

**THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS AND THE CONCEPT OF SACRIFICE
AMONG THE XHOSA: TOWARDS AN INCULTURATED UNDERSTANDING
OF THE EUCHARIST.**

By

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DECLARATION

I declare that

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is my own work and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and
acknowledged by means of complete references.


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SUMMARY

The last Supper Jesus had with his disciples on the night before he died on the cross is the foundation of a major liturgical celebration in the Catholic Church called 'the Eucharist'. One of the major designations of the Eucharist is that it is a sacrifice. The starting point of this work is that the sacrificial character of the Eucharist is not as meaningful and relevant for Xhosa people as it should be. The way forward is to study the Eucharistic and Xhosa sacrifices, compare them and suggest ways of rendering the Eucharistic sacrifice meaningful and relevant to Xhosa the people.

Although not conclusive, the New Testament gives a strong foundation for the sacrificial understanding of the Eucharist. The Eucharist, as interpreted through the Last Supper accounts, covers all the conventional intentions of sacrifice, i.e. propitiation, communion, thanksgiving and mutual responsibility. The Fathers of the Church affirm the sacrificial character of the Eucharist with varying emphases, but taken together, their understanding shows development of thought and complementarity of themes.

In the Middle Ages the most pronounced intention of the Eucharistic sacrifice is propitiation and post Tridentine theological reflection is informed by this mentality. According to modern and contemporary thought, Christ's death on the cross, which is sacramentally represented in the Eucharist, is not an act performed on our behalf to appease an angry God but God's act of love towards us. The emphasis is on self-offering to God as exemplified by Christ.

The Xhosa people still have regard for sacrificial rituals, but modernity has modified and sometimes changed their understanding and practice of sacrifice. The principle of God's universal salvific will and the doctrine of incarnation provide theological grounds for inculturating the Eucharist. Thus the inclusion of ancestors and use of cultural symbols in the celebration of the Eucharist may render it meaningful to Xhosa people. Relating the Eucharist to Xhosa culture will revitalise the communion element in Eucharistic sacrifice,

which element has been lost sight of through the centuries. Eucharistic sacrifice in its turn will help Xhosa Catholics to have a deepened understanding of sacrifice that extends beyond performance of rituals to include self-giving.

KEY TERMS

Eucharist; Sacrifice; Last Supper; Mass; Church; Xhosa; Ancestors; Saints; Modern; Missionaries; Comparison; Inculturation; Propitiation; Communion; Lineage.



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**TO THE PALLOTINE MISSIONARIES WHO INTRODUCED THE XHOSA
SPEAKING PEOPLE OF QUEENSTOWN DIOCESE TO THE CATHOLIC FAITH**

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INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

In my first four years of priesthood among the Xhosa, it became clear to me that while Xhosa Catholics know from the Catechism that the Eucharist is a sacrifice, its explanation and performance did not fit their own understanding and practice of sacrifice. This became clear to me when one day, after trying to explain the Eucharistic sacrifice in Xhosa terms of sacrifice, I got an overwhelming attention of the congregation.

When the Eucharistic celebration was over, a good number of them still came to say that they have, for the first time, understood that the Eucharist is a sacrifice. My success was due to the language I used. While I felt satisfied about having found a way of explaining the Eucharist as sacrifice, I continued to wonder whether they were experiencing it as a sacrifice and whether they were perceiving it as responding to the needs that a sacrifice, in their own understanding and circumstances, normally responds to.

Importance of the Study

I have since then desired to make a systematic investigation of this observation because I feel that there is a need to live, celebrate and express the faith in the cultural mentality of the people to whom it is preached; in this particular case, the Xhosa people. On subsequent reflection I came to realise that, in fact, the theme of sacrifice could be a good foundation for a Xhosa to understand and appreciate the Eucharist. This theme, as far as I can assess, occupies a central place both in the life of the Xhosas and in Catholic Eucharistic theology.

The practice of Sacrifice among the Xhosa and, indeed, among all Africans, has remained constant in spite of the discouraging influence of colonisation, Christianisation and modernisation. As a Catholic I also know that even though this theme has not been accorded enough theological reflection, it has always been understood as the central part of the Eucharist.

The centrality of this theme in the Eucharist is demonstrated by the way the missionaries have translated the word 'MASS' in Xhosa as IDINI, which means sacrifice¹ and to this day that is how a Xhosa Catholic refers to the Mass. I will continue to demonstrate the grounds for comparison between these two in some detail during the course of this work. What I wish to establish for now is that the theme of sacrifice occupies a central place in both positions and this justifies the investigation of similarities and comparison between the two.

Convinced as I am about the centrality of this theme in both Catholic and African tradition, I am equally surprised that there seems to be very little that has been done on the comparative study of the two. Comparative studies of African and systematic theology seem to be dominated by Christology, Ecclesiology and some individual sacraments. Only a few have attempted to relate Eucharistic themes to culture. Fredereck Chiromba (1988), in his work, *The Mystery of the most holy Eucharist in the Shona cultural situation*, puts the Eucharist in dialogue with culture, but does so from the point of view of the Presence (Sacramental presence of Christ in the Eucharist).

An equivalent of what I intend to do is an article by Lupande (1996) in *African Christian Studies*, which seeks to compare a western Tanzanian tribe's practice of sacrifice with both the sacrifice of the cross and the Eucharistic sacrifice. A doctoral dissertation of Ukpong, (1987) *Sacrifice: African and Biblical*, in which he makes a comparison between the Ibibio tribe and Levitical sacrifices, also comes a bit close to our theme. This

¹ In Zulu and Sotho, even though sacrifice is understood as an essential part of the Mass, it is not called sacrifice but *Imisa* and *Missa* respectively (cf. Zulu Sunday and Major Feast days book 1982 and Sotho Sunday and major feast days 1984) while in Xhosa it is called *Idini* (cf. Xhosa hymn book 1986).

work, however, is purely comparative and does not seek to draw any implications for dialogue between the two as I hope to do in mine.

Perhaps the closest work to our proposition in terms of the subjects of comparison is that of Pauw (1975), *Christianity and Xhosa Tradition*. This work, however, is too broad in its scope as it covers the whole belief system of both Christian and Xhosa traditions, whereas mine will be limited to one theme within the context of the Eucharist. It is also not strictly comparative in its approach but narrative, seeking to present the behaviour of the Christian Xhosas in their practice of belief. In view of the material I have read so far, the justification for the theme of this thesis lies in its specificity, i.e. sacrifice within the Eucharist, which is related to a specific culture i.e. the Xhosa culture.

Method

The main aim of this work is to offer an inculturated understanding of the Eucharistic sacrifice. This task requires being familiar with both traditions of sacrifice, i.e. Eucharistic and Xhosa sacrifices. We will, therefore, begin by presenting the Catholic understanding of the Eucharistic sacrifice, focusing more on its theoretical or theological dimension and less on its practical or liturgical dimension. This approach will include all the significant periods of history that have shaped the Catholic understanding of Eucharistic sacrifice, i.e. from the Bible to the present era. It is hoped that with this wide survey, we will be able to establish more grounds for the comparison of Eucharistic sacrifice with Xhosa sacrifice.

This will be followed by similar comprehensive survey of the practice and understanding of sacrifice among the Xhosas. After that I will make a comparison between the two with the hope of coming up with a Eucharistic sacrifice that is both Xhosa and Catholic. My method, therefore, will be exploratory, descriptive, analytic, comparative and synthetic. For both traditions of sacrifice, my sources will come exclusively from written material and from my own experience as a person who is Xhosa-speaking and who has worked among the Xhosa-speaking people as a Catholic priest.

Procedure

The work will be divided into three parts. The first part will deal with the analysis of Eucharistic theology; the second, with the Xhosa concept and practice of sacrifice; while the third part will deal with the comparison and synthesis of the analysed data. The first part will consist of four chapters. The first chapter will try to establish biblical foundations for Eucharistic sacrifice. We will explore the Old Testament practice and understanding of sacrifice as a background to Eucharistic sacrifice. We will then proceed to analyse the Last Supper accounts in the New Testament, which, as we shall see, are regarded as the biblical foundation of the Eucharist.

The period after the New Testament era, which is known as the early Church period, marks the beginning of structured Christian religion in terms of doctrine and Church structure. The leaders of this period are known as 'the fathers of the Church', hence this period is also known as patristic period. The fathers are important because they were the first to attempt a systematic exposition of the elements of the Christian faith, which includes the sacrificial character of the Eucharist. Chapter 1 will, therefore, finish off by looking at what the fathers understood the Eucharistic sacrifice to be. We shall consider the fathers of the first four centuries.

The second chapter will look at the medieval period, also known as the Middle Ages, which is usually put between the 5th and 15th centuries. This chapter will investigate the theological understanding of the Eucharistic sacrifice before the Reformation, during the Reformation and in the teaching of the council of Trent on the subject. Chapter 3 will look at the period after Trent up to our own time. To ascertain the present trend in Catholic theological thinking on the subject of Eucharistic sacrifice, we will present and assess the views of modern and contemporary theologians. Chapter 4 will cover the recent magisterial teaching, i.e. the teaching of the recent popes and Vatican II on the sacrificial character of the Eucharist. This chapter will also look at the Eucharistic liturgy of the Roman rite to highlight themes that are related to sacrifice.

The second part of this work will concern itself with the Xhosa concept and practice of sacrifice. This section will be divided into three chapters. The first chapter, which will be chapter 5, will try to identify the Xhosas as people and their culture. More attention will be given to their world-view or their cosmology because this will help us gain more insight into the subject of sacrifice among the Xhosa. Chapter 6 will attempt detailed analyses of the types and procedures of sacrifice among the Xhosa in their traditional setting. It is hoped that this will help us towards a conceptualisation of Xhosa sacrifice.

The 7th chapter will look at the practice and understanding of sacrifice among the Xhosa in the modern setting. We will note any continuity or discontinuity in the practice and understanding of sacrifice by the Xhosa in their traditional and modern settings. Having noted how similar or dissimilar the understanding of sacrifice is in these two settings, we will look at the causes of these similarities or differences, and proceed to ascertain what the continuity and discontinuity suggest for the understanding of sacrifice among the Xhosa today.

The third part of this work will seek to compare and to synthesise the two traditions of sacrifice. It will be divided into two chapters. The first chapter will compare the two traditions of sacrifice. In view of the comparison done, the second chapter will suggest ways in which Eucharistic sacrifice can be meaningfully related to Xhosa people in terms of understanding, existential concerns and celebration. This is where I hope to make a contribution.

Among other elements of comparison between the two traditions of sacrifice I will compare the cosmological or metaphysical background of Xhosa and Eucharistic sacrifices. Here I hope to establish some common ground or, as the case may be, some differences on the need and purpose of sacrifice. Next I will compare in some detail the object of sacrifice, and this is where we can expect some differences. My hope here is to make a contribution towards the on-going debate on God or ancestors, or both, as the object of Xhosa sacrifice.

Next I will consider the nature of the Eucharistic sacrifice as a memorial and see how it compares with the Xhosa understanding of sacrifice. We will also spend some time on the elements used in the Eucharistic sacrifice as well as the manner of performing it and draw some conclusions about what it means or does not mean for a Xhosa person. The suggestions we shall make for an inculturated understanding of the Eucharistic sacrifice will emerge at this stage. However, we can say right away, without pre-empting the results of this work, that its success or failure will depend on how well it argues for a meaningful inclusion of ancestors in the Eucharistic sacrifice.

Limits

As the title of this work suggests, my investigation will be limited to one aspect of the Eucharist, i.e. the sacrificial aspect. Even this sacrificial aspect, as stated earlier, is not investigated in all its aspects; it is mainly the theoretical or theological aspect that will concern us the most. While I will make some reference to different denominational understandings of the Eucharistic sacrifice, my point of departure and context will remain Catholic.

I do not intend to cover all that could be said or explored on the topics I will be comparing. I will occupy myself mainly with those aspects I consider relevant for the purpose of this study, i.e. the comparative purpose. I am doing this study as a person who is an insider in both camps, viz. a Xhosa-speaking and a Catholic. Thus while I will make use of anthropological insights, my point of departure is not that of a neutral anthropologist but a theologian who has a religious insight into the story and meaning behind the concept of sacrifice.

PART 1

EUCCHARISTIC SACRIFICE IN CATHOLIC TRADITION

Introduction

The purpose of this section is to present as clearly as possible the Catholic understanding of Eucharistic sacrifice, beginning from the Bible to the modern period. The immediate official source of information about Eucharistic sacrifice is the Roman Missal (from now on referred to as RM) promulgated in 1969 by Pope Paul VI. In the introduction, the Missal clearly describes the Mass, among other descriptions, as a sacrifice. Affirming the sacrificial character of the Mass, it says that 'the priest speaks to God in the name of all the people and offers in thanksgiving the holy and living sacrifice' (RM:xiii).

It further goes on to describe the nature of the Eucharistic sacrifice 'as a memorial of his [i.e. Christ's] death and resurrection' (RM:xiii). It also explains the purpose of this sacrifice as that of 'praise, and of thanksgiving, a sacrifice that reconciles us to the Father and makes amends to him for the sins of the world' (RM:xiv). Quoting from the second Vatican Council also explains the subjects of this sacrifice. 'At the Last Supper our Saviour instituted the eucharistic sacrifice of his body and blood [and] He entrusted it to his bride, the Church' (RM:xiii). In this brief presentation the Roman Missal describes the fact and the nature, or the 'WHAT?' the purpose or the 'WHY?' and the subject or the agent or the 'WHO?' of the Eucharistic sacrifice. These questions, without strictly following them, will be at the back of our mind as we attempt the theological explanation of the Eucharistic sacrifice.

By tracing the origin of the Eucharistic sacrifice to the Last Supper, the Missal seeks to establish its biblical foundation. It also seeks to validate the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist by appealing to tradition, particularly to the fathers of the church: 'The teachings of such outstanding saints as Irenaeus, Ambrose, Cyril and John Chrysostom have shed light on the theology of the Eucharistic mystery in Christian antiquity' (RM:xvi). The Missal also appeals to the authority of the two Councils, Trent and

Vatican II, for the sacrificial understanding of the Eucharist: 'The sacrificial nature of the Mass was solemnly proclaimed by the Council of Trent in agreement with the tradition of the universal Church. The Second Vatican Council reaffirmed this teaching' (RM:xiii). Thus the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist, according to the Missal, is an article of faith, which has biblical foundation, supported by tradition and upheld by the teaching authority of the Church. Thus this section will include Scripture, the fathers, the tradition of theological reflection in various periods of history and the Magisterium as areas of investigation for the understanding of Catholic Eucharistic sacrifice.

Closely connected with the Eucharistic sacrifice is the realism of Christ's presence in the Eucharist, which is known among Catholics as 'Real presence'. Belief in real presence is seen in Catholic circles as a foundation for the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist. This perhaps explains why the topic of 'real presence' has been given more attention in theological discussion of the Eucharist than the topic of 'sacrifice'. It seems to be taken for granted that clarity on the former leads to clarity and acceptance of the latter. It is interesting, though, that the Missal does not follow this order. The explanation of Eucharistic realism is preceded by the explanation of Eucharistic sacrifice. I shall not deal with the topic of 'real presence' in itself, except where it bears relevance to the discussion of Eucharistic sacrifice.

CHAPTER 1

THE IDEA OF EUCHARISTIC SACRIFICE FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT TO THE EARLY CHURCH

1.1 Introduction

The celebration of the Eucharist has its foundation in the meal Jesus had with his disciples just before he died, which is often referred to as *the Last Supper*. In trying to understand the sacrificial aspect of the Eucharist, therefore, we need to begin from this supper. As we shall see later, the Last Supper is understood in the New Testament as the fulfilment of sacrifice as originally practiced in the Old Testament. An meaningful exposition of the Last Supper, therefore, requires that we begin by sketching an overview of the Old Testament understanding of cultic sacrifice, which is a background to the Last Supper, and which in turn forms a background for the understanding of the Eucharistic Sacrifice.

While there are debates among scholars about the origin of the concept and practice of cultic sacrifice in the Old Testament, there are no doubts that it is one of the major elements of Old Testament theology. The whole Old Testament abounds with texts on sacrifice. There is even a book within the Old Testament, i.e., Leviticus, which deals just with the topic of sacrifice. Indeed the whole life of the ancient Israelites hinges on cultic sacrifice. The theme of sacrifice is inseparable from the theme of the covenant, which is fundamental to Israel's religion. The practice of sacrifice sustains and keeps alive this covenant consciousness as it serves to renew Israel's commitment to a covenant with God. Sacrifice, therefore, is not a peripheral theme in the Old Testament but a central one; the material researched and written on this topic proves the point. For my purpose here the Old Testament understanding of sacrifice and its theological discussion in the subsequent periods provide a background of the Eucharistic Sacrifice in the New Testament.

In the New Testament, while the notion of sacrifice to a large extent focuses on the life and death of Jesus (cf. Bradley 1995:103-108), reference is also made to the Eucharist with strong sacrificial overtones (cf. Last Supper accounts). We can therefore now qualify our topic of investigation, i.e. sacrifice, with the adjective 'Eucharistic', hence the topic 'Eucharistic sacrifice in the New Testament'. Obviously, this investigation presupposes the fact of the sacrificial life and death of Jesus on which the Eucharist as a sacrifice has its foundation. Those who are interested in the sacrificial life and death of Jesus as taught by New Testament and Christian tradition can read about it from other sources, like Humphreys (1978), *The Death of Christ*, Gunton (1988), *The Actuality of Atonement*, Bradley (1995), *The Power of Sacrifice*, Beckwith and Selman (eds.) (1995), *Sacrifice in the Bible*, to mention but a few.

Most papers, articles and books on the Eucharist include a section on patristic understanding of the Eucharist, where the sacrificial dimension is also dealt with extensively. Some works like Rordorf, (1978) and Sheerin (1986), are specifically dedicated to patristic thought on the Eucharist. To avoid unnecessary repetition, we will not attempt an analysis of the patristic texts on the Eucharist but we will content ourselves with the conclusions of those who have made this their task. Bringing together these conclusions should suffice, since our aim here is only to establish an overview of early patristic thought on the subject.

1.2 Sacrifice in the Old Testament

According to Daly, the most common suggestions about the essence of cultic sacrifice in general have been: (1) the *gift* of the human being to the deity, or (2) the *homage* of the subject to the lord, or (3) the *expiation* of offences, or (4) *communion* with the deity, especially in the sacrificial banquet, or (5) *life* released from the victim, transmitted to the deity, and conferred upon the worshipers' (1978:4). The same author (1978: 16) further notes that three of these suggestions about the nature of sacrifice, viz., *gift*, *communion* and *expiation* find an echo in the Old Testament understanding of sacrifice. A good number of biblical theologians, like Von Rad (1962:254), Jenson (1995:31), Courtman

(1995:52-54), Ashby (1988:31) and Anderson (1987:24) share the same view as Daly about this matter. A brief analysis of these types of sacrifice will help us understand the nature of sacrifice in the Old Testament.

1.2.1 The nature of sacrifice in the Old Testament

The nature of sacrifice in the Old Testament can be explained by looking at the different types of sacrifices that are found in it. Among the types of sacrifices that appear in the Old Testament, the following are the most noted: gift sacrifice, communion sacrifice, expiation sacrifice and Passover sacrifice. The idea of sacrifice as a gift, which in its original meaning carries an understanding of bribing the deity, finds no parallel in the Old Testament where everything is seen as belonging to God and where God cannot be coerced by human efforts. Sacrifice as gift in the Old Testament has therefore come to be understood as an expression 'of gratitude to God and of joy for his presence....' (Pfeiffer 1961:34). This view is confirmed by a number of other authors (see Von Rad 1962:254; Courtman 1995:53; Wenham 1995:81).

When one looks at the context of the gift sacrifice in the Bible, however, at least some of them, the idea of bribery and bargaining with God, which these authors are trying to disprove, seems to be present. This is particularly true of all distressful situations where a sacrifice is promised to God in return for a favour (Gen. 22:10-22; Jg. 10:30; Sam.15:7-9). Considering the issue in the wider context of the Bible however, where the idea of bribery is denounced by law (Deut. 16:19) and the prophets, the conclusion of these authors about the nature of gift sacrifice is probably right. The accounts that seem to suggest gift sacrifice as a bargain with God can best be explained as belonging to the earlier stage of the evolution of the Jewish idea of sacrifice. For now we could conclude with Thurian that the main idea behind gift sacrifice is to give thanks to God (cf. 1960:40).

In the Old Testament, communion sacrifice was offered to celebrate conviviality between Israel and God, it was closely related to the idea of covenant between God and Israel. 'It signified community of life between God and His faithful servants' (Thurian 1060:41). The main part of gift and communion sacrifices was the burning of the whole flesh of the victim in case of the former and only part of it in case of the latter, and the other part was consumed by the offerer (Jenson 1995:26). This suggests a sharing of a meal between God and worshipers, but this is not to be understood literally. 'The Israelites were as aware as anyone that God did not physically eat food, but eating is a rich symbolic resource for theological reflection' (Jenson 1995:31).

Expiation sacrifice was a sacrifice that concerned itself with the restoration of a broken relationship with God. It is regarded by some authors as the most important in the Old Testament (see Von Rad 1962:258 and Daly 1978:13). This is confirmed by the detailed explanation given by Leviticus on the regulations for this type of sacrifice. Ashby explains that expiation sacrifice probably gained more prominence during the exile period 'as a result of a stronger emphasis on community repentance instilled into the reformed Israel by the teachers of the period such as Ezra and Nehemiah' (1988:31-32). The popularity of expiation sacrifice is further confirmed by the division of this type of sacrifice into three kinds, i.e., purification offering, guilt offering and atonement offering.

The main part of expiation sacrifice in general was the manipulation of the blood according to the different rites of the sacrifices falling under its category. The animal was important for its blood, which was the most important element of the sacrifice (Daly 1978:30). Thus it was not the actual killing of the animal that was important but its blood. The importance of the blood in sacrifice, particularly in expiation sacrifice, was due to the fact that blood was seen as possessing the life of the sacrificial animal (Von Rad 1962:270). If blood was seen as an important element of the sacrifice because of its life force, it would seem that sin is seen as bringing death, which is then reversed by the sacrificial blood.

The Passover sacrifice was a re-living of the liberation from Egypt (cf. Mackenzie 1968:644 and Saldarini 1984:5) and an anticipation 'of the eschatological salvation event to come at the last day (cf. Isa. 31:5; Hos. 2:16; Jer. 23:7...)' (Daly 1978:40). There are different theories about the origin of this type of sacrifice (see. Ashby 1988, Alexander 1995), but there is no doubt about the sacrificial character of the Passover in its Jewish setting. According to Saldarini, in Jesus' time, the Passover meal was eaten 'with a sacrificial animal...in Jerusalem after the animal was slaughtered and offered in the Temple' (1984:32). The prescriptions and rituals of the Passover that Saldarini describes certainly put it in the category of sacrifice (cf.1984:30-31).

For the purpose of clarity, we have tried here to explain sacrifice in the Old Testament by distinguishing different types of sacrifices found in it. When one reads about them, however, the distinctions that we have made here are not that obvious. Von Rad explains that the reason for this is that 'whenever sacrifice was offered, several motives were involved, and these imperceptibly passed over into one another...' (1962:255). Jenson, also confirms Von Rad's observation: 'it is often difficult to relate a general idea exclusively to a particular kind of sacrifice because of the overlap between sacrificial rituals' (1995:31).

1.2.2 The Purpose of sacrifice in the Old Testament

The classification of Old Testament sacrifices provided above already gives an understanding of their purpose. But for the sake of clarity, notwithstanding the risk of repetition, a brief separate explanation of their purpose is offered. As already noted, the purpose of gift sacrifice was to give thanks to God for deliverance or for the request granted or a vow that was fulfilled (Cf. Nu. 15:3). The purpose of communion sacrifice was to renew the consciousness of Israel as God's people and God as Israel's God. While the purpose of some sacrifices was to make up for the damage done by sin to the covenantal relationship with God, the purpose of communion sacrifice was to celebrate the covenant as such. Communion sacrifice further sought to foster fellowship among the participants. Von Rad tells us that communion sacrifice was often seen as a meal by the

community, enjoyed in the presence of God. 'This sacrificial act was always a social occasion--the worshipper invited his friends to the meal, "to eat and drink before Jahweh"' (Von Rad 1962:257).

The purpose of expiation sacrifice was to restore the relationship with God, wittingly or unwittingly broken by sin both at individual and community level. One division of this sacrifice, i.e. atonement, was concerned with the sins of the community, and another division, which is purification and guilt offering, was concerned with the transgressions of individuals. The purpose of the Passover sacrifice was to recall God's choice of Israel as God's people through mighty deeds of their liberation from Egypt. It was not just a mere recalling, but a kind of recall that encouraged the participants to re-live the exodus experience. It recalled 'the deliverance from Egypt in such a way that it re-presents the past redemptive activity and looks forward to the future definitive intervention of Yahweh' (Bermejo 1985:5).

In trying to explain the purpose of sacrifice in Israel, we have looked at individual sacrifices. If a single definitive answer to the purpose of sacrifice as whole in the Old Testament were to be given, one could say that it serves to keep the covenant. Any type of sacrifice in Israel had a covenant-related purpose: if it did not seek to make up for its disruption through expiation offering, it sought to renew and to strengthen it in communion, gift and Passover sacrifice.

1.2.3 The agents of sacrifice in the Old Testament

In a general way one could say that the people of Israel as a whole were the agents of sacrifice since its practice was motivated by the overall consciousness of being God's people. By agent here is meant the one who carries out the sacrifice. In a formal way, it was the priest who was the agent of sacrifice. The role of the priest in the sacrificial offering was to act as mediator between the offerers and God. He did this by prescribing

the required animal victim¹ and carrying out the rite of sacrifice. He acted as the mouthpiece of God in declaring the acceptance or the non-acceptance of the sacrifice. This is because 'the priest was deemed to be a gift from God to Israel (Num. 18.6-7); that is why he remained responsible to God and to Israel (Deut. 18.2; Josh. 13.33; Ezek. 44.28)' (Knight 1959:301).

1.2.4 The conditions for the acceptance of sacrifice

One thing clear in the Old Testament, especially in the prophetic literature, is that the internal disposition and corresponding deeds of the offerer were of great significance for the meaning of sacrifice. There must be congruence between the external act of offering and the attitude and behaviour of the offerer towards God and fellow human beings. Hosea (6:6) tells us that if a sacrifice is not accompanied by steadfast love and knowledge of God, then it has no meaning before God. The popular text of Isaiah (1:1-17) and other similar texts tell us that sacrifices that are not accompanied by concern for justice and for the needy are not accepted by God.

The manner in which the Prophets presented their challenge about sacrifice, e.g. 'God does not want sacrifice but mercy', can easily lead to an understanding that they totally rejected cultic sacrifice in favour of spiritual sacrifice, yet it was more the integration of the two they wanted. 'Integrate' is the operative word, because as Lucas notes, the condemnation of sacrifice by the Prophets is not done 'because sacrifice is wrong, but because it is meaningless unless accompanied by obedience to God's moral commands' (1995:62). The condition, then, for the acceptance of sacrifice is the integration of the act of sacrifice with a proper spiritual disposition of obedience to God that should result in corresponding deeds towards the neighbour.

¹ It is important to note that while for the most part sacrifice in the Old Testament involved the killing of animals, there were other types of sacrifices e.g. grain offering that did not involve killing (cf. Jenson 1995:27).

1.3 Sacrifice in the New Testament

We now move on to the New Testament description of sacrifice. Vorgrimler, notes that 'the Last Supper accounts found in the New Testament are regarded in all Christian Churches as the historical and theological basis for the Eucharist' (1992: 138). Kodell (1988:12) also notes that even though Christian churches differ in their interpretation of the Eucharist, they all agree on its connection with the Last Supper. This supper refers to the supper Jesus ate with his disciples the night just before his death, which the early Christian community down through the ages later commemorated.

Thus we make a distinction between the Last Supper and the Lord's supper, the former being 'the final meal Jesus shared with his disciples before he died...' and the latter being 'the community re-enactment of that meal after Jesus' death and resurrection' (Kodell 1988:22). For now we want to focus on the Last Supper, especially its sacrificial aspect. Even though the word 'Last Supper' is not used in the New Testament, we will continue to use it throughout our discussion because of its familiarity in the theological discussion of the Eucharist. A biblically precise word would be Jesus' Passover meal since all the synoptic Gospels connect the eating of this supper to the Passover.

The attempt to establish a link between the Last Supper and the Passover is important because the Old Testament Passover has significant implications for the discussion of the sacrificial nature of the Last Supper. 'To justify the sacrificial character ascribed by Church tradition to the Eucharist, the Passover connection seems vital' (Nichols 1991:23). The sacrificial character of the Last Supper is built on the identification Jesus makes between himself and the paschal lamb. If the Passover has no sacrificial meaning, it follows that the Last Supper, whose sacrificial character is maintained on the basis of its link with the Passover, cannot be sacrificial and consequently the Eucharist, which originates from the Last Supper also, cannot be sacrificial. It thus becomes necessary to establish the sacrificial character of the Passover as grounds for the sacrificial character of the Last Supper.

1.3.1 The sacrificial character of the Passover as grounds for the sacrificial character of the Last Supper

As noted earlier on, in Jesus' time, the Passover included the eating of the lamb, which had been ritually killed and offered in the Temple and this, makes the meal sacrificial. Also when considering the origin of the Passover, one finds strong sacrificial overtones and meaning which are now transferred to Jesus. The Passover recalls how the Israelites were saved from the angel of death by the sign of blood on the night of their escape from Egypt. There is thus an implicit reference to atonement, it was because of blood that the Israelites were saved. 'Implicit in this is the idea that the Israelites were inherently no different from the male firstborn of the Egyptians. Without the atoning blood of the sacrifice they too would have been struck dead by the "destroyer"' (Alexander 1995:17).

The sacrificial connection between the Passover and the Last Supper is that just as the Israelites were saved from the angel of death by the blood of the lamb smeared on their doorposts, so shall we be saved by the blood of Jesus the new lamb. 'For our Passover has been sacrificed, that is Christ' (1Cor. 5:7). To seal the point we are making about the sacrificial connection between the Passover and the Last Supper, Chidester's explanation of this connection is worth quoting in full:

The ancient Israelite festival of Passover, commemorating liberation from slavery in Egypt, provided another model for understanding the sacrificial death of Jesus. Prior to the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 70 CE, the festival involved the sacrifice of lambs in thanksgiving for liberation. By applying the model of Passover, Christians could understand the sacrificial offering of Jesus on the altar as an act of thanksgiving similar to the Passover offering of lambs. "For Christ our Passover lamb" as Paul declared, "has been sacrificed" (1Cor. 5:7) (2000:77).

Also contained in the Passover meal is the idea of a covenant, as the meal recalls a choice of Israel by God over and against the Egyptians and the blood of the lamb serves to seal this covenant (Ashby 1988:75, Alexander 1995:18). The specifications about the paschal lamb and the blood rite in the celebration of the Passover also put it in the category of sacrifice. 'The Paschal victim (usually a lamb) had had to be slaughtered by the priests in the temple, and the elaborate rite had to be carried out by them at the altar' (Daly

1978a:198). There are therefore grounds for the sacrificial understanding of the Passover with which the sacrifice of Christ is identified by the Last Supper accounts.

Some commentators suggest that for John, who does not have the Last Supper account, the identification of Christ with the Passover lamb serves to explain the sacrificial role of Christ (Daly 1978a:294, Head 1995:119-123). This identification begins already at the beginning of Jesus' ministry when he is pointed out as the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (see Jn.1:29). According to Daly (1978a), John explicitly identifies Jesus with the Passover lamb by making his death coincide with the slaughtering of the Passover lambs in the temple. Even the report that the soldiers did not break the legs of the crucified Christ (see Jn.19:34-36) 'is, in view of the legislation for the paschal lamb in Exod 12,46....a direct comparison of the crucified Christ with the Paschal lamb' (Daly 1978a 294-295). Head notes that some scholars express doubts about the precision of the word 'lamb' used in John in relation to the Paschal lamb, but he concludes 'that John has deliberately used an ambiguous term, in order to maintain that Jesus' death fulfils and displaces all the OT sacrifice' (1995:122).

