

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Much has been written about sacrificial performances within Christendom, in the Bible (Young, 1975; Kodell, 1988), world religions and African traditional religions, including some tribal, traditional religious groups of South Africa (Awolalu, 1973; Ukpong, 1982; Mbiti, 1975; Magesa, 1997 and Ngubane, 1977). It seems as though all the areas connected to sacrificial performances have already been invaded through academic exploration. However, one of the rhetorical questions relevant to all this remains unexploited. This dissertation will attempt to uncover this mystery. But, before this, let us attempt to uncover the meaning, as well as some interpretations, of the concept of sacrifice in general. This study will look at the definition of the concept of sacrifice, the classification of the concept, how it can be classified, instances occurring in everyday life, human and divine benefits of sacrifice, and sacrificial ideologies. It will then go on to discuss sacrificial interpretations, that is, sacrifice as a gift exchange and renunciation, the sacramental sacrificial meal, sacrifice as a communicative act, sacrifice as a purifying power, as well as some spiritualised modes of sacrifice. Following this will be a statement of the problem, outline of the study, motivation for the study, as well as its hypothesis and methodology. Finally, this study will draw conclusions. Therefore, it is appropriate to begin with a definition of the concept of sacrifice.

1.1.1 Definition of the concept of sacrifice

Sacrificial performances play a significant role in the religions of the world. “They are most of the time very complicated ritual performances through which communication between worshippers and spirit beings may be made viable, impeded and severed” (Von Stuckrad, 2006:1657). Attempts to define the “concept of sacrifice” have revealed that it is “problematic”, given the fact that such differentiations in “religious phenomena” are known under “sacrifice” as “Jesus’ sacrifice of atonement, votive gifts, and animal sacrifices, that are basically distinct, in the intentions of actors as well as in the main theological picture and faith systems” (Von Stuckrad, 2006:1657).

Van Baal claims that there is a difference of meaning between sacrifice and offering: “an offering is that act of presenting something to a supernatural being, a sacrifice an offering accompanied by the ritual killing of the object of the offering” (Van Baal, 1976:161). This meaning seems too narrow, since killing is only applicable to “living beings, animals, human beings and not to some other sacrificial materials such as food stuffs, drink offering and libations”. A “supernatural being with supernatural power” constitutes the most critical element that the worshipper desires to relate to and stay in communion with (Eliade,

1987:544). According to Eliade, bloodless sacrifices also include “consecration of human beings and animals” (Eliade, 1987:546).

A sacrifice is” a cultic act in which objects were set apart or consecrated and offered to a god or some other supernatural power” (Fahert, 1977:128b). Therefore, the ideas of “bloodless and bloody offerings” (sacrifices) are to be taken into account. Blood functions as an important “power-laden substance that brings fertility”; it is moistened over the fields in order to increase the harvest. “Head-hunting and human sacrifices belong to the same complex of ideas and rites”. The compound term “human sacrifices” has to do with all “cultic killings” of human beings. This also includes “self-inflicted death...the complete laying down of one’s life in order to pay a debt or to make atonement” (Obstat, 1967:831). Blood rites are often combined with fertility concepts. Usually, blood sacrifices are primarily made from “domesticated animals” (sheep, goats, cattle, pigs, fowl, horses and camels). The objective of the sacrifice will determine the characteristics of the sacrificial animal. Brightly coloured animal victims are sacrificed to the divinity of the sky, and black animals to the divinity of the “underworld and the dead, or to feared demonic beings” (Eliade, 1987:545-546 - see Zulu sacrificial thoughts later on in this dissertation). Therefore, let us now look at the classification of the concept of sacrifice.

1.1.2 Classification of the concept of sacrifice

The words that are used for the concept of sacrifice are not only clear, but are also ambiguous. In other modern languages, the word for “sacrifice” is not a “scientific concept, but a loan word”, coined from the church Latin word *Operari*: “to serve God through works”. Modern, everyday speech therefore uses the word “sacrifice”, on the one hand, in keeping with Christian moral conceptualizations, for the designation of non-ritualised, ethical activities, distinguished by renunciation, suggesting “painful loss for a higher end”. For instance, one sacrifices a day for one’s family (Ubrurhe, 1996:13). Theological ideologies of renunciation can be re-formed and harnessed for political ends. In sacrificial ideology, the sense and meaning of cultic sacrifice is equated with giving one’s life for the good of the community (Hinnells, 1995:440). For example, one can mention soldiers of a given country in general, and freedom fighters during the apartheid era in South Africa in particular. However, this does not meet the objective of any of this dissertation’s rubrics.

On the other hand, the meaning of the Latin word *victima* passively refers to the “sacrificial animal” that is given without its consent, or through exercising its will, and this “led to the now metaphorical altar of slaughter as ‘road casualty’”, or indeed, that which is produced as a sacrifice of the holocaust, that is, a whole burnt offering” (Hinnells, 1995:439). “This double meaning has been understood against the background of the Christian theology of sacrifice “(Von Stuckrad, 2006:1658). “These ambivalent uses and subtexts of words used for ‘sacrifice’ have led to conceptual confusion. Hence, modern religious studies seem more

precisely orientated in the context of the Latin concept *sacrificium*: sacred action: however, no unitary scientific usage prevails” (Eliade, 1987:544). How can we then classify sacrifices as such?

1.1.3 How can sacrifices be classified?

Sacrificial rituals are classified in accordance with the make-up of the sacrificial materials or how they are used. Nevertheless, one can distinguish between “vegetable sacrifices, animal sacrifices, human sacrifices, bloody and non-bloody sacrifices, or again, immersion sacrifices, drink sacrifices (libations), and sacrifices of annihilation” (Hinnells, 1995:439-440). Typologies have more to do with the actors’ motivations that support “sacrificial rituals; the traditional categories of praise, thanksgiving, impetration, and satisfaction would correspond here” (Eliade, 1995:545). Theoretical works, as well as those concerned with description, “classification and sacrificial types, frequently overlap” if sacrifice is “conceptualized as an action performed by human beings, one effectuating a symbolic exchange with gods or spirits”. Thus, in a “communicative structure then, the ‘connecting’ type of sacrifice versus the ‘dividing’ will be conceived as following: sacrifices are then rituals performed by the actors in order to produce or to discontinue a communication with the sacred region, the divine powers” (Von Stuckrad, 2006:1659).

The type of sacrifice that connects the worshipper to a deity is equivalent to “sacrifices of praise, thanksgiving and impetration”. In fact, the material of the sacrifice that generates “connection between human and spirit beings, and in the course of communicative process, human intercourse is withdrawn, destroyed” (Hubert & Mauss, 1968:11). Some examples of a connecting aspect would be the “food sacrifices” in African religions, or votive gifts based on the *Do ut des* concept - “I give in order that you give”. In the “dividing type of sacrifice, the ritual process is set in motion in order to break off the contact with spiritual beings by means of a communicative act” (Obstat, 1967:831).

Thus, in the African rite of the “exchange of heads”, evil, psychic or physical infirmity is transferred from the head of the patient to that of the sacrificial cock-interpreted as a “quest for a homecoming” on behalf of the malevolent spiritual being. The animal is then exposed or slain, that is, offered as a whole to the deity in question (Figge, 1973:131-132). In scapegoat rituals, however, the meal to be eaten by human beings is absent (Von Stuckrad, 2006:1659). What are the occasions for sacrifices in the real world?

1.1.4 Instances occurring in everyday life

Convenient opportunities for sacrifices that emerge in everyday life are as numerous as the circumstances in which human beings are forced to live – here, sacrifices are made in order to secure the benefaction of the deity out of actual need, to give thanks to it (sacrifices of thanksgiving, first fruits, thanksgiving

festivals after harvests), to increase the fertility of the field through the use of sacrificial blood and other matter (“agrarian religion and agrarian magic”), to appease the wrath of the deity or cleanse the community (scapegoat), or to make the dead friendly by placing food and drink offerings on their graves (sacrifices to the dead). Sacrificial acts can also form sets of complicated rituals, for instance, of prophecy: or the “sacrificial reading of the innards of the slain animal, or of initiation or feasts” (Von Stuckrad, 2006:1659). A person may then ask: what are the human and divine benefits of sacrifices?

1.1.5 Human and divine benefits of sacrifices

Sacrificial offerings are visibly divided among participants, and symbolically between sacrifice makers and mythic powers. In Africa, during serious crises such as droughts, famine and war, this apportioning can take the form of an independent “eradication sacrifice”. The animal victim is slaughtered in the bush, where the sacrificial meat is completely given to hostile spirit beings. Here, renunciation is a tormenting setback. Sacrificial offerings are not only given to gods, but also made against them, in order to keep them aloof, repelled, reconciled, accorded sacrifices. The “sacrifice of satisfaction” or “sacrifice of the first fruits” helps to control fear: they are moistened, as “the inimical spirits are demonstratively awarded the best or first portion” (Gladigow, 1984). With this in mind, this study will now examine some sacrificial ideologies.

1.1.6 Sacrificial ideologies

Sacrificial rituals underlie a variety of religious worldviews. For instance, the word for sacrifice among the Dogon people of West Africa is *bulu*, “to restore to life”. The reference here is to the idea of bloody sacrifice as a technique for a new distribution of the power of life, *nyama*. The “different linguistic usages betray culture-specific conceptual worlds, and sacrificial ideologies, that cannot be brought under a common denominator”. This diversity caused the downfall of older scientific theories of sacrifice, because they sought to formulate a “general theory of sacrifice” in accordance with a unitary “meaning and end of sacrifice”. This arose “as an illusion and the theoretical construction was already penetrated by Christian conceptions” (Drexler, 1993). However, “ethnographic observation can in no way justify the emphasis on bloody, even on ‘bloodthirsty’ rites of sacrifice that occur in recent theories” (Girard, 1977; Burkert, 1983). From this perspective, the latter must be interpreted as exoticising reception of the “other” (Von Stuckrad, 2006:1664). But how should we interpret sacrificial rituals?

1.2 SACRIFICIAL INTERPRETATIONS

Some aspects of sacrificial rituals or “components of the bloody-sacrifice complex” are emphasised in the scientific theories of Burkert (1987) and Girard (1987), as we will see later on in this dissertation, through the slaying, apportioning and sharing of the material of sacrifice.

1.2.1 Sacrifice as a gift exchange and renunciation

In his concept of animism, evolutionist E.B. Taylor defined sacrifice as a gift formed as an exemplar of human social relations: originally, sacrifice was not a selfless gift, but a bribe. In higher evolutionary development, gifts were offered in homage or, in the properly ethical form, out of renunciation. In the animistic view of sacrifice, deities take their nourishment from the substance, essence or soul of the sacrificial material. African sacrificial rites confirm this view, in that the duty of the adherents consists of “giving the gods to eat” (Figue, 1973:90). “Blood, innards, extremities of slain animals, are set before the images of gods, that the gods may consume their ‘essence’. In ethnographic literature, the dynamistic interpretational variant occurred as well, meaning that this kind of sacrifice of foodstuffs is a matter of a reciprocal and magical exchange of power between gods and believers”; thus, the “sacrificial acts of Africans are also ritual techniques of the redistribution of life power, so that the theoretical model in the sense of dynamistic tendencies remains debatable” (Von Stuckrad, 2006:1664). At this point, this study will look at the sacramental sacrificial meal.

1.2.2 The sacramental sacrificial meal

William Robertson Smith, a Scottish theologian and Oriental scholar, acknowledged the significance of the sacrificial meal (communion or communal meal) for the creation of the community. He holds that, by way of sharing the collectively slaughtered animal, mystical unification takes place between the worshippers and the deity being revered. “Smith’s speculative theory of the origin of the sacrificial meal influenced Freud’s psychoanalytical interpretations of sacrifice as murder of one’s father, and anthropophagous sacrificial meal” (Von Stuckrad, 2006:1664). Smith’s “understanding also influenced the sociological approach of Emile Durkheim, who, like Smith, saw the animal totem as a symbol of the society”. However, “the sacramental eating of God at the Lord’s Supper that Smith did choose as the patron of his theory must be distinguished from the eating with the gods of African festival of sacrificial food” (Von Stuckrad, 2006: 1664). The above reference to communion between worshippers and gods is insufficient without considering the idea of sacrifice as a communicative act.

1.2.3 Sacrifice as a communicative act

The most important interpretation of sacrifice is that of the French sociologists Henry Hubert and Marcel Mauss (1968). They defined sacrifice as a “mediated communication between the profane and the sacred world”: the sacrificial animal, which must first be made sacred, is a means of communication, and the sacrifice itself is a rite of passage between the worlds. “Rites of entry and exit, or sanctification and de-sanctification, place a framework around the actual sacrificial act which climaxed in the slaying of the animal with which the sacred and dangerous ‘energies’ have been released, which now flow out both to the

holy and to the persons performing the sacrifice”. Socially, it serves as a means of reconciliation between those performing the sacrifice and the gods for whom the sacrifice is made (Von Stuckrad, 2006:1665).

1.2.4 Sacrifice as a purifying power

Around 1900, J.G. Frazer talked about scapegoat rites based on the “magic transfer/conveyance of the insalubrious to the matter or material”. René Girard (1977) found that the philosophy of the scapegoat procedure meant to control the threat of violence that constantly hangs over the community being, by transferring it on to a surrogate sacrifice (Burkert, 1983). This will be elaborated on in the heuristic framework of this dissertation. However, before this, a look at some spiritualised modes of sacrifice will be taken.

1.2.5 Spiritualised modes of sacrifice

The crisis of sacrifice within the Christian theology of sacrifice refers to Jesus’ eschatological sacrifice of atonement, which put an end to the biblical practices of bloody sacrifice. Old Testament prophets spoke against the whole sacrificial system as being external ritualism. The centering of Israel’s sacrificial rituals in Jerusalem resulted in the cessation of institutionalised bloody sacrificial performances after the destruction of the Temple 70CE (Von Stuckrad, 2006:1665). The temple sacrifice gave rise to the “divine service of the word”, and was celebrated in the synagogue; spiritualised and conventional ways of sacrifice replaced the bloody sacrificial system. The holocaust and the burning of the fat gave rise to humility and prayer. The “metaphorization and spiritualization of the Hebrew biblical concept of sacrifice” seem to have been fostered and intensified in Christianity. Human beings are to offer themselves as a “living, holy, sacrifice pleasing to God” (Rm 12:1). Therefore, the “spiritual sacrifices of the Christian include all acts of self-giving and surrender to God, all ascetical self-denial, all altruistic works of love for the neighbor” (Von Stuckrad, 2006:1665). Therefore, let us now turn to the statement of the problem of this study.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

In this dissertation, the researcher will deal with what may be called “The communicative power of blood sacrifices: A predominantly South African perspective, with special reference to the Epistle to the Hebrews”. To communicate means: to share or exchange information, to pass on or convey an emotion, disease etc. Therefore, communication is the “action of communicating, a letter or a message” and communicative is an adjective which means: “willing or eager to talk or pass on information” (Stevenson, 2002:133). The word “communicate” is “historically related to the word ‘common’. It stems from the Latin verb *communicare*, which means ‘to share’, ‘to make common’... When we communicate, we make things common. We thus increase our shared

knowledge, our 'common-sense' -the basic precondition of all community" (Rosengren, 2000:1).

To communicate means "to make known, pass on and to transmit". Communication means an "interchange of thoughts or opinions through shared symbols". The adjective 'communicative' means: "inclined to talk freely and sometimes indiscreetly, communicable, demonstrative or effusive" (Mirriam, 1976:153-154). Communication stands for the "exchange of information, expression of feelings, correspondence, writing". Communicative means "forthright, expressive, revelatory, revealing or informative" (Stein & Berg, 1984:147).

Power can be defined as "the actual or potential possession of control, authority, or influence over others"... Basically it means "strength", from which the words "army" and "wealth" are derived. The term is used more than eighty times in the Old Testament as an "attribute of people in the sense of strength, power or might, and strong hands" (Myers, 1987:844-845; See also 1Chr 29:11-12; Ps 65:5-13; 2Sm 22:33; 1Ki 17:17). It can also be viewed as stemming from the "Greek words used in the singular to express the idea of power: $\beta<\forall:4H$ which describes the general ability to perform, $f>\cong 1\Phi$: \forall the authority of freedom from any inward restraint... And $f>\cong 1\Phi$: \forall is used for spiritual agencies (Rm 8:38; Eph 6:12), generally of adverse character, but sometimes neutrally for earthly rulers, as indicated in Romans 13:1-3 (Harrison, 1999:411).

Myers (1987:844) maintains that the New Testament claims that the Greek concept of $\beta<\forall:4H$ can have meanings ranging from "ability or means, a powerful work or mighty works, principalities and powers, power and dominion, supernatural gifts and supernatural forces of which Jesus is the mediator", as reflected respectively in the following scriptures: 2Corinthians 8:3, Acts 2:22, Matthew 7:22, Luke 10:13, Colossians 1:16 and Hebrews 9:15. However, Harrison (1999:411) adds that, unlike in the Old Testament, the New Testament shows that the idea of the overwhelming display of the divine power of God leads to its personal manifestation in Jesus Christ. His Messianic power, though linked with God's overwhelming power in the Old Testament, is described as far greater than the power with which the prophets were endowed. This power was first manifested in Jesus' life through His miracles, which "were signs to corroborate the powerful effect of His teaching".

At this stage, the researcher will not concentrate on the theme of power, because it is not the purpose of this dissertation. Instead, this study is just looking for a way to explain what is meant by the phrase "communicative power of blood sacrifices". From the above definitions of both "communicative" and "power", as well as the related materials, one can infer that the communicative power of sacrifice is a reversible, mysterious transference of power through shared symbols during sacrificial rituals, release, sharing, conveyance of supernatural power, or just a willful, automatic passing on of power in or from the

spiritual realm, that might have either positive or negative effects on both the worshipper or sender of the sacrificial signal, through offering a sacrifice, or the addressee, that is, the receiver, usually a perceived supernatural being. This could be explained in terms of results: that is, blessings as an outcome of an offered sacrifice, and abortion or diversion of wrath on behalf of a deity.

The appeased deity or spirit(s) refrains from carrying out their prior destructive plan, because the wrath and malefic evils primarily conceived are transformed into a pleasurable relationship, a peaceful and reconciliatory condition through the power that emanates from the sacrificial offering. It seems that there is always some energy communicated during a sacrificial offering in general and blood sacrifice in particular, which disposes the perceived deity favourably towards the giver, by bestowing spiritual and material blessings, physical healing and good crops, atonement for sins, protection etc.

In this dissertation, the researcher will endeavour to discuss the communicative power of blood sacrifices in South Africa and a few other selected countries in Africa, and will then focus on the theme of blood sacrifice in Hebrews, especially the sacrifice of Jesus. After this, the study will attempt to show how it rendered communication with God an unhindered relationship (Heb 10:19-23), as well as how it communicated salvation. At this stage, one might ask: what relationship exists between the Hebrews' material and material on the communicative power of blood sacrifices in South Africa and elsewhere in Africa? First and foremost, it should be noted that the researcher is not going to link the two and say that one is dependent upon the other. Instead, this study is only going to compare the material relevant to the topic, in South Africa and elsewhere in Africa, with the material in Hebrews, and show the differences and similarities in order to make some hermeneutical applications. In this situation, if one has information about what the New Testament says concerning the communicative power of blood sacrifices, and what African traditional religions (South Africa: Xhosas, Zulus, Tsongas and elsewhere in Africa) say about it, one can use the material from Africa to link the current situation to the Bible.

This study is not interested in clear independence, since it only needs information from Hebrews, as well as that from a South African perspective, including a few examples from elsewhere in Africa, so that in talking to people in Africa, they become aware of the information provided in Hebrews, and can thereby discover where it overlaps with their own situation, and use it as a type of entrance into biblical material. This study has purported to investigate the theme of the communicative power of blood sacrifice in Hebrews, especially through a theological exegesis of the blood sacrifice of Jesus.

This dissertation comprises three major tasks: The first consists of an extensive reading of literary sources on sacrifices among the Xhosa, Zulu and Tsonga people, including qualitative, empirical research, whereby fifty-four informants from Gauteng, Kwazulu Natal, and North West provinces respectively are

interviewed using a homogeneous qualitative data collection methodology - that is, a focus group interview, in which grassroots people (Christians) are the targets of investigation, in order to indicate how the communicative power of blood sacrifice is shown among South Africans today. The second task will deal with a theological exegesis of the blood sacrifices in the Epistle to the Hebrews, especially the sacrifice of Jesus, in order to compare both the validity and significance of bloody sacrifices in all the sacrificial contexts used in this dissertation.

This task will consist of finding relevant occurrences of the theme in the Epistle to the Hebrews. In the exegetical analysis of the theme of blood sacrifices in Hebrews, this study will focus on the sacrifice of Jesus. The purpose here is not to study Hebrews for the sake of blood sacrifices, but rather to establish a Christian framework relating to sacrificial practices.

The selection of the Epistle to the Hebrews was motivated by the fact that it is the major New Testament book that reflects on the Leviticus sacrificial system, which seems to have parallels with African traditional religions' sacrificial systems, thus allowing some type of extrapolation. Secondly, the occurrences in Hebrews of the theme of blood sacrifice will help to evaluate both sacrificial systems, with regard to the sacrifice of Christ and those occurring in the church today, serving as a basis for showing how the communicative power of blood sacrifices is viewed in the Old Testament sacrificial dispensation, in African traditional religions, in the New Testament (Hebrews), especially in the sacrifice of Christ, and finally, in both African traditional religions in South Africa (Xhosa, Zulu and Tsonga peoples), including some examples from elsewhere in Africa, as well as Christianity (church-restricted) today.

The researcher will attempt to bring to the surface similarities and differences with regard to different sacrificial cults dealt with in this dissertation, and then, a summary of this dissertation's results will be provided, in which this study will attempt to show how the communicative power of blood sacrifices is viewed in the various contexts considered in this dissertation. Finally, the researcher will make some recommendations in this regard.

1.4 DELINEATION OF THE STUDY

The investigation with regard to the communicative power of sacrifices will cover the area of the Republic of South Africa, as well as some other examples from the rest of Africa. The Xhosa people will be focused on, making comparisons with sacrificial thoughts among the Zulu and Tsonga people. This is a very extensive field, but this study will still attempt to cover it as thoroughly as possible. If one deals with a single sacrificial system, one can write a whole dissertation on the finer details. However, the purpose here is rather to examine the effects of communication, and this study will therefore not be looking at every detailed aspects of sacrifice. Some important groups of people, such as the Zulus,

Xhosas and Tsongas, who are some of the biggest nations in South Africa, will be focused on, in addition to a few other peoples in Africa, in order to broaden the research base. The researcher will illustrate how sacrifice occurs within each group, in order to determine whether or not there are major differences. Therefore, the hypothesis that every group is the same will not be used.

Primary and secondary information will be gathered respectively through focus group interviews and extensive reading of existing material on the topic. The interviewees will be randomly selected from people living in Gauteng, North West Province and Kwazulu Natal, as a representative sample of the population of the Republic of South Africa, whose responses will be generalised to the whole area of the Republic, according to scientific regulations of qualitative research (Steward & Shamdasani, 1990:4; Taylor & Bogdan, 1984:5; Steyn & Uys, 1988:22).

This dissertation will comprise twelve chapters: chapter one, an introduction consisting of the statement of the problem, delineation of the study, as well as its motivation, hypothesis and methodology. Chapter two will comprise the heuristic framework, incorporating some scholarly desiderata on Christianity and African traditional worldviews (religions), as well as the perspective of missions in Africa, including some recent scientific theories on sacrifices. Chapters three to eight will consist of a review of relevant literary sources on sacrifices in the South African context, specifically among the Xhosa, Zulu and Tsonga peoples, including a few examples from elsewhere in Africa. Chapter nine will deal with sacrifice in the Old Testament, as a background to the exegesis of the sacrifice of Jesus in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Chapter ten will focus on the sacrifice of Jesus in Hebrews, and is an exegetical analysis. Chapter eleven is a dialectical discussion comparing the biblical material about sacrifices with African traditional religions' material, within the limits of the study's contexts. Chapter twelve will be a conclusion, and the dissertation will end with a list of all works consulted.

1.5 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

The researcher's attempt to investigate the "communicative power of blood sacrifices" (both biblical and traditional blood sacrifices) has been prompted and fuelled by the need to know why people in both traditional religions and Christianity, in South Africa in particular, have never completely abandoned blood sacrifices. The practice of blood sacrifice seems to have enjoyed continuity in African traditional beliefs. However, in African Christianity, it has been both continuity and discontinuity that have created syncretistic types of beliefs. Some people tend to hold on to their traditional sacrificial rituals, and at the same time claim to adhere to Christian beliefs in matter connected with Christ's sacrifice and Christian New Testament sacrifices (Mckenzie, 1997). This was paired with some desiderata pro-sacrifice, and it was in defence of it and its practice that some post-modern pluralistic tendencies or attitudes were propagated with regard to biblical and extra-biblical sacrifices. Claims for sameness and interchangeability

propagated the idea that biblical sacrifices are of the same essence and implicitly complementary to traditional ones, thus attributing the same extrinsic and intrinsic values to traditional blood sacrifices (Mckenzie, 1997; Crafford, 1996; Dhavamony, 2001).

The motivation for this study grew even more when the researcher read that orthodox Christian communities have expressed the desire to revive animal blood sacrifice performances within the mass liturgy, alongside the sacrifice of Christ (Sexton, 2002:2-3). It was then that the idea to investigate why blood sacrifice performance rituals were so attractive, captivating and enslaving as to make people adhere so strongly to them, and what was so real about blood sacrificial exercises that people should proclaim an re-awakening of such practices. This seems to be also partially true of biblical blood sacrifices (Old Testament blood sacrifices), as biblical discontinuity seems to be grounded in a more superior and effective sacrificial performance. There must be something peculiar to blood sacrifices, both Old Testament and African traditional religions' ones, as well as Jesus' blood sacrifice, including Christian sacrifices, that so strongly influences worshippers.

The very manifestation of the same thing in varying degrees has curiously aroused in the researcher the motivation to investigate the topic: "The communicative power of blood sacrifice: A predominantly South African perspective, with special attention given to the Epistle to the Hebrews". The following hypothesis will guide the investigation throughout this dissertation.

1.6 HYPOTHESIS

In this dissertation, the following hypothesis will be investigated, namely: the reality of the communicative power of blood sacrifices - that is, whether or not there could be any release of power during blood sacrificial performances, and how it is manifested or shown in the various religious contexts mentioned in this study. The fact that people crave for, and cling to, blood sacrificial performances, seems to reinforce the assumption that some forces inherent to blood sacrificial rituals effectively stimulate and enhance the interest of those involved in them. If this were not so, there could have obviously been a complete disintegration of blood sacrificial performances, and a disengagement on behalf of those participating in them. Blood sacrificial performances would have been reduced to mere ancient history. Nevertheless, given the ongoing existence and continuity of blood sacrifice on the one hand and discontinuity on the other, also continuity-discontinuity and discontinuity-continuity in some religious circles, the probability that some invisible forces associated with blood sacrifices, and working through and around blood sacrificial performances, endowing participants with supernatural abilities to communicate with entities within the non-physical world or to effect any person's impairment and hinder natural cataclysms, needs to be investigated.

1.7 METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in this dissertation is basically founded on sound exegetical approaches, as is actually described in Fee (1993:63-114), Van der Watt (2001), Kilian (1993:26-34), Porter (1997) and de Vos (1999). It is not the purpose of this study to evaluate or develop [or even propose] any exegetical method to be used in studies on Hebrews. For further reading on exegetical methods, one can refer to extensive research conducted by scholars such as Wilhelm Egger (1996); Joel Green (1995); Stanley Porter and David Tombs (1995); Stanley Porter and C. A. Evans (1996); as well as Stanley Porter and Dennis Stamps (2002). This study does not use a single methodology, but rather a combination of methods based on the requirements of the text that will be analysed. Therefore, this study will not be method-driven, but rather text-driven, and the text actually invites particular approaches or methods needed in order to analyse it properly. In the researcher's approach to the text containing the theme of blood sacrifice in Hebrews, the question regarding the communicative power of blood sacrifice and how it is shown in the text will basically determine the exegetical approach. This study will also use a qualitative, empirical research methodology, by means of focus group interviews conducted in the Gauteng, Kwazulu Natal and North-West provinces respectively. It is the researcher's hope that all these methods will somehow respect the criteria of scientific objectivity, reliability and explicability as far as the exploration and evaluation of the "communicative power of blood sacrifices" is concerned. The terms "African traditional worldviews" and "African traditional religions" will be used. Therefore, before concluding this chapter, it is necessary to explain some such terms.

1.8 CLARIFICATION OF SOME TERMS

Qualitative research refers to research that elicits participants' accounts of their meanings, experiences and participation. It also produces descriptive data in the participants' own written or spoken words. It thus involves identifying the participants' beliefs and values that underlie the phenomena (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984:5). By *focus group interviews*, the following is meant: "group" can be defined as a number of individuals between whom a distinguishable pattern of interaction exists (Steyn & Uys, 1988:22). "Interview" signifies the presence of a trained moderator who can skillfully facilitate the discussion that takes place between all the members in the group, in order to elicit information on the desired topic. "Focus" implies that the discussion that takes place within the group will be limited to the specific theme under investigation (Steward & Shamdasani, 1990:4).

A focus group interview could therefore be described as a purposive discussion of a specific topic or related topics, taking place between eight to ten individuals with similar backgrounds and common interests. The group interaction will consist of verbal and non-verbal communication and an interplay of perceptions and opinions that will stimulate discussion, without necessarily modifying or

changing the ideas and opinions of individuals. The focus group interview is conducted as an open conversation on a specific topic, in which each participant may make comments, ask questions of other participants, or respond to comments by others, including the moderator (Ferreira & Puth, 1988:167). Therefore, blood sacrifice and sacrifice will be used interchangeably to mean animate sacrificial victims and, given the fact that either the flesh of a sacrificial victim or its blood may be offered separately as a burnt offering or a sprinkled or poured-down offering, blood-life sacrifice and blood sacrifice will also be used interchangeably to mean sacrificial blood, sacrificed blood or blood for sacrifice.

1.9 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the blue-print or design of this dissertation has been provided. The researcher has attempted to succinctly define the concept of sacrifice and its classification, instances arising in everyday life, human and divine benefits of sacrifice, sacrificial ideologies, sacrificial interpretations, sacrifice as a gift exchange and renunciation, the sacramental sacrificial meal, the sacrificial communicative act, sacrifice as a purifying power, and spiritualised modes of sacrifice. The chapter then went on to discuss the statement of the problem, the delineation, motivation, hypothesis and methodology of the study, and the clarification of some terms. The following chapter will be dedicated to the heuristic framework of this dissertation.

CHAPTER TWO: HEURISTIC FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The heuristic framework encompasses brief descriptions of African traditional religion, Christianity and mission perspectives in Africa and South Africa, as well as a critical approach to some modern theories on blood sacrifices. However, given the fact that the face of Christianity is so diverse, wide and complex, and that there are so many churches in South Africa, this study will discuss this only as a background, by providing a general description. It is not a comprehensive description, as it does not include a history of the whole situation, but is rather a way to sensitize oneself to the diversity of Christianity. The purpose of this dissertation is to determine how people from Africa can use the Epistle to the Hebrews in order to better understand their culture, and to understand how they can link Christianity and African traditional religion as far as the communicative power of blood sacrifices is concerned.

Therefore, this background to the abovementioned issue is necessary. This discussion will therefore not go into any details about blood sacrifice, but will instead just provide brief descriptions of Christianity and African traditional religion. In this dissertation, information on the reading strategy of the Bible from project reading of the Bible in Africa will be incorporated, which summarily and clearly highlights the reflections of various scholars on the nature of Christianity, African traditional religion and Western missions in Africa (South Africa in particular), as well as the diverse perceptions about each of them as far as Bible reading strategy is concerned. “African Christianity can only be able to tackle the identity problem of the hour if it remains faithful to the basic convictions of the New Testament” (Rakotoharintsifa, 1999:8).

This study understands that reading and interpreting the Bible in Africa cannot be separated from interpreting biblical sacrifices. The perspectives from worldviews help one to recognise those aspects which constitute knowledge within a person, and which function as a cohesive unit. It helps us to understand how problematic it was that missionaries could simply declare ancestors or sacrifices to be taboo, without recognising that these things were bound to other objects which necessitated the presence of sacrifices and ancestors. This is why, after centuries of Christianity in Africa, one still finds ancestor worship or forms of sacrifice, even among African Christians (Adamo, 1999:1-2). Therefore, it is necessary to examine the perspectives from worldviews.

2.1.1 Perspectives from worldviews

Relevance in the true sense of the word is significant here (other factors such as “social play” do not play a role). The type of communication that “goes in one ear and goes out the other” is only possible when a person is met “within his context and where he stands”. Relevance relates to applicability to a situation or context, and the needs of the user, as stated in Webster’s Dictionary (1988). If there is no need for the applicability of the material, communication is restrained. It follows therefore that one should be familiar with a particular person’s context, in order to achieve effective communication. The sociology of knowledge and especially the influential work of Berger and Luckmann (1989), provide stimulating insights. However, their concept of symbolic universe is so loaded with implicit meaning and implications that this study will not use it – it will, however, use insights gained from the sociology of knowledge. The term “sociology of knowledge” might imply things that are not intended, and this study might want to express aspects not covered by this concept.

The researcher prefers to use the term “*worldview*” in order to describe the social constructs that people make from the accumulation and processing of their total acquired knowledge. Adamo (2001:8-22) uses the expression “African worldview”. It is not an effort to create a new word, but in this way it is possible to fill the word with the content that the researcher wants to express. This term is a combination of two Greek words, namely *kosmos* and *skopeō*. *Kosmos* (*kosmos* is spelled with a “k” to emphasise the Greek roots of the word as it is used here) has a wide variety of possible uses in ancient Greek literature (see for instance Bauer et al, 1979: ad loc). It may also be used to refer to “the sum of everything here and now, the orderly universe” (Bauer et al, 1979:445). It is in this broadest sense that the word is used here. This study is interested in the visible and invisible, the real and fictional (fictional here refers to mythical construction aspects of “*kosmos*”, which are real to people), and the flesh and spiritual aspects of the universe.

This includes God and the spiritual world, even the realities of faith, dreams, visions, etc. *Skopeō* has more limited meanings, but may be used to mean: “keep one’s eyes on or notice someone or something” (Bauer et al, 1979:756). With the combination of these two words – worldviews – it suggests the process of taking notice of, accumulating, systematising and integrating knowledge about reality (*kosmos*), in its widest sense, and using this knowledge as a basis for existence. Existence refers to the process of making decisions and motivating them (rationally, religiously or mythologically), which then determines one’s behaviour and actions (some might prefer the expression “worldview”, but this expression has the same problem as the phrase “symbolic universe”-it is too vague and has already acquired too many

meanings). In describing what a worldview entails, the research would like to make use of the terms 'objects', 'abstracts', 'relations', 'activities' and 'motifs'.

In the "*kosmos*", objects – whether they are real or fictional (mythological objects are real to the "believer", while others might regard them as fictional) – are to be found. These objects can be called "worldview objects", since they are not neutral. Each person attaches a different value or meaning to a specific object. In this way, a network of associations is created around a particular object. For instance, if one mentions the word "God" to someone, that person will immediately associate a large number of ideas with that word. These ideas might be positive or negative, but as long as they are linked to the idea of "God" for that person, it is part of the worldview object "God". Anything a person knows has a number of associated ideas linked to it. If one talks of "father" or "family" or "money", everyone will have certain ideas about that object. According to those ideas, a person will either value the object or not. Money as a worldview object includes all the ideas and feelings that a person associates with that specific object.

Within the wider framework of its worldview, that particular object will function in relation to other objects, according to the value or meaning that is attached to it. For instance, if a person attaches a very positive and influential value to God, God will play an influential role in relation to other objects in that person's worldview. If choices are to be made, the influence of God will be seen in relation to those choices or actions. On the other hand, if a person holds God in low esteem, the opposite will be true. God will not influence the person's behaviour.

There are also abstracts involved, such as grace, friendliness, patience, etc. Although the qualitative aspect is emphasised here, these words might also be used to express actions (if a quality such as one of these is expressed in an action, it should be treated as an action). Within a worldview, values are also attributed to these qualities, as is the case with objects of worldviews. For instance, patience might be positive for one person, but negative for the other. If the latter is approached, you might not expect much with regard to patience from him/her.

2.2 [PLUS EVENT]

These different objects also stand in specific relations to one another. Relations between different objects in the "*kosmos*" may be called worldview relations. It describes the way in which specific objects and even abstracts are organised within the worldview of an individual. This organisation determines the relative positions of objects, and the mutual influence that they have on each other within one person. For instance, a person might value money more than his family. This priority given to money will determine his attitude towards the other objects in his worldview, and consequently determine his actions – he will

therefore not spend much money on his family if he can avoid it, but will rather save the money. However, if he loves God more than his money, this relation will motivate him to give money for “God’s work”, which he will not give to his family. In this way, the objects are organised according to the value attributed to each. Causality and reasons for actions might be found by focusing on the organisation of relations within the worldview of a particular person. Based on these relations, cohesion exists within a worldview.

Activities also form part of a worldview. Objects and abstracts stand in relation to one another. The situation is, however, not static but dynamic. As the opinion of an individual changes with regard to an object within his worldview, the inner dynamics and arrangements within his worldview will change accordingly. New relations and positions of authority are formulated within his particular worldview. For instance, imagine that a person thinks very highly of his pastor. He is prepared to follow him without reserve. Then, he finds out that his pastor has feet of clay and has cheated the congregation by having an extramarital affair. A worldview activity now takes place – the estimation linked to the worldview object “pastor” now loses its value, and a rearrangement of objects takes place. From a worldview perspective, a relation between a feeling of mistrust (abstract) and the pastor (object) is established. These dynamic changes are part of the worldview reality, and this is what is meant by activity. These objects, abstracts and the relations between them are in a constant internal movement of redefinition, rejection or confirmation (there are events theorists who claim that changes take place each time one person has contact with another). In the process of reading the Bible, this activity will allow the integration of different worldview perspectives.

It might also be that, with the introduction of new objects or the rearrangement of worldviews, objects in the worldview might clash and therefore exist in a state of tension in the worldview of a particular person. For example, the object “Jesus” might be associated with the care and well-being of a person. However, the object “ancestors” might have the same associations in the worldview of that same person. This creates tension in the dynamic relations within the worldview of that particular person. To whom should such a person turn if he needs care? External forces such as experience, social or religious pressures, family expectations, etc. might then cause that person to give priority to one of these two objects. Thus, he redefines the relation between these two objects, by granting the one a higher status in his worldview than the other. In many cases, tensions such as these persist within that person.

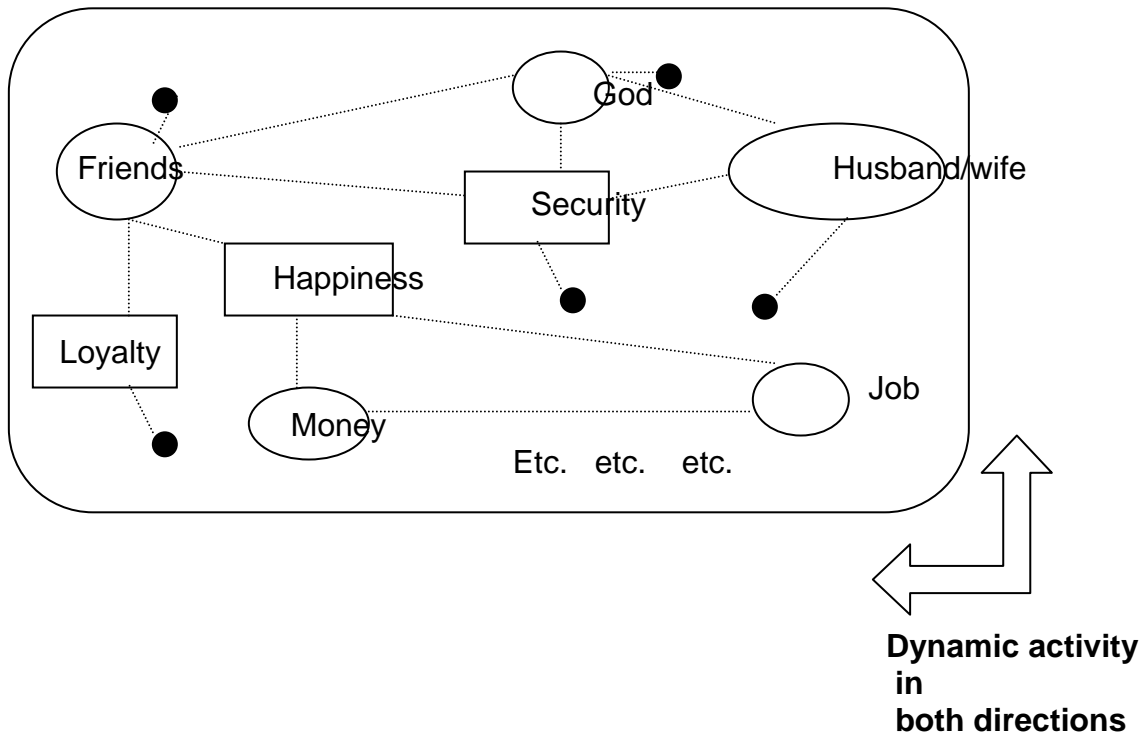
Then, there is what a person can call motives. These are the reasons why an object holds a specific position and stands in a specific relation to other objects. Motives include myths, historical narratives, traditions, dogma, wise sayings, etc., that motivate how and why certain things should happen. Take, for instance, the view held in parts of Africa that it is necessary to kill a crippled child. A myth is found in Africa that the mother of the first ever crippled child

was ordered by the gods to kill the child. She did not do it, and in the end this child was instrumental in killing his mother as well as many other living beings – in the myth, the child becomes the personification of evil. This story motivates the negative value accorded in this situation to a cripple child. Another example could be that God is valued highly because He is creator of all things. This is a basic assumption of Christian faith (1Cor 8; 1Th 1). The stories of creation in these traditions then motivate and explain how creation took place, and why God should be valued. Dogma also plays an important role in this regard. Religious dogma is intended to motivate and explain the organisation of religious and related aspects within a worldview. The believer is then supposed to organise his own worldview according to the one described in the dogma.

These motivational materials play a very important role in the nature of the worldview of a person. If the story about the first crippled child is rejected, then the crippled child will have a higher value and be treated differently. The relative positions and resulting interrelatedness are therefore always motivated, which emphasises the strong cohesive nature existing within the worldview. The origins and sources of these motifs are varied. Why does one love one's wife? An emotional or perhaps practical reason – and not some or other myth - might motivate why one's wife is valued highly by you. If one listens to people who want to divorce, they will entertain one with fictional and real stories which serve as motives for their planned action.

This study regards it of utmost importance to see this cohesion, but also to understand the motives for certain people regarding certain objects or abstracts as of more importance than others. It is also an illusion to think that one can simply tell a person to abandon certain objects or abstracts, without understanding the reasons why those things are of value to that person. If that person still holds those reasons as important, he will not change or abandon those objects or abstracts within his worldview. If one wants to know what is relevant for a particular person, one should have insight into his worldview. Schematically, the previous explanation might be illustrated as follows:

Fig. 1
Circles = objects
Squares = abstracts
Dotted lines = relations
Dots = motives



For instance, God might move down in value and money up (vertically). This will make the influence of money on actions and behaviour stronger. Job and friends (social acceptance) might move closer together (horizontally), while job moves further away from happiness. This would imply that a person works for acceptance, and not for satisfaction or happiness.

A few remarks can be made here:

- The perspective from the worldview allows one to recognise those aspects which constitute knowledge within a person and function as a cohesive unit. It helps us to understand how problematic it was that missionaries could simply declare ancestors or sacrifices as being taboo, without recognising that these objects were bound to other objects, which necessitated the presence of sacrifices or ancestors. This is why, after centuries of Christianity in Africa, you will still find ancestor worship or forms of sacrifice, even among African Christians. Within a worldview, relations exist between different objects and abstracts, which means that

these cannot be treated in isolation, as if each element stands on its own. The whole worldview is interwoven with stronger or weaker threads, which also explains causality within worldviews. This means that if the current worldviews of African Christians are studied, individual elements in worldviews should not be isolated, but rather approached as a whole. Adamo (1999:1-2) illustrates how the worldview of Africans is integrated -evil, spirits, protection, nature, etc. are all interrelated and influence each other.

- In dealing with the views of people, a distinction should be made between the more and less important ideas. From the perspective of worldviews, not all ideas are central - some are peripheral and can simply be forfeited without any significant loss. For an atheist, disregarding God would not really matter. In any cross-cultural discussion, the discussion partners should know what is important and what is not in their respective worldviews, in order to facilitate the discussion.
- The process within a worldview is dynamic. With every new influence, smaller or larger changes in relations or relative positions occur within the worldview. New motives might replace older ones. This means that people might change their opinions, but they will do so with reasons. These changes might affect a wide range of interrelations within the worldview. If the “object” God is, for instance, taken out of the worldview of a Christian, major changes will occur within his worldview. Questions will arise, such as: what object will now be the most important? Where will the motivation for norms come from, etc, and these will then force a reorganisation of his worldview. In dealing with central issues such as ancestors or diviners in African worldviews, attention should be paid to the abovementioned point. It is not just a matter of rejecting or accepting ideas. The process is much more complex.
- Since there is a constant process of attributing values to objects and abstracts within a worldview, burning issues can be more easily identified. Simple questions such as: what is important to you? or what concerns / troubles you? will lead directly to these burning issues. If the word “why” is added, the answer will expose aspects of the worldview of that person. The person’s reasons, what he/she regards as important and what not, how he/she views the relations between different objects in his worldview, and so on, will give one insight into his/her worldview. This is what relevancy is about.

From the above, it becomes clear why relevance is significant. Relevance means that a person feels that his worldview is of importance. The way in which he views objects or abstracts in their respective relations is being addressed and challenged, and therefore, his worldview is being engaged.

