33.33	
	58.06	34.62	
<b>Christian</b>	13	17	30
	22.81	29.82	52.63
	43.33	56.67	
	41.94	65.58	
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>57</b>
	<b>54.39</b>	<b>45.61</b>	<b>100</b>

65.38% of the female respondents are categorised as “christian” while only 41.94% of the male respondents are categorised as “Christian”. 58.06% of the respondents in the “other” group are male and only 34.62% are female.

#### Statistic for Table of Group by Gender

<u>Statistic</u>	<u>DF</u>	<u>Value</u>	<u>Prob</u>
Chi-Square	1	3.1187	0.0774

Since the p-value = 0.774 is greater than 0.05, there is no statistical significant relationship between group and gender. But since the p - value is so close to 0.05, there is definitely a tendency that males are more “other” (traditional religious) inclined. If the sample size was

larger we probably would be able to establish this relationship.

### 6.7.3. Testing according to ethnic groups.

<b>Frequency</b>			
<b>Percent</b>			
<b>Row Pct</b>			
<b>Col Pct</b>	<b>Tswana</b>	<b>Northern Sotho, Southern Sotho Tsonga</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Other</b>	20 35.09 74.07 44.44	7 12.28 25.93 58.33	27 47.37
<b>Christian</b>	25 43.86 83.33 55.56	5 8.77 16.67 41.67	30 52.53
<b>Total</b>	45 78.95	12 21.05	57 100.00

78.95% of the respondents are Tswana, the other 21.05% includes Southern Sotho, Northern Sotho, Tsonga, Zulu, and Ndebele.

#### Statistics for Table of Group by Ethnic Group

<u>Statistic</u>	<u>DF</u>	<u>Value</u>	<u>Prob</u>
Chi-Square	1	0.7330	0.3919

The p-value = 0.3919 indicates that there is not a significant relationship between group and ethnicity.

#### 6.7.4. Testing according to education qualification

Frequency Percent Row Pct			
Col Pct	Matric/ No formal education	Diploma/ Degree	Total
<b>Other</b>	6 10.53 22.22 27.27	21 36.84 77.88 60.00	27 47.37
<b>Christian</b>	16 28.07 53.33 72.73	14 24.56 46.67 40.00	30 52.63
<b>Total</b>	22 38.60	35 64.40	57 100.00

According to the percentages, the majority of the respondents categorised as “other” (77.78%) has a diploma or a degree, while 53.33% of the respondents categorised as “Christian” have matric or less. Also take note that of the respondents with matric or less (72.73%) are categorised as “Christian.”

#### Statistics for Table of Group by Education Qualification .

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	1	5.8036	0.0160

The Chi-Squared test for independence shows that there exist a significant relationship between group and education since the p-value =  $0.0160 < 0.05$ .

### 6.7.5. Testing according to Employment Situation.

Frequency			
Percent			
Row Pct			
Col Pct	Unemployed	Employed	Total
<b>Other</b>	5	22	27
	8.77	38.60	47.37
	18.52	81.48	
	45.45	47.83	
<b>Christian</b>	6	24	30
	10.53	42.11	52.63
	20.00	80.00	
	54.55	52.17	
<b>Total</b>	11	46	57
	19.30	80.70	100.00

19.30% of the respondents are unemployed, the other 80.70 are either part time, permanent or self employed. From the table and chi-squared test, it is evident that there is no relationship between the group and employment situation.

#### Statistics for Table of Group by employment situation

Statistics	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-square	1	0.0200	0.8875

The respondents in the “Other group are African Christian people confused in understanding salvation in Christian Religion as it relates to salvation in African Traditional Religion. Their confusion leads to hampering the building up of the local church. Through the empirical

circle of observation, induction, deduction, testing and evaluation, the following hypothesis may help solving the problem. **“When African Christian people have a clear understanding of salvation in Christian religion and understand how it relates and differ to the salvation in African Traditional Religion, the process of building up the local church will be successful.”** Observing the pure Christian religious practice, facts shows that there is no problem in its contribution in the building up of the local church. The Christian church is having Jesus Christ as centre and mediator between God and man, God provides salvation through Jesus Christ, and God’s salvation has a unique contribution in the building up of the local church. Factors considered as characterizing the building up of the local church are as follows:

**Identity building:** The building up of the local church is the equipment of God’s children to be able to identify themselves in Jesus Christ as children of God and as church of God Faith in Christ as head of the church makes them God’s people. Paul in his letter to the Romans (Romans: 3:21) says: “God is the one initiating their salvation. It is God coming to them in Christ and through the Holy Spirit.”