So far the sacrificial character of the Last Supper has been argued on an analogical basis with the Passover². If the Passover has a sacrificial meaning, as we have tried to argue, so does the Last Supper since it is set in the Passover context. While there is no doubt about the sacrificial character of the Passover, however there is doubt about the connection between the Last Supper and the Passover.

What is unclear is whether the meal Jesus had with his disciples was in fact a Passover meal. It is not clear for example, if Jesus had this meal on the day of the Passover. The synoptic gospels seem to suggest that the meal was had on the day before the Passover (cf. Saldarini 1984:56-57). It is also not clear if the meal Jesus had with his disciples included a lamb which had been killed according to the sacrificial ritual in the temple (cf.

² For a detailed discussion of the Paschal character of the Last Supper, see Ryan (1966:160-169).

Delorme 1965:64). Delorme concludes that while the Last Supper had paschal overtones, it did not include all the elements of a Passover meal (cf.1965:65).

Yet, even if the Last Supper did not include all the elements of a Passover meal, it is very clear from the Gospels that the Last Supper serves to identify Jesus' death with the Passover sacrifice. This identification may not be historically true in terms of the elements used at the Last Supper, but it is true in terms of the intention. As Saldarini rightly observes, the identification of the Last Supper with the Passover may not be 'historically true' but 'it is theologically true' (1984:57).

1.3.2 The sacrificial language of the Institution words

Another indication of the sacrificial character of the Last Supper is the sacrificial language, which pervades the Last Supper accounts. There are two words found in all the Last Supper accounts which Jeremias sees as sacrificial in the Semitic context and which Jesus uses, i.e. the body, which was either burned or eaten, and blood, which was poured on the altar. 'Only this second, cultic, meaning comes into question when Jesus speaks of 'his flesh' and 'his blood'. He is applying to himself *terms from the language of sacrifice*,.. In other words: *Jesus speaks of himself as a sacrifice*' (Jeremias 1966:222).

Two other words further put the Last Supper in a sacrificial context, i.e., *poured out*, 'which is the usual expression for the shedding of blood of the slaughtered animals' (McGoldrick 1969:25), and *Covenant*, which was understood as always sealed by sacrificial blood. The presence of these sacrificial words in all the accounts points to an independent tradition, which goes back to Jesus about the sacrificial character of the Last Supper. According to Kodell 'the expiation theme is not characteristic of Luke' (1988:63), and yet Luke unflinchingly applies sacrificial meaning to the Last Supper (cf. Lk. 22:20). If Luke then has gone out of his way to include an idea which is outside the theme of his Gospel, it can only be that sacrifice was considered an essential part of the Last Supper by those who knew about it.

A further attempt must be made to show how the Last Supper is linked to the death of Christ that was to come a day later at Calvary. After all, Eucharistic sacrifice is a memorial of Christ's death. At the Last Supper Jesus had a clear premonition of his imminent violent death as he had predicted it many times before in different contexts (cf. Jeremias 1971: 283-284). It was at the Last Supper that he clarified the nature and meaning of the sacrifice on the cross. 'Thus the words of the institution clearly looked ahead to Jesus' death as bloody, sacrificial and atoning' (Daly 1978: 56). The institution narratives at the Last Supper therefore provide us with the meaning of Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

To this extent, the Last Supper represented in anticipation the historical sacrifice of the cross, while the Eucharist would represent it in a memorial fashion. The nature of this representation, however, is something that scholars cannot agree on. The dispute lies on the understanding of the words of institution of the bread and wine as body and blood of Christ, which is understood by one group literally and symbolically by the other. What is interesting, though, is that in most cases the interpretation seems to be determined by the ideological and denominational starting point. Catholic exegetes end up affirming the literal understanding while the Protestant exegetes end up affirming the symbolic understanding. Moloney, quoting Bultman, perhaps has a point when he says that 'A presuppositionless exegesis is impossible,..' (1995:34).

1.3.3 The nature of the sacrifice of the Last Supper

The nature of the sacrifice of the Last Supper can be deduced from the institution narratives. A quick analyses of the institution narratives suggests that the Last Supper sacrifice is a vicarious, atoning, covenant, communion and representation sacrifice. From the words of interpretation of the bread, 'This is my body given for you' (Lk.22:19), and the words of interpretation of the cup, 'my blood...' 'blood... poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.' (Mt.26:28), we are to understand a vicarious or a representative sacrifice, where Christ takes upon himself the sins of all those for whom he offers the sacrifice.

Most commentators associate this type of sacrifice with the Isaian servant (Is 53) who suffers in place of others and whom Jesus understood as finding fulfilment in himself (Kodell 1988:65-66). Jeremias explains that "*for many*" must be understood as inclusive of all people because Jesus knew that 'he would not only restore the preserved of Israel but also be a light to the Gentiles, in order that the salvation of God might reach to the end of the earth' (1966:229). The explicit reference to the cup being poured for the forgiveness of sin in Matthew further qualifies the Last Supper as an atonement sacrifice.

The interpretation words over the cup in all the four accounts of the Last Supper further identify the cup as the blood of the covenant. In Matthew and Mark, the cup is referred to as 'the blood of the covenant' (Mt. 26:28, Mk.14:24) and in Luke and Paul it is referred to as 'the new covenant in my blood' (Lk. 22:20, 1Cor. 11:25). Thus, the vicarious sacrifice of Christ is also a covenant sacrifice. The blood of Christ seals a new covenant, which replaces the old covenant of Sinai.

This new covenant alludes to the covenant announced by the prophet Jeremiah (see Jer.31:31-34), which would facilitate a good relationship between God and his people through a proper knowledge of God and forgiveness of sins (cf. Benoit 1965:78). Kodell summarises this dual purpose of Christ's sacrifice well when he says that 'By allusion to the Old Testament, Jesus identified himself as the Isaian Servant of God giving his life in atonement, and interpreted his actions as the inauguration of the new covenant foreseen by Jeremiah' (1988:67).

The direct commands in Matthew, 'take and eat' and 'drink from this, all of you' which are also implied in other accounts when Jesus gives the bread and the cup to his disciples, further mark the Last Supper as a communion sacrifice. This trait is in line with the Old Testament sacrifice, where the participants partook of the remains of the sacrificial victim as a symbolic means of uniting themselves with God, who accepted the sacrifice, and with each other (Benoit 1965:81).

The background to St. Paul's account of the Last Supper explains this communion aspect between the participants and the Lord as well as among the participants themselves. 'The blessing-cup which we bless, is it not sharing in the blood of Christ? and the loaf of bread which we break, is it not sharing in the body of Christ? And as there is one loaf, so we, although there are many of us, are one single body, for we all share in the one loaf' (1Cor.10:16-17). Some Catholic commentators (see Mollat 1964:143-156, Kodell 1988:123-126), interpret the bread of life discourse in John 6 as affirming the communion aspect between Jesus and participants through the eating and drinking of Jesus' body and blood.

1.3.4 The agent of the Last Supper sacrifice

From the discussion above, it should be clear that it is Christ himself who is the offerer. He offered himself in anticipation of the sacrifice of the cross, which he was to (physically) offer with his own body a day later. It could also be said that the command by Jesus, 'do this in memory of me', to the Apostles also established the Church in general and the Apostles in particular as offerers, in the future, of the Eucharistic sacrifice.

The conclusion made here about Christ being the agent of the Eucharistic sacrifice is deduced purely from the Last Supper he ate, which had strong sacrificial overtones, and of which he was the subject. Furthermore, the conclusion that through Christ's command the Apostles were established as offerers of the Eucharistic sacrifice is based on the later interpretation of Trent. Otherwise from the Bible, apart from the Last Supper command, there is no clear indication that the task of the Apostles consisted in presiding over the Eucharist, although it can be reasonably assumed that sometimes they did preside³.

³ Acts 20:11 reports of a gathering in which Paul preached apparently for a very long time to the extent that one young man who was sitting on the window became drowsy and fell three floors below. The text continues to state that 'Paul went down and stooped to clasp the boy to him, saying "there is no need to worry there is still life in him. **Then he went back upstairs where he broke the bread and ate** (bold mine) and carried on talking till he left at daybreak'.

1.3.5 The condition for the acceptance of the Eucharistic sacrifice in the New Testament

The Eucharistic sacrifice, which Christ offered with his disciples at the Last Supper, was in anticipation, as I have noted, of the sacrifice of the cross. The conditions of its acceptance, therefore, are the same as that of the cross. As most authors note, including St. Thomas Aquinas, the cross was his obedience and his total self giving to God. According to Thomas Aquinas, this is what makes Christ's sacrifice the most acceptable and perfect, because the external act of his sacrifice totally corresponded with the required internal disposition of obedience to God (cf. Moloney 1995:140).

The conditions for the acceptance of sacrifice, which the Prophets called for in the Old Testament, found their fulfilment in Christ. Thus in Jesus the cultic and spiritual sacrifices are integrated. One could also say that Christ, by his symbolic washing of the feet of his disciples, was pointing out the implications of participating in the sacrifice, i.e. to serve. Paul's account of the institution of the Eucharist in 1Cor. 11 was sparked off by the lack of integration between what the Corinthians were offering and the way they behaved among themselves, i.e. discriminating against and lacking care for each other. Thus according to Paul, there must be a correspondence between the act of Eucharistic celebration and one's inner disposition and behaviour.

1.3.6 Observations on Eucharistic sacrifice in the New Testament

Reference to the Last Supper by the Roman Missal suggests the New Testament as a starting point for biblical reflection on Eucharistic sacrifice. The Old Testament understanding of sacrifice, however, provides an insightful background to Eucharistic sacrifice, hence a brief survey of it was offered. All the types of sacrifices considered in the Old Testament, i.e. the gift, communion, expiation and Passover sacrifice, find an echo in the Eucharistic sacrifice, as deduced from the institution words.

Among these, it is in relation to the Passover sacrifice that the Last Supper is seen as acquiring its sacrificial status. Christ is the new Passover lamb that is sacrificed. While

there is doubt about the historical similarity between the Last Supper and the Passover, there is no doubt that the synoptic Gospels present the Last Supper as theologically connected to the Passover.

The institution words also carry strong sacrificial overtones that relate the Last Supper to Old Testament sacrifice. The gift sacrifice as thanksgiving, for example, finds an echo in Jesus giving thanks and praise before giving the bread and cup to his disciples. There is also a clear parallelism between communion sacrifice and the Last Supper. Jesus' instruction, 'take and eat', suggests that the Last Supper and therefore the Eucharist, is seen in the New Testament as a meal of communion between the worshipers and God. Paul clarified this aspect when he addressed the question of whether or not it was right to eat meat offered to idols. In this regard he clarifies that one cannot participate in idolatrous sacrificial feasts because by participating in the Lord's meal one is already identified with the Lord and therefore cannot again identify oneself with idols. In this context, the Eucharistic sacrifice is explained as a means of communion with Jesus.

The Old Testament expiation sacrifice, which involves the spilling of blood for the forgiveness of sin and renewal of the covenant, provides a good background for the understanding of the similar sacrificial words that Jesus applies to himself. These two functions of the blood find an echo in the Last Supper where the power and effectiveness of Christ's sacrifice over sin in the Eucharist is associated with the spilling of his blood which also establishes a new covenant (Lk.22: 20).

Unlike the death of Christ, which is clearly presented by the New Testament as a sacrifice, especially by the letter to the Hebrews, the Eucharist is not clearly presented as such. Its understanding as sacrifice is based on a variety of interpretations which, as the medieval controversies were later to show, cannot be regarded as scientifically conclusive and acceptable to everybody.

On the other hand, those who totally exclude the sacrificial understanding of bread and the cup are also guilty of selective exegesis. They need to take into account the

wholesome understanding of the New Testament understanding of the Eucharistic sacrifice, which include the bread and the cup. The sacrificial language and intentions attached to the Last Supper are too overwhelming to be ignored, that even some Protestant scholars have come to accept that it cannot be easily reduced to symbolism (see Moloney 1995:41). The rejection of the sacrificial character of bread and the cup should not be based on denominational polemics, but on exegesis.

1.4 The Patristic understanding of the Eucharistic sacrifice

What is immediately noticeable about the teaching of the fathers on the Eucharistic sacrifice, or on any other doctrine for that matter, is that it is not coherent and systematic. One of the major reasons for this is that often their thoughts were expressed in the context of responding to situations. It was in the context of preaching, teaching, advising, responding to accusations and heresies, etc., that they made statements, without bothering too much about coherence of thought and clarity of terms⁴. The method of inquiry suggested at the beginning of the chapter, therefore, i.e. the nature, the purpose and agent of sacrifice, cannot be applied to individual fathers without being superficial. It will be noted at the concluding observation how the fathers, considered together, answer the question of the nature, purpose and agents of sacrifice. We will begin with two second century fathers, Justin and Ireneaus.

1.4.1 Justin

Most authors begin with Justin the martyr who, according to Moloney (1995:81), was 'the first Christian writer to take up the idea of sacrifice as a theological question...' Daly further observes that 'whenever Justin tends to be more specific about the sacrifice, he is speaking of the Eucharist' (1978:90). He saw the Eucharist as a sacrifice in view of the

⁴ The context of affirmations by the early fathers of the sacrificial character of the Eucharist included the desire by the fathers to refute the accusation that Christians were atheists because they did not have a sacrificial ritual (cf. Daly 1978a:35, Sheerin 1986:37,41,244). They sought to demonstrate that, like all religions, Christian religion too had a sacrificial ritual and that Christian Eucharistic sacrifice was in fact superior to any other sacrifice.

prophecy of Malachi, according to which the perfect sacrifice was not the Jewish cultic sacrifice but the praise, which the nations will render to the Lord. 'I am not pleased with you, says Yahweh Sabaoth; from your hands I find no offering acceptable. But from the farthest east to farthest west my name is great among the nations, and everywhere incense and a pure gift are offered to my name, since my name is great among the nations, says Yahweh Sabaoth' (Ml. 1:10-11).

In his dialogue with Trypho, Justin contrasts God's refusal to accept the Jewish cultic sacrifice with his acceptance of the sacrifice offered in the Eucharist of bread and wine. 'It is of the sacrifices offered to Him in every place by us, the gentiles, that is of the Bread of the Eucharist and likewise of the cup of the Eucharist, that He speaks at that time; and He says that we glorify His name, while you profane it' (Jurgens 1970 Vol. 1 No. 35).

The sacrifice that Justin speaks about consists not in bread and wine offered and consecrated, but in the spiritual disposition of the participants to give thanks and praise to God. The development of the word 'Eucharist' has come to include the whole rite of the Mass, including the consecrated species of bread and wine. In its original Greek meaning, it meant 'thanksgiving'. It is in this original sense that Justin sees the Eucharist as sacrifice. The Eucharist is a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, and according to Daly this does not extend to include 'the ritual (or consecratory) action over the gifts of bread and wine' (1978:90). The background of Justin's understanding of sacrifice as praise and thanksgiving, i.e. Malachi 1:10-12, which condemns cultic sacrifice in favour of the sacrifice of praise, confirms this exclusion.

There seems to be an overwhelming consensus among authors, even those, whose traditions attach sacrificial understanding to bread and wine, that this understanding is absent in Justin. While Justin understood the words spoken over bread and wine as rendering them identical to the body and blood of Christ, he did not understand these as constituting a sacrifice, but as means of transformation and nourishment of the participants (cf. O'Connor 1988:21).

Justin's understanding of sacrifice consists in prayer and thanksgiving. This is brought out clearly in chapter 117 of his dialogue with Trypho. 'If we read the passage with a view to seeing exactly what the Eucharist is, we find Justin locating the sacrifice (*thusia*) in the prayers (*euchai*) and thanksgiving (*eucharistia*) of worthy men' (Rordorf 1978:80). Yet Justin's specific reference to the bread and the wine as a sacrifice which Jesus intended to be carried out in place of the old sacrifice could easily lead one to understand him as saying that bread and wine constitute the sacrifice. Williams clarifies this possible confusion by stating that the Eucharist as offering of bread and wine, according to Justin, is the ritual expression of this praise and thanksgiving. 'While it is true that prayer and thanksgiving are the only real sacrifice, the ritual form of this for Christians is the "sacrifice" of food and drink so as to remember the passion of Jesus' (Williams 1982:7-8).

Moloney also makes the same point when he says that 'in Justin's mind the sacrificial thanksgiving he is referring to is not just a matter of words or attitudes but is embodied in the Eucharistic ritual' (Moloney 1995:82). The death of Christ is seen by Justin as the organising centre for the understanding of Christian life. It is because Christians have been redeemed by the death of Christ that they make the sacrifice of thanks and praise to God. The Eucharist as the memorial of the death of Christ forms a theological context for the understanding of Christian sacrifice. This serves to avoid reducing Christian sacrifice 'into "natural religion", prayer and good deeds' (Williams 1982:8). In other words the sacrifice of praise does not take place in a vacuum but is deeply 'anchored in the history of Christ as the vehicle of sacrificial prayer' (Williams 1982:8).

In bringing these observations together, we could say that Justin has an understanding of the Eucharist as sacrifice. This understanding does not consist in the consecrated elements but in the spiritualised sacrifice of prayer and thanksgiving. The consecrated elements, however, as the memorial of the passion of Christ, provide a proper setting for the sacrifice of praise. It ritualises the sacrifice of praise and to that extent, it is a sacrifice.

1.4.2 St. Irenaeus

When we come to St. Irenaeus, whom the Missal regards as one of the outstanding Eucharistic theologians among the fathers, we find that he also regards the Eucharist as sacrifice. Like Justin, he saw the Eucharist as sacrifice in view of the fulfilment of the prophecy of Malachi. He understands the Eucharist as a pure sacrifice compared to the Jewish ritual sacrifice. This purity derives from two things; i.e. the difference of the status of those who offer the sacrifice and what is received in the sacrifice. The Jews offered sacrifice as 'slaves', while Christians offer sacrifice as 'free men'. Secondly the Eucharistic sacrifice is pure because what is received is not ordinary bread and wine but realities that have been transformed into heavenly realities by their association with the person of Christ.

The starting point of St. Irenaeus for the possibility of a sacrifice is his positive view of the material world as a creation of God that is good. St. Irenaeus' view was that since creation comes from God, it can be used to express and to ritualise our attitude towards God. It is in this sense that he regards the Eucharist as sacrifice. He often refers to the Eucharist as an *offering* or *gift* and here he 'thinks rather of the bread and wine as the gifts of creation which the congregation brings before God to be used in the celebration. Such presentation of "gifts and offerings" has no meritorious significance' (Aulen 1958:179).

He also speaks of the Eucharist as the offering of the transformed bread and wine, to which he refers as 'the first fruits'. The subject of this offering is not the Church but God. It is God who is offering us something, i.e. the body and blood of Christ that nourishes the believers. Williams clarifies this point very well. 'Now an offering of bread and wine is not a "first-fruits" offering in any obvious sense; we are not dealing with a Christian harvest festival. If we read Irenaeus carefully, it seems that what he is saying is that Christ at the Last Supper took an offering from creation, and by designating it as his body and blood constituted it a "first fruits" of new creation...' (Williams

1982:9). Sacrifice here consists in being offered the body and blood of Christ by God, and in our turn the offering of our humanity to God, which has been 'deified' (Williams 1982:10) by the reception of the body and blood of Christ.

The second consideration that shapes St. Irenaeus' idea of sacrifice is his understanding of God as self-sufficient. An act of sacrifice does not perform any function towards God, but is expressive of the believers' attitude of thanksgiving. This is because God 'needs nothing, because in himself he has the fullness of praise and glory' (Williams 1982:9). The sacrifice we offer to God is for our benefit, to keep us from idolatry and to remind ourselves of God in gratitude and as belonging to him. Its purpose is to mould the participants into the likeness of Christ, which should be manifested in the way they live and act towards others.

1.4.3 St. Hippolytus

Among the third century fathers, Hippolytus is usually the first to be considered. His contribution seems to lie in his introduction of the idea of priesthood, which is closely linked to the offering of the Eucharistic sacrifice. In his work, *Apostolic Tradition*, which is considered as an early source on the liturgy and hierarchical structure of the Church, he specifically mentions the offering of the Eucharist as one of the functions of the Bishop. In his prayer for the consecration of the bishop, he presents him as the high priest who is to 'propitiate unceasingly before your face; and to offer the gifts of your holy Church' (Jurgens 1970 Vol 1: No. 394a).

In Hippolytus we find more explicit reference to the Eucharist itself as cultic sacrifice than 'the ordinary life of Christians as sacrifice' (Moloney 1995:86). He 'uses the word "offering" or "oblation" (*prosophora*) to signify both the eucharistic rite as a whole as well as the material offerings themselves' (Daly 1978:99). Hippolytus is, however, not clear on what he means by the sacrifice of the Eucharist, nor does he address the relationship between the Eucharistic sacrifice and the sacrifice of Christ.

1.4.4 St. Cyprian

St. Cyprian is best known for his theology of the Church, which he developed in the context of the problems of division in the Church of his time. The title of his celebrated treatise *De Unitate* attests to this fact. It was within the context of the unity of the Church that he spoke about the Eucharist. He also wrote letters in response to various issues of faith, and in one of them he addresses the sacrificial character of the Eucharist directly. The context of the letter is a dispute about using either water or wine for the Eucharist. He argues for the mixing of water and wine and uses sacrificial language to explain the unity of the offerer and the victim:

When we consecrate the cup of the Lord we cannot offer water alone, any more than we can offer wine alone. If we offer wine alone, the blood of Christ is present but without us; if the water is alone, then the people are there alone without Christ. But when the one is mingled with the other and the two fuse to become one, then the spiritual, heavenly mystery is accomplished (epistle 63. 13 in Rordorf 1978: 163).

This is a clear indication that he understood the Eucharist as sacrifice. The foundation of the sacrificial character of the Eucharist is its connection to the Last Supper, which Cyprian understood as a sacrifice and the Eucharist as its memorial. According to Rordorf, 'Cyprian certainly thinks of the Eucharist as a true sacrifice; it contains the sacrifice of Christ, and from this sacrifice it derives its efficacy' (1978:165). The cultic language applied to the Eucharist is even more explicit in Cyprian than in Hypolytus. He refers to the priest as offering the sacrifice at the Eucharist.

If Christ Jesus, our Lord and God, is the High Priest of God the Father; and if he offered himself as a sacrifice to the Father; and He commanded that this be done in commemoration of Himself – then certainly the priest, who imitates that which Christ did, truly functions in place of Christ. (Jurgen 1970 Vol. 1 No. 584).

Apart from these erratic references, Cyprian does not offer a clear explanation of the Eucharistic sacrifice. He does not explain, for example, what the purpose of this sacrifice is. What he does explain are the practical consequences for those who participate in the Eucharistic sacrifice. The most obvious consequence is the one that stems from his concern about the unity of the Church. Those who participate in the Eucharist must

remain in one household because 'The flesh of Christ, which is the holy thing of the Lord, cannot be thrown outside; and for believers there is no other house than the one Church' (*De unitate* 8). They must also remain in cordial relationship with their fellow worshippers and be at peace with the Church authorities.

A more significant consequence for participating in the Eucharistic sacrifice, according to Cyprian, is that those who participate must themselves become a sacrifice in their lives. This must show itself in their everyday life and in charitable acts and attitudes that show concern for others. The problem of the *lapsi* (those who have slipped away from the faith), which Cyprian had to address, gives a further understanding of the consequences for participating in the Eucharist. According to Cyprian, participating in the Eucharistic sacrifice must show itself in the willingness of the participants to lay down their lives to the point of shedding their blood. Thus Cyprian had no sympathy for people who forfeit their faith on account of persecution because the Eucharist should prepare them for that. For Cyprian there is a close connection between Eucharistic sacrifice and martyrdom. It could be understood as commemorating those who have suffered martyrdom, or praying for those who are about to be martyred, or as a source of strength for the participants to choose martyrdom when it becomes necessary or even to desire it.

1.4.5 Cyril of Jerusalem

In the fourth century, the fathers to be considered on the question of Eucharistic sacrifice are Cyril of Jerusalem and St. John Chrysostom. Cyril of Jerusalem is more clear and elaborate on the doctrine of the real presence than he is on the Eucharistic sacrifice. He addresses the question indirectly when he explains in his catechetical sermons the practice of praying for the Church and for the dead at the Eucharistic celebration. He regards this practice as appropriate because prayers are 'carried up, while this holy and *most solemn sacrifice* [italics mine] is laid out' (Jurgens 1970 Vol. 1: No. 852). When he explains the Eucharist as an offering for the dead he gives a hint of what he understood the Eucharistic sacrifice to be, i.e. a propitiatory sacrifice. He says that when we offer we

'offer up Christ who has been sacrificed for our sins; and we thereby propitiate the benevolent God, for them as well as for ourselves' (Jurgens 1970 Vol. 1: No.853).

1.4.6 St. John Chrysostom

St. John Chrysostom is cited by the Missal as important for Eucharistic theology. His thoughts on the Eucharistic presence and sacrifice are much clearer than those of the fathers that have been considered so far. For this reason he has earned himself the title of Doctor of the Eucharist.

St. John Chrysostom builds his understanding of the Eucharistic sacrifice on the Jewish concept of anamnesis, or remembrance, according to which the event remembered is not just recalled in the mind and emotions, but is rendered present here and now in its effects. He addresses questions that would become contentious in the reformation period, namely, the identity of the victim in both the sacrifice of the cross and the Eucharistic sacrifice. In his homily on the letter to the Hebrews, he explains the identity between the two sacrifices thus:

What then? Do we not offer daily? Yes, we offer, but making remembrance of His death; and this remembrance is one and not many. How is it one and not many? Because this Sacrifice is offered once, like that in the Holy of Holies. This Sacrifice is a type of that, and this remembrance a type of that. We offer always the same, not one sheep now and another tomorrow, but the same thing always. Thus there is one Sacrifice. By this reasoning, since the Sacrifice is offered everywhere, are there, then a multiplicity of Christ's? By no means! Christ is one everywhere. He is complete there, one Body. And Just as He is one Body and not many though offered everywhere, so too is there one Sacrifice (Jurgens 1970 Vol. 2 No.1222).

Thus according to Chrysostom, the sacrificial character of the Eucharist is justified by its unity with the sacrifice of Christ. There is 'unity of the Offerer (for it is Christ "our High priest" Who offers through the church His Body), unity of the offering (for that which is offered is what He offered, His Body), unity of the effects ("which cleanses us")...' (Dix 1945:244). Chrysostom also speaks of Eucharistic sacrifice in strong cultic and realistic terms and highlights the role of ministerial priesthood in the Eucharistic sacrifice. 'When you see the Lord immolated and lying upon the altar, and the priest bent over that

sacrifice praying, and all the people empurpled by that precious blood, can you think that you are still among men and on earth? Or are you lifted up to heaven?' (Jurgens 1970 Vol. 2 No. 1118). O'Connor (1988:49) observes that the purpose of such crude description in Chrysostom is to emphasise the sacrificial reality of the Eucharist.

1.4.7 St. Augustine

Augustine discusses Eucharistic sacrifice in the context of a general exposition on the nature of sacrifice. According to St. Augustine, a sacrifice is true if it has God as its object and is accompanied by an inner disposition that seeks to unite oneself with God through good works and self sacrifice (cf. *City of God* 10.6)⁵. St. Augustine argues that Christ, by giving up his life, or as he puts it, by preferring 'to be the sacrifice rather than to receive it' (*City of God* 10.20) fulfilled the condition of a perfect sacrifice.

Right from the beginning, St. Augustine discusses Eucharistic sacrifice in relation to the sacrifice of cross. According to St. Augustine, Christ's sacrifice on the cross is the true sacrifice and the Eucharistic sacrifice is related to it as its sacramental commemoration. Referring to Christ, he says that 'He wished that the sacrament of this reality [i.e. Christ's sacrifice on the cross] should be the daily sacrifice of the Church' (*City of God* 10.20). Thus for St. Augustine, the Eucharistic sacrifice is a sacrament that renders the reality of Christ's sacrifice on the cross present for the church.

The Eucharistic sacrifice, however, is not just an indifferent commemoration of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, but a sacrifice in which those who take part also offer themselves. St. Augustine comes to this conclusion by adopting the Pauline theology of the church as the body of Christ, which makes members of the church one with Christ. This leads him to conclude that the sacrifice offered in the Eucharist is not only Christ's, but also one of the members of the church as well:

'Such is the sacrifice of Christians. "We the many are one body in Christ." This is the sacrifice, as the faithful understand, which the church continues to celebrate in the sacrament of the altar, in

⁵ This refers to St. Augustine's work, book number and chapter.

which it is clear to the church that she herself is offered in the very offering she makes to God' (*City of God* 10.6).

1.4.8 Observations on Eucharistic sacrifice in the Fathers

The theme of Eucharistic sacrifice finds some echo in the fathers just considered. In some of these fathers, especially those of the first two centuries, reference to our subject is so sporadic and incomplete that it is difficult to construct a coherent theory of their understanding of the Eucharistic sacrifice. What remains clear, though, with the second century fathers is that they attach a lot of importance to the spiritual dimension with more emphasis on the praise of God by the participants and their practical daily life of virtue and concern for others than on the ritual itself. The emphasis is more on the effect the sacrifice has on the community that offers it than on the nature of the sacrifice offered.

While the Eucharist was understood as the memorial of the sacrifice of the cross, the focus of explanation was not on the relationship between the Eucharist and the sacrifice of the cross, but on the moral implications of participating in it. We saw, for example in Cyprian, that the unity of the Church is the starting point of his explanation of the Eucharistic sacrifice. In short we could say that while there was some understanding of the Lord's supper as sacrifice, this understanding extended to include all the aspects of Christian life, which include inner disposition, thoughts and behaviour.

Exclusive focus on the consecration of bread and wine is a development peculiar to the Middle Ages which, though seminally present in the early fathers, does not dominate their attention. Thus instead of reading later ideas and problems into the early fathers, we need to appreciate what they have to offer for a broader understanding of the Eucharistic sacrifice. If the early fathers mean anything for today's understanding of the Eucharistic sacrifice, the spiritual, ethical and the ecclesial dimension of Eucharistic sacrifice must be taken seriously.

Those whose tradition is hostile to the ritualistic understanding of the Eucharistic sacrifice, need to appreciate the fact of the development of a doctrine. As we saw in the

analysis of the fathers of the first four centuries, there was a progression of the understanding of Eucharistic sacrifice. While the fathers of the first two centuries accentuated the spiritual dimension, the fathers of the last two centuries began to explain, though without much clarity, the realistic nature of the Eucharistic sacrifice. They did this by identifying the offerer, i.e. Christ through the priest (cf. St. Cyprian and Chrysostom), its propitiatory nature (cf. Cyril of Jerusalem) and its relationship to the sacrifice of the cross (cf. St. Chrysostom and St. Augustine).

I want to submit that even among the second century fathers who understood Eucharistic sacrifice as primarily spiritual, the idea of the Eucharist as a ritual sacrifice was seminally present in some of their thoughts. One thing clear among the early fathers, for example Justin and Irenaeus, is that they understood the bread and wine as identical to the body and blood of Christ. We could say, at least from a Catholic point of view, that such understanding was a stepping stone towards a cultic sacrificial understanding of the Eucharist, which was to be seen in the later fathers of the third and the fourth centuries. Ultimately it is because of the belief that the bread and wine are the real body and blood of Christ that they were later viewed as sacrifice, and the early fathers provided this foundation, even though they themselves did not explicitly affirm this doctrine.

From a Catholic point of view, a doctrine is not usually maintained because it finds explicit reference from authoritative early sources, or even the Bible. It is enough if it does not contradict but builds on the previous understanding, because the spirit is always at work, enlightening us about the mysteries of faith. In view of this observation, it is false for a Catholic to claim direct authority of the early fathers on the cultic sacrifice of the Eucharist because they were never clear on the issue. It is also false for a Protestant to refute reference to the early fathers on the basis that they were not clear, because the idea was seminally there.