2.2.1 The issue of intra- and interaction between Euro-American Christianity and African traditional worldviews

Frequent mention is made of African culture (the issue of unity or diversity in Africa will be discussed elsewhere. The term is used here in its broadest sense), inculturation, African Christianity etc. in literature. These types of terms and phrases are problematic for several reasons. One is the diversity within Africa. The second is that in previous centuries, the traditional way of living was confronted with strong influences, inter alia, Christianity in a Euro-American form (Christianity's influence was mainly on a religious level, although it was in some sense interpreted in a holistic way, which meant that it had a strong social impact in the areas of hospitals and schools), colonialism (this had a strong political and social impact), capitalism (this had an economic impact), and modernism (this had a philosophical and religious impact). These forces had a definite impact on the African psyche and way of thinking – they resulted in significant changes in Africans' traditional worldviews. The influence was not uniform in all areas, or even in all individuals. The result is that one finds a wide variety of opinions being prevalent in Africa. Africa is “in movement” – one might find traditionalists rubbing shoulders with people who are largely westernised. Slogans such as “African Renaissance” (the phrase introduced by President Thabo Mbeki of the Republic of South Africa to propagate a movement back to the cultural and historical heritage of Africa), as well as the end of colonialism, fuelled movements that advocated a return to African heritage. This makes the picture even more volatile, and the so-called African identity even more elusive. Adamo (1999:1, see also Mbiti, 1978) also emphasises the importance of recognising the unique nature of the worldview of African people. Their actions should be viewed in this light.

This makes the challenges of a “hermeneutics of relevance” even greater. In order for something to be relevant, it must touch the heart and mind of a person. But, what is the heart and mind of Africa or of a particular group in Africa, especially in a time in which so many changes are taking place in Africa? Since this question lies at the center of what is unique to the reading of scripture in Africa, it should be approached and answered with care. It is noteworthy that many (see Ukpogon, 1999; Mosala, 1989; Mugambi, 1999) efforts of inculturation focus on issues such as poverty, hunger, HIV/Aids, stress on family structures and the like, which are generally described as suffering due to oppression. In many cases, the reading strategy followed is basically a social program. These types of approaches often only deal with physical issues, and in this sense, they are restrictive. This study does not deny that hunger, as experienced in parts of Africa, has definite social and philosophical impacts. However, there is more to a hermeneutics of relevance than meets the eye. It has to do with the inner convictions and worldview of

people. This worldview is their “database”, to which they turn to answer existential questions – in the broadest sense of the word – and this is where one should look for relevance. The way in which a person constructs their worldview should therefore be understood and used as a point of departure. It opens up and explains the way in which people think. A worldview which is dominated by Christian (biblical) objects (with Christ in a central position), abstracts, relations and activities, could be described as a Christian worldview. The same applies to a worldview which consists of African traditional objects, abstracts, relations and activities. It may be called an African traditional worldview.

This brings us to the next question. What is the African worldview, if there is such a thing? This is a complex question. This study will, however, try to explain the problem (this can be done in a very technical way, but the researcher will try to do it as simply as possible, focusing only on the main issues) and suggest a viable way to approach it. To do this, the researcher will start with a diagram or schema. Each aspect represented in the diagram will be individually discussed according to the schema. The schema indicates two points of focus, namely Western (where the missionaries came from) Christianity and the African traditional worldview (the reason why the phrase “African traditional worldview” and not African traditional religion is used will be explained shortly) Obviously, these two are fictional points of focus, since both are characterised by variety, as is indicated in the schema. In exposing these two worldviews to each other, different people and groups responded differently. Since the interaction took place during the colonial period, the movement of change was from the African traditional worldview to Christianity.

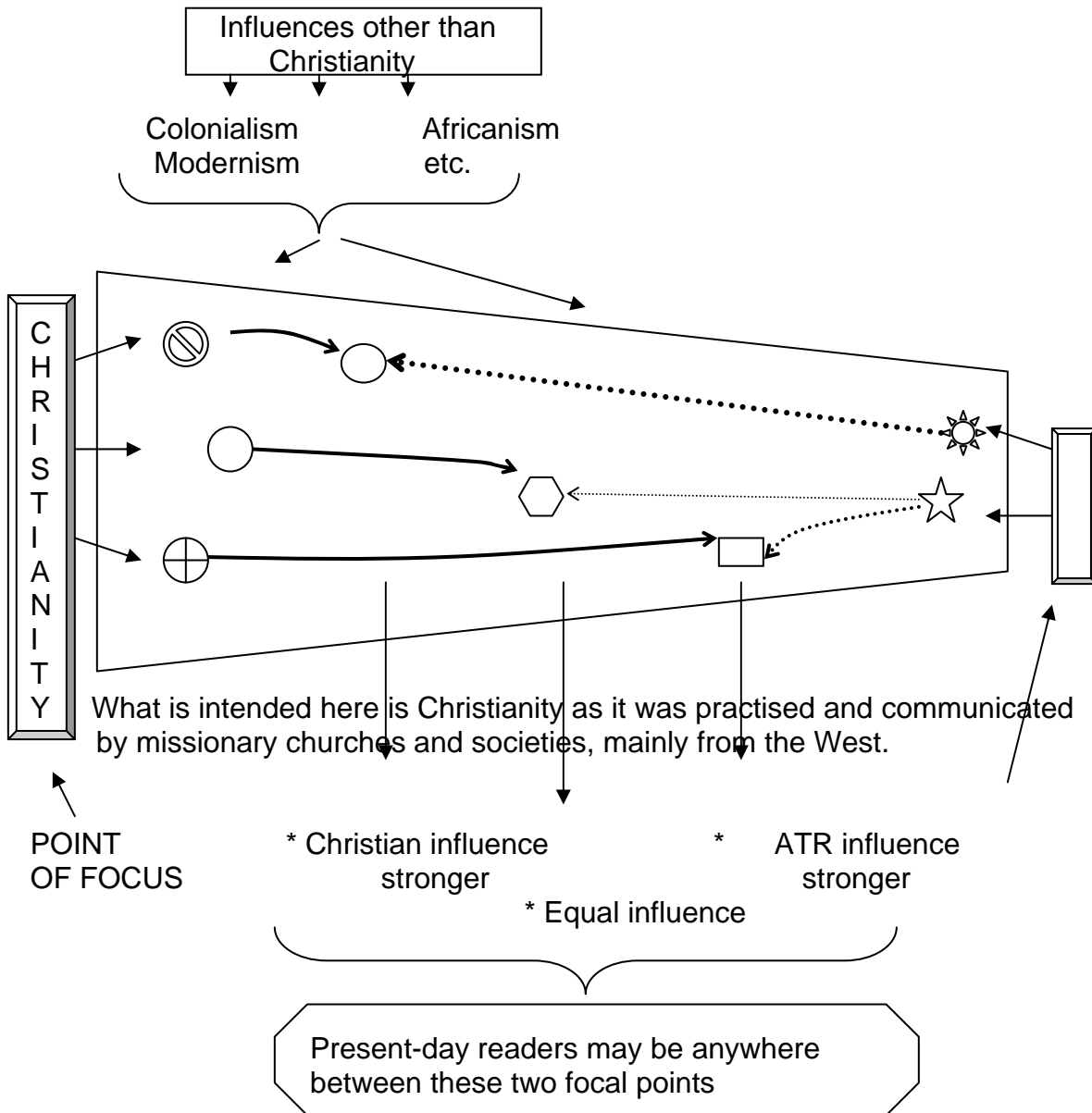
Only today, after the end of the colonial period, is there a noticeable movement from Christianity to more traditional ways. In the early 80’s, Prof. (JvdW) experienced this movement first-hand. Students were eager to learn more about their roots. African thought and literature was a very popular subject at the University of Fort Hare. This resulted in a situation in which a person may be closer to Christianity, but still accept certain objects or relations from the African traditional worldview - note that this is not necessarily a negative thing. It might refer to certain family customs or practices such as singing, dancing or certain forms of hospitality, which are foreign to Christianity but do not create any tension. In other cases, a person might still be closer to the African traditional worldview, or perhaps somewhere in the middle, between these two focal points. There are also other influences which should be considered, namely colonialism, capitalism, modernism, pan-Africanism etc. These political, economic and philosophical movements left profound marks on the souls and bodies of Africa and the ways in which their worldviews are constructed.

What follows is a schematic representation of the situation, followed by a discussion of the different aspects represented in the schema. This schema

attempts to provide a diachronic as well as synchronic picture. It endeavours to illustrate where people come from, as well as where they are:

Two worldviews in interaction

Fig. 2



2.3 AFRICAN TRADITIONAL WORLDVIEWS OR RELIGIONS

2.3.1 Is there something such as African traditional religion?

The first question should be whether or not there is something like African traditional religion (Ganusah, 2000:29 speaks of African indigenous religion) or an African traditional worldview? This question leads to several problems.

Terms may be confusing. For instance, is it possible to accurately determine what is meant by Western theology, European theology, or even Lutheran or Roman Catholic theology? The same applies to phrases such as African traditional religion or African theology. Answering this question is notoriously difficult. On a very basic level, there are questions concerning what Africa is, and who decided that this is what Africa should be. Maluleke (1999:3) emphasises the diversity of the African continent, and notes that people such as Appiah or Mudimbe call Africa a European invention (See also West, 1999a:18). The area north of the Sahara was strongly influenced by Europeans (as part of the Roman Empire) and then Middle Eastern cultures (Islam, therefore, plays an important role here. It is, however, not the only place where Islam plays a role in Africa). The tendency is, therefore, to use Africa in the sense of sub-Saharan Africa when reference to religion or culture is made. This study will also use it in this way. Nevertheless, even sub-Saharan Africa is characterised by its variety – as can be seen in the variety of clothes, languages and houses. In some cases, one will find dozens of different languages within one country, or even within one province in that particular country (South Africa has eleven official languages, while travelling to places such as the Democratic Republic of Congo is even more confusing).

Although scholars from different disciplines increasingly emphasise the diversity within sub-Saharan Africa, one can look at Teffo & Roux (1998:136), who refer to the intense ongoing debate in this regard. One should also acknowledge the strong views of Maluleke (1999:1-3). Okure (1999:1) also emphasises the “fragmented and multi-faceted reality of the African continent”. Wendland (1999:3) mentions that there are 2000 languages in Africa alone, not to mention the vast differences in history and customs, for instance, between the patrilinear-patrilocal and matrilinear-matrilocal peoples of central Africa. There are, nevertheless, certain prominent scholars who do still not hesitate to keep on referring to African religion or theology in the singular. See Mbiti (1969, 1986); Paris (1995); Kalu (1999:8); and Manus (1999:5) in this regard. Adamo (2001:8-22) refers to an African worldview or African indigenous tradition (1999:2) in the singular, although he concentrates on the Yoruba of Nigeria. Maluleke (1999:2), however, attacks the singular use when it comes to forms of Christianity in Africa, when he says that: “links with such titles as ‘Christianity in Africa’, ‘African Christian theology’, ‘Bible and theology in African Christianity’... are rather ‘colonialist’ and ‘modernist’ in scope”. Materials that are available

and that give generalised descriptions of spirituality and religious expressions in Africa are usually received with general acceptance throughout the continent. Similarities in central themes, which will be described later in this dissertation, seem to reoccur throughout Africa, although ways of expressing or motivating them (myths, other stories or cultic practices) might differ. This study acknowledges that this is not a watertight academic argument, but it is nevertheless a fact which must be noted, especially in light of the lack of detailed studies. Professor (JvdW) had people from all over Southern Africa as well as Nigeria in one classroom, discussing these matters, and there was general agreement on the basic principles of African traditional Christianity. In using the word 'Africa', it does not mean that there are no differences, neither is it an expression of absolute unity. It locates the area and people with regard to which or whom we attempt to make some careful and critical generalisations – what exactly this entails will be discussed shortly.

The direct focus of this study will, however, be on South Africa. Qualitative research has been done in several major regions such as Kwazulu-Natal, North West Province, Northern Province and Gauteng, the industrialised and demographic centre of South Africa. This has been done in order to identify trends prevalent in South Africa. However, by means of the available literature from scholars in the rest of Sub-Saharan Africa, this study will constantly evaluate its own information in the light of the broader picture in Africa.

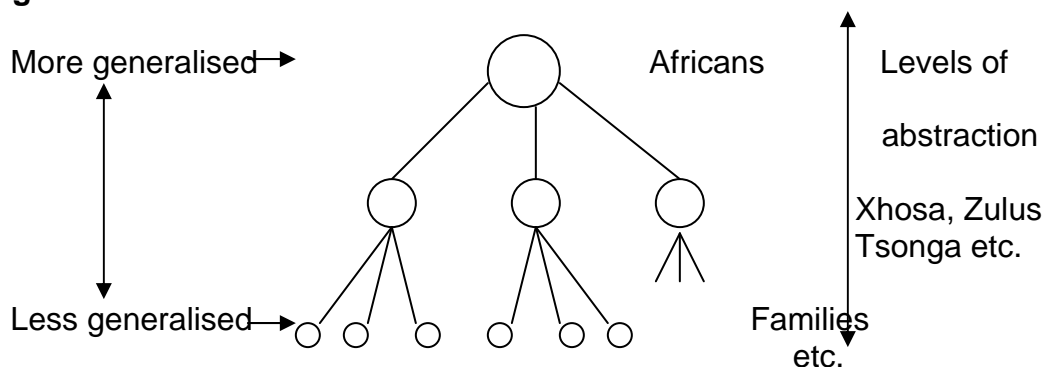
Apart from the above observations, the discussion about the unity or diversity of African traditional religion(s) has its own dynamics. Nobody can deny that there are differences as well as similarities within this religious system. Consider the strong remarks made by Yorke (2000:132): "The sheer size of the continent, the multiracial complexity of its demographics, the profusion of indigenous ethnic communities (over 3,000), a continental plethora of religious cultural traditions, and the missiologically created denominational fragmentation of the church in Africa has actually dissuaded some from speaking and writing in the singular" . However, he acknowledges similarities, which makes it possible to generalise. Equally, one should not overemphasise either of these. A complicating factor at this stage is that insufficient research has been conducted on individual groups in Africa to have adequate insight into the differences and similarities between all groups in Africa. Teffo and Roux (1998:136 - see also Oosthuizen, 1991; Tutu, 1978 and Setiloane, 1986) also stress this point in support of a culture-specific reading of the text. The result is that one might find doom prophets who will keep on arguing that one can actually say nothing about African religion. People who try to presume to write on the subject of African traditional religion have been severely criticised by some authors (see Wendland, 1999:3). One can only say: "A few people Professor (JvdW) knows in the area of Pretoria have these or those ideas". Nothing further can be said. This approach hinders any effort to make a more general description of the African worldview. It does serve as a warning not to

generalise too easily, and this must be taken seriously. However, this minimalist approach is overemphasising the particularities and differences.

On the other hand, Teffo & Roux (1998:137) argue that a generalised approach, as such, is not out of order. We constantly use phrases such as Western philosophy or theology, German or Euro-American theology, Calvinism or Lutheranism, and the like. None of these descriptions imply that everybody within such a group thinks alike or should do so. It indicates things like common activities based on more or less shared presuppositions. No scholar would like to force every German theologian into the mould of what may be called German theology. Life is too varied and dynamic for that. However, there will be commonalities. Even if a generalisation does not fit everyone or is later proven wrong, it at least stimulates efforts and research to correct or adjust it. In this way, ideas and opinions are refined. Moreover, an approach which reflects a tendency for critical generalisation will also stimulate descriptive and detailed research, since there are opinions and views to critically test and evaluate. See Teffo & Roux (1998:137) in this regard. This is one of the reasons why this study opts for both qualitative research and research from written sources. The latter presents us with generalisations which can be tested and refined through qualitative research. A minimalist approach, on the other hand, will stay minimal in its results, and most probably in its efforts too. The implication of the minimalist approach is that every piece of evidence must be processed before one can start to make remarks that are more general. That this will or can ever happen in Africa is a dream that will not come true in the near or foreseeable future. Therefore, the minimalist becomes a victim of his non-criticism.

These arguments are expressions of the age-old universality-particularity argument: are there things that everybody shares? And are there things which only one person in the whole universe has? The answer appears to be yes to both these questions, and this seems to be why this debate is never-ending – for every argument in one direction, there is another argument in the other direction. But how should we understand this? It has to do with the level of generalisation. Let us look at the following illustration:

Fig. 3



Efforts to describe a typical African, Xhosa, Zulu or Tsonga (tribes in South Africa), or a typical Ndwandwe (Zulu family), will all have to be abstractions or generalisations, although on different levels. There will be aspects in which each individual Zulu will differ from the general description of a Zulu. Max Weber has pointed this out as inherent to sociological descriptions, while Teffo and Roux (1998:137) draw attention to this fact in the following way: "...in philosophy we are concerned with general or universal matters". However, the higher the level of abstraction, the more differences there will be. Thus, the argument that one must not talk about Africans in South Africa, but rather Zulus or a particular group of Zulus in a specific area, does not escape the problem of generalization - one simply moves to a lower level of abstraction. The reason why this is an ongoing debate is because there are aspects that all of us share and differences between all of us. Weredu (1998:31-40) discusses the problem of cultural universals, and shows how things like the ability to perceive, deduce, act etc. are common to all *Homines Sapientese*. Therefore, whichever position one takes, there will be criticism from the other side. Try, for instance, to describe the group/nation you belong to. There are general elements, but one will immediately be able to think of people who do not fulfill those requirements. It remains in itself a cultural construct. See Van Staden (1998:25) in this regard.

Different people try to solve this problem in different ways. Paris (1995:21-22), for instance, argues that "the traditions of African peoples... are diverse in cultural form yet united in their underlying spirituality". Others such as Teffo and Roux (1998:136) refer to the severe criticism levelled against the idea of a common set of ideas which may be termed African philosophy (see Wendland, 1999:3; Anum, 1999). They point out that, since people are becoming aware of the vastness of the continent, the tendency is to approach philosophy and religion in a more culture-specific way. They therefore warn against efforts to generalise too easily by speaking of an African metaphysics. Nevertheless, they opt for a more traditional approach: "We argue that, generally speaking, metaphysical thinking in Africa has features which make it a particular way of conceptualizing reality" (Teffo and Roux, 1998:136). They therefore choose to work on a specific level of abstraction (generalisation) when it comes to the conceptual scheme of Africa, because this reflects the true situation. Kaphagawani & Malherbe (1998:206) take the same line. They say that the general trend of thought is that there is such a thing as African philosophy in the singular. They remark that people who believe in witchcraft or a supreme being will share certain conceptions of reality, which usually include aspects such as causality, responsibility etc., and this makes certain generalisations possible.

This study adopts the position taken by Paris, Teffo and Roux that generalisations are possible and indeed necessary. Like Wendland (1999:3), the researcher prefers not to use "either-or" language but rather "both-and". In

speaking of African religion or African worldviews, this does not literally mean that every African (or even every tribe out of the hundreds of tribes in Africa) shares (or shared) a particular opinion. It rather refers to general trends or what Kaphagawani and Malherbe (1998:206) refer to as what may reasonably be viewed as “generic features of knowledge”. If this is no longer a trend within a particular group, descriptive research must point this out and propose alternatives to the general description. The researcher has taken pains to “critically test” general opinions against current ones in conducting qualitative research among different groups in South Africa (some of these groups included people from other parts of Africa). The presence of differences and similarities is acknowledged, and the researcher therefore endeavours to work with great care in terms of the way he generalises and particularises.

As was mentioned above, this study aims to take both similarities and differences seriously. On a practical level, this will be done by both providing a generalised description of African traditional religion, as well as being aware that this is a generalisation and that there might be many exceptions to the rule. The researcher is, however, confident that such a careful generalisation is possible and usable. However, in order to identify differences, qualitative research is necessary. In this way, particular differences can be highlighted. By having a generalisation, differences may now be identified more easily. The generalised description and particular results of the qualitative research will be read in constant relation and necessary tension. It is a matter of “unity in diversity”, which means that one does not focus so much on the one as to ignore the other (Wendland, 1999:3).

Recently, the word “religion” in the phrase “African traditional religion” has been questioned. In a short discussion, the African Diaspora specialist, historian P. Lovejoy, questioned the use of the word “religion” to identify the worldview of Africa with, as is often done by using “African traditional religion”. Teffo & Roux (1998:136) use African philosophy to include many of the things which are usually included in the phrase African traditional religion. This is a general trend in an important collection of articles by Coetzee and Roux (1998). This phrase asks for a closer definition of what religion is. There are no clear margins where one could say: this has to do with spirituality and this not. What theologians might call African religion is, for instance, called African metaphysics or philosophy by philosophers (see Teffo and Roux, 1998:134-136 or Kaphagawani and Malherbe, 1999:1-2). This is partly due to the holistic approach of most African people to life. The problematic feature is that African spirituality is usually integrated with everything that is done or thought. More accuracy in the use of terminology should receive serious attention, but it cannot be done here. This is why this study has opted for the new phrase “African traditional worldview(s)”. The way in which a person sees and approaches his “*kosmos*” is thus the focal point.

What does the word “traditional” in the phrase “African traditional religion” signify? As Onyeidu (s.a.:20) states, Africa traditional religion “is a heritage of the primal society whose forebears could be regarded as the collective founding fathers of the religion”. He further points out that Africans do not “denominate their traditional beliefs”, and therefore no special name is attached to their beliefs. It is simply accepted as “the people’s way of life and part of their culture” (s.a.:20). He also emphasises that, irrespective of the differences, African religion reflects a system in which objects, activities etc. form a coherent system (see Onyeidu, s.a.:12-13; Adamo, 1999:1-2 and Ganusah, 2000:291). The different aspects of this system should be interpreted and understood in relation to each other. Inherent to this is the possibility of expressing oneself in different ways with different myths and folktales. Diversity was accepted as part of the religion which they speak of in the singular (see Onyeidu, s.a.:12-13; Adamo, 1999:1-2 and Ganusah, 2000:291). It is also called “traditional” because of the force of custom. “Traditionally, all beliefs and practices were not so much rationalized as justified on the basis of the customs of the fathers” (Onyeidu, s.a.:24). As an oral culture, the “ways of the fathers” were transmitted as tradition, and this was a determining factor in the worldviews of people who belonged to these African groups.

2.3.1.1 The reality of African Traditional Religion

African traditional religion is Africa’s own way of coming to terms with reality (Olupona & Nyang, 1993:67; see also Crafford, 1996). “In the African experience all men are children of God. None is a child of the earth” (Groyter, 1993:98; see also Mbiti, 1990). “It is quite evident that African traditional religion plays an important role in shaping the character of African society and culture today” (Olupona 1991:1; see also Oduyoye, 1991). According to Olupona (1991: 35), “African traditional views in Africa present an affinity with post-modern worldviews. Because of Africa’s predominant cultural heterogeneity, none could speak of a single worldview in Africa”. The heterogeneity aspect of Africa’s traditional cultures and religions makes the integration of ethnic groups difficult, even impossible (Olupona, 1991:35-36).

With regard to traditional religion and the sense of community, one can say that the metaphysical world of Africa is full of beings. Thinking is synthetically, not analytically, orientated. There is a total interdependence with religious values. There is “an intense sense of the community”. “In modern thinking, the principle of identity prevails; there is no sharing of being”. “Humanity in Africa is basically family, basically community” with strong stress on traditional religion and its “symbiotic union with ancestors and spiritual entities ‘through animal sacrifice performances’ in the metaphysical world” (Shutte, 1994). A person’s deeds from birth to death and thereafter only render him/her answerable to the community. Sacrificial meals are symbolic; stressing the fact that the living and the living dead are gathered together (Olupona, 1991:41; see also Mahlangu, 1999; Van der Watt, 1977b and Sundermeier, 1999). The researcher is of the

opinion that similarities between African traditional religion and animal and human blood sacrifices would serve as a fertile ground on which some missionary endeavours could help Africans to understand the message of Christianity.

2.3.1.2 African Traditional Religion: a stem of Christianity

The nature of denial has it that, to regard African religious beliefs as a foundation for faith in Christ, not dead works, but one of the pathways to God, is crucial. It has ingredients which qualify it to be an example of religion for Christians. For instance, priest Laurenti Magesa of Tanzania said that: “Ujamaah should be emulated by Christianity. He claimed that Dr. K.J.Nyerere’s vision of the ideal African society was equal to the Gospel” (Nyirango, 1997; see also Mbiti, 1977 and Mugambi, 1989). Eboaji Edowu equates the African experience of God to that of Christians. He accepts the view of researchers such as Lang and Schmidt that ancient Africans were monotheistic, just like Christians. He asserts that pre-Christianity Africans knew God and worshipped Him rightfully. He also affirms that “African religion contains abundant truth” (rich heritage), qualifying her to be a “stepping stone for Christian faith”. These theologians and scholars attempt to find truths isolated from pagan religions since “truth (and lies) don’t disintegrate into separate bits but form an organic whole” (Nyirango, 1997; see also Bediako, 1977; Crafford, 1996 and Maimela, 1990). Therefore, this study will now look at why literary and qualitative research is necessary in this regard.

2.3.2 Literary and qualitative research are both necessary – why?

The African traditional worldview forms one point of focus. However, social dynamics, especially over the last two centuries, were so diverse and vibrant that the ideas and views of Africans changed considerably. In South Africa in particular, influences such as Christianity in its diverse forms, the political situation of colonialism, which grew into apartheid, capitalism with its devastating influence on family life, the growing awareness of Africanism, education with its particular emphases, urbanisation etc., exercised a strong influence on the worldviews of Africans. It should not be assumed that what is commonly described by phrases such as African traditional religion or African traditional thought or philosophy is still the dominant orientation, especially in big cities. However, the other mistake which should not be made is to presume that African traditional religion has no influence any longer or has simply disappeared. Qualitative research has shown that the worldviews of even urbanised young people are still well-founded in ideas which could be called traditional, or are at least related to the traditional.

The first question to ask is why it is necessary to take cognisance of African traditional religion’s views if it is not that prevalent in its pure form any longer. This is of course a statement which should be made with caution. There is also

that which could be called traditional in its pure form, which is still common today. Why should it still be taken into account as a point of focus in the hermeneutical process?

- The roots and foundation of African worldviews lie in traditional views. Adamo (2001) uses this argument as the basis for his African cultural hermeneutics. According to him, the Bible should be read from this perspective. As Teffo and Roux (1998:136) rightly suggest: “It is clear... that views which are called ‘traditional’ still play a role, indeed an important role, in the lives of Africans”. Taking note of traditional views becomes even more important, since African traditional worldviews are not sets of atomic, unrelated ideas, but rather a coherent system of interrelated ideas.

It serves as the framework within which changes as well as resistance to change may be evaluated and understood. For more specificity, it is now increasingly acknowledged in semantics that in reading a text, the (macro) genre determines understanding. Take, for instance, the following sentence: “Honey, are we eating out tonight? I do not smell anything burning”. If this sentence is uttered in the form of a joke, the effect will be laughter. If it is uttered as part of the genre of serious talk, the effect might be divorce or serious injury. Genre contributes substantially to the semantic function and effect of the text. Meaning is not just words or sentences. In a circular way, the parts contribute to the meaning of the whole, and the meaning of the whole to that of the parts. In the same way, it is necessary to understand the whole of traditional thinking in order to understand the individual parts.

- Inculturation may be facilitated by being aware of traditional beliefs. Africa has experienced an abuse of its ideas, which were in the past described by outsiders as primitive, pagan, superstitious absurdities, uncivilised, stupid ‘mumbo jumbo, and the like (Onyeidu, s.a.:1-5). This resulted in ignorance about the strong systematic nature of traditional ideas. The conversation needed for proper inculturation and contextualisation i.e. for the hermeneutics of relevance, will be difficult without understanding why certain aspects are still accepted and others not, or why certain elements are defended and others do not seem to matter. The issue of healing can be taken as an example. People often go to a medical doctor or a diviner. To the outsider, this seems questionable and superstitious. However, if it is realised that within traditional views, illness is not necessarily a biomedical problem (sickness) but also a social one. Therefore, this need for social reflection and advice regarding illness requires the intervention of a diviner.

The description of traditional views will be done based on available sources. These sources will be read both critically and in order to obtain information. Information will be gathered about traditional religion(s) through these available

sources – this study will “stand on the shoulders” of these researchers. By reading critically, the researcher will try to determine the measure of similarity of opinions in sub-Saharan Africa by comparing books written by scholars from different parts of Africa. This study will also be sensitive to differences which might militate against too strong a systematisation, but at the same time will note the similarities in these descriptions.

The second question deals with the necessity for qualitative empirical research. The method of research and what it entails have been discussed in the first chapter. Relevancy means that one meets people where they are. Contextual reading means that one meets them in their context. Through qualitative research, it can be established what people today think and why – one can indeed explore their worldviews in a detailed way, and determine what their positions are between the two points of focus (Western Christianity and African traditional Christianity), as illustrated in Figure 2. Le Marquand (2000:96), for instance, points out that African male scholars are more positive towards patriarchal traditions in Africa than women scholars, who also question these themes in the Bible. This is significant in dealing with the current context of African believers. Adamo (2001:112) also acknowledges the necessity for more knowledge of the current ways of experiencing and thinking about Christianity in Africa (see also Mbiti, 1986). This will also accommodate the differences which might exist between different groups within Christian movements in Africa. Maluleke (1999:2) emphasises the variety of Christianity in Africa – there are a host of Christianities, and even Christianities within Christianities. This cannot be ignored, and should be accommodated in any responsible approach towards the Bible.

The reason for combining qualitative research with literary research is to establish to what extent traditional ideas have remained intact, and to what extent they have changed. So-called unstable areas, where changes occur rapidly, will also be identified. Groups from different major areas in South Africa are identified to see whether or not there are significant differences between the different areas. In this analysis, the researcher will focus on the similarities as well as the differences. He will also strive to determine to what extent current ideas are still reflecting the traditional worldview. The ideas will not be treated in an atomic way, but causality and interrelatedness will play an important role.

By combining these two methods of research, this study hopes to outline and discuss views which are alive in a large part of Africa. In this way, it is hoped to encourage similar detailed studies elsewhere, through using, comparing and adjusting this study’s results. How, though, did Christianity come into being?

2.3.3 The emergence of Christianity

The rich diversity of Christian traditions worldwide, including Christianity, historically and in all its present forms, cannot be extensively dealt with in this dissertation. It is only for the sake of background that this issue is being included here. Only a look at some Christian doctrine developments, accepted as authoritative in the majority of Church traditions, can help in providing a profile of Christianity. Thirty percent of the world's population call themselves Christians, which shows the importance of Christianity among world religions (Meiring, 1996:128, see also Kärkkäinen 2004).

Christianity evolved from a non-famous Galilean Jew, and it came to have thousands of adherents, most of them non-Jews, in the Eastern Mediterranean wider world. Its expansion was considered to be a divine intervention in the history and affairs of the human race. This view was shared by Christian contemporaries of the Jews and later generations. Enthusiasts and opponents alike saw its rapid growth as an extraordinary achievement, unparalleled in the religious history that preceded that time (Hastings, 1999:7). Around C. 120 C.E., when all New Testament canonical books had already been written, Christianity was distinguishable from Judaism by its own extensive history (Hastings, 1999:7). At this stage, one can also ask how the church came into being.

2.3.3.1 The emergence of the Church

It was after Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection in or around 30 C.E. that Christianity truly began. The first century Judea had several charismatic teachers, but none drew as many followers to himself after his death as Jesus did (Hastings, 1999:16). Therefore, this study will begin the description of Christianity with Boulaga's (1984) criticism: "Christianity has expanded to all the nations of the world in about two millenniums; it has enjoyed ample success, constancy and brilliance. Christianity is the ultimate religion. It is the genealogical and cultural religion. Christianity should be untouchable for churches have indefectibly handed down on the essential of the revealed message, self-identical, necessary for salvation, universal and in no way tied to any civilization whatsoever" (Boulaga, 1984:3-6).

"Thus all that is just, good and true, today as yesterday and tomorrow, attaches to this church, and thus belong to Christianity; it emanates from its saving superabundance, or else its pre-figuration...outside of visible and invisible pole of Christian religion... There is but error, ignorance and evil" (Boulaga, 1984:6). It is the researcher's belief that, even though the biblical message is irrevocably true, men, not angels, have always been the vehicles of the divinely revealed truth. The study of church history highlights both human strengths and weaknesses. The lives of the Old Testament heroes of faith, including those of the New Testament, testify to this. It would therefore be unrealistic, on behalf of

anyone, to attribute people's erroneous attitudes and behaviours to Christianity as a religion. Boulaga seems here to go a bit far in his satire. He goes on to say:

"Simply the application and recognition of true biblical knowledge can easily win the case. True knowledge is obedience to the sovereignty of God. One recognizes it only in submitting and worshipping it. Not to understand it is to disobey, to rebel, and to prefer the human to the divine and ultimately preferring oneself to one's Creator and Savior". "Thus the proof from scripture comes down to the argument from authority. What is to be made of Christianity is the framework of an ethics of historical responsibility, and in a view of the experience of language limitations that forbid us to speak from God's viewpoint"(Boulaga, 1984:6-15). In the researcher's opinion, Boulaga's ironical portrayal of Christianity does not seem to validate its distinctiveness, as compared to other world religions.

Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah, and the incarnated Son of God, accomplished reconciliation between the Father and humankind. His vicarious, atoning death and resurrection constitute an emphatic point and backbone of Christian confession (Meiring, 1996:128). Many people in Africa, and specifically South Africa, have been influenced by Christian traditions. Seventy percent of the South African population has embraced Christianity, with approximately 13.5 million Protestants and 2.5 million Roman Catholics. The Methodist Church is the largest, with about 2.5 million adherents. This is followed by the Anglican Church with 2 million, and finally, the Dutch Reformed Church with 1.4 million. South Africa comprises many rapidly growing independent churches, among which the Zionists have gathered about 2 million members. Independent churches' membership accounts for one third of the entire black population (Meiring, 1996:142; see also Mbiti, 1986).

The person and work of Jesus (His self-sacrifice on the cross, shedding His blood for us and being resurrected) constitute the bedrock of Christianity. Jesus' ministry upon Earth, as well as His death and resurrection, create a strong platform and nucleus for Christian creeds and teachings. God's special and final revelatory act on Earth fulfilled the reconciliation and restoration of humankind into fellowship with God through Jesus' sacrifice. He is the mediator between God and men, and the sole intermediary by virtue of His vicarious and atoning sacrifice, granting to Christianity a distinctive nature among world religions (Meiring, 1996:148; see also Stoker 2006).

2.3.3.2 The nature of Christianity

Among Christianity's features, particularism and universalism paradoxically occur. It is known to be both exclusive and inclusive. Particularism is seen in God's calling: God called a particular man, Abraham, to whom He disclosed His will for mankind. He also chose a particular line through which to convey His

eternal redemptive message, namely Abraham's progeny. This calling entailed that, through Abraham, all the nations of the world would be blessed. Therefore, it must be understood that the phrase "God of Israel" does not suggest bigotry, nationalism or racism (Kato, 1985:35).

Christianity's universalism only refers to the redemption of all mankind. Acts 2:9-11 shows this universalistic aspect of Christianity, because Asians, Africans and Europeans were represented on the day of Pentecost. The apostle Paul conveys the same understanding in 1Corinthians 12:13 and Galatians 3:28 respectively saying: "For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free and we were all given the one Spirit to drink" (NIV). "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (NIV). Genesis 12:1-3 and Isaiah 45:22-23 vividly add to the portrayal of Christianity's prophetic and historical nature (Kato, 1985:35). Therefore, Christianity is African, Asian, European and American, since its followers are distributed all over those continents (Kato, 1985:35-36). But what are the beliefs of orthodox Christianity?

2.3.3.3 Beliefs of orthodox Christianity: An African religion

Doctrinal disagreement within the three branches of Christendom - Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and Protestant - "doesn't supersede their agreement on the vital essentials of the faith. The following information serves as a yardstick to evaluate the errant beliefs of some erring religions: African traditionalists normally say that Christianity is a white man's religion; this is even so true in the Republic of South Africa due to the historic sequels of the apartheid regime whereby there was no separation between the state and the church" (Gibellini 1994:1, see also Jansen 1995; Pobe 1992).

This study will attempt to establish and explain why Christianity is an African religion. Christianity has been on the African soil since as early as the first century A.D. Some important centres of Christianity were witnessed in Alexandria (Egypt) and Carthage (Tunisia). During the fourth century, Christianity came to the kingdom of Axum in Ethiopia. It was only in the course of the 15th century A.D. that Christianity reached the sub-Saharan regions of black Africa. With the emergence of Islam in the seventh century, the Latin Christianity that had been formerly established was swept away, and disappeared from North Africa, with the exception of Coptic Christianity (Gibellini, 1994:1-2). At this point, one wonders about the historic relationship between Christianity and African traditional religion.

2.3.3.4 Christianity and Africa's historic relationship

Historical accounts show that Christianity was linked with Africa, even before the advent of European and American missionaries. The first man to whom God revealed His will was Abraham, an Asian – then, through his posterity, the

Jews. He gave them the message of salvation, not a monopoly on the Gospel. This did not include any culture gradation - God simply used them to carry out His eternal redemptive purpose for all humankind. Jesus, the founder of Christianity, was born, raised, educated, died and resurrected in Asia. He never walked on the European soil (Kato, 1985:34).

Among the writers of the Bible, none is of European origin as far as history is concerned, and Christianity reached Europe only twenty years after the death and the resurrection of Christ, with Lydia's conversion through Paul's missionary, evangelic journey (Acts 16:15). There are many historical facts that prove the relationship between Africa and the biblical land, Palestine:

- God's people were saved from Egyptian bondage in Africa (Ex 1-14).
- The Queen of Sheba, who paid a visit to King Solomon, was from Ethiopia in Africa (2Chr 9:12).
- Moses, the leader of the Israelites, married an African girl (Nm 12:1-2).
- An African pulled prophet Jeremiah out of the pit (Jer 38:7-8).
- Prophecy specified that God's work would expand tremendously in Africa, and that African countries such as Egypt and Ethiopia would play a representative role, and would stretch out their hands to God (Ps 68:31).

There is also a direct link between Africa and the New Testament:

- Baby Jesus was brought to Egypt because King Herod wanted to kill him (Mt 2:13-15).
- On the way to Golgotha, Simon of Cyrene, an African, helped to carry the cross of Jesus up to the crucifixion hill (Mt 27:32-33).
- At Pentecost, Africa was represented, as there were some people from Egypt and parts of Libya near Cyrene (Ac 2:10).
- The Ethiopian eunuch was the first convert outside the Jewish circle (Ac 8:26-38).
- Simeon, nicknamed Niger, after whom the river of Niger and countries of Niger and Nigeria were named, and which means black, was a member of the leadership of the church at Antioch (Ac 13:1).

North Africa and Asia Minor were big centres of Christianity, with very strong churches during the first four centuries:

- For instance, Agustin of Hippo was an outstanding theologian who had a lasting influence on Christian theology after Paul. "His African practical mind can be still noted in both Roman Catholic and Protestant theology" (Kato, 1985:35).
- Cyprian, Athanasius, Tertullian, and Origen were all outstanding theologians. "It was due to internal squabbles and to lack of vision that Christianity spread northward to Europe and British isles. Then the converted Europe brought Christianity back to Africa. Therefore, it is historically inaccurate to say that Christianity is not an African religion,

since those who confess to be Christians in many African countries constitute the majority of the population” (Kato, 1985:35, see also Ott 2007).

2.3.3.5 The practice of Christianity

Given the fact that Christianity is truly an African religion, African believers must be encouraged to feel comfortable in the church. The Christian doctrine must be expressed in words or terms understandable to Africans. Church leaders should promote practices that contribute to the growth, maturity and spiritual welfare of African believers. For instance, a formal prayer written in the 18th century sounds unintelligible to young people - it must be rewritten in a modern language so that it is easy to grasp for African youth. More reflections should be undertaken in order to promote whatever strategic plan necessary to make the African feel that “Christianity is his/her faith” (Kato, 1985:36, see also Kinoti 1997).

With regard to alien beliefs that might have mingled with Christianity, the best solution would be to purge biblical faith in Africa of those foreign and indigenous accretions, and to declare immutable biblical faith in Africa for Africans. As Kato remarks (1985:37). “Since it is an African religion inasmuch a European religion. In today’s Africa we need not return to the old traditional religion, or borrow some of the pagan practices to add to Christianity”. The above summary of Christianity is relevant to this study because it shows that Christianity stands upon the platform of Jesus’ self-sacrificial death as carrier of our sins, the fulfillment of biblical sacrificial typologies. Like all animal substitutes, Jesus shed His own blood to achieve mankind’s redemption as well as spiritual and physical healing (Sloyan, 1995:99, see also Munga 1998; Bujo 1992). The following section on Christianity as a point of focus will provide the reader with more insight in this regard.

2.3.4 Christianity as a point of focus

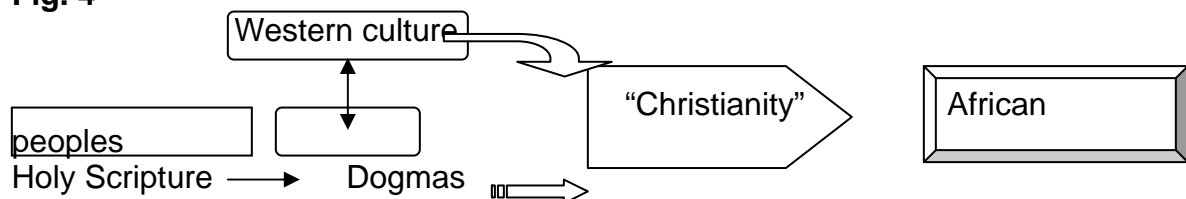
Christianity did not come to Africa as a single set of ideas, and does not exist as such in Africa. The history of missions in Africa presents us with a varied, complex and controversial picture. In Southern Africa, initial missionary efforts were so confusing to the indigenous people that the churches were forced to sign a triangular agreement, reserving the eastern part of the country to English-speaking churches, the centre of the country to Dutch Reformed churches, and the western part to the German Lutheran church. From the very outset, Africa was confronted with Christianity in its diversity, since the Christian message was presented with strong systematic and dogmatic convictions, which of course differed from church to church.

Missionaries usually promote their brand of Christianity with vigour, a tendency that often creates a social atmosphere of dogmatism. Apart from this, Le

Marquand (2000:87) points out that “the missionary worldview and the ethos of the New Testament were sometimes quite apart” (see also Onyeidu, s.a.:6-7 in this regard). Furthermore, West (1999a:37) reminds us that the reception of Christianity and the Bible in Africa did not necessarily amount to the same thing. A second complicating factor was that the dividing lines between the culture of the colonialists and Christianity were vague, and often not recognised by the indigenous people. The dress, manners, general conduct, race and so forth of Western colonialists were linked to Christianity, and in this way received religious sanction. This was not a problematic link for Africans to make, since they traditionally approached everything in life from a religious perspective.

Christianity was received in a mixed form, which combined ideas from the scripture with dogmatic and cultural elements. Part of the problem, according to Nkomazana (2000:235), was also that “missionaries did not realize that their interpretation of the Bible was basically European”. They hindered the rapid development of an authentic Christianity in Africa, according to him. West (1999a:17) applies the statement of Bush to the African context, which implies that the role of the Bible was initially not primary. The impact was indirect, since it was often imbedded in catechetical materials, doctrinal statements or sermons. What happened may be simply illustrated as follows:

Fig. 4



In qualitative research, as mentioned above, the mixed nature of Christianity and its “triumphant entry” into Africa (Western culture is also a varied phenomenon - Germans are unlike the English or Portuguese in many ways, and vice-versa. The term is used here in a general sense) via the Western culture (or was it vice versa?) are duly taken into account. There are places where traditionalists will tell you that God was initially rarely mentioned. With exposure to Christianity, an awareness of God and His presence were created, which forced formulations about God into the foreground. Often, typical scholarship qualities of God are found in these formulations. It leads to the suspicion that these formulations were taken over from Christian dogmatism. In different parts of the country, you might therefore get different dogmatic ideas, which play a role in the worldviews of the people. LeMarquand (2000:87) rightly points out that the “missionary worldview and the ethos of the New Testament were sometimes quite far apart. This tension between African and

western world-views continues in scholarly circles”. Onyeidu (s.a.:6-7) refers to the efforts of missionaries to uproot African culture and religion.

Reactions to Western culture and elements of Christianity soon became evident. In South Africa alone, there are approximately 8,000 indigenous churches, a number which increases daily. See Obeing (1999:1), who claims that churches are springing up in Ghana too. This is emphasised by Maluleke (1999:2), who reminds us that “the continent hosts various Christianities – even Christianities within Christianities”. These different forms of Christianity combine Christian and indigenous elements according to different mixtures. This is a common way in which Western dogma was absorbed. What was practical or of use was accepted. This means that the worldview of Christianity was also not accepted as a whole. Maluleke (1999:3; see also Mugambi, 1999 and Nkurunziza,1989) complicates the situation even more. Because of the diversity in the Bible itself, “there is tremendous variety of reception, use and interpretation of the Bible”. The implication here is that different Christianities in Africa are all based on the Bible, but in different ways and emphasising different texts or ways of interpreting or using the text. Nevertheless, the Bible remains a fundamental criterion for theological activity (see also Schronhoven, 1989; Ukpong, 1995; Punt, 1997).

Recently, charismatic churches, focusing very strongly on the work of the Spirit, are fast gaining ground. Elements are freely integrated into their forms of spirituality, according to the guidance of the Spirit. There are, therefore, clear efforts to short-circuit the dominant influence of Western culture and its accompanying dogma. There is a clear tendency towards relevance and personal involvement. In an attempt to be more specific, this study is going to describe the perspective of mission in Africa for the sake of background.