African Christian people on the other hand practice their religion to identify themselves as Africans. There is no complete belief in Jesus Christ as saviour because African Traditional Religion is based on ancestral worshipping. In African Traditional Religion, it is the people initiating their way to God and so become the initiators of their salvation by approaching God through their ancestors. Meiring (1996:14) says: “ancestors are the mediators between the deity and the tribe, allowing the vitality of the Supreme Being to flow to them.” Jesus Christ is not considered as the ultimate mediator between God and man as Luke puts it clearly in (Acts 4:12) where he says: “Salvation is to be found through him alone, in all the world there is no one else whom God has given who can save us .” African people became Christians through persuasion of missionaries by proclaiming the Gospel of

Jesus Christ to them and ultimately became Christians, but will never abandon their traditional way of worshipping their ancestors. Now as members of the Christian Church, they partially believe in Jesus Christ and at the same time will keep on practicing their traditional way of their life. This results in the mixture of Christianity and African Traditional Religion. Mbiti (1975:14) says: “When Africans are converted to other religions, they often mix their traditional religion with the one to which they are converted.”

The mixing of Christianity and African Traditional Religion brings about confusion because of not understanding salvation in Christian religion as compared to salvation in African Traditional Religion and these results in hampering the progress of building up the local church. Christianity is not regarded adequate to bring the complete salvation unless combined with African Traditional Religion. The mixing of the two religions creates a problem because of the conflict between the two and there is an undesirable and unacceptable situation in the building up of the local church.

It has been pointed out clearly here above that the confusion in understanding salvation in Christian religion by African Christian people hampers the building up of the local church. Reading through some African religious books, one finds that there are elements in African Traditional religion, which indirectly or indirectly contribute to the building up of the local church. In the following chapter we shall look into some of those elements.



## **CHAPTER 7.**

### **Contribution of African Traditional Religion in the Building Up of the local Church.**

#### **7.1. Introduction**

African Traditional Religion as defined in chapter one, it is the way the African people live. Their traditional religion is their culture. The African Traditional Religion has been developed within the context of African life and became their way of life and culture. Christian Religion and other religions like Israelite religion are developed within a context of the life of the people concerned. People practice their religious life in conjunction with the way they live and their religion determines their behaviour of living. Christianity as a religion has its roots in one culture or other, and it is shaped and developed by it. Ryan (2000:6) states that: “Every theology therefore, including traditional Western theology, is rooted in some culture or other, and it is shaped by it. Ferguson & Wright (1973:183) say: “...no theological statement is culture free.” Salvation in the Jewish traditional or Jewish cultural religion was acculturated in a Jewish culture.

#### **7.2. Acculturation**

For African Traditional Religion to contribute to the building up of the local church, acculturation of Christian religion is one of the means to be engaged. It is noticed that Jewish religion is acculturated in the Jewish culture, and the Jewish people understood clearly what their religion was all about and what it meant to them. So acquiring of Christian religion is imperative for an African Christian. The word culture means the way of thinking and the behaviour shared by a substantial grouping which gives them identity in relation to others. (CF. Ferguson & Wright 1973: 183). McGee (1975:41) defines culture as: “pattern of behaviour or designs for living for members of a particular society and imposes particular behaviour patterns on members.” Members of a particular society learn to behave in accordance with the expectation of the culture in which they are raised.

The expectations of a culture are norms and standards of living that have to be maintained and adhered to. On the other hand norms and standards are viewed as a society's methods of meeting life's problems. Nicholls (1970:10) defines culture as: "A design for living. It is a plan according to which the society adapts to itself to its social and ideational environment" Mbiti (1976:12) on the other hand see culture as: "the human pattern of life in response to man's environment." During the process of religious acculturation in the building up of the local church, the people's way of life must be considered. The people's way of life cannot just be abolished when they accept Christ. The acculturated gospel will influence and transforms culture. The norms and standards of living are rules defining and describing both reality as understood in a given society and proper ways of behaving for most situations. Rules for life includes law, customs morality, property, etiquette usages etc. (CF McGee 1975:362) The norms and standards are laid down, which permit him/her to act or prevent him.