1.5 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to present a Catholic theology of the Eucharistic sacrifice from the bible and the fathers. The Roman Missal, as the official public source

of information about the nature and celebration of the Eucharist, was taken as a guide for this reflection. The Roman Missal clearly affirms the sacrificial character of the Eucharist, and cites Scripture, the fathers and the Magisterium as witnesses to this fact. The investigation of the Scriptures revealed that almost all types of sacrifice found in the Old Testament find an echo in Eucharistic sacrifice. Among these, it was observed that the Last Supper, from which the idea of the Eucharistic sacrifice originates, is closely associated with the Passover sacrifice. There is no conclusive argument about the historical similarity between the Last Supper and the Passover, but there is no doubt that there is a clear intention by the Gospel writers to make a theological connection between them.

The survey of the fathers on the subject of the Eucharistic sacrifice, based on the work of Eucharistic scholars and theologians, revealed that there is a clear reference to it by all the fathers considered in this chapter. Among the second century fathers, particularly St. Justin, the Eucharistic sacrifice is explained with reference to Malachi 1:11, which emphasises the understanding of the Eucharist as a ritualisation of the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. With St. Irenaeus, still steeped in the tradition of St. Justin about the latreutic character of Eucharistic sacrifice, the language of offering or oblation begins to crop up but with reference to God offering us the body and blood of his Son as means of enhancing Christian life.

A more explicit reference to Eucharistic sacrifice as an offering begins to emerge among the third century fathers, but it is with the fourth century fathers that one perceives a clear cultic understanding of the Eucharistic sacrifice. The seeming lack of unanimity among the fathers about Eucharistic sacrifice has led some to pick and choose according to what suits them, depending on whether one comes from the tradition that affirms or denies the sacrificial character of the Eucharist. We have preferred to see this lack of unanimity as a development instead of disagreements, because patristic teachings, taken together, offer a holistic understanding of the Eucharistic sacrifice.

CHAPTER 2

EUCCHARISTIC SACRIFICE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

2.1 Introduction

Alasdair (1983:80) observes that 'the broad lines of what is still today the official Catholic understanding of the Eucharist were laid down in the middle ages', and as it will be seen, this is especially true of the Eucharistic sacrifice. A comprehensive understanding of the Eucharistic sacrifice, therefore, must include a considerable investigation and analysis of the medieval theology on this topic. This task becomes even more important when one considers that there are some expressed doubts and even convictions that there was no coherent or clear theology of Eucharistic sacrifice in the middle ages. Our position is that there was a coherent theology of Eucharistic sacrifice in the middle ages, by that, meaning a variety of theological positions that were consistent in their exposition.

The opinion that there was no clear theology of Eucharistic sacrifice in the middle ages is largely due to the abuses¹ that were widespread during this period, which eventually led to the reformers' revolt. As we hope to show, however, the fact that there were abuses at the level of popular practice of the Eucharist does not mean that there was no clarity about it at the level of the official teaching and among theologians. While it is true that some of the medieval theologians offered a shallow or even superstitious explanation of Eucharistic sacrifice, one still found theologians of good calibre like Peter Lombard, Biel and Thomas Aquinas who, gave a lasting framework of thinking about the Eucharist.

Given that there is doubt about whether there was any coherent theology of the Eucharistic sacrifice in the middle age, this chapter will start off by offering a brief

¹ By abuse, we mean the superstitious and magical view of the Eucharist, which focused mainly on its utility value for spiritual and material benefit, as well as the manner of celebrating and participating in the Eucharist, which was informed by this view.

overview of medieval Eucharistic theology. The abuses, which are cited as contributing to this doubt, will also be looked at briefly; it is really the mentality behind these abuses that we shall focus on. Having cleared this doubt, we shall proceed to analyse the development of medieval Eucharistic theology in some detail. We will begin by looking at the period before the Reformation and proceed to the Reformation itself up to the Council of Trent.

2.2 Medieval Eucharistic theology

Clark (1960:78) reports of authors and theologians who allege that by the time of the Reformation, the doctrine of Eucharistic sacrifice had degenerated 'so that at length all was confusion and error and no solid and stable doctrine remained recognisable'. Some of these authors that Clark refers to attribute the cause of Reformation disputes to abuses, and not to doctrine, since there was no clear doctrine (see Clark, 1960:63-72). As Clark tries to show however, the disputes were largely on a doctrinal level because there was a clear doctrine, and the abuses at most served to confirm the doctrinal objections of the reformers.

Abuses on their own do not provide an adequate explanation of the reformers' revolt. After all, it was not only the Protestant reformers who objected to abuses, but also Catholic theologians and bishops of the time. The Council of Trent itself dedicated a number of canons to the condemnation of abuses (see White 1995:17). Thus while the abuses contributed to the revolt, the target of the revolt was the theology itself from which the abuses were presumed by the reformers to have originated.

It is true that by the time of the Reformation, Eucharistic sacrifice had not been accorded enough reflection by theologians, at least not as much as the theme of Eucharistic *real presence* was accorded. Crockett tells us that 'Thomas Aquinas devotes only one article in the *Summa* to an explicit consideration of the Eucharist as sacrifice, whereas he devotes twenty-four to the doctrine of transubstantiation' (1989:120). This however, does not mean that there was no clear position among theologians and the Magisterium about

the nature of Eucharistic sacrifice. Perhaps there was not as much creative theological thinking and speculation about the sacrificial dimension of the Eucharist as one would have wanted, but for the little that was done there was clarity about its reality.

Power (1987), in his work *The sacrifice we offer*, provides a twofold structure for the analysis of the background to Trent's teaching on the sacrificial character of the Eucharist, namely the medieval practice of the Mass and the medieval theology of the Mass. This is a helpful distinction because it clarifies the issues involved in the discussion, i.e. the practice and the doctrine.

Stated briefly, the doctrine of the Eucharistic sacrifice was generally understood by medieval theologians as a memorial of Christ's sacrifice. This, however, is not just a commemoration that only brings the memory of the event to mind but one that renders the reality of the event present. The Eucharist, therefore, is a sacrifice in this sense of being a commemoration, i.e. as sacramentally representing the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ. St. Augustine's understanding of symbols as participating in the reality they represent provided a language for explaining how the sacrifice of the Mass under the symbol of bread and wine could be 'one reality with the sacrifice of the Cross' (Nichols 1991:88).

According to this explanation, the Eucharist is a real sacrifice because of its sacramental link to the sacrifice of Christ; 'sacramental', meaning that it is a sign that renders present what it signifies. The victim offered and the offerer are the same in both sacrifices, even though different in modes. The purpose of the Eucharistic sacrifice is to apply the fruits of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, for sins and for other needs of the individuals who participate in the Mass or for those whose intentions or well-being the Mass is being offered.

Application of the fruits of the Mass presupposed a good disposition towards God on the part of the beneficiary. Thus in answer to the question of the nature, the purpose and the offerer of the Eucharistic sacrifice, it is a sacramental sacrifice, offered by Christ through

the priest, applied for the forgiveness of sins and the good of the beneficiary who is well-disposed towards God. This then, in brief, was the medieval understanding of the sacrifice of the Mass. A similar summary can be viewed in Clark (1960:93-95) and Power (1987:92-93).

Stated briefly, the practice of the Eucharistic sacrifice in the Middle Ages was characterised by piety, the substance of which was to elicit God's favour and benefits. The benefits looked for included securing personal communion with God both in this life and after death. The Mass served this purpose by making satisfaction for sins committed, which would otherwise prevent this communion. For this reason Masses were celebrated 'for the dead as well as for the living to offer satisfaction for their sins and to plead for their eternal rest' (Power 1987:37). The benefits of the Mass were believed to extend to material or physical well-being as well. Such material well-being included security from natural disasters and wars, and guarantee of good health and long life.

2.3 Factors contributing to abuses of Eucharistic sacrifice

Certain Christological views, particularly the view enunciated in the Council of Nicea to a certain extent, had an influence in the practice and understanding of Eucharistic sacrifice in the Middle Ages. A brief recollection of this view can help to give an insight into the practice and understanding of medieval Eucharistic sacrifice as well as the abuses that ensued from such practice and understanding. Alasdair (1983:81) notes that the insistence of this first Christological Council on the divinity of Christ, even though later balanced by the Council of Chalcedon, which insisted on his humanity, had an enduring influence that tended to over-emphasise Christ's divinity in the subsequent ages. Medieval thought, devotion and art were greatly influenced by this tendency. The Church and sacraments, particularly the Eucharist, as well as the ministers that administered them, came to be seen as bridging the gap that existed between the divinity of Christ and humankind.

With regard to the Eucharistic sacrifice, this resulted in an exaggerated sense of awe. Silent consecration and use of Latin at Mass, for example, was justified as rendering the due sense of awe and mystery to the sacrifice. With regard to what it can achieve, its effects were spoken of in magical terms, and at times bordered on superstition. Another element that contributed to the shaping of the medieval theology of the Eucharistic sacrifice was a theology of atonement that tended to express the relation between God and humanity in legal terms. 'It is to this tradition that we owe the introduction of the concept of satisfaction into the theology of atonement' (Gunton 1988:85).

In this view of atonement, Christ's sacrifice on the cross was seen as making 'satisfaction in justice for the offence rendered to God by sin' (Power 1987:42). Modelled on this understanding of Christ's sacrifice, the Mass too was seen as making satisfaction for sin in justice to God. This understanding of Mass as making satisfaction was popularised by the practice of exchanging acts of penance, some of which were austere and long with Mass offerings. Each type and length of penance had a designated equivalent number of Masses. Power (1987:43) tells us that twenty Masses, for example, could 'compensate for seven months of penance'. With this background in mind, one can make theological sense of the belief and practice of Mass in the middle ages.

Power further observes that the practice of Eucharistic sacrifice in the Middle Ages cannot be divorced from its cultural milieu. In an environment where natural calamities were the norm rather than the exception, it was natural that intentions for the Eucharistic sacrifice would extend to these mundane concerns. The practice of offering Mass for the dead, even though it had a doctrinal foundation, was done out of an existential concern.

The frequency and lingering danger of death in the Middle Ages created a sense of solidarity between the living and the dead. The living could support the dead by offering Masses on their behalf, while the dead, who are united with God, could intercede for the living. With regard to the practice of offering Masses in honour of patron saints, Power notes that this too fitted in well in the social structure of the middle ages. 'For a society that lived on the practices of patronage, it was not unnatural to cast the saints in similar

mould' (Power 1987:40). With such Masses, it was hoped that the combination of the saint's intercession and sacrifice to God would achieve the desired effect of security.

These practices, with all the good intention behind them, at best led to a gross misrepresentation and consequently misunderstanding of Eucharistic sacrifice. All kinds of fanciful and exaggerated interpretations of Eucharistic sacrifice, which bordered on superstition were offered and believed. There was, for example, a belief that one's process of ageing was suspended while attending Mass. At worst, these practices led to abuses, manifested in the commercialisation of the Mass as well as the perception that God could be manipulated or bought through the Mass. To these abuses the reformers protested vehemently. Literature abounds on medieval abuses of the Mass, for a comprehensive view of these abuses, the reader is referred to Clark (1960:56-72). A more illustrative account can be viewed in Power (1987:37-38).

Of interest in Power's observations is how Eucharistic sacrifice as a doctrine was adapted to the medieval cultural milieu, notwithstanding the misrepresentation and the abuses that ensued in the process. In view of the projected purpose of this study, namely, to provide an inculturated understanding of Eucharistic sacrifice, Power's observations provide landmarks on how the same can be done in Xhosa cultural milieu. Without pre-empting the process of this investigation, integrating the Eucharistic sacrifice into the Xhosa world view and in the traditional occasions for sacrifice will be part of creating an inculturated understanding of the Eucharistic sacrifice. For now we proceed to analyse medieval theology of the Eucharistic sacrifice in some detail.

2.4 The pre-Reformation theology of Eucharistic sacrifice

The earliest attempt in the Middle Ages to construct a Eucharistic theology was done by Paschasius Radbertus in the 9th century in his work called *De Corpore et Sanguine Domini* (About the Body and Blood of the Lord). This work was a compendium of the patristic teaching on the Eucharist. As was noted earlier, patristic teaching on the Eucharistic sacrifice was sporadic and incomplete. With no coherent theory on the

subject, it is not surprising that Radbertus' summary has very little to say on Eucharistic sacrifice. The most he does is to affirm the sacrificial character of the Eucharist without offering any further reflection and insights on the matter.

Peter Lombard, even though without much originality, is often regarded as the earliest to offer a systematic analysis of the nature of Eucharistic sacrifice (cf. Clark 1960:75 and Alasdair 1983: 103-104). He explains the grounds for calling the Eucharist a sacrifice as being the fact that it is a sacramental representation of Christ's sacrifice on the cross and that the victim offered is the same. The principle of representation and identification between the Eucharist and the cross is a verbatim reproduction of St. Chrysostom's teaching and, as we shall see, it was to constitute the essence of all subsequent orthodox explanation of the nature and purpose of Eucharistic sacrifice in the Middle Ages.

The new element that Lombard introduces is the explanation for the daily offering of the Eucharistic sacrifice. He explains that it is repeated not because it is inadequate, but because 'we sin daily' (Alasdair 1983:103). In fact, the purpose of the Eucharistic sacrifice had been clarified much earlier than Peter Lombard's time. Moloney (1995:238) reports that since the time of John Scotus Erigena, which is around the ninth century, a threefold distinction of the 'fruits' of the Mass existed, i.e. the general, the special and most special. The *general*, which stems from the infinite value of Mass, is for the entire Church and all people. This infinite value derives from the infinite value of the Calvary sacrifice, of which Mass is a memorial. The *special* is for those for whom the Mass is specifically offered and the *most special* is for the priest because of the unique place he has in the offering of the sacrifice, which it is his ability to consecrate.

The principles of representation and identification, however, do not say everything about the medieval conception and practice of the Eucharistic sacrifice. Taken as they are, they can give an impression that the Mass is a mere representation of the sacrifice of the cross without any distinct sacrificial value proper to it. Such an understanding, however, would be against the general medieval conviction manifested in the practice of the Mass,

namely, that to some extent the Mass is a sacrifice in its own right². It certainly would be against Trent's teaching, which explicitly stated that the Mass is a true and proper sacrifice. Thus in the subsequent explanations of the Eucharistic sacrifice, more attention was given to distinguishing the Eucharist as a sacrifice from the sacrifice of the cross.

To do this, some theologians sought to identify some actions in the Mass that would qualify it as a sacrifice. Biel, one of the leading medieval Eucharistic theologians, sees the distinction of the Eucharistic sacrifice as lying in its mode of offering, which differs from that of the cross. For Biel, 'the Mass is a sacramental, bloodless sacrifice, whereas Calvary took place in a blood-stained fashion, in the order of natural existence, not in that of signs' (Nichols 1991:90). In terms of its purpose, Biel seems to have understood it as working according to the *ex opere operato* principle. He tells us that the Eucharistic sacrifice is effective 'not according to the merit of the minister who acts but according to the work that is wrought; it has the effect of expiating sins not from the mere devotion of the celebrant but much more from the very offering of Christ' (Quoted by Clark 1960:85).

Other theologians looked for realistic actions in the rite of the Mass that would put it in the category of sacrifice because, as Mascall observes, according to these theologians, if the Eucharist is a sacrifice, 'Christ must in some sense be put to death' (1965:83). The separate consecration of bread and wine, for example, was seen as representing the immolation of Christ, the priest washing his hands represented Pilate, and the priest's action of bowing his head after consecration was a sign of Christ bowing his head on the Cross and so on. Still other theologians distinguished the Mass as a sacrifice in its own right by making a distinction between its purpose and that of the cross. 'Some theologians said that, while the Sacrifice of the Cross had taken away original sin, the sacrifice of the Mass takes away personal sin' (Hearne 1978:50).

² As we shall see, by Mass in its own right, some medieval theologians meant that the Mass was somehow a repetition of the sacrifice of the cross. For other theologians as well as for Trent, it meant the new elements that are proper to Mass e.g. the inner disposition of the participants and the prayers they offer, which are constitutive of its sacrificial character.

A more theologically argued distinction was deduced from the dual role of the priest in the Eucharistic sacrifice. According to this view, called by Kilmartin (1994:405) the Scotus-Biel-synthesis, the priest represents both Christ and the church in the Eucharistic celebration. He represents Christ when he pronounces the institution words and thus bringing about the consecration of the elements into the body and blood of Christ. He represents the Church when he offers the body and blood of Christ under the form of bread and wine. 'When consecrating, the priest says, "This is my body" and thus speaks directly in the name of Christ; but in the prayers of oblation ("offerimus" – "we offer") he seems to be speaking not directly in Christ's person but in the person of the Church' (Clark 1960:326). In other words, here the act of offering is subsequent to the act of consecration and the subjects and roles represented by the priest are distinct. When he consecrates, he represents Christ and when he offers, he represents the Church.

This view then has the meaning of the offerer as the Church, and thus distinguishing Eucharistic sacrifice from the sacrifice of the cross in which Christ was the offerer. Clark, however, notes that while this synthesis emphasises the ecclesiological rôle in the offering of the Eucharist, it nevertheless did not intend to exclude Christ as the offerer. 'While Scotus and his followers say that the Church is the proximate offerer they also say that Christ is the high priest of the Mass' (Clark 1960:332). The same Clark reports that according to Scotus, on the basis of the difference between the offerers of the two sacrifices, that of the cross and that of the Eucharist, the efficacy of the latter is less. It thus appears that the Scotus-Biel synthesis was serious about distinguishing the Eucharistic sacrifice by distinguishing the offerers. This is confirmed by the fact that according to Clark the Thomistic synthesis, which holds the opposite, emerged as a reaction to the Scotus-Biel synthesis.

The Thomistic synthesis, on the other hand, holds that it is not only the act of consecration of Eucharistic elements that is done in Christ's name, but also the offering. In other words, 'the moment of consecration is also the moment in which the Priest offers Eucharistic sacrifice under the same formality, that is, *in persona Christi*' (Kilmartin 1994:406). Unlike the Scotus-Biel synthesis, where the act of offering is subsequent to

the act of consecration, in the Thomistic synthesis the two acts are simultaneous. The priest's performance of both acts in Christ's name implies that the Eucharist as sacrifice is brought about by Christ and offered by him as well, unlike in the Scotus-Biel synthesis, where the latter role is ascribed to the Church. Does this mean that according to the Thomistic synthesis, the Eucharist is not distinguished as a sacrifice apart from being a mere representation of the cross? This synthesis does not cover all that the Angelic doctor would have said on the subject. A brief analysis of his teaching on the nature of Eucharistic sacrifice maybe helpful.

Like Lombard, Thomas Aquinas upholds the principle of representation and identification of Mass with Christ's sacrifice on the cross as the foundation of its sacrificial character (Clark 1960: 77). Thomas' starting point is the sacramental principle that a sacrament contains what it signifies, and if the Eucharist is the sacrament of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, 'then...it must contain that sacrifice and bring its effects about in our time' (Moloney 1995:141). Thomas understood the Eucharistic sacrifice as consisting in the consecration words because the words themselves, 'body given' and 'blood poured', bear the meaning of sacrifice. After the words of consecration, Christ becomes present under the signs of sacrifice [i.e. the bread and the wine], thus what comes about in the Eucharist is identical 'to the victim of the cross' (Kilmartin 1994:407).

To explain the sacrificial value of the Eucharist in its own right, Thomas went on to grant people who offer and for whom the Mass is offered a share in its effectiveness as sacrifice. 'Therefore, its effect as a sacrament is in the recipient, its effect as a sacrifice is in the offerer or in those for whom it is offered' (Aquinas Q. 79, art. 5). Thus according to Thomas the Eucharist has a twofold value, the value of consumption for the purpose of spiritual nourishment, communion with Christ and the grace of communion with the Church (cf. Power 1992a:217). The second value is that it can be offered to make satisfaction for sins. It is as sacrifice that the Eucharist 'is of benefit even to those who do not partake – if it is offered for them' (Alasdair 1983:106).

Thomas does not clarify well where, exactly, does the offering of the Church through the priest lie. Even renowned Eucharistic theologians like Power do not seem to be sure. Power asks: 'Does this mean that the Eucharist is a sacrifice inasmuch as the Church offers prayers in commemoration of Christ's passion, which is represented in the consecration?' (1992a:229). From the observation of Kilmartin (1994:406) on the same problem, namely that 'as explained by Aquinas....the presiding priest....proclaims the Eucharistic prayer in the name of the Church and consecrates the bread and wine, acting in the person of Christ....' the answer seems to be on the affirmative. Thus the status of the Eucharist as a distinct sacrifice from the sacrifice of the cross lies in the prayers of the Church through the priest that are joined with Christ's sacramental sacrifice. The Eucharist as a distinct sacrifice in the manner just explained, according to Thomas, 'has the power of rendering satisfaction' (Aquinas Q 79 art 5) and in several Masses, 'the sacrificial effect is increased' (Aquinas Q 79 art 7).

Thomas goes on to explain that the subjective effectiveness of the offered Eucharist does not depend on the value of what is offered, viz. the victim who is Christ, but on the measure of the disposition and devotion of those who offer. 'Although this offering of the Eucharist suffices in its own quantity to satisfy for all punishment, nevertheless it renders satisfaction for those whom it is offered, and also for those who offer it according to the amount of their devotion...' (Aquinas Q 79 art 5). Thomas' teaching renders the medieval practice of the multiplicity of Masses theologically intelligible. It clarifies why Eucharistic sacrifice has to be offered over and over again: it is because the limited devotion of the offerer limits the effect of the sacrifice. Power adds that 'to the limitation coming from the offerer there is added the limitation coming from the side of the beneficiary, for not all beneficiaries are equally disposed in faith and will not receive grace and remission of sins' (1987:74).

The understanding drawn from this discussion and supported by Power is that, according to Thomas, 'the Eucharist is a sacrifice inasmuch as the Church offers prayers in commemoration of Christ's passion...' (Power 1992a:229). This understanding does not make Thomas an articulator of the medieval understanding of the Eucharistic sacrifice,

which was understood as more than just offering prayers. Such understanding would not be far from the reformers' understanding of the Eucharist as a sacrifice of prayer. The difference, of course, would be that for Thomas it would be an intercessory and supplicatory prayer done in the context of the real presence of Christ's sacrifice, while for the reformers it would be a prayer of praise and thanksgiving done in the context of symbolic memorial. Considering the nature of sacrifice in general, also, it does not make sense to say that propitiation is effected through prayer.

2.5 Eucharistic sacrifice during the Reformation

As we proceed to consider Eucharistic sacrifice during the Reformation, it is well to clarify the meaning of the term 'Reformation'. The term is used in a number of senses. Used in general terms it refers to the move in the Middle Ages to revive the Church in terms of its 'belief system, morality and structures' (McGrath:1998:156). In a focused sense it refers to diverse approaches to the Reformation, hence we speak of the Protestant Reformation and Catholic Reformation. The Protestant Reformation is characterised by its method of 'protest', which culminated in Luther's publication of ninety-five theses against indulgences. The Catholic Reformation, on the other hand, refers 'to the revival within Roman Catholicism in the period following the opening of the Council of Trent' (McGrath:1998:163). The ground for the Catholic Reformation was prepared by discussion among Catholic theologians, and stimulated by the criticism of the abuses by the reformers. It culminated in the doctrinal definitions of the Council of Trent.

2.5.1 The reformers

Variations within the Protestant Reformation exist, so that in a more specific sense one can still speak of different forms of Reformation within the Protestant tradition (cf. McGrath 1998:155-163). With regard to the Eucharist, for example, variations and even opposing views among the reformers existed about the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the Eucharistic elements. The reformers do, however, have common theological principles which 'include: the doctrine of justification by faith alone and not works, the sole authority of holy scripture, and the universal priesthood of all believers' (O'Collins

and Farruga 1991:195). It is these common theological principles that made them a united front against particular doctrines of the Catholic Church.

On the Eucharist, the common belief among them was that it was not a propitiatory sacrifice as was and is still held by the Catholic Church. It would, however, be simplistic to lump the reformers together as rejecting Eucharistic sacrifice, because even as they agreed about the non-sacrificial character of the Eucharist, they did so with varying theological emphases. Before considering their views on the Catholic medieval theology of Eucharistic sacrifice, it is necessary to look briefly at the theological presuppositions of their objections. Martin Luther, being the first among the reformers to blow the whistle against abuses, is usually the first to be considered in the discussion of the Protestant Reformation. O'Connor (1988:133) notes three issues that Martin Luther raised against the Eucharistic theology and practice of his time: (1) The denial of both species to all the faithful, (2) The doctrine of transubstantiation, (3) The notion that Mass is a sacrifice.

Of particular significance to Eucharistic sacrifice are 1 and 3. With regard to the first issue, Luther suspected that this withdrawal was based on the denial of the priesthood of all the faithful. By calling for communion under both species, he sought to restore the rightful place of the faithful in the celebration of the Eucharist. His theological framework for this call was the claim that all the faithful are priests by virtue of their baptism. He based this claim on 1Pet.2:9, 'You are a chosen race, a kingdom of priests.' Among others, participation in the Eucharist was one of the rights of the faithful as priestly people (George 1989:96). The denial of the distinction between a priest and a layman undercut the whole conception of the sacrifice of the Mass and the distinctively sacrificial role of the priest.

With regard to Mass itself as sacrifice, Luther rejected it because it presented the danger of putting one's salvation on good works, instead of faith, and thus expecting to earn one's salvation instead of receiving it as a gift from God. For Luther the Mass is the very opposite of sacrifice. It is the pledge of what God offers to us, namely the forgiveness of sins (Crockett 1989: 144). Luther's famous expression "There is here no duty but

benefit, not work or service but only enjoyment and profit", (Quoted by George 1989:157), summarises his objection to Mass as sacrifice. He conceded, though, that at most Mass can only be 'a sacrifice of thanksgiving for that which is memorialised' (Vorgrimler 1992:165). Here Luther was concerned primarily with the very doctrine itself and not with the abuses, as it is often claimed. 'It is not merely commercial abuse that Luther denounces, but the underlying conception of the matter which alone makes such abuse possible – the view of Mass as a sacrifice and the Priest as one who is uniquely empowered to offer it' (Alasdair I, 1983:113).

Most of Zwingli's considerations, a contemporary of Luther are on the question of real presence. Guided by his theological principle of the superiority of Spirit over the flesh, Zwingli rejected the idea that the true flesh and blood of Jesus are received, for it is not flesh but the Spirit that 'brings our faith to bear on Jesus Christ...' (Alasdair I, 1983:115). According to Zwingli, the Eucharist is not an event that brings about something, be it body, blood, or sacrifice of Christ. It is rather an act of believing what Christ has done, and this act is facilitated by the Spirit. The Eucharist, therefore, is not a sacrifice, but an act of believing that Christ was sacrificed for us. On a more argumentative level Zwingli rejected the notion of the sacrifice of the Mass for four reasons: (1) Only the blood of Christ takes away sin, (2) That Blood was shed only once, (3) Christ was offered only when he suffered, and (4) He can neither suffer nor be offered any more (cf. O'Connor 1988:144).

In rejecting the Eucharistic sacrifice, Calvin, another prominent Protestant reformer, has as his starting point, the affirmation of God's sovereignty. God is never at our disposal. To suggest that Mass is a sacrifice performed by us for God is to pose a threat to the once and for all Christ's sacrifice on the cross. It also suggests that we can manipulate God by claiming that we can do something for him. For Calvin the only sacrifice we offer in the Eucharist is a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. The duty of the priests, or ministers as Calvin would prefer to call them, is to distribute the gift of God at the Eucharist and not to offer sacrifice. Sacrifice as a category of the description of Christian life 'applies to all

believers, not only, nor in any special sense, to ministers over and against others' (Alasdair 1983:144).

2.5.2 The Council of Trent

A group known as Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue (1967:151-153) gives a succinct summary of Trent's doctrinal teaching on Eucharistic sacrifice: In view of the rejection of the sacrificial character of the Eucharist by the reformers, Trent sought to affirm this belief on the Eucharist as sacrifice. In chapter 1 of its decree on the sacrifice of the Mass, Trent stated that Mass as a visible sacrifice was instituted by Christ. The Council here seeks to validate the sacrificial character of the Eucharist by tracing its origin back to Christ. In view of the denial of cultic priesthood by the reformers, the Council also states that in instituting the Eucharistic sacrifice, Christ also instituted the priesthood. Thus, 'the efficacy of the priest's act in offering and applying the mass is attributed to the power of Christ' (Power 1987:118). In mentioning this point, Power is quick to point out that the focus of the Council was not on defining or talking about the origin of priesthood, but on linking the efficacy of priesthood, like all other sacraments to Christ.

Chapter 2 of the decree touches on the nerve centre of the reformers' objections about the sacrificial character of the Eucharist, i.e. its perceived competition with the sacrifice of the cross. According to Trent, the Eucharistic sacrifice does not impair the value of the Calvary sacrifice because it is the same with it, if in different form. There is between the two, a relationship of identity; the victim and the offerer in both sacrifices is the same. There is also a relationship of distinction, the manner of offering is different. Whereas Christ offered himself on Calvary by shedding his blood, in the Eucharist he offers himself in an unbloody manner through the ministry of the priest. There is also a relationship of complementarity between the two, because as explained by the Council in Chapter 1, the Eucharistic sacrifice applies the saving effects of the cross for the sins we daily commit.

On account of this identity, the Council goes on to affirm that the Eucharist is a **truly propitiatory sacrifice**. The intention of the Council was to refute the reformers'

limitation of the value of the Mass to communion. The Eucharist was for Luther a means of grace, forgiveness and consolation. As he himself puts it: "This bread is a comfort for the sorrowing, a healing for the sick, life for the dying, food for the hungry, and a rich treasure for all the poor and needy" (Quoted by George 1989:157). In the context of such an understanding, the Council presents the Eucharist as a sacrificial act, 'distinct from the grace obtained through the reception of communion' (Power 1992a:258). Furthermore, by noting that it is **truly sacrifice**, the Council sought to distinguish Eucharistic sacrifice from prayers of thanksgiving and praise. While these are part of it, they do not constitute its character.

To summarise Trent's teaching on the Eucharistic sacrifice, we note the following points: Trent affirms that the Eucharist is a sacrifice. Christ instituted it simultaneously with the priesthood. Its institution is in line with God's plan of salvation as it fulfils the sacrifices that prefigured it in the Old Testament. Its sacrificial character derives from being a representation of Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

It has a relationship of identity of priest and victim with the sacrifice of the cross. It is from this relationship that its propitiatory effect derives. Its propitiatory effect includes the granting of grace, the gift of repentance, the forgiveness of sins, and other necessities both for the living and the dead. The propitiatory effect of Eucharistic sacrifice, however, presupposes faith and a good inner disposition towards God. It is executed in a sacramental mode, where Christ, through the priest by means of the words of consecration, effects the representation of his sacrifice and offers it. While Eucharistic sacrifice is related to the cross, it is also distinct from it. On the cross Christ offered himself in a bloody manner, while in the Eucharist he offers himself in an unbloody manner.

2.5.2.1 Observations on Trent's teaching on Eucharistic sacrifice

Trent's teaching demonstrates some conscious effort on its part to disprove some of the accusations made by the reformers against the Catholic Church. Contrary to Luther's

accusation that the notion of Eucharistic sacrifice was a human invention without scriptural foundation, Trent sought to relate this doctrine to Scripture by tracing its origin from Scripture and by showing how the former fulfils the latter. Contrary to the reformers' accusation that the Catholic doctrine of the Mass as sacrifice posed a threat to the uniqueness and sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, Trent related and subordinated the Eucharistic sacrifice to the cross. It consciously excluded in its decree the notion of two sacrifices and upheld one sacrifice under different modes. Contrary to Luther's objection that the Mass as sacrifice presented the danger of ascribing one's salvation to good works instead of faith, Trent asserted that faith and a good inner disposition are the conditions for the benefits of Eucharistic sacrifice.