2.3.5 Mission perspective in Africa

Christianity and African traditional religions are the main religions on the African continent. African Christianity has always been called the religion of the European missionaries. Yet, Christianity has strong claims to be reckoned as the oldest of the religious traditions known to Africa, with a continuous history on the continent of nearly 2000 years. Lamin Sanneh, a West African historian and theologian, said that Christianity in modern Africa is a preservation and affirmation movement for African culture. This sounds debatable, given the widely held view that Christian missionaries were despisers and destroyers of African cultural heritage. It is quite interesting to note that Sanneh holds that the main emphasis on the Bible’s translation into African peoples’ mother tongues has contributed to the enhancement of African culture in its particularities and diversities (Hastings, 1999:192).

The intention here is not to write the history of missions in Africa, and specifically South Africa, but rather to point out the negative impulses on behalf

of missionaries that caused unbelief, divisions and a rise of black independent churches, as well as a relapse back to, and promotion of, African traditional beliefs and syncretistic ways of worship. The dehumanising slave trade in Africa and the apartheid regime in South Africa, initiated by some Christian missionaries, inhibited to some extent the preaching of the Gospel (Mugambi, 1985:27; Hastings, 1999; Shaw, 1996; Pobee, 1999; Anderson et al, 1994; and Baur, 1994). At this point, it would be useful to briefly discuss the perspectives of mission in South Africa.

2.3.5.1. Mission perspectives in the Republic of South Africa

The Republic of South Africa has had over 150 years' history of Christianity. In the Republic of South Africa, the Protestant Church has the largest membership. In 1900, approximately one quarter of all Africans professed the Christian faith. In 1970, this had risen to three-quarters. However, "South Africa has also the greatest proliferation of separatist churches than any other country in the world". In 1970, this amounted to one third of all African Christians, with three and a half million distributed among 3000 distinct bodies. However, racial discrimination and sectarianism are eventually symptomatic of South Africa's greatest problem. This raises the following question: How far is Christianity in South Africa truly Christian (Baur, 1994:403)? At this juncture, a short look at apartheid and the churches is necessary.

i) Apartheid and the Churches

"Apartheid" or separate development was the ideology proposed in order to guarantee the survival of the Boers as a nation. Defeated by British imperialism (Boer War of 1898-1902) and forced into the South African Union, they became scared of an eventual submersion by the ever-increasing black race. The Industrial Revolution brought Boer farmers to urban centres, where they called themselves Afrikaners. Africans also left homelands to become urban dwellers. After World War II, the liberal government of General Jan Smuts "envisaged the eventual opening of a multi-racial parliament but the whites voted into power Dr. Malan and Dr. Verwoerd's Party" (1948). They started to "struggle for racial purity" (Nazi ideology), coupled with the war against "godless communism" (the devil at the wall), in the name of "Christian civilization" (Baur, 1994:406). Therefore, because of practical discrimination in both "daughter churches" and multiracial churches where blacks felt dominated by either missionaries or white members, tensions were common. The founding of independent churches was the earliest and most radical black reaction against white churches' historical bigotry (Baur, 1994:409). "Indigenous churches symbolise the Black revolt against European spiritual and cultural domination". Why did independent churches establish themselves?

ii) Reasons for the rise of independent churches

The Protestant practice of separatism seems to be the principal cause for the rise of independent churches. Related to this are “missionary authoritarianism and the desire to preserve something of the African heritage and rituals...” However, the problem of evil was understood differently by African Christians and missionaries, since Africans looked at the problem functionally, not philosophically. Africans distinguished between three levels of evil: the first being humiliation or human shame... “Africans were the most dishonored of all races that God created in this earth”. The second evil originates from the mysterious world of spirits: illness, infertility, pestilence, famine, and sudden or inexplicable death. Ancestral and demonic spirits constitute the underlying causes of these events. Witchcraft was built around the existence of the second evil. The third face of evil was that of alienation (Shaw, 1996: 241). Following this brief overview of mission perspectives in South Africa, this study will now examine some recent scientific theories on blood sacrifice.

2.4 SCIENTIFIC THEORIES ON BLOOD SACRIFICE

2.4.1 Introduction

The following scientific theories on blood sacrifices will be included here in order to ground this dissertation within the field of scientific studies. They are the most recent, and information about them is needed in order to have knowledge about the framework of sacrificial theories in the field of science, as far as blood sacrifices are concerned, so that when analysing the material later on, one is sensitive to the different approaches. Therefore, before specifically approaching blood sacrificial performances in South Africa and providing some examples from other parts of Africa and the New Testament (Epistle to the Hebrews, this study would like to critically survey some modern scientific theories on blood sacrifices in order to provide a reliable, tangible theoretical framework. The focus will be on the following modern theorists: Burkert (1987), Girard (1987) and Smith (1987). The following theories serve as a background to both this study’s approach to blood sacrifices in South African traditional religious beliefs, especially among the Xhosa, Zulu and Tsonga peoples, as well as to its exploration of the theme of blood sacrifice in Hebrews, chapters five to thirteen.

2.4.1.1 Walter Burkert

In his *Homo Necans*, Burkert’s approach comprises an eclectic mixture of functionalism, structuralism and socio-biology (Burkert, 1983:xix; 1987:150). He terms rituals as * $\Delta\Xi$; ∇ (things done): “action patterns used as signs, in other words, stereotypic demonstrative action” (Burkert, 1987:150). Further definitions encompass forms of non-verbal communication and patterns that are accompanied by motives (Burkert, 1987:150). These definitions are

revelatory of Burkert's structuralist and socio-biological background that the following declaration more clearly illustrates: "Even philosophy depends on a biological, psychological and socially determined environment and tradition to provide its basis of understanding" (Burkert, 1983:xix).

According to Burkert, human society has been moulded through the history of the past. Consequently, its development over long periods of time needs to be examined. He examines religion as a historical and social phenomenon - people's traditional communication medium (Burkert, 1983:xxii). His emphasis is on the primary function of religious rituals. In this, he heavily depends upon the scholar Meuli (1946), who suggested that "aspects of Greek sacrificial practices, especially the caring and handling of bones of animal victims, were similar to the practice of Paleolithic hunters" (Burkert, 1987:24).

Meuli pointed out that sacrificial practices originated during the Paleolithic hunting periods. After hunting, game meat was distributed among the community members anticipating its consolidation through communal eating. Sacrifice became "a transfer of property", a "gift" with the introduction of animal domestication during the Neolithic Age (Burkert, 1987:165-166). Burkert's ritual and religious theory was developed out of the establishment of the Paleolithic hunting culture (Burkert, 1987:24).

i) Burkert's view of ritual and myth

Here, Burkert takes into consideration the meaning and function of ritual, as adopted from Huxley and Lorenz. Consequently, ritual stands for "a behavioral pattern that has lost its primary function...and persists in a new function, that of communication" (Burkert, 1983:23). According to socio-biologists and Burkert himself, repetition and theatrical exaggeration constitute two characteristics of ritual. Burkert's further argument maintains that a ritual activity needs to be viewed in a communal context, since its function "normally lies in group formation, the creation of solidarity, or the negotiation of understanding among the members of the species". The ritual activity comprises a combination of extremely threatening and alluring things such as fire, blood and weapons on the one hand, and food and sexuality on the other (Burkert, 1985:54).

Ritual makes up and concretely sustains social interactions (Burkert, 1983:24). $\forall \exists \Delta (\forall$, that is, corporate or individual gestures and postures including signs, declare an individual's belonging and place in the community. Thought structures and behavioral patterns pertaining to a certain community are occasionally allocated collective expressions through ceremonial customs, and recognised as the participants' social universe (Burkert, 1983:24). With regard to this, Burkert adds that: "Ritual is, after all, communication of a special sort: it is an action rooted in pragmatic interaction, and thus not only transports information, but often directly affects the addressee and possibly the 'sender' as well". Socio-biologists and functionalists' traditions hold that religious

ceremonies constitute communication forms that “create, commemorate, and preserve solidarity among group members” (Burkert, 1983:155).

In terms of the relationship between myth and ritual, Burkert argues that ritual as a form of communication should be equated with verbalised language and vice versa. Contrary to Harrison, who considers myth as essentially text or scripts to ritual, Burkert enjoins that, according to historical evolution, myth and ritual are not of the same age. Myth does not simply grow from ritual, but possibly dates back to the advent of speech. Ritual, on the other hand, started with animal evolution. Paradoxically speaking, the two systems became intimately connected. However, they can exist independently of each other, but might sometimes be intertwined (Burkert, 1983:29-34).

ii) Burkert and sacrificial ritual

In this section, Burkert discusses the slaughtering of animals and shedding of their blood as central to religious rituals. From his perspective, the practice paradoxically confirms the fact that violence is unavoidable for the foundation of human culture (Burkert, 1987:163). Violence and blood “lurk fascinatingly at the very heart of religion”, for even to be delivered from the “evil of aggression”, they must be confronted with human butchering at the very core...the death of God’s innocent Son” (Burkert, 1983:2). Of the elements that Burkert analysed, aggression and violence are the most significant, since they marked mankind’s progress towards civilization, and currently grow continually as the generation’s central problem (Burkert, 1983:1).

Burkert situates the roots of aggression within human evolutionary biology. With regard to Lorenz, the socio-biological theorist whom Burkert noticeably depends upon, the human species’ aggressive capacity appears to be unique in terms of self-destruction. Consequently, communal rituals and the resulting sacrifice curb intra-specific aggression, thus preventing the species from self-destructing. His analysis of sacrificial ritual structure identifies a three-fold death structure:

- The preliminary rite of purification and preparation;
- *?* emotional climax sealed by a piercing scream; and
- The concluding rites comporting animal sacrifices and the sharing of a communal meal. This serves as peace restoration, formerly disrupted by the killing. Thus, the sacrificial shift “from an inhibited labyrinth begins through a terrifying midpoint to a scrupulous tidy conclusion” (Burkert, 1983:12).

A sacrifice turns death into life-affirming enjoyment (Burkert 1985:58). Sacrificial rituals grant society a specific shape or form. “A sense of community arises from collective aggression” (Burkert, 1983:35). The shock experienced during the act of killing is followed by consolidation, guilt is followed by reparation, and destruction gives way to reconstruction (Burkert, 1983:38). It

means that “killing justifies and affirms life; it makes us conscious of the new order and brings it to power” (Burkert, 1983:40). Hunting rituals mould society, define it and protect it from destructive, intra-specific aggression. “Sacrificial killing is the basic experience of the sacred...*Homo religious* acts and attains self-awareness as *Homo necans*”. In other words, only man, the killer (*homo necans*) has the ability to change into a truly religious being or *homo religious* (Burkert, 1983:3).

iii) Sacrificial ritual and the hunting hypothesis

As mentioned earlier, Burkert’s theory states that sacrifice ultimately derives from hunting ritual, which has its origins in Meuli’s work on customs of hunting and herding communities during the Paleolithic times (circa 30 000 B.C.E). Aggression, among other elements of hunting activities, is “necessary to kill and bind the hunting group together”, and is an “essential deeply-ingrained element in man’s nature, acquired over many years in this stage of his biological evolution” (Lambert, 1993:305). Burkert suggests that aggression is released during a dangerous and bloody hunt. He contends that intra-specific aggression is sublimated and redirected if the hunting party were to succeed (Burkert, 1987:24). This was intimated by the failure of adult males to co-operate.

Adult males’ aggressive nature fuels the group’s demonstration of aggression towards outsiders, creating a sense of communal personal cohesion (Burkert, 1983:20). The hunting act of killing is practical, not ceremonial. It is subject to chance and profane aim: to obtain meat for food (Burkert, 1983:15). However, depending on circumstances, killing can become ceremonial, even among hunters. Investigations conducted in societies accessible to ethnological studies revealed that hunters expressed guilt feelings following the slaughtering of what they primarily considered to be quasi-human (Burkert, 1983:160). Afterwards, hunting focused on large mammals that “consciously resembled men in their body picture and movements, their eyes and faces, their breath and voices, in fleeing and in fear, in attacking and in rage” (Burkert, 1983:20).

Burkert points out that there is an invasive feeling of fear and guilt when a person sees the “flowing of blood” that indicates “the remnant of biological, life preserving inhibition”. He finally mentions that “weapons, blood, and death establish a sense of the community...The power to kill and the respect for life illuminate each other” (Burkert, 1983:21). Later, guilt is “evinced in the ritual attempt to restore or re-constitute the beast after the hunt-bone gathering, the raising of the skull and the stretching of the skin” (Lambert, 1993:305). The complexity of guilt feelings in this encounter rest on the fact that, undoubtedly in ancient Greek sacrifice, the one offering the sacrifice begs for the beast’s permission prior to its slaughtering. In accordance with Burkert’s understanding, the requirement for permission from the animal victim substantiates the fact that “forgiveness and reparation...are critical to sacrificial ritual” (Burkert, 1983:16).

Nevertheless, ritual is incapable of channeling, sublimating or erasing anxiety completely, but it creates anxiety on the spot or before and during the immolation, in order to comfort it and channel it creatively (Burkert, 1987:27). While on the subject of ritual and death, Burkert suggests that “The ritual betrays an underlying anxiety about the continuation of life in the face of death”. Consequently, the shedding of blood is critical for the perpetuation of life and for new life to start again (Burkert, 1983:16).

iv) Funerary rituals and sexuality

According to Burkert’s argument, the fact that ritual ceremonies include eating signifies that funerary rituals are also born out of hunting. He argues that, since in funerary rituals every burial is accompanied by sacrifices, this adequately proves the existence of a relationship between ritual hunting, sacrificial and funerary rituals. They mutually influence each other. The equal treatment of dead animals and dead humans by Paleolithic people shows that “*Homo sapiens* were also *homo necans* and *homo sepeliens*”. In other words, *Homo sapiens* were man the killer and man the burier (Burkert, 1983:49).

Burkert highlights the function of the funerary meal in funerary rituals, and argues that: “At first, the necessary combination of death and eating appeared only in the hunt. In that regard, there is a two-fold transferal procedure:

- The deceased person replaced the hunted quarry.
- The sacrificial animal replaced the quarry, or mourners were prohibited from eating their dead. Furthermore, he singles out the fact that, though “feasting follows death, death must be repeated immediately before the feast, through ritual killing” (Burkert, 1983:50-51).

The treatment of bones in funerary rituals is also interesting and typical of hunting customs. The dead person’s bones are assembled, as in the case of the guilty hunter who attempted to reconstitute the quarry by collecting the animal bones. The scene that takes place after this is characterised by lamenting, weeping and wailing, tearing of clothes and hair, and the use of aggression elements issuing from hunting behaviour to pollute oneself. The aggressive behaviour at funerary rituals turns death into killing, celebration into an aggression eruption, followed by reparations. Killings (that is, of sacrificial animals) connected with funerary rituals are perceived as serving the purpose of re-establishing the context of the hunt. In this way, the deceased person becomes the focal point again, with recognition and a renewal of power (Burkert, 1983:55-56).

In looking at human sexuality, Burkert argues that human impulses and sexuality must be viewed within the ritual context, considering the fact that “male aggression and male sexuality are closely linked”. He advocates that the “act of killing is sexually charged” and “sexual abstinence is frequently a part of preparing for sacrifice, war, and for the hunt” (Burkert, 1983:64). With regard to

this, he writes that: “If the preliminaries and the aftermath of the great experience correspond, the sequence of guilt and atonement can be reversed, that is, the sacrifice of a maiden or a woman can follow the battle...In this way, feelings of guilt and readiness to atone can be expressed, just as death previously has been given the form of killing, in aggressively and sexually motivated act” (Burkert, 1983:67).

In conclusion, Burkert notes that: “Sexual reproduction and death are basic facts of life. Mutually determinant and interwoven, both are acted out in sacrificial ritual, in the tension between renunciation and fulfillment, destruction and reparation”. Consequently, according to him, the stele erected on a grave might take the form of a phallus. “Orgies and death are close neighbors. Therefore, the ritual itself serves as the process with which the group perpetuates its existence through death” (Burkert, 1983:72). After the above description of Burkert’s theoretical desiderata, some criticisms of his views need to be provided. This is the task of the following section.

v) Criticisms of Burkert’s hypothesis

Lambert provides some criticisms with regard to Burkert’s theory of ritual sacrifice’s Paleolithic origin, by testing his theory’s universal assumptions in another sacrificial culture. For instance, Lambert denies the view that Zulu people who offer a sacrifice experience guilt or anxiety at any time or in any way before and after the immolation of the sacrificial victim (Lambert, 1993:307). He points out that, unlike ancient Greek sacrificers who used to conceal the weapon inside a basket of grain, Zulu sacrificers do not even try to conceal violence. On the contrary, the “*giya* almost tends to accentuate the act of violence” (Lambert, 1993:305, 308).

Moreover, French structuralist scholars who conducted some studies in the area of ancient Greek sacrifice, pointed out that Greek people differentiated hunting from sacrifice, and never related one to the other (Durand & Schap, 1989:61-70). In the same way, Lambert’s comparative study advocates the fact that Burkert’s theory does not appear to be universally valid, because the link between sacrifice, guilt and hunting is not necessarily the same in all cultures - similarities do not eclipse strong differences. With regard to participants in the ritual process, Lambert raises a crucial question: “Do all the participants in ritual acts ever know precisely why they are performing an act?” (Lambert, 1993:309).

The answer to this question sounds undoubtedly negative. The participants in a ritual are only capable of explaining behaviours in terms of their tradition or immediate function, but not in terms of origin, as Burkert alleges. This disproves Burkert’s theory of “formative antecedents” as “always fraught with speculative trap”, as Burkert himself concedes (Lambert, 1993:307). With regard to Burkert’s theory, Kirk contends that there is no particularly valid system in

studying sacrifice (in particular, ancient Greek sacrifice). With regard to Mauss's attempt to utilise the concept of gift to study sacrifice, Kirk argues that the scheme suffers from incompleteness and one-sidedness. Accordingly, he points out that: "There are different kinds of gifts with many different possible motives, and yet phrases like *do-ut-des* (I give in order that you may give)...Are now used as though they were self-explanatory and needed no further discrimination" (Kirk, 1980:42).

Kirk rejects the allegation that ritual acts are to be viewed as single motives or states of mind, and he seems to be sceptical about the structuralist approach to the treatment of matters connected with sacrificial rituals. Moreover, he argues that even psychological interpretations may sometimes be misleading (for more information, see Freud, Adler, and Jung). Burkert's particular insistence upon the association between sacrifice and sexuality is more or less a matter of Western psychoses and romanticism, rather than science itself (Kirk, 1980:42-43). With regard to Burkert's work, Kirk's preliminary conclusion reads: "any view of society and its institutions, whether it is termed functionalist or structuralist or something else, which insists on society as a bound and self-consistent organism, is wrong" (Kirk, 1980:53-54).

Kirk does not entirely doom a functionalist approach, but suggests "rather the careful re-statement of functionalism in relation to those accidents, confusions, syncretism and historical changes that make religion in particular, including its rituals and the practices of animal sacrifices not least of all, such a multifarious and often contradictory affair". He emphasises the fact that some scholars understand that rituals can only be viewed in terms of concrete physical performance and not in terms of beliefs. As far as this matter is concerned, two functions emerge: either they are performed to respond to some urgent needs and interests, or they try to give some explanation concerning something in the traditional past itself. Therefore, since rituals are adjustable, not static, there will always be new propositions and new adjustments of ritual to purpose. A specialist or historian of rituals should be able to unearth and discern the "serious re-casting of the whole complex" (Kirk, 1980:54-55).

Returning to Burkert's reconstruction of ancient Greek sacrificial ritual, Kirk disagrees with Burkert's account of this type of ritual. The $\epsilon\delta\epsilon\delta\beta.T$ (the ritual scream of a woman), which according to Burkert's understanding accompanies terrible slaughtering or killing, appears only once in the Homeric epics in direct connection to sacrifice. Furthermore, the $\epsilon\delta\epsilon\delta\beta.T$ never accompanies slaughter, death and blood-shedding, but rather the puzzling stage that preceded them. Kirk goes on to specify that Homer does not mention any bones, contrary to Burkert's allegation that burnt thigh-bones were placed on the pyre. He disagrees with this aspect of Burkert's interpretation, which is critical to his notion of guilt and reconstructing the beast (Kirk, 1980:56-66).

In approaching Karl Meuli's theory that sacrifice originates indirectly with the Paleolithic and Mesolithic hunters, Kirk agrees with the view that prehistoric hunters surely reconstituted the bones of their animal victims, granted them special treatment by burying them, setting them on trees or taking out some internal organs and handling them in a special manner, and that Neolithic herdsman "maintained many of these practices, and in particular, increased the tendency to throw the specially-treated bones on to a fire". Kirk warns that, in light of the above facts, one should not "encourage the conclusion that everything of importance about Greek sacrifice has been said, even in relation to its Olympian developments, once hunting analogies have been fully set out" (Kirk, 1980:70-71).

There is a need to fully understand Greek religious concepts and attitudes "in the periods to which we have access, those from Homer onwards..." Briefly, Kirk argues for particularity, rather than for the generalised theory that Burkert contemplates (Kirk, 1980:72). He cautions that Burkert's views on anxiety and aggression with regard to Greek sacrificial ritual should be understood as a precarious business, since they include a lot of speculation about a period for which we have no concrete evidence. Furthermore, in attributing anxiety and guilt to Paleolithic hunters, it seems as if Burkert is projecting twentieth century notions onto prehistory.

Nevertheless, Burkert's understanding of the origins and function of sacrificial ritual are viewed as being bold and typically imaginative (Kirk, 1980:76). One should be cautious about the notion of bone collection, hunting theories and theories of sexual aggression. However, one can agree with the idea of the relationship between sacrificial rituals and the renewal of life. There is also a need to support the community-affirming and building role of sacrificial ritual. René Girard's theory is examined in the next section.

2.4.1.2 René Girard

i) Background influence

René Girard is a privileged French literary critic whose views on violence, sacrifice and aggression have been moulded by literary texts such as Euripides' *Bacchae*. His major work: *La violence et le Sacré* (violence and the sacred) was first published in French in 1972, the same year in which Burkert's *Homo necans* first appeared in German (Girard, 1987:171). Written independently of each other, these works are both dubious reactions to the horrors of the Vietnam War and the problems it raised concerning human aggression and the very survival of human culture and society. Girard's literary approach is close to that of Burkert, and he claims to have also been influenced by structuralism (Girard, 1987:108).

ii) Girard's view of ritual and myth

Girard utilises Freud's model of the conscious and unconscious. He defined ritual as a replacement act for a prior event. Myth stands for a verbalised concealment of the original event. Therefore, ritual belongs to the dynamic social institution known as repetition, since it presents itself as a mimetic re-enactment of a prior event. Afterwards, the myth-beautifiers emerge who replace "the truth of the scapegoat phenomenon". Myth serves to describe "the safer course, the most reassuring course from the standpoint of the community at large" (Girard, 1987:99-100).

Girard alleges that: "all myth is born out of non-conscious efforts to repress, distort, marginalize or erase the original pattern itself, they tell tale signs of collective scapegoatism". Therefore, "myths that contain something else and do not clearly support my case I regard it as having been tampered with" (Girard, 1987:103). He suggests that: "In an enormous number of myths, we find a cluster of themes that, despite the extremely diverse variations they undergo, always remain compatible with the pattern I have in mind, the pattern of scapegoatism delusion narrated from the standpoint of the deluded persecutors" (Girard, 1987:79). Now, the question is: What is collective scapegoatism, and how is it connected to sacrificial ritual?

iii) On generative scapegoatism and sacrificial ritual

Girard concedes that sacrifice has its roots in a prehistoric, fictional mob violence act which was engendered by the fact that "humans have no breaking mechanism for intra-specific aggression". The solution to one murder is another murder. This points to the second feature of human behaviour: mimetic desire. The vicious cycle of revenge murder proves to be a necessity due to the simple fact that desire is learned through emulation. For instance, person A desires object C; person B emulates the desire of person A for object C. In this process (mimetic desire), the closer person A gets to object C, the more persons A and B fall into lethal rivalry. Consequently, emulation turns into killing (Girard, 1987:8-9).

A surrogate victim was finally selected to annihilate the cycle of murders and revenge murders. The killing of the victim temporarily grants peace to the community. Therefore, violence is both collective and spontaneously unanimous. Its role is to bring the community together (Girard, 1987:100). The unanimously and spontaneously selected person becomes a scapegoat, which constitutes the basis for the formulation of Girard's theory of "generative scapegoatism", generative in the sense that the mechanism (i.e. the scapegoat) is instrumental in the generation of human societies and cultures. Girard views scapegoatism as the "generative principle of mythology, ritual, primitive religion, even culture as a whole" (Girard, 1987:106).

According to Girard, only positive effects can be inferred from this (Girard, 1987:120). He perceives as true the fact that “scapegoat murder holds in check the intra-specific fighting among human beings” (Girard, 1987:121). The death of the scapegoat brings about harmony and peace. What is noticeable is the contrasting aspect - before the scapegoat death, there is disruption, while reconciliation is achieved afterwards. These binary opposites are crucial and central: social order, which is a symbol of supreme benevolence, while disorder is the symbol of supreme malevolence (Girard, 1987:92)

In this regard, the “transcendental of the divined scapegoat is very harmful as well as beneficial” (Girard, 1987:97). The obvious ambiguity of the scapegoat results from the fact that “victimizers see themselves as the passive victims of their own victim, and they see their victim as supremely active, eminently capable of destroying them. The scapegoat appears always to be a more powerful agent; a more powerful cause than he really is” (Girard, 1987:91). In conclusion, Girard states that the victim is both malefactor and benefactor. The whole “mimetic cycle is projected on to him and interpreted as supernatural visitation destined to teach the community what to do and not to do in the future”. This is motivated by the fact that people fail to share “peacefully an object” they all desire, but they can always share an enemy they all hate because they can join together in destroying him (Girard, 1987:128). In this case, the cure is really the same as the disease, and the Greek word for scapegoat ($N\forall\Delta:\forall I\in H$) in fact conveys this perfectly, for $N\forall\Delta:\forall I\in H$ stands for both “cure” and “poison”.

Girard makes use of the Oedipus myth to illustrate the above argument. Oedipus brought a plague upon the city of Thebes, but his expulsion brought about the necessary cure. He is thus both the cure and the poison. Girard considers the word ‘sacrifice’ to be an important one in the portrayal of the original event, as well as later sacrifices that commemorate the original mob killing that brought peace to the community (Girard, 1987:10). Therefore, unanimous victimisation is vital for the stabilisation of human communities, since it offers “a model for the whole elaboration of human culture beginning with ritual sacrifices” (Girard, 1987:121).

iv) Criticisms of Girard’s theory

Burkert criticizes Girard’s theory of the original, fictional, collective murder for its lack of foundation in historical fact. Accordingly, he writes: “...there are clear advantages to this construct, as compared to many controversial items of evolution history adduced in *Homo necans*. There is no need to hypothesize about evolution or even animal behavior, and the equivalent of man and animal plays quite a secondary role. In fact Girard is not primarily interested in ritual; works of literature turn out to be the more revealing source” (Burkert, 1987:172).

Burkert argues that Girard combines two different mechanisms gleaned from the Greek literature: the scapegoat $N\forall\Delta:i\cong H$ and $\Phi B\forall\Delta\forall(:\cong H$ (the tearing into pieces), which one finds in the rituals of Dionysus, as described in Euripides' *Bacchae*. Burkert denies the allegation that Oedipus was killed by a mob in a spontaneous collective killing, but rather that he was "voluntarily led away". He says: "If there is annihilation in the scapegoat complex, it is characteristically left to the 'others', to hostile forces, be the demons or real enemies. The basic action seems to be abandonment; it is different with normal sacrifice through which killing leads to the communal meal" (Burkert, 1987:172).

Burkert emphasises the fact that Girard's theory of generative scapegoatism has really failed to account for the origins of sacrifice: "the basic fact that man has always eaten animals in sacrifice comes in only as an additional, secondary trait, a form of deterioration" (Burkert, 1987:172). He clings to his own hunting hypothesis that "envisages the one situation in which killing is as legitimate and necessary as it can possibly be, namely, the quest for food in the competitive system of life" (Burkert, 1987:176). Although Burkert disagrees with the details of Girard's theory, especially the reduction of everything to binary opposites and the positioning of the hypothetical original situation, the idea of projected guilt is critical and could be combined with Burkert's, especially in terms of the community-building aspect and the death-life exchange.

2.4.1.3 Jonathan Smith

i) Background Influence

Smith is a religious historian with a specialisation in Hellenistic religion. He uses a comparative methodology, which consists of juxtaposing Hellenic text with another text from a completely different historical and cultural context. He cautions that comparative activity is never identity. It calls for "postulation of differences as the grounds of its being interesting....and a methodological manipulation of difference, a playing across the 'gap' in the service of some useful end" (Smith, 1987:36). He argues that *homo religiosus* is *homo symbolicus* (Smith, 1987:39).

ii) Smith's criticism of Burkert and Girard

Smith argues that ritual activities should be combined with the concept of incongruity. He cautions that while dealing with issues of ritual and myth, one has to be sober enough not to prioritise action and experience categories at the expense of rationality and language (Smith, 1987:103). He defines a ritual as a mode of paying attention and a process of interest (Smith, 1987:103; 1982:54). He presents the church as an example, because people consider this to be a marked-off space. The person who enters the church is expected to be attentive. This marked-off space functions as a focusing lens, "establishing the

possibility of significance by directing attention, by requiring a perception of difference” (Smith, 1987:104; 1982:54).

The strength of this view lies in the fact that someone or something is made sacred (see *sacrificium*). Ritual process brings about transitive categories - that is, divine and human, sacred and profane (Smith, 1987:105). Smith emphasises the realm of thought as opposed to the realm of reality. He rejects the allegation that ritual elements should be joined together with substances, but rather that ritual elements work as purely differential and infinite signs constituting a system comprised of elements that are signifiers, and yet, at the same time, signify nothing (Smith, 1987:108; 1982:57, 60).

Smith maintains that action and speech, ritual and myth, are modes of human cognition. He utilises the theories of Freud and Levi-Strauss. His argument is that “ritual activities are an exaggeration of everyday activities, but an exaggeration that reduces rather than enlarges, that clarifies by miniaturizing in order to achieve sharp focus”. According to him, rituals are no “big deal” (Smith, 1987:194-95). What is significant in ritual is “its infinite and infinitesimal elaboration”. It is impossible to find the theory of sacrifice in a quest for origins, but this can only “be found through the detailed examination of elaboration” (Smith, 1987:195).

Smith theorises that ritual as an assertion of difference denies or provides an opportunity for reflection on rationalisation of the fact that what ought to have been done was not, and what should have taken place did not. Ritual brings forth the relationship between present reality and an ideal world (Smith, 1987:109). Smith’s theory is comparable to that of Vedic scholar, Frits Staal. Staal analysed the Agnicayana ritual, a 3000 year old Vedic ritual performed in a southwest Indian village by Nambudiri Brahmins. He argues for the essential meaninglessness of ritual (Staal, 1979:2).

Staal disagrees with the view that ritual consists of symbolic activities that refer to something else. He maintains that participants in a ritual process concentrate only on the rules of their performance, not on symbolic meanings “going through their minds when they are engaged in performing ritual”. It is only the outsiders or bystanders who may suggest to them ideas “about religion and philosophy generally”. Therefore, he narrows down ritual to a simple activity legislated by specific rules. The most important thing to be considered is what a person does, as opposed to what he thinks or believes (Staal, 1979:3-4).

There are two reasons for performing rituals: obligation and option. Staal asks the question: “Why should anybody wish to re-enact a myth? Why should social structures be represented or enacted ritually”? With these questions, he challenges ritual theory that still maintains that rites re-enact myth. According to him, “ritual exhibits its character of pure activity most readily when it is contrasted with the applied activities of our ordinary, everyday life. In ritual

activity, the rules count, but not the result. In ordinary activity it is the other way round". On a positive side, a ritual is viewed as creator of a bond between participants that "reinforces solidarity, boosts moral and constitutes a link with the ancestors". However, he cautions that positivism in this matter can only explain ritual preservation and not its origin (Staal, 1979:7-11).

2.4.1.4 On sacrificial ritual: Smith's theory of domestication

Smith stipulates that the Paleolithic indications for sacrifice are uncertain. "...If Walter Burkert attempts to prove something about the Paleolithic era, it has still no data, because I do not admit anything from that era as evidence" (Smith, 1987:206). Animal "sacrifice appears to be, universally, the ritual killing of a domesticated animal by agrarian or pastoralist societies and so is a component of secondary and tertiary cultures - a product of civilization (Smith, 1987:197).

In suggesting a probable link between sacrifice and domestication, Smith indicates that: "A theory of sacrifice must start with the domesticated animal and with the socio-cultural process of domestication itself". He defines domestication as the "process of human interference or alteration of the genetics of plants and animals", understood in terms of time and place. This makes it possible to distinguish a paradigm shift from the nomadic social world of hunter-gatherers to the social world of settled societies with their notion of continuity of time and place. Within the settled social world, the art of breeding and selective killing is introduced (Smith, 1987:200).

Therefore, "Sacrifice is an elaboration of the selective kill, in contradiction to the fortuitous kill". Sacrifice becomes an "exaggeration of domestication, a meditation on one cultural process by means of another" (Smith, 1987:199-200). Given the fact that domestication emphasises selected characteristics of the animal and thus targets the perfection of the species, sacrifice therefore becomes emphatic about this emphasis. "It can do this precisely because it is a ritual". Sacrifice in the agrarian or pastoral context is the artificial (i.e realised) killing of an artificial (i.e domesticated) animal (Smith, 1987:201).

i) Criticisms of Smith's theory

Smith did not escape from structuralist approaches to rituals that emphasise the language and structure of ritual acts as the essence of their meaning, rather than the function of ritual within a community. Smith's language betrays the influence of Levi-Strauss (Smith, 1987:202). French structuralist studies of ancient Greek sacrifice equally reveal the same concerns about the grammar and/ or syntax of sacrificial acts, and the way that these mediate between nature and culture. According to these scholars, sacrifice is not "mediation on domestication", but the means by which human beings identify themselves as cooked meat-eaters, as opposed to beasts that eat raw flesh and gods who eat

none. In transforming raw meat into cooked meat, sacrifice thus mediates between nature and culture.

In conclusion, it is clear that Smith and Staal belong to non-sacrificing societies. Smith fails to explain the power and meaning of sacrifice to an insider. The most important point is that there is some collective process that results in a kind of communal transformation. Here, Burkert's theory of sacrificial ritual as social affirmation and community building, through a transforming ritual process between life and death, is capable of offering a more satisfactory explanation. Smith and Staal's theories have no regard for the sacred. They leave in its stead meaninglessness and random actions.

Smith also fails to understand the transforming power of the scapegoat ritual, as clarified by Girard. Therefore, this study accepts Burkert's main theory, as modified by Girard. So far, this study has dealt with three theorists, namely Burkert, Girard and Smith. As it has already been stated, aspects of Burkert and Girard's theories are instrumental in providing this investigation on the communicative power of sacrifice in the South African context with an interpretative framework in the light of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Those aspects are indeed relevant to this study, because they similarly stress the motivational essence of sacrificial violence and its positive, purposeful effect upon the community as a whole.

2.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter has discussed the heuristic framework of this dissertation. It made use of information on the reading strategy of the project reading of the Bible in Africa to describe various perceptions of African scholars on Christianity, African traditional religions and missions in Africa (South Africa), merely for the sake of background and for positioning this dissertation. The heuristic framework has included some recent scientific theories, as well as their respective criticisms, which have attempted to show the essential significance of sacrifice in a given community. Sacrifice has the power to bring people together, achieve peace and harmony in traditional communities, and to effect reconciliation and forgiveness (Burkert, 1987; Gerard, 1987; Smith, 1982, 1987). Burkert alleges that a ritual is a communal activity whose function is group formation and communication (Burkert. 1983:54). He insinuates that rituals make up and sustain social interactions that create, commemorate and preserve solidarity within group membership (Burkert, 1983:155).

According to him, the slaughtering of animals and shedding of their blood is central to religious rituals, and is significant in dealing with aggression and evil, as in the case of the death of the innocent Son of God. "The shock of slaughtering is followed by consolidation, guilt by reparation and destruction by reconstruction", which necessitate a release of certain power (Burkert, 1983:12, 35, 40). The flow of blood instills great fear and guilt. Burkert goes on to say

that forgiveness and reparation are critical to sacrificial rituals: the shedding of blood is critical for the perpetuation of life and for new life to start again (Burkert, 1983:16). Girard's generative scapegoatism enjoins that the killing of the surrogate victim grants peace to the community (Girard, 1987:100).

There is a question that one needs to ask oneself before concluding this section: what can we learn from all this, what can we apply and why? It is the researcher's opinion that the abovementioned modern theories, that is, Burkert's theory of ritual sacrifice and Paleolithic origin, Girard's theory of the original, fictional, collective murder, and Smith's theory of the transforming power of the scapegoat ritual, seem relevant to the theme of this dissertation, despite their respective weaknesses. From these theories, one learns that there is material that has been developed in the field of science upon which any study regarding sacrifice can be based.

One also learns that violence or blood sacrifices can scarcely be separated from individual human beings and communities at large, because blood sacrifices contribute to the establishment of human communities, protecting them from aggression, ensuring their continuity, and providing the power for reconciliation and the establishment of harmonious relations, communion and fellowship between the world of the living and the world of the spirits. It is also evident that blood sacrifices are as old as mankind is, and the former appear to be inherent to the latter and at the very core of their survival.

These theories are applicable to Old Testament blood sacrificial rituals, the African blood sacrificial system in general, and to Xhosa, Zulu and Tsonga sacrificial rituals in particular. They also agree on the sacrifice of Jesus in the New Testament as a scapegoat, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (Jn 1:29). In terms of individuals and the community, these theories seem to offer similar benefits. They also constitute a scientific framework for this dissertation, and people from Western Christianity as well as Africa can relate to them as they seek to understand their respective situations and to iron out their differences by finding a scientific framework to which they can all refer. The following chapter will focus on blood sacrificial rituals among the Xhosa people.



CHAPTER THREE: XHOSA PEOPLE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Fundamental to this study of Xhosa people's sacrificial ritual performances is an acquaintance with the Xhosa people themselves. This background information will enable one to identify them within the context of other groups within Southern African. Afterwards, this study will approach them as a unique tribe by taking a look at their traditional kinship structure, as well as their cosmology, which constitute a logical context for understanding their sacrificial rituals in their traditional and modern contexts.

However, it is important to note that the aim is to have a broad overview with a specific focus. This study has purported to discuss the communicative power of blood sacrifices in South Africa (among Zulus, Xhosas and Tsongas), including a few places in Africa, as well as in the Epistle to the Hebrews. It is therefore important to examine a broader field concerning sacrifices, in order to sharpen the focus. In the meantime, this study will begin with the quest for the Xhosa people.

3.1.1 The quest for the Xhosa people

South Africa consists of various groups of people and different tribes, as with any other African country. With regard to this, Maylan testifies that: "the vast majority of African people in the South of the Limpopo have come to be classified under two broad generic labels - Nguni or Sotho" (Maylan, 1968:20). These two divisions comprise further sub-divisions. Many writers have founded their further divisions upon linguistic similarities, rather than "common cultural traits" (Maylan, 1968:20). Consequently, the Zulus, Ndebeles, Swazis and Xhosas constitute the Nguni group, due to their languages' sharp similarities. The Batswanas, Bapedis and Basothos make up the Sotho group, due also to their languages' strong similarities. There is still controversy and speculation among historians in connection with the Nguni and Sotho designations. For the time being, however, scholars and anthropologists only consider these terms as fundamental to further anthropological investigations and analyses of the people beyond the Limpopo (Sipuka, 2000:106).

The designation 'Xhosa' applies to all Xhosa-speaking South African people dwelling in the Cape Province, which the 1994 political dispensation re-zoned into the Eastern, Western and Northern Cape Provinces. They are also disseminated in a small minority over the country, as well as in some of the neighbouring countries such as Lesotho, Namibia and Botswana. Jackson alleges that a more precise name for the Xhosa-speaking African people would be "Cape Nguni" or "southern Nguni", as distinct from the northern Nguni such as Zulus, Ndebeles and Swazis. Jackson considers Cape Nguni, and not Xhosa, as being more precise, because the Xhosa people alone make up only a portion of the whole Nguni population of the Cape (Jackson, 1976:1). The same is true of the West where "Xhosa speaking people...are referred to broadly as Xhosa people, but are in fact a number of independent



chiefdoms of which the native Xhosa people constitute only one related group” (Jackson, 1976:12).

3.1.2 Xhosa people’s distinctiveness

A classification of the Cape Nguni tribes is not easy to resolve with precision, because of classification incongruities. Some writers classify some groups as tribes, while others classify the same groups as sub-tribes or clans. The Xhosa, Thembu, Mpondomise, Mpondo, Bomvana, Xesibe and Bhaca people constitute the strata, the accuracy of which many writers support (Jackson, 1976:2; West, 1976:2). Besides these peoples’ origins and arrival date discrepancies, many writers unanimously support the fact that the first five tribes are the longest “established inhabitants of the area” (West, 1976:12). The three others are termed “later arrivals” (Shaw, 1973:3). The Southern Nguni people need a bit of attention here. Even though the discussion of their relatedness falls outside the scope of this study, their common designation as Xhosa people necessitates some clarification.

Firstly, the Xhosa language is a popular language among the Cape Nguni people. Jackson confirms that Xhosa is “with minor dialectical variations the language spoken by all Cape Nguni” (Jackson, 1976:1). Secondly, Xhosa customs such as circumcision are ascribed to most of the Cape Nguni tribes. However, these customs are extending to tribes geographically distant from the Xhosa people’s tribe. This is due to the fact that the Xhosas enjoyed political strength and stability that enabled them to keep their language and customs, while converting other tribes to their language and customs at the same time (Soga, 1931: vi-vii). The Xhosa language was the only language that was put into writing, and the only one that was taught at school (Hammond-Tooke, 1975a: 9).

Therefore, the whole group came to be designated Xhosa because of the linguistic and cultural assimilation of other Cape Nguni tribes by the Xhosa tribe. Given the fact that other tribes have assimilated the Xhosa tribe’s customs, the sacrificial rituals being investigated by this study will sensibly focus only upon the actual Xhosa people. It is also obvious that, while looking into the Xhosa people’s performances and understanding of sacrificial rituals, this study will at the same time gain insights into the other Cape Nguni tribes’ sacrificial understanding, since they have assimilated Xhosa customs. However, one should understand that assimilation is not synonymous with the complete integration of other Cape Nguni tribes into the Xhosa tribe. “Their separate origin and identity...is never lost sight of. The following biblical statement applies to them: ‘though of Israel, they are not Israelites’” (Soga, 1931:18).

3.1.3 Xhosa people’s present composition: kinship and lineage system

The current Xhosa tribe’s composition contains the following subdivisions:

- Gcaleka tribes;
- Rarabe tribes;



- Pre-Gcaleka or Pre-Rarabe: those that are genealogically junior to the Gcaleka and Rarabe branches; and
- The Gqunukhwebe, difficult to link with Xhosa genealogy (Jackson, 1976:6).

Anthropologists utilise the word “kinship” to refer to a relationship between groups of people “either through consanguinity or established through marriage affinities” (Preston-Whyte, 1974:177). The concept of kinship also involves lineage in a broader sense, because it includes descendants of “a common grandfather or even great-grandfather or higher level” (Bigalke, 1969:47). This emphasises the fact that the two words may be at times used interchangeably. Thus, kinship also fuels a relationship not only among the living, but also extends “to the departed and those yet to be born” members of the lineage (Mbiti, 1969:105). Malina (1993) claims that social norms display the “oughts’ that are known as cultural hints that guide people to find out and gauge persons, things and events of their experience”. According to him, kinship “refers to patterns of such social norms that regulate human relationships which are directly based upon the experiences of birth and THE birth cycle, from the womb through developmental stages, to death” (Malina, 1993:117).

“...kinship norms symbolize human biological interactions and their outcome” (Malina, 1993:117). They are grounded in the social feeling that human beings’ relationships exist between persons issued from certain parents, or more specifically through births within marriage. One can distinguish four categories of these potential births:

- “The selection of marriage partner;
- The marriage bond;
- The immediate conjugal family of husband(s), wife (or wives), and children; and
- The extended family or kinship beyond the immediate conjugal family bond” (Malina, 1993: 117-118; see also Mhlangu, 1999:91-107 for a social description of the African family).

3.1.4 Kinship principles’ relevance to sacrificial rituals

Kinship principles have to do with specific kinship members’ division, as well as defined interaction and behaviour regulating rules. “Categories of kinship principles are recognized and behaviors towards individuals falling into them organized according to a blueprint of kinship expectation” (Preston-Whyte, 1974:177). The kinship structure determines individual roles in various spheres of life: that is, religious, economic and political spheres. Descending groups operate in social interaction areas: in the recruitment to, and organisation of, residential and local groups, in the organisation and distribution of certain scarce resources, in the dispute settlement between lineage members, and in ancestors’ cult rituals (Preston-Whyte, 1974:196).

This last function, namely the ancestors’ cult ritual organisation, qualifies the discussion of kinship structure as a relevant background to the Xhosa people’s understanding of sacrificial rituals. Given the fact that all the



Southern Africa Bantu-speaking people adhere to the patrimonial system of descent, only the consanguinous relationship from the father's side counts the most. This indeed holds a significant consequence for the performance and understanding of sacrificial rituals among Xhosa people. Common patrilineal descent determines blood relation bonds. As far as sacrificial rituals are concerned, common patrilineal descent constitutes the congregation or participants in sacrificial rituals, and this compels all lineage members' presence. "Lineage members, even distant ones, are specifically notified well in advance of impending rituals and ceremonials and are expected to attend unless prevented by work, great distance or quarrels..." (Bigalke, 1969:104). Among the lineage's various activities is the succession to office. It includes co-ordinating and presiding over kinship sacrificial rituals, as specified by the patrilineal genealogical hierarchy. Usually, the most senior lineage member heads the lineage and officiates at sacrificial rituals. "The three most important qualifications apart from birth order are:

- Sound bodily and mental health;
- Marriage; and
- Wisdom" (Bigalke, 1969:63).