Acculturation of Christian religion is the process of integrating some of the elements in African Traditional religion into Christianity. It is a process that Christianity can relate to and become embodied within rich variety of cultures of Africa. Ryan (2000:6) sees acculturation as: "a process through which elements of the gospel find adequate and meaningful forms of expression in any culture." On the other hand, Turkson and Wejse (1993:48) say: "acculturation is a process of interaction between African culture and Western Christianity and a movement of insertion of the Christian faith and church into milieu of Africa." Christian acculturation is a reformulation or re-expression, re-interpretation of Christianity in terms of receiving culture. Acculturation must be a continuing process between Christianity and African culture. During the ongoing process of acculturation, there is a possible enrichment of the local church and the reformation of African Traditional Religion. The local church has to integrate what Africa has to offer into their own expression of Christianity (CF

Ryan 2000:8). Acculturation of Christianity is one of the most active methods that have to be applied whereby African Traditional Religion can contribute towards the building up of the local church especially because of genuine elements from African Traditional Religion that can be integrated into Christianity in the process of building up the local church. All the good elements embraced in the “Ubuntu” are always present in the lives of African people. One other fact is that Jesus Christ, the head of the Christian Church, was a cultural person. He was a bonafide Israelite and was fully immersed in his culture as an Israelite. He was brought up in an Israelite culture by devout Israelite parents, Maria and Joseph. His birth and his whole life was viewed and explained as the fulfilment of the promises God made to the Israelite people. He observed all Israelite customs like circumcision (Luke 2:22 – 24) and observed the Israelite religious feasts (Luke 2:41 – 50). He attended synagogue services and observed Israelite Passover, spoken Israelite language. Jesus also made it clear that he had not come to abolish Israelite tradition, religion and culture, but to fulfil them, perfect them and bring them to another level of consciousness (CF Mathew 4:17 – 20).

### **7.3. Contextualization.**

#### **7.3.1. Understanding Contextualization**

Hablisan K 1983 Vol. X1 No.1) defines: ”Contextualization is that discipline which deals with the essential nature of the gospel. It’s cross cultural communication, and the development and fostering of local theologies and indigenous church forms. Imasogie (1983 Vol 2 No 1) defines contextualization as a process whereby concepts are translated from cultural setting to another without loss of essential meanings and also whereby the application of these concepts can be demonstrated in a new setting”

Contextualization is therefore a process of systematic presentation of the Christian faith that is informed by a serious and critical consideration of culture of the people and the worldview that fashions that culture. Contextualization refers to the evangelization as a means of

building up of the local church into the African Traditional Religious context. It is the act of bringing the gospel from a certain cultural context to a new cultural context. It is essential to the understanding of God's revelation. God revealed Himself in Jesus Christ, as a cultural person as Jesus was fully immersed in his culture as an Israelite. Ferguson & Wright (1988:164) say: "The incarnate is the ultimate paradigm of the translation of the text into context. Jesus Christ is the word of God incarnate as an Israelite, identify with a particular culture at a limited moment in history through transcending. In his life and teachings, he is the supreme model of contextualization. For the African Traditional Religion to contribute to the building up of the local church, the proclamation of the gospel should respond to the situation in which African people find themselves. Bate (12991:3) see contextualization as: "a search for meaning and understanding within a particular experience of faith. This experience is local or contextual and thus the theology is done locally." Contextualization takes into account the global politic economic and cultural context of each people. African Christians view Jesus Christ not as the only one intermediating between them and God. Together with Jesus Christ, the ancestors play an important role in the communication between God and African people. Sacrificing to them activates the ancestor's act of mediation between God and human. Mediation by ancestors between God and human is mainly not for forgiveness of sin, but God through the ancestors is approached to assist where difficulty is experienced in the family or by an individual.

### **7.3.2 Conclusion.**

African people living within their culture must not perceive the gospel as a threat to their culture because when they accept Christianity they must abandon their traditional religious way of life, which is on the other hand their culture. The African Traditional religious way of life need not be abandoned but rather be reformed. Nichols 1979: 9) states that: "There are features for every culture which are not incompatible with the Lordship of Christ, and which

therefore need not be threatened nor discarded but rather preserved and transformed.” In building up the local church, the builder takes note of the context situation in which he/she builds. He/she responds meaningfully to the gospel within the framework of one’s own situation (CF Nicholls 1979:21). Contextualization must be seen as a means of effectively communicating the gospel within a specific cultural context. It is a means that makes the gospel of Jesus relevant for all times and under all circumstances. It must be a continuous process in religious endeavours to make the gospel of Jesus relevant to the different cultural context. The gospel should address the local and the regional cultures. An example of one of the elements from Christian religion that can be contextualized is church music. Music is one of the powerful and an important element in African culture. Africans sing when they are happy, when they grief even when they are at war, when worshipping, they sing. Music in church services must be performed to respond within the framework of African cultural context. For an example clapping hands and doing footsteps, are some of the methods used by Africans when they sing. Singing choruses in an African style will make African Christians to feel accommodated within the Christian church. King David also danced Israelite style to honour the Lord. (CF. 2 Samuel 6:14)

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