Lastly it may be noted that Trent, by insisting on the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist, has played a significant role in keeping the image of sacrifice alive in Christian belief and language. It is to a large extent due to Trent that the notion of sacrifice has remained as an integral part of Eucharistic theology, notwithstanding the fact that it has tended to overshadow other elements that are equally important in Eucharistic theology. The notion of sacrifice, as the purpose of this study demonstrates, has provided a meaningful point of contact between the Eucharistic doctrine and other cultures. In anticipation of the comparison still to be made between Eucharistic sacrifice and Xhosa sacrifice, it can be noted right away that Trent's association of communion between the living and the dead through the Eucharistic sacrifice provides a common ground between the two.

While on the whole Trent's decree on Eucharistic sacrifice was clear, some points covered at the Council were left hanging, leaving one unclear about the real stand of the Council. Except for the clarification of the sacrificial status of the Eucharist, based on sacramental representation and identity of the victim, the Council remained unclear on what it means by sacrifice. Yet this was the most controverted issue in the Reformation and continues to be so even today. This, as we shall see, has resulted in a variety of theories by different theologians, which has made catechetics and teaching about Eucharistic sacrifice a daunting task. Another controverted issue, which the Council left unclear, was the propitiatory character of Eucharistic sacrifice. In chapter two of its

decree on the Eucharist Trent stated the following on the propitiatory character of the Eucharist:

Therefore, the holy Council teaches that this sacrifice is truly propitiatory...For the Lord, appeased by this oblation, grants grace and the gift of repentance, and He pardons wrongdoings and sins, even grave ones (Neuner 1983: 1548).

Not even the best of Catholic theologians have been able to explain satisfactorily this part of Trent's teaching on Eucharistic sacrifice. Perhaps this should not come as a surprise because it appears that even the Tridentine fathers themselves were not clear about it. In his historical analysis of the sessions of the Council of Trent, Power reports an intervention made by one bishop about the obscurity of the propitiatory character of the Eucharist:

The very obscurity of this question and the diversity of views on it led Campeggion, bishop of Forli, to warn his brothers that the Council needed to be careful in what it defined. The general statement that the mass is rightly offered for the living and the dead and applied by the priest for sins, satisfaction and other necessities, seemed to be about all that could be said without entering into very muddy waters (Power 1987:89).

Power continues and names those muddy waters when he points out the difficulty 'to reconcile the appeal to divine mercy through intercession in remembrance of Christ, which the Conciliar text places in the forefront with the computations of merits, punishments and satisfactions inherited from the medieval penitential system as categories of explanation' (Power 1987:121). Bermejo does the same when he seeks to understand the relationship between the propitiatory character of the Eucharist and the sacrament of reconciliation. 'If the power to forgive sins is allegedly present in both these sacraments, how is it operative in both of them? How far is sacramental confession needed before receiving communion? Can the faithful rely on the cleansing power of the Eucharist and therefore dispense with the practice of the confessional?' (Bermejo 1985:82-3).

As already noted in the above quotation from Power, propitiation, together with the notion of punishment and satisfaction, are analytical categories borrowed from the

medieval penitential system to explain Eucharistic sacrifice. As Bermejo rightly observes, Trent cannot be blamed for using such categories of explanation, because it was a child of its time. What can be questioned, however, is whether those categories of explanation are still helpful today for the understanding of Eucharistic sacrifice. In a society where prisons are no longer called prisons but centers for correction and rehabilitation, does it still make sense to speak of sacrifice in terms of punishment, satisfaction and propitiation? Bermejo seems to think that the notion of propitiation is not indispensable for a sound understanding of Eucharistic sacrifice, especially that it has not always been a standard expression for the Eucharistic sacrifice. He observes that very few of the fathers used the term. Thomas Aquinas never used it and Vatican II does not use the term to explain the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist.

Other authors, while they do not advocate the substitution of the term, bemoan the limiting effect that the notion of propitiation has had on Eucharistic sacrifice. They note that by focusing exclusively on propitiation, Trent failed to appreciate and to promote other equally valid notions of Eucharistic sacrifice such as thanksgiving, and communion or covenant sacrifices. Even though the Council never condemned these other aspects, the tone of its definition was not in favour of them since the reformers upheld them as the only way in which the Eucharist could be sacrificial. Its definition narrowly confined Eucharistic sacrifice to dealing with sin. Power observes that:

Though occasional suggestions were made in the debates as to how to integrate the different aspects of the Eucharist typified by reference to different kinds of sacrifice, the official teaching was stated in such a way that it seemed to register opposition instead of harmony between a theology of mass as thanksgiving and a theology of the mass as propitiation (1987:152-3).

The sidelining of these aspects by Trent has resulted in them receiving very little theological reflection as integral parts of the Eucharistic sacrifice.

Some observers have noted that Trent's lack of clarity in its decree on the Eucharist, at least in some of the issues, was intentional. These observers claim that the purpose of all magisterial teachings is to affirm the Church's belief while leaving room for a variety of

explanations and understanding by theologians, and this was true for Trent as well. It remains to be seen whether the varying modern explanations of the unclear issues in Trent's decree will lead to an enhanced understanding of what Trent sought to present, or to further confusion and disputes.

2.6 Conclusion

The time of the Middle Ages was a high point of the affirmation and articulation of the sacrificial character of the Eucharist. Even though it was riddled with abuses, it offered a lasting framework for the understanding of the Eucharist as sacrifice. According to this understanding, the Eucharist is a sacrifice because it is a sacramental representation of Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

A further development in the Middle Ages was the clarification of the extent to which Eucharistic sacrifice, apart from being a representation of the sacrifice of the cross, is also a sacrifice in its own right. One school of thought, represented by Biel, clarified this issue by distinguishing between Christological and Ecclesiological aspects of Eucharistic sacrifice. The former was explained as consisting in the words of consecration, which brings about the body and blood of Christ, while the latter consisted in offering the body and blood of Christ. Another school of thought, represented by Thomas Aquinas, saw the new element in Eucharistic sacrifice as lying in the prayers and supplications of the Church, joined to Christ's sacrifice made present in the Eucharist.

The Eucharist, particularly its sacrificial aspect, became a great source of dispute during the Reformation. While the Church's abuses had a role in the dispute, the real cause rested on doctrinal differences about the uniqueness of Christ's sacrifice on the cross and justification. For the reformers Christ's sacrifice on the cross, like any historical event, was a once and for all event, which continues to save by putting one's trust of faith in it as a saving event. Salvation comes about by believing that Christ has died for one's sins. The Eucharist, therefore, is not a moment of sacrificing, but a moment of proclaiming the attained salvation and helping others to appropriate it, not by doing something, since we

cannot do anything to save ourselves, but by believing and trusting. If there is any sacrificial meaning that can be attached to the Eucharist, according to this view, it can only be in praise and thanksgiving for what Christ has done.

In view of this denial, Trent asserted the sacrificial character of the Eucharist as originating from the will of Christ, as his act, and as subordinate to the sacrifice of the cross and deriving its efficacy from it. What has been noted so far against Trent's decree on Eucharistic sacrifice is its lack of clarity about the exact nature of sacrifice, and how the Eucharist as sacrifice is related to the forgiveness of sins.

CHAPTER 3

EUCCHARISTIC SACRIFICE AFTER TRENT TO THE PRESENT

3.1 Introduction

Trent's definition of the Eucharistic sacrifice did not bring the issue to a close. Reflection on the subject has continued ever since, both by theologians and the Magisterium of the Church. Though Trent had made definitive statements on Eucharistic sacrifice, the finer details of its definitions were left out, and as we have noted, sometimes deliberately because of the complexity of the issue. The subject of the Eucharistic sacrifice, then, and Trent's teaching on it have remained open to further pondering, elucidation and debate among theologians and the Magisterium of the periods subsequent to Trent. Some of the issues that have occupied the attention of this period with regard to the Eucharistic sacrifice include the following:

- a) The sacrificial nature of the Eucharist, in other words, how does it fit the structure of sacrifice? What is immolated and what is offered?
- b) The Eucharist as propitiatory and its relation to the sacrament of reconciliation.
- c) The place and role of the Church in offering, in other words, is the Eucharist a sacrifice of Christ or of the Church or both, and if any, how?
- d) Other dimensions of Eucharistic sacrifice not considered by Trent, e.g. the Eucharist as a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving and the Eucharist as self-offering.

The period under discussion can be conveniently subdivided into three periods, namely; the period following immediately after Trent, which we shall call the *Post-Tridentine period*, the *Modern period* which covers the late nineteenth, and the early part of the twentieth century and the *Contemporary period* which extends to our own time.

3.2 Eucharistic Sacrifice in the Post-Tridentine period

The post-Tridentine period ranges from the period after Trent to the 18th century. Catholic theologians at this time had not shed the polemic mood of the Reformation and most of their theological exposition was in defence of Trent. This was true for Eucharistic sacrifice as well. Their treatment of this subject still centred round the medieval controversies, the relationship of the Eucharistic sacrifice to the cross and its propitiatory character being top on the agenda. In line with Trent's teaching, they sought to establish convincing arguments for the sacrificial character of the Eucharist.

One will remember that Trent had stated that the Eucharist is not a mere representation of the Calvary sacrifice, but also a true and proper sacrifice in its own right. The concern of the post-Tridentine theologians was to clarify the distinct status of the Eucharist as a sacrifice, even though still dependent on the sacrifice of the cross. To do this, they identified some actions in the ritual of the Eucharist that could be regarded as constituting it a sacrifice.

The explanations given started off with a theory of sacrifice, and proceeded to demonstrate how the Eucharist fits the proposed theory. Common among the theories of sacrifice provided at this time, was the idea that sacrifice consisted in the killing of, destruction of, or something else happening to the victim. This was greatly due to St. Thomas Aquinas' teaching 'that in a sacrifice "something is done to that which is offered"' (Stone 1909:373). Applying this principle to the Eucharist, the Eucharist was considered a sacrifice because something symbolising destruction was done or happened to the body and blood of Christ brought about through the consecration.

One school of thought represented by Melchior Cano (-1520 –1560) applied this principle in a literal sense to the Eucharist. He explained that the breaking of the host, after consecration, signifies the breaking of Christ's body on the cross. This led him to a conclusion that if the breaking of the host were to be omitted, it would not be a sacrifice

(cf. Stone 1909:357). Another school of thought, identified with the scholastic Jesuits, saw this destruction as symbolised by the separate consecration of bread and wine. 'More specifically, it is the *separate* consecration of bread and wine – symbolically, of flesh and blood – which signifies the death of the Lord and hence must be the ritual occasion for the making, in sacrament, of his sacrifice' (Nichols 1991:93-94). Another school of thought represented by Cardinal John de Luogo saw the sacrificial moment as consisting in the changing of the Eucharistic elements. This school saw transubstantiation, through which it is believed that the glorified Christ becomes present on the altar, as self-emptying on the part of Christ, and therefore symbolising a form of death on the part of Christ.

The theoretical presupposition of sacrifice from which post-Tridentine theologians operated, namely that the essence of sacrifice consists in the killing or destruction of the victim, has been severely criticised. Some authors have argued that not only does this understanding of sacrifice deviate from the biblical understanding of sacrifice, but it also does not represent a general understanding of sacrifice. Lash (1968:49) claims that 'there are plenty of forms of primitive sacrifice that involve no destruction of the materials used'. There certainly is unanimity among authors, both Protestant and Catholic, on the subject, that in the Old Testament, the killing of the victim is not an essential part of the sacrifice but the means of releasing and offering its life.

Another criticism that is often meted against post-Tridentine theologians is the limitation of Christ's sacrifice to his death. The critics argue that the whole life of Jesus was a sacrifice, from his conception to his death and resurrection. The other events in the whole life of Jesus, these critics continue to argue, form part of the sacrifice of Christ of which his death was a culminating point. The implication of the criticism is that if post-Tridentine theologians had as their starting point this comprehensive understanding of Christ's sacrifice, their explanation of Eucharistic sacrifice would have been equally more comprehensive than focusing on the event of death. This criticism is valid to a point, but the death of Christ as constitutive of his sacrifice has strong biblical support and highlighting Christ's death does not seem out of order.

A more pertinent criticism, for which I am indebted to Mascall (1953), is the one that addresses itself to the implied repetition of the sacrifice of the cross suggested by the Eucharistic sacrifice theories of the post-Tridentine theologians. Mascall notes that the attempt of the post-Tridentine theologians to establish the sacrificial character of the Mass by highlighting a particular ceremonial act as resembling the death of Christ isolates the Mass as a repetition of the Calvary sacrifice. In other words, to say that just as Christ was slain on the cross, so is he slain when the host is broken, is to suggest to the imagination a physical representation of the cross, even if in a symbolic manner. He further notes that these views 'tend, in spite of the efforts of the exponents to avoid this conclusion, to make the Mass a sacrifice *numerically different* from Calvary, even if dependent upon it' (Mascall 1953:87). Of course these theologians repeatedly affirmed the uniqueness of the sacrifice of the cross and the subordination of the Eucharistic sacrifice to it, but their manner of explaining the distinctiveness of the latter lends them to the conclusion drawn by Mascall.

It is interesting that another author commenting on the same theologians makes an opposite observation about them. According to him, 'the theologians who have so far been mentioned, ...scrupulously avoid any doctrine which might seem to imply a repetition of the sacrifice of the cross or the death of Christ' (Stone 1909:373). Unfortunately, Stone does not show how the idea of the repetition of the cross cannot be implied by theories that situate the moment of Eucharistic sacrifice on ceremonial acts that re-enact the death of Christ. One can only agree with Mascall that the location of the Eucharistic sacrifice on acts that are interpreted as resembling Christ's death suggests a repetition of the cross, even if inadvertently.

The implication that the Eucharist as a repetition of Christ's sacrifice on the cross would contradict Trent's teaching, which clearly affirmed the uniqueness of Christ's sacrifice on the cross and, therefore, saw the Eucharist not as its repetition but its memorial. Furthermore, it makes no sense to look for physical resemblances between the sacrifice of the cross and the Eucharistic sacrifice, because there are none. Physically, the Eucharist is

far-fetched as a symbol of the sacrifice of the cross, and does not naturally present itself as connected to the cross. It is the words of Jesus that invest the Eucharist with sacrificial meaning and link it to the cross. Consequently, the sacrificial character of the Eucharist should not be asserted on the basis of its physical resemblance to the cross. It should rather be based on Christ's 'declaration that the bread was his body and that the cup was the new covenant in his blood, and his command that the rite should be repeated as his *anamnesis*' (Mascal 1953:89).

Clark (1960:459) defends the post-Tridentine theologians by noting that when they highlighted a symbolic destruction or immolation in the Eucharistic ceremony, it was never their intention to present the Eucharist as a repetition of the cross. In locating a moment of sacrifice in the Eucharistic rite, they did not intend to imply a new infliction of harm on Jesus but to make reference to it in order to make sense of the Eucharist as a sacrifice. He notes, however, that a more justified accusation against them is that 'they failed to apply the sacramental principle to the Mass' (Clark 1960:460). It was the twentieth century theologians who were to rectify this mistake by explaining the sacrificial character of the Mass according the notion of *anamnesis*, or more precisely, according to the principle of sacramental representation.

In concluding this brief discussion of the post-Tridentine period, we note that it is mainly to the nature of Eucharistic sacrifice that the theologians of this period address themselves. They viewed its nature as consisting in some symbolic resemblance to the cross. With regard to the purpose and the offerer of the sacrifice, it would seem that they upheld Trent's teaching as it is without any further elaboration. Clark (1960:331) seems to confirm that they indeed upheld Trent's view when he states that the Scottist view, which accentuated the role of the Church in offering, 'lost ground to the rival theory which seemed to the post-Tridentine authors to suit better the words of Trent.'

3.3 Eucharistic sacrifice in the modern Period

The Modern period for theology is usually presented as ranging from the eighteenth century to the present day (cf. Lane 1984: 177 and McGrath 1998:215). Here we shall focus on the period from the end of the nineteenth century to the middle of the present one. Like post-Tridentine theologians, modern theologians sought to clarify Trent's teaching on Eucharistic sacrifice but with more matured theological insights than their predecessors. They 'set themselves to recover the best features of their predecessors and to inter-relate them in a way that was intellectually coherent, theologically balanced, and preachable' (Nichols 1991:102).

The modern period began with a school of thought composed mainly of French authors, who proposed a more holistic approach to understanding the Eucharistic sacrifice. This approach sought to establish the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist not by considering it in isolation, but by relating it to the cross and the risen ascended Christ. It argued for inherence of purpose between the sacrifice of the cross, Christ's heavenly sacrifice and Eucharistic sacrifice. Thus the defining point of Christ's sacrifice on the cross is also the defining point of Christ's heavenly and Eucharistic sacrifice. Now according to this view, which finds its best expression in Valentin Thalhofer (1825-1891), the essence of Christ's sacrifice on the cross did not consist in what happened externally but in his inner attitude of obedience and his desire to give honour to God.

The essence of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, therefore, as Valentin Thalhofer puts it, is 'surrender'. Consequently, the essence of Eucharistic sacrifice does not lie in separate consecration as symbolising destruction but in the act of consecration as a sacramental representation of self-surrender of Christ in honour of God. Quoting from the work of Valentin Thalhofer himself, (see Stone (1909), Nichols concludes by noting that 'the act of eucharistic consecration...' "has the value and meaning of an act of sacrifice only

because of its inner relation to that sacrificial death, which as a willing surrender of life it affirms anew, and continues, and recapitulates” ’ (1991:97).

In the twentieth century, the first Eucharistic theologian of note is Maurice de la Taille (1872-1933). Like the post-Tridentine theologians, he begins by offering a general definition of sacrifice, and goes on to demonstrate how it applies to Mass. He distinguishes between two types of sacrifice, the latreutic and propitiatory sacrifices. In the former, the destruction or immolation of the victim is not necessary, while in the latter it is called for: ‘Where the primary and prevailing end is latreutic only, we hold that destruction is not necessary...Where, however, the propitiatory purpose is more prominent, we say that slaying or destruction of some kind is the more fitting’ (De la Taille 1941:12). He, however, does not offer a satisfactory explanation for this distinction.

With regard to propitiatory sacrifice, he presents three elements as constituting it, i.e. offering or oblation, immolation and acceptance. With regard to immolation, it is his contention that the victim can be offered as about to be immolated or by immolation or as already immolated. ‘The victim IS EITHER OFFERED TO BE IMMOLATED, OR IS OFFERED BY IMMOLATION, OR IS OFFERED AS IMMOLATED’ (De la Taille 1941:14). De la Taille presents these different modes of immolation with the view to explain the distinctive sacrificial character of the Last supper, the Cross and the Eucharist, while at the same time asserting their identity on the basis of the identity of the victim.

At the Last Supper, Christ offered himself as about to be immolated, on the Cross he was immolated, and in the Eucharist he offers himself as immolated. Nichols (1991:104) summarises this connection very well: ‘The Supper differs, via the Cross, from the Mass...[W]hile the supper looked to the immolation as future, the Mass looks to it as past.’ Mascall (1953:91) puts it differently, ‘the Eucharist *offers* what Calvary *immolated*, and it offers *after* the immolation the victim which the Last Supper offered *before*.’

With regard to the offering or oblation, de la Taille insists that it should be a conscious liturgical action. He insists, after refuting various suggestions to the opposite, that on account of the lack of a visible rite, 'the Passion of our Lord is not sufficiently specified as sacrifice' (de la Taille:1941:46), and that it is in the Last Supper that it is specified as such. 'Now the rite in the Supper appears wholly voluntary. Christ not only approaches it of His own free will, but He even accomplishes it gladly and commands His apostles to repeat it' (de la Taille 1941:52). There is thus a relationship of inter-dependence between the Cross on the one hand, and the Last Supper and the Eucharist on the other. While the former provides the latter with the victim, the latter in turn provides the liturgical ritual of oblation without which Christ's immolation on the cross would not be a complete sacrifice. 'For de la Taille the Last Supper and the Eucharist provide the element of oblation...' (Mascal 1953:92).

On the sacrificial character of the Mass then, we can conclude that according to de la Taille, the Mass is a distinct sacrifice not because Christ is immolated again but because it is a renewal of the offering of the already immolated victim. As this new offering is made by the Church, it is an offering of the Church. It is also at the same time the sacrifice of Christ because he is the victim and it is in obedience to his will that it is offered. Secondly, we can conclude by deduction that (according to de la Taille) since the Mass provides an element of oblation for the Calvary sacrifice, without which Calvary would be incomplete, the Mass makes Calvary complete.

The strength of this approach is that the Eucharistic sacrifice, while it depends on Christ's sacrifice on the cross, is distinguished from it as the offering of the Church. By avoiding the equation of sacrifice with death, de la Taille succeeds in explaining the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist where there is no death involved. When de la Taille speaks of the already immolated victim as being offered at Mass, he does not only think of it in terms of crucifixion, but extends it to resurrection and ascension. In other words, Christ at Mass is not only a victim of the cross, but also a victim that has been perfected through the resurrection and eternalised through his ascension. This is because when Jesus

'said "Do this in memory of me" he was not restricting his vision to the passion and the death. The Eucharist was to be in memory of *him* suffering and dead yes, but also risen, ascended and glorified with his Father. The Eucharist is the sign, the sacrament, the mystery of all this' (Crichton 1993:102).

As O'Connor (1988:239) notes, the advantage of this approach is that it links the Eucharistic sacrifice to Christ's continuing sacrifice in heaven. Where others have offered a narrow view of Christ's sacrifice by confining it to his death, de la Taille succeeds in offering a more comprehensive view by linking it to other post-paschal mysteries.

This is important because as De la Taille himself points out, 'all these mysteries are integral parts of the one mystery which is the sacrifice of the Redemption offered by Christ and accepted by God' (1941:201-2). His omission of the other pre-paschal events which some authors (cf. Bradley 1995:104) see as also constituting an integral part of Christ's sacrifice, still makes him vulnerable to the criticism that his view of Christ's sacrifice and Eucharistic sacrifice is not comprehensive enough. Except to say that the pre-paschal events, i.e. the conception, birth, infancy and ministry prepared and led to Christ's sacrifice, I do not see how their inclusion would improve its understanding. In view of the of comparison in mind between Catholic and Xhosa understanding of sacrifice, I want to note that de la Taille's oblationist view of Eucharistic sacrifice helps form an important link between the two.

One major criticism that has been leveled against de la Taille is that the close ritual connection that he insists on between Christ's sacrifice on the cross and the Mass suggests that the former is incomplete without the latter. From a Catholic point of view, it may be argued that without the Mass, the fruits of the Calvary sacrifice would not be concretised and appropriated, but to say that Christ's sacrifice on the cross in itself would be incomplete does not sound theologically correct. Furthermore, the suggestion that the Mass completes the sacrifice of the cross does not do well to bring out the distinctiveness of the Eucharist as a sacrifice. It gives an impression that 'when we celebrate Mass we are...adding an element which *is* necessary to make the sacrifice complete...' In the end, this approach makes '...neither Calvary nor the Mass a sacrifice at all' (Mascal 1953:93).

Another point that can be noted against de la Taille is that his idea of the Eucharistic sacrifice, as consisting in the offering of an immolated victim, resembles, if it does not replicate, the medieval Scotus-Biel tradition (cf. Clark 1960:333). In this tradition, as we have seen, the act of offering is ascribed exclusively to the Church, with the unintended implication of two sacrifices, that of Christ on the Cross and that of the Church in the Eucharist. Though not condemned, this view was not affirmed by the Council of Trent. Instead, the Council preferred the view that it is Christ through the priest who offers. In relation to the previous attempts to explain the sacrificial character of the Eucharist and its relation to the cross, de la Taille's approach is a great improvement. As Moloney rightly observes, however, 'it scarcely does justice to the notion of sacramentality in the way it relates the Last supper to the cross as but part of but one total event' (1995:209). It was Anscar Vonier (1875-1938) who was to fill this missing part.

Vonier appeals to sacramental thinking in order to explain the sacrificial character of the Eucharist. Basic to this approach is that the Eucharist is a sacrament, and as a sacrament, it makes present the reality of Christ's sacrifice according to the sacramental order. Mascall offers a very succinct insight into Vonier's thought that a somewhat lengthy quotation from him is justified.

For Vonier, then the Eucharistic presence of Christ is entirely real, but is of an altogether different type from his presence on earth before the Ascension and his presence in heaven after it. These presences are, so to speak, presences in their own right, while the Eucharistic presence exists only because Christ, by his institution and promise, has attached it to certain sensible signs. It exists simply because it has a sacramental sign ordained by God and through no other cause whatever (Mascall 1953:95).

When applying this principle to Eucharistic sacrifice, Mascall draws the following conclusion:

The sacrificial character of the Mass does not consist in its being an event which happens to Christ after his Ascension and which in some way repeats or imitates his death, but in its being the means by which the whole sacrificial action of Christ, centred on the Cross and culminating in the Ascension, is made sacramentally present in his Church... It is not a repetition of the sacrifice, nor is it the completion of the sacrifice; it is simply the sacrifice itself, present in the unique mode of a sacrament, present, that is, simply and

solely because the sacramental species are divinely ordained effective signs of it (Mascal 1953:96).¹

The Eucharistic sacrifice as a rite, according to Vonier, consists in the separate consecration of bread and wine, which represents the death of Christ. 'Now, Christ's death is Body and Blood separated; we do neither more nor less when we sacrifice at the altar...The sacrifice of Mass, then is this, that we have separation between Christ's Body and Christ's blood' (Vonier 1925:111-2). As far as its purpose is concerned, Vonier sees it as serving to apply the fruits of Christ's passion and he explains what he means by application:

By application we mean that individual benefit of every believer in Christ's passion; the merit, the sacrificial atonement of that great immolation on the cross comes down on the individual man and enters his soul. The Eucharistic sacrifice is the divine means for the individual believer to come into contact with the sacrifice of the cross; this is what we mean by application (Vonier 1925:125).

As far as the offerer of the Eucharistic sacrifice is concerned, Vonier is unambiguous: 'Christ must be looked upon as the One who offers the Eucharistic sacrifice as truly as he offered the Calvary sacrifice' (Vonier 1925:229). He does become ambiguous when he tries to explain that it is also the sacrifice of the Church because Christ gave to the Church the priesthood, which is a sacramental representation of His priesthood. The point is that it is still as representing Christ that the priest offers and not as representing the Church. As Vonier himself says, 'Eucharistic sacrifice is offered up always and everywhere *in persona Christi* (Vonier 1925:229).

One obvious success of Vonier's approach is that it clearly distinguishes Eucharistic sacrifice from the sacrifice of the cross while at the same time maintaining the due link

¹ Thurian, writing six years later, echoes Vonier's sacramental explanation of Eucharistic sacrifice almost *verbatim*.

The Eucharist is therefore a sacrifice in so far as it is the memorial and sacrament of the unique sacrifice of the cross and of the heavenly sacrifice of the intercession of Christ. It is the memorial of the sacrifice of Christ because it presents it before the Father as a living and present intercession; it is the sacrament of the sacrifice of Christ because it makes it present before the Church as an effective and actual means of sanctification. The Eucharist, as the memorial and sacrament of the sacrifice of Christ, is one with the cross and with the heavenly intercession of Christ (1961:13).

between the two. His uncompromising classification of the Eucharistic sacrifice as belonging to the realm of sacramentality excludes any possibility of confusion or competition with the sacrifice of the cross, which belongs to natural order. The sacrificial status of the Eucharist does not derive from some equation with the cross because the two belong to different realms, each operating according to the rules of its realm. (cf. Vonier 1925 Chapter X and XI).

Most authors and commentators are filled with admiration for Vonier and present his approach as a major breakthrough in Eucharistic theology. Liesting tells us that we should give credit to Vonier 'for focusing attention on the particular nature of the sacramental order of being, which is distinct from the natural order of being' (1966:57). O'Connor observes that Vonier's approach is 'favoured by almost all recent Catholic theologians' (1988:240). Moloney declares that Vonier's approach provides 'the most satisfactory basis for a theological explanation of the unity of the Eucharist and the cross' (1995:209).

Mascal makes use of Vonier's sacramental principle to explain the puzzle of the silence of the letter to the Hebrews on the Eucharistic sacrifice. It will be remembered that the once and for all character of Christ's sacrifice presented by the letter, and its silence about the Eucharistic sacrifice, was a clear indication for the reformers that sacrificial understanding of the Eucharist has no biblical foundation. In view of the sacramental nature of the Eucharist, however, Mascal argues that in fact in its silence, the letter says everything about the Eucharistic sacrifice. Unlike the sacrifice of the cross which was a natural event that happened to Christ, the Eucharistic sacrifice is not an event that happens to Christ again, but a sacramental representation of the whole event of Christ's sacrifice, from incarnation to ascension. For the author of the letter, the Eucharist

was something in which the *whole* biography, the *whole* life of self-oblation to the Father, beginning in time with the Incarnation in the womb of Mary and culminating in the eternal order at the Ascension, was made present, not as a new event in history, but as a permanent reality communicated to the Church under the sacramental signs (Mascal 1953:109).

Given that Vonier is held in high esteem, it is with fear and trepidation that one attempts to critique him here. Perhaps we can start off by noting a critique levelled against him by one of his admirers, Mascal (1953:96), who observes that he identifies sacrifice exclusively with death. Mascal refers to this observation as an inclination in Vonier, but I think that it is a conscious position because he explicitly confines it to the cross: 'The Eucharistic Body and the Eucharistic Blood on our altars are the representation...not of the Christ who is in heaven but again of the Christ who was broken up on Calvary' (Vonier 1925:122). The reasons for the confinement of Eucharistic representation to the cross are not clear, but Vonier's position singles him out from the modern theologians who view Eucharistic sacrifice as representing the totality of the Christ event, i.e. his sacrifice as perfected by his resurrection and continued in heaven.

This brief survey of modern theological opinion shows a development of thought on the Eucharistic sacrifice. With Valentin Thalhfer we see that the Eucharistic sacrifice is not only a representation of Christ's physical death but also of his inner attitude of obedience to God, which is an integral part of this sacrifice. In de la Taille, we see a movement from the view of sacrifice as consisting in death, making way to the view of sacrifice as consisting in offering or oblation. This development has rendered the Eucharistic sacrifice meaningful since it could now be considered sacrifice even if there is no death involved in it. A subsequent development to this has been the abandonment of the idea of the Eucharistic sacrifice as consisting in some sense in a physical resemblance of the cross.

Two of the theologians dealt with above, even though they differ in their explanation of the distinctiveness of the Eucharistic sacrifice, compliment each other. For de la Taille, it consists in the offering of the immolated victim and in giving ritual structure to the sacrifice of the cross. Here even though distinctiveness is affirmed, it is done in the overall context of unity between the two. For Vonier, the Eucharistic sacrifice belongs to the sacramental order and is radically different from the Calvary sacrifice that belongs to the natural order. Even though the Eucharistic sacrifice represents the sacrifice of the cross, as a form of sacrifice it is totally different from it. Here, the unity of these

sacrifices is affirmed in the overall context of their being different. These views, taken together and not withstanding their respective weaknesses, express the truth claims of faith about Eucharistic sacrifice as a distinct sacrifice and yet related to the cross.

3.4 Eucharistic sacrifice in the contemporary period

In the contemporary period, the understanding of the Eucharistic sacrifice is much broader than in the earlier periods. In line with Karl Rahner's transcendental theology, according to which human beings are oriented towards the absolute or God, contemporary theologians explain sacrifice as an instinctive human behaviour to achieve unity with God. 'The instinct to sacrifice wells up from those depths within us, so unforgettably described by Karl Rahner, where the human heart is oriented to the mystery of being itself (Maloney 1995:214). Bermejo (1985:81) echoes the same idea when he states that 'Christian sacrifice, although in itself an act of cultic adoration, yet dynamically considered, is rather an impetus towards God, a longing for personal communion.' Earlier on, Schmaus had explained the same point when he clarified what the act of sacrifice seeks to achieve:

Arising out of the experience of one's own limitations and sinfulness, it is the attempt to acknowledge God as the absolute Lord and the holy One, to obtain his favor and grace, to enter into fellowship with him and thus be liberated from one's lonely and exposed position in the world and from sin (1972:107).