The need to respect elderly people constitutes another significant principle of Xhosa people's sacrificial ritual understanding. This is emphasised when admonishing young men emerging from their initiation seclusion, whereby they are reminded to submit to orders and instructions given by the elders (Bigalke, 1969:42-43).

The importance of this principle for the understanding of Xhosa people's sacrificial rituals is that in many cases, as shall be seen, sacrificial rituals are performed in accordance with the wishes and demands of the ancestors. Ray compares this principle to the expression of the extension of filial obedience to the ancestors, among the Talleli people of North Africa. This allegiance to ancestors is compared to that which a child owes his parents. Similarly, an adult person owes his ancestors the same filial service:

- Obedience;
- Economic service; and
- Respect required by parents on a domestic level, are religiously translated into ritual service, sacrifices, and allegiance required by the ancestors (Ray, 1976:84).

Another relevant kinship principle in the study of Xhosa people's sacrificial rituals is the requirement that people who adhere to the kinship circle either through birth, adoption or marriage, be acknowledged through certain ritual performances. These rites quite often involve sacrificial rituals. The passage from one stage of life to another is sanctioned by sacrificial rituals: that is, from childhood to adulthood, and from adulthood to death. Seniors who expect obedience and submission from juniors are also expected to provide for their needs. This reciprocal relationship also extends to the world of the ancestors. In this regard, Bettison writes that: "Similarly with the ancestral spirits---the unseen fathers of the people---their authority was absolute, and provided the living conformed to their wishes, their welfare was assured" (Bettison, 1954:20). Therefore, the mutual obligation kinship principle



becomes applicable to the ancestors as well. This constituted the grounds for their plausible rebuke when they failed to reciprocate to a sacrificial act performed in their honour (Bettison, 1954:29).

3.1.5 Xhosa people's cosmology

From a scientific perspective, the term “cosmology” stands for the objective study of the universe, and all the interactions and dynamics of its component parts. Terrestrial considerations of the universe have to do with speculation about the origin and evolution of the world, while celestial consideration, also called astronomy, has to do with the composition, evolution and movement of planets and stars. This scientific speculation prompted Bettison to point out that the Southern Bantu people, under whom the Xhosa people fall, “were not given to speculating about...the origin of the universe, or even of man” (Bettison, 1954:2).

Xhosa people's knowledge of the celestial world is demonstrated by the fact that they named a few stars for the practical purpose of measuring time. For instance:

- Pleiades was known as *Isi-limela* (lit. the one that ploughs for), that is, the star which ushers in the ploughing season.
- Venus, as the morning star, was known as *-l-khwezi lokusa*, as the evening star it was *U-cel'izapolo* (lit. the one who asks for little milk from the teat), in other words, milking time (Soga, 1931:419).

The cosmology concept is also used in connection with beliefs, that is, explanations that can scarcely be conclusively demonstrated concerning the origins and forces of the world. Mostly, these clarifications use myths, tales and legends. Cosmology understood in this sense may sometimes be distinguished from cosmology proper as “cosmogony”. The latter refers to a “commonly accepted set of ideas concerning life and the world”, and the former “refers to more consciously entertained images, doctrines and scientific views concerning the universe” (Eliade, 1987:101)

These cosmogonies normally serve the purpose of clarifying and dealing with the world experientially, that is, the world experienced as awesome, threatening, diverse, unstable and overwhelming. It has the meaning of making sense of the world as it affects people on an existential level. Bolle argues that cosmologies are usually classified in accordance with geographical and cultural homogeneity. He remarks that, for this reason, “a grouping of cosmic view is given according to the continent of the earth, the various regions within them, and their ethnic and linguistic divisions” (Eliade, 1987:101). This is due to the fact that cosmologies of close geographical and cultural proximity present similarities in many ways.

Xhosa people's cosmology is not an exception to this rule. On a continental level, it has shared features with all African indigenous tribes, and with increasing intensity, it also bears similarities to those of the Southern Bantu people, the Nguni or the Cape Nguni. Because of this, most writers and anthropologists approach the Xhosa people's religious system in terms of



Bantu and Nguni classifications. However, the focus upon details reveals that they are some elements peculiar to the Xhosa people's religious system. This is why writers such as Soga, Hodgson and others have made it their task to investigate and expound on those elements (Sipuka, 2000:117).

3.1.6 The Supreme Being

In contrast to the Judeo-Christian and other religions' accounts of creation, which begin with nonthingness, the Xhosa people's account begins with an existing world, and proceeds by explaining the origin of humanity. The most ancient explanation of the origin of humanity is that humanity emerged "through an immense hole, the opening of which was either in a cavern or else in a marsh overgrown with reeds" (Hodgson, 1982:18), which Xhosa people's oral tradition refers to as a place called *Uhlanga*. It can be easily seen that Xhosa people's creation myth is not comprehensive, because it does not account for the universe's existence as a whole, but only for humanity's existence.

Even humanity's existence is not comprehensively described, because Bantu legends of the human origin "do not try to account for the origin of the human race as a whole, or rather their legends seem to assume that particular tribe in question is actually the human race..." (Bettison, 1954:20). Hodgson supports this view, pointing out that some details were added to the original *Uhlanga* myth so as to account for the existence of other tribes that the Xhosa people came across later (Hodgson, 1982:20). There is a multiplicity of myths regarding God and creation among all indigenous groups of Africa. These present some similarities and differences between these groups themselves and the biblical account about God and creation in general.

The lack of clarification about the ultimate cause of things in Xhosa people's cosmology resulted in a controversy among writers as to whether or not Xhosa people believe in the Supreme Being, who can be associated with the God mentioned in the Bible. The argument in favour of this takes into account Xhosa traditional names for God: *uDali*, *uMdali* and *uMenzi*, which respectively convey the meaning of making, creating and bringing into existence (Hodgson, 1982:43). However, other writers are suspicious about these names, and speculate that they are not Xhosa people's names for God "but were introduced to the Xhosa people by missionaries" (Hodgson, 1982:44).

A counter-argument is that these names are also Zulu traditional names for God (Hodgson, 1982:44), and are to be presumed to have been in use long before the Xhosa and Zulu people separated. There are speculations that Zulu and Xhosa people migrated last from the north - they share a common expression of language that predates other influences that came later on (Maylan, 1968:22). Bettison observes that the point is not whether or not the Xhosa people believed that the world was created. Given the fact that it exists, means that it was made, but whatever made the world was not regarded as the creator of humanity. Evidently, "Southern Bantu people acknowledge that the universe was a given entity; created and controlled by



something...It is an important fact that the Bantu people to the North of the Xhosa /Pondo tribes where reliable evidence of a creator and Supreme Being are available, view such a character as the maker of the earth, the mountains, rivers, etc., but never of mankind” (Bettison, 1954:5).

The reference to rituals directed to God in times of national calamity and extended drought has been used to support Xhosa people’s belief in a Supreme Being. However, Hodgson remarks: “a prolonged drought was one of the few occasions when the God of the Xhosa was approached directly, ritual supplication being led by the chief at the top of the high hill or mountain” (Hodgson, 1984:24). The absence of research material regarding the details of this ritual, however, has generated diverse explanations of what exactly it involved, throwing people into confusion as to whether the supplication was addressed to God or to the ancestors. Taking into consideration the fact that this practice was observed once a decade, and that it was the last resort, it does not really provide a good example for demonstrating the belief in the Supreme Being among Xhosa people (Hodgson, 1984:78).

Some writers have accounted for short spontaneous calls on God such as ‘God help’, mostly made in moments of crisis, with an implicit suggestion that the Xhosa people did not only believe in God but also had frequent recourse to Him in their everyday lives (Olivier, 1976:7; Hodgson, 1982:71). The period during which these observations were made is quite recent, and one cannot rule out the possibility that these spontaneous calls on God are prompted by Christian influence. Even if Christian influence were to be ruled out as being responsible for these ejaculatory appeals to God, however, it still would not take away the fact that God is not the subject of formal worship or sacrificial rituals among the Xhosa people (Sipuka, 2000:119).

Based upon the above observations, one can say that the idea concerning the Supreme Being is referred to in Xhosa people’s cosmology, but it occupies a peripheral place in its religious system, meant to a large extent “to explain the phenomenon of creation” (Hammond-Tooke, 1975b: 15). God was not perceived as existentially relevant, and for this reason interaction between God and the people, as expressed through religious activities, was very minimal, if at all. God did “not constitute an important factor in the religious system of the Xhosa people” (Hammond-Tooke, 1974:319). Therefore, if this study’s conclusion is that the idea of God holds very little significance within Xhosa people’s religious system, the next step would be to investigate other forms of supernaturalism in Xhosa cosmology, and to evaluate their importance in their belief system.

3.2 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the researcher has attempted to distinguish the Xhosa tribe proper from the South-East or Cape Nguni common designation of Xhosa-speaking people, who are not necessarily members of the Xhosa tribe proper, and make up a small percentage of the population found in the Willovale Kentani district. This has helped to clarify and correct the general assumption that everybody who comes from the Eastern Cape and speaks Xhosa belongs



to the Xhosa tribe proper. This information is valuable because it touches on the diversity of the African people in the Eastern Cape, and acknowledges the identity, history and culture of each tribe of the Cape Nguni (Sipuka, 2000:129).

The explanation provided by Soga that the Xhosa people enjoyed more political and cultural stability in comparison with other Cape Nguni tribes may be insubstantial and too sentimental, given the fact that Soga is a Xhosa tribesman himself. It is hoped that further research will explore the reasons for this common designation. Religion has sometimes been defined as reflecting its host society in such a way that the understanding of the latter would shed more light on the former. The dynamics of Xhosa kinship that have been described in this chapter have enabled us to permeate the social structure underlying the Xhosa people's sacrificial ritual performances.

Two itineraries have been specifically adopted: that is, common patrilineal descent and mutual obligation among kinship members. Patrilineal descent determines who the participants and officiating person in sacrificial rituals will be. It has also been observed that socialisation provides a context for various sacrificial rituals. Mutual obedience, obligation and rewards between junior and senior tribal members provides a social background for sacrificial ritual performances, operating under the same mutual obligation principle between the ancestors or living dead and their living descendants.

Xhosa cosmology implicitly calls for multiplicity and diversity of cosmologies in accordance with diverse groups and cultures. 'World religions' cosmologies have certainly achieved a coherent explanation and interpretation of the cosmos, in comparison with Xhosa cosmology, which still experiences some complexities. There is a need to understand that world religions' cosmological achievements resulted from many development stages. However, with new paradigm shifts in the area of knowledge, experience and interpretation of the universe, achieved levels of coherence can be subjected to further transformations, as substantiated by emerging new shifts in creation theology, for instance. As Mosala rightly observes, "Christianity, contrary to Western doctrinal ideology, is not a finished business, neither is African religion" (Mosala, 1983:23).

This observation can be made from the unconscious arrogance often shown towards other religious traditions by analysts from so-called established religious traditions. Their introductory points often have a disparaging connotation concerning the lack of a unified thought system in traditional belief systems, as illustrated by the following quotation: "One of the most striking features of traditional belief systems is the almost complete absence of what might be called a 'theology'. There is little speculation as to the nature of the spirit world or the life after death and, unlike some other people, a rather poorly developed corpus of myths" (Hammond-Tooke, 1974:319).

It can be inferred from the tone of the above quotation that traditional belief systems fail to theologise, speculate and integrate mythological explanations. However, when a person looks at this apparent absence of theology in a



positive way, the whole scenario does not point to inability – rather, it reveals that traditional religions are still undergoing an evolutionary process, just as established world religions did. In other words, Hammond-Tooke suggests that Xhosa people’s belief system, together with similar belief systems, is still at a complex stage, in which religious belief systems still struggle for a more coherent and systematic expression (Sipuka, 2000:131).

The claim that there has always been an explicit worship of God among the Xhosa people is due to some African Christian writers who want to demonstrate and force continuity between the Xhosa people’s belief system and Christianity, by overemphasising similarities between the two, even if it means forcing them. This may also stem from the tendency among some writers and researchers to apply religious concepts and practices observed in some parts of Africa to Africa as a whole. Most writings on African religion tend to convey the understanding that they are dealing with the whole of Africa, when in fact they are actually focusing on only two tribes, usually from Central and North-West Africa. They then proceed to make a general conclusion for the rest of Africa, based on the details of a particular tribe. This is intellectual dishonesty, and is sadly misleading. This study does not deny that there may be common regional or continental religious concepts. However, any work that claims continentality should deal with elements pertaining to all African tribes or groups, and indicate those elements that apply to each particular tribe or group.



CHAPTER FOUR: SACRIFICE IN XHOSA TRADITION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The idea and performance of blood sacrifices permeate the entire life of the Xhosa people. From birth to death, various recurrent sacrificial rituals mark a Xhosa person's life. This applies to Xhosa people both in traditional and urban contexts, as well as to those who have adhered to Christianity, which does not condone this type of belief and practice. It is not easy to clearly establish how Xhosa people's understanding of blood sacrifice developed over time. This can be explained by the fact that Xhosa people themselves were not prone to theories of religion. Therefore, the discussion of Xhosa people's understanding of blood sacrifice here will include the following aspects:

- Sacrifice as it was traditionally viewed
- Sacrifice as understood and practised since the contact of Xhosa people with, and influence of, Western culture and modernisation.

Even though the popular understanding of the term "Xhosa" has come to encompass all Xhosa-speaking people, the Xhosa proper people, as will be attempted to clarify later, consist of one group out of many groups of Xhosa-speaking people. As of now, this tribe comprises two sub-groups, the Gcaleka and Rarabe. However, this does not contradict the classification mentioned earlier, because the pre-Gcaleka and pre-Rarabe groups constitute junior tribes of either the Gcaleka or Rarabe sub-groups. According to Elliot, "customs and beliefs in the Xhosa tribe are basically the same" (Elliot, 1970:11), and there is no difference between the Gcaleka and Rarabe. Therefore, the material to be covered here with regard to Xhosa people's understanding of sacrifice accommodates these two sub-groups.

Bigalke (1969) and Olivier's (1976) writings on the Ndlambe (a sub-stratum of people who broke away from the Rarabe line) and the Gcaleka, which concentrate on sacrifice within the two groups of the Xhosa tribe, do not exhibit significant disparities in their facts and conclusions concerning Xhosa people's practices and understanding of sacrifice. Lamla's work (1971) entitled *Sacrifice among the Southern Nguni* provides a comprehensive classification of Xhosa sacrifice, and attempts to balance its conceptualisation and significance.

Other writers such as Bettison (1954), Hammond-Tooke (1974, 1978, 1981), Pauw (1975, 1994) etc have also shed some light on the Xhosa people's sacrificial rituals. Given the fact that much has already been done in terms of the understanding of Xhosa blood sacrifice, this study will borrow from past research, and highlight some aspects that will facilitate the objective of indicating how the communicative power of sacrifices is viewed. Therefore, this section will be purely based on a review of relevant literary works.



The description of this rubric will comprise two main sections, dealing firstly with sacrifice among the Xhosa people in their traditional environment, and then analysing the occasions and types of sacrifice. Chapter five will focus on some Zulu and Tsonga views with regard to sacrificial rituals, and the discussion in chapter six will focus on how sacrifice has come to be understood by the Xhosa people following their contact with Christianity and ongoing urbanisation. At this point, this study will take a look at the Xhosa people's sacrificial system.

4.2 SACRIFICE IN THE XHOSA TRADITIONAL SETTING

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the practice of sacrifice is a way of life for the Xhosa people. In fact, it would not be an exaggeration to suggest that Xhosa religiosity, within their traditional context, is demonstrated in various acts of sacrifice. There is therefore a need to understand that the centrality of sacrifice in the Xhosa people's belief system does not constitute any exception to similar practices among other tribes in South Africa, and indeed in Africa as a whole.

As fundamental as it appears, blood sacrifice in the Xhosa traditional setting has not been granted systematic exposure by insiders i.e. those who believed and practised it prior to Western and Christian influences. This can be attributed to the practical orientation of religion in Africa as a whole, which placed the emphasis on the role that religion plays, rather than on a speculative understanding of religious concepts. The analyses of occasions and sacrificial rituals reveal the fact that, not to exclude accompanying invocations, Xhosa people's sacrificial practices, although not defined, are nevertheless full of meaning.

By making use of previous research in this area, this study will try to determine the meaning of Xhosa people's sacrificial rituals by focusing on the fact of sacrifice in the Xhosa language, sacrifice and ritual, categorisation and classification of sacrifice as birth initiation, marriage and contingent, and the types of sacrifices, namely: propitiatory, diviner initiation, supplication, communion, thanksgiving and ostracism sacrifices, as well as important solemn sacrifices. The elements of Xhosa sacrifice will also be described and discussed, as well as the *ukunqula* ritual's meaning and purpose, and the nature of Xhosa sacrifices. Finally, some conclusions will be drawn.

4.3 THE FACT OF SACRIFICE IN THE XHOSA LANGUAGE

The fact of sacrifice is accounted for among Xhosa people in the first place because the Xhosa language has a generic term for sacrifice, *idini*. Xhosa-English dictionaries translate this word as 'animal sacrifice' (Kropf, 1915:77; McLaren, 1923:43). Kropf explains that animal sacrifice is meant to propitiate departed ancestors (Kropf, 1915:77). English-Xhosa dictionaries also utilise *umnikelo* and *umbingelelo* in the same sense as *idini* (McLaren. 1923:243; Fischer, 1985:550). These two words broaden the Xhosa understanding of sacrifice. *Umunikelo* also stands for a "gift offering" (Kropf, 1915:270; McLaren, 1923:103), Therefore, blood sacrifice in Xhosa serves more than



just the purpose of propitiation. *Umbingelelo* derives from the verb *binga* and signifies “to tender what is done to departed ancestors” (Kropf, 1915:36). It promotes the Xhosa understanding of the concept of sacrifice, by introducing other elements involved in it. *Binga* highlights sacrificial elements such as “*um-Bingi*, the host who offers, that is, who gives the animal for a sacrifice... *um-Bingeleli*, a person who offers for one; ...*isi-Bingelelo*: the place for offering (Kropf, 1915:36).

The above linguistic analysis of the term “sacrifice” can help one to answer the “what”, “where” and “why” of Xhosa sacrifice, and to tentatively attempt a definition of the Xhosa concept of sacrifice. “A sacrifice is an animal victim to be slaughtered by a designated person for the purpose of propitiating and offering a gift to ancestors”. While language dictionaries provide us with an idea of the Xhosa understanding of the concept of sacrifice, they are nevertheless inadequate, and more pertinent questions regarding Xhosa sacrifice remain to be answered. What creates the need for an act of sacrifice? What are we to understand by propitiating and offering a gift to ancestors? What variety of sacrifices do Xhosa people have and what significance can be attached to such variety? Thus, the answers which language dictionaries provide with regard to Xhosa sacrifice unveil a host of other questions that can be answered by probing the facts they suggest, a task that will be undertaken in the following sections.

4.3.1 Sacrifice and ritual

Any person acquainted with the Xhosa traditional and modern contexts can witness an act of sacrifice. Missionaries, anthropologists and African Christian theologians have visualised and recorded sacrificial practices among the Xhosa people. The fact that sacrifice and ritual are used interchangeably in this context might lead to confusion, because, although both terms are related, they do not mean exactly the same thing. A ritual is broader than a sacrifice. The former can refer to any religious ceremony, with or without a sacrifice. Sacrifice is one ritual among many, and thus an appropriate and precise reference to sacrifice as ritual would be “sacrificial ritual”, not merely “ritual”. Neyrey (2005:470) seems to implicitly illustrate this in terms of “balanced reciprocity in the benefactor-client relations”.

4.3.2 Sacrifice categorisation and classification

As already pointed out, Xhosa people practise a variety of sacrifices. A cursory glance at works of authors such as Bigalke (1969), Lamla (1972) and Olivier (1976), who previously conducted research on Xhosa sacrifice, reveals that Xhosa people identify at least two categories of sacrifices that comprise fourteen types. One finds that these sacrifices are categorised and classified in line with their object, or the “recipient to whom they are made” (Ikenga-Metuh, 1987:27). There is an absence of a pantheon among Xhosa people, since all sacrifices are offered to ancestors. Because of this, many authors classify Xhosa sacrifices with regard to their occasion and purpose, not in accordance with their recipient (Harmmond-Toke, 1974:352).



The only situation that would allow for this would be when a sacrifice is offered to either home or river ancestors. However, this all amounts to the same thing, since one always has to deal with them, even in this situation. Hammond-Tooke classifies Bantu (including Xhosa) sacrifices into:

- *Life cycle rituals*, referring to the sacralisation of the important stages of an individual's life; and
- *Piacular or contingent rituals*: those prompted by a specific stimulus such as illness, seen as being inflicted by ancestors for the neglect of customs (Hammond-Tooke, 1974:352).

Nevertheless, there are also some writers who argue strongly that God is also the object of sacrifice, as in the case of rain. The lack of research concerning the details of this type of sacrifice has led to various explanations of its nature, and uncertainty about the orientation of supplication (Soga, 1931; Hodgson, 1982). Bigalke puts them into two groups, *imigidi*, or public feast, without attendance restrictions, and *izizathu* (meaning reason), or ancestral, restricted rituals that are not open to all (Bigalke, 1969:106).

Lamla offers detailed occasions for sacrifices, which can be divided into four categories as follows:

- Sacrifices connected to God and ancestors, which he calls "sacrifices connected with religion";
- Initiation sacrifices;
- Sacrifices connected to economic activities; and
- Sacrifices connected to other events such as rain-making, war etc. War sacrifices are meant to strengthen the army, and serve as thanksgiving sacrifices in cases of victory, etc. Seemingly, the classification of Xhosa sacrifices denies unanimity (Lamla, 1971:24).

Therefore, this study would now like to attempt to synthesise these different types of sacrifices, in order to provide a coherent picture of Xhosa sacrificial types. After birth, a person goes through different stages of life, and ultimately he dies. A specific sacrifice corresponds to each of these stages. The gap between birth and death comprises various contingencies that need to be taken care of. Therefore, one can clearly state that Xhosa sacrifices may be logically categorised into birth, initiation, contingent and death sacrifices, each of them containing further sub-divisions.

4.3.3 Birth sacrifices

Xhosa birth sacrifices include *ukufuthwa* (to be steamed), *Imbeleko* or *umbingelelo* (a thing with which to carry on the back or sacrifice), and *ingqithi* (amputation of the first phalanx of one finger of the left hand). These will be dealt with separately and in sequence.

4.3.3.1 Ukufuthwa (to be steamed)

The first birth sacrificial ritual among Xhosa people is called *ukufuthwa*. It consists of the repetitive swinging of the baby over the smoke of a fire specially made by the mother, while chanting the following words: "*Wush*,



wush, wush khanyela into oyaziyo”, which means “deny what you know” (Olivier, 1976:29). People from other tribes in South Africa attribute the Xhosa people’s astuteness and cunning to this ritual. Of all the writers who deal with Xhosa sacrifices, only Lamla seems to attach some sacrificial meaning to this ritual (Lamla, 1971:24).

Monica Hunter conducted a survey on the abovementioned birth sacrifice among Xhosa people, and reported that her respondents gave her different explanations, most of which sounded like ad hoc opinions (Hunter, 1979:154). Lamla suggests that it is normally meant to “ensure mental vigor, wisdom, strategy and eloquence for the child” (Lamla, 1971:14). He also attaches sacrificial significance to it. He says that when this ritual “is being performed for the last time, a number of cattle is gathered outside the hut and prayer is made to ancestral spirits. The beast that urinates first is slaughtered as a sacrifice...and appeal is made to them for blessings” (Lamla, 1974:14).

4.3.3.2 Imbeleko or Umbingelelo (A thing with which to carry on the back or sacrifice)

This is the most remarkable of all the birth sacrifices. Its primary purpose is to express gratitude to the ancestors for the birth of a child (Paw, 1994:12), and to implore them for its good health (Olivier, 1976:30). Its secondary purpose is to provide a listing for carrying the baby on the mother’s back. The omission of this ritual performance may lead either to sickness later in the life of the child (Bigalke, 1969:148; Olivier, 1976:30), or to odd behaviours such as continuously urinating in bed and being disobedient (Paw, 1994:12), or even to death (Laubscher, 1937:69).

4.3.3.3 Inggithi (amputation of the first phalanx of one finger of the left hand)

Laubscher and Lamla are the only writers who provide information about the sacrificial features of this ritual. Lamla states that: “the ritual is known as *ingqithi* and is a sacrificial function meant to illustrate the principle of compensation or gift intended to the ancestors” (Lamla, 1971:14). Olivier observes the opposite. He remarks that “*Hieirdie rite staan nie direk in verband met die voorouer nie*” (meaning that this ritual does not have a direct link to ancestors) (Olivier, 1976:29). Bettison (1954:28) also wonders whether the ritual is in any way related to the ancestors, since it does not involve any ceremony. Other writers refrain from referring to this ritual as a sacrifice.

Laubscher points out that the *ingqithi* ritual can be viewed as a sacrifice to the ancestors from the child itself. “The child is required to give up a healthy part of himself or herself so that he or she may receive health for the whole of his or her being” (Laubscher, 1937:73). Although other writers express doubts about the sacrificial features of the *ingqithi* ritual, Laubscher’s argument in this regard is very interesting. What is different about it is that the child itself provides the sacrifice from its own body, not the father from his livestock. This links to the theory of substitutionary sacrifice, which allows the offering of one part of the body in the place of the whole body, “like the offering of fingers, hair, or blood drawn through self inflicted wounds” (Eliade, 1987:546).



However, there is no evidence among the Xhosa people that the above explanation constitutes the rationale behind the *ingqithi* ritual.

4.3.4 Initiation sacrifices

Xhosa people distinguish between two different types of initiation sacrifice: *ukwaluka*, or circumcision, refers to the passage of boys from youth to manhood, and the *intonjane*, the equivalent rite for girls, which does not carry the meaning of passage for girls from childhood to adulthood or womanhood, as in the case of boys. It merely involves the seclusion of girls for a certain period of time. Marriage (for girls) is equivalent to *ukwaluka* or circumcision (Wilson, 1981:140). Therefore, one can identify three types of initiation rites, namely, *ukwaluka* or circumcision, *intonjane* or girls' initiation, and marriage. The sacrificial features of these rituals will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

4.3.4.1 Ukwaluka

The *ukwaluka* ritual involves three ritual performances: Ngcamisa, Ojisa and Buyisa or Ukubuya.

- One day before a youth undergoes circumcision, the Ngcamisa ritual is performed. According to Raum, *Ngcamisa* is derived from *ukucamagusha*, or 'to implore for blessings from the ancestors' (Raum, 1972:181). The Ngcamisa ritual reflects a clear sacrificial ritual. A goat is slaughtered and offered to the ancestors for the protection of the boys during their initiation period (Lamla, 1971:16; Van der Vliet, 1974:229; Laubscher, 1975:100; Pauw, 1994:14).
- The *Ojisa* ritual takes place one week after circumcision (Bigalke, 1969:107; Lamla, 1971:17; Olivier, 1976:31). It is supposed to reintroduce the boys to a normal diet, that is, food that they abstained from in order to accelerate the healing of their wounds. The uttered words, as reported by Olivier, demonstrate that: "*Hayi ke, namshlanje ndiyanojisa. Ndinikhululela okokuba nitye yonke into*" (Olivier, 1976:31), meaning: "today I allow you to eat everything".

This reintroduction of the boys to normal food carries a sacrificial connotation because a piece of meat, *intsonyama*, given to the person for whom the sacrifice is offered in normal circumstances, is given to the boys (Olivier, 1976:31). However, this sacrificial significance is not clear, and it can be inferred from this that it lies in thanking the ancestors for the healing of the boys' wounds.

- *Ukubuya* (to return) marks the end of the initiation period. Its emphasis is on admonishing and advising "newly created men" on what it means to be a man, as well as celebrating their development into adulthood (Lamla, 1971:16; Van der Vliet, 1974:321).



4.3.4.2 Intonjane or Ukuthomba

The *intonjane* refers to the rite of passage of girls from childhood into marriageable women. It is concerned with the fattening and beautifying of the girls. This initiation period culminates in marriage (Hunter, 1979:173-174). Before such a ritual, the girl, “previously called *intombazana* or little girl” (Pauw, 1994:18), takes on the name *intombi*, or full girl, after the *intonjane* ritual, an experience that turns her into a “potential bride” (Wilson, 1981:30). Hunter points out that most girls marry without undergoing this ritual experience, due to their fathers’ inability to afford the required food and animals, and for some, the ritual is performed after marriage, when sickness and barrenness befall them due to the omission of this ritual, according to the diviner’s diagnosis. Its sacrificial features are shown by the slaughtering of animals at the beginning and end of the initiation period, the eating of a sacrificial portion of meat by the initiates, as well as its connection to ancestors, who cause sickness and barrenness when it is omitted (Hunter, 1979:173-174).

4.3.4.3 Marriage sacrifices

Xhosa marriage is a highly esteemed, solemn occasion involving a number of sacrificial rituals. This is indeed important because it “is an alliance between two lineages” (Lamla, 1971:20). Works on Xhosa marriage reveal that seven animals are immolated during the marriage ceremony:

- A goat known as *umngcama* is slaughtered at the bridal home before the marriage ceremony starts, in order to inform the ancestors of her departure to her new homestead. Laubscher suggests that this sacrifice is equivalent and similar to *ngcamisa*, the first sacrifice of the boys’ initiation. Hunter calls it *ukumncamisa*, and Olivier calls it only a sacrifice before the bride goes to her in-laws (Laubscher, 1937:171; Olivier, 1976:33; Hunter, 1979:193; Pauw, 1994:27).
- The second goat to be immolated during the Xhosa marriage ceremony is the *umthula-ntabeni*, or ‘to be brought down the mountain’. The goat is slaughtered as a sign of welcome when the bride and her entourage arrive at the bridegroom’s home (Soga, 1931:231; Pauw, 1994:28).
- The *impothulo* (ground, boiled mealies mixed with sour milk) cow, brought along with the bride as food for the journey, is slaughtered the day after her and her escort arrive at the bridegroom’s home. Satyo says that *inkomo yempothulo* or cow, slaughtered for the *impothulo* sacrifice, serves as a purification sacrifice for unintended incestual relationships (Satyo, 1981:46). If Satyo’s claim is true, as no other writer corroborates his explanation, it may be said that this sacrifice is performed as a precautionary measure, in case the bride is related to the bridegroom (Soga, 1931:231; Laubscher, 1937:175; Lamla, 1971:21; Olivier, 1976:33).
- One day after the immolation of *impothulo*, an ox by the name of *ukubonwa kwentombi* or ‘the viewing of the girl’, is slaughtered for the unveiling of the bride (Soga, 1931:232; Lamla, 1971:21; Pauw, 1994:28).



- Towards the end, the *ukutyiswa amasi* or ‘to be fed with sour milk’ goat is immolated, in order to seal the beginning of the end of the marriage ceremony (Soga, 1931:234; Laubscher, 1937:183; Bigalke, 1969:110; Lamla, 1971:21; Preston-Whyte, 1974:204; Olivier, 1976:33; Hunter, 1979:200-201; Pauw, 1994:29).
- The slaughtering of the *umdudo* ox for a dance feast proclaims the winding up of the marriage ceremony (Soga, 1931:236-238; Lamla, 1971:21; Olivier, 1976:33).
- The *umphako* (provision) is slaughtered shortly before the departure of the bride escort back home for a journey provision (Soga, 1931:238; Lamla, 1971:21). According to Olivier, four slaughtering of animals comprise the ritual tasting of *intsonyama* or sacrificial meat: *umngcamo*, *impothulo*, *ukutyiswa amasi* and *umdudo*, which he characterises as sacrificial killings. To these, Lamla adds *ukubonwa kwentombi*, which, according to him, is a sacrifice that takes place in the kraal. If a person considers the slaughtering of animals discussed by Lamla and Olivier, one realises that, although one can deduce from them some sacrificial significance, in essence some of them are only meant to sustain the feast and to keep the ceremonial celebrations going. This is made clear by their names, many of which betray festive motivations.

One can therefore postulate that, out of all these immolations of animals, only *umngcamo* and *ukutyiswa amasi* suggest quasi-explicit sacrificial grounds. These two sacrificial instances are purposed to respectively inform the ancestors on both sides that the bride is leaving her homestead, and to ask for their protection and good health. Part of the speech recorded by Olivier in connection with *umngcamo* proves this point: *Namhlanje ke, maTshawe, intombi yam ihamba; kenihambe nayo niyikhaphe iphile*, meaning: you of the Tshawe clan, my daughter is going away, please go with her so that she may be well (Olivier, 1976:33). Hunter claims that if this sacrifice is not performed on behalf of the girl, “she is liable to fall ill on account of the omission” (Hunter, 1979:194). This confirms the importance of the *umngcamo* sacrifice in the marriage ritual. The *ukutyiswa amasi* sacrifice is critical to the sealing of marriages among Xhosa people. The bride becomes a member of her in-laws’ family after its performance. Pauw says that “a woman is not regarded as married if the *ukutyiswa amasi* ritual has not been performed” (Pauw, 1994:29). With this sacrifice, the bride “is initiated as a member of her husband’s family” (Soga, 1931:134). Its omission can result in sickness (Hunter, 1979). It is understandable that these two sacrifices are critical, in that they respectively sanction the release of the bride from her native homestead, and introduce her to the bridegroom’s homestead. At this point, it is important to look at another type of sacrifice among the Xhosa people, namely the contingent sacrifice.

4.3.5 Contingent sacrifice

In order to be conversant with the discussion on contingent sacrifice, it is necessary to start by providing a proper understanding of the term “contingent”. The word ‘contingent’ means “dependent, subject to, controlled



by and conditioned” (Stein & Berg, 1984:165). These words refer to an act, decision or situation that is subject or subordinate to factors either in evidence or thought likely to arise. Provisionally, they may merely refer to something adopted for the moment out of a temporary necessity, or until something better can be arranged, ie a provisional plan. Even more relevant here, the word often suggests a situation that is allowed to exist, provided that some results are forthcoming - e.g. the student was given provisional status as a matriculant, until his examination results were available (Bogus et al, 1971:468).

The word ‘contingent’ usually suggests that the crucial factors determining t status are those that lie in the future. Something even less certain than provisional is ‘tentative’, which means experimental in nature. Provisional actions, methods etc. would have a greater chance of being adopted or succeeding than those that are tentative. ‘Dependent’, in contrast to provisional, may indicate something that is subject to past, present or future factors. ‘Conditional’ almost entirely stresses this sense of dependence, suggesting an agreement that will be honoured by one side if the other holds. The word, less specifically, may simply mean tentative. The word ‘contingent’, at its least complex, may refer to something liable to happen. It may also indicate something unforeseen or occurring by chance. It may also suggest something dependent upon an uncertain event or condition (Bogus et al, 1971:468-469).

Among Xhosa people, circumstances that require sacrifices include sickness, misfortunes of various kinds, and death. Contingent events are not necessarily negative, but on the positive side, they grant feelings of gratitude, communion and generosity. Negative contingent events raise awareness about impending disharmony between the living and the dead, and require appropriate sacrifices, that is, propitiatory and supplicatory sacrifices. Positive contingent events necessitate thanksgiving and communion sacrifices. Therefore, this study will discuss the following contingent sacrifices: propitiation sacrifice, diviner initiation sacrifice, supplication sacrifice, communion sacrifice, thanksgiving sacrifice and ostracism sacrifice (Bigalke, 1969:146).

4.3.5.1 Propitiatory sacrifice

According to Xhosa diviners’ diagnoses, sickness and misfortune are consequences of the anger of the ancestors, due to the omission of anticipated behaviours and offences against the community, kinship and ancestors themselves. Bigalke provides examples of diagnoses associated with the causes of various sicknesses and misfortunes, as well as their corresponding sacrificial prescriptions (Bigalke, 1969:146-148). Hammond-Tooke attempts to explain the process leading to propitiatory sacrifices, saying that: “The actual worship (sacrifice) is occasioned, usually by two things. Either a lineage member gets ill, and the diviner diagnoses that it [sickness] is sent by his ancestor, or a particular ancestor appears to a lineage member in a dream. This is always taken as proof that the ancestor is



annoyed or worried, and wishes a ritual [sacrifice] to be performed” (Hammond-Tooke, 1981:26).

Hammond-Tooke’s maxim is supported by the fact that the performance of the recommended sacrificial ritual often appears to yield the desired effect, which is viewed as further corroboration of the link between misfortune and the intervention of the ancestors. Some writers who have conducted field research among Xhosa people reported cases in which a full restoration of health followed a sacrifice ritual. For instance, a certain woman was “ill with pneumonia. A diviner diagnosed that she was being made ill by the old people of her *umzi* [marriage homestead], specifically the mother of her *umzi*]. They killed a beast and gave her the milk of the *umzi*, and she recovered” (Hunter, 1979:200). Another man was sick and could not be cured by a white doctor’s medicine. Then he consulted a diviner and this is what transpired: “*die beeinding was dat hy nagelaat het om vir sy vader die terugbringrite uit te voer. Nadat hy die rite by sy kraal afgehandel het, het hy gesond word*” (meaning: he omitted to perform the returning ritual for his father. After he completed the ritual at his kraal, he became well) (Olivier, 1976:20).

4.3.5.2 Diviner initiation sacrifice

The diviner initiation sacrifice constitutes a typical contingent sacrifice. Among the Xhosa people, becoming a diviner is quite unpredictable. Very few elites may claim the calling for the diviner office, yet even for them, it surprises them overwhelmingly. Given the fact that proceedings involve many inconveniences, it is both surprising and dreadful. Hence, anyone who exhibits signs for the calling as a diviner is referred to as having *inkathazo* or ‘a problem’ (Bettison, 1954:33; Olivier, 1976:51). Although the office of diviner comprises many women (Hammond-Tooke, 1974:348), the call does not discriminate between the sexes, and “could come at any age, even in childhood” (Bettison, 1954:30).

The calling and initiation process for becoming a diviner are marked by “a prolonged sickness” at their inception (Bettison, 1954:30). It is conveyed by dreams and diagnoses by the diviner, and it comprises the following sacrificial rituals:

- *Ibhokhwe yokuvuma ukufà* (Olivier, 1976:53), which normally stands for ‘a goat to accept sickness’. This serves the purpose of telling the ancestors that a specific individual is yielding to their calling to become a diviner. The whole thing is clarified by words that convey the sacrifice: “*Ewe ke, namhlanje maNgwevu, lo mntwana wenu uyakwamkela ukufa. Kufuneka nimqhube ke, nimvulele nimbonise*” (Olivier, 1976:53), that is, “Today you of the Ngwenu clan, this child of yours is yielding to the call; guide her, open for her and show her”.
- *Ibhokhwe yentambo*, that is, ‘a goat for string, for making string from the skin’ (Olivier, 1976:55).
- *Inkomo yokugodusà*, that is, ‘a cow with which to accompany the initiate home’. This marks the conclusion of the initiation, and the graduation of the initiate as a full diviner (Olivier, 1976:55).



4.3.5.3 Supplication sacrifice

Supplication sacrifices are featured as petitions whose purpose starts from "purely material goods to the highest spiritual blessings" (Eliade 1987:549). All Xhosa people's sacrificial rituals comport always a supplication element, which accounts for the absence of many explicit supplication sacrifices. The only notable cases of supplication sacrifices usually include national or tribal sacrifices for "rain-making, the securing of fertility of land and crops, protection of the country against lightening and hail...and the strengthening of the chief's army" (Hammond-Tooke 1974:549). Unfortunately detailed information about these sacrifices is very scarce, and whatever seems accessible appears insufficient and controversial; consequently we have to rely upon reports written about these sacrifices.

4.3.5.4 Communion sacrifice

Communion sacrifices are prompted by a deep need to have a good relationship and harmony with the ancestors. The following sacrifices are inherent to them:

- *Ukupha* (to give) - This ritual is adhered to on behalf of a named, communicating ancestor. The sacrificial ritual is performed either when the homestead head feels he ought to give him something, or when the ancestor requests it in a dream (Bigalke, 1969:80; Olivier, 1976:40). This sacrifice is motivated by a sheer filial intuition to offer a feast on behalf of the named ancestor. The ritual has a supplicating element, as Olivier's recorded statement shows: "*Naku ke mabandla kaPhalo, KaGcaleka, namhlanje kukanje, ndipha uHintsa. Ke ndicela impilo, inzala, umbona neenkomo. Ndimpha laa nkabi ilubhelu*" (Olivier, 1976:40).

This statement suggests that the host of the sacrifice says that he is offering it to his ancestor, and hints at requesting health, fertility, mealies and cattle. When it is performed on behalf of a maternal ancestor, mother or grandmother, the *ukupha* ritual takes the name *ibhokhwe yokupha uMama*, or 'a goat offered to the mother' (Bigalke, 1969:97). The alternative name provided by Bigalke is *ukukhapha unina*, which points to a mortuary ritual (see below). However, this does not appear to be applicable to women after death, since *ukukhapha* and *ukubuyisa* rituals are only performed for men (Olivier, 1976:39).

- *Izilo* (ancestor animal sacrifice). The totemic animal sacrifice contains two forms: low-key sacrificial rituals, during which a goat is slaughtered when the totemic or ancestral animal visits the homestead. It is meant to pacify the ancestor's animals (Olivier, 1976:40). There is also the more appropriate *izilo* sacrificial ritual, which usually takes place following the *ukubuyisa* or mortuary sacrificial ritual discussed below, and the *ukupha* sacrificial ritual (Bigalke, 1969:80; Olivier, 1976:40). A diviner could also recommend its performance (Bigalke, 1969:93).



The *ukubuyisa* and *ukupha* sacrificial rituals are reserved for idiosyncratic ancestors whose names are spelled out, whereas the *izilo* ritual is meant for all lineage ancestors. The *izilo* sacrificial ritual is also associated with the homestead's deceased women diviners (Bigalke, 1969:93). If these conflicting and controversial ascriptions are significant, it would appear as though the Gcaleka and Ndlambe, among whom Bigalke and Olivier conducted their research, present some differences in their understanding of the *izilo* sacrificial ritual. Both writers provide a detailed documentary account of the *izilo* sacrificial process:

- The *ukuvula umzi* (to open a home). This sacrificial ritual is observed when Xhosa people move from one location and establish themselves in a new area and new home. It informs the ancestors of their descendants' new residence, and invites them to join them (Bigalke, 1969:80).
- The *ukutshayela inkundla* (to sweep the area between the huts and the kraal), or to *camagusha*, that is, to propitiate the ancestors, depending either upon the homestead head's wishes or the diviner's recommendation. He slaughters a goat, a substitutionary sacrifice, and pledges to soon perform an adequate and relevant sacrifice (Bigalke, 1969:80). The Gcaleka call this sacrifice *Ukungxengxeza* (Olivier, 1976:38).

4.3.5.5 Thanksgiving sacrifice

Xhosa people's thanksgiving sacrifices are mostly associated with harvest celebrations, journey mercy acknowledgements upon a safe return, and salvation from danger. With regard to harvest celebrations, Pauw says: "After the crop has been harvested a feast is normally held during which a man will thank his ancestors for a good harvest". These "festivities are normally accompanied with beer drinking and every person has his own festival". He also points out that long ago, there was a national harvest festival presided over by the king (Pauw, 1994:108). In her field research among the Pondo people, Hunter accounts for the fact that a thanksgiving sacrifice is offered upon a man's safe return from the mine or from war (Hunter, 1979:251).

4.3.5.6 Ostracism sacrifice

The ostracism sacrificial ritual refers to the dispossession of a person, usually a son, who permanently disregarded and transgressed the kinship norms and expectations. This sacrifice expels him from the kinship group (Laubscher, 1937:84). This study's review of the relevant material reveals that Laubscher is the only writer who provides a considerable documentary account on the ostracism sacrificial ritual. The rationale behind the ostracism sacrifice is that it safeguards kinship cohesion, and reveals the great significance of kinship dynamics. The ex-communication of such an individual conveys to the ancestors, custodians of customs and traditions, the message that these are still being seriously observed by the community (Laubscher, 1937:85). Furthermore, the ostracism sacrifice informs the ancestors about the dissidence occasioned by the rebellious son in the lineage. The sacrificial



ritual consists of the slaughtering of a goat and the cutting of a dog's ear that is "eaten with the goat's meat" (Laubscher, 1937:85). The rationale behind the cutting of a dog's ear and mixing it with the goat's sacrificial meat is not clearly explained. However, the researcher believes that this might be a way of bewitching or placing a curse on the rebellious son.

4.3.5.7 Death sacrifice

Death sacrifices are also known as mortuary rituals (Bigalke, 1969:7; Lamla, 1971:24; Hammond-Tooke, 1974:328). They indicate a transformation "in the individual's status; he or she is transferred from the mundane world to the super mundane" (Lamla, 1974:24). Mortuary sacrifices with which Xhosa people are mostly acquainted include *ukukhapha* (send off), also referred to as *izilo*, and *ukubuyisa* (to bring back) or *ukuguqula* sacrifices (Bigalke, 1969:80; Pauw, 1994:120; Lamla, 1971:23; Olivier, 1976:36-37; Hammond-Tooke, 1974:328). The *ukukhapha* and *ukubuyisa* rituals are performed respectively a few weeks and about a year after funerals.

These rituals simultaneously accompany the deceased to the ancestral world and reintegrate him with his living kinship folk and ancestors (Bigalke, 1969:80; Pauw, 1994:120). These sacrificial rituals are only made for men, except in the case of a woman who dies at a very old age, and for women diviners (Bigalke, 1969:86-87). In both situations, an ox is slaughtered, the only difference being that the first sacrificial situation does not sanction the tasting of the sacrificial portion of meat (*intsonyama*), while it is part of the latter. Both ritual processes are accounted for in a detailed fashion (Bigalke, 1969:81-86; Olivier, 1976:36-39).