Sacrifice as explained above, involves a total self-giving to God, motivated by love, which finds its best expression and execution in Christ, and this explains why his sacrifice is perfect. It is with this view of sacrifice as a background that contemporary theologians seek to understand and interpret Trent's teaching on Eucharistic sacrifice.

3.4.1 Eucharist as sacrifice of Christ and the Church

As it has been seen, modern theologians addressed themselves mainly to the nature of Eucharistic sacrifice by clarifying its relationship to the sacrifice of the cross. Contemporary theologians continue to explain the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist, but in essence they re-echo their predecessors. Reflections with an amount of originality

among contemporary theologians have focused more on the Christological and Ecclesiological aspect of the Eucharistic sacrifice. If the early modern theologians were concerned with the relationship between the sacrifice of the Cross and Eucharistic sacrifice, contemporary theologians are concerned with the Eucharist as the sacrifice of Christ and of the Church. Topics such as 'Christ's sacrifice and ours' (cf. Green 1968), 'Whose sacrifice?' (cf. Lash 1968) 'His sacrifice and ours' (cf. Alasdair 1983), to name but a few, reveal this occupation.

Not that these questions have not been addressed before, but it is my impression that they find a clearer theological explanation among this group. It must, however, be noted that unlike the early modern theologians, on the whole, this group does not provide an analytical category with which to explain Eucharistic sacrifice, but offers explanations from broad biblical and theological premises. These explanations are often offered within the general exposition of Eucharistic theology in books and articles. The major question they address is the extent to which the Eucharist is the sacrifice of Christ while at the same time being the sacrifice of the Church. The second question concerns the purpose of Eucharistic sacrifice with particular attention to propitiation and the fruits or benefits of the Mass

The problem of who the subject of the Eucharistic sacrifice is, has been strikingly expressed by Jungmann in the following passage:

What is so striking is that the Mass appears in our liturgy at once and before all else as *our* sacrifice, and so it appears throughout: *we* bring gifts, *we* beg for acceptance, *we* prepare *my* sacrifice and *your* sacrifice. On the other hand, we are accustomed from the side of dogmatic theology to regard the Mass just as precisely and almost exclusively as the sacrifice of Christ (Quoted by Lash 1968:109).

The possibility of qualifying the Eucharist as the sacrifice of the Church has been argued by Nicholls (1955) on the principle of representativity. He distinguishes between Christ's sacrifice as *substitutionary* and Christ's sacrifice as *representative*. In the former, Christ 'has done something for us alone, something that only He could do without our

cooperation...' while in the latter, 'He has made it possible for us to share His glad worship of the Father' (Nicholls 1955:374-5).

Alasdair (1983) presents a similar sort of argument based on the economy of incarnation. He argues that while it is true that Christ alone as an individual offered the ultimate and the once and for all sacrifice, which we could not offer, he did so as the one representing us, since he had assumed our nature as a human being. By sharing nature with him, we were also included as he was offering himself so that we could say we offered that sacrifice with him. By offering himself as a human being, Christ has made it possible for us who live today to share that once and for all but ever enduring sacrifice so that this sacrifice becomes ours and for us. In his sacrifice, Christ 'stands first of all alone, apart from us; yet he does so on our behalf, precisely so that we may be included with him; and it is to that inclusion that the Eucharist witnesses' (Alasdair 1983:169).

Nicholls, along with Schmaus (1975), further clarifies this point by appealing to the biblical concept of the Church as a 'body' and Christ as its 'head'. The Eucharist as the memorial of Christ's sacrifice on the cross is Christ's sacrifice, but since Christ is also the head of the Church, the Church is joined in his offering, so that Christ's sacrifice becomes the Church's sacrifice as well. Schmaus explains that in fact it is when the sacrifice of the Church as body and Christ's sacrifice as head come together that we can speak of Eucharistic sacrifice. 'The Church's self-sacrifice through the self-sacrificing of Christ is of constitutive importance for the eucharistic sacrament of sacrifice' (Schmaus 1975:114).

The image of body and head is applied here not in a univocal sense. It does not mean that Christ's sacrifice is incomplete without the Church's sacrifice. It does mean however, that the latter would not only be incomplete without the former, but it would be non-existent since it has its foundation on it. 'Since the sacrifice of the Head is perfect and complete, the sacrifice of the Church is made within it, while retaining its own identity' (Nicholls 1955:376).

Lash also tackles this question first by considering the nature of the Church's relationship to Christ. He argues that the Church has its origin in Christ, it comes into being as a result of being called, addressed by Christ and responding to Christ. He explains that the death and resurrection of Christ, which can be expressed through the category of sacrifice, is God's final and definitive address of his love and care to humanity. In Eucharistic sacrifice, Lash continues to explain, this definitive address of God 'is made present in the life and celebration of God's faithful people' (1968:115).

Now since the Church becomes Church when it is addressed by Christ, and the recalling of his sacrifice is a response to his presence and his address, the question 'whose sacrifice is the Eucharist?' is superfluous because Christ is objectively present among worshippers. Thus 'to say "act of the church" is to say "act of Christ": apart from Christ, men and women are not (theologically) "church" at all' (Lash 1968:119). Lash's answer then to the question; whose sacrifice is the Eucharist? is: 'Christ's sacrifice made present in our [Church's] sacrifice of praise, our Eucharist' (Lash 1968:120). Power seems to affirm the same conclusion as Lash when he states that 'The actions of Christ in the Church are the actions of the body, or there is only one action, which is that of the body, head and members, as though one person' (1992b:116).

Bermejo (1985) parts ways with views that see the Eucharist as primarily Christ's offering, to which the Church joins its own. While he grants that the Church's power to offer comes from Christ, he sees the Eucharist as essentially the sacrifice of the Church. He bases his argument on the institution words, which he understands as rendering the Eucharist a sacrifice of the Church.

Before his final departure he committed the Eucharist to the Church and now it is therefore the Church that offers the sacrifice, rather than Christ. After entrusting the eucharistic memorial to the Church, Christ follows a policy of 'non interference', as it were. "Do this in memory of me", he commanded the infant Church. But *you* do it, not I (Bermejo 1985:127).

As it can be seen, the first two authors considered above, i.e. Nicholls and Schmaus, are trying to walk a tight rope between the Ecclesial and the Christological ownership of the

Eucharistic sacrifice, and with their image of 'head' and 'body', in my opinion, they do manage to hold this balance. Lash on the other hand tries to solve the problem by highlighting the unity and coexistence between Christ and the Church so that the Eucharistic sacrifice can be simultaneously attributed to both. While this approach has solid theological foundations, it does lead to over identification of Christ with the Church, as his conclusion proves: 'thus to say "act of the church" is to say "act of Christ" ' (Lash 1968:119). This defeats the purpose of distinguishing the Ecclesial aspect of the Eucharistic sacrifice from the Christological aspect.

Bermejo goes to the other extreme when he identifies the Eucharist almost exclusively as the sacrifice of the Church. In doing that, he incurs the disapproval of Trent which clearly teaches that the Eucharist is Christ's sacrifice. Both of these authors need to heed Nicholls warning when he writes:

The mystery of the Eucharist is one of unity and duality. If we stress the duality too strongly we shall end with two sacrifices, that of Christ and that of the Church... If on the other hand we stress the unity too strongly we overthrow the nature of a sacrament, and render human action meaningless because (we make it) absolutely identical with God's (Nicholls 1955:376-7).

From the above discussion we can now answer the question of how the Eucharist is the sacrifice of the Church while it is essentially the sacrifice of Christ. It is the sacrifice of the Church by virtue of its incorporation into Christ. Christ, by assuming human nature, has taken humanity unto himself, so that when he offers himself, that part of humanity which is characterised by faith, i.e. the Church, is also offered and is offering. In a more focused sense, the Eucharist is a sacrifice of the Church because Christ is the head of the Church and when he offers, the body also becomes part of that offering.

As distinct from Christ, the Church offers sacrifice by joining its own sacrifice with that of Christ. What is it exactly that the Church joins to Christ's sacrifice as its own sacrifice? It joins its praise and thanksgiving for what God has done in Christ, which is again made present in the Eucharist (cf. Kilmartin 1971: 245). Modeling itself on Jesus, the Church also offers itself in obedience and love to God, i.e. those who take part in the

Eucharist offer their lives, suffering and sacrifices and these are taken up with the sacrifice of Christ and become a new element that is not found in the Calvary sacrifice. It is in this sense that we can talk of the priesthood of the faithful. In other words, the Eucharist becomes a vehicle of the self-offering of the Church to God (cf. Kilmartin 1971:246).

Lastly, the Church joins Christ's sacrifice by attaching its prayers and petitions to Christ's sacrifice. In other words, '...the sacramental sacrifice of the head affords the opportunity for members of the Church throughout the world to participate personally by their intention and devotion...' (Kilmartin 1994:439). Thus in addition to being a sacrifice of thanksgiving, the Eucharist is also a sacrifice of petitioning or supplication. Through the Eucharist, supplication is made 'for the multifarious needs of man [and women]' (Bermejo 1985:92), which includes both the living and the dead. Eucharistic sacrifice as an act of supplication can extend to include the dead because 'its vivifying effects are neither limited by space nor restricted by time' (Bermejo 1985:93).

The Ecclesial dimension of the Eucharistic sacrifice, therefore, does not consist in the Church offering Christ for various needs and thus manipulating God and earning its salvation. It consists rather in the Church being incorporated into Christ and thus into his sacrifice and in joining its own sacrifice of praise, self-giving and petitions to Christ's sacrifice. It is 'through him, with him, in him' that the Church can be regarded as offering sacrifice.

Most of the contemporary theologians and authors considered here do not offer any clarification about the meaning of the Church in relation to the offering of the Eucharistic sacrifice. It may thus be presumed that what they have in mind when they refer to the Church as offering, is the entirety of the Church. Thus each time the Eucharistic sacrifice is offered, it is not only this or that particular Church or community that is offering, but also the entire Church is part of that Mass and therefore also offering. Rahner, however, for whom the objective value of Eucharistic sacrifice is correlated to personal participation through proper devotion and disposition, doubts the intelligibility of

ascribing the offering of a particular Mass to people who are not realistically associated with it.

It cannot be proved that acts of that kind (i.e. acts proper to human beings that give value to the Mass) are posited in relation to a particular Mass by any human beings other than those who in some way are really engaged in the particular sacrifice itself (whether by actually saying the Mass or by stipends, by assisting at Mass, etc.) To suppose they are is...pious fantasy' (Rahner 1968:42).

Bermejo joins Rahner when he observes that at the level of practical experience it makes little sense to say that the whole Church co-offers in each Mass because one section of the Church in one part of the globe is not even conscious of a particular Mass being celebrated in another part of the globe. 'How can they take active part in something whose very existence they do not know?' (Bermejo 1985:130). I think that this objection serves to safeguard the concreteness of the Eucharistic sacrifice, which like any other sacrifice requires some personal involvement of those who are regarded as part of it. The idea that the whole Church co-offers in each Mass that is celebrated, runs the risk of over spiritualising the Eucharistic sacrifice.

Bermejo, however, does not deny the element of the universal Church at the Eucharistic sacrifice because when the local Church offers, it does so in the name of the whole Church. 'The local church, present here and now at the celebration is like the enfleshment, the incarnation of the universal Church. It is therefore in this sense, and only in this sense, that the universal Church can be said to co-offer the eucharistic sacrifice' (Bermejo 1985:131). As it can be seen, Bermejo comes to the same conclusion that the whole Church offers, but his argument moves from the local to the universal and not vice versa. Universal ecclesial oblation does not take place in an abstract universal Church joining particular sacrifices, but in concrete local Churches conscious of being part of the whole and offering sacrifices in the name of the whole.

Closely connected with Christological and Ecclesiological dimensions of the Eucharistic sacrifice is the role of the ordained minister in the sacrifice. Trent clarified the role of the ordained minister in the Eucharistic sacrifice as twofold, i.e. as representing Christ and the Church. Referring to the representative role of the priest in relation to Christ, it says,

'the same (Christ) now offers through the priest' (Neuner 1983: No. 1548)². Referring to the validity of 'Private Masses', it says that they 'are to be considered truly public...because they are celebrated by a public minister of the Church...for all the faithful who belong to the Body of Christ' (Neuner 1983: No. 1552).

This dual role of the ordained minister has received a variety of explanations among contemporary authors. Schmaus explains it as a unitive factor between the Christological and Ecclesiological dimensions of the Eucharistic sacrifice. 'In relation to the community he (the minister) plays the role of Christ, and in relation to Christ he plays the role of the community' (1975:118). In other words it is through the minister that Christ effects his sacrifice for the Church, and it is also through him that the Church joins Christ in his sacrifice. As it can be seen, this explanation, and all other explanations represented by it, move from a radical distinction between Christ and the Church, so that Eucharistic sacrifice becomes a mutual event between Christ and the Church only through the priest who has a part of both sides. It makes Christ a stranger to the Church and vice versa.

Another explanation given by Kilmartin (1994) builds on the image of 'Head' and 'Body', the former being Christ and the latter being the Church. This view is supported by Power (1992b) as the prevailing theological explanation of the priest's role in the Eucharistic sacrifice. According to this view there is no dual, but a single representation of Christ, the head of the Church. Thus in representing Christ, the Church is also represented, since the head and the body are one. 'In this...case it would hold true that the priest represents the Church at the moment of consecration only because here he acts exclusively as instrument of Christ the head of the Church' (Kilmartin 1994:440). As it can be seen, this view runs the risk of over-identifying Christ with the Church

3.4.2 The 'fruits' of Eucharistic sacrifice

Contemporary theologians see the effects or fruits or purpose of Eucharistic sacrifice as applying to both God and human beings. 'Too often when people speak of the fruits of

² Reference to this work is done according to paragraph number, from which the citation is taken and not according to page number.

the sacrament, their minds often focused on the fruits we receive. But in the Eucharist, in Christian life generally, it is in giving that we receive, and the first thing we give to God by our sacrifice is the glory and honour of our praise and worship' (Moloney 1995:238). Rahner (1968) has offered a systematic reflection on how Mass can be said to give glory to God.

First of all, the Eucharistic sacrifice serves to honour God by making present Christ's sacrifice on the cross with its infinite value, without suggesting that it is a new act on the part of Christ in addition to the honour he rendered on the cross to God. Secondly, it is a distinct act of glorifying God because it is a free conscious act of believers expressed through a liturgical ritual. The new element of glory given to God at Mass is not Christological but Ecclesiological. In other words, it is not Christ who gives honour to God in a new way, 'because the sacrifice of the cross was unique and impossible to repeat' (Rahner 1968:36), but the Church which consciously and personally offers Christ at the Eucharist. Thirdly, the honour given to God through a conscious ritual expression must correspond to an interior sacrificial disposition. 'They [the faithful] have not merely to posit the constitutive expression of that union, the Mass, as a rite but also to fill it with the interior reality which as a rite it expresses and announces' (Rahner 1968:36).

Another effect of Eucharistic sacrifice considered by contemporary theologians in relation to God is propitiation. The meaning of placating an angry God that is usually associated with the concept of propitiation has made some authors uneasy about its use in relation to the Eucharistic sacrifice. Bermejo (1985:84-102), while not explicitly coming to this conclusion, seems to suggest that the scanty biblical and patristic reference to the propitiatory character of the Eucharist and its omission by Vatican II should warn us not to attach too much weight on this aspect of the Eucharist. He further queries the theological appropriateness of propitiation as an analytical category of Eucharistic sacrifice. Questioning Trent's statement that God is appeased by the Eucharistic sacrifice and consequently pardons sins, even grave ones, he asks: 'Is this correct,? Is it possible to hold that the Lord is appeased (let alone placated) by the sacrifice of the altar? For even

the sacrifice of Calvary cannot, properly speaking, appease or placate God...' (Bermejo 1985:101-2)

In this objection he is joined by other authors like Moloney (1995) who, while not rejecting propitiation as an analytical category, call for an understanding that is congruent with God's way of acting, where the initiative in offering salvation is always taken by God. Stated briefly, these authors clarify that propitiation begins with God's initiative and achieves its purpose according to his will and plan. Thus the death of Christ on the cross was not an appeasing of an angry God but an act within God's plan to reconcile humanity with himself. Quoting St. Thomas Aquinas, Moloney explains that 'it is not because of A (our propitiating) that God wills B (our reconciliation) but he wills that B comes about because of A' (1995:218)³. Though the will of God to save precedes the cross, the latter remains a definitive historical manifestation of the former, which cannot be repeated. Thus when we speak of the propitiatory character of the Eucharist, we speak of it not as another event of propitiation but as a representation of the once and for all propitiation on the cross made present here and now for personal appropriation.

The consequence of the propitiatory character of the Eucharistic sacrifice is the forgiveness of sins. This effect pertains to human beings. I still await more clarity among contemporary theologians about Trent's statement that God forgives sins, even grave ones, through the sacrifice of the Eucharist. What has been clarified, at least by Moloney, is that the Eucharist as a means of forgiveness, does not render the sacrament of reconciliation superfluous. This is because in its structure the Eucharist does not naturally present itself as a judicial event that could elicit a deep sense of sin and repentance as a sacrament of reconciliation would.

³ Kilmartin expresses the same point thus:

Rather, in the regard, the New Testament turns upside down the history of religion's understanding of sacrifice. The movement is not, in the first place, from human beings to God. It is quite the opposite... In other words, the love of God is the ultimate source of the self-offering of the Son to the Father on behalf of the world. To speak of the self-offering of Jesus on the cross means, for the eyes of faith, to perceive the movement of the offering of the Father himself to us, to accept it and give thanks (1981:8-9).

Christianity has its positive and negative sides. Positively it means union with God and his love through our union with Christ's paschal mystery. This is the central reality of redemption, which we celebrate in the Eucharist in joy and thanksgiving. It follows that in the Eucharist the forgiveness of sins cannot be the main point. There it is always incidental and mostly related to venial sins (Moloney 1995:247).

Given that Trent itself had rejected the idea that 'the principal purpose of the most holy Eucharist is the forgiveness of sins' (Neuner 1983: No. 1530), it would seem that the Eucharist is related to the actual forgiveness of sins in a secondary sense. The first words preceding Trent's statement that God forgives sins, even grave ones, are: 'For the Lord, appeased by this oblation, *grants grace and gift of repentance* [italics mine].' If this order is anything to go by, it would seem that the Eucharist is related to the forgiveness of sins by granting grace and gift of repentance which should naturally lead to the reception of the sacrament of reconciliation and consequently to the forgiveness of sins, even grave ones. If these observations are true, it means we should regard Trent's statement that sins are forgiven through the Eucharistic sacrifice as a firm affirmation by Trent of some connection between the Eucharist and the forgiveness of sins, which the reformers rejected completely.

With regard to the 'fruits' of the Mass in general, contemporary theologians, following the lead of Karl Rahner, affirm two types of fruits instead of three, as was the case in the Middle ages. The ones affirmed are the general fruit, which is for the benefit of the whole Church, and the special, which is for the benefit of those for whom the Mass is specifically offered. The third type, i.e. the *most special* which is traditionally allocated to the celebrant priest, is rejected on the grounds that the priest, like any baptised person, receives his share of grace at Mass in proportion to his devotion (cf. Rahner 1968). This leads Rahner to conclude that a priest would benefit in attending Mass with proper devotion, than celebrating Mass without devotion.

What also gets clarified in the discussion of the 'fruits' among contemporary theologians is the question of stipend. A Mass stipend symbolises the co-operation of the faithful in offering the sacrifice, by making the sacrifice physically possible. An offering becomes the donor's way of participating in the sacrifice and therefore being able, according to his

or her inner disposition, to receive the fruits of the Mass. On the side of the celebrant, he can take one stipend only, as one Mass cannot be made physically possible more than once without cheating the donors, or commercialising the Mass. This, however, does not mean that he cannot apply other intentions in the Mass because the value of the Mass is infinite.

3.4.3 Eucharistic sacrifice and liberation

As it can be seen in the exposition of Eucharistic sacrifice presented so far, reflection on the Eucharistic sacrifice has for the most part remained on a speculative level. It has concerned itself mainly with issues like the relation of Eucharistic sacrifice to Christ's sacrifice on the cross, the effects of the Eucharistic sacrifice, the manner in which the Church could be said to be offering sacrifice, etc. While it is true that the Bible (cf. 1Cor. 11) as well as the Fathers (cf. Irenaeus Chapter 1 above) do indicate the social implications of participating in the Eucharist, they do so within the context of the worshipping community and not on a broad social and political context.

Some contemporary liberation theologians, e.g. Gutierrez and Balasuriya, have tried to relate the Eucharist to the issues of social justice. They appeal to various Eucharistic themes in the Bible and the practice of the early Church to demonstrate the relevance of the Eucharist for liberation. One such theme, for example, is the Eucharist as a meal which forms solidarity among the participants. 'The Eucharistic rite in its essential elements is communitarian and orientated toward the constitution of human brotherhood [and sisterhood]' (Gutierrez 1974:263). Even though this is not well argued by Gutierrez, by implication this solidarity seems to be understood to form a foundation for co-operation against injustice (cf. Balasuriya 1979:16).

These theologians also appeal to the example of the early Church, where worshipping people shared resources among themselves. These theologians decry the individualisation of the Eucharist, which makes the rich to be comfortable at Mass while they not only neglect the needy, but are also the cause of their poverty: 'The eucharistic ceremony did

not disturb the peace of conscience of the exploiting capitalists, it tended to legitimize their nefarious activities' (Balasuriya 1979:37). According to these theologians, Eucharistic sacrifice that does not issue into concern for the oppressed is not different from the sacrifices condemned by the prophets and Jesus

The theological significance of the Eucharist for liberation has been argued from the connection of the Eucharist to the Passover meal of the Jews. The Passover is unashamedly presented by liberation theologians as a meal that celebrated the political liberation of the Jews, and their plea is that the Eucharist, which can be traced back to this meal, must not be stripped of its political significance.

The liberation of the Jews from Egypt prefigured the subsequent liberation of the whole humankind in Christ. The Paschal feast of the Christians harks back to this central event of the Old Testament, which was the pledge of God's concern for this chosen people. It is very important for us to reflect that the core of the history of Israel in the Old Testament was a political event. The institution of the Eucharist is thus closely connected to the struggle of the Jewish people for their liberation (Balasuriya 1979:12).

The liberation brought by Christ through his sacrifice, sacramentally represented in the Eucharist, is thus understood by these theologians as not only concerned with spiritual salvation but with political liberation as well or, as Balasuriya puts it, as concerned with 'integral human liberation' (1979:16).

3.5 Conclusion and observations

In this chapter we have divided the period after Trent into 3 periods, i.e. the post Tridentine period, the modern and the contemporary periods. Post Tridentine theologians were concerned with rendering the Eucharistic sacrifice meaningful by demonstrating how it fits the structure of a sacrifice. As we saw, however, this exercise ended up backfiring because in their attempt to show how the Eucharist resembles the sacrifice of the cross, post Tridentine theologians fell into the trap of seeming to duplicate the sacrifice of the cross. It was the modern theologians, especially Vonier with his principle of sacramental representation, who demonstrated that while the Eucharist is related to the

sacrifice of the cross, it is nevertheless different in its nature from the sacrifice of the cross. It is a sacramental sacrifice.

Contemporary theologians have distinguished themselves by clarifying the question of the Christological and Ecclesiological aspects of the Eucharistic sacrifice. One school of thought highlights the unity of the two on the basis of total unity between Christ and the Church, while the other highlights the distinction on the basis of the unity that respects separate identities of Christ and the Church.

They have also grappled with the notion of 'propitiation' ascribed by Trent to the Eucharist, and observed the lack of biblical and patristic support for this notion. Some of them have taken the liberty to re-interpret it in a way that highlights God's initiative and mercy. The question of how the Eucharist as a sacrifice is related to the forgiveness of sins presupposes precision on how the death of Christ on the cross is related to the forgiveness of sin. Precision on this question is still unclear because the Church itself has not come out clearly on this matter. There is yet 'no defined teachings on soteriology other than the statements in the various creeds which indicate that *for our salvation* the Son of God descended to earth, took our flesh, suffered death and rose on the third day' (Osborne 1995:83).

As Osborne continues to observe, even theologians are struggling to come up with a unified meaning of soteriology. The abundance of theories on atonement proves how difficult it is to answer the question of how sins are forgiven through Christ's death. In the light of Trent's teaching that the Eucharist is not directly ordered to the forgiveness of sin, it seems right to understand it as a foundation and a background for the forgiveness of sins which takes place through other means. For the most part, reflections on the Eucharistic sacrifice by modern theologians remains at the level of speculation. There are, however, a few liberation theologians who have tried to highlight the significance of Eucharistic sacrifice for social justice.

There are two issues about the Eucharistic sacrifice as it has come down to us from the Middle Ages and Trent that require reconsideration. They involve the assessment of the scope Trent set for the understanding of the Eucharistic sacrifice and the language which has been used to express the purpose of this sacrifice.

The detailed explanation of the sacrificial character of the Eucharist by Trent was to a large extent a response to the objections of the reformers and this was both advantageous and disadvantageous. It was advantageous because it clarified some of the misconceptions the reformers had about the Catholic doctrine of the Eucharistic sacrifice. It was disadvantageous because it confined itself to objections raised by them, and left out the other equally important aspects of the Eucharistic sacrifice like communion, praise and thanksgiving. Its definition narrowly confined the Eucharistic sacrifice to dealing with sin. The sidelining of these aspects by Trent has resulted in them receiving very little theological reflection as integral parts the Eucharistic sacrifice.

Given the authority Trent enjoys on doctrinal issues, it will take a long time before these other aspects are given their rightful place in the theological exposition of Eucharistic sacrifice. It is hoped that future theological endeavours concerning Eucharistic sacrifice will focus on these 'previously disadvantaged' aspects. It is also hoped that the entrance of the mystery of the Eucharist into African culture will speed up the process, since the African culture naturally lends itself to these aspects.

One of the explanations of the relationship between the Eucharistic sacrifice and Christ's sacrifice on the cross inherited from the Middle Ages and Trent is that the former, i.e. Eucharistic sacrifice applies the fruits of the latter, i.e. the sacrifice of the cross. While this explanation serves to secure the primacy of Christ's sacrifice on the cross and complementarity between it and the Eucharist, it can easily entrench a consumer approach to the Eucharistic sacrifice: Analysis of the medieval practice of the Eucharist (cf. Clark 1960:93-95 and Power 1987:92-93) attests to the danger of seeing the value of the Eucharistic sacrifice as lying in its use for acquiring benefits often related to one's material, psychological and physical well being.

If it is not balanced with the corresponding purpose of the Eucharistic sacrifice as an offering of ourselves, 'application of fruits' can easily lead to a superficial, cosy, egoistic perception of the Eucharistic sacrifice. The ultimate fruit of the Eucharistic sacrifice is our union with God, the intensity of which corresponds to the degree to which we offer ourselves. The Roman Missal with which we started this section summarises the ultimate purpose of the Eucharistic sacrifice thus:

The Church's intention is that the faithful not only offer the spotless victim but also learn to offer themselves and daily to be drawn into ever perfect union, through Christ the Mediator, with the Father and with each other, so that at last God may be all in all (RM 55).

CHAPTER 4

EUCCHARISTIC SACRIFICE IN THE RECENT MAGISTERIAL TEACHING AND IN THE EUCCHARISTIC LITURGY.

4.1 Introduction

The theme of the Eucharistic sacrifice finds reference in the teaching of the contemporary Magisterium or the teaching office of the Church. By contemporary Magisterial teaching we mean the official teaching of the popes from Pius XII in 1947 to Pope John Paul II. This teaching also includes the teaching of the Vatican II Council and the Catechism of the Catholic Church

Pius XII's encyclical; *Mediator Dei* (from now on referred to as MD) appears to be the most comprehensive magisterial teaching on the Eucharistic sacrifice since Trent. It is considered by many as the precursor of the liturgical reforms that were to be finalised twenty years later by Vatican II (cf. O'Connor 1988:250). Reference is made to this encyclical by almost all the subsequent Magisterial teaching on the subject of the Eucharistic sacrifice.

Pope Paul VI's teaching on the Eucharistic sacrifice is presented in the context of post-Vatican II theological debates about the Eucharist, which debates, in the Pope's view were shaking the foundations of the orthodox understanding of the Eucharist. Most of his teaching aims at putting things right, as it were. Vatican II itself makes reference to the sacrificial character of the Eucharist in a number of its documents. It is, however, in three documents that it addresses the subject in some detail. These documents are: Constitution on the liturgy, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church and the Decree on the Life and Ministry of Priests.

Following Vatican II, John Paul II addresses the subject in one of his annual Holy Thursday letters, which he writes to priests and bishops. Although it is only a letter and not an encyclical, in terms of its content it is considered as 'one of the more significant papal contributions to the theology of the Eucharist in the twentieth century' (Kilmartin 1981:16). Finally the Catechism of the Catholic Church, as a major Catholic doctrine, affords enough space to the theme of the sacrificial character of the Eucharist..

4.2 Recent Magisterial teaching on Eucharistic sacrifice

As noted above, the recent Magisterial teaching on the Eucharistic sacrifice to be considered here is from Pius XII, Paul VI, Vatican II, John Paul II and the Catechism of the Catholic Church. While these sources do not deal exclusively with the theme of Eucharistic sacrifice, they give a fair amount of space to it. Even though it may be argued that in the final analysis, the Magisterial teaching on the Eucharist is the same, one still finds a variety of emphases in the way different popes and documents present the subject. For this reason we present these sources individually below.

4.2.1 Pius XII (*Mediator Dei*)

In chapter 2 of part one, the pope considers the *modus operandi* of the fruits of the Mass, where he tackles the question of the objective value of the Mass and the subjective personal devotion. In part two of the document, which deals with Eucharistic worship, the pope dedicates the first two of the four chapters to the Eucharistic sacrifice. In chapter one under the heading 'THE NATURE OF EUCHARISTIC SACRIFICE', he explains the nature, the purpose or the end, and the effects or the fruits of the Eucharistic sacrifice. In chapter two under the heading 'THE PART TAKEN BY THE FAITHFUL IN THE EUCHARISTIC SACRIFICE', the pope clarifies the distinction between the ordained minister and the faithful in relation to the Eucharistic sacrifice.

With regard to the nature of the Eucharistic sacrifice, the pope repeats almost verbatim the teaching of Trent, i.e. the institution of the sacrifice together with cultic priesthood at the Last supper and the identity and modal difference between the Eucharistic sacrifice

and the sacrifice of the cross (cf. MD 71-74). Part of his explanation of the relationship between the sacrifice of the cross and the Eucharistic sacrifice is reminiscent of the post-Tridentine tendency to see the Eucharistic sacrifice as resembling and repeating the cross. He explains, that 'the eucharistic species under which He [Christ] is present symbolize the violent separation of His body and blood, and so a commemorative showing for the death which took place in reality on Calvary is repeated in each Mass' (MD 74).

Further down in the document (cf. MD 80-83), the pope continues to clarify the relationship between the two by showing how the Eucharistic sacrifice compliments the sacrifice of the cross. The essence of his explanation is that while the sacrifice of the cross is all-sufficient, it finds its concrete application through the Mass. 'Although Christ, universally speaking, has reconciled the whole human race to the Father by His death yet He has willed that all men should come and be brought to His Cross, especially by the Sacraments and the Mass, and so take possession of the fruits which through the Cross He has won for them' (MD 82). Thus the Eucharistic sacrifice provides the occasion for a concrete historical and personal appropriation of the fruits of the cross

With regard to the purpose or the ends of the Eucharistic sacrifice, the pope offers a comprehensive explanation of the purpose of the sacrifice, an explanation far more comprehensive than that of Trent. He lists four ends of the Eucharistic sacrifice, i.e. to praise, to thank, to propitiate and to impetrate (supplicate) God (Cf. MD 75-79). Of great significance is the affirmation of the positive purpose of the Eucharistic sacrifice by the pope. He begins with praise and thanksgiving as the first two ends of the Eucharistic sacrifice. Even propitiation, as the end of the Eucharistic sacrifice, is presented by Pius XII with a positive stroke, for he links it to reconciliation. 'The third end is expiation, propitiation and reconciliation' (MD 77). The pope thus seems to suggest that ultimately the purpose of the Eucharistic sacrifice is not to appease an angry God, but to reconcile humanity with God.

This should be a consolation to those modern theologians who lament Trent's narrow presentation of the Eucharistic sacrifice. It will be remembered that Trent spoke of the

Eucharistic sacrifice only in terms of propitiation, with all the negative overtones that go with it, and remained silent about praise and thanksgiving, which are equally constitutive ends of the Eucharistic sacrifice.

In chapter two of the second section, the pope clarifies in what manner the faithful can be said to offer Eucharistic sacrifice. He explains that they offer sacrifice first of all by assisting at Mass, and he clarifies what he means by assisting. The faithful assist by the fact that they 'recite their prayers alternately with those of the priest;... they present bread and wine...they give alms in order that the priest may offer the divine victim for their intention' (MD 40).

The second manner of offering by the faithful, according to the pope, is through the priest, considered as representing Christ the Head of the Church. 'That the faithful offer the Sacrifice through the priest is clear from the fact that the minister at the altar acts in the person of Christ considered as Head, as offering in the name of all the members; and this is why it is true to say that the whole Church makes the offering of the victim through Christ' (MD 96).

This leads the pope to address the question of the Masses offered without the congregation. The pope reasons that since the priest acts in the person of Christ the Head of the whole Church, when he offers sacrifice, all the members of the Church are somehow present in that offering. 'For he who offers it acts in the name of Christ and of the faithful of whom the divine redeemer is the Head, and he offers it to God for the Holy Catholic Church, and for the living and the dead. And this happens whether the faithful are present...or whether they are absent...' (MD 101). In this way, while the pope appeals for full participation of the faithful in the Eucharist (Cf. MD 102), he defends the validity of Mass offered without congregation.

With regard to the efficacy of the Eucharistic sacrifice, the pope clarifies it according to the *ex opere operato* sacramental principle, according to which the act becomes efficacious from the task being performed. 'This efficacy, so far as the Eucharistic

sacrifice and the Sacraments are concerned, is primarily *ex opere operato*' (MD 29). This efficacy consists in the power of Eucharistic sacrifice daily to purify and to consecrate the human race to God (cf. MD 30). A lack of proper disposition however, can obstruct this efficacy. Hence for its proper effect, Eucharistic sacrifice requires 'our souls to be in the right dispositions' (MD 33).

4.2.2 Paul VI

Pope Paul VI included belief in the sacrificial character of the Eucharist as an article of faith when he proclaimed the "*Credo*" of the People of God. 'We believe that the Mass which is celebrated by the priest in the person of Christ...and which is offered by him in the name of Christ and of the members of his Mystical body, is indeed the Sacrifice of Calvary sacramentally realized on our altars' (Paul VI 1968:12). He also deals briefly with it in his encyclical *Mysterium Fidei* (from now on referred to as MF). The pope addresses himself to both the doctrinal and the ecclesial aspects of the Eucharistic sacrifice. With regard to the former, he summarises Trent's teaching, while on the latter he re-echoes his predecessor, Pius XII:

The first point which it is useful to recall is, as it were, the summary and the summit of this doctrine. It is that, by means of the eucharistic mystery, the sacrifice of the cross, achieved once on Calvary, is marvellously symbolised, continually recalled to the memory, and its saving virtue is applied to the remission of the sins which are daily committed by us' (MF 27).

There is another point which may well be added, for it is most helpful in throwing light on the mystery of the Church. When the Church, together with Christ, performs the function of priest and victim, it is the whole Church that offers the sacrifice of the Mass and the whole of the Church is offered in it.' (MF 31).

For Paul VI, the ecclesial character of the Eucharistic sacrifice remains true, even for Mass celebrated without a congregation, because 'even if celebrated by a priest alone in private, [it] is not private; it is the act of Christ and the Church...' (MF 32).

4.2.3 Vatican II

Unlike Trent, Vatican II, does not deal with the Eucharistic sacrifice in a focused and systematic manner. Most of what the council has to say about this sacrifice is found

scattered in most parts of the documents, but mainly in the documents on the constitution on the liturgy and the document on the Ministry and life of Priests. Bourassa (1989:124) summarises Vatican II's various statements on Eucharistic sacrifice into the following themes:

1. *The Unicity of Christ's Sacrifice.* There is one single sacrifice of Christ, which is of infinite value, and which culminates in his offering and his immolation on the cross once and for all. In this one oblation, we have all been sanctified.
2. *The Specifically "Sacramental" Character of the Eucharistic Sacrifice as Representation of the One Sacrifice of Christ on the Cross.* The Eucharist does not add another sacrifice; it is one and the same sacrifice offered on the cross and made present on the altar in the celebration of the eucharistic supper.
3. *The Participation of Christians in this Sacrifice.* Christians participate actively in the Eucharistic sacrifice, the source and summit of the Christian life, by offering the divine Victim of God and themselves along with it (LG¹11).

As it can be seen, there is no new doctrinal announcement about the nature of the Eucharistic sacrifice made by Vatican II; the summary given above reflects Trent's teaching and its explanation by the post-Tridentine and pre-conciliar theologians. What may perhaps be new, are certain points of emphasis and explanation. One obvious point of emphasis by Vatican II is the meaningful role of the faithful in the offering of Eucharistic sacrifice, as Bourassa states in the third point of his summary. Another point of note about Vatican II's presentation of Eucharistic sacrifice is the reference to the resurrection as an integral part of Eucharistic memorial (cf. LG 47).

According to Bermejo, Vatican II's explanation of Eucharistic sacrifice as a memorial of Christ's death and resurrection is an improvement on Trent's, which confined it to being a memorial of Christ's death. As it has been noted above, modern theologians consider Christ's resurrection as an integral part of Christ's sacrifice recalled in the Eucharistic sacrifice. The acknowledgement of this fact by Vatican II gives Bermejo a sigh of relief.

¹ Lumen Gentium

Now the resurrection of Christ, his exaltation to the heavenly realm, his complete glorification, are explicitly recalled as the indispensable setting for the celebration of the eucharistic mystery' (Bermejo 1985:98).

4.2.4 John Paul II

The most comprehensive teaching of Pope John Paul II on the Eucharist is found in his Holy Thursday letter of 1980, *On the mystery and worship of the Holy Eucharist*, also known as *Dominicae Cenaе* (from now on referred to as DC). In this letter, the Pope also addresses the sacrificial character of the Eucharist at length.

His starting point is the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, which has an unceasing purpose of restoring humanity to God. The pope argues that if the restoring function of Christ's sacrifice on the cross were to cease, one would have to question its excellence, but thanks is due to the Eucharist which ensures its excellence by making it continually present (cf. DC 9). 'Accordingly, precisely by making this single sacrifice of our salvation present, man [sic] and the world are restored to God through the paschal newness of Redemption' (DC 9). Thus, the Eucharistic sacrifice bears testimony to the excellence of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, which unceasingly and continuously restores humanity to God. The Eucharistic sacrifice, therefore, is a continuous salvific act of Christ, and for this reason, the pope insists on the *persona Christi* identification of the priest, because only if that identification is asserted can the Eucharist be an effective sacrifice:

In persona means in specific sacramental identification with "the eternal High Priest" who is the author and principal Subject of this Sacrifice of his, a Sacrifice in which, in truth, nobody can take his place. Only he--only Christ--was able and is always able to be true and effective "expiation for our sins and...for the sins of the whole world". Only his sacrifice--and no one else's was able and is able to have a "propitiatory power" before God, the Trinity, and the transcendent holiness' (DC 8).

The pope further clarifies that although it is Christ through the priest who effects and offers the sacrifice, the faithful become part of it by joining their own sacrifice to it. This joining is symbolised by the presentation of bread and wine. 'The bread and wine become in a sense a symbol of all that the Eucharistic assembly brings, on its own part, as an

offering to God and offers spiritually.'(DC 9). The pope continues and states that to Christ's sacrifice, 'which is renewed in a sacramental form on the altar, the offerings of bread and wine, united with the devotion of the faithful nevertheless bring their unique contribution' (DC 9).

Thus while the Eucharist is Christ's sacrifice, it is also the Church's sacrifice. The pope demonstrates this by quoting from the order of Mass an invitation to people to pray for the acceptance of the priest's sacrifice as representing Christ and theirs. "Pray that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.' As the pope sees it, this invitation expresses the 'divine and the ecclesial content' (DC 9) of the Eucharistic sacrifice

4.2.5 Catechism of the Catholic Church

The latest Catechism of the Catholic Church (from now on referred to as CCC) explains the sacrificial character of the Eucharist as deriving from its being 'the memorial of Christ's Passover': 'Because it is the memorial of Christ's Passover, the Eucharist is also a sacrifice' (CCC 1365). The Passover referred to here is the meal Jesus had with his disciples which was an anticipatory ritualisation of his death that took place a day after. By memorial the catechism means a recalling of the event that renders its reality present according to the biblical notion of *anamnesis*. (cf. CCC 1362-3), so that each time Christ's Passover is memorialised, 'the work of our redemption is carried out' (CCC 1364).

The redemption carried out through the memorial sacrifice is considered by the Catechism as effective not only for the living but also for the dead who have not yet been purified. It is offered for them so 'that they may be able to enter into the light and peace of Christ' (CCC 1370). Thus the sacrificial character of the Eucharist derives from its being a memorial of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, performed according to the last Supper ritual, and serving the same purpose as Christ's sacrifice on the cross, i.e. redemption. 'The Eucharist', concludes the catechism, 'is thus a sacrifice because it re-

presents (makes present) the sacrifice of the cross, because it is its memorial and because it applies its fruit' (CCC 1366).

With regard to the ownership of Eucharistic sacrifice, the catechism ascribes it primarily to Christ and secondarily to the Church. It is the offering of Christ the head in which the Church, the body, participates. 'The Church which is the Body of Christ participates in the offering of the Head' so that 'the sacrifice of Christ becomes also the sacrifice of the members of his Body' (CCC 1368). The Church participates by uniting the offering of itself, its 'praise, suffering, prayer and work ...with those of Christ and with his total offering' (CCC 1368).

According to the catechism, the Church participates in Christ's sacrifice at all levels of its existence i.e. at universal, local or diocesan and parochial or communal levels, each time the Eucharist is celebrated. This is expressed through the association of the pope, the local bishop and clergy who represent the unity of the Church at these respective levels with each Eucharistic celebration.

Since he has the ministry of Peter in the Church, the Pope is associated with every celebration of the Eucharist, wherein he is named as the sign and servant of the unity of the universal Church.... The bishop's name is mentioned to signify his presidency over the particular Church...The community intercedes also for all ministers who, for it and with it, offer the Eucharistic sacrifice (CCC 1369).

'Church', according to the catechism, also includes the Church triumphant, which also participates in Christ's sacrifice. 'To the offering of Christ are united not only the members still here on earth, but also those already *in the glory of heaven*' (CCC 1370).

With regard to the forgiveness of sin as the effect of Eucharistic sacrifice, the catechism, like Trent, continues to be ambiguous and simply states that in Eucharistic sacrifice, Christ's sacrifice on the cross is re-presented and perpetuated for the forgiveness of sins we daily commit. In its chapter on Sin, the catechism states that the Gospel as well as the Eucharist, which is given for the forgiveness of sins (CCC 1846), are the revelation of God's mercy. It continues to state that 'To receive his mercy we must admit our faults' (CCC1847).

It seems that according to the catechism, and this may be true for Trent as well, the Eucharist, like the death of Christ on the Cross, is related to the forgiveness of sins as foundation for its possibility which must still be concretely dealt with in the sacrament of reconciliation. The Catechism also relates the Eucharistic communion to sin as a preventative measure, because it is a source of strength against it. It increases charity which in turn makes us less inclined to venial sins, and it intensifies the bond between us and Christ and thus makes it more difficult 'to break away from him by mortal sin' (CCC 1395).

4.3 The theme of sacrifice in the current Eucharistic liturgy

We conclude this chapter by giving a brief analysis of the structure of the Eucharistic liturgy in its current form with the aim of determining how it brings out the theme of sacrifice. The axiom *Lex orandi lex credendi*, which is usually translated as the 'Law of prayer is the law of belief' (Bretzke 1998:65) seeks to explain that what the Church does in the liturgy is what it also believes. Put differently, 'how the Church prays witnesses to what the Church believes' (Bretzke 1998:65).

The Vatican II constitution on the liturgy states that the Mass is made up of two parts, i.e. 'the liturgy of the word and the Eucharistic liturgy' (SC². 56). While these two divisions can be viewed as distinct, they are nevertheless connected with each other and are complementary to each other. Since, however, our subject of analysis is the Eucharist and not the whole Mass, we shall confine ourselves to one division, i.e. the Eucharistic liturgy. The general instruction of the Roman Missal divides Eucharistic liturgy into three parts, i.e. (1) Preparation of the gifts, (2) Eucharistic Prayer and (3) Communion rite (cf. RM 48). We will explain these parts in turn.

4.3.1 Preparation of the gifts

The preparation of the gifts involves the carrying of bread and wine to the altar and according to the Roman Missal, it is preferable that the faithful should be the ones doing

² Sacrosanctum Concilium

this while an offertory song is being sung. The sacrificial significance of this act lies in symbolising the desire of the people to offer themselves to God by offering something that represents them, because it is the fruit of their labour and means of their daily sustenance. The bread and wine become 'signs of the people's desire to give themselves in eucharistic worship, and since self and life and work are really one, they are signs too, of the surrendering to God of what man [one] has' (Crichton 1993:96).

Thus strictly speaking bread and wine are not the materials for sacrifice, we cannot therefore say that at Mass we offer bread and wine. They can be regarded as materials for sacrifice in the sense that they are the visible elements, 'while in fact and in reality it is the body of Christ that is "given" and his blood "poured" that are the sacrifice made present in the celebration of the Eucharist' (Emminghouse 1997:159). The sacrificial value of bread and wine is the expression of self-offering and not the offering of bread and wine as sacrifice to God.

4.3.2 Eucharistic prayer

The first part of the Eucharistic prayer, known as the preface serves, to thank God for God's saving works and to give God praise. For this reason, this part of the Eucharistic prayer is also known as thanksgiving, proclamation of God's saving works and acclamation of God's glory. The following is a typical example of a preface with a threefold intention:

Father, it is our duty and our salvation always and everywhere to give you thanks through Jesus Christ our Lord.

He is the Word through whom you made the universe, the saviour you sent to redeem us. By the power of the Holy Spirit he took flesh and was born of the Virgin Mary.

For our sake he opened his arms on the cross; he put an end to death and revealed the resurrection. In this he fulfilled your will and won for you a holy people.

And so we join the angels and the saints in proclaiming your glory: Holy, holy, holy ... (RM Preface 42).

The second significant part is the invocation of the Holy Spirit over the bread and the wine, which is also known as *Epiclesis*. The purpose of this invocation is to unite the self-offering of the community represented by the gifts of bread and wine to Christ's self-

giving to God as sacrifice. 'The gifts the people have presented as the sign of their self-giving are now to be integrated into the offering of Christ which the eucharistic action makes present' (Crichton 1993:101).

The third part is the pronouncement of the institution words over bread and wine through which Christ's sacrifice is made present. This is followed by a prayer called the *anamnesis* or memorial prayer which serves to highlight the memorial character of the Eucharistic sacrifice³.

The fourth significant part is the intercessions in which prayers for the well-being of the Church, the salvation of the world and acceptance into God's presence after death are made. The following is an example of intercessions taken from Eucharistic prayer III

Lord may this sacrifice, which has made our peace with you, advance the peace and salvation of all the world.

Strengthen in faith and love your pilgrim Church on earth; your servant, Pope N., our bishop N., and all the clergy with the entire people your Son has gained for you.

Welcome into your kingdom our departed brothers and sisters and all who have left this world in your friendship. We hope to enjoy forever the vision of your glory through Christ our Lord, from whom all good things come (Eucharistic Prayer III)

The last part is the doxology, which again proclaims the Glory of God.

4.3.3 Communion Rite

Communion rite involves the Lord's prayer (Our Father), prayer for peace and exchange of peace greetings, the breaking of consecrated bread and procession for the reception of the body of Christ. According to the Roman Missal, the Lord's prayer in communion serves to remind Christians of the true bread which is Christ's body and to ask 'forgiveness from sin, so that what is holy may be given to those who are holy' (RM 56a). In the exchange of peace greeting 'the people express their love for one another and beg for peace and unity in the Church and with all mankind (humanity)' RM 56b). The

³ As explained earlier on, memorial or *Anamnesis* according to Hebrew mentality involves a recalling of the event that renders its reality present and effective to those who recall it.

breaking of bread 'signifies that in communion we who are many are made one body in the one bread of life which is Christ' (RM 56c). 'The song during communion... [which] expresses the spiritual union of the communicants who join their voices in a single voice, shows the joy of all, and makes the communion procession an act of brotherhood' (RM 56i).

4.3.4 Observations on the structure of Eucharistic sacrifice

The structure that has been presented above suggests that Eucharistic sacrifice has five major intentions, i.e. to give thanks, to make self offering, to propitiate, to supplicate and to create communion among participants and between participants and Christ. These intentions have been noted in various periods under which the nature and purpose of Eucharistic sacrifice has been investigated in this chapter. Up to now we have not had a holistic understanding of the Eucharistic sacrifice because each period tended to emphasise one aspect much to the neglect of other aspects. We saw, for example, that thanksgiving and communion characterised the patristic Eucharistic sacrifice. The medieval period on the other hand was concerned with the propitiatory character of the Eucharist. The modern period in its turn seems to be highlighting self-offering.

What is clear from the analysis of the structure of Eucharistic liturgy is that, contrary to the impression given by various schools of thought and traditions that the Eucharist is more of one aspect than the others, it is all these aspects. However, among all the other aspects noted in the structure of Eucharistic liturgy, the aspect of thanksgiving seems to stand out prominently. The Eucharistic prayer begins with thanksgiving in the preface and ends with thanksgiving in the doxology. In fact reference to thanksgiving is made in the whole Eucharistic prayer. Perhaps this should not come as a surprise because after all, the Greek word 'Eucharist' means thanksgiving.

4.4 Conclusion and observations

The current section began by asking three questions about the Eucharistic sacrifice in Catholic tradition. These questions concern the 'WHAT' or the nature, the 'WHY' or the

purpose and the 'WHO' or the agent or the subject of the Eucharistic sacrifice. In bringing this section to a close we want to show how these questions have been answered, if at all.

Common among all the sources of the recent Magisterial teaching investigated in this chapter is the affirmation of the sacramental character of the Eucharistic sacrifice. As we have tried to show, from the patristic era to the post-Tridentine period, with regard to its nature, the Eucharistic sacrifice is understood as the sacramental representation of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Therefore, in concluding this section on the Eucharistic sacrifice in Catholic tradition we can say it once and for all that this is the Catholic understanding of its nature.

The manner of explaining the sacramental nature of the Eucharistic sacrifice by the Magisterium, however, continues to borrow from the old school of thought which sees the Eucharist as repeating the sacrifice of the cross (cf. MD 74). However, since the sacramental character of the Eucharistic sacrifice is officially affirmed, such crude explanation of the Eucharistic sacrifice may be quietly ignored.

With regard to the purpose of the Eucharistic sacrifice, we have seen that in the various periods under which this topic has been investigated, except for the New Testament, there has been a tendency to reduce it to one or two purposes. The recent Magisterial teaching, even though still inclining towards one purpose, i.e. propitiation, is nevertheless comprehensive in its understanding of the purpose of the Eucharistic sacrifice. As we have seen, such comprehensive understanding, as presented by the recent Magisterial teaching and in the Eucharistic liturgy, includes thanksgiving, praise, propitiation, supplication, communion and self-giving.

The question of the agent or the subject of the Eucharistic sacrifice is closely connected to its nature as a sacramental representation of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. The position of the recent Magisterial teaching is that in the final analysis, it is Christ through

the priest who carries out the Eucharistic sacrifice and the Church becomes part of it through the same Christ who is its head.

To conclude, the Eucharistic sacrifice is a sacramental representation of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. It serves the purpose of thanking, praising, propitiating, supplicating, communing with God and among worshippers as well as self-surrender to God. Its subject is Christ who, by virtue of being the head of the Church also makes it the subject of the Eucharistic sacrifice. Modern and contemporary theologians have helped to offer a theologically intelligible understanding of the nature, purpose and subject of the Eucharistic sacrifice.

PART 2

SACRIFICE IN XHOSA TRADITION

Introduction

If in the Christian religion the fact and value of sacrifice is sometimes doubted, as demonstrated by the reformation debates, the same cannot be said about the role of sacrifice among the Xhosa. Any material written on the Xhosa people cannot come to a conclusion without at least making a statement about their practice of sacrifice. From birth to death, a Xhosa person's life is caught up in various forms of sacrifice. This is true for the Xhosa in both traditional and urban settings as well as for those who have embraced the Christian faith, which for the most part discourages this belief and practice.

It is difficult to establish a clear development of Xhosa understanding of sacrifice in terms of periods as we have done in the previous section with the Eucharistic sacrifice. This is largely due to the fact that the Xhosa themselves were not prone to theorise about religion. If they did, we would be able to determine the development of their understanding of sacrifice. The discussion of Xhosa sacrifice in literature is mainly done in the context of traditional and modern settings, without a clear demarcation of these settings as they continue to overlap. This section will discuss the Xhosa understanding of sacrifice in these two settings. The first part will discuss sacrifice as it was understood ① traditionally and the second part will discuss it as it has come to be understood and practised since the contact of the Xhosa with, and influence of, Christianity, Western ② culture and modernisation.

Although the common understanding of the term 'Xhosa' has come to refer to all Xhosa-speaking people, the Xhosa people proper, as we hope to clarify later, consists of only one group out of the many groups of Xhosa speaking people. Today, this tribe consists of two major sub groups, the Gcaleka and Rarabe. As Elliot (1970:11) observes that

'customs and beliefs in the Xhosa tribe are basically the same', it is not expected that there will be great divergence between the Gcaleka and the Rarabe in their understanding of sacrifice. Thus the material to be covered here on the Xhosa understanding of sacrifice will be inclusive of both Xhosa groups.

Two works on Ndlambe (a division that broke off from the Rharhabe line) and Gcaleka religion by Bigalke (1969) and Olivier (1976) respectively, largely based on field research, have come to my notice. These works deal considerably with the subject of sacrifice on both groups of the Xhosa tribe. A quick scan of these works reveals no significant difference in the facts and conclusions they reach about Xhosa practice and understanding of sacrifice. Another work by Lamla (1971) *Sacrifice among the Southern Nguni*, his honours' dissertation based completely on literature study, offers a comprehensive classification of Xhosa sacrifices and attempts a good conceptualisation and significance Xhosa of sacrifice.

Other authors like Bettison (1954), Hammond-Tooke (1974), (1978), (1981), Pauw (1975), (1994), etc. have also thrown some light on Xhosa sacrifice. Since I am not a pioneer in the investigation and analysis of Xhosa understanding of sacrifice, I will build on what has already been done by these and other authors and highlight particular aspects ✓ that will be relevant for comparison with Eucharistic sacrifice. This section, therefore, like the previous one, will be based purely on literature study. The author being Xhosa speaking himself will now and again interject his own experience of the issues discussed in relation to Xhosa sacrifice.

This second part of the thesis will be divided into three chapters. The first chapter (chapter 5) will begin by distinguishing the Xhosa from other South African tribes, so that we can be clear about whom we are talking. This distinction will focus on their geographical location, their kinship structure and their cosmology. The second chapter (chapter 6) will focus on sacrifice itself and work towards a concept by analysing the occasions and types of sacrifice. The third chapter (chapter 7) will investigate how

sacrifice has come to be understood by the Xhosa after their contact with Christianity and undergoing urbanisation.

CHAPTER 5

THE XHOSA PEOPLE

5.1 Introduction

As a background to the discussion of the Xhosa practice and understanding of sacrifice, we will begin this chapter by familiarising ourselves with the Xhosa people. This will involve their identification within the context of other groups of Southern African people. After this we will briefly look at their history as a tribe. This will be followed by a presentation of the traditional Xhosa kinship structure and traditional Xhosa cosmology, which together form a context for an intelligible understanding of Xhosa sacrifice in its traditional and modern setting. In Xhosa cosmology particular attention will be given to the concept of God, ancestors and spirits as these seem to be related to the practice of sacrifice.

5.2 In search of the Xhosa people

Like all African countries, South Africa is constituted of various groups of people or tribes. According to Maylam, 'the vast majority of African people on the south of the Limpopo have come to be classified under two broad generic labels – Nguni or Sotho' (1968:20), within which further sub-divisions can be made. According to most authors, this classification is based more on linguistic similarity than on 'common cultural traits' (Maylam 1968:20). Thus the Zulu, Ndebele, Swazi and Xhosa, because of pronounced similarities in their languages, are grouped together as Nguni, and for the same reason, the Batswana, Bapedi and Basotho are grouped together as Sotho. The question of how the designation of Nguni and Sotho occurred remains a matter of speculation and dispute among historians, but most scholars have settled for these terms as a general starting point for the anthropological analysis of African people below the Limpopo.

Reference to the Xhosa often designates all the Xhosa-speaking African people living mainly in the Cape Province, which since the 1994 political dispensation has been re-zoned into the East, West and Northern Cape provinces. They are also found in small measures all over the country and in some of the neighbouring countries like Lesotho, Namibia and Botswana. According to Jackson (1975:1), however, a more precise designation of the Xhosa speaking African people would be 'Cape Nguni' or southern Nguni as distinct from the Northern Nguni such as Zulu, Ndebele and Swazi. Jackson regards 'Cape Nguni', and not Xhosa, as a precise designation because as he says, the Xhosa alone do not constitute the whole Nguni population of the Cape but are 'only a part of the Cape Nguni' (Jackson 1975:1). West makes the same point when he notes that the 'Xhosa speaking people...are referred to broadly as the Xhosa people, but are in fact a number of independent chiefdoms of which the Xhosa proper are merely one related group' (1976:12).

5.2.1 Distinguishing the Xhosa people

A division of the Cape Nguni tribes is difficult to determine with precision because some authors in their list include tribes that are classified as sub-tribes or clans by others. The following division finds confirmation from a number of authors, and thus can be regarded as reasonably accurate (cf. Shaw 1973:3, Van Warmelo 1974:61-63, Jackson 1975:2 and West 1976:12): 1 Xhosa, 2 Thembu, 3 Mpondomise, 4 Mpondo, 5 Bomvana, 6 Fingo, 7 Xesibe and 8 Bhaca. The exact time of the arrival of these tribes and their place of origin remains a matter of speculation, but there is unanimity among authors that the first five tribes listed above are the longest 'established inhabitants of the area' (West 1976:12), while the last three are 'later arrivals' (Shaw 1973:3). Even though the discussion of how the Southern Nguni tribes are related to each other falls outside the scope of this work, their common designation as Xhosa calls for an explanation, even if only briefly.

The most immediate reason for this common designation is that Xhosa is a common language among the Cape Nguni. Jackson tells us that Xhosa is 'with minor dialectical variations the language spoken by all the Cape Nguni' (1975:1). The second reason is

that some customs which are peculiarly Xhosa, like circumcision, are found in most of the Cape Nguni tribes and according to Soga (1931), they are still spreading even to those tribes that are not geographically close to the Xhosa tribe. This, according to Soga, is due to the fact that compared to other Cape Nguni tribes, the Xhosa enjoyed political strength and stability, which made them to be able to keep their language and customs, while assimilating other tribes into their language and customs. Soga states the following about the linguistic and cultural strength of the Xhosa in relation to other Cape Nguni tribes:

...we find the isi-X[h]osa displacing, in an ever widening circle all other kindred dialects. It has in the past century penetrated beyond the Bashee River to the north-eastern boundary of the X[h]osa tribe, right up to the confines of Natal...One peculiar feature of the isi-X[h]osa is that it is practically non-absorbent, incorporating only a word here and there and in extremely limited numbers from the neighbouring tribes, its purity being practically unaffected, so that it remains in the unadulterated form in which it was found when Europeans first came in the country. Then again, if we consider the essentially X[h]osa custom of circumcision, we will notice its gradual extension to tribes that did not originally observe the custom. Not only have the Fingo tribes of Lala origin and the Aba-Mbo living on the borders of X[h]osaland, adopted the custom, but tribes further afield, such as the Pondos and Pandomise, are falling under its influence. All these things point to the special virility of the Ama-X[h]osa tribe, as they also do to the vitality of the X[h]osa language. (Soga 1931:vi-vii)¹

It is this linguistic and cultural assimilation of the other Cape Nguni tribes by the Xhosa tribe that has led to the designation of the whole group as Xhosa. Since it is the other tribes that have assimilated customs from the Xhosa tribe, it makes sense to focus the investigation of 'sacrifice' on the Xhosa proper. Thus in analysing the Xhosa understanding of sacrifice, we shall also be gaining insight into the other Cape Nguni tribes' understanding of sacrifice, since (some) Xhosa customs have extended to these groups. Soga, however, observes that this assimilation does not imply a total fusion of the other Cape Nguni tribes into the Xhosa tribes. "Their separate origin and identity...is never lost sight of. So that, to use a Biblical synonym, "though of Israel, they are not Israelites"" (Soga 1931:18).

¹ Another contributing factor to the entrenchment of the Xhosa language in the Cape is that among other languages that probably existed in the Cape, it is the only language that was put into writing. This was largely due to the fact that the Xhosa were in the forefront of expansion westwards, which brought them into contact with the missionaries and the colonists who put their language into writing. When the Cape Nguni were assimilated into western culture, it was the only language that was taught at school and in this way it became a fixed African language of the Cape (cf. Hammond-Tooke 1975a:9)..

According to Maylan (1968:24) and Wilson (1969:77) the distribution of the Southern Nguni in the beginning of the 19th century was as follows: Between the Mzimkhulu river and Umzimvubu on the coastal side, are the Pondos, towards the interior from the coast are the Xesibe, and further interior towards the Drakensberg are the Mpondomise. Between Umzimvubu and Mbashe on the coastal side are the Bomvana. Between Mbashe and the Kei river on the interior are the Thembu. Between Mbashe and Sunday River on the coastal side are the Xhosa.



Adapted from Maylan 1968:24.

5.2.2 A brief history of the Xhosa

Having distinguished the Xhosa tribe from the rest of the southern Nguni, we now proceed to give some brief information about its composition and location. This tribe, like all the other Cape Nguni groups, is thought to have migrated from Natal into the

north-eastern Cape and gradually spread westward. It is reported that by the middle of the 16th century it had made its way as far as Umtata, a town which became the capital of the nominally independent homeland of Transkei under the apartheid system, and since then spread beyond the Kei river. Today a good number of them, together with the other Cape Nguni groups, are also found 'in the major cities especially Cape Town, East London and Port Elizabeth' (West 1976:12), as well as in the farming areas of the Cape provinces.

The composition of the Xhosa tribe is best explained by relating it to Xhosa royal lineage, through which its origin and subsequent divisions can be understood. The detailed history of Xhosa royal genealogy can be viewed in Soga (1931) who has become a standard reference for this subject. The Xhosa tribe is thought to have originated with a chief called Xhosa. Recorded facts about this chief and his successors, Malangana and Nkosiyanntu, are almost non-existent. Under these three chiefs historians present us with a unified tribe simply known as Xhosa.

During the course of history, beginning with the sons of Nkosiyanntu, i.e. Cira, Tshawe and Jwara, this tribe evolved into multiple divisions of chiefdoms; hence there are AmaCira, AmaTshawe, AmaJwara and all the other subsequent clans that have emerged from later generations of chiefs. Each clan enjoyed political autonomy while respecting and valuing the unity of the tribe personified in the reigning heir to Chief Xhosa. As Switzer (1993:34) puts it, they were 'a tribal cluster of genealogically related but politically independent chiefdoms'.