4.3.5.8 Important solemn sacrifice

Olivier suggests that of all the sacrificial rituals described above, *ukubuyisa*, *ukupha*, and *izilo* constitute the most significant ones among the Gcaleka people (Olivier, 1976:26). Their distinctive features are listed as follows:

- Their attendance is compulsory for all lineage members, without exceptions. Other sacrificial rituals, however, offer some attendance alternatives.
- The ritual official is the lineage head, unlike in other rituals, where he is the segment or househead.
- The officiating lineage head and daughters-in-law wear ceremonial garments.
- The sacrificial rituals involve ceremonial dancing, as well as the *izinqulo* or invocation of clan ancestors. An ox is always the sacrificial victim.
- The *utywala bokushwama* or beer for ritual tasting. The participants enjoy it, unlike in other sacrificial rituals, whereby only the sacrificial meat *intsonyama* is ritually tasted. This ritual's duration is longer than that of other sacrificial rituals (Olivier, 1976:26-27, 37-43).

The abovementioned sacrificial rituals are the ones that are specifically referred to as *idini* or 'sacrifice' in Xhosa religious terminology. Olivier reports that his respondents made a clear distinction between sacrifice proper and



other ritual killings. “Die volgende rites is offers (*amadini*): die terugbringte, die offer vir ‘n vader en die offer vir die vooroudiere” (meaning: the following rituals are sacrifices: the bringing back, the sacrifice for a father and the sacrifice for ancestors) (Olivier, 1976:26). Hammond-Tooke singles out other slaughtering from *idini* slaughtering as *amasiko* (custom), but he remarks that *amasiko*, as well as ritual killings, implicitly involves the ancestors. This is proved by the fact that “at all *amasiko* killings there are always some form of words, addressed ostensibly to the subject of the ritual, or to those present, but intended for the ears of *izinyanya* or ancestors” (Hammond-Tooke, 1978:146).

Bigalke holds that *ukubuyisa* is “the most important of all” sacrifices. His documentary account concerning *ukupha* and *izilo* sacrificial rituals among the Ndlambe people bears strong similarities with *ukubuyisa* sacrificial rituals. From this, it can be inferred that the abovementioned sacrificial rituals are equally important, since they present overlapping features with other sacrificial rituals (Bigalke, 1969:114-123).

4.4 ELEMENTS OF XHOSA SACRIFICE

The discussion of the elements of Xhosa sacrifice can be dealt with under two separate headings: the material and the ritual elements.

4.4.1 Material elements

The material elements of Xhosa people’s sacrifices include the lineage head and lineage members, the sacrificial victim, beer and *ubulavu* (home medicine), the spear, and the kraal as sacrificial altar. “A lineage is a group of people who can trace their descent from a common ancestor” (Hammond-Tooke, 1981:25). Deceased lineage members up to the fifth generation become the ancestors of all living lineage members. The reason is that as the lineage expands, the lineage members beyond five generations are obliterated. Therefore, lineage members must congregate for compulsory sacrificial rituals, as well as for optional ones, because they subsume the most significant elements of sacrifice (Hammond-Tooke, 1981:25). Sacrificial ritual officials, as integrated sacrificial elements, officiate for the entire lineage constituency and for the lineage segmentary constituency respectively.

Oxen and goats constitute the next crucial material elements in the Xhosa sacrificial system, and the type of sacrifice will always dictate the corresponding type of sacrificial victim, either an ox or a goat. The sheep is excluded because “it does not cry out when it is killed and the ancestors will not then be called” (Hammond-Tooke, 1981:26). However, the Nguni and Fingo people in Xhosa Mfengu utilise sheep as a sacrificial victim, instead of goats. Diviner and rain-making initiation sacrifices require a black cow (Lamla, 1971:7; Olivier, 1976:55). Amazingly enough, even when the sacrificial victim is not a cow, it is spoken of as one (Bigalke, 1969:129).

The belief that Xhosa people’s preference for the cow as an appropriate sacrificial victim would be very remote from its deification, as the Indian



people do, but is rather associated with the fact that a cow serves as a material bond between the living and those who have gone before, or the living dead. The fact that cows are objects of inheritance from one generation to the next, symbolically assures continuity between the living and the living dead. Consequently, even acquired cows are considered as gifts bestowed by the ancestors, which emphasises the many requests for cows during Xhosa people's sacrificial rituals. This highlights why Xhosa people reserve special treatment and great affection for cows - they can never be separate from them because they view them as precious and adequate material offerings for the ancestors (Shaw, 1974:94).

The special sacrificial killing spear initiates the process of slaughtering the sacrificial victim by prodding it. Afterwards, other appropriate equipment completes the task. Each Xhosa homestead owns this type of spear for use in appropriate sacrifices. Other secondary, but also inexorable physical elements include beer, *ubulavu* or *iyeza* and *lasekhaya* (herbal mixture type of home medicine). These two are also instrumental in fostering a communion with ancestors outside the sacrificial setting (Olivier, 1976:21-22).

Some writers' investigations suggest that beer "*is 'n noodsaaklike element by sommige slagrites*" (meaning: it is an essential element of some sacrifices) (Olivier, 1976:121). Nevertheless, beer is often used in sacrificial rituals where it had been previously omitted, such as in *ukukhapha* and *ukubingelela* sacrificial rituals (Bigalke, 1969:112; Olivier, 1976:121). With regard to *ubulawu* (mixed herbal medicine), Olivier observes that the Gcaleka and Ndlambe Xhosa sub-groups use it in the *izilo* and diviner initiation sacrificial rituals, but Bigalke suggests that it is rather used in *ukuguqula*, *ukupha*, *izilo*, *ukuvula umzi*, *intambo* and *ukuttshayelesa* sacrificial rituals (Olivier, 1976:50; Bigalke, 1969:127).

The last material element in the Xhosa sacrificial system is the kraal, which is the usual place for the ancestors' abode. The above elements therefore make up the physical dimension of the Xhosa sacrificial system. There is also the fire on which the sacrificial portion of meat is roasted, special tree branches, that is, *umuthathi* and *indwaba* (kinds of trees), used for putting the meat on the fire. These merely have utility purposes, and do not have any sacrificial significance (Bigalke, 1969:134; Olivier, 1976:23).

4.4.2 Ritual elements

The most remarkable ritual elements in Xhosa sacrificial rituals can be listed as the following: dancing, *ubulawu* application, clarification of sacrificial purpose, *ukunqula* or invocation of the ancestors, prodding of the sacrificial victim with the official sacrificial spear (*umkhonto wekhaya*), and the roasting of the suet (*intlukuhla*), roasting and tasting of the sacrificial portion of meat (*ukushwama intsonyama*), ritual tasting of beer (*utywala bokushwama*), and the burning of bones symbolising the conclusion of a sacrificial ritual (Olivier, 1976:42).



4.4.3 Dancing

The dancing performed by the entire lineage during rhythmical and orthodox sacrificial rituals goes hand in hand with emotional singing and clapping of hands, while the lineage membership moves in the direction of the kraal. Though the writers' documentary account of dancing does not provide one with any clue as to its sacrificial significance (Olivier 1976: 42), it is the researcher's view that one could compare it to the High Mass orthodox procession.

4.4.3.1 Ubulawu application

The *ubulawu* medicine's application during Xhosa people's orthodox sacrificial rituals functions in the following manner: during *the izilo* sacrificial ritual, the Gcaleka lineage members use it to wash the whole body: "*Hierna gaan hulle die beeskraal binne en was die hele liggaam met –ubulawu-medisyne, mans aan die linkerkant en die vrouens aan die regterkant*" (meaning: after this, they go into the kraal and wash the entire body with ubulawu medicine, men on the left side and women on the right) (Olivier, 1976:42). During the diviner initiation sacrificial ritual, the *ubulawu* is used to wash the body of the *ignoramus* diviner (Olivier, 1976:45). Its serviceability among the Ndlambe remains uncertain, although it is acknowledged to be more inherent to them. Bigalke observes that the *ubulawu* is usually borne by the processing people, who deposit it in some place near the kraal. Then, at the *ukupha* sacrificial ritual, it is found "thrown out the billycan onto the manure" (Bigalke, 1969:120).

4.4.3.2 The ukunqula ritual's meaning and purpose

The ukunqula involves some invocatory petitions. During Xhosa people's propitiatory sacrifices, it refers to a request that the supplicants address to the ancestors, petitioning for deliverance from misfortune. It also contains health, well-being and fertility supplications respectively, in connection with initiation and communion sacrificial rituals. The *ukunqula* or invocation of the ancestors happens in all types of sacrificial rituals, because people believe that they can not miss the boat, even with certain sacrificial rituals that are not intended for them (Hammond-Tooke, 1974:329).

In this regard, Bigalke observes that the purpose of sacrificial rituals is reflected in all types of sacrifices. Therefore, because of their anticipated participation in and presence at all sacrificial rituals, clan names have been invented, by which all lineage ancestors and beyond are generally addressed. For instance, the names *Matshawe*, *Mabamba*, *Mangwevu* etc are meant to accomplish that same objective (Bigalke, 1969:130). Ancestors' invocations through clan names are found in all sacrificial rituals that Bigalke has studied (Bigalke, 1969: 81-98). This also applies to some of the Gcaleka sacrificial rituals that Olivier analyses (Olivier, 1976:30, 33, 37-38, 41, 43, 45).

With orthodox sacrificial rituals such as *ukubuyisa*, *ukupha* and *izilo*, invocations are more focused on specific lineage ancestors for whom the



sacrificial rituals have been performed, and on other ancestors, because these types of sacrifices are intended for 'lineage solidarity' (Bigalke, 1969:130). While these invocations are being made, certain ancestors are called out and briefed about the purpose of the sacrificial ritual. There are no special formulae for communicating with the ancestors during these invocations: "the language is that of everyday speech" (Hunter, 1979:247).

Invocations are characterised by spontaneous naming of the ancestors. However, Bigalke remarks that, among the Ndlambe people, "the constitution of the congregation determined the ancestors to be named" (Bigalke, 1969:131). The petitioning worshipper looks at the number of lineage members present, and then the ancestors who would "combine them all" (Bigalke, 1969: 131). His genealogical knowledge and eloquence constitute another determining factor of the lineage ancestors in the invocation (Bigalke, 1969:131). This does not matter "*omdat die name wat aangeroop word al die ander name insluit*" (meaning: because the names that are called already include the other names) (Olivier, 1976:48).

For instance, the invocation hereafter recorded from a Pondo sacrificial ritual is also true for the Xhosa people: "Here is your beast, here is the thing you wish (people) of Klwo, Ntsikanyane, Nogemane, and Gwadiso" (Hunter, 1976:247). Olivier gives a lengthier account in connection with the invocation of ancestors through naming, which he recorded from the Gcaleka people: "*Nali ke, mabandla kaZulu, kaCikolo, KaTshangisa, kaSimuka, kaKwethane, nawo kaTywayi, nawo kaRengqo, nanku esitsho ke umzukulwana wakho looingubomoi utsho*" ,which means "Listen hoisted of Zulu, Cikolo, etc. Here is your grandchild as he sits with that red ox called *Bomoyi*" (Olivier, 1976:41).

So far, this study has attempted to account for the *ukunqula* as being analogous to an invocation, with the significance of calling on higher powers for succour and all kinds of intervention. This has been motivated by the fact that most writers, mainly African theologians, as well as a few anthropologists, associate this meaning with *ukunqula*. However, there is also a belief that *ukunqula* is not equivalent to invocation, but rather to worship in the sense of contemplation, adoration and total commitment and devotion to a higher being or symbol (Hammond-Tooke, 1978:134-135).

Given the fact that Hammond–Tooke stands out as the modern proponent of the abovementioned view, this study will confront him with the opposite view, but before that, it is essential to concentrate on his argument. Hammond-Tooke contends that it is appropriate to consider ancestors as being worshipped, because they meet all the criteria that qualify them as a being or entity, and as an object of worship. However, he agrees that ancestors lack numinousness, a quality that conveys a sense of awe and infinity, as Rudolf Otto suggests. However, Hammond-Tooke doubts the validity of such an allegation in terms of the concept of worship. Then, he concludes that: "It would seem unlikely, on the face of it, for the idea of the ineffably holy, with all its implications of power and majesty, to be necessarily part of all religious concepts, especially in egalitarian societies. It is undoubtedly part of the so-



called world religions, on which Otto founds his analysis” (Hammond-Tooke, 1978:137).

Furthermore, Hammond-Tooke contends that the dignity with which rituals are conducted and the choice of words reveal that they are “pregnant with reverence (and numinous?)” in ministrations to the ancestors who are objects of worship (Hammond-Tooke, 1978:141). He stresses Xhosa sacrificial rituals’ descriptive words such as *ukunqula* and *camagusha*, which have a worshipping connotation. In concluding his argument, Hammond-Tooke asks the following question: “Can the South African Bantu, especially Zulu and Cape Nguni, be said to worship their ancestors?”, to which he replies: “I conclude that they can” (Hammond-Tooke, 1978:147). The reasonable motivations involve: “Examination of the invocations and their accompanying ritual acts has brought out important aspects of the worship. In all, there is a formal distancing of the shades from the living” (Hammond-Tooke, 1978:147).

In agreeing with those who hold a positive view, this study would like to refer to what was pointed out earlier in this dissertation in connection with the nature of invocation among Xhosa people, namely the fact that their language is that of everyday speech. Noticeably, the dignity of invocation suggested by Hammond-Tooke, and from which he draws his conclusion that ancestors are worshipped, is taken from the Zulu context. However, he fails to provide even one example from the Xhosa people, with which a similar conclusion could be reached. It goes without saying that the lack of similar instances among the Xhosa would only sanction a different type of conclusion. One can say that even the conclusion he draws in relation to the invocation of their ancestors is far from being definite, because he himself admits that the one example he quoted referred “to a ritual performed at a time of serious illness and thus invested with a highly-charged emotional element”. He also admits that perhaps “not all ‘ritual’ is performed with such a concentrated attention of piety” (Hammond-Tooke, 1978:142).

One can attempt to recall the observation made earlier concerning ancestors’ ontology, which deals with the authentication of their nature as similar to that of human beings. In this regard, Bettison remarks that ancestral spirits have the same characteristics as the living, essentially human, without any attribute that would prompt or propel man to worship or adore them. Ancestors did not derive their abilities from ethical or moral perfection, but simply through consanguinity and death. Bettison emphasises the fact, that among the Southern Bantu people, ancestors are not “worthy of man’s worship and adoration” (Bettison, 1954:21).

His conclusion is similar to that of a host of African Christian writers such as Mbiti (1969:8-9), Oladimeji (1980:19-20) and Lungu (1982:10-12). It is the researcher’s view that the above argument rules out the allegation that Xhosa people worship their ancestors. Rather, while the invocations indicate allegiance, they do not propound such a great metaphysical difference between ancestors and the living. However, the Bible does not share this conviction. O’ Donovan says that “ancestors are a subterfuge by the devil; elaborated relationships expressed through various sacrificial rituals are anti



biblical” (O’ Donovan, 1996:218-228). This will be looked at in more detail later in this dissertation.

4.4.3.3 Prodding with the sacrificial spear

Prior to the prodding of the sacrificial victim with the *umkhonto wekhaya*, a sacrificial spear, the sacrificial animal is made to lie down on its left side in order to facilitate the cutting of *intsonyama* from its right side (Olivier, 1976:23). Afterwards, the sacrificial spear is transposed “in the form of an eight figure through the legs of the animal” (Pauw, 1994:120). Studies conducted in Gcaleka on sacrificial performances by the Gcaleka Xhosa, affirm that the purpose of prodding the ritual animal is to “bless” (*sikelela*) it (McAllister, 1997:291). Kuckertz, who conducted his research among the Pondo, argues that the act has to do with the “consecration of the animal” meant to be offered to the ancestors (Kuckertz, 1990:238). No explanation is provided as to why this sacrificial animal is consecrated in this fashion. McAllister’s respondents suggested that the practice was a custom inherited from the astronomical, distant past, without any explanation (McAllister, 1997:291).

The prodding of the animal victim comes next. It is prodded in the stomach with the tip of the sacrificial spear, prompting its bellowing. Xhosa people do not attribute this bellowing to plausible pain that the sacrificial victim might be experiencing, as the Society of Prevention of Cruelty against Animals (SPCA) would, but as a demonstration that the sacrifice has been acquiesced, and is “jubilantly greeted by the onlookers”, with the cry “*Camagu*” (Bigalke, 1969:130). It is thus “not the killing but the bellowing of the animal that is an essential element, because the cry is the medium through which the praises spoken by the ritual elders” are transmitted and approved by the ancestors (Kuckertz, 1990:239).

Camagu means to “be propitiated” (Bigalke, 1969:23); “*Wees gepaa*” (be appeased) (Olivier, 1976:23); “blessings” (Hammond-Tooke, 1978:144); and “Give us your good will” (Pauw, 1994:21). Some writers provide the meaning of the word, instead of its literal translation. Laubscher considers it as “an appeal to *Izinyanya* (ancestors) for blessing and protection” (Laubscher, 1937:67), while Olivier understands it as a calling associated with intense thankfulness (Olivier, 1976:23).

4.4.3.4 Cutting of the suet (Intlukuhla)

This ritual consists of cutting a piece from the stomach-protruding fat to be consumed by fire. The ritual is intended to create an attracting smell for the ancestors (Pauw, 1994:120). In other words, this might be understood as an offering to the ancestors. Interestingly enough, of all the writers, only two, namely Soga (1931:146-147) and Pauw (1994:120) have accounted for this ritual. Soga accounts for it, and associates a sacrificial significance with it. While referring to the sacrificial tasting of *intsonyama*, which most writers consider as step number one in a sacrificial ritual, next to the prodding of the



sacrificial animal, he ranks it as “the second ceremonial step in the sacrificial ritual, the first having already been performed” (Soga, 1931:147).

4.4.3.5 Sacrificial tasting: *intsonyama* and beer

The tasting of sacrificial meat (*ukushwama*), as well as the tasting of beer (*utywala bokushwama*) by all lineage members, occurs during solemn sacrificial rituals. The sacrificial portion of meat (*intsonyama*) is taken from the sacrificial victim’s right shoulder, roasted without salt and ritually tasted by all the lineage members and by the beneficiary of the sacrifice, in the case of birth, initiation and contingent sacrificial rituals (Bigalke, 1969:133; Olivier, 1976:23). Tasting rituals are not part of *ukukhapha* and *inkobe* sacrificial rituals, as mentioned earlier on (Bigalke, 1969:133).

It is unfortunate that the literature consulted did not clarify the idea behind *ukushwama*. Firstly, the purpose of cutting the sacrificial portion from the sacrificial victim’s right shoulder remains a mystery. The only plausible response that Olivier obtained from his informants was that the shoulder was selected because it was considered to be the best part of the carcass. However, this allegation appears to be more an ad hoc opinion than a matter of fact (Olivier, 1976:24). Laubscher only sheds a shadowy light on this matter. He only refers to the birth sacrificial ritual. He observes that meat from the sacrificial victim is given to the mother at the *umbingelero* sacrificial ritual, which “indicates that the child is born from the seed of the right-hand hut facing the rising sun, and is hence not illegitimate since the right-hand hut is the hut of the head of the kraal. It further impresses this fact upon the ancestors to show that tribal morality and customs have not been violated and that therefore the child, being on the right line of descent, is entitled to their protection and blessings” (Laubscher, 1937:74).

Secondly, the rationale behind *ukushwama* can only be warged by associating it with the sacrificial meal shared between the offerer and the sacrificial recipient. Hence, we speak of the communion meal (Eliade, 1987:551). By relating the *ukushwama* tasting sacrificial ritual to the general principles of sacrificial rituals, it can be viewed as a communion meal between the living lineage members and their ancestors. In fact, when one accounts for this among the Nguni people, “In all sacrifices it is commensalism which has been expressed: a communion meal which symbolically unites the living and the dead” (Hammond-Tooke, 1978:353). It is this study’s view that such speculation is far from getting to the point.

4.4.3.6 Burning of the bones

The gathering and burning of bones when the sacrificial ritual has been completed points to the significance of preventing the removal of any part of the sacrifice from the homestead where the sacrificial ritual was performed. The rationale behind this was to discourage anyone from taking parts of the sacrifice for sorcery purposes. It is unclear how sorcery would harness an already made, and probably accepted, sacrifice. The utilisation of the sacrificial remains by witches would create a reversal in the sacrificial effects,



such that a person healed through sacrificial rituals might relapse back into sickness and ancestors' blessings turn into curses, epidemics or other natural calamities. Before approaching the theme of sacrifice among a few other tribes of South Africa, as well as sacrifice among modern Xhosa people, a quick glance at the nature of Xhosa sacrifice is imperative (Sipuka, 2000:161).

4.5 THE NATURE OF XHOSA SACRIFICE

After surveying the Xhosa people's sacrificial elements, there is now a need to draw a few conclusions concerning its nature. This will specifically describe their sacrificial rituals' purpose, essence, objectives and mood.

4.5.1 Purpose

The purpose of Xhosa sacrificial rituals is to maintain solidarity and to cement the undisturbed bond of unity, as well as to enforce behavioural norms among lineage members. This explains why the introduction of new members is done through initiation rituals, dead members remembered through death rituals, and detected disharmony among lineage members dealt with through contingent rituals. Xhosa sacrificial rituals' emphasis on lineage solidarity is ostentatiously interpreted by the fact that, while some sacrificial rituals' attendance remains open to all, others are restricted to, and compulsory for, lineage members (Bigalke, 1969:104).

Among the Ndlambe people "there is a tacit understanding that rituals, unlike *imigidi* (initiation rituals) are not absolute public occasions". For rituals that are open to the public, non-lineage attendants are integrated into the lineage. The proof of this is that all outsiders attending open sacrificial rituals are called by the hosting house's clan name, irrespective of the fact that they do not share that particular clan name. Xhosa people's sacrificial rituals therefore constitute a clan and lineage affair (Bigalke, 1969:104).

4.5.2 Essence

Concerning sacrificial ritual performance itself, two elements constitute the very essence of sacrifice, invocation (*ukunqula*) and the sacrificial victim's bellowing. The *ukunqula* constitutes a punctilious address to the ancestors about the purpose of the sacrifice to be offered. The bellowing typifies the ancestors' voice in accepting the sacrifice, and the assurance that the effect for which the sacrifice was offered was granted. For this reason, the bellowing is greeted with jubilation: "*Camag*". While conducting his field research, Bigalke observed that participants in a certain sacrifice were greatly disappointed when the sacrificial victim failed to bellow (Bigalke, 1969:104). After four desperate attempts to cause the animal to bellow, Bigalke remarks: "He went back to the ox. He tried hitting it on the stomach with the spear and stabbed again with no result. Bystanders said "*Ayivumi*" (it does not agree). Hala, looking tense, tried again. "Speak, speak", shouted the man...." Hala's brother instructed the abafana to catch the beast again...Bystanders called to him to speak from between the gateposts. He went and stood there and said,



'what is it *Bamba*'? We know the ritual we are performing..." (Bigalke, 1969:104).

This ritual example stresses once more the fact that the sacrificial animal's bellowing is the most crucial, not being slaughtered, because only its bellowing symbolically represents the ancestors' response to the lineage head's invocation. Generally, in sacrificial considerations, blood has also been essentially upheld as crucial to sacrificial processes (Eliade, 1987:546). However, the information at hand does not indicate an intense sacrificial use of blood in Xhosa sacrificial rituals. There is nothing such as pouring it out or sprinkling it. Soga observes that it is put in the sack's hut overnight, then the next day it is cooked for the dogs (Soga, 1931:147). Pauw advances that it is cooked the same day "for male relatives and old men" (Pauw, 1994:111).

4.5.3 Objectives and Moods

This lack of significance of blood renders invocations (*inziqulo*) and the sacrificial animal's bellowing as the essence of Xhosa sacrificial rituals. In normal circumstances, the general objectives of sacrifice include consumption, exchange and substitution (Chidester, 1992:12). Of these three, a Xhosa sacrificial ritual is mainly characterised by the first two objectives: that is, the sacrificial focus is on consumption, since this is indicated in the sacrificial introductory speeches, particularly the "*ukupha*" sacrificial ritual, in which hints of offering ancestors something to eat are given. This is also clarified when the lineage members participate in the "*intsonyama*" living, and when the remainder of the meat is "left in the house overnight so that the ancestor spirits may take their share". It also becomes clearer when the meat is boiled and distributed among all the participants (Pauw, 1994:121).

Exchange as a sacrificial ritual objective conveys the meaning that something valuable is granted to the sacrificial recipient in anticipation of some favours in return (Chidester, 1992:12). When this element is dominant in the sacrificial ritual, the sacrifice is categorised as a bribe sacrifice (Henninger, 1987:550). The element of exchange is very obvious in Xhosa sacrificial rituals. When a sacrificial offering is intended for the ancestors, it is simultaneously accompanied by a request or supplication. Olivier's documentary account reveals this: "*Naku ke mabandla kaPhalo, kaGcaleka, namhlanje kungakanje, ndipha uHintsa Ke ndicela impilo, inzala, umbona nenkomo Ndimpha laa nkabi ilubhelu*" (Olivier, 1976:40).

In the above case, the worshipper offers a cow to his ancestors, asking for health, fertility, mealies and cows. Apparently, though this statement sounds like an exchange, it naturally emphasises the mutual obligation between the living and the living dead. The living people show their allegiance towards the ancestors, who in turn are expected to support them with living supplies and material security. In the case of sacrificial objectives, substitution refers to the transference of the offerer's sin and punishment to the sacrificial victim. However, this might not be evident among Xhosa people's understanding of the sacrifice. The idea of personal sin denies any probable legitimacy of substitution here, because personal offences are dealt with by other



disciplinary measures. In Xhosa sacrificial practices, sacrificial rituals exclusively deal with the “sins” of omission regarding obligations towards the lineage (Olivier, 1976:40).

All Xhosa sacrificial rituals are relaxed and festive, except for the *ukupha*. The relaxed and festive nature of Xhosa sacrificial rituals is particularly true of initiation sacrifices. After elementary performances are completed, people sit according to gender and age, and share tobacco and conversation. This time is normally interrupted by sporadic announcements with regard to the distribution of meat and beer. Thus, Xhosa sacrificial rituals continue with chatting, teasing, sharing of meat, beer and tobacco, until the end of the ceremony (Olivier, 1976:40).

4.6 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter was to undertake an analysis of sacrificial rituals as understood and performed in the Xhosa traditional cultural context. This timid attempt has not fully achieved this task, due to the scarcity of early scholarly records on Xhosa sacrificial rituals. Therefore, this study has relied on current documented reports that, to a large extent, account for Xhosa sacrificial rituals after the Xhosa people had come into contact with Christianity and colonialism. Thus, the integrity of these records cannot be guaranteed. However, this study has attempted to focus on elements that have been considered to be traditional by most writers.

While investigating this topic, the researcher came across Rev. Sipuka’s allegation that most research on Xhosa traditional practices and understanding of sacrificial rituals has been undertaken by white anthropologists and people who are entrenched in the Western culture. He states: “while this might be prolific on the side of objectivity considering the fact that they were investigating from an outsider’s point of view, this presents also some disadvantages we are not allowed to overlook; namely prejudices and biases as well as the lack of insight into the issues they described and analysed”. Although terms such as “natives, kaffirs, pagans and savages are becoming obsolete in connection with referring to African people in current publications, you still discover some disparaging and prejudicial reports concerning certain elements of indigenous African culture” (Sipuka, 2000:165). Therefore, being cognisant of the fact that this only constitutes an observation and not an integrated part of this dissertation, Rev. Sipuka endeavoured to illustrate his views using only two examples, which will shortly be responded to.

In attempting to explain kinship/lineage dynamics among Bantu people, for instance, Hammond-Tooke says: “safeguarding kin group interest is greater than the value of truth-telling as an absolute”, and he concludes: “This has led to the widespread Bantu mandicity” (Hammond-Tooke, 1974:360). The researcher truly finds this comment a bit strange, since the need to safeguard kin group interests, sometimes at the expense of truth, is a universal sociological fact applicable to all groups. Tischeler, a sociologist, reports



about a group behaviour study conducted in America, which revealed that individuals were “willing to give incorrect answers in order not to appear out of step with the judgement of the other group” (Tischeler, 1990:167).

Obviously, this is common to both small and large groups, that is, governments, institutions and churches. If this is true, why should the mendacious effect of kin groups be thought to be widespread only among the Bantu people? The logical reply to this question would be that kin group interests have perhaps different effects for different groups. For the Bantu, as it is alleged, it has the effect of mendacity, while for Europeans it has perhaps the effect of veracity. With such a conclusion, therefore, one still needs to clarify why the same thing has a different effect on different groups, if people are basically the same. Could this be attributed to the fact that Bantu people are maybe not the same as other groups? Could it be associated with the fact that one group is primitive and the other modern and Westernised? Or that one is savage or barbaric and the other civilised? Or that one is black and the other is white? Or that one is pagan and the other Christian? This is important to know.

The second instance refers to a writer who attempted to explain the utilisation of cattle among the traditional Bantu people. In this regard, she says: “Cattle are also the means of obtaining sexual satisfaction, since a legal marriage cannot take place without the passage of cattle” (Shaw, 1974:94). If Lamla’s description of traditional marriage as an alliance between two lineages (Lamla, 1971:20) is significant here, then Shaw’s interpretation of the passage of cattle as a licence to sexual satisfaction would be a fragrant distortion of the Bantu understanding of marriage. It is equivalent to saying that the dowry brought by the bride to her husband in Western culture constitutes her licence to have sex with him.

It is the researcher’s view that, unlike what Sipuka says and the types of questions he asks, there is a reversible cultural shock from both external and internal agents, and only the perceptions of either side trigger the detonation. Furthermore, all criticism is not bad, if only people could be more reflective about this and consider it as an opportunity for self-introspection and learning, and ultimately for correction. For example, the researcher recently visited one black preacher from the Free State. In his 1 metre high and 2 x 1.5 metre lodge, he enjoyed a shocking way of life. Everything was dirty and mixed up. Without a spare cup, he washed the one and only cup that he had, without soap - to cut it short, it was repulsive because of his legendary dirtiness.

It is possible that he may have interpreted this profound shock as boastfulness and disparaging behaviour, because the researcher truly did experience repugnance and great unease in partaking of whatever he laid before him. This inferiority complex and mother-to-African reactionism between African people is greatly magnified when it comes to outsiders, and blinded self-defensive reactionists can only see bias, disparagement and dehumanization, even if there might be something positive and advantageous. After having said this, Rev. Sipuka, however, can rejoice in the fact that not all white anthropologists have the same kind of prejudice. For instance,



Willoughby (1928) was one of the Western anthropologists who described Bantu culture with sympathy and insight. This reveals the need for insider anthropologists who are steeped in Bantu culture. The inquiry concerning sacrificial rituals among Xhosa people has established that these rituals were both practised and conceptualised. The linguistic analysis of Xhosa words for sacrifice revealed that the traditional Xhosa did not only perform sacrificial rituals, but also knew what they were doing. Anthropologists and researchers from various disciplines and interests have enlightened the facts and meanings of Xhosa sacrificial rituals (Sipuka, 2000:166-167).

However, people still differ. Consequently, this study has dared to give some suggestions as to what might help towards an intelligible picture of the existence of the Xhosa sacrificial system. For instance, the researcher has suggested that Xhosa sacrifices may be categorised into birth, initiation, contingent, death and solemn sacrifices. The investigation into Xhosa sacrificial rituals in this chapter has revealed the fact that there are numerous rituals that include the slaughtering of animals, some serving as provisions for the feast, as in the case of boys and girls' initiation rites, as well as marriage. Therefore, contrary to what some writers would choose to believe, not every killing should be regarded as a sacrifice.

This investigation has further revealed the fact that while ancestors are involved in their descendants' everyday lives and are consequently part of every ritual, not all rituals involving the slaughtering of animals are intended for them. This makes it easy for us to distinguish between ritual slaughtering that can truly be termed as sacrifice (*idini*), and those that can be called customs (*amasiko*). The conclusion that can be drawn concerning the analysis of the types of Xhosa sacrificial rituals discussed here is that *ukubuyisa*, *ukupha* and *izilo* constitute rituals that could be properly considered to be sacrifices, while the rest can only be viewed as customs (Sipuka, 2000:167). This distinction is critical for the purposes of this study, which focuses on showing how the communicative power of blood sacrifices is viewed in the Old Testament, African traditional religion (South Africa and elsewhere in Africa), the New Testament (Epistle to the Hebrews), as well as in the Christian Church and African traditional religion (South Africa, Xhosas Zulus, Tsongas etc.) today. The analysis of Xhosa sacrificial elements has revealed that it is quite difficult to be conclusive about what Xhosa sacrifices are composed of. Among various reasons in support of this, are the following:

- People themselves, among whom research has been conducted. They have no tangible explanation for some of the rituals and elements associated with sacrifices.
- When Bigalke, for instance, inquired among the Ndlambe people about the utilisation of *ubulawu* in sacrificial rituals, the response he got from them was: "*Savela kunjalo*" (Bigalke, 1969:128), meaning: "when we were born it was like that". Others' explanations were just ad hoc opinions without any objective grounds for verification.

Furthermore, the utilisation of elements associated with sacrifices differs from one lineage group to the other, from one settlement to the other, from one Xhosa house to the other, and from one Nguni group to the other. For



instance, it has been pointed out in this chapter that the utilisation of *ubulawu* is more widespread among the Ndlambe than the Gcaleka people.

- The third reason lies with researchers. Some of them overlook sacrificial elements noted by their fellow researchers. A respectable number of them keep silent on the burning of the suet (*Intlukuhla*), including Bigalke and Olivier, who specifically conducted research on the two Xhosa subgroups. Only two offered their documented accounts in this regard. Moreover, some emphasise elements that others consider to be insignificant. As an example, Pauw is the only writer who attaches sacrificial significance to the sprinkling of the animal's stomach contents in the kraal. The others only mention it (Sipika, 2000:168).

In some instances, where clarity with regard to the meaning of particular rituals, as well as elements associated with sacrifice, is absent, the researcher has allowed himself to speculate as to possible meanings. Those speculations have been deduced from either the general understanding of sacrifice, or from a similar ritual explanation from another context. For instance, Hunter and Kuckertz were consulted for insight into similar Xhosa sacrificial rituals that they explained in the Pondo context (Sipika, 2000:168). Undoubtedly, such speculation would contribute to an intelligible representation of Xhosa sacrifice if it is correct. Otherwise, the researcher would be happy to be informed as to the relevant results.

The *ukunqula* element created a controversy as to whether ancestors are invoked or worshipped. The presentation of the arguments on both sides led to the conclusion that the argument that *ukunqula* is different to an act of worship proved to carry more weight than the opposing argument. Although ancestors are considered to be superior in power, and fill the living with allegiance, they basically share their spiritual essence with the living. At death, their spirit undergoes a certain metamorphosis from *umphfumlo* to *umoya*. The basis of their authoritative superiority does not come from their metaphysical status, which distinguishes them from the living, as is the case with the Judeo-Christian God. It is rather obtained from the customary respect for elders, and the elders' obligation to assume the well-being of their offspring. This respect due to the ancestors constitutes in no way an act of worship. It is only intended to preserve the tribal traditions, of which the ancestors are custodians (Sipika, 2000:169). However, this study is of the view that there are divided opinions in this regard, as will be elucidated later on in this dissertation.

The conclusion concerning the nature of Xhosa sacrificial rituals can be drawn with reference to its purpose, essence, objective and mood. Xhosa sacrificial rituals strengthen lineage solidarity - otherwise, without this lineage, Xhosa sacrificial rituals become non-existent and meaningless. In other words, Xhosa sacrificial rituals have value for a person who values lineage. They essentially consist of communicating with the ancestors through invocation and the bellowing of the sacrificial animal, which is perceived as the ancestors' positive response to the sacrifice (Sipika, 2000:169).



Given the fact that Xhosa sacrificial rituals are intended to sustain lineage solidarity, their major objectives cannot be other than consumption and exchange. Consumption refers to the communion sharing between the living and the living dead. Expectation emphasises the obtaining of favours in exchange for a sacrifice offered, which instills a sense of mutual obligation between the partakers. A feeling of being in communion, and a sense of mutual support, feature in Xhosa people's sacrificial rituals, as evidenced by the festive and joyous mood that permeates them (Spika, 2000:169).

The discussion on Xhosa sacrificial rituals in this chapter has revealed the fact that the understanding and practice of sacrificial rituals among Xhosa people has been widely, if not entirely, moulded by their cosmological views, as well as their social structures. A logical expectation would sanction change in the concept and practice of sacrifice, as the above elements change and develop. Before approaching the chapter on how Christianity and modernity might have influenced Xhosa people's traditional sacrificial rituals' performance and their understanding of sacrifice, a quick glance at one or two other South African tribal sacrificial rituals, namely the Zulu and Tsonga people's traditional thoughts on sacrificial rituals, seems to be imperative, just for the sake of comparison and generalisation of the research findings. One can now ask oneself: what is communicative power of blood sacrifices among the Zulus and Tsongas, and what activities and objects are involved in them?



CHAPTER FIVE: ZULU AND TSONGA PEOPLES' SACRIFICIAL IDEAS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Before approaching the chapter on Xhosa sacrificial rituals in the modern context, this study has decided to very briefly look at the Zulu and Tsonga peoples' sacrificial ideas, in order to show how the communicative power of sacrifices is viewed among these two tribes, and to facilitate the generalisation of this investigation to other Bantu tribes in South Africa, especially with regard to the effects of blood sacrifices. In this section, the researcher is not interested in going into too much detail regarding Zulu and Tsonga sacrificial ideas, but only wants to mention them for the sake of comparison. Therefore, this study will first look at sacrificial rituals with regard to the Zulu people.

5.1.1 Sacrificial rituals among the Zulu People

Zulu customs suggest that this group sacrifices the hornbill through the breaking of its neck or through suffocation, without spilling blood. Afterwards, they attach a stone to its feet and throw it into deep water, in order to bring rain (Berglund, 1975:57). In the case of a very severe drought, Zulu people sacrifice a domestic animal (a goat or a sheep) in order to end the drought (Berglund, 1975:55). Zulu people believe that during sacrificial rituals, some freshness is transferred to the ritual object. The entire metaphor involved shows that the sacrificial animal is a link between the sacrificer and the god that delights in its fat (Strauss, 1971:600-603). The exploration of complementary concerns engendered by the selection of the black sheep reveals the following: the black sheep's fat is an ingredient in the manufacturing of magic medicines. Female horns contain ewe fat, which is equated with women's fat (Berglund, 1975:54).

5.1.2 The Ox: sacrifice to the ancestors

According to Zulu thought, an ox is a prestigious animal with primarily a socio-economic value. Cattle play a big role in regulating matrimonial exchanges. They share the settlement with men at night (Berglund, 1975:110). Since the ancestors (*indlozi*) are intimately associated with their offspring, they dwell in their bodies and in the cattle. Ancestors take another human form in dreams that make the "*amathongo*" invisible during the day (Berglund, 1975:89-91). Ancestors are also capable of living underground. In this case, they are called *abaphansi*. They can also live at the back of a hut on a type of altar, where they are offered meat, beer and tobacco. Ancestors also like to stay at the arch over the entrance (Berglund, 1975:102-105).

Ancestors "have seats in the gall bladder of animals; they forester women fertility, conception and pregnancy. The birth of a child is like the ancestors' reincarnation or rebirth for, during sexual intercourse, an ancestor leaves the water and enters a sperm in the form of water, then goes into the woman's



womb, mixes with her blood to form a child. This childbearing perpetuates the ancestors and ensures their immortality. Slough from an ancestor serves as medicine for women suffering from menstrual problems or those with premature babies. Ancestors cannot stand the cooking smell; meat sacrifice that is given to them is eaten in a very strange way. After the victim has been immolated, the ancestor licks pieces of raw meat kept for them on the *msamo* altar. They also lick the victim's bile" (Ngubane, 1977:59-61).

5.1.3 The sacrificial sequence

Zulu people agree with the fact that both an ox and a goat are equally sacrificed to the ancestors (Berglund, 1975:225). The invocation of the ancestors is done in the presence of the animal to be sacrificed. The circumstances and reasons for sacrificing must be well expressed, and in the case of an offence that might have disrupted the relationship between the ancestors and the living, a *bona fide* confession is a pre-requisite, since sacrifice essentially seeks the establishment of a dialogue with the ancestors. In these instances, the beauty and health conditions of the sacrifice are upheld. The sacrificial ritual is performed in a dignified and self-conscious manner. Before immolating the victim, the officiator rubs the animal's back with a "carbonized magical plant" or with beer (Berglund, 1975:228).

Imphepho (*Helichxysum miconiae folium*) is a plant that is always fresh. It is gathered early in the morning, and the exercise is similar to a sacrifice. The ancestors are believed to live closer to this plant in metaphorical and metonymical ways. According to tradition, an ox is stabbed in the flank with the ancestors' ritual spear. In the case of a goat, its throat is cut and it is obliged to bleat in order to call the ancestors (Berglund, 1975:209). Meat and fat reserved for the ancestors are burnt in a place of fire in the house believed to belong to the ancestors (De Heusch, 1985:51).

Ancestors' meat that is exposed to fire is reduced to ashes. In the Zulus' land, sacrificial cookery has to do with sex and death (De Heusch, 1985:53). Among Zulus, beer and meat are always associated with sacrificial rituals for ancestors. These two substances are connected with heat and fertility. Wanting beer is likened to desiring a woman, and the religious nature of drinking beer is equated with a sacrifice. A man longing for ancestors' blessings drinks first (De Heusch, 1985:53).

5.1.4 Ancestor spirit veneration

African spirituality and the cult of the ancestors reveal that in African society, each newborn baby carries an ancestor in him or her. Libations precede the blood sacrifice, which generally involves victims who are white in colour. For an African with a sense of traditional values, the reason behind this is clear. Libations constitute the introduction to trade with the ancestor, and the sacrifice its high point, engaging the living in a radical fashion in their quest and wait, and the dead their obligation to reply favourably (Olupona, 2000:42). During ancestral rites, human victims were killed on the occasion of a royal funeral and on their anniversaries (Parrinder, 1976:62).



Ancestor cult is equivalent to religious worship. “The gods of the Bantu people (Zulus and others...) are their ancestors”. Some African writers deny the fact that Africans worship their ancestors. They allege that Africans speak to them in the same way they speak to their fathers. They say that the African attitude towards distinct classes of spiritual beings could be understood through the terminology used by the Catholic Church. *Latria* denotes the worship due to God alone, and *Duha* the reverence and homage paid to the saints and angels. *Hyperdulia* refers to special homage to the Virgin Mary. Some Europeans have portrayed Africans as “pre-logical”, meaning that their religion is “danced rather than thought out” (Parrinder, 1976:66).

5.1.5 Interaction between the dead and the living

The belief that dead people continue to be part of the community seems to be universal for some authors (Gumede, 1990). Though they are feared, rituals promote interaction between the living and the dead. In South Africa, for most black communities, funeral rituals constitute acts of “reincorporation, readmission of the deceased in the community in their newly achieved status”. They surrender some rights and duties, and they assume others. The type of belief system develops into ancestor cults, which call the deceased peoples’ spirits back into the community, reaffirming or reinforcing the connection between the deceased and the survivors (Gumede, 1990). This is true of Xhosas, Zulus and other Bantu groups of South Africa.

The death of a family head is commemorated through the *ukubuyisa* ceremonial rite (to bring back). Beer brewing and the slaughtering of a beast (animal) assure the people that the deceased person’s spirit has been brought back. It is believed that failure to do so results in misfortune and sickness, which bears upon the family as a reminder by the neglected spirits. Interaction variations become realisable according to places, cultures and societies. Some people even hold that a marriage plan must be presented to ancestors for approval (McKitshoff, 1996:186-187). It may appear that the above paragraphs have focused on the ancestors and not on sacrifices as such. This is due to the permanent interaction between the ancestors and the living through sacrificial rituals. The communion between them and the living remains significant.

The role of the Zulu sacrifice is to reinforce the vital liaison with ancestors who circulate freely among them, even in the most intimate areas. When there is a conflict and a family group decides to end it, the members gather around their head and avoid looking each other in the eye, because of the heat in their hearts. The officiator mixes ashes with water, people wash their hands, and then a live animal is offered to the ancestors (De Heusch, 1985:55). The *inkomo yamandlozi* is an animal of exceptional ritual status, namely a bull or a cow with proven fertility, fat, and docile with long horns, but never a castrated ox. It is set aside for the ancestor and cannot therefore work. It cannot be sacrificed or sold to anyone: the owner offers it to the ancestors by rubbing its back with *imphepho* medicine. In the case of offences, the owner appeases the ancestors’ anger by rubbing the back of the victim with *inkomo*



yamandlozi. Through this, Zulu people establish another kind of communication with the ancestors. As Figure 5 indicates, the bull soothed by the refreshing ashes reveals an inverse, symbolic relationship between the sacrificial victim and the animal dedicated to the ancestors (De Heusch, 1985:56).

Fig.5 Symbolic link between the sacrificial victim and the animal dedicated to ancestors

| | |
|--|---|
| Live animals dedicated to the ancestors | Sacrificial victim |
| Intact bull or fertile cow | Either bovine or caprine |
| Communication with the ancestors established through ashes | Communication with the ancestors established through fire and cooking |

The superb creature representing the ancestors sometimes chooses its companion for sacrifice. Together with its female offspring, they were used exclusively for religious communication (De Heusch, 1985:57).

Fig.6 Domestic sacrificial animal companion: distinctive characteristics

| | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| Preferred animal | Sacrifice to the ancestors. Any ox | Sacrifice to the python genie: Black sheep |
| Substitute animal | Any goat | Muzzle black goat |
| Mode of communication | Loud sacrifice | Silent sacrifice |
| Place of offering | Domestic fire | Midstream |

5.1.6 Death, cries, prayer and silence

Silence is strictly observed during Zulu sacrificial rituals and ancestor worship, especially when the offering is being placed on the fire. This silence is necessary to the establishment of mediation relationships (Strauss, 1964:300). The sacrifice to the ancestors takes an intermediary position. The cries of the dying animals and prayer summon the spirit-snakes. There is no sacrificial ritual, except the offering of beer and seed, followed by a speech (Vincent, 1976:190).