The dynamics of the multiplication of chiefdoms has found different explanations from different authors. There is one school of thought represented by Hammond-Tooke, which ascribes it to fission inherent in the polygamous marriage that often led to conflict between the offspring of the king from the 'great house' wife and the 'right hand house' wife, sometimes leading to the establishment of separate chiefdoms (cf. Hammond-Tooke 1965:157-161). The classical example of this situation was the conflict between Gcaleka and Rarabe, and between Ndlambe and Ngqika, which in both cases led to the establishment of new independent chiefdoms, but recognising the genealogical seniority

of the parent chiefdoms. Chiefs of the minor houses called *iqadi*, as exemplified by Ntinde, son of the minor house of Chief Togu, have also in some cases seceded and formed their own independent chiefdoms while paying sentimental cultural allegiance to the founding house of the Xhosa tribe 'as the living embodiment of a common ancestry' (Davenport 1978:53).

Another school of thought, represented by Peires, explains this multiplication as a way through which the Xhosa tribe systematically expanded itself. He tells us that "Xhosa history is best viewed not as a series of schisms destroying a previously unified people, but as the on-going expansion of the Xhosa polity brought about by the dispersion of the Xhosa royal lineage and its conquest of new lands and independent groups of Khoi, San and Nguni" (quoted by Maylan 1968:39). This often occurred through cordial agreement as exemplified by the case of Kwane, 'who was given the chieftainship over a clan of Hottentot and Xhosa origin' (Soga 1931:11-12). Another similar case is that of Mdange, who with the approval of king Phalo crossed the Kei River and established the Imidange tribe.

Given that Xhosa chiefdoms strongly asserted their political independence among themselves and often went to war to defend it, Peires' suggestion that the coming into existence of multiple chiefdoms was a way of expanding Xhosa polity does not sound convincing. Even those chiefdoms that were peacefully established, their aim was not to expand Xhosa political domain but to establish themselves as independent political entities.

5.2.3 The present composition of the Xhosa

The present composition of the Xhosa tribe is as follows:

1. The Gcaleka tribes;
2. the Rarabe tribes
3. the pre-Gcaleka or pre-Rarabe tribes (i.e. those that are genealogically junior to the branches of Gcaleka and Rarabe);

4. the Gqunukhwebe, who cannot be linked with the Xhosa genealogy (cf. Jackson 1975:6)

The Gqunukhwebe tribe, found mainly in the Middledrift area, originates from Kwane, thought to be of Khoi origin and 'who was admitted to the councillorship by the Xosa chief Tshiwo, about 1700, and by favour of the latter was "created" or given the chieftainship over a clan of mixed Hotttentot [Khoi] and Xhosa origin. He is therefore, not a hereditary chief of the X[h]osa tribe' (Soga 1931:11-12).

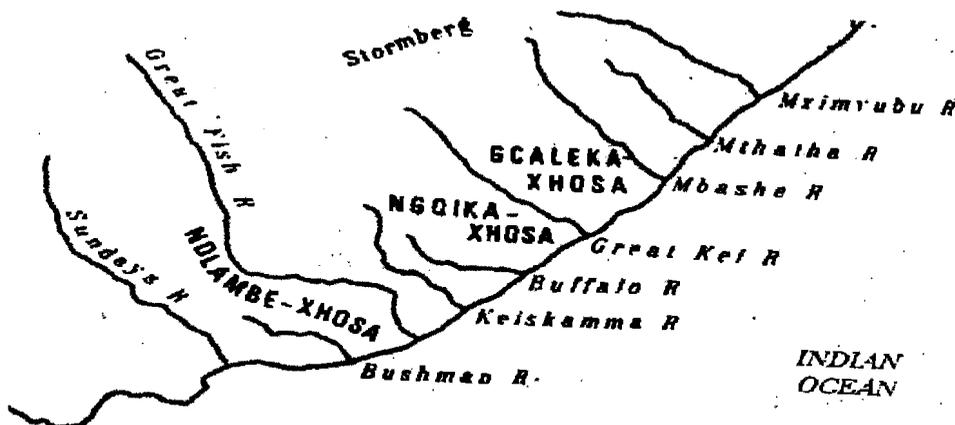
The pre-Gcaleka or pre-Rarabe tribes, namely Amantinde, Imidange etc. found in the King William's Town area, originate from chiefdoms of lower ranks, two generations before the Gcaleka and the Rarabe that became independent. This happened through secession as a result of royal conflict or through peaceful agreement.

The Rarabe tribes (also known as amaNgqika, named after Ngqika, Rarabe's grandson), found between Kei river and Keiskama river and in the former homeland of Ciskei, originate from Rarabe of the right hand house of Phalo, who reigned from 1715-1775 (cf. Peires 1981:43). While Phalo was still alive, Rarabe fought with his brother Gcaleka who was the heir to Phalo. The reasons given by various authors for this war vary (cf. Hammond-Tooke 1975b:20, Peires 1981:46 and Theal 1922:144), but whatever its reasons were, it led Rarabe to establish his independence further away from the established Xhosa land across the Kei river.

The Gcaleka tribes found in the original Xhosa territory, which is what used to be known as Transkei, originate from Gcaleka, (heir to chief Phalo), who after Rarabe had crossed over the Kei river, remained behind. According to Hammond-Tooke (1956:29) today the Gcaleka tribes are concentrated at Willovale district. It is ironic that the senior house of Xhosa has been reduced to such a small area, while the junior house on the other side of the Kei river, and other Nguni groups, seem to have more space.

Historical reasons to this effect may be interesting, but their investigation and discussion would extend beyond the purpose of this brief background. The situation today is that there 'are two Xhosa paramount chiefs, one in the Transkei and one in the Ciskei' (Jackson 1975:6). The Gcaleka paramount chief in the Transkei, due to his genealogical seniority 'is in fact the head of all the Xhosa, whilst the Rarabe paramount chief in the Ciskei is by right the head of the Rarabe tribes' (Jackson, 1975:6).²

There are therefore two main branches of the Xhosa tribe, i.e. *amaGcaleka* named after Gcaleka found on the east side of the Kei River, and *amaNgqika* named after Ngqika the grandson of Rharhabe found on the west side of the Kei River (see Olivier (1976) and Bigalke (1969³)).



Adapted from Maylam 1968:24

² Transkei and Ciskei are the now defunct independent homelands created by the apartheid system to deprive Cape Nguni of full South African citizenship. Since 1994, they now fall under Eastern Cape provincial government.

³ Bigalke did his research among the Ndlambe. The Ndlambe are a division that broke off from Rharhabe line. History has it that Ndlambe, a paternal uncle of Ngqika, became a regent to the baby chief, but when Ngqika became of age, Ndlambe did not want to let go of the throne and he put up a strong fight against the supporters of the royal house. In the end he established his own division known as *Amandlambe* and remained on the same side of the Kei River as *Amangqika* (the name by which *AmaRharhabe* are known today, a name coming from *Ngqika*, the grandson of *Rharhabe*) (cf. Peires 1981:). It is here presumed that while *Amandlambe* and *Amangqika* are politically autonomous from each other, culturally they are the same because they are both descendants of *Rharhabe* and have both remained in the same area. Therefore what is said about the *amaNdlambe* understanding of sacrifice, among whom a thorough research on the subject has been done, will be presumed to be true for the *amaNgqika*, among whom no comprehensive research has been done on the subject.

5.3 The kinship and lineage system

The word "kinship" as used by anthropologists refers to a relationship among a group of people formed 'either through blood (consanguinity) or established by marriage (affinity)' (Preston-whyte 1974:177). The same concept applies to lineage, but is broader because it extends to include descendants of 'a common grandfather or even great-grandfather or higher levels...' (Bigalke 1969:47). For this reason, the two words are sometimes used interchangeably. Thus kinship does not create a link of relationship only among the living but also extends 'to include the departed and those yet to be born' (Mbiti 1969:105) members of the kinship.

5.3.1 Kinship principles relevant for sacrifice

Principles of kinship include a defined division of the members of kinship. Closely connected with the division of members are the defined rules of interaction and behaviour among them. 'Categories of kin are recognized, and behaviour towards individuals falling into them organized, according to a blueprint of kinship expectation' (Preston-Whyte 1974:177). Roles of individuals in various spheres of life, i.e. religious, economic and political spheres, are also determined by the kinship structure. Only particular people, by virtue of their place in the kinship structure, can perform certain functions. Preston-Whyte explains the functional importance of kinship thus:

In everyday social life there appear to be four areas of social interaction in which descent groups operate, or in which lineage membership may have relevance for the individual, viz. in the recruitment to, and organisation of, residential and local groups, in the organization and distribution of certain scarce resources, in the settlement of disputes between lineage members and in the rituals of the ancestor cult. (Preston-Whyte 1974:196)

It is the last function, i.e. the organisation of the rituals of ancestor cult, that makes the discussion of kinship structure relevant as a background to a Xhosa understanding of sacrifice. Among the Xhosa, as among all the Bantu-speaking people of Southern Africa, it is the consanguineous relationship from the fathers' side that counts most. This has

significant consequences for the practice and understanding of sacrifice among the Xhosa. Common patrilineal descent defines bonds of blood relations. As far as sacrifice is concerned, common patrilineal descent defines the congregation or participants in a sacrificial ritual and for this reason, all lineage members must be present. 'Lineage members, even distant ones, are specifically notified well in advance of impending rituals and ceremonial and are expected to attend unless prevented by work, great distance or quarrels...' (Bigalke: 1969:104).

Succession to office in various activities of the lineage, which include co-ordinating and presiding over sacrificial rituals of the kinship, is determined by one's place in the patrilineal genealogical hierarchy. It is usually the most senior member of the lineage who becomes the head of the lineage and officiates at sacrificial rituals. Bigalke observes, however, that 'the three most important qualifications, apart from order of birth, are sound bodily and mental health, marriage, and wisdom' (1969:63).

Another significant kinship principle for the understanding of Xhosa sacrifice is the expected behaviour of respecting the elders, which includes being submissive to the orders of senior people.

The value attached to it can be noted from the exhortations made by old men to newly-circumcised young men when they emerge from seclusion -- "respect your parents, so that you will have long life in this world", respect your elderly people" "respect your father, mother and all adults as a whole". Included with respect, is the expectation that younger men will follow orders and instructions given by their elders (Bigalke 1969:42-3).

The significance of this principle for Xhosa understanding of sacrifice is that in many cases, as we shall see, sacrifice is carried out in obedience to the demands of the ancestors. Ray best expresses this extension of filial obedience to ancestors in his observation on the Tallensi tribe of Northwestern Africa, among whom the same principle applies.

Just as the child owes his parents, especially his father, complete service and submission, so an adult owed his ancestors the same filial service. The same obedience, economic service, and respect required by a parent on the domestic level are transformed, on the

religious level, into the ritual service, sacrifice, and reverence required by the ancestors (Ray 1976:84).

Another kinship principle that is relevant for the discussion of Xhosa sacrifice is the requirement that people who join the kinship circle, either through birth, adoption or marriage, be formally recognised through certain rites. These rites often lead to occasions of sacrifice. Passages from one division of kinship membership into the other, i.e. from childhood to adulthood and from life to death, present occasions for sacrifice.

If juniors are expected to respect and obey their seniors, a corresponding expected type of behaviour from the seniors is that they would provide for the needs of their juniors. This reciprocity extends, according to Bettison, to the world of ancestors as well. '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). The kinship principle of mutual obligation, therefore, applies to ancestors as well. For this reason, they too could be rebuked when they failed to reciprocate an act of sacrifice made in their honour (cf. Bettison 1954:29).

5.4 The Xhosa cosmology

From a purely scientific point of view, the word 'cosmology' has a meaning of the objective study of the universe and all the interactions and dynamics of its component parts. Terrestrial consideration of the universe has to do with speculation about the origin and evolution of the world, while the celestial consideration, also called astronomy, has to do with the composition, evolution and movements of the planets and the stars. At this level of scientific speculation about the origin and nature of the universe, Bettison (1954:2) states that the Southern Bantu within which the Xhosa tribe under consideration falls, 'were not given to speculating about...the origin of the universe, or even of man'.

The most that can be said about the Xhosa knowledge of the celestial world is that they had names for few stars which were noted largely for their practical purpose of measuring time, e.g. 'Pleiades-*Isi-limela* (lit. The one that ploughs for), i.e. the star that ushers in the

ploughing season. Venus as the morning star-*I-Khwezi lokusa*. Venus as the evening star is also *U-cel'izapolo*. (Lit. the one who asks for a little milk from the teat), otherwise, milking time' (Soga 1931:419).

Cosmology is also used to refer to beliefs, i.e. explanations that cannot be conclusively demonstrated about the origin and forces of the world. These explanations often make use of myths, tales and legends. Cosmology understood in this sense is sometimes distinguished from cosmology proper as '*cosmogony*'. The latter refers to a 'commonly accepted set of ideas concerning life and world', while the former 'refers to more consciously entertained images, doctrines and scientific views concerning the universe' (*Encyclopaedia of religion* Vol. 4 1987:101). Usually these cosmogonies have the purpose of explaining and dealing with the world as it is experienced, i.e. the world experienced as awesome, threatening, diverse, unstable and overwhelming. It has the meaning of making sense of the world as it impacts on people at an existential level.

Bolle states that cosmologies are usually classified according to geographical locations and cultural homogeneity. He observes that for this reason, 'grouping of cosmic views is given according to the continents of the earth, the various regions within them, and their ethnic and linguistic divisions' (*Encyclopaedia of religion* Vol. 4 1987:101). This is because cosmologies of close geographical and cultural proximity are similar in many ways.

Xhosa cosmology is no exception to this rule. At a continental level it has shared features with all African indigenous tribes, and with increasing intensity it also bears similar characteristics to those of the Southern Bantu, the Nguni and the south or Cape Nguni. For this reason, most authors and anthropologists deal with the Xhosa religious system under Bantu and Nguni classification. When attention is focused on details, however, one finds that there are elements that are peculiar to the Xhosa religious system. For this reason some authors like Soga, Hodgson and others, have made it their task to investigate and to expound on these elements.

5.4.1 The Supreme Being

Unlike the Juedo-Christian and other related religions' creation accounts, which begin from nothingness, the Xhosa creation account begins with an existing world, and proceeds to explain 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 marsh overgrown with reeds' (Hodgson 1982:18), which Xhosa oral tradition refers to as a place called *Uhlanga*.

Thus the Xhosa myth of creation is not comprehensive, in that it does not account for the existence of the universe as a whole, but only for humanity's existence. Even the existence of humanity is not comprehensively accounted for, because as Werner states, Bantu legends of 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 the particular tribe in question is the human race..." (quoted by Bettison 1954:6). This view is supported by Hodgson's observation that later, details were added to the original *Uhlanga* myth to account for the existence of other races and tribes that the Xhosa later came across (cf. Hodgson:1982:20).

The absence of the principle of sufficient reason⁴ which accounts for the first cause in Xhosa cosmogony has led to a debate among the authors concerned as to whether or not Xhosa people believe in a Supreme Being. One school of thought argues for the affirmative side of the debate. It does this by looking at the Xhosa traditional names for God, i.e. '*uDali*, *uMdali* and *uMenzi*' (Hodgson 1982:43), which carry a meaning of making, creating or bringing into existence.

These names, however, are looked upon with suspicion by other authors, who speculate that they are not original Xhosa names for God but 'were introduced to the Xhosa by the missionaries' (Hodgson 1982:44). A counter argument to this view is that these names are also Zulu traditional names for God (cf. Hodgson 1982:44) and are to be presumed to

⁴ In other words the absence of the explanation of the ultimate cause of things.

have been in use long before the Xhosa and the Zulu separated⁵. It is thus concluded, according to this argument, that upon migrating south eastwards, the Xhosa would have continued to use these names long before their encounter with the missionaries.

Bettison (1954) puts the argument in perspective. According to this author, the point is not whether or not the Xhosa believed that the world was made. Given the fact that it is, means that it was made, but whatever made the world was not also regarded as creator of humanity.

The evidence concerning the Southern Bantu suggests they recognised that the universe was a given entity; it must have been created by something and its movements were sufficiently co-ordinated to suggest that it was controlled. Their reply on close questioning was invariably 'it was created to do so', and that was as far as their interest in it went... It is a significant fact that the Bantu people to the North of the Xhosa/Pondo tribes, where more reliable evidence of a Creator and Supreme Being is available, view such a character as the maker of the earth, the mountains, rivers, etc., but never of mankind (Bettison 1954:5).

To support the belief in a Supreme Being among the Xhosa, reference is often made to rituals that were directed to God in cases of national crises, like prolonged drought. Hodgson tells us that '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). Lack of researched information about the details of this ritual, however, has led to diverse explanations of what it exactly involved, leading to uncertainty as to whether the supplication was addressed to God or to the chief's ancestors. Considering also that this practice was done once in a while (Hodgson (1984:78), reckons that it was probably done once in a decade) and that it was usually the last resort, it does not make a good example for demonstrating the belief in the Supreme Being among the Xhosa.

⁵ It is speculated that the Zulu and the Xhosa were the last of the other Nguni groups to migrate from the north (cf. Maylam 1986:22). Having lived together longer, the argument above speculates that common expressions between Zulu and Xhosa languages must be taken as predating other influences that came after migration.

Some authors have noted short spontaneous calls on God like, 'God help me', often made in moments of crisis, with an implicit suggestion that the Xhosa did not only believe in God but also had frequent recourse to him in their everyday life (cf. Olivier 1976:7 and Hodgson 1982:71). The period in which these observations have been made is quite recent, and one cannot rule out the possibility that these spontaneous calls on God are due to Christian influence. Even if Christian influence were to be ruled out as responsible for these ejaculatory appeals to God, however, that still would not take away the fact that God is not the subject of formal worship or sacrifice among the Xhosa.

From these observations, one could conclude that the idea of a Supreme Being finds reference in Xhosa cosmology, but retains a peripheral place in its religious system, serving 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 people as expressed in religious activity was very minimal, if at all. God did 'not constitute an important factor in the religious system' (Hammond-Tooke 1974:319) of the Xhosa.

If our conclusion is that the idea of God bears little significance in the religious system of the Xhosa people, the remaining task is to investigate other forms of supernaturalism in Xhosa cosmology, and to evaluate their significance in its belief system.

5.4.2 The Ancestors

In addition to the Supreme Being, other members of the supernatural world are the ancestors. Basic to the belief in ancestors is 'the belief that man, or rather part of him, survives after death' (Eiselen 1956:247). This belief, however, is not that obvious among the Xhosa. Xhosa anthropology defines human beings largely in terms of social identity, and not so much in terms of personal identity, hence the maxim *umntu ngumntu ngabantu*. The Xhosa share this collective view of persons with the rest of the African continent. Mbiti, a man who has gained international status in matters of African religion, concludes that in Africa, the essence of being human is in relation to the group. 'The

individual can only say: "I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am". This is a cardinal point in the understanding of the African view of man' (1969:107-8).

This lack of focus on the concept of personal identity makes it difficult to specify exactly what survives after death. Bigalke in his master's dissertation on the religious system of the Ndlambe is the most recent author who has attempted to explore this area. From his interviews of the Ndlambe Xhosas about the constituent elements of a person, he comes to this conclusion: 'Their concept of the person includes three elements, which are common to all human beings of whatever age and either sex: the body (*umzimba*), the life principle (*umphefumlo*) and the mind (*ingqondo*)' (Bigalke 1969:74). He further states that at death, the life principle is separated from the body and, according to his informants, goes up to heaven (cf. Bigalke 1969:75).

When a person dies, the *umphefumlo* becomes *Umoya* (spirit). It is not clear how *umphefumlo* changes into *Umoya* after death, but it serves to explain what in the person becomes an ancestor. 'When a person dies and the life principle leaves that body, it is *umoya* –that part of the person which becomes an ancestor is the *umoya* that comes out of the body' (Bigalke 1969:75). For this reason, according to Bigalke, 'Ancestors are often said to be "ezweni lemimoya (in the land of *imimoya*")' (Bigalke 1969:75).

It is not only being spirit that makes one an ancestor, but also the position of the deceased in the social structure as well as the performance of certain rituals in favour of the deceased by the survivors. 'Death alone does not guarantee ancestorhood nor do the burial rites confer it. First it is necessary to ritually "reunite" the separated souls of the deceased' (Ray 1976:142). Among the Xhosa these reunification rituals include 'the ritual killing of an ox to *khapha* (accompany) the deceased to the land of the spirits and, a year or so later, the *ukuguqula* or *ukubuyisa* ritual ('to cause to turn back', to cause to return)...' (Hammond-Tooke 1974:328). The notion of 'causing to return' points to the continual involvement of the dead in the life of the living. 'What is of importance here is not the afterlife itself but the way in which the dead continue to be involved in *this life* among the living... Thus, the afterlife and the notion of personal immortality have

meaning only in concrete terms in relation to the present life of the community' (Ray 1976:140-41).

Even though Bigalke has identified *Umoya* as the stuff out of which ancestors are made, this word does not constitute the essence of the names with which ancestors are called. The names used for ancestors indicate the abode of the ancestors, e.g. '*abaphansti*...' 'those who are beneath'...' and the relationship of the ancestors to the living, e.g. '*oomakhulu*, *oobawomkhkulu*, *ookhokho* which means grand-mothers, grand-fathers and great grand-fathers respectively' (Lungu 1982:9). The names that are used often for ancestors are those noted by Olivier in his master's dissertation on the religion of the Gcaleka, i.e. *izinyanya* and *amawethu* (cf. Olivier 1976:13). The word '*Amawethu*', means 'those of us' and Olivier explains the word '*izinyanya*' as the word that is '*gebruik vir iets wat oud is*' (used for something that is old) (Olivier 1976:13). From the author's experience, this word is not used for a thing that is old but for a person that is old.

Theron states that 'the place where the ancestral spirits are living differs from tribe to tribe' (1996:30). Among the Xhosa, there is no certainty about the exact abode of the ancestors. Various practices related to ancestors suggest that they live in more than one place. The respect of the kraal area in which the house owner's father or grandfather is buried (cf. Hunter 1979:36), and the fact that sacrificial rituals are performed in the kraal (cf. Olivier 1976:23), clearly indicate the kraal as ancestors' normal place of abode.

The practice of township dwellers to make pseudo kraals with tree branches on occasions of ancestor-related ritual killings further indicates the association of ancestors with the kraal. Belief in river ancestors (*abantu bomlambo*) (cf. Olivier 1976:15-16) as well as the rituals performed in their honour near rivers indicate that rivers and pools are also places of abode for ancestors. Yet even though ancestors are associated with particular places, they are also thought to be everywhere where their descendants are (cf. Bettison 1954:15).

The respect shown to ancestors by the living has sometimes been interpreted as fear of the dead. Some authors maintain that Africans, on the whole, display a disposition of 'fear rather than affection' (Parrinder 1962:58) towards the ancestors. This is deduced from the practice of offering sacrifices in response to the "anger" of ancestors manifested through misfortunes that befall those who omit their duties towards kinship, which includes the ancestors. I would like to argue that the offering of sacrifice by the Xhosa is not done out of fear, but out of the sense of respect for the ancestors built within the kinship dynamics, whereby a junior must always obey a senior. This respect does not mean that there is no affection. Heusch states that among the Zulu, for example, and this would be true for the Xhosa as well (cf. Olivier 1976:40-41), the good condition and the qualities of the animal to be sacrificed for the ancestors are usually noted. He continues to state that 'the animal seems to be "loaded" with the affection that the living feel for their ancestors' (1985:50).

5.4.2.1 Categories of ancestors

Pauw distinguishes four categories of ancestors among the Xhosa:

- (a) Spirits of the kinship group: these are the ancestor spirits of each line of descent.
- (b) Tribal spirits: these are the spirits of the kinship group of the chief and they care for the tribe as a whole as the chief will do the same during his life time.
- (c) Foreign spirits: deceased persons that may have meaning in particular instances, e.g. war heroes.
- (d) River people (abantu bomlambo): these are people who disappeared in the river to be trained as doctors (Pauw 1994:119).

Mbiti offers a similar categorisation of ancestors for the Acholi tribe in Uganda (cf. 1969:85), which proves the point made by Bolle (cf. *Encyclopaedia of religion* Vol. 4 1987:101) that cosmologies of close geographical and linguistic boundaries share common features. The first category of ancestors features more in the belief system of the Xhosa than the other categories. It consists first of all in the belief that the departed

members of the family continue to live and that they are 'capable of exercising some influence' (Lungu 1982:10) on the living members of the family. While all departed members of the family are believed to be in the ancestral world, not all of them can be properly referred to as ancestors.

One's position in the social structure during lifetime determines one's status in the ancestral world as what Bigalke (1969:78) terms a 'communicating ancestor' or just a member 'of the collective spirits of the dead' (Bettison 1954:16). It is also known as an 'ancestral shade' (Hammond-Tooke 1975b:17) or a 'collective body of ancestors' (Kiernan 1995:20). The communicating ancestors are those that affect 'the well-being of the living' (Bettison 1954:16), positively or negatively. The major determining criterion is the patrilineal, and in some cases the matrilineal, relationship of the deceased to the living. The communicating ancestors are mostly those of the patrilineal line, for whom post-mortem rituals are performed; and the ancestral shades are the women, children and 'unmarried men who died without issue' (Bigalke: 1969:78). Making the same point about the status of ancestors among the Pondos, Bettison observes that 'there is an association between the earthly influence of a living person and his power as an *ithongo* (ancestor) after death. As the influence of youth and children was small in the earthly society, there was little chance of great influence elsewhere' (Bettison 1954:16).

The scope of the influence of ancestors is limited to those who are patrilineally related to them. The demands and the benefits the ancestors are able to effect apply 'only to those they were able to influence' (Bettison 1954:19) during their lifetime. Bettison states that ancestors are perceived by the Southern Bantu (who include the Xhosa) as following the principle of 'the clan grouping of the mundane world' (1954:17) in their *modus operandi*. The condition, therefore, for becoming an ancestor is to have had descendants during one's lifetime, with whom the deceased will continue to interact. Thus 'a person remains an ancestor spirit as long as she or he is remembered and honoured by his/her descendants' (Theron 1996:30). This extends to the average period of 'four to six generations' (Hammond-Tooke 1974:325), after which it may be presumed they 'merge into the company of spirits' (Mbiti 1969:85), and become ancestral shades.

With regard to their ontology, Bettison argues that except for their power to cause sickness and well being, in their own being or character they are not different from their living descendents. They possess no higher ethical standard or degree of holiness than during their life time. Even though they exist as spirit, they share human qualities like being angry and hungry. If Bettison's explanation of the ontology of ancestors is anything to go by, it means that ancestors are not worshipped because, in essence, they are human beings. Yet arguments to the contrary have been and are still being presented (cf. Hammond-Tooke 1978:134-147, 1994:7), but that debate will have to wait for the next chapter. There the intentions of Xhosa sacrifice will be discussed in more detail.

Tribal spirits are the ancestors of the royal lineage, and they perform to the royal family the same function performed by ancestors of ordinary kinship groups to families. (cf. Bettison 1954:19). In addition to that, tribal spirits have national significance, in that they are responsible for the well being of the tribe as a whole. For this reason, periodic national rituals and supplications are made to them. An example of the presumed reality of tribal spirits is a Gcaleka national sacrifice, performed every few years in a stream called Ngxingxolo in an East London district, a stream into which Gcaleka is believed to have disappeared into (cf. Hammond-Tooke 1956:65).

Among some authors, there is almost total silence on the third category of ancestors, i.e. foreign spirits. One wonders what the sources of Pauw are about this category of ancestors. Neither Monica Wilson, who has studied Pondo cosmology in great detail, nor Hammond-Tooke, whose anthropological analysis covers not only the Xhosa but all the Bantu speaking people of South Africa, make mention of this category.

With regard to the fourth category, which is *abantu bomlambo*, Pauw seems to be confusing issues when he says that these ancestors 'are the people who disappeared in the river to be trained as doctors' (Pauw 1994:119), thus leading to a conclusion that like the kinship ancestors, they were once members of the society. According to Hodgson, *abantu bomlambo* are 'those who remained in the place of origin when mankind came out

of the hole' (1982:18). They are thus not known and are 'different from lineage ancestors' (Bigalke 1969:101), and exercise their influence across clanship boundaries.

They themselves never disappeared in the river, but have the river as their natural abode into which they sometimes lure people who, after spending some days in the river and offering sacrifice to them, come out as diviners (cf. Hammond-Tooke 1974:322). Their relationship to the living is quite ambiguous, because the fact that the call to be a diviner is sometimes attributed to them (cf. Bigalke 1969:100) implies that they are good towards the living. Yet they are also feared because they can cause harm to the living for no apparent reason. Bigalke reports that it is believed, among the Ndlambe, that the river people get upset when children wonder near the river of their abode and they cause them to have 'sore legs, irritation of the body, sore faces and fevers' (1969:100).

Olivier speaks of river and forest ancestor animals and goes on to explain that these animals are associated with river and forest ancestors, respectively (cf. 1976:17). Given that *abantu bomlambo* (river people) have been categorised as ancestors, we can infer that it is with them that the river ancestor animals (totems) are associated. With regard to forest ancestor animals, it is difficult to make a similar conclusion because among all the authors consulted, including Olivier himself, there is no one who talks about forest ancestors. However, considering that according to Olivier sacrifice to river and forest ancestor animals is one of the prominent sacrifices among the Gcaleka (cf. 1976:40), it makes sense to infer that there are forest ancestors. In order to make sense of the statement that sacrifice is offered to forest ancestor animals, we must conclude that there is another category of ancestors called 'forest ancestors' with whom these animals are associated. Thus to Pauw's list of categories of ancestors, we may add one more, i.e. forest ancestors.

5.4.2.2 Manifestation of ancestors

Ancestors are believed to reveal themselves to the members of their own lineage through dreams, which the dreamer himself or the diviner may interpret as a reason to offer

sacrifice. Ancestors also reveal themselves through misfortunes and sickness. In the occasion of misfortune, like barrenness, miscarriage, lack of productivity in the fields and in livestock, and sickness, a diviner is approached to determine the cause of the trouble. Very often the cause is attributed to an ancestor who is disgruntled for the offence or omission of duty towards him/her by one of the kinship members and who communicates this by causing misfortune or sickness.

They (ancestors) can also reveal themselves through the animals that are associated with them⁶. Strange behaviour of domestic animals can also be an indication that the animal is being requested for sacrifice. Olivier tells us that when a cow rolls itself in the *inkundla* (the open space between the huts and the kraal), it is a sign that the ancestors are asking for it (cf. 1976:19). Lamla (1971:11) also links the phenomenon of prophecy with the manifestation of ancestors. Cases of prophecy involved people who claimed contact with the ancestors and presented themselves as messengers of the ancestors to the nation. One known example is that of Nongqawuse, whose instruction, presumably from the ancestors, to kill cattle and destroy the grain resulted in national suicide.

I do not know of an original Xhosa word for 'prophet' or an equivalent concept, nor have I read about it. My suspicion is that such prophetic manifestation of ancestors were a result of the fusion of Xhosa and Christian belief. Switzer seems to confirm my suspicion when he states that 'prophetic vision...was perfectly compatible with existing Xhosa beliefs' (1993:68). To say 'it was compatible', implies that it came from elsewhere, and when it came into contact with Xhosa belief it was found to be adaptable to it, but it was not original.

It further finds confirmation in Peires, the renowned Xhosa historian who observes that the visions Nongqawuse had 'were most probably more recent conceptions bred partly from Christian ideas and partly from the felt need of the Xhosa people for more powerful gods of their own' (Peires 1989:310). In addition to that, the Nongqawuse prophecy

⁶ In anthropological language these animals are known as totems. For the Xhosa there are two categories, i.e. the forest and river animals. Under the forest category of animals Olivier mentions elephants, snakes and bees, and crocodile and otter under river category (cf. 1976:17).

remains open to other interpretations that are political. It is speculated by some authors, for example, that the whole event was engineered by whites to weaken the Xhosa (cf. Peires 1989:317), while others argue that it was a strategy by the Xhosa chiefs to stir up an uprising against the white settlers (cf. Willoughby 1928:120). Given the ambiguity of the prophecy phenomenon and that other authors do not list it as a manifestation of ancestors, it is better perhaps to regard only dreams, misfortunes, sickness, ancestor animals and divination as normal means of ancestral manifestation.