Because of the presence of ancestors, participants must also be numerous in order to communicate with them. The first seance started with “long introductory speeches” after the victim was immolated, its blood was put into a receptacle found on the altar. It was left for coagulation, and then part of it was mixed with millet flour and eaten silently by the congregants (Vincent, 1976:197). The raw blood and silence show the absence of communication with ancestors when the victim is being put on the altar. Only elders closely related to the ancestors have the right to eat the raw and coagulated blood. The sacrifice underway necessitates a “correlation of distinct beings and places.” During the offering of the fire, Zulus exhibit such like behaviour at the beginning of the cooking ritual: no “sacralization” of the victim while solemn contact is being held (De Heusch, 1985:58).



The silence involved in spite of the artifice of prayer indicates a notable difference between mortal men and immortal ancestors. The notion of “communion” in the Christian language implies the existence of a true theophany. The eating of cooked, fermented vegetable substances (bread and wine) simulates the true body of the divinity sacrificed long ago. “Now how could people eat an ancestor or a ram genie”? The religious silence of a Christian group during the mystery of transubstantiation also has a topological role - at that time, God comes down, and the silence confirms that heaven approaches earth. The sacrifice of Christ, man and God, and the ritual eating of His body brings a precise meditation. A dizzying void that prayer can never overcome separated these “two terms” (De Heusch, 1985:58-59).

5.1.6 Bile and chyme

When meat has been offered to the ancestors in the hut, the father of the sacrificer sprinkles the bile upon the body of his son outside. The gall bladder is tied to the arm of the latter. Then both wash their hands with chyme, some of which falls into the fire. Afterwards, the chyme is scattered in the cattle enclosure and the shed blood is covered. The symbolic role of the chyme is the following: after bile, it is the most important element in a sacrifice, it is a purifying substance used for washing hands, and is required most of all at burials. Chyme makes the hands white like the ancestors when it is scattered on the roof after a sacrifice. This means that “everything is clean and that there is neither bad thought nor ill feeling with any body” (Ngubane, 1977:124-126). The purifying power of chyme falls into the category of coolness and calming of social tension.

The bile is extracted from an organ that is the exact image of the womb. Sacrifice is like a “hot impulse” between the cool times. One could ask why the entire process is centered on the digestive system of the animal. Ngubane, a Zulu writer, replies that the chyme has life-giving properties, and that it plays an important role in the purification of sacrifices requiring no ritual cooking. Ngubane goes on to say that a goat’s chyme has the function of restoring “the spiritual well being of an entire female age set, threatened by an offense committed by one member (loss of virginity)”. The man responsible for their fertility offers them a live goat that they slaughter, and whose chyme they rub themselves with, and then they leave it near the river. After this, they wash themselves in running water (Ngubane, 1977:126-130). This is in fact a perversion of a family sacrifice. The carrying out of this rite by women is an exceptional occurrence. The bile is left aside, and only the chyme has a symbolic function. Only old women eat the animal’s meat. The purification rite performed by means of a goat’s chyme has a marginal place in the Zulu sacrificial system. It is performed with a lot of excitement, young girls throwing themselves on the animal. Here, the difference between chyme and bile becomes more apparent. The chyme alone is employed in certain purification rituals, where the sacrificer must recover the state of “whiteness” formerly lost because of a broken prohibition (Ngubane, 1977:18-25).

The bile is the true inscription of the sacrificial victim upon the sanctifier’s body, a sign that brings down the blessings of the ancestors. According to



Ngubane, the white colour, a compendium of all light colours, symbolises life, whereas the “black color symbolizes death and sorcery”. The red colour mediates between the two (Ngubane, 1977:25-26). Green and blue (*luhlaza*) fall into the category of whiteness, which is associated with life. The ultimate purpose of the digestive process is to transform *luhlaza* into black waste or excrements, an unclean substance denoting death and sorcery (Ngubane, 1977: 120). The *caecum* that is believed to be “saturated by the ancestral presence” is only eaten by old women - it normally “interferes with the reproductive power of younger women” (Ngubane, 1977:123-125).

5.1.8 The Mystery of the black sheep

Zulu people use the black sheep as another type of sacrifice, and it falls into the scapegoat category. It is treated like a man. The sacrificial ritual is held at night, and no blood is shed. The victim is suffocated and buried far away from people’s settlements (Ngubane, 1977:119). Figure 7 below summarises all the sacrificial options involving animal sacrifices.

Fig. 7 Animal sacrifices: sacrificial options summary

| Recipient | Ancestors | Python genie | Sacrifice without recipient | |
|--------------|---|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| Animal | Ox or goat | Black sheep | Black sheep | Goat |
| Procedure | Ritual cooking | Licking of fat | Buried in the earth | Abandoned |
| Agent | Bile and chyme | | | Chyme |
| Final result | Mediation between lineage members and ancestors | Mediation between sky and earth | Getting rid of sorcery | Purification after the breach of a prohibition |

It is important to understand that cattle have two main characteristics: They are the sole species sacrificed to the ancestors and to go through complete organ processing. Rituals with no recipient only have a magical, but not a religious role: to repair a snag in the social fabric, and to compensate for the “unveiling of its stitches”. The sacrifice intended for the ancestors promotes a “positive conjunction on a social cosmogonic level”. The sheep’s black sub-species play the role of ending the drought and warding off the malefic effects of sorcery (De Heusch, 1985:62-63).

5.1.9 Goat sacrifice and matrimonial alliance

There is normally a fight that takes place at the marriage ceremony between the fiancé’s group and the bride’s brother. This tension also involves verbal abuse from both sides. After the bride price (wealth) has been assessed, the goat brought by the fiancé is slaughtered before the hut where the bride is hiding, and they throw chyme on each other chyme (*psanyi*). When the



tension decreases, the bride and her fiancé “squat” on a mat laid down where the sacrifice was made. The girl’s father invites the ancestors, then he cuts a small piece along the length of the offered animal’s belly, and ties the protective goatskin belt to his daughter’s waist, then the following day she rejoins her husband. Here, the new role of sacrifice is that the chyme “stigmatizes” simultaneous rivalry and brutal separation in matrimonial alliances (Junod, 1927:257).

Specific rituals in the case of two related people wishing to marry include the case of cousins, in which the goat brought by the suitor opens the hut. The chyme is extracted from its stomach, then the bridegroom and the bride are seated on a mat outside, the man’s legs passing the girl’s (this is done to kill shame: *ku dlaya tingana*), then they pour the chyme over them in a sign of anointment. Afterwards, they cut the goat skin and make a hole in it, and then place it over their heads. Finally, they take a raw liver that they give to the prospective couple, asking them to tear it on both sides and to eat it *shibindji*. The liver eaten publicly shows patience and determination, and is a *mhamba* (offering to the gods). The priest concludes with a prayer warding off misfortune, and wishing the couple to bear children. When he finishes, all the participants take the available solid chyme and place it upon the head of the girl, saying: “go and bear children” (Janod, 1927:258).

5.1.10 Mourning chyme

The mourning sacrifice is held two or three months after the death of a family member. The deceased man’s maternal nephew sacrifices a young male goat, together with two hens and one cock. After the extraction of the chyme, old women start an obscene dance. A man addresses prayers to the deceased person. They open with a confession of the misunderstanding that had ravaged the family. After that, the maternal nephew interrupts the prayer by offering a drink to the officiator. Suddenly, nephews’ wives take pieces of kidney kept for the ancestors, steal sacrificial meat, while the rest chase after them, laughing, shouting and pelting them with the chyme (Junod, 1927:167). This disorderly ritual that starts with an erotic demonstration symbolises a disturbance of the social order (De Heusch, 1985:9; 603-619).

Another sacrifice is made one year after the mourning sacrifice, while sharing the deceased’s belongings and the widows. The day is marked by several surprises, dangers and aggression. The maternal nephew starts acting aggressively when beer is being offered on the tomb. After libation is over, maternal nephews claim the widows. Then, a goat is sacrificed in front of the deceased’s hut, and a prayer to the ancestors begins. One of the maternal nephews starts recriminating the ancestors, and then the rest join in. They finish by picking the meat kept for the ancestors, while the crowd pursues them, laughing and throwing chyme bombs on them (Junod, 1927:208). The Tsonga people tie the gall bladder to the sanctifier’s hair as a symbol of “happiness and luck”. Figure 8 below shows the asymmetrical exchange between the uncle and nephew:

Fig.8 Asymmetrical exchange between uncle and nephew

| | |
|---|--|
| Uncle as sacrificer | Nephew as sacrifice |
| Personal service | Collective service |
| One uncle, one nephew | The lineage of the uncles and all the nephews plus their wives |
| Reinforcement of the alliance | Simulated destruction of kinship |
| Animal or object according to the oracle's instructions | Must be a goat (role of chyme) |

5.1.11 Goat sacrifice and exorcism

The strongest religious form of blood sacrifice is linked to the ritual of exorcism of the possessed. The sacrifice in this case serves to expel the pathogenic spirit, a spirit from outside the maternal or paternal lineage. Spirit possessions resulting from the ancestors' anger require a therapeutic ritual based on offering and prayer. Tsonga people consider mental illness as exogenous, whereas sicknesses that originate with ancestors are endogenous. In all these cases, divining bones diagnose the nature of the illness, and also determine the specialised cure, where to find it and the therapeutic procedures. Musicians and strong choruses chanting introduce trance in the body of the patient, forcing the spirit to say who it is and to disclose its name. Violent dancing follows, which normally lasts for several days. The second phase consists of plunging the sick person's head into a basin, in order to open his eyes. The third phase is the appeasement by blood, consisting of blood and violent sacrifice, so as to ensure the expulsion of the pathogenic spirit from the body, and to transfer it to an altar (De Heusch, 1985:83).

The remains of the sacrificial animal are used as follows: the gall bladder is tied to the exorcised patient's hair, strings from the root of a tree with a pleasant odour are then attached to the strips cut from the victim, and ritual cooking takes place after the sacrifice (De Heusch, 1985:83). During the sacrifice, the patient is actually beside himself and, fully identifying with the spirit, drinks the raw blood of the animal. In order to expel the spirit, the possessed person must be made to vomit, and then he must wear the animal skin and begin ritual running, in order to positively communicate with all spirits. He carries the strips for one full convalescent year before the purification rituals are undertaken (De Heusch, 1985:84). Fig.9 below illustrates the two phases of sacrifice.

Fig.9 Two sacrificial phases

| | |
|--|--|
| Exorcism: raw blood spurting from one leg | Alliance with spirits - cooked meat coming from the four legs of the sacrificed animal |
| Vomiting | Digesting |
| End of identification with the pathogenic spirit | Return to the human state through the mediation of the animal |

Fig.9 shows that the shift from abusive “divination” to the normal human state calls for “animalization”. The sacrificial victim must face violent aggression. The patient is a cannibalistic monster. The animal helps the patient to construct a new personality. The therapy necessitates attention from psychoanalysts. Trance is meant to develop the act of identification with one sole god. Therefore, transference to the sacrificial animal is done, in order to enable exorcism and the restructuring of the social person (Junod, 1927: 209).

5.2 GENERAL SYMBOLIC CODE

Fig. 10 General chyme: cooking and sacrificial sharing

| | God’s digestive system | Ritual | Cooking |
|--|------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Chyme | Bladder | Roasted meat | Boiled meat |
| A change of status (sickness, death, marriage) | Luck, prosperity | Outside the village | Inside the village |
| Opposition between in-laws and relatives, maternal uncles and nephews, men and ancestors | Familial harmony | Ancestors and outsiders share | Alimentary communion of relatives |

Harmony, luck and prosperity, signified by social cohesion, are also symbolised by boiled food (De Heusch, 1985: 86). In the ritual of exorcism, the bones of the goat are burnt to ashes in order to appease the spirits (Junod, 1927b: 493).

Fig. 11 Symbolic role of blood in private family offerings

| | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|
| Ancestors | | Foreign spirits |
| Normal situation, roasted meat | Abnormal situation, raw meat | Raw blood |

Blood plays an insignificant symbolic role in private family sacrifices. Only a little blood is mingled with the officiator’s saliva during the presentation of the victim (Junod, 1927:416). During the exorcism, the bones of the goat are

burnt to ashes under the shade of a tree, as a means of refreshing the spirits, appeasing them, and making them less wild (Junod, 1927:493). Blood is placed before cooking, and burnt bones are placed after cooking. Fig. 12 below illustrates the basic lexicon of the ritual.

Fig. 12 Lexicon of private family offerings

| Raw | Cooked | Burnt to ashes |
|-------|----------------------|----------------|
| Blood | Ritually cooked meat | Bones |

The exorcism rituals are part and parcel of the Tsonga general system of sacrifice, from which it takes two traditional protective elements: the sacrifice wears the animal's gall-bladder upon his head and the ankle bone over his sternum. The horns and hooves are kept on the spirit-possessed person's roof. The sacrificial ritual transforms his personality completely, and once healed, he becomes an exorcist himself (Junod, 1927:499).

5.2.1 Black ram for the sky: cooked chyme, quarrel and beer

During a severe dry season, Tsonga people sacrifice a ram selected because of the blackness of its wool (Junod, 1927:405). It is offered to the chief ancestor by the maternal niece (Junod, 1927:269). The sacrifice of the black ram is addressed to the chief ancestor. The exceptional killing of the black sheep is equivalent to that of a human sacrifice. It is said that long ago, due to a severe drought, a young man was left alive in a sacred forest. Among the Lovedu, the sacrifice of a man was a means for the revitalisation of the rain medicines (Krige, 1954:65). The above practices are still seen in Southern Africa, especially among the Tswana, where the chief's main ritual role is to bring rainfall (Schapera, 1971:70-72).

Tsonga warriors do not rejoin the village before the after-war purification rituals. One sacrificial part used is the goat's chyme, which is roasted and consumed through the nostrils. The sacrifice of an ox is a requirement during a family group meeting for the big millet offering, which typifies a happy event. Its role is the reinforcement of the marriage bond. During this thanksgiving offering, the chyme of the sacrificed animal is poured on the altar, along with the millet beer (De Heusch, 1985:93). Tsonga people call the reconciliation ceremony *byalwa bya huwa* (the beer of noise). Sacrifices and offerings are made to the ancestors when there is a quarrel between brothers (De Heusch, 1985:92).

5.2.2 Children's blood: brain and weaning

This constitutes the last aspect of the Tsonga sacrificial system. The children play a particular role in the weaning rites (Junod, 1927:58-59). The victim's blood serves as a purifying substance. In connection with Hubert and Mauss's statement that "the destruction of the victim is the essence of sacrifice", Herrenschmidt says that this is the only way of making it pass from the visible to the invisible (Hamarryon, 1987:151). The sacrificed animals ascend from



men towards the spirits. The consecrated animals represent the descent of the spirits to men (Hamaryon, 1978:151-179).

Human life is more valuable than animal life. It would be monstrously inconceivable to eat the meat of the former. This would also be murder. However, animal sacrifice is less than a murder, and according to Zulu beliefs, the black sheep constitutes man's substitute in rain rituals. Therefore, it may be clearly seen from the marginal and unsettled sacrificial zone. Religions build the foundation myth of their ritual practice - the death of a man-god assures the creation of the world or the salvation of men. In Christian iconography, the man-god is sometimes called the Lamb of God. Van Eyck's painting reflects the familiar anthropological image of a peaceful animal transformed into a celestial agent (De Heusch, 1985:97).

5.2.3 The Tsonga people's goat

In the Southern African context, the ox's value is seen in economic, political and ritual terms. Zulu and Swazi people determine "ranks and aristocratic status" by the procession of herds. The *lobola* requires the transfer of several heads of cattle to the bride's family. The *Mpondo* substitutes heads of cattle with a goat, as the most valuable animal (Hunter, 1979:71). The Tsonga people, actually neighbours to the Zulus, did not appreciate a goat as currency for matrimonial exchange (*lobola*) (Junod, 1927:275-276).

All Tsonga people keep goats that are true sacrificial animals for important ritual acts. Members of the founding lineage give all kinds of offering on the ancestral altar (*gandjelo*). Like the Zulu people, ancestor worship is at the centre of their religious life. The category of offering (*mhamba*) is made up of the following: the officiator is the elder brother of the family group concerned. However, no one is allowed to present an offering "prior to the death of his parents". The verb *hahla* means "to consecrate". The concept of *mhamba* refers to any object or act of a person used to establish a link between the ancestor-gods and their worshippers. *Mhamba* is applied to the entire magico-religious field (De Heusch, 1985:66).

The analysis of Tsonga religious offerings shows that the share reserved for the ancestors is very minimal, and the offering involves no pomp and ceremony at all. When they sacrifice a goat, they consume the meat and reserve a small portion taken from each leg for the ancestors (Junod, 1927:414). The contexts in which the *mhamba* offering occur include the following: a distressed village chief offers his saliva known as an "offering of bitterness", which serves as a preventive measure. In the case of misfortune, he also offers charcoal (Junod, 1927:346). Since heat symbolises sickness or dangerous excitement in Tsonga and Zulu beliefs, the above ritual is a means of appeasing the lion's burning mouth, which typifies the destructive power of angry ancestors. In the same way, a chief can offer a thorn that he sucks while salivating, in order to avert the extinction of a village. The thorn is also used in a magical conjuring procedure to stab the enemy and render him weak (Junod, 1927:418).



The negative cases looked at in the above section show that the idea of an offering is inappropriate, since the *mhamba* object is a metaphorical sign. In the offering of bitterness, the object is absent from the ritual scene - only communication remains by means of saliva and the word (De Heusch, 1985:67). In positive offerings, *mhamba* may represent a chicken, goat, field produce, tobacco, beer or ancestors. However, the very idea of a bloody sacrifice is not clarified in the Tsonga culture. Animals taken to the sacrificial site have socio-economic significance. They are part of what they have - the contact with saliva and the offering in the *hahla* ritual take place in the offerer's being. This shows the ancestors that the officiator offers a part of himself, and in this sense the offered object becomes a metonymic sign of the offerer (De Heusch, 1985:68).

In order to understand the practices involved in Tsonga sacrificial rituals, three networks of communication must be distinguished: the *lobola* system, allowing for the conversion of rare valuables - socio-economic circulation is not seen in the offering system. The divining bones reduce losses at all costs. The diviner's prescriptions are very variable, and can sometimes be restrictive (Junod, 1927:413). The above sections show that the characteristics attributed to polytheism, pantheism and panentheism are lodged in African traditional religion (Geisler, 1998:173-193).

However, the harmonisation of signs and sacrificial symbols, as well as the way African traditionalists intertwine the animal realm and the sky, including specific plants and birds to serve mankind's welfare, remain intriguing. They are constantly involved in communication with spirits and the worship of ancestors. The offering is always kept alive - even a live chicken and goat offered to ancestors must not be killed. All this shows that *mhamba* offerings are far from being called sacrifices, even though animals have an important role to play. The Tsonga people establish their sacrificial system around the goat, namely in marriage and mourning rituals.

5.2.4 The locus of the ancestor

Ancestors, beneficiaries of *mhamba* offerings, stay in underground villages. They also appear in human society in the form of inoffensive blue snakes (*dendrophis subcarinatus*). Most prestigious ancestors are believed to inhabit sacred woods that can only be entered by priests. According to Tsonga beliefs, man's universe is diametrically opposed to that of the ancestors. There is also an asymmetrical nature to offerings and sacrifices. The offerings ward off the state of tension, and prayers appease the ancestors' anger, and conjure away misfortune or sickness. Two words stand for the prayer of the ancestors: *khongota* (to please) and *bula-bulela* (to reprimand). In the case of calamities, "the petition is either preceded or followed by insults hurled at gods" (Junod, 1927:421-423).



5.3 CONCLUSION

This chapter has attempted to briefly describe both Zulu and Tsonga sacrificial ritual ideas. As members of extended Bantu groups, their sacrificial ritual performances, as well as sacrificial victims, present sharp similarities. However, they also display significant differences. The sacrifice of the hornbill caters for rain in times of severe drought. It is either killed by suffocation or by breaking its neck, and it is thrown deep into the river's water. Like Xhosa people, communication with the ancestors is through various sacrificial rituals and offerings. Parrinder says: "ancestors' cult is equivalent to religious worship and the gods of the Bantu people (Zulu and others...) are their ancestors". As mentioned earlier on in this dissertation, the whole idea concerning the worship of African ancestors constitutes a point of controversy that this study will attempt to clarify in light of biblical teaching later in this dissertation. It is difficult to understand whether the "true Spirit" referred to in Zulu sacrificial thoughts is the same as the Holy Spirit, or equal to the personal God.

Silence is strictly observed in Zulu sacrificial rituals during ancestor worship. Ancestors have the right to eat raw meat and coagulated blood. Meat reserved for them must be burnt to ashes. When it is put on the fire, this action triggers communication with the ancestors. Sacrificial victims' entrails such as bile, chyme and gall bladder are used for ceremonial washing, cleansing, healing and purification (Ngubane, 1977:124-126). Ngubane, a Zulu writer, alleges that the chyme has life-giving properties and plays an extremely significant role in sacrificial purification.

A goat's chime, among the Zulu people, serves to restore "the spiritual well being of an entire female age set, threatened by an offense by one member (loss of virginity)". A sacrificial victim's colour is very important among the Zulu people: the white colour symbolises life, and the black colour is the symbol of death. The black sheep falls into the category of scapegoats, and is treated like a man. Cattle constitute the sole species sacrificed to the ancestors, and their digestive organs go through complete processing. Sacrifices made to the ancestors promote positive conjuncture on a social, cosmogenic level. The black sheep ends the drought and wards off the malefic effects of sorcery.

The features of Tsonga people's sacrificial rituals include the fact that mental illness constitutes the strongest religious form of a blood sacrificial ritual - it is exogenous (exterior to the group), while sicknesses inflicted by the ancestors are endogenous (internal to the group). In these cases, the divining bone diagnoses the nature of the sickness and prescribes the cure. The sacrificial blood ensures the expulsion of the pathogenic spirit. In order to curb a severe drought, Tsonga people sacrifice a black ram. Tsonga warriors sometimes spend time in purification camps where they consume a goat's roasted chyme through their nostrils, before they can go home. During a big millet ceremony, an ox is slaughtered for consolidation of the marriage bond.



The last aspect of Tsonga sacrificial thought that has been approached in this chapter is the sacrificial victim's blood during the weaning ritual. The blood serves as a purifying substance. The Tsonga people's goat is a true sacrificial animal, and not a currency for matrimonial exchange (lobola). They give a minimal share to the ancestors, and their offerings are not characterized by pomp and ceremony. Three networks of communication are involved in Tsonga people's sacrificial rituals: lobola, divining bones and the diviner's prescriptions. Lobola brings different lineages together in a matrimonial bond, including various powerful communications with the ancestors. The divining bones are detectors of various illnesses, and help to prescribe an appropriate cure.

Tsonga people believe that ancestors live in underground villages, and that they can appear in the human community in the form of blue snakes, inhabit secret woods etc. As has been pointed out in several instances in this dissertation, there are sharp similarities between Xhosa, Zulu and Tsonga people's sacrificial rituals, as well as some unique features pertaining to each of the groups.

As was specified in chapter three of this dissertation, these groups all belong to the extended Cape Nguni Bantu tribe. Similarities may also be explained by the fact that, for instance, Xhosa people have influenced other groups within the Cape Nguni tribe. However, as already mentioned, the questions of how and why have not been satisfactorily answered, because interviewed respondents gave ad hoc opinions that are very difficult to substantiate. On the other hand, the researcher is of the opinion that there is this element of a lack of inquisitiveness among traditional African worshippers associated with allegiance to elderly people. Traditional worshippers do things the way they have seen them done. They say things the way they have been told them.

Chapters 3 to 5 of this dissertation tie in with the heuristic framework in Chapter two, because they all have to do with the lineage bond and sacrificial rituals characterised by a lot of bloodshed, and viewed as violent killings in terms of the theoretical framework (Burkert, 1983; Burkert, 1985; Girard, 1987; Girard, 1977 etc.). The questions that continue to haunt one are: Why the perpetuation of bloodshed and violent killing? Is there something inherent to blood that captivates and even coerces not only heaven, but also African traditional religion worshippers, to cling to the practice of sacrifice?

In the last chapter of this dissertation, the researcher will attempt to answer these questions. The following chapter will deal with Xhosa sacrificial rituals in the modern context, and the effects of urbanisation and modernity on the Xhosa sacrificial system will be generalised to the rest of the Bantu groups that have evolved within the same socio-political, economic and religious contexts in modern South Africa.



CHAPTER SIX: SACRIFICE AMONG MODERN XHOSAS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Even though the practice of sacrifice among modern Xhosas is not as common as it used to be in the traditional context of the past, it still continues to be part of their lives. Press reports about sacrifices being performed by some leading Xhosa figures and celebrities indicate a host of similar unreported cases among ordinary Xhosa people. By modern Xhosas, one is referring to people of the Xhosa culture and who speak the Xhosa language, living between Mbashe and the Sunday River on the coastal side, including those who are distributed all over South Africa and in neighbouring countries, from the 19th century up to this day (Switzer 1993:34; Jackson, 1975:6). Reverend Sipuka, a Xhosa priest living among Xhosa people, testifies that the practice of sacrifice “among the Xhosa people is alive and kicking” (Sipuka, 2000:170). Reported cases of sacrifices performed in upmarket environments further highlight the fact that the belief in sacrifice is deeply entrenched among the Xhosas.

The public practice of Xhosa sacrifice in modern times has enabled anthropologists and researchers from various disciplines and interests to study and analyse it objectively. Among those who have made the study of such sacrifice their task, the following may be mentioned: Manona (1981); Staples (1981); Pauw (1975); Raum (1972); Oosthuizen (1971) and Mayer (1961).

A quick scan of these sources immediately reveals that, while sacrificial rituals continue to be performed among modern Xhosa people, the manner of practising them and the meaning attached to them have changed, or is changing, in comparison with the traditional practice and understanding of blood sacrifices. There are some factors that have contributed to a shift in the understanding and practice of sacrifice among modern Xhosa. Thus, after providing evidence of the practice of sacrifice from press reports and other sources, this study will proceed to mention the factors involved, and will briefly discuss their respective impacts. Afterwards, an attempt to postulate a modern Xhosa understanding and practice of sacrifice will be made.

6.2 RECENT OCCURENCES OF SACRIFICE

As recently as April 1999, Brenda Fassie, the Xhosa-speaking queen of pop music, thanked her ancestors for her big comeback into the music world. This, according to *Bona* magazine, was after a “rough-and-tumble life threatened to wipe her completely from the music arena” (Mtshali, 1999:62). For this occasion, Mabbrrr, as she was affectionately known, slaughtered “two cows, two goats, and a sheep at her Langa, Cape Town home” (Mtshali, 1999:15). For the most part, the report focuses on the sensational aspects of the event, referring to Brenda’s BMW 325i, the money she spent on the event, and the neighbourhood dancing to her latest album at the time, *vulindlela*.



However, there were few comments and pictures that characterised the event as sacrificial. There was reference to the occasion being “graced by the presence of *amaDlomo* clan, to which [former] president Mandela also belongs” (Mtshali, 1999:62). There was also reference to the gathering of the *amaDlomo* clan “in the bedroom to drink home-brew from the same container—a pledge of family oneness” (Mtshali, 1999:63). There was a picture of men apparently on the driveway, skinning the sacrificial victim, as well as pictures of men drinking traditional beer. For the purpose of this study, one would here wish for a more detailed account of the sacrificial ritual itself, but one can presume that this report is a fair expectation from a magazine such as *Bona*.

A more explicit example of a sacrificial ritual in the Xhosa modern setting is the event of Thabo Mbeki’s official return to his home village after decades of exile, a visit that took place in December 1998. In describing this event, the *Daily Dispatch* newspaper stated: “He (Thabo) and the members of his *Amazizi* clan performed a traditional cleansing ceremony in the kraal. Elderly family members spoke to the ancestors, thanking them for guiding Mr. Mbeki through the long years of struggle” (*Daily Dispatch*, Dec. 28, 1998). Hadland, in his unofficial biography of Thabo Mbeki, entitled: *The life and times of Thabo Mbeki*, also covers this event. While the writer obviously had other motives for narrating this event, he also offers a succinct account of the sacrificial features of this occasion, as provided in the following passage:

“Two bulls bought for the party bolted just before they were slaughtered. The local old folks smiled and the women ululated. It was a good omen, they assured everyone. The grins and singing returned when the beasts had finally rounded up and bellowed loudly before surrendering to their fate”... Hours later, in a vacant lot behind the Good will store, a makeshift kraal of grass huts had been erected. Undoubtedly here Thabo took his rightful place among the *Mazizi* clan. For his tribesmen and those who gathered to be with him and his family, there was nothing enigmatic about Thabo. He was their kin and their son. For him they danced the traditional dance (*Ukuxhentsa*), they shared a special piece of meat for clan members only (*Ukushwama*) and they washed it all down with the African beer, brewed meticulously and proudly by the women of Ncingwana” (Hadland, 1999:133).

Although the practices of blood sacrifice ritual performances “are still alive and kicking” among Xhosa people, they are not free of tension. Some of the tensions result from the environment in which sacrificial rituals are performed, and from diverse perceptions of sacrificial killings, as illustrated in two recent articles from the *Herald* newspaper and *Drum* magazine, entitled, respectively, *Traditional offerings in suburbs must be accepted* (*Herald*, 3 Feb 1999:7) and *Bibles replace beer* (*Drum*, Iss 174, Oct 1993:12-13) demonstrate this tension. The *Herald* daily newspaper reported on the slaughtering of an ox, possibly for the *ukubuyisa* (to bring back) sacrificial ritual to mark the end of the year-long period of mourning, in an upmarket Port Elizabeth suburb. The editorial of this newspaper goes on to assert that this event proceeded peacefully, without any protest from neighbours (*Herald*, 3



Feb. 1999:4), implying that in the past, similar occasions were followed by tension.

It seems as though sacrificial killings in urban settings go against the municipal hygiene laws and the “traditions” of former white areas. In view of such tensions, the editor goes on to make the following suggestions: “Not all traditions that have developed in the rural environment can survive unaltered in the built-up urban area...Perhaps, for the sake of those whom the bellow of the dying slaughtered ox is upsetting, specially designed conveniently accessible public venues will eventually develop in cities for traditional sacrificial performances” (*Herald*, 3 Feb. 1999:4).

Mbengo’s article in the *Drum* magazine on boys’ initiation also reflects a tension that arises out of a competition of beliefs, that is, between Xhosa tradition and Christianity. In this article, the writer reports that “the young men are given Bibles as gifts instead of the usual kieres and sticks”, and that the traditional slaughtering and drinking of beer are replaced by “cakes, biscuits and soft drinks” (*Drum*, Iss. 174, Oct, 1993:12). However, Xhosa traditionalists saw this as “the churches’ interference in their culture”, while a leader of the Church, bishop Dapula, viewed it as a natural development of this ritual (*Drum*, Iss. 174, Oct. 1993:12, 13).

6.3 MODERN XHOSA SACRIFICIAL RITUALS IN LITERATURE

Modern Xhosa people are those who belong to the tribe of Xhosa people, as specified in chapter three of this dissertation. In other words, Xhosa-speaking South Africans, members of the Nguni group, and dwelling in the Cape Province, including small groups distributed all over South Africa, as well as in neighbouring countries such as Lesotho, Namibia and Botswana, and who are living in this era (Maylan, 1968:20; Sipuka, 2000:106). If any recent study is of significance, then all blood sacrifices discussed in the previous chapter, that is, birth, initiation, contingent and death sacrifices, are still practised by modern Xhosas. Within these categories, however, there are some sacrificial rituals that have been done away with, and others that have been modified.

6.3.1 Birth sacrificial rituals

The most remarkable is the *Imbeleko* or *umbingelelo* (A thing with which to carry on the back) sacrificial ritual. There is no indication that the purpose of this sacrifice, that is, to ensure the good health of a child, has changed from its traditional purpose. The skin of the sacrificial victim traditionally used to carry the child on the back is nowadays, according to Raum, used as a sleeping mat for the child, and when it is sold, the money is used for the needs of the child (Raum, 1972:181). Both non-Christian and Xhosa Christian people perform this sacrificial ritual, with the latter renaming it *idinala yomntwana* (child’s dinner), although in essence, it is still the same as *imbeleko*. Writers whose works have been consulted are silent about other sacrifices falling into the birth category, that is, *Ukufuthwa* (to be steamed) and *Inqithi* (amputation of the first phalanx of the finger of the left hand). One



can therefore conclude that these two birth-related sacrificial rituals have faded away, while the *imbeleko* sacrificial ritual has survived.

6.3.2 Initiation sacrificial rituals

As observed in chapter four of this dissertation, initiation sacrificial rituals consist of *ukwaluka* (boys' circumcision rite), *intonjane* (girls' initiation rite) and marriage. All these sacrificial rituals are still being performed, with *intonjane*, as Lamla remarks, gradually being phased out. Raum's research revealed that very few people perform the *intonjane* sacrificial ritual. In comparison with other sacrificial rituals, the *intonjane* rite and its accompanying sacrifices are not mentioned in any other writers' research results. With a few exceptions, as demonstrated by the replacing of the boys' initiation sacrifice with the reading of the Bible, the *ukwakula* sacrifice is still widely practised among modern Xhosa (Lamla, 1971:34).

Two sacrificial killings related to *ukwaluka*, that is, *Gcamisa*, a word derived from the verb *ukucamagusha*, meaning: 'to announce the ceremony to the ancestors and request their blessings' and *Ojisa* (to make one roast) are still performed. With regard to marriage, the *ukutyiswa amasi* (to be fed with sour milk) sacrificial ritual, which is a sacrifice to initiate the bride into her husband's family, is the most remarkable. The least remarkable is the *umngcamo* sacrificial ritual, which informs the ancestors of the bride of her departure from her parents' homestead, and requests them to protect her and give her good health. It may thus be concluded that the *umngcamo* sacrificial ritual is also being phased out (Raum, 1972:181).

6.3.3 Contingent sacrificial rituals

Contemporary Xhosa people perform most of the contingent sacrificial rituals mentioned in chapter four of this dissertation, with the exception of supplication sacrificial rituals such as rain-making and seasonal sacrificial rituals, which are merely reported as being archaic, and some of the communion sacrificial rituals such as *ukupha*, *izilo* and *ukutshayelela*. As the press reports concerning Brenda Fassie's and Thabo Mbeki's sacrificial rituals suggest, the most commonly performed sacrificial ritual is the thanksgiving one because, according to Pauw, modern Xhosas ascribe more benevolence to ancestors than they do for misfortunes (Pauw, 1975:147).

"Altogether it seems that the negative role of the ancestors, their sending of misfortune to punish or complain, has moved far into the background in the stable rural Christian communities, although it is still fully recognized in popular dogma". Pauw ascribes this tendency to Christian influence, but it may also be due to other factors such as the modern economy and medicine. People are economically better off, and modern medicine cures illnesses effectively. It is suggested here that the less efficient traditional economy and less effective medicines made people depend on the ancestors in these areas. Consequently, any lack in these areas was perceived as resulting from ancestral wrath (Pauw, 1975:147).



6.3.4 Death sacrificial rituals

Many writers mention that *ukukhapha* (to send off) and *ukubuyisa* (to bring back) sacrificial rituals are now quite common. Modern Xhosa people perform the above sacrificial rituals with some variations. In some cases, they are performed in a traditional manner, as was explained in the fourth chapter of this dissertation (Raum, 1972:183-184), while in other cases, they have been modified, presumably on account of the Christian influence. Manona, for example, reports that *ukukhapha* among Christians has been stripped of its sacrificial significance and now serves as a “funeral meal” (Manona, 1981:35). Pauw, in his own research, comes to the same conclusion - that it is performed “ostensibly to provide food for the guests” (Pauw, 1975:177).

6.3.5 Modern Xhosa sacrifices: observations on reports and research

The four press reports concerning sacrificial rituals cited above demonstrate that the practice of sacrifice among modern Xhosa people is a common phenomenon. They also demonstrate continuity between traditional and modern practice and understanding of sacrificial rituals. Some of the sacrificial elements mentioned are recognisable from the discussion of Xhosa people’s traditional sacrificial rituals, presented in chapter four of this dissertation. One can note, for example, the following sacrificial elements: the sacrificial victim used for solemn sacrificial rituals, namely bulls and goats, dancing, invocation of the ancestors, traditional cleansing ceremony, bellowing of sacrificial animals, ritual tasting of beer and the sacrificial portion of meat, and the joyous mood of the occasion.

The research cited simply states that traditional sacrificial rituals continue to be performed in modern times, without giving details with regard to the procedure and elements of sacrifice. One may therefore presume that the procedure and elements are still the same because, as shall be seen in the pages that follow, writers indicate the respective points of departure between these two settings. One example of a modern, national sacrificial ritual has been the occasional national gathering at *Ntaba kaNdoda* (Mountain of Man), a national shrine created by Mr.L.L.Sebe, the late president of the former independent Ciskei (Hodgson, 1987:28). According to Hodgson, this shrine served mainly to artificially create Ciskei nationalism, which in turn was viewed as giving credence to Ciskei independence (Hodgson, 1987:29-30).

There are also some noticeable discontinuities. In the case of Brenda Fassie, the slaughtering took place in the driveway, not in the kraal. In the case of Thabo Mbeki, it took place not in the real kraal, but in a makeshift kraal. Brenda’s clan people ritually tasted beer in the bedroom and not in the kraal. In the future, one could expect more drastic changes, as the editor of *Herald* magazine suggests. For example, that sacrificial slaughterings may have to take place in a commonly designated area, which would be safer and less controversial than homes are (Lamla, 1971:32).

One could also expect a total elimination of the sacrificial significance traditionally attached to some sacrificial rituals, as Mbengo’s article, *Bibles*



replace beer, suggests. Worse still, it may happen that some sacrificial rituals are completely abandoned. In fact, some sacrifices such as traditional national sacrifices, rainmaking sacrificial rituals, and seasonal sacrificial rituals are on the verge of being phased out (Lamla, 1971:32-34). The press reports cited above are quite revealing with regard to Xhosa sacrificial rituals in modern times. However, for a complete picture, one needs to take into account the research conducted in this area.

The research cited above concerning modern Xhosa sacrificial rituals shows that there is general continuity between the modern and traditional understanding and practice of sacrifice. Some types of sacrificial rituals performed today continue to be the same as those performed in the traditional setting, and for many of them the intention also continues to be the same. However, information obtained also reveals discontinuity between the two. Research shows that the performance of modern sacrificial rituals in terms of procedure and elements of the sacrifice is quite erratic. In some cases, elements of sacrifice such as beer, serving meat on branches, burning the sacrificial victim's bones etc. are observed, while in others they are omitted (Raum, 1972:176-186). However, the reasons for omitting some sacrificial elements while retaining others are not clear.

Pauw observes that objectives of sacrificial rituals today are sometimes confused or merged. One sacrifice, for example, can be designated as a propitiatory sacrifice, while at the same time it is viewed as a thanksgiving sacrifice (Pauw, 1975:175). Unfortunately, Pauw does not offer a clear interpretation of this practice, but it could be explained as resulting from the growing ignorance of various traditional sacrificial rituals and the meanings attached to them (Manona, 1981:36, 38).

It may also be due to various factors that influence one's understanding and interpretation of sacrifice. Pauw, for example, states that some modern Xhosas "interpret the ritual slaughtering for a new baby as a thanksgiving to the ancestors, more than as an invocation" (Pauw, 1975:175). In fact, a close look at most of the recorded interviews conducted by Pauw with regard to the meaning of sacrificial rituals shows that even among modern Xhosa people themselves, there is no common understanding regarding the meaning and value of various sacrifices. Interpretations seem to be more personal and ad hoc, rather than being based on a general understanding. In examining these interviews and the erratic manner in which sacrifices are performed, it is difficult to state with precision exactly what a modern Xhosa sacrificial ritual stands for (Sipuka, 2000:177).

Among Christians, there is a conscious effort, at best, to minimise and, at worst, to eliminate the significance of killings traditionally considered as sacrifices. As has been noted above, for example, the *imbeleko* (sacrifice at a child's birth) and other sacrifices are called "dinners" instead of sacrifices. It can also be noted how Christians have stripped the *ukukhapha* (to accompany the deceased) sacrificial ritual of its sacrificial significance. Furthermore, traditional ritual elements such as invocations to the ancestors,



prodding of the sacrificial victim with the sacrificial spear, ritual tasting of sacrificial meat etc. have been omitted (Sipuka, 2000:177).

However, the intention of Xhosa Christians to keep Xhosa people's traditional rituals, while stripping them of their essential elements, is not clear. Worse still, as will be shown later, a majority of Christians continue to perform pure Xhosa sacrificial rituals while remaining committed to the beliefs regarding Christ's absolute sacrifice. Thus, similar to modern Xhosas in general, the beliefs and practices of sacrifice among Xhosa Christians are equally unclear. It is the intention of the remainder of this chapter to enumerate and discuss the issues that have contributed to this lack of clarity, with the hope of pointing the way towards clarity (Sipuka, 2000:178). The researcher will begin by looking at some of the factors that have influenced and moulded the modern Xhosa practice and understanding of sacrifices. The factors below, which have had a strong influence on Xhosa traditional blood sacrifices without discontinuing them, obviously stress the idea that blood sacrifices seem to communicate power, which has enabled people, even in the modern Xhosa cultural setting, to continue the performance of blood sacrificial rituals.

6.4 FACTORS DETERMINING MODERN XHOSAS' PRACTICE AND UNDERSTANDING OF BLOOD SACRIFICES

The various factors that will be described in the following paragraphs further enhance the idea concerning "the communicative power of sacrifices", in that, despite their hindering effects, people still cling to blood sacrificial rituals, even today. The earlier discussion of sacrifice among the Xhosa people in their traditional context revealed that, even in their "days of independence", an expression used by Peires to denote the period in which the Xhosa were relatively free politically, which he places at around 1650 to 1850 (Peires, 1981: viii), the practice of sacrificial rituals was not totally free of foreign influence. It can be noted that, even in the early 19th century, the notion of "prophecy" that came to the Xhosa people through Christian influences (Willoughby, 1928:116; Peires, 1989:10) played a role in the practice of sacrifice among them.

For example, Mlanjeni, a self-proclaimed Xhosa prophet born in 1832, inspired people to offer sacrifices to him (Peires, 1989:10). In chapter four, it was also noted that if the Xhosa people, in their traditional context, are said to have had God as the object of their sacrificial acts, this could only be due to Christian influence, because their cosmology and belief system do not support such a claim. Since the loss of Xhosa people's independence due to colonialism, the Christian influence on Xhosa people's practice and understanding of sacrifice has become even more pronounced. In addition to this, there have been a host of other factors that have made their mark and continue to do so with regard to the Xhosa people's practice and understanding of sacrifice. These factors may be classified as political, economic, social, environmental, ideological and religious (Lamla, 1971:132).

The first four factors affect Xhosa sacrifices on a practical level, and can thus be broadly categorised as social factors, while the last two affect them on a



level of understanding and belief, and can thus be categorised as mental factors. This study hopes to show in the pages that follow, at worst, that these factors have had an eliminatory effect, and at best, a modifying effect on the practice and understanding of sacrifice among modern Xhosa people. In other words, as a result of these factors, some sacrifices have been completely abandoned, while others have been modified or adapted to conditions created by them (Lamla, 1971:32).

6.4.1 Political factors

Political factors may seem to be less connected to religion, particularly with regard to the performance of rites, but in actual fact there is a definite connection. Sacrificial rituals among the Xhosa people were not only a family or lineage affair - they were also a tribal affair, or better still a national affair, since the Xhosa people considered themselves to be a nation. National sacrificial rituals such as rainmaking and harvest sacrifices were presided over by the king (Lamla, 1971:32).

When the Cape Colony government and the succeeding governments gradually withdrew the king's powers, the sacrifices he used to perform as a unifying figure and guardian of his nation also faded away. Hammond-Tooke cites a letter written by the king of the Xhosa people to the Willovale magistrate in 1945, asking for permission to perform a tribal sacrifice. This sacrifice had apparently been stopped because the place in which it was normally performed belonged to a white farmer, who would not allow it to take place. In this letter, he writes the following: "...Kindly letter to Magistrate of Komgha; know that sometimes at the end of November, I and amaTshawe people of my clan shall be performing a sacrifice at a certain place called Ngxingxolo stream where the sacrifice was formerly performed by my forefathers as this must be done according to our customs " (Hammond-Tooke, 1956:66).

Hammond-Tooke informs us that "this request was not acceded ...", and although he continued to state that there was a possibility that the government would buy the farm in order to allow this ritual to take place, there is no record that it eventually did. One may thus presume that the refusal of the king's request marked the death of that type of sacrifice. Political factors have since then continued to negatively affect the practice of sacrifice among the Xhosas. Mayer reports on the condition in the early sixties under which the migrant workers in East London (a sizeable town in the Eastern Cape) had to perform their sacrifices (Hammond-Tooke, 1956:66):

"Whether the sacrifice is done in a yard or a bush, whether it involves a goat or an ox, the man sacrificing in town cannot afford to relax his guard for a moment. 'You are skinning the beast when you see an unfamiliar figure coming down the hill towards you. Immediately you stop skinning and watch the figure closely to see if you can identify it as a policeman'...the makeshift conditions, the absence of relatives, the atmosphere of secrecy and fear", are all negative factors (Mayer, 1961:153). Mayer explains that regulations



against sacrificial killings were “primarily” hygienic in their intention (Mayer, 1961:152).

One could say here that the primary intention was political, for if the Xhosa people were considered as permanent residents of East London and accepted as such, provisions would have to be made for sacrificial activities to take place in a free and dignified manner. Even today, political factors continue to affect the practice of sacrifice. Many black South African people, who were forcibly removed from their places of birth, are no longer able to perform sacrificial rituals in the vicinity of the graves of their lineage folk, as was traditionally done. The forced removal of black people was a result of a political policy aimed at re-zoning the country along racial lines (Mayer, 1961:153).

It is a common thing to hear middle-aged people, while pointing at places that have now been “developed” and turned into formerly “whites only” suburbs, stating that such places stand on the graves of their forefathers. Even with the new, independent South Africa, the legacy of apartheid continues to affect the practice of sacrifice. One often hears of people who are evicted from a farm they have lived on for decades, and thus have had to leave the area of the graves of their lineage members, which is the usual place for sacrifices. Farm evictions also have the effect of scattering the living lineage members who normally form the congregation of sacrificial rituals. This strains the performance of sacrifices, as members must now travel long distances to attend sacrificial rituals of fellow lineage members (Mayer, 1961:153).

6.4.2 Economic factors

Economic factors affect the practice of sacrifice in the same way as political factors do. Out of pressure to adapt to the modern economy, people are compelled to leave their places of residence in order to find work in distant places. Some of them return periodically and are able to offer and participate in sacrifices in a manner that is traditionally meaningful, that is, in the vicinity of the graves of their ancestors and in the presence of their lineage members. For this reason, Rev. Sipuka says that the performance of sacrifices is timed according to the work schedules of lineage members, in order to allow them all to be present. In the writer’s experience, it is usually the month of December that is targeted for sacrificial rituals, and for this reason, December is also called *inyanga yemicimbi* (month of issues). The preference for this month is due to the fact that lineage members who are working in distant places are usually back home then for the Christmas holidays. The choice of this month ensures that all lineage members, or at least most of them, are present when a sacrifice is performed (Sipuka, 2000:181).

This does not always work out well, because some members of the lineage may be working for the month of December, or others are too far away to come. The concentration of sacrifices in one month sometimes creates a situation of a clash of sacrifices within one lineage. It is not unusual in some sacrificial rituals to hear an announcement to the effect that significant lineage members could not attend because they had to attend a similar occasion for



one of the lineage members somewhere else. The traditional intention of Xhosa people's sacrificial rituals, that is, lineage solidarity, is thus not fully realized, as some members of the lineage may be absent for certain important sacrificial rituals (Sipuka, 2000:182).

The absence of lineage members is even worse for those who have settled in their places of work, because in the places where they stay, they are usually the only lineage unit. This has necessitated some adaptation in terms of participants or congregations of sacrificial rituals. Sacrificial rituals in which normal lineage members would form the congregation have clan members as the congregation. This is because clan membership is broader than lineage membership, and therefore clan members are likely to be spread across a wider area than lineage members would (Sipuka, 2000:182).

Bigalke, who conducted research among the rural Xhosa people, reports on some cases in which on account of the absence or shortage of lineage members, clan members took the place of the former (Bigalke, 1969:50). If the shortage of lineage members is sometimes a problem in rural areas, it is obvious that, in an urban situation, it would be more likely to be a problem. Wilson and Mafeje, in their study of the social life of migrant workers in Cape Town, only make reference to clansmen and not lineage members as the normal congregation of sacrificial rituals, as well as of other rituals (Wilson & Mafeje, 1963:78).

Another obvious economic factor that affects the practice of sacrifice is whether or not one has the means to provide the sacrificial victim and other expenses that go with it. Even in the traditional context, this was sometimes a problem, hence there were interim sacrificial rituals, that is, *ukutshayela inkundla* (to prepare the ground) or *ukungxengxeza* (to plead), that served to appease the ancestors, while still finding means to provide for the required sacrifice. In the modern era, in which, on top of inflation, sacrificial rituals have become lavish, it can be expected that financial considerations will seriously affect the performance of sacrificial rituals. For example the huge expenses for the unveiling of the tombstone, which coincides with the *ukubuyisa* sacrificial ritual, are probably the reason why it usually takes a very long time before it is done (Pauw, 1975:114).

Raum confirms this in his research on the performance of sacrificial rituals among Xhosa Christians and non-Christian people from Ciskei. He concludes that "Christians, who are better off economically than the non-Christians, can afford a more elaborate ritual, that is, more frequent sacrificial rituals" (Raum, 1972:195).

6.4.3 Social factors

Sacrifices, especially Xhosa people's sacrificial rituals, are not an individual but a communal exercise. Among those who take part in them, there is a presupposed common belief about what is being done when they are performed. Thus, "social", meaning the ability to live, interact and co-operate with others in activities of common interest, with a common purpose, is very



important for sacrifices. The performance of sacrificial rituals in the traditional context has a clear social function, that is, to instill a sense of belonging among the lineage members, and to perpetuate a traditional way of life (Sipuka, 2000:183).

In modern times, individuals find themselves in the company of people who are neither lineage members nor share a way of life with them, which traditional sacrificial rituals serve to perpetuate. Instead, they find themselves being drawn into other social values that are not enhanced by the performance of sacrificial rituals. Wilson and Mafeje (1963), in their study of the Xhosa people in Cape Town, show that the practice of sacrificial rituals was more prevalent among those who insulated themselves from the city influence than those who embraced city life. This shows that social factors do influence the practice of sacrificial rituals (Sipuka, 2000:183).

6.4.4 Environmental Factors

The modern environment is not always conducive to the performance of sacrificial rituals. It also discourages them, even among those who still find meaning in sacrifices. A man interviewed during research among Xhosa people in East London (a town known in Xhosa as *Monti*,) clearly expressed the negative effect that the urban environment has on the performance of sacrificial rituals. "Sacrifices we perform in town are like a watered down liquid [*umngxengo*] they are tasteless. Town is not a place where Africans can sacrifice freely. Where is the kraal? If there is such a thing it is away in the bushes, so that nobody would know it is yours. Sacrifice needs to be done openly and without fear. There must be no disturbances of any kind, there must be perfect peace and calm. Can you get that in town? Definitely not...the absence of the relatives makes the sacrificial ritual in town incomplete. Real relatives matter the most in a sacrifice, because they are the ones living the life the spirits have lived" (Wilson & Mafeje, 1963:153).

Those people living in upmarket suburbs must surely think twice before they go ahead with a sacrifice. First of all, they must obtain permission from various departments of the municipality, that is, the health, sanitation and possibly traffic departments. Having obtained this permission, they must inform the neighbours - for "whom the bellow of a slaughtered dying ox is upsetting" (*Herald*, 3 Feb. 1999:7) - in time about the event. After this, they must transport the beast to the suburb, keep it "for up to 12 hours to help calm it down" (*Herald*, 3 Feb 1999:7) and slaughter it in the driveway, as Brenda Fassie did.

6.4.5 Ideological factors

Xhosa people have been assimilated into Western culture and the capitalist economic system in varying degrees. There are those who, if they had a choice, would not be part of these, and so they participate in them as little as possible. While, for example, they will be part of the capitalist economy, which involves migratory labour and settling in urban areas, they still retain most of their traditional way of life (McAllister, 1981:16-17), including sacrifices and



other rituals. Other people, on the other hand, have embraced the Christian religion and Western culture as their way of life, and have thus dissociated themselves to a certain degree from Xhosa people's traditional way of life. They have "adopted new values and many disregard tribalism and its ramifications, of which sacrifice is but one" (Lamla, 1971:33).

During the sixties, anthropologists categorised Xhosa people who rejected most of the Western and Christian influences as *Abantu ababomvu* (red people), while those who fully adopted it were referred to as *Abantu basesikolweni* (school people). Mayer gives a succinct explanation of how these two groups differ in their approach to Western and Christian influence: "The people known as *abantu ababomvu*, "Red people", or less politely as *amaqaba*, "smeared one" (from the smearing of their clothes and bodies with red ochre), are the traditionalist Xhosa people, that is, "the conservatives who still stand by the indigenous way of life, including pagan Xhosa religion...The antithetical type, *abantu basesikolweni*, "School people" are products of the mission and the school, holding up Christianity, literacy and other Western ways as ideals" (Mayer, 1971:4).

The *abantu basesikolweni* (school people) saw themselves as "civilized" compared to the *abantu ababomvu* (red people) or *amaqaba* (smeared people) group, whose way of life (which includes performance of sacrifices) they saw as primitive (Lamla, 1971:33; Mafeje, 1975:168). As far as the disdain for sacrifice results from this attitude, it may be regarded as motivated by ideology. This, however, does not mean that the *abantu basesikolweni* (school people) do not perform sacrifices - they do, but "in their performance of Xhosa people's custom (sacrifice) they do not observe the minor tribal variations that are displayed by "red people" (Pauw, 1975:4). One such variation, for example, that is not observed by "school people" is the prodding of the sacrificial victim with the spear, because they consider it to be barbaric. Thus, ideological factors do not have an eliminatory effect on the understanding and performance of sacrifice (Sipuka, 2000:185).

6.4.6 Religious factors

Christianity is about the only foreign religion with which the Xhosas have come into contact. This section has to do with those elements of Christian belief that have impacted, and continue to do so, on the Xhosa people's understanding and practice of sacrifice. Most writers note that in general, the attitude of missionaries towards the Xhosa people's practice of sacrifice was negative (Hodgson, 1984:21; Pauw, 1974:425; Wilson et al, 1952:130). Most of the material on the interaction between the missionaries and the Xhosas is political, meaning that it concerns itself with the political and cultural implications of this contact. There is very little, if any, material by the early missionaries that objectively explored the divergence and convergence between Christian and Xhosa practices and understanding of sacrifice (Sipuka, 2000:185).

This is mainly due to the fact that, in their evangelical endeavours among the Xhosa people, missionaries did not only concern themselves with religious



matters, but with the lives of the Xhosa people as a whole, which they felt were barbaric and needed to be changed. Converting to Christianity, for a Xhosa, meant that one did not only have to stop sacrificing to the ancestors, but also everything that goes with his culture (Sipuka, 2000:186). Thus, in theory, the missionaries regarded all humankind as potentially equal, but did not differentiate between Christianity and the accepted norms of people's cultures. Plows and wagons, cotton clothes, Western medicine, square, upright furniture, square houses built along straight lines, and above all, formal literacy, were all regarded as fruits of the Gospel. Traditional doctors and diviners, beer drinking, and expression of what the missionaries regarded as nudity and open sexual behaviours were condemned. Male and female initiation rites, male polygamy and the exchange of women for cattle (now referred to as the *lobola* system) and the role of ancestors in worship, were rejected as anti-Christian (Switzer, 1993:116).

It is therefore not surprising that there is no clear, detailed theological discourse in connection with Xhosa people's sacrificial rituals by the missionaries, because its rejection was included in the blanket banishment of everything that pertained to Xhosa culture. Their certainty that they were right, since they considered themselves to be religiously and culturally superior to the Xhosa people, made it unnecessary for them to explain and justify the grounds for discriminate rejection of Xhosa sacrifice and customs. Fast (1994) illustrates the missionaries' superiority complex among the Xhosa people in the 19th century. Switzer's report about the attitude of the missionaries towards the Xhosa and their customs seems to be true of the other early missionaries in the rest of Africa as well. African continental theologians have also noted this attitudinal problem of missionaries, with almost the same words used by Switzer (Mbiti, 1969:237; Hastings, 1976:37-38; Hastings, 1989:23-34 and Boudillon, 1990:268).

Theron observes the following: "there were many individual missionaries who had more understanding of the traditional culture, and who were more positive towards it" (Theron, 1996:25). Among the Xhosa people, one of the early missionaries who could be considered to have been more positive towards Xhosa people's traditions was Van der Kemp. Concerning this missionary, Hodgson says that he ate African food, lived in Xhosa people's huts and travelled on "foot without a hat, shoes or stocking". At the same time, Van der Kemp's spartan existence was undoubtedly part of a conscious decision to live out his equality philosophy among men. He was the kind of missionary who wanted to adapt Christianity to the everyday life of the indigenous community. His successors were only out to change Xhosa people's ways of life, and to conform to the standard of "Christianity and civilization" as imported from Europe, and who set an example by establishing separate communities at their mission stations (Hodgson, 1984:10).

Although Van der Kemp was positive about Xhosa people's way of life in general, he disapproved of Xhosa sacrificial rituals. Hodgson tells us that he was "highly critical of the 'doctor's' role in ordering the slaughtering of cattle by way of expiation" (Hodgson, 1984:21), but unfortunately he does not tell us about Van der Kemp's theological reasons for the rejection of Xhosa people's



sacrificial rituals, although other missionaries do. Therefore, one is left with no resource but the missionaries, who are likely to point out at least two factors in their faith that are likely to have led them to prohibit converts from practising sacrifice. These factors are:

- Belief in one God or monotheism; and
- Salvation through Christ or soteriology (Sipuka, 2000:187).

6.4.6.1 Monotheism

Monotheism is characterised first of all by the belief in one God who is considered to be the source of everything there is, “the absolute sovereign and the only rightful God” (Kraemer, 1963; Theron, 1996:118). To God alone, praise and honour is due. Among “world religions”, it is Judaism, out of which Christianity developed, that has always been monotheistic in the sense of regarding the God the Jews believe in as the God of everyone. The God they initially believed in “was originally worshipped as a tribal God, Jahweh of Israel, over and against such foreign deities as Dagon of the Philistines and Chemosh of the Moabites” (Hick, 1990:6). It was monotheistic in the sense that the Jews worshipped only one God. Therefore, it is perhaps better to speak of the early Jewish religion as “henotheism rather than monotheism”. Monotheism stands for the existence of only one God, whereas henotheism stands for the worship of only one God (Deist, 1982:15; see also Kärkkäinen, 2004:35-36, 132, 134-138, 145, 148).

What added a universal dimension to Jewish monotheism was the perceived military victory of their God over other gods. In retrospect, they concluded that such a powerful God must in fact be the only God there is, who is the foundation of everything. “By His victories over the enemy YWH proved to be the only God” (Deist, 1982:34). With the era of the prophets, a new way of establishing the universality of God was introduced. This was instead of taking military conquests as the proof of God’s universal salvific will or His will to save all people, in order to demonstrate that God is God not only of Israel but also of all people. They “taught that although God had indeed summoned their own nation to a special mission as the living medium of his revelation to the world, he was not only their God but also the Lord of the Gentiles or foreigners” (Hick, 1990:6).

Even though in theory the Jews believed that their God was the God of all people, in their practice of religion they were still nationalistic. One only needs to read the Gospels to see how they still considered salvation as their own privileged right. Hartman reveals that there was a prevailing mentality among the Jews of Jesus’ time that the “Gentiles” could be sharers in the salvation that by right belonged to the Jews (Hartman, 1963:869). Many of Jesus’ parables, especially in Luke, who wrote for non-Jewish readers, confront this attitude. The parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-27), the narrative of the foreign leper coming back after healing to express his gratitude to God (Lk 17:11-19), the prayers of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Lk 18:9-14), as well as the parable of the transference of the vineyard from the Jews to the Gentiles (Lk 20:9-19), all emphasise this belief. It is really with this advent of Christianity that the universal salvific will of God finds clear expression, and



that there is a clear instruction from Jesus to act towards its realization: “Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Mt 28:19). Monotheism proper is the foundation of this instruction (Sipuka, 2000:189).

In trying to be faithful to this instruction, missionaries found themselves eager to introduce the Xhosa people to the “one true God”. Some of them sincerely believed that the Xhosa people had no knowledge about this God. Hastings tells us, for example, that Moffat, the first missionary among the Tswana people, “called the Xhosa people a nation of atheists and he quoted Van der Kemp (the first missionary among the Xhosa) in support” (Hastings, 1994:325). However, as the work of Hodgson entitled: *The God of the Xhosas* (1982) tried to show, when the missionaries arrived among the Xhosa people, the latter already knew about God. In looking at Hodgson’s work, it is clear that Moffat’s statement that the Xhosa people were a nation of atheists is true.

What is true, as this study has already attempted to illustrate in chapter three, is that the Xhosa people had no personal relationship with God, and therefore had no formal worship or supplication directed to Him. As the missionaries soon found out, the Xhosa people had some sacrificial rituals which were not directed to God, but to the ancestors. The missionaries perceived these sacrificial rituals as worship of the ancestors. Naturally, they opposed them with all their might because, as they perceived, these rituals offended the supremacy of God. In fact, missionaries saw sacrifices directed to ancestors as idolatrous, because ancestors were not only human beings but also “unsaved pagans”, as the Institute for Contextual Theology (ITC) suggests (ITC, 1985:23). They thus viewed them as misguided and false practices which had to be rejected in their totality. This was, and still is, particularly true of the Protestant and evangelical churches (Theron, 1996:25), which readily quote the Bible to support their position concerning sacrifices to the ancestors.

At best, Xhosa people’s sacrificial rituals were seen as something that could be purified, reinterpreted and incorporated into the Christian faith. This is particularly true of the Catholic Church, at least in principle (Theron, 1996:23-24). This approach, for example, would suggest that ancestors and sacrifices directed to them might be viewed in a similar way to that in which saints are viewed and related to. As can be seen, the first approach proposes total elimination of Xhosa people’s sacrificial rituals, while the second suggests their modification. The theological presupposition of the first approach is the idea that revelation has taken place exclusively in Christ, so that prior to contact with Christianity, there is nothing in other beliefs that can be taken as leading to God. There can thus be no “point of contact” between Christianity and “pagan” beliefs, and the only way to be saved is to completely abandon the latter in favour of the former (Knitter, 1985:80-87). The basis of the second approach is the belief that the grace of God is present among all people, and is perfected through the preaching and acceptance of Christian faith (Vat. II *Nostra Aetate*, Number 2).



6.4.6.2 Soteriology

Even if Xhosa people's sacrificial rituals in their traditional context had been directed to God and not the ancestors, they would still not be accepted because, according to Christian views, Christ's sacrifice on the cross is the only acceptable sacrifice to God. Thus, the missionaries would have seen Xhosa people's sacrificial rituals as competing with Christ's sacrifice. The letter to the Hebrews, which clearly states that the blood of "Bulls and the blood of goats are incapable of taking away sin" (Heb 10:5), and that Christ on the cross offered one single sacrifice for sins (Heb 10:12), would have been used as biblical proof against Xhosa people's sacrificial rituals. On a theological level, the concept of justification by faith alone and not works would have been used against Xhosa people's sacrificial rituals, as the Reformers did against the Eucharistic sacrificial system in the Middle Ages (Sipuka, 2000:190).

Since the missionary understanding of salvation placed emphasis "on individual conversion" (Staples, 1981:213), the salvation wrought by Christ through His sacrifice would have been seen by missionaries as being related to forgiveness of personal sins and unity with God after death. Such a view of sacrifice would require a total adjustment for a Xhosa person, because Xhosa people's sacrificial rituals are concerned with the relationship among members of the lineage, and not the relationship between an individual and God. As we have seen, it is also not concerned with life after death, but with "prosperity and happiness in this life" (Fast, 1994:19), in which even those who are dead continue to participate. Consequently, one could boldly say that for the Xhosa people, life is all about the here and now, because death is not viewed as "a distinct cessation of life but a continuation in another form, namely as an ancestor" (Fast, 1994:10).

For the Xhosa people, "salvation meant help in time of trouble, healing, fertility, protection from sorcery, witchcraft and evil spirits, and success in life's venture. It did not have to do with the salvation of the soul, but rather with prosperity and happiness in this life" (Staples, 1981:212). In spite of the influence of the Christian factors already mentioned, Xhosa sacrificial rituals have survived. As Lamla suggests, "the practice of sacrifice has to a certain extent withstood all these onslaughts" (Lamla, 1971:33). Therefore, it is necessary to now examine modern Xhosa people's understanding and practice of sacrifice, which stresses the effect of the communicative power of blood sacrifices.

6.4.7 Modern Xhosa people's understanding and practice of sacrifice

The current sacrificial ritual practice among the Xhosa people has been shaped by the factors mentioned above (Staples, 1981:241; Deist, 1982:15; Hodgson, 1984:21 etc). Social and environmental factors have had an effect on the physical performance of sacrificial rituals, while religious factors have had an effect on the understanding of sacrifice (Sipuka, 2000:18; Wilson & Mafeje, 1963:153). These two are not mutually exclusive because changes in the physical elements of sacrifice, namely the congregation, the officiator and



the sacrificial site, which are due to political, economical, social and environmental factors, cannot take place without somehow altering or changing the understanding as well (Staples, 1981:214). There is, therefore, an account of the conditions imposed by social factors. There is also an understanding of sacrificial rituals, which results from the beliefs about them (Raum, 1972:195). In the next few pages, this study will attempt to investigate what Xhosa sacrificial rituals have come to signify, as a result of their being performed in the modern context and influenced by Christianity.

6.4.8 Social factors and sacrificial ritual understanding

One of the limiting social factors imposed on today's sacrificial ritual performance is the scarcity of lineage members who traditionally formed the congregation of sacrificial rituals. As noted earlier, lineage members are substituted by clan members and Staple, speaking for the Bantu speaking people of South Africa as a whole, states that the congregation of a sacrificial ritual may even "be friends rather than kinsmen" (Staples, 1981:241).

Pauw confirmed this phenomenon among the East London urban Xhosa people in 1973. "Clan and lineage are not highly significant categories in the urban structure compared to neighbours and friends, churches, associations, and relationships at work" (Pauw, 1973:169). This practice could mean that the congregational dimension of sacrificial rituals is no longer determined by lineage membership, but by relationships that are significant to the one offering the sacrifice. This interpretation, however, has a problem in explaining how non-lineage members can participate meaningfully in an ancestor's sacrificial ritual with which they have no relationship (Sipuka, 2000:192).

The second possible interpretation could be that sacrificial rituals no longer include lineage solidarity, but are exclusively concerned with one's nuclear family and ancestor in whose honour the sacrificial ritual is performed. The presence of other people in this case would merely be to grace the occasion, otherwise there is no sacrificial significance attached to their presence. This possibility is confirmed by Staples, who states that the ancestor's "cult now functions as a homestead, or heart cult. In extreme cases, it has become a personalized cult of the individual and his/her ancestors" (Staples, 1981:240). This is a "minimal lineage segment" (Staples, 1981:40), the furthest ancestors being the grandparents. Otherwise, one's normal ancestors are one's dead parents (Mayer, 1961:151). Brenda Fassie, for example, visited the grave of her parents when she offered sacrifices in thanksgiving to her ancestors (Mtshali, 1999:63).

Social and environmental factors have also had the effect of displacing people from their places of origin, and thus removing them from the environment of their ancestors, which is the normal environment for the performance of sacrificial rituals. This has heightened the notion of the ubiquity of ancestors, which is witnessed during the *Ukuvula umzi* (open a house) sacrificial ritual, traditionally performed to inform the ancestors of one's new place of abode, and implying the ubiquitous nature of the ancestors. However, with more



people relocating as a result of political and economical factors, it has come to be taken for granted (Mayer, 1961:154-158).

This enables people to regard their present places of residence as suitable for sacrificial rituals. Mayer's informants tell us that ancestors "will follow a man whether he goes to Johannesburg or Ghana or England" (Mayer, 1961:151). This explains the increase of sacrificial performances in urban areas. For those who have not totally severed ties with their places of origin, even though "the city has already started to take on the shape of a permanent home" (Pauw, 1994:133), the original home is still the preferred place for sacrificial rituals. This is because while ancestors are ubiquitous, they "are thought of as hovering about graves near the cattle byre, and around the village of their descendants" (Staples, 1981:494).

Modernisation has heightened the role of ancestors as protectors, thus reducing their role as custodians of tradition and lineage solidarity. As a person finds himself or herself "alone" in the city, the lineage dimension of ancestors is overshadowed by the need for personal protection. "If previously they (ancestors) were clothed with stern authority and armed with severe sanctions to keep the young in place and steady for the future responsibility, they would become now the ubiquitous guardian angels of a mobile society protecting persons in their precarious ventures in the city" (Staples, 1981:242). With regard to sacrificial rituals, this has had the effect of focusing the intention of sacrificial rituals more on personal protection and success than on lineage solidarity (Sipuka, 2000:193).

As a result of this change of focus, one perceives a proliferation of thanksgiving sacrificial rituals that have to do with personal successes in one's engagement with the modern world. McAllister argues that protection and thanksgiving rituals for the economic success of individuals serve to instill an understanding that one's economic success does not result from individual effort, but from the corporate effort of kinship members. Consequently, the fruits of one's success must be used to promote kinship solidarity and the traditional way of life (McAllister, 1981:41-49). While this may be true for migrant workers who maintain regular contact with their kinsmen, for those who have settled in cities, the focus would be on their thanksgiving sacrifice as individuals and on their ancestors (Sipuka, 2000:193). Among the thanksgiving sacrifices that have emerged, Raum lists the following: return from a journey, return from the mines, return from a court case and jail, and passing examinations (Raum, 1972:196-197). Wilson and Mafeje (1963) also mention winning a horse bet as a reason for a thanksgiving ritual. A big personal success is another reason for offering a thanksgiving sacrifice, as in the case of Brenda Fassie, who thanked her ancestors for her success in the music business. As Staples rightly observes, "ancestors" worship (sacrifice) is undergoing a process of individualization" (Staples, 1981:241).

In the traditional context, communication with ancestors took place through the channels built into the kinship system. Individuals had access to the ancestors through the lineage head, whose duty it was to address the ancestors on behalf of lineage members. The absence of these channels in



the city and urban environment has led to a situation in which individuals communicate directly with their ancestors. Many migrants said that, in town, if one cannot sacrifice to the spirits in order to have a person's affliction removed, one can pray to them instead. "In suffering of any kind of all you need to do is to speak to your spirits in the dead of the night, when no body sees or hears. You get up from your sleeping place and go outside, and talk to them silently, saying, "Why have you forsaken me, spirits of my father and grandfather?" (Mayer, 1961:155). The implications of this practice for sacrifice are that "the intermediary function of the regular officiator seems to fall away" (Staples, 1981:489), and personal prayer to the ancestors may at times be a substitute for the performance of sacrificial rituals. This is a new development in the understanding and practice of Xhosa sacrificial rituals, and which is due to social and environmental factors (Sipuka, 2000:194).

6.4.9 Understanding and practice of sacrifice as shaped by religious factors

This study now turns to a discussion of how religious factors have moulded Xhosa people's understanding and practice of sacrificial rituals. As already mentioned, since their contact with Christianity, the Xhosa people have continued to perform sacrificial rituals. It has been observed that there is unanimity among all writers that ancestral sacrificial vestiges can be detected, even among those Xhosa Christian people who claim to have completely abandoned their traditional belief system in favour of the Christian faith. Raum observes that most Xhosa Christians, for example, among whom he conducted his research, call the marriage sacrificial ritual *ukudlis'amas*i (to feed with sour milk), which traditionally served to introduce the bride to the ancestors of her groom, *idinala yomtshakazi* (bride's dinner). He then goes on to conclude: "there is very little doubt that the *idinala yomtshakazi* is a synthesis between Christian elements and the traditional *ukudlis' amasi*" (Raum, 1972:59).

It seems as though the word "*idinala*" (dinner) has become a euphemism for sacrificial rituals. "Dinner which involves ritual killings, often conducted secretly and with less supporting rituals than in customary ways, and which appears to serve rather traditional functions that are performed at weddings, the outdoor of babies and in connection with burial and post-burial ceremonies" (Staples, 1981:504-505). It is clear therefore that Christian influence has not eliminated sacrificial ritual performances among the Xhosa people, at least not completely. What is also clear, as Raum and Staples observe, is that, on account of the influence of the Christian faith, the understanding and practice of sacrificial rituals has changed: however, what exactly this understanding has changed into is not clear (Sipuka, 2000:195).

Research conducted by many writers has shown that some Christians do not camouflage Xhosa sacrificial rituals, but openly perform them for what they are. A survey by Oosthuizen among the Xhosa Christian people of "Victoria East, Middledrift districts, and in urban areas of Zwelitsha" (Oosthuizen, 1971:109), shows that this is true for all areas of the former independent homeland of Ciskei. The result of the survey showed that "Ancestor worship...is still practiced openly by 44% of the respondents" (Oosthuizen,



1971:113). In her research among the Xhosa people of the Keiskammahoek, Wilson also discovered that “Church members... sometimes undertake ritual killings in case of illness, in addition to wearing necklaces made from a beast’s tail hair” (Wilson, 1952:198).

In his research in an unspecified area among the Xhosa people, Pauw also concludes that “Christians perform sacrifices of propitiation, thanksgiving, sacrifices for children, and sacrificial rituals of accompanying and bringing back the dead, in which Xhosa people’s tradition predominates even in the formal aspects of the rituals” (Pauw, 1975:225). These Xhosa Christian people simultaneously embrace both the Xhosa and Christian sacrificial ritual traditions. The task that remains is to explain how people who have embraced Christianity can continue to openly perform Xhosa sacrificial rituals, considering the fact that these two are apparently opposed to one another (Sipuka, 2000:195).

It is also true that some Xhosa Christian people completely dissociate themselves from traditional sacrificial ritual performances, as demonstrated by the *Drum* magazine article on the initiation of boys, in which the sacrificial ritual was replaced by the reading of the Bible (*Drum*, Oct. 1999:12). In accordance with Oosthuizen’s survey, however, these constitute “a small percentage” (Oosthuizen, 1971:113). Some researchers also report that the first generation of Xhosa Christian people who settled in missions were expected to abandon their traditional beliefs (Wilson, 1952:129; Pauw, 1975:21). One wonders if they did so freely, or out of fear of being evicted from the mission. According to Manona, it may be inferred from this that it was more for the latter reason that they abandoned them (Manona, 1981:136), and Pauw explicitly observes that “some (missionaries) favoured the policy of expelling from mission those who failed to live a Christian life” (Pauw, 1975:207). First, the sacrificial rituals known as *idinala* (dinner) will be explained.

The *idinala* occasions include “baptismal dinner, bride’s dinner and sometimes mourning dinner (*idinala yokuzila*) after an elderly man or woman in the family has died. Also, a son who has returned safely from the towns may provide money to purchase food for a “thanksgiving dinner” [and] on all these occasions a goat, a sheep, or even an ox may be slaughtered” (Wilson, 1952:198). The grounds for suspicion are that these dinners are disguised. They are performed in similar circumstances to those in which traditional sacrificial rituals are performed. For instance, traditionally, when a child is born, the *imbeleko* sacrificial ritual is performed, whereas among Xhosa Christian people, when a child is born, a baptismal dinner is held. Traditionally, when a person dies, the *ukukhapha* sacrificial ritual is performed, while Xhosa Christian people observe a mourning dinner and the like (Sipuka, 2000:196).

It is for this reason that Raum explains them as a combination of Xhosa people’s sacrificial rituals with some elements of the Christian faith. Pauw clarifies them as “an adaptation” of Xhosa people’s tradition to Christian tradition through modification, which takes the form of the elimination of certain details or the simplification, change of name, substitution or



replacement of Western Christian forms by Xhosa people's forms (Pauw, 1975:225). When one looks at the intentions of some Xhosa people's traditional sacrificial rituals, and the intentions of some Xhosa Christian people's dinners, the explanation of the latter as being a synthesis makes sense (Sipuka, 2000:196).

There is, between the two, some complementarity in some of their intentions. One of the intentions of the *imbeleko* sacrificial ritual, for instance, is to make the child a full member of the lineage group. From a Catholic point of view, one could argue that the baptism dinner is a feast to celebrate the welcoming of the child through baptism into the Christian community. Raum observed that the *ukukhapha* (accompanying of a deceased person) sacrificial ritual, allegedly substituted by Xhosa Christian people with the *idinala yokuzila* (mourning dinner), was "even attended by European ministers" (Raum, 1972:179). According to Raum, this is because the *ukukhapha* sacrificial ritual includes the intention of ritual purification that "is a universal concern and not characteristic of pagan attitude" (Raum, 1971:88), and which is also shared by Christian tradition. There is thus a commonality of intention between the two.

The problem with understanding "dinners" as a synthesis of Christian faith and Xhosa people's sacrificial rituals is that not all Xhosa Christian people who hold "dinners" consider themselves to be synthesising their faith with the Xhosa people's tradition. Wilson's research in Keiskammahoek revealed the following: "Christians strenuously deny any connection between their feasts and occasions of pagan ritual..." (Wilson, 1952:198). The second problem is that even if Xhosa Christian people explain *idinala* as a synthesis of Xhosa tradition and Christian faith, it does not meet the requirements of a synthesis, which would normally involve a merging of two meanings. Pauw convincingly points out that *idinala* is not a synthesis but a superficial modification of traditional sacrificial rituals, which involves naming traditional sacrificial rituals and the altering of some of the ritual elements involved (Pauw, 1975:176).

A Methodist preacher interviewed by Pauw about *idinala* replied: "We no longer make *amadini* (sacrifices) for illness because the minister taught us that Jesus is *idini* for all our illness. When there is ill misfortune...it is said (by unbelievers) that the kinsmen of this house [ancestors] are complaining... A beast is slaughtered and they say *kuyanqulwa* (worship takes place). "School people" make *idinala* (dinner)...for misfortune...you make a dinner for your ancestors (*izinyanya*), you pray to God and to the ancestors" (Pauw, 1975:176).

The following response by an Anglican sub-deacon interviewed by Pauw reveals that *idinala* is a Xhosa people's sacrificial ritual trimmed of its ritual elements: "*Idini*" (sacrifice) is wrong because of the belief that it restores the patient's health. We have one *idini*, the one made by Christ a dinner is different and there is no objection to it, because it will be preceded by prayers, and the patient's health will be restored through prayer...When the "school people" slaughter they just have a sort of dinner without the small ritual details" (Pauw, 1975:176).



Xhosa Christian people should perhaps be taken seriously when they say that, in holding “dinners”, they are not camouflaging a “pagan” ritual, but are instead doing something new. What they are doing can perhaps be compared to what Christianity did when it took over some Jewish and “pagan” rituals and feasts, and used them to explain and ritualise its own beliefs. However, until Xhosa Christians, or should we say Xhosa Christian theologians, clarify what is being done when a “dinner” is held, the suspicion that “dinner” is a camouflaged Xhosa people’s sacrificial ritual will continue to persist. Here, after Pauw provides a succinct observation concerning the superficiality of the *idinala* concept “...Many Xhosa Christian people reveal that their objections to the traditional *idini* are of a supernatural nature. If the name *idini* is avoided, no Xhosa medicines are used, and the ritual meal takes the form of a dinner, served in a “civilized manner”...Missionary opposition to this traditional ritual caused it to be disguised or camouflaged, without fostering strong convictions about its incompatibility with Christian belief” (Pauw, 1975:177).

6.4.10 The dichotomous understanding of Xhosa people’s sacrificial rituals

Xhosa Christian people who openly perform Xhosa people’s sacrificial rituals while accepting the Christian understanding of sacrifice would be better described as “heterodox”, which when literally translated, conveys the meaning of simultaneously holding different opinions or beliefs. According to the dictionary, however, “heterodox” has the meaning of “holding unorthodox opinion” (New Webster’s Dictionary, 1971:709), with the emphasis being on “wrong” instead of “different”.

The word “dual” does not come close enough to explain this phenomenon, because “dual” means understanding the same reality in two different ways. For example, when being human is understood as being physical and spiritual. For lack of a better expression, one can use “dichotomous understanding” to explain the fact that Xhosa Christian people who openly perform Xhosa people’s sacrificial rituals understand them and Christ’s sacrifice as both being valid beliefs in their own way. There is thus no attempt to synthesise the two, because they are understood and explained separately (Sipuka, 2000:198).

The dichotomous understanding of sacrificial rituals is largely due to the difference between Christianity and Xhosa people’s belief system, in terms of their understanding of salvation. The Christian understanding of salvation, as introduced by missionaries, is largely concerned with being saved from one’s sins and given the grace to overcome sin in one’s pilgrim journey on earth, as well as being assured of a union with God after death (Hasting, 1994:270-271). Xhosa people’s understanding of salvation, on the other hand, as Hammond-Tooke crudely describes it, “is unashamedly this world” (Hammond-Tooke, 1974:318). The following description (already given) of Bantu speaking people’s view of salvation is also true of the Xhosa people, because they belong to this group: “For the Bantu, salvation means help in time of trouble, healing, fertility, protection from witchcraft and evil spirits, and success in life ventures. It doesn’t have to do with the salvation of the soul, but rather with prosperity and happiness in this life” (Staples, 1981:212).



The fact that as early as 1960, between forty and sixty percent of Xhosa people were already Christians, means that the Christian message of salvation had proved attractive to them. Obviously, there are other factors that contributed to the conversion of Xhosa people to Christianity. The eschatological dimension of salvation can be counted as one of the important contributing factors to Xhosa people's conversion because, although they saw death as a transition to the world of the ancestors, they nevertheless viewed it with fear and negativity. The efforts to establish the cause of death, when it occurs, through divining and taboos related to coming into contact with death's surroundings, suggests a fear and negative view of death by them. It is not surprising, therefore, that the missionary message of Christian salvation, which consisted of destroying death by ensuring everlasting life with God after death, struck a chord among the Xhosa people (Sipuka, 2000:199).

The political and economic factors that, as noted above, had and continue to have the effect of replacing traditional communality with individualism, also have their share in rendering eschatological personal salvation meaningful. This, however, did not wipe away the traditional Xhosa people's understanding of salvation. While the Xhosa Christian people embrace the Christian view of salvation, they simultaneously also hold onto their traditional views (Sipuka, 2000:200). Lungu ascribes the simultaneous holding of two opposing beliefs as being due to Xhosa people's logic [which] is weak and without defined boundaries. This is the reason why Xhosa people hold opposing views "with neither position nor experiencing any conflict" (Lunga, 1982:92-93). It is the researcher's opinion that simultaneously upholding opposing views cannot be attributed to Xhosa people's weak logic, when consideration is given to other writers' statements.

In the minds of Xhosa Christian people, these two views of salvation are not contradictory or mutually exclusive, but rather complementary. The Christian view of salvation deals with life after death, while the Xhosa view of salvation deals with daily needs and life crises. In this regard, Daneel deplores the one-sidedness of missionaries, who failed to address people's daily needs and problems as crucial factors that fuelled the formation of independent churches. Missionaries failed to preach the salvation of the entire man (Daneel, 1987:78).

Thus, the Christian view, as presented by missionaries, and the Xhosa people's view of salvation exist side by side, and each view is adopted according to the need at hand. If the concern is about daily practical needs, for example, the need for healing and material well-being, Xhosa people's sacrificial rituals are performed, while for eschatological needs, the Christian view of salvation is adopted. This is clear from the following response given by a Xhosa respondent when asked why he prays to God and to the ancestors: "For the thing of the spirit I pray to God, for the things of the flesh there are *amasiko* (customs) in connection with ancestors or *amawetu*" (Pauw, 1975:220).

This dichotomous understanding of sacrifice is also due to the pluralistic character of society, which, though constituted of different groups, nevertheless allows co-operation among them. What Staples says about



religion not being the “cause of sharp cleavage between groups” (Staples, 1981:234) among the Southern Bantu, is very true for the Xhosa people. Grounds for co-operation among the Xhosa people are not determined by religious convictions, as they are for the Jews and Gentiles, for example, but by neighbourliness and lineage membership (Pauw, 1975:42; Manona, 1981:37).

For example, a Christian who would not normally perform a sacrificial ritual might find himself or herself taking part in a sacrifice because of their neighbour or a kinship relationship with the person hosting the sacrifice. On the other hand, a non-Christian may be involved in a Christian service or a modified type of Xhosa people’s sacrificial ritual for the same reasons. As Staples observes, “there is a great deal of mobility between the groups on the spectrum accompanied by considerable religious interdependence. Christians are expected to participate in many traditional sacrificial rituals...” (Staples, 1981:253-255). Social co-operation, therefore, has a role to play in the way the modern Xhosa people perform and understand sacrificial rituals (Sipuka, 2000:201).

It would, however, be too simplistic to conclude this section on Xhosa Christian people’s understanding of Christian salvation as being exclusively concerned with the soul, and as unrelated to physical needs and daily life struggles. Pauw observes that a typical response from Xhosa respondents to the question about the content or intention of their prayer is: “I pray about my sins and troubles” (Pauw, 1975:80). This is a brief response, but it points to a comprehensive view of salvation. Pauw further states that, with regard to the question about prayers that have been answered, the following responses were given: “health and life sustenance; having a family and maintaining good fairly relations; and immediate economic necessities” (Pauw, 1981:80).

With regard to specific material needs, fulfilled prayers included the granting of the following: “Good crops, having stock, obtaining a mechanical planter, finding a job, success in applying for pension, and a gift of clothes...” (Pauw, 1975:80). It shows that some Xhosa people perceive Christian salvation as, after all, also relevant to this life. Pauw, however, hastens to clarify that “this is due to recent prayer movements... and were it not for their influence, prayer would be more predominantly concerned with finding strength and courage to endure hardships of life”. These prayer movements, known as *Abatandazeli*, focus upon a gift to pray for other people’s physical and material needs (Pauw, 1975:81).

The performance of Xhosa people’s traditional sacrificial rituals by modern Xhosa Christian people can also be ascribed to the general quest of indigenous people of South Africa to reclaim their African identity, which includes regaining customs that were labelled as pagan and savage by the missionaries. These customs, which include communication with the ancestors through manifold sacrificial rituals, are seen by black South Africans in general, and by Xhosa people in particular, as instrumental in asserting their uniqueness and equality in the presence of those who previously regarded them as inferior. They are also seen as instrumental in providing a religious and political perspective that is informed by African experience.



Thus, as Manona points out, “the resurgence of the ancestors belief and its corresponding cult has not only a religious and symbolic significance, but also it exhibits a clear political dimension” (Manona, 1981:37).

This positive view of African customs, which includes Xhosa people’s sacrificial rituals, has led to some attempts to give a biblical and theological justification for the performance of Xhosa sacrificial rituals. Biblical justification includes reference to the commandment to honour one’s parent (Ex 20:12), so that ancestral sacrificial rituals, if seen as honouring the ancestors, are not perceived as being incompatible with the Bible (Lungu, 1982:44). It is also justified by appealing to Jesus’ statement in Matthew 5:17 that He did not come to abolish but to fulfill the law. The conclusion of this appeal in Matthew 5:17 is that Xhosa people’ sacrificial rituals do not contradict biblical teaching because “Christ did not abolish the Xhosa people’s customs but it is the church that rejects them” (Lungu, 1982:45). It is quite obvious that these texts cannot go far in attempting to make Xhosa people’s sacrificial rituals incompatible with the Bible. This is even more so, considering the fact that, when compared to other biblical texts quoted with regard to Xhosa people’s sacrificial rituals, they are found to carry less weight (Lungu, 1982:43).

Theologically speaking, the justification for Xhosa people’s sacrificial rituals is largely based on a clarification of the analogous nature of their sacrificial rituals to the doctrine of the communion of the saints. One aspect of the doctrine of the communion of the saints concerns the nature of the church as having three divisions, namely the pilgrim church on earth, the suffering church in purgatory, and the triumphant church of the saints and angels in heaven. This doctrine further integrates these divisions into one church, on account of the unity of faith, and these divisions are supportive of one another. The pilgrim church can thus appeal in prayer to the triumphant church, while the former can also join the latter in praising God and in praying for the suffering church in purgatory (CCC 994-958).

The theological justification for Xhosa people’s sacrificial rituals is argued along the same lines of communion and mutual support. Just as the appeal to the saints for prayer expresses support between the living and the saints, so Xhosa people’s sacrificial rituals express mutual support between the living and the ancestors. If the analogy between the saints and ancestors has a purely comparative purpose in suggesting that, just as some Christians appeal in prayer to saints for support, so Xhosa people appeal to ancestors through sacrificial rituals for support, then the analogy may be regarded as valid. However, if the intention is to interchange between the two, then the analogy is invalidated, because many writers do not attach any similarity of meaning to the two (Sipuka, 2000:203). See Staples (1981) and Lungu (1982) for a more detailed discussion in this regard.

In this regard, there is a need to understand that the criteria for becoming an ancestor are different from those for becoming a saint (Lungu, 1982:88). Therefore, saints cannot become ancestors, and ancestors cannot become saints (Lungu, 1982:88). On the other hand, there is a difference between the intention of appealing to the saints in prayer, and the intention of appealing to the ancestors through sacrificial rituals. Sacrificial rituals in honour of the



ancestors are meant to enhance mutual responsibility, traditional norms and moral taboos among lineage members. An appeal to the saints in prayer, on the other hand, has a universal character, in the sense that it is relevant to the church as a whole, which is wider than a lineage group. While it is true that popular devotion to saints includes a concern for earthly wellbeing, theologically speaking, it is seen as a concern for helping individuals to grow in grace and in their personal union with God (Sipuka, 2000:204).

Staples further states that prayer can be addressed to the souls in purgatory, because when they “enter heaven they will gratefully remember, before God, those who made intercession for them and in turn intercede for grace and blessing on their behalf” (Staples, 1981:281). According to his argument, Xhosa people’s sacrificial rituals may be seen in a similar way as an offering to one’s ancestors in anticipation of their benevolent response to one’s offering. Staples’ affirmation that prayer can also be made to the souls in purgatory in the hope that, when they get to heaven, they will remember those who prayed for them, may be true on the level of popular piety. On the level of official teaching, however, it finds no support at all. The official teaching of the Catholic Church concerning souls in purgatory is that they cannot be of any use to the living. On the contrary, they are the ones who are assisted by the living (CCC: 1032). There are no grounds for an analogy, to say nothing about a similarity, between souls in purgatory and the ancestors. Souls in purgatory are prayed for, while ancestors are honoured and appealed to through sacrificial rituals (Sipuka, 2000:204). One doubts whether all this would find any biblical support.

The idea that Xhosa people’s sacrificial rituals have God as their ultimate object is widespread among proponents of continuity between Xhosa people’s belief system and Christianity. Soga, a Xhosa Christian who is considered to be an authority on Xhosa people’s customs, states that God is worshipped “through the medium of *iminyanya* or ancestral spirits, who in the unseen world are nearer to Him, and know more than men on earth (Soga, 1931:150).