5.4.3 mysterious beings

Strictly speaking one could say that the Xhosa spirit world consists of God or the Supreme Being and ancestors. In addition to these, however, there are other mysterious beings that seem to belong to the physical and spiritual world, for they are believed to possess features and abilities of both worlds. In most cases, these mysterious beings, endowed with supernatural powers, are believed to have a form of an animal while a few bear a human form and are used by people of bad will, generally known as witches, to cause harm to other people. These mysterious beings are known as 'familiar'.

The following are some of the familiars often associated with women: 1. *Thikoloshe*: This is believed to be a short hairy man who can operate on his own but is usually attached to a person, who at her instruction can cause harm to others (cf. Soga 1931:185-192, Pauw 1994:129 and Bettison 1954:41-42). 2. *Impundulu*: A bird believed to be used by a witch to cause harm to others (cf. Bettison 1954:42-43, Hodgson 1982:47-48 and Pauw 1994:128-129). The experience of the author is that coughing blood is often ascribed to a kick by this bird. Bettison reports that it is also 'accredited with interfering with pregnant women, causing miscarriages, sucking blood, or preventing newly born babies from suckling from their mothers' (1954:43). 3. *Inyoka yabafazi*: A snake believed to be passed on from mother to daughter, used to cause other people to 'fall ill and even die' (Pauw 1994:129). In the writer's experience, it is believed that a common way in which the snake causes harm is to vomit on the victim's food.

The only familiar associated with men is *Umamlambo* or *iCanti*, (type of snake) because *imfene* (a baboon), which is another men familiar, does not seem to cause harm from supernatural powers. The *imfene* is mainly used by the owner at night when he carries out his sorcerous activities. It is also used to interfere and to harm other people's livestock, 'e.g. (it is believed that) it sucks out the cows so that the calves die' (Pauw 1994:131). *Umamlambo* on the other hand is a mysterious snake usually inherited from father to son or acquired by men mainly to secure good harvest and numerous livestock. It is believed that 'the fields of a person who has an *umamlambo* are always lush and his cattle are more numerous and fatter than those of others. It may however be used to cause damage to a person and to kill him' (Pauw 1994:130). Given that caring for livestock was men's domain, it is interesting that familiars associated with men are largely used in relation to livestock, while those familiars that cause harm and death to human beings are associated with women.

There are also other animals, mostly birds, which on their own are associated with evil. Encounter with them is usually interpreted as indicating bad luck or even death. Those listed by Soga include the following: the hammer-headed shadow bird (*uthekwane*), the ground Hornbill (*intsikizi*) and the owl (*isikhova*) (1931:198-99).

5.4.4 The diviners

If witches use supernatural powers to cause harm, diviners use it for the opposite effect. Diviners (*amagqira*) are people who have the supernatural ability 'to give answer to all questions and problems' (Pauw 1994:130). Diviners 'were consulted to divine the cause of illness and accidents, death in man or beast, the wishes of the ancestors, the identity of an "enemy" sending evils and the whereabouts of the lost property' (Bettison 1954:35). Diviners are of great significance for a Xhosa understanding of sacrifice because in times of disconcerting situations, it is they who determine cases for sacrifice and the type of sacrifice required. While it is not clear where the witches get their power from, diviners have theirs from the ancestors. They are chosen by the ancestors and this choice is usually accompanied by sickness, which can lead to death if certain rites towards

becoming a diviner are not carried out. A process of becoming a diviner is well explained by Bettison (1954:29-35) and Olivier (1976:51-57).

We have spent considerable space on the nature and classification of ancestors because, as we shall see, they are greatly significant for the Xhosa understanding and practice of sacrifice. In 'all the rites of passages and the community rites, the ancestors are called upon and sacrifices are made to them' (Theron 1996:33). Thus before dealing with sacrifice itself, it was necessary that we first consider them in some detail. We now bring this chapter to a close with a few observations of our own.

5.5 Conclusion and observations

The common designation of the South-East or Cape Nguni as Xhosa is very interesting because the Xhosa tribe proper (especially on the east side of the Kei river), constitutes a very small percentage of the population. As noted earlier, they are found in Willovale-Kentani district. The explanation given by Soga that, compared to the other Cape Nguni tribes, the Xhosa enjoyed more political and cultural stability, is skimpy and may also be too sentimental, given that Soga himself is Xhosa. I hope to explore the reasons of this common designation further in another research.

The isolation of the Xhosa as subject of investigation for their practice and concept of sacrifice has helped to clarify and correct the general assumption that everybody who comes from the Eastern Cape and speaks Xhosa is a Xhosa. The value of this clarification is offering information about the diversity of the African people in the Eastern Cape and the acknowledgment of the identity, the history and culture of each tribe of the Cape Nguni.

This clarification also helps one to be precise when making reference to the people of the Cape provinces. For example, it has sometimes been alleged in the media and in conversations that being Xhosa is a major criterion for the choice of leadership in the ANC and in the present government. The fact of the matter is that most of the recent

ANC leaders have not been Xhosa. The late ANC president Oliver Tambo, was Pondo; Mandela the former president of South Africa, is Thembu and Mbeki, the reigning president of South Africa is Mfengu. If there are any grounds to charge the ANC with tribalism, it could be charged of Cape or South Nguni tribalism and not Xhosa tribalism.

Religion has sometimes been explained as reflecting the society in which it is practiced, so that a better understanding of the latter will throw more light on the understanding of the former. The dynamics of Xhosa kinship that have been presented here have helped us to understand the social structure underlying the Xhosa practice of sacrifice. Two trajectories in particular have been noted, i.e. common patrilineal descent and mutual obligation among the members of the kinship. Patrilineal descent determines who the participants are and who the officiating person is in a ritual sacrifice. We have also noted that the socialization process provides context for various sacrificial rituals. Mutual obligation of obedience and reward between junior and senior members, respectively, provides a social background for the practice of sacrifice, which operates under the same principle of mutual obligation between the living and the dead.

The specification of Xhosa cosmology implies multiplicity and diversity of cosmologies according to the multiple and diverse groups of people and cultures. Some cosmologies, like those of the so-called 'world religions', have reached a certain level of coherent conceptual explanation and interpretation of the cosmos, compared to others such as Xhosa cosmology, which still remains complex. The observation that they 'have reached a certain level' needs to be noted well, because the level reached is a result of many stages of development. With the changes taking place regarding knowledge, experience and interpretation of the universe, even the achieved level of coherency can be expected to undergo further changes, as demonstrated within Christendom by the emerging new theologies of creation, for example. As Mosala rightly states, 'Christianity, contrary to Western doctrinal ideology, is not a finished business, neither is African religion' (1983:23).

This observation is made in view of the unconscious arrogance often displayed towards other religious traditions by analysts coming from the so-called established religious traditions. Their starting point often carries a disparaging tone about the lack of a unified system of thought in traditional belief systems as the following quotation illustrates: '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 peoples, a rather poorly developed corpus of myths' (Hammond-Tooke 1974:319).

The tone of the quotation gives an impression that traditional beliefs systems lack the ability to theologise, to speculate and to integrate mythological explanations. When one views this apparent absence of theology positively, it does not indicate lack of ability, but a stage at which traditional religions still are in their process of evolution, a stage at which world religions also once were. A positive way of saying the same thing that Hammond-Tooke is trying to say is that Xhosa belief system, together with all other similar belief systems, are still at a stage of complex belief system where religious beliefs have not yet found a coherent and systematic expression.

The fact of the remoteness of a Supreme Being in Xhosa belief system has not gone down too well for some Xhosa Christians and they have tried to argue the opposite. It is true that in the cosmology of many of the central and Northwest African tribes, belief in the Supreme Being or God is quite pronounced and that God is the direct object of their worship, which is carried out on a regular basis (cf. Mbiti 1969:59-74 and Idowu 1973:140-165). Among the Bantu tribes of Southern Africa, however, particularly the Xhosa, as it has been argued above, there is no similar belief and practice (cf. Ikenga-Metuh 1987:73). We can thus conclude that if the Xhosas today are said to believe in God and regularly interact with him through sacrifice or worship, this is due to the Christian influence.

The assertion that there has always been an explicit worship of God among the Xhosa is due to African Christian authors who want to demonstrate continuity between Xhosa

belief system and Christianity by emphasising similarities between the two, even if it means forcing them. It may also be due to a tendency among writers and researchers to apply religious concepts and practices found in some parts of Africa to Africa as a whole. Most titles on African religion give an impression that they are dealing with the whole of Africa, when in fact they are dealing with one or two tribes, usually from central and north-west Africa. They then proceed to make a general conclusion for the rest of Africa from the details of a particular tribe. This is an intellectual dishonesty and the sad thing about it is that it is misleading. It is not suggested here that there can be no common regional or continental religious concepts, but any work that claims to be continental must deal with elements that are common to all tribes and indicate those that are particular to each tribe.

CHAPTER 6

SACRIFICE AMONG THE XHOSA IN THEIR TRADITIONAL SETTING

6.1. Introduction

As noted in the introduction to this section, any material written on the Xhosa people does not come to a conclusion without at least a statement being made about their practice of sacrifice. This goes to show how central sacrifice is among the Xhosa; from birth to death, the life of a Xhosa person is marked by various types of sacrifices. In fact, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the religiosity of the Xhosa in their traditional setting manifests itself in various acts of sacrifice. Needless to say, the centrality of sacrifice in the Xhosa belief system is no exception to similar practices among the other tribes in Southern Africa, and indeed in Africa as whole.

Central as it is, sacrifice in the Xhosa traditional context has not been accorded any systematic exposition by the insiders, i.e. those who believed and practised it prior to Western and Christian influences. This is due to the practical orientation of religion in Africa, which focuses on the function religion serves rather than on speculative understanding of religious concepts. The analysis of the occasions and rituals of sacrifice as well as the accompanying invocations, however, reveal that sacrificial practices among the Xhosa, though not defined, are nevertheless pregnant with meaning. With the help of those who have made analysis of Xhosa sacrifice their task, this chapter hopes to bring out this meaning.

6.2 The fact of sacrifice in the Xhosa language

The fact of sacrifice among the Xhosa is demonstrated first of all by the fact that they have a word for it. The generic term for sacrifice among the Xhosa is *idini*. Xhosa-English dictionaries translate this word as 'animal sacrifice' (Kropf 1915:77, McLaren

1923:43). Kropf goes on to explain that this animal sacrifice is 'made to propitiate departed ancestors' (1915:77). In addition to *idini*, the English-Xhosa dictionaries have *umnikelo* and *umbingelelo* as a Xhosa translation for sacrifice (cf. McLaren 1923:243, Fischer 1985:550). These two words broaden the Xhosa notion of sacrifice. *Umnikelo* is translated as 'gift, offering' (Kropf 1915:270, McLaren 1923:103), thus sacrifice in Xhosa understanding is not only about propitiation. *Umbingelelo*, which derives from the verb *binga*, meaning 'to render what is due to departed ancestors' (Kropf 1915:36), further broadens the Xhosa notion of sacrifice because it introduces other elements involved in sacrifice. From the word *binga* is derived the following sacrificial elements: 'um-Bingi, the host who offers, i.e. who gives the animal for a sacrifice... um-Bingeleli, the person who offers for one... isi-Bingelelo the place for offering' (Kropf 1915:36).

From this linguistic analysis of the word 'sacrifice' we can already begin to answer the 'what', 'who' and 'why' of Xhosa sacrifice, indeed a tentative definition of Xhosa sacrifice can be attempted. Sacrifice is the killing of an animal by a designated person for the purpose of propitiating and offering a gift to ancestors. While language dictionaries give us an idea of the Xhosa understanding of sacrifice, they remain inadequate. More questions about Xhosa sacrifice present themselves. What gives rise to the need for an act of sacrifice, for example? What are we to understand by propitiating and offering gifts to the ancestors? What variety of sacrifices do the Xhosas have and what significance can be attached to such variety? Thus the answers which language dictionaries offer about Xhosa sacrifice unleash a host of other questions that can be answered by probing into the facts they suggest, a task we hope to take up in the pages that follow.

6.3 Sacrifice and ritual

Anyone who has lived among the Xhosa, both in their traditional and modern settings, would have witnessed an act of sacrifice. Missionaries, anthropologists and African Christian theologians have observed and recorded the practice of sacrifice among the Xhosa. Often the word sacrifice is used interchangeably with ritual. This can be confusing because though the two words are related, they do not mean the same thing. A

ritual is broader than sacrifice because it refers to any religious ceremony, which may or may not include a sacrifice. Sacrifice is one ritual among others, and so a precise reference to sacrifice as ritual would be 'sacrificial ritual', not just 'ritual'.

6.4 Categorisation and classification of sacrifice

According to the evidence at hand, there are a variety of sacrifices among the Xhosa as already indicated. A quick scan of three authors who have studied Xhosa sacrifice, namely Bigalke (1969), Lamla (1972) and Olivier (1976), reveals that there are at least two categories of sacrifice and within those categories, fourteen types of sacrifices.

In other areas of Africa where there is a pantheon of deities to whom sacrifices are offered, these sacrifices are categorised and classified according to their object, i.e. according 'to the recipient of sacrifice – the one to whom the offering is made' (Ikenga-Metuh 1987:29). Among the Xhosa, however, given the absence of such a pantheon, offering of sacrifices is always related to the ancestors¹. Ancestors are therefore the usual recipients of sacrifice. For this reason, most authors classify Xhosa sacrifice not according to recipients, for there is only one group of recipients, i.e. the ancestors, but according to the occasion and purpose of sacrifice. Perhaps the only ground for classification according to recipients would be where the sacrifice is offered either to home ancestors, or river ancestors, but even here, it has no justification because they are both ancestors.

Hammond-Tooke categorises Bantu sacrifices, which include those of the Xhosa, into '(a) *life-cycle rituals*, the sacralization of important stages in the life of the individual, and (b) *piacular* or *contingent rituals*, those performed in response to specific stimuli, in particular to illness divined as sent by the ancestor for some neglect of custom' (Hammond-Tooke 1974:352). Bigalke puts them 'into two classes, *imigidi*, public feasts

¹ Some authors would insist that God is also the object or recipient of sacrifice, as in the case of rain sacrifice, for example (cf. Soga 1931 and Hodgson 1982). Lack of researched information about the details of this type of sacrifice, however, has led to diverse explanations of what it exactly involved, leading to uncertainty as to whether the supplication was addressed to God or to the chief's ancestors.

at which anyone is welcome to attend, and *izizathu*, (meaning a reason), rituals concerned with the ancestor cult and not considered by Ndlambe² to be open to all comers. (1969:106).

Lamla offers detailed situations of sacrifice, which can be divided into four categories. a) Sacrifice connected with God and ancestors, which he calls 'sacrifices connected with religion'³ (1971:1), b) Initiation Sacrifices, c) Sacrifices connected with economic activities and d) Sacrifices connected with other events like rain making, war etc. The purposes of these sacrifices are suggested by their names. Initiation sacrifices serve to introduce one from one stage of life to the other, economic and rain sacrifices serve 'to secure success in agricultural undertakings' (Lamla 1971:24), war sacrifices serve to strengthen the army and to give thanks for military victory, etc.

As it can be seen, there is no unanimity among authors about the classification of Xhosa sacrifices. For the sake of clarity, I would like to synthesise these classifications into one that would bring more coherence among the various types of Xhosa sacrifices. The classification suggested here is an improvement on Hammand-Tooke's categorisation of sacrifice into life cycle and contingent sacrifices. One is born, passes through different stages of life and ultimately dies. The corresponding categories of sacrifice to these stages of life would be *birth*, *initiation* and *death* sacrifices. In the space between one's birth and one's death, however, there are various contingencies that must be taken care of. In view of that another category of sacrifice, i.e. *contingency* sacrifice suggests itself. It is, therefore, here suggested that Xhosa sacrifices can be intelligibly categorised as follows: birth, initiation, contingent and death sacrifices, each with further subdivisions.

² For the explanation of Ndlambe see page 112 above.

³ Lamla seems to be distinguishing sacrifices directed to ancestors, namely propitiatory sacrifices, from life cycle sacrifices and other sacrifices as religious sacrifice. Such distinction is misleading because in all Xhosa sacrifices, ancestors are involved even if they are not formally invoked. (cf. Hunter 1952:195, Hammond-Tooke 1981:26). Therefore if the religious character of a sacrifice is determined by reference to ancestors, all sacrifices are religious because ancestors are always part of the sacrifice. It is perhaps for this reason that Olivier lumps all sacrifices as connected with ancestors (cf. Olivier 1976:iv-v)

6.4.1 Birth sacrifices

According to the authors consulted, birth sacrifices that are in existence among the Xhosa include the following: *ukufuthwa* (to be steamed), *Imbeleko* or *umbingelelo* (a thing with which to carry on the back or sacrifice) and *Inggithi* (amputation of the first phalanx of one fingers of the left hand). We will take them in turn.

6.4.1.1 *Ukufuthwa* (To be steamed)

The first type of birth sacrifice is a ritual known as *ukufuthwa*. This ritual involves a repetitive swinging of the child by the mother over the smoke of a specially made fire while chanting the following words, '*Wush, wush, wush, khanyela into oyaziyo*' (Olivier 1976:29), which mean, deny what you know. In the authors' experience, individuals of other tribes sometimes ascribe the supposed astute and cunning character of the Xhosa to this ritual. Except for Lamla, all the authors consulted cannot clearly explain the purpose of this ritual and they also do not attach any sacrificial meaning to it.

Monica Hunter tells us that her informants gave her varying explanations, most of which sound like *ad hoc* opinions (cf. Hunter 1979:154). Lamla explains that the purpose of this ritual is 'to ensure mental vigour, wisdom, valour, strategy and eloquence for the child' (1971:14). He also attaches sacrificial significance to it. He states that when this ritual 'is being performed for the last time, a number of cattle are collected outside the hut and prayer is addressed to the ancestral spirits. The beast that happens to urinate first is sacrificed...(and appeal is made) to the ancestors for blessings' (1971:14).

6.4.1.2 *Imbeleko* or *umbingelelo* (A thing with which to carry on the back or sacrifice)

Among birth sacrifices, *imbeleko* or *umbingelelo* is the most noted of them all. The purpose of *imbeleko* is to thank the ancestors for the child (cf. Pauw 1994:12) and to ensure the good health of the child (cf. Olivier 1976:30). The secondary purpose of this

sacrifice was to provide a sling to carry the child on the back of the mother. If this ritual is not performed, such omission may lead to sickness later on in the life of the child (cf. Bigalke 1969:148, Olivier 1976:30) or to abnormal behaviour, like continuously wetting the bed and being disobedient (cf. Pauw 1994:12). It may even lead to death (Laubscher 1937:69).

6.4.1.3 *Ingqithi* (amputation of the first phalanx of one finger of the left hand)

Only Laubscher and Lamla argue for the sacrificial character of this ritual. Lamla tells us that 'the operation is called *ingqithi* and it is a sacrificial function intended to illustrate the principle of compensation or gift to the ancestors' (1971:14). Olivier asserts the opposite. He states that '*Hieirdie rite staan nie direk in verband met die voorouers nie*' (1976:29). Bettison (1954:28) also expresses some doubts as to whether the rite is related to the ancestors, because it is not accompanied by any ceremonial. Other authors do not even make reference to this rite as a sacrifice.

Laubscher explains the *ingqithi* rite as a sacrifice to the ancestors from the child itself. 'The child is required to give up a healthy part of himself so that he may receive health for the whole of his being' (1937:73). Even though other authors are doubtful or silent about the sacrificial character of the *ingqithi* rite, Laubscher's explanation of *ingqithi* is very interesting. What is interesting in his explanation is that the sacrifice is provided for by the child itself from its own body and not by the father from his livestock. This also brings to mind a theory of substitutional sacrifice according to which a part of the body is offered in place of the whole body, 'like the offering of fingers, hair, or blood drawn through self inflicted wounds' (*Encyclopaedia of religion* Vol. 12 1987:546). There is, however, no evidence among the Xhosa that this is the rationale behind *ingqithi* rite.

6.4.2 Initiation sacrifices

The most common initiation is the passage of boys from youth to manhood, known as *ukwaluka* (circumcision rite). The equivalent rite for girls, though not having the same meaning of passing from childhood into adulthood as it has for boys, is *intonjane*. It

involves the seclusion of girls for a period of time. The purpose of *intonjane* ritual is, as we shall see later, quite obscure. Marriage is classified under initiation because through marriage rites, an individual passes from girlhood into womanhood. Marriage is a full equivalent of *ukwaluka* (circumcision) (cf. Wilson 1981:140). Thus there are three types of initiations, namely, circumcision, *intonjane*, and marriage. Our aim here is to establish the sacrificial character of these initiations.

6.4.2.1 *Ukwaluka*

With regard to *ukwaluka*, three rituals are performed, i.e. *Ngcamisa*, *Ojisa* and *buyisa*.

- a) *Ngcamisa* is a ritual performed a day before a youth undergoes circumcision. Raum (1972:181) traces the etymology of *Ngcamisa* to the word *ukucamagusha*, which has a meaning of requesting the blessings of the ancestors. *Ngcamisa* ritual has a clear sacrificial significance. In this ritual a goat is killed and offered to the ancestors for the protection of the boys in the duration of their initiation period (cf. Lamla 1971:16, Van de Vliet 1974:229, Laubscher 1975:100, Pauw 1994:14).

- b) *Ojisa* is a ritual performed about a week after circumcision (cf. Bigalke 1969:107, Lamla 1971:17, Olivier 1976:31). The purpose of *Ojisa* ritual is to introduce the boys to normal food from which they have had to abstain for their wounds to heal. The accompanying words reported by Olivier are clear about the intention of this ritual, '*Hayi ke, namhlanje ndiyanojisa. Ndinikhululela okokuba nitye yonke into*' (1976:31), which mean, Today I allow you to eat everything. Even though the focus of *Ojisa* ritual is on reintroducing the boys to normal food, it also has sacrificial significance because a portion of meat called *intsonyama*, which is usually given to the person for whom the sacrifice is offered, is given to the boys (cf. Olivier 1976:31). From my readings, however, the sacrificial significance of this ritual is not clear, it can thus be speculated that it lies in thanking the ancestors for the healing of the boys' wounds.

- c) *Ukubuya* (Return) is a ritual, which marks the end of initiation. The focus of *ukubuyisa* ritual is to admonish and to advise 'newly created men' on what it means to be men as well as to celebrate their maturation into adulthood (cf. Lamla 1971:16, Van der Vliet 1974:321). A sacrificial portion of meat (*intsonyama*) is again given to the new men. Pauw concludes that 'this ritual also implies an expression of thanks to the ancestor spirits' (1994:16) and is therefore sacrificial.

6.4.2.2 *Intonjane* or *ukuthomba*

Intonjane is, according to Hunter (1979:173-174), a ritual of passage of girls from childhood into marriageable women. Hunter observes that the act of beautifying the girl 'by bleaching and fattening' (Hunter 1979:174) her during this period of initiation has marriage as the end view of this ceremony. For this reason, a girl 'previously called an *intombazana* (little girl)' (Pauw 1994:18), after undergoing the *intonjane* ritual becomes *intombi* (full girl); she changes from being a child and becomes a 'potential bride' (Wilson (1971:30). It often happens, however, that most girls marry without having undergone this ritual. Hunter ascribes this omission to the poverty of the girl's father, who may not have the required animals and food that go with this ritual. According to Hunter, for most women this ritual is performed when they are already married often as a result of them getting sick or failing to conceive and the omission of *intonjane* being diagnosed by the diviner as the cause.

Intonjane ritual is clearly sacrificial, for it involves at least two killings of animals, one at the beginning and one at the end of the initiation period, and in both the girl being initiated eats the sacrificial portion of the meat. Its sacrificial character is further demonstrated by the fact that it is connected with ancestors who, when this ritual has been omitted, demand it by causing sickness and barrenness.

6.4.2.3 Marriage

Xhosa marriage is the most solemn occasion and involves ritual because, as Lamla observes, it 'is an alliance between two lineages' (1971:20). It is marked by prolonged celebration and feasting and involves multiple animal slaughtering. A quick scan of the literature on Xhosa marriage shows that there are at least seven killings of animals in a marriage ceremony:

- 1) A goat is killed at the bride's home just before the marriage ceremony begins, called *umngcama*⁴ (cf. Laubscher 1937:171, Olivier 1976:33, Hunter 1979:193, Pauw 1994:27), to inform the bride's ancestors about her departure to her new homestead.
- 2) Another goat called *umthula-ntabeni* (to be brought down the mountains) (cf. Soga 1931:231, Pauw 1994:28) is killed at the bridegroom's home on arrival of the bride with her entourage as a welcome.
- 3) A day after the arrival of the bride at the bridegroom's home, a cow called *impothulo*⁵ (ground boiled mealies mixed with sour milk) which has been brought along by the bride as food for the journey is killed (cf. Soga 1931:231, Laubscher 1937:175, Lamla 1971:21, Olivier 1976:33).
- 4) A day after *impothulo*, an ox is killed for the unveiling of the bride, called *ukubonwa kwentombi* (the viewing of the girl) (cf. Soga 1931:232, Lamla 1971:21, Pauw 1994:28).
- 5) Towards the finalisation of the marriage ceremony, a goat is slaughtered and this is called *ukutyiswa amasi* (to be fed with sour milk) (cf. 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).

⁴ According to Laubscher (1937:171), this sacrifice is similar to the first sacrifice of boys' initiation, called *ngcamisa*. Hunter (1979:193) calls it *ukumncamisa*. Olivier does not give it a name but simply refers to the sacrifice that is offered before the bride goes to her in-laws' homestead.

⁵ Satyo explains *inkomo yempothulo* (a cow killed for the *impothulo* sacrifice) as a purification sacrifice for unintended incestual relationship (cf. 1981:46). If Satyo is right (because there is no other author who corroborates his explanation) one could say that this sacrifice serves as a precaution, in case the bride is related to the bridegroom.

- 6) At the conclusion of the marriage ceremony another ox is killed for a dance feast called *umdudo* (cf. Soga 1931:236-38, Lamla 1971:21, Olivier 1976:33).
- 7) Just before the departure of the bride's party back home, another cow called *umphako* (provision) for a journey provision is killed (cf. Soga 1931:238, Lamla 1971:21).

Olivier singles out four killings in which the sacrificial portion of meat called *intsonyama* is ritually tasted, i.e. *umngcamo*, *impothulo*, *ukutyiswa amasi* and *umdudo*, and qualifies them as sacrificial killings. To these, Lamla adds *ukubonwa kwentombi* and observes that it is done in the kraal, thus qualifies it also as a sacrifice. If one looks carefully at some of the killings of animals noted by Lamla and Olivier, however, even though one can deduce some sacrificial significance from them, in essence many of them serve to provide for the feast and to keep the celebration going. This is clear from their designations, many of which indicate a festive intention.

If the statement that Xhosa marriage is an alliance between two lineages is anything to go by, I would suggest that among all these killings, only two, i.e. *umngcamo* and *ukutyiswa amasi* have explicit sacrificial intentions. These two killings serve to inform the ancestors of both sides about what is taking place. The *umngcamo* serves to let the ancestors of the bride know that she is leaving her homestead and to ask them to protect her and give her health. Part of the speech recorded by Olivier on the occasion of this sacrifice confirms the point: '*Namhlanje ke, maTshawe, intombi yam iyahamba; ke nihambe nayo niyikhaphe iphile*' (Olivier 1976:33), which translates thus: Today, you of the Tshawe clan, my daughter is going away, please go with her so that she may be well. The observation by Hunter that if this sacrifice is not done for the girl, 'she is liable to fall ill on account of the omission' (1979:194) further confirms its importance in the marriage ritual.

The *ukutyiswa amasi* sacrifice is central to the sealing of the Xhosa marriage. In fact it is only after this sacrificial ritual has been performed that a woman becomes a member of her new household as a wife. Pauw tells us that 'a woman is not regarded as being

married if the *ukudliswa amasi* ritual has not been performed for her' (1994:29). With this sacrifice the bride is 'initiated as a member of her husband's family' (Soga 1931:234). Again, Hunter in her research among the Pondo observes that in cases where this ritual sacrifice had been omitted, sickness may occur on account of its omission. Thus these two sacrifices serve to release the bride from her homestead and to introduce her to the homestead of the bridegroom respectively.

6.4.3 Contingent sacrifices

In proceeding to discuss contingent sacrifices we must begin with an explanation of the term 'contingent'. 'Contingent' as used here refers to something that is likely to take place but without certainty about the manner and time of its occurrence. A contingent event is characterised by the possibility that it may or may not happen. Contingent events usually take people by surprise and are sometimes a puzzle to them. They are not necessarily negative. Among the Xhosa, contingent events that usually call for sacrifices include the following: sickness, misfortunes of various kinds and death.

On the positive side they include feelings of gratitude, communion and generosity. For the Xhosa, negative contingent events raise awareness of disharmony between the living and the dead and call for appropriate sacrifices, i.e. for propitiatory and supplicatory sacrifices. Positive contingent events on the other hand have the opposite effect and call for thanksgiving and communion sacrifices. The following contingent sacrifices will be discussed: propitiatory sacrifice, diviner initiation sacrifice, supplication sacrifice, communion sacrifice, thanksgiving sacrifice and ostracism sacrifice

6.4.3.1 Propitiatory sacrifice⁶

The case for propitiatory sacrifice arises as a result of the experience of sickness or misfortune, which is usually diagnosed by the diviner as due to the anger of ancestors for omission(s) of expected behaviour or for offence towards the kinship and ancestors themselves. Bigalke (1969:146-48) gives examples of diagnoses of the cause of various sicknesses or misfortunes and corresponding prescriptions of sacrifices. Hammond-Tooke explains the process leading to propitiatory sacrifice thus:

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 ritual [sacrifice] to be performed (Hammond-Tooke 1981:26).

Hammond-Tooke's statement is supported by the fact that the performance of a prescribed ritual sacrifice often seems to yield the desired effect, which is seen as further confirmation of the connection between a misfortune and the intervention of ancestors. Some authors who have done field research among the Xhosa report of observed cases where a performance of a prescribed ritual sacrifice was followed by a full restoration of health. Hunter tells of a woman who 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' (1979:200). Similarly, Olivier reports of a man who was sick and could not be cured by a white doctor's medicine, whereupon he consulted the diviner. Olivier tells us that '*die bevinding 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*' (1976:20). (The diagnosis was that he did not perform the rite of bringing back his father and after he had performed the rite in his kraal, he got well.)

⁶ Usually these are sacrifices that should have been performed, i.e. initiation and death sacrifices, but have for various reasons been omitted. We call them propitiatory sacrifice here not because they are a class of their own as such, i.e. sacrifices to propitiate ancestors for failure to perform sacrifices that should have been performed. They are designated 'propitiatory' because their performance is a result of being reminded through ancestral anger that what should have been done has been omitted and that it should be done. We classify them under the contingent category because their performance may or may not be demanded by the ancestors.

6.4.3.2 Diviner initiation sacrifice

Diviner initiation sacrifice is a typical contingent sacrifice. To be a diviner among the Xhosa is something unpredictable. Only a handful is called to the state of being diviners, and even for those chosen few, it comes as a surprise. Not only is it a surprise, it is also something dreaded because it involves a lot of inconvenience. Hence anyone who has signs of being called to be a diviner is referred to as having *inkathazo* (a problem) (cf. Bettison 1954:33 Olivier 1976:51). Even though women constitute a great majority of diviners (cf. Hammond-Tooke 1974:348), the call is directed to both sexes and 'could come at any age, even in childhood' (Bettison 1954:30). The process