Most of the Xhosa Christian people interviewed by Pauw clarified the fact that the relation of the ancestors to God and the living is almost identical to that of the saints to God and the living. “The ancestors can speak to God and ask things of Him. They live with God. They are always with Him. They can ask things for us, because they are near God” (Pauw, 1975:218). However, with all the best intentions of accommodating the ancestors and accompanying sacrificial rituals within the Christian faith, it has to be said that the communion of the saints is not a viable model for this purpose, because the meanings attached to the ancestors and the saints differ (Lungu, 1981:81).

6.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, an attempt has been made to describe and analyse modern Xhosa people’s sacrificial rituals. The sources consulted have been drawn from the Eastern Cape, considered as the traditional geographical area of Xhosa speaking people, and in which they are still concentrated today. It is



therefore hoped that the results of this research will truly apply to most modern Xhosa people in particular, and other Bantu people of South Africa and black Africans in general.

This study began its argument by singling out reported cases of sacrificial rituals that can concretely and objectively prove that sacrificial ritual performances are still taking place among modern Xhosa people. In order to provide a broader and more concrete picture, it was decided to consult research conducted specifically with regard to modern Xhosa sacrificial rituals. The results obtained sanction both continuity and syncretistic discontinuity between traditional and modern performances and understandings of sacrificial rituals. With regard to continuity, it was observed that most of the sacrificial rituals performed in the traditional context continue to be performed in the modern setting as well (Sipuka, 2000:205).

Syncretistic discontinuity, not really complete discontinuity at all, between traditional and modern sacrificial ritual performances was emphasised with regard to the way in which sacrificial rituals are performed and understood. It was pointed out that the rationale behind this discontinuity was not immediately clear, and this propelled the researcher to consider the factors that have influenced modern Xhosa people's sacrificial rituals, with the intention of obtaining clarity in this regard. Factors that have shaped modern Xhosa people's understanding and sacrificial ritual performances were identified as political, economic, social, environmental, ideological and religious in nature. They can be broadly categorised as socio-environmental and religious factors (Sipuka, 2000:205).

Social factors were seen to have both eliminatory and modificatory effects on Xhosa people's sacrificial ritual performances and understanding. Social circumstances have at worst rendered some sacrificial rituals, such as national sacrificial rituals, impossible to perform, and at best made some sacrificial rituals difficult to perform. They have also had major modification effects on performances and understanding of sacrificial rituals. People's exodus from their birthplaces and scattering due to political and economic factors, has contributed to the reduction in Xhosa people's unparalleled sacrificial rituals (Sipuka, 2000:205).

As was pointed out in chapter four, traditional Xhosa people's sacrificial rituals were meant for uniting lineage members. In the modern era, the attendance of lineage members at a sacrificial ritual has become something desirable. Consequently, on such occasions, much effort is made to inform as many lineage members as possible. At this level, it may be said that modern sacrificial rituals constitute mechanisms for undoing the destabilising effect of modernity, which weighs upon lineage members. McAllister observes that sacrificial rituals deal "with identifying cognatic and affinal links, clarifying uncertain relationships, exchanging information about the genealogical and physical locations of distant kin, conveying kinship information to the young people and creating an 'imagined' kin community for those present" (McAllister, 1997:285). As has been seen, however, this does not always work, given the fact that some lineage members sometimes fail to attend sacrificial rituals (Sipuka, 2000:206).



The destabilising effects of modernity on lineage members, and the strain involved in gathering them together, has begun to transform the Xhosa sacrificial ritual congregation from a lineage to a nuclear family affair. Staples predicts that, over time, it might even become a one person affair (Staples, 1981:241). Circumstances imposed by socio-environmental factors cause one to decide on one's own when, how and with whom to perform a sacrifice. If circumstances do not allow for sacrificial ritual performances, a personal address to the ancestors in the form of a prayer takes precedence over the customary one. When conditions are such that lineage members cannot attend sacrificial rituals, important friends of the person offering the sacrifice, as well as clan members, make up the congregation.

This phenomenon leads one to draw the conclusion that modern Xhosa people's sacrificial rituals have mostly become a family or personal affair, because traditional and modern understandings of sacrificial rituals continue to overlap. The increasing emphasis on the personal aspect of sacrificial rituals among modern Xhosa people now lies on thanksgiving sacrificial rituals for personal success, as some of the press reports used as examples show. The individualisation of Xhosa people's sacrificial rituals has engendered a situation that has rendered a clear categorisation of these sacrificial rituals difficult, because they sometimes appear to be fused together in conformity with the wishes and circumstances of the individual. It has also become difficult to identify the ritual elements involved in Xhosa people's sacrificial rituals, because individuals reduce or increase rituals, as dictated by their understanding and situation (Sipuka, 2000:207).

Christianity has had both the effect of elimination and superficial modification of Xhosa people's sacrificial rituals. The mutually exclusive views of Christianity and the Xhosa belief system concerning sacrificial rituals have driven a few Xhosa Christian people to relinquish their traditional sacrificial rituals, while others continue to adhere to them (that is why we speak of syncretistic discontinuity) in a disguised manner, under the name of "*idinala*" (dinner). Apparently, the "*idinala*" concept can be viewed as a synthesis of Xhosa and Christian people's understanding of sacrificial rituals, or as an adaptation of the former to the latter. However, a close analysis shows that it has become difficult to convincingly explain what takes place at "*idinala*", because the principles with regard to sacrificial rituals involved in both beliefs contradict one another. This poses a great challenge to Xhosa theologians who have to clarify this amorphous "synthesis" (Sipuka, 2000:207). This study's contribution to research in this area will hopefully be clarified at the end of this dissertation.

Other Xhosa Christian people, who represent the majority, have opted for a syncretistic attitude by adhering to both Christianity and their traditional belief system, without synthesising them. This has resulted in a dichotomous understanding of spiritual and physical salvation, as respectively offered by Christianity and the Xhosa people's traditional belief system. These are not contradictory, but rather complementary. This also results from the culture of co-operation based upon a religious affiliation, as well as on neighbourliness and kinship affinity (Sipuka, 2000:207). As illustrated earlier on, non-



Christians participate in Christian functions and vice versa. Some timid attempts have been made to provide a Christian explanation for Xhosa people's traditional sacrificial rituals, but the model used, namely the biblical commandment to honour one's parents and the communion of saints, has proved extremely ineffective.

Consequently, a viable solution would now be for Christianity to develop, within the Xhosa people's contextual milieu, an integrated view of salvation that would satisfy both spiritual and eschatological needs, as well as physical and daily human needs. Therefore, this chapter can conclude its investigation in the area of modern Xhosa people's sacrificial rituals by saying that the nature and purpose of modern Xhosa people's sacrificial rituals cannot be verbalized with any precision. This lack of precision may be attributed to the traditional understanding of sacrificial rituals that continually overlaps with the emerging understanding resulting from the factors discussed in this chapter.

Two types of understanding of sacrificial rituals continue to be simultaneously upheld: some Xhosa Christian people adhere to both Xhosa and Christian views regarding sacrificial rituals. They also continue to exist as unspecified syntheses through "*idinala*". The emerging understanding seems to point to a narrower and more personalised understanding of sacrificial rituals among Xhosa people. The concept of ancestors as objects of sacrificial rituals is now being gradually restricted to one's parents, and the congregation to one's family or homestead members. It can be predicted that, individually speaking, ancestors as sacrificial ritual objects and the sacrificial ritual congregation are now being determined not by blood and kinship affinity, but by voluntary association, for example, churches and clubs etc.

As previously mentioned, this appears to be the direction that Xhosa sacrificial rituals are taking, without completely getting rid of elements from the traditional sacrificial understanding. It thus remains an amorphous and fertile ground for new research by anthropologists and theologians. In this regard, especially in modern South Africa, the influence and power communicated by these diverse sacrificial rituals that permeate the core of the Xhosa people's lives, remain undeniably in existence: reciprocal or reversible affinity between the departed and the living, as well as renouncement and upholding of syncretistic attitudes, have respectively attributed to a few modern Xhosa Christians and the majority of Xhosa traditionalists, including high-ranking political authorities in South Africa, all emphasising the powerful impact of sacrifices upon the black South African community.

The findings concerning the performance and understanding of sacrificial rituals with regard to both traditional and modern Xhosa people may be generalised to the rest of the Bantu tribe of South Africa, namely Pedis, Zulus, Tsongas etc, since they all represent blood affinity, as was pointed out in chapter three of this dissertation. It goes without saying that social and environmental factors that have impacted on modern Xhosa people's performance and understanding of sacrificial rituals may generally apply to other South African Bantu tribes. However, there are still some similarities and differences between tribes. The following chapter will provide some examples of sacrifices from elsewhere in Africa and their impact, as well as their



communicative effect. This is indeed crucial in an attempt to show how the communicative power of sacrifice is shown in the various contexts considered in this dissertation.



CHAPTER SEVEN: SOME EXAMPLES FROM ELSEWHERE IN AFRICA

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapters four, five and six of this dissertation, the researcher has undertaken to investigate blood sacrificial rituals among traditional Xhosa people, including Zulu and Tsonga ideas, as well as sacrificial rituals in the Xhosa modern setting. The findings are relevant to all Bantu people in the modern context, including Zulus and Tsongas in the South of the Sahara. This chapter includes a few examples from elsewhere in Africa for the sake of comparison and counter-checking. It is hoped that the information on blood sacrificial rituals in other parts of Africa will enhance the investigation concerning whether or not sacrificial rituals communicate some viable power to those involved in their performance. Therefore, this chapter will discuss Yoruba sacrificial practices (purpose of sacrifices) and sacrificial worship among the Ibibio people of Nigeria for the sake of comparison. Finally, the sacrifice made by Christ versus human sacrifices in Africa will be discussed, and conclusions will be drawn.

7.2 YORUBA SACRIFICIAL PRACTICES

The idea and institution of the concept of sacrifice are deeply grounded in Yoruba people's thoughts and practices. Sacrifice is an integral part of the traditional beliefs of these people. Yoruba people call sacrifice *ebo* and to sacrifice is *ruebo*. Positively speaking, a sacrifice is meant for gaining the favour of spirit beings for the preservation and continuation of life. People therefore maintain communion and good relationships with these spiritual beings.

7.2.1 Purposes of sacrifice

Sacrificial practices that were observed will help to clarify the manifold purposes of sacrifice:

- To appease spirits;
- To appease witches;
- To propitiate the powerful divinity of peace and war, who was at the same time a farm supervisor;
- To ward off affliction from witches, blood, oil and cold corn were offered to a *babalawo* (Ifa priest);
- To find favour with the divinity controlling fate, and to be bestowed with good fortune;.
- To offer to the ancestors as "an affirmation of the existence and power of the departed ancestors". The sacrificial ritual is also meant for their invocation, begging them to be present, to hear the offerer's supplications, and thereafter "grant his requests;
- To offer a sacrifice to some divinities and ancestral spirits for good crops. The supplicants brought the material for sacrifices (Awolalu,



1973:82-86). There were also human scapegoats who were sacrificed on behalf of their fellows (Awolalu, 1973:88).

The immolation of the victim, which is the climax of the sacrificial ritual, is accompanied by relaxation and jubilation. Yoruba people believe that the life of the animal is in the blood - when they offer the blood, they know they are offering the life of the animal to the divinity and the intention behind this is to get life in exchange, or to enjoy long life and prosperity. (Awolalu, 1973:90-91).

Other uses of blood include applying it to the body of the suppliant, in order to purify and strengthen it. Substituted victims are entirely offered to the divinities, and no cannibalism is witnessed among the Yoruba people. Where a cow plays the role of a human being's substitute, it is abandoned before the divinities, where it rots completely. This practice is still observed in Ilawe during the Oro Olofin festival, in which sacrificial cows are offered to Obalufon (a deity among the Yoruba people). Any priest who dares to cut a portion of the sacrificial cow for food will swell and die (Awolalu, 1973:91-92).

It is interesting to note the striking similarities between Yoruba people's sacrificial rituals and those of other South African people, namely the Xhosas, Zulus, Tsongas and other groups of Bantu people living in South Africa. Sacrificial rituals permeate the entire life of these people, and are ejaculatory and materialistic in nature. They mediate the communion between the living and the dead, and serve as a means of communication with them, in order to plead for protection, healing, fertility and prosperity. They also possess the power to achieve individual or community purification, and therefore establish harmony and good relationships between the living and the supernatural spirits, divinities and ancestors. However, there are also some differences.

Yoruba people believe that, besides a multitude of divinities, ancestral spirits, and various spirits and forces, all sacrifices are mainly offered to the Supreme Being. Among Xhosa people, there is a debate as to whether sacrifices are exclusively offered to God, only to the ancestors, or to both. Yoruba people offer foodstuff, palm oil, snails and individual cloths, besides animal and human sacrificial victims. These things are not emphasised much among Xhosa people. Therefore, in order to obtain more information about the power that sacrificial rituals have injected into African communities, a glance at the Ibibio people's sacrificial rituals will be useful.

7.3 SACRIFICIAL WORSHIP IN IBIBIO TRADITIONAL RELIGION

The Ibibio people constitute the sixth largest group of people, spread over ten tribes in the South Eastern part of Nigeria. Their main occupations include "farming, trading, and fishing". Ibibio sacrifices can be understood when one understands their "theoretical conception of the world and of life". According to Ibibio people, the world has two aspects: the visible aspect, which "is the domain of ordinary human experience", and the invisible aspect, "the domain of God, the gods and the spirits". They believe in a life cycle. People are born in the visible world, get old and pass into the invisible one. They are



reincarnated as babies in the first world. Birth and death are moments in the life cycle. However, premature birth, twin birth, birth with feet first, death by accident, death of young persons, and even serious illness, are seen as abnormal and are attributed to the actions of evil, invisible powers (Ukpong, 1982:162). Sacrificial types include annual sacrifices, agricultural sacrifices, life cycle periodic phases and sacrifices (naming, puberty, death and ritual initiation) and installation sacrifices (Ukpong, 1982:162-170).

7.3.1 Religious significance of sacrifices

This section will attempt to explain the meaning of rituals and symbols in Ibibio sacrifices:

- A sacrifice is a means of communication with invisible beings supposedly living among men. Processes of communication in all rituals are symbolic, not verbal, and they consist of paying homage to them, returning thanks, and asking for favours.
- A sacrifice is a gift to invisible beings.
- A sacrifice is a means of expressing friendship and communion with good spirits, and a means of warding off evil spirits.
- A sacrifice is a means of atonement: Ibibio people categorise offences into three main categories: an offence (sin) according to the cosmic order violated by the act of sinning, adultery, which violates the sacred order, and other sins such as stealing, which only violate the profane order.

An offence possesses dimensions that might be classified as individual, social and sacred. The individual dimension instills guilt, and encourages the person to repent. The social dimension involves the context of the entire community and vice versa (Ukpong, 1982:187). Ibibio people believe that the entire community is liable for an individual's hidden sin and vice versa. Sacrifice is the only way to restore the disrupted order and reestablish friendship with the spirit world. "Atonement by sacrifice involves repentance (public acknowledgement) and reparation at the social and sacred levels" (Ukpong, 1982:187). Ibibio people have twenty-eight different types of sacrifices in different life situations, with an element of *do ut des*. The praxis and theoretical conception of the sacrifice are the deepest religious expression of the Ibibio people (Ukpong, 1982: 182-187). Therefore, it is important to take a look at the sacrifice of Christ and human sacrifices in African culture.

7.3.2 Christ's sacrifice and human sacrifices in African culture

Some examples concerning human sacrifice among the people of Nigeria can help to communicate the event of Christ's sacrifice in particular cultures in a way that is understandable to the people in these cultures. The following examples of blood sacrifices are closely related to Jesus' death, and can shed more light on the appreciation of Jesus' supreme sacrifice. Eleguru offered himself as a priest and sacrifice on behalf of his people. There are some similarities and differences between Jesus' and Eleguru's deaths: Jesus is "the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29). Eleguru's



supreme sacrifice is comparable to Jesus' supreme sacrifice in that both sacrifices constitute a demonstration of the greatest love a man can have for his friends. The only difference is that Jesus' death was divinely ordained and exempt from all divination paraphernalia. The evangelist Saint John declares: "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lays down his life for his friends" (Jn 15:13). Both Jesus and Eleguru were aware of the dangers their people were faced with to some degree (Ubrurhe, 1998:211).

Jesus as God incarnate sought to meet the real needs of His people, even beyond the physical life. His knowledge was of a greater dimension than the mythological knowledge possessed by Eleguru, whose sacrificial death was mainly concerned with alleviating the enemy of man's physical and material property. As already mentioned, these two sacrificial deaths possess salient differences in terms of their significance, both extrinsically and intrinsically. Jesus' sacrificial death was aimed at doing the will of God (Heb 10:7, 9) and giving eternal life to whosoever believed in Him, restoring him to fellowship with God (Ubrurhe, 1998:211).

Eleguru's sacrificial death fails to meet his people's real need, which the supremacy of Jesus' death proclaimed over the self-willed death of Eleguru. Jesus' death meets the real need of men universally, but Eleguru's death only meets the physical need of his people. Jesus, the God-man, realised that if human beings kept on living with their sins, they would be thrown into eternal damnation, whereas Eleguru "feared the complete annihilation of his people by the annual genocidal deluge". Both were driven by the need to save their people from impending danger, and intervened by heroically paying the ultimate price through self-sacrifice. "Jesus at one stage prayed that the cup (passion, suffering, crucifixion and death) be removed from Him, but finally He resigns His case to the Father by saying: "Father, if it is your will, remove this cup from me; nevertheless, not my will but yours be done" (Lk 22:41). Mark's Gospel renders it as: "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Take this cup from me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what you will" (Mk 14:36).

However, Eleguru's death differs from that of Jesus, even though it was appreciated by Nigeria natives of his area, who later testified how it stopped the deluge of the lagoon river. His posterity was exempt from paying taxes for many years. Jesus' death was not comprehended by His people, the Jews, except for His disciples (after resurrection). Eleguru's salvific work was realised eschatology (here and now), while Jesus' was "realized and futuristic eschatology" (Ubrurhe, 1998:212). There is one important element here to be kept in mind - Dr. Ubrurhe says that Eleguru's story is a myth. In a myth, it is very easy to put things together and reach a desired conclusion. In this comparison, there is a need not to lose sight of the fact that Jesus was a historical figure who exercised an influential ministry among the people of His time, both by His teaching and His way of life. One can also find it complicated to compare a mystical and fictitious individual with a person who has really existed.

The Jews refused to acknowledge the suffering Messiah, because of their obsession concerning the reigning Messiah. They closed their eyes and



refused to acknowledge Jesus' resurrection, not because of the falsity of that miraculous fact, but because of their pride and lack of belief. They were fully convinced of Jesus' death, burial and resurrection, as the bewildered Roman soldiers gave them an irrefutable report. The claim that Jesus' disciples had stolen His body was a self-protective tactic and a defence mechanism, as no investigation was conducted to arrest the culprits, who were known to the priests, all the Sanhedrin members and the Jewish public (Ubrurhe, 1998:212).

In any case, this study finds the comparison by Dr. Ubrurhe to be weakened by the inequality of these two figures, both in essence and mission. Eleguru's story has no mission at all, no gospel proclaimed, no cross, but only appears to be a publicly committed suicide. Jesus was caught by the Jews, taken to court and sentenced to death, according to Old Testament prophets. He even gave a prediction about His death – ie. that He would die and rise up again on the third day. The literal fulfillment of His prophecy is irrevocable proof of His Messianic redemptive work and deity. The New Testament synoptic Gospel placed an emphasis on the futuristic aspect of eschatology, while John emphasises the present as well as the hereafter. Eleguru's salvific work was lost, but Jesus' disciples perpetuated His work, despite acute persecution (Ubrurhe, 1998:212).

This indeed constitutes proof of the fact that the whole matter enfolded into the divine's universal and eschatological prophetic scope. It was all in connection with the fulfillment of the Lord's great commission: "all authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded, and lo, I am with you always, even to the ends of the age" (Mt 28:18-20).

There is also another significant contrast between Eleguru and Jesus' sacrifices. Eleguru's death and salvific work were localised and mundane, whereas Jesus' death and salvific work had a universal and spiritual value that led to the eternal salvation of all believers. However, both deaths satisfy the three following conditions that are essential qualities of a sacrifice, namely:

- The presence of a victim,
- Consecration; and
- The surrender or relinquishing of the victim.

The Zulu writer, Sofola, says that: "any sacrificial act that lacks these qualities is meaningless and bogus" (Sofola, 1983:142).

From the moment at which the victim is being prepared for sacrifice, he is considered as sacred and treated as such. He goes before the divinities, not only bearing their guilt, but also to be their advocate. Before immolation, the priest and people confess their known and unknown faults, and send messages concerning their needs via the sacrificial victim. The sacrifice (he) is partly dressed in white and partly in grass, and is made to appear in public where worshippers circle around him, saying: "Take these away! Take



misfortune away! Take pestilence away! Take death away"! In so doing, people believe that their sins, misfortunes and calamities have been transferred to the victim, and are ceremoniously borne away by the scapegoat in the grove (Awolalu, 1973:87).

Although symbolism similarity is so salient and so strong between African traditional religion and Leviticus sacrificial systems, it should be emphasized that Leviticus sacrifices do not stem from human beings' acrobatic searches. African traditional religion sacrifices are conventions coming from men, whereas Leviticus sacrifices, as found in the Old Testament, with its priesthood, ordinances and regulations, including procedures and sacrificial victims, were a revelation from God, and were of the type which foreshadowed the once-and-for-all sacrifice of the God man, Jesus Christ. This all enfolded as a result of God's eternal, redemptive plan. Old Testament sacrifices were ordained by God, the Creator of the Universe, and were only performed for Him as their unique object (Lv 1-9, 11-16; 17-27:34). This is indeed true, as viewed from the Christian perspective.

The above section has attempted to examine the deepest core of sacrificial rituals in other parts of Africa, by showing how profoundly sacrificial practices have permeated African people's entire way of life. There exists a seemingly heterogeneous, total fusion between life and animal blood sacrifices or just sacrifices and life, which appear to be quasi-impossible to dissociate. This African religious fact witnessed throughout black Africa in general, and in black South African religious beliefs in particular, seems to point to forces originating from blood sacrifices that appear to throw into perpetual and desperate bondage those practically initiated into it. Who can stand the waves of violent killing of both animal and human sacrificial victims in African religiosity? This was also a striking reality in the case of Jewish bulls and goats, etc in the Old Testament sacrificial dispensation. These Old Testament typologies pointed to a future reality described in the New Testament dispensation, especially in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

7.4 CONCLUSION

The discussion in this chapter has dealt with blood sacrificial rituals among the Yoruba and Ibibio people of Nigeria. It has highlighted the purposes of sacrifices among the Yoruba and Ibibio people, including blood sacrifices, and their religious significance, as well as the sacrifice of Christ and human sacrifice in African culture. It goes without saying that any denial of the above sacrificial realities, that is, of their similarities and differences in type, function and purpose to the biblical sacrificial system of the Old Testament, would be somewhat ridiculous and self-defeating. From the Yoruba and Ibibio people to the Xhosas, Zulus and Tsongas and other black African religious groups in general, as well as other black South African groups, the fact of empowerment through sacrificial rituals is overwhelmingly unfathomable.

With regard to the objects of African sacrifices, one can only support one of the African theological scholars, Wilbur O' Donovan, concerning what Jesus, in His parable regarding the rich man and Lazarus says in Luke 16:19-31.



Deuteronomy 18:10-11 reads: "Let no one be found among you who... consults the dead. Anyone who does this is detestable to the Lord". O'Donovan remarks that: "Traditional beliefs and practices involving ancestral spirits are not from God. They are part of Satan subtle plan by which he kept many people from having a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ" (O' Donovan, 1996:222).

In most parts of the world, many people have claimed to see their ancestors or spirits from time to time. They may resemble a dead relative and even talk like them. Luke 16:24-26 and 2 Corinthians 5:8 teach that God assigns specific and definite places to the spirits of those who die, and restricts them to those places. They do not have the freedom to quit those places, unless they receive His special permission (1Sm 28:15-19). "Since demons have the power to appear to human eyes in any chosen form" (2Cor 11:14; Rv 16:13), and since demons are much more powerful and intelligent than people, it should not come as a surprise that demons have the ability to imitate the appearances and voices of dead relatives. "Why would demons imitate dead relatives? They do it to increase their deception of non-Christian religions, which leads men to trust in ancestors or other spirits, instead of trusting in Christ" (O' Donovan, 1996:224). This could be debatable, if viewed from other religious beliefs' perspectives. However, from the biblical standpoint, it might help reflective people from other religious beliefs to rethink their faith position, in comparison with what the Bible tells them.

The apostle Paul teaches that "...the things which Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice them to demons not to God, and I do not want you to fellowship with demons" (1Cor 10:20). This should sound an alarm to African sacrifice practitioners for them to understand that their sacrificial worship is debased of any valid, valuable and durable benefit, apart from making them stray far away from the one true and self-disclosing God of the Bible. Satan, in his subtlety, has been empowering animal sacrificial performers to form a strong, intimate and unbreakable bond with it, to the extent that people would prefer death rather than to be separated from their innate sacrificial rituals. Only turning to the powerful and unique sacrifice of Christ described in the New Testament can break the yoke of traditional blood sacrificial practices in the African religious context. The next chapter focuses on sacrifices and Christianity today, and will give more insight into our understanding of the practice of blood sacrificial rituals.



CHAPTER EIGHT: SACRIFICES AND CHRISTIANITY TODAY

8.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will endeavour to discuss sacrifice in the Christian context. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ will be discussed in the following manner: an overview, the sacrifice of Jesus and its theological interpretation, the Paschal mystery of Christ and its nature, Christian teaching with regard to the Eucharistic sacrifice, an exploration on scapegoatism, and finally, the drawing of conclusions. The Jewish influence was evident with regard to rational sacrifices in the “Corpus Hermeticum”. The Epistle to Diognetus classifies Jewish sacrifices as similar to pagan sacrifices. Diognetus ironically criticises the Jews, highlighting that the Creator of the Universe does not need anything. And, if ever need be, it at least would not be “all blood, and fat of whole burnt-offering”. Stephen and the Jerusalem Hellenizers held the same view. In front of the rising “tertium genus”, pagan syncretistic philosophers equated Judaism with Hellenism, and subsequently Christianity, based on the similarities in both traditional sacrifices. Celsus and Julian charged Christianity with deserting Hellenism and failing to adhere properly to Judaism. Replying to Celsus, Origen provided a summary concerning the treatment of Jewish sacrifices in Christian apologetics (Young, 1979:87).

Jewish sacrifices cannot be dismissed as being different from cult practices in other nations, simply because they are symbols of spiritual truths - now that the reality has been revealed through Christ, literal observance of ceremonial law is over, the proof being the destruction of the temple a few years after Christ’s crucifixion, death and resurrection. However, according to Julian, the proof-argument from the destruction of the temple does not hold water (Young, 1979:79-86).

Gregory of Nazianzus’ oration blew up Julian’s allegations against Christianity’s apologetic writings. The sacrificial system was introduced for the Jews in order to keep them away from idolatry, apostasy and “duritia” - insistence on the faithful fulfillment of sacrificial precepts was a method of ensuring obedience to God (Young, 1979:87-88). This obedience and humbleness are objectively concretised through Jesus’ vicarious death and self-sacrifice. Therefore, in order to avoid any kind of ungrounded criticism, a formal understanding of sacrifice today is very important. A better understanding of sacrifice today will effectively enhance one’s understanding of how the impact of the practice of sacrifice is dynamically shown in the New Testament and the church today. Therefore, this study will now take a look at the peculiarities and distinctiveness of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

8.2 THE SACRIFICE OF JESUS CHRIST: AN OVERVIEW

In this section, the sacrifice of Jesus will be briefly discussed, since the theme of this dissertation concerns sacrifice. This study cannot concentrate on



sacrifice in the New Testament, since the purpose is to focus on the sacrifice of Jesus in Hebrews. The sacrificial theme that occurs in the rest of the New Testament was researched by Young (Young, 1975; 1979), and what is being presented here is a kind of framework or background for what will be discussed with regard to Hebrews. The discussion here is based mainly on Young, who describes the nature of sacrifice in the New Testament, and the researcher will then attempt to link his research to that of other researchers.

The New Testament teaches that Christ's sacrificial blood effects expiation and discontinues Old Testament sacrifices, for it proved to be the best and final sacrifice (Heb 9:27-28; 10:1-14: we will not bother to analyse Hebrews 9:27-28 and Hebrews 10:11-14 at this stage, because they will be treated in detail in the exegesis of Jesus' sacrifice in Hebrews). This entails consequences for theology and the church today. The atonement and sacrifice led to the creation of subjective and objective theories of atonement. Abelard held that the cross was a subjective human experience, but Anselm maintained that it was an objective transaction, reconciling God with sinful man. Protestant tradition accepts that the Eucharist is a sacrifice, in the sense of worship offering, praise and thanksgiving (Young, 1975:85-98).

However, Eliade (1987:555-556) says that "the self-giving of Jesus in His death on the cross is understood as the definitive and perfect sacrifice that has the power in itself to effect expiation and redemption and that, therefore, makes all earlier sacrifices superfluous". He carefully shows the danger of the substantiation doctrine held by the Roman Catholic Church and Eastern churches (Catholic orthodox churches). The Reformers, spearheaded by Calvin, took the most radical stand and "rejected the official priesthood and the sacrificial dimension of the Eucharist" (Eliade, 1987:556).

Can sacrifice mean anything to us today? Primitive rituals played a role in the society of their time, and may also be relevant in helping to comprehend our own socio-cultural context, by replacing them with drama, novels, art, music and competitive sport. The offering of a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving is still viable in the Christian context today. Transformed by reinterpretation according to Christian ideas of fellowship with one another and with God, communion sacrifice remains a central part of Christian life and worship. Jesus' once-and-for-all sacrifice replaced the sacrifices of sin, which include expiatory, propitiatory and aversion sacrifices (Young, 1975: 124-130).

A study of God and sacrificial worship shows that all that man can do is to respond with repentance to the sacrifice of Christ. The fellowship meal and communion sacrifice are summed up here. Christ's continuing sacrificial work remains part of the sacrificial worship and sacrificial living of the Christian. Therefore, one can say that the concept of sacrifice is rooted in the deepest experience of Christian religion (Young, 1975:132-138). Thus, how can Jesus' sacrifice be interpreted theologically today?



8.2.1 Sacrifice of Jesus: theological interpretation

From the outset, in terms of the repudiation of Jewish sacrificial practices by Christianity, the scriptures were kept to support the new spiritual cult. It has been difficult to draw a line between typology and analogy, since many writers switch from one to the other almost imperceptibly. The Day of the Atonement and the red heifer ritual are interpreted in the Epistle of Barnabas. The Epistle of Barnabas asserts that the scarlet woollen cord in the red heifer ritual symbolises the blood of Jesus, and the purification rite, the forgiveness of sins. The two goats in the Day of the Atonement ritual stand for the two comings of Jesus Christ: one as a suffering Messiah, “the Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world” and another as the reigning Messiah in glory (Young, 1979: 145-148).

Jesus’ sacrifice is a covenant sacrifice. His sacrificial death inaugurated the ratification of a “New Covenant” with the “New Israel”. The New Covenant sacrifice had twofold purpose: to accomplish the typological representations of the Day of the Atonement and to establish a new relation with God (Young 1979:148-151). The above representations are equivalent to Pauline Passover sacrifice. He exclaimed: “Christ our Passover Lamb is sacrificed” (1Cor 5:7b). The shed blood of Jesus was “apotropaic”, the sacrificial Lamb was meant to redeem mankind from sin enslavement and to avert the evil power of the enemy (Young 1979:152-156).

Sometimes people can ask themselves what type of sacrifice for sin Jesus offered. Jesus’ sacrifice was expiatory, because it sanctified the sanctified ones. It was also an aversion sacrifice. Jesus conquered the tyranny of death, sin and the devil. It was not propitiation for God, as the sacrifice for sin was a ransom, an aversion sacrifice made to the devil in order to free mankind. Finally, the sacrifice of Christ was a propitiatory sacrifice because it confirmed the purpose of propitiating God by reconciling man with a wrathful and terrifying God. According to Eusebus’ *Domonstratio Evangelica*, the sacrifice of Christ is an anti-type of Old Testament sacrifices (Young, 1979:159-192).

In accordance with the Christian theology of sacrifice, Obstat claims that “the entire earthly career of Jesus was viewed as an expression of His inner self-giving to the Father... In accepting baptism from John, Jesus publicly dedicated Himself to human redemption and glorified His Father. All the actions of the public life translate Christ’s continuing attitude of self-oblation; these come to a climax in the Supper-Calvary-Easter event”. His blood shed for men ratifies the new covenant. The primitive Christian church seemed not to have known the import of Christ’s death and resurrection, but this was a consciously understood element of faith by the time Paul wrote his early letters. During modern times, the “validity of the mass as truly efficacious sacrifice” was questioned by Protestant reformers who insistently claimed that “Calvary was the all-sufficient and the unique sacrifice which rendered other sacrificial acts useless” (Obstat, 1967:837-842).

In modern times, New Testament literary scrutiny shows that the early church emphasised the link between the Eucharist and Last Supper, as well as



between the Eucharist and resurrection. However, in modern times, the Catholic Church's contemporary theology still holds onto the fact that "Christ is present in the Eucharist as the living word of God... Though the Eucharist is the sacrifice of Christ it is also the sacrifice of the church; Christ continues to offer sacrifice in and through the Christian community, for it is this act that gives expression in space and time to His enduring sacrificial attitude" (Obstat, 1967:839).

This study truly disagrees with this way of theologizing, because it denies us the permanence of our redemption, eternal salvation and forgiveness of sins through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. If we feel that we still have to offer some sort of sacrifice in order to supplement what Jesus has already done, then we are openly declaring the insufficiency of His sacrifice, that there is no difference between the old covenant and the new, that they are still coexisting and will therefore continue to coexist, and a complete denial of the New Testament teachings of Hebrews, chapters 9 and 10, as will be seen later in this dissertation. Before discussing Christian teaching on the Eucharistic sacrifice, this chapter will first look at Christ's paschal mystery, as well as its nature.

8.2.2 The paschal mystery of Christ and its nature

According to Chibuko (1999:5), the paschal mystery located within the entire framework of Christian mystery constitutes an integral part of the global Christian mystery. Broadly speaking, it comprises Christ' incarnation, birth, public life ministry, miracles, doctrine of passion, death, resurrection, ascension, Pentecost, position at the right hand of God, and final coming in glory (parousia). The narrow or strict nature of the paschal mystery only includes His passion, death and resurrection. This paschal mystery is persistently the "bedrock, the heart, the center and the foundation of the entire church life", and is also revealing of its divine nature, as it fits into God's eternal redemptive plan.

With regard to the paschal mystery, Obstat (1967:840) says that "Jesus, humanity's High Priest, offered Himself to God as an immolated victim. Thereby He fulfilled all the sacrificial foreshadowings of Calvary established by God's old covenant with men. He reconciled sinners to God by a lasting reconciliation and formed a new people cleansed by His redemptive blood. His sacrifice on Calvary inaugurated the Christian rite and aptly set forth its spirit sacramentally on the cross". Therefore, in order to broaden our understanding of the practice of sacrifice, it is necessary to spend some time looking at Christian teaching on the Eucharistic sacrifice.

8.2.3 Christian teaching on the eucharistic sacrifice

This study uses the cultural paradigm of the Sukuma goat sacrificial ritual to discuss Christian Eucharistic teaching. This raises the African cultural paradigm to a higher level, which brings Pope John II BB's Post-Synodal Apostolic "exhortation" to sound the following alarming: "The intimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration in



Christianity” is considered to be the first inculturation dimension (Lupande et al, 1998:249).

Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God supersedes the purification and expiation rituals of the African tradition. He is “...the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world” (Jn 1:29). He is not just a special lamb or goat, but is the “definitive, the ultimate, the One and Only Lamb of God. He died for all the people everywhere”. Consequently, the Eucharistic sacrifice perfects all sacrifices.

Another Sukuma song praises magical medicine that protects and cripples all enemies, granting boldness, security and life assurance. The Eucharist is Jesus’ “medicine for mortality” to His disciples. “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day” (Jn 6:54). Jesus Himself is the medicine of eternal life. The “Missal”, a prayer recited before partaking of the Holy Communion, stipulates the conditions and anticipations of the congregants. The Eucharist transforms people into Christ. Partakers of the Holy sacrament should be marked by their walk and praise Jesus for the inexpressible gift of the Eucharist (Lupande, 1998:248-249).

In conclusion, one can emphatically say that the sacrificial goat and self-reliant orphan lamb may be used as a step towards an inculturated Christianity in Africa. Pope John Paul II’s Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation asserts that: “inculturation includes the whole life of the church and the whole process of evangelization. It includes theology, liturgy, the church’s life and structures” (Nm 62). Let us move forward boldly so that the church in Africa is truly a new homeland for Christ (Nm 6 and 56), and Christ and the members of his body, is Himself African (Lupande, 1998:249-253).

These are beliefs from the Catholic tradition, and although they intimate some respect, the researcher does not agree with the whole self-defeating argument regarding the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, which reduces the supernatural sacrifice of Jesus to nothing, in both scope and effect. Equating Jesus’ sacrifice with world religions’ traditional sacrifices by the sole declaration that the sacrifice of Calvary is repeatedly performed during the Eucharist celebration constitutes an unbearable denial of the truth. Jesus declares His work in terms of the Calvary to be incomplete, unfit and insufficient. This study does also not share the theological belief that “inculturation” has to include the whole life of the church and the whole process of evangelisation: that is, theology, liturgy, the life of the church and its structures, and incorporating elements from indigenous traditional beliefs and practices into Christianity. In the researcher’s opinion, this would be unacceptable, because it might lead to a totally syncretistic and misleading situation in many aspects. This study will refrain from elaborating on this for the sake of the scope and purpose of this dissertation, in the hopes that further research will deal with this in an appropriate manner.

The whole idea connected with both Jesus and the cultural transformation of Christianity sound strange. Currently, the Catholic Church has concluded the long-term debate concerning the incorporation of African traditional religion



sacrifices into the liturgy (mass), with echoes of cheerful, resounding melodies. What heralding signal is this? Is animal sacrifice to become part of Roman Catholic Church mass? An article by Sexton (2002) introduces a challenging idea to all honest theological scholars, church leaders (priests, pastors etc) and ordinary congregants: “Human life International reported that some South-Africans are calling for ancestor worship and animal sacrifices to be included in the liturgy of the mass”. Archbishop Buti Tlhagale from Bloemfontein asserts that plans to incorporate African pagan rites into the Catholic Church mass are in line with the Vatican Council’s invitation to churches to inculturate Christianity (Sexton, 2002: 1).

The London Daily Telegraph reported that Archbishop Buti stated that: “Animal sacrifice has a special place in the scheme of things and is celebrated in almost all African families. We have kept it out of the church of God too long. It is time we welcomed it openly into the Christian family of the living and the dead”. The ACPSM (African Catholic Priests’ Solidarity Movement) has been fostering the so-called “inculturation” of the church in South Africa (Sexton, 2002:3). A video recorded in one case reveals a priest blessing goats and chickens during the mass. Afterwards, the animals were slaughtered and their blood poured into a hole outside the church. Archbishop George Daniel, leader of the Pretoria Archdiocese for twenty-five years, testified that animal sacrifices, including chickens and goats, were already being performed in the parishes of his diocese.

Archbishop Buti has five dioceses under him, with a population of 100,000, which includes four ethnic groups and races: black, white, Asian and coloured. About 100,000 Catholic believers are clustered into forty parishes, of which twenty-two each have a resident priest, assisted by seventy religious women coming from six different congregations, as well as twelve major seminarians. It goes without saying that he exercises a great deal of influence on these adherents, which he uses by all means possible to promote animal sacrifice during mass (Sexton, 2002:4). With this reality of the practice of animal sacrifice in contemporary Christianity, it is important to attempt to make a distinction between the Eucharist and sacrifice.

8.2.4 Eucharist and sacrifice

The New Testament never speaks of the Eucharist as a sacrifice. The reason for this appears to be the very close relationship between the new ritual and the death of Christ. The meaning of the death of Jesus has incorporated everything that the sacrificial language of the Eucharist says about atonement. However, the New Testament does not speak of the Eucharist as a sacrifice. To partake of the Eucharist is to partake of the sacrifice of Christ (1Cor 10:16): the early church adopted the term “sacrifice” for the Eucharist, in order to rebut the irreligious charges against them. The popular term for a cultic act was “sacrifice”. Thus, Christians adopted sacrifice for the Eucharist. The missal prayer stresses that the Eucharist is a sacrifice. The objective character of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross as an atoning sacrifice has been supplemented: “Our liturgy strongly affirms that the atoning work of Jesus’ sacrificial death should plead that we continually receive its advantages, and



deploy cultic language to describe the life His death has made possible” (Williams, 1984:6-7).

This is not essential to it, but when included, it draws out the symbolism of the Eucharist in certain ways. What liturgical text should appropriately accompany this “abortive gesture”? This study thinks that the emblematic elements containing symbolism do not represent a physical reality, a fresh sacrifice and fresh blood shed through ritual performances. A person’s partaking of them as mere remembrance reinforces the value, validity and sufficiency of Jesus’ physical self-sacrifice until He returns. His once-and-for-all shedding of blood, represented by the Holy Communion cup, and His body by the broken bread, symbolically covers the spiritual, historical and eschatological scope of the church (Williams, 1984:8-9). In the above discussion, one has come to understand how the Eucharist came to be considered as a sacrifice, although the New Testament never speaks of it as such. The next section will look at the excursus on Christian and traditional views with regard to human sacrifices.

8.2.5 Excursus on Jesus and human sacrifices in Africa

This study is not interested in a very broad or detailed discussion here, but basically wants to position itself, because hermeneutically speaking, its interests are not in small details but in those areas that overlap between Christian and traditional views. In the African context, the idea of a human carrier or someone who lays down his life for his fellow community members hinders the propagation of the message of the cross, because it does not enlighten people’s understanding concerning Jesus’ death for the following reasons:

- In most cases, human victims were slaves or people illicitly procured from distant places.
- Only the case of Eleguru, as discussed in chapter seven of this dissertation, may be meaningfully used to explicate Christ’s self-giving sacrifice for the atonement of people’s sins.
- None of the sacrifices would actually have replaced the victim, in the majority of cases in which human sacrifices were made.
- This being the case, it could be argued that no sacrifice really took place.
- Sofola confirms this by emphasising that whenever a slave or foreigner, rather than a prince or a child of a diviner, was used as the victim of human sacrifice in African religion, no sacrifice took place. It was only a hoax (Sofola, 1983:145).

Eleguru’s case reinforces the concept of a carrier or scapegoatism. It is similar to Jesus’ case, in that he also laid down his life for the sake of other people. For instance, Eleguru, as the diviner-priest, did not adopt an escapist, self-seeking attitude so that he might choose another person as a victim in his stead, but voluntarily gave himself as a victim, because of his self-effacing, selfless love. Like Jesus, Eleguru could sincerely claim that: “Greater love has no man than this that he lays down his life for the people”. This is true to some extent, since it is the view of the researcher that Eleguru’s case could only be



used as a material object to teach people about the self-sacrificing love of Jesus.

However, there is still a need to recall that Eleguru is a mythological figure, to whom human personality traits have been given. Therefore, divine love, Agape love's spiritual value and validity, is far removed from a novelish, unrealistic, limited, drama-like and mythologically constructed one. Other African communities might have had other heroes such as Iden and Molemi, who made great sacrifices for the deliverance or liberation of their people. These examples may be used as bridges or contact points to make the Gospel message intelligible to Africans. Such an approach by Christian followers or missionaries could have made the Gospel of Jesus Christ explicit and permanent in people's minds. Only this would have made Christ come alive within the African cultural experience and contextual setting (Ubrurhe, 1998:213). There is no need to overemphasise the power of these human sacrifices to bring about healing, effect harmonious relationships between the world of spirits and human beings, as well as promote peace, deal with epidemics and natural calamities, and enhance spiritual and material prosperity within African communities.

8.3 CONCLUSION

This chapter has briefly discussed blood sacrifices and Christianity today. It specifically undertook to discuss the sacrifice of Jesus as the climax and fulfillment of all Old Testament sacrificial schemes. It is the best sacrifice, and is totally sufficient and final. The theological interpretation of the sacrifice of Christ has been faced with the difficulty of drawing a line between typology and analogy within the realm of sacrificial practices. Jesus' sacrifice ratifies a new covenant with the new Israel. The purpose of the new covenant is to accomplish typological representations, and to establish a new relationship with God.

In its expiatory capacity, Jesus' sacrifice sanctified the sanctified ones. It was an aversion sacrifice and ransom, a propitiatory sacrifice and an anti-type of Old Testament sacrifices. The paschal mystery of Christ and its nature emphatically refer to the historical implementation of His eternal redemptive plan on earth, as well as its culmination. This chapter then discussed the Christian teaching on Eucharistic sacrifices. Nevertheless, the Catholic Church in South Africa today, represented by Archbishop Buti of Bloemfontein, has started the revivalism and integration of African traditional religion animal sacrifices into the Catholic Church mass, alongside the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. With regard to the Eucharist and sacrifice, this study has clarified the fact that the New Testament teaching does not view the Eucharist as a sacrifice. It was adopted as such by early believers, in order to escape from hostilities. An analysis of Eleguru's self-sacrificial and somewhat localised, redemptive act shows that it remains significant, though very inferior to, and incompatible with, Jesus' sacrificial act. It has a tremendous bearing on the topic of this dissertation, in that it highlights the powerful forces coming from sacrificial victims, both animals and human beings, Jesus' sacrifice releasing the most powerful and supernatural forces, as the best, most



sufficient and final sacrifice. The above material is relevant to this dissertation because it encompasses the idea of sacrifice today. After a theological exegesis on the theme of sacrifice in the Epistle to the Hebrews, information obtained in the above sections will help to show to some extent how the communicative power of blood sacrifice is viewed in the various contexts considered in this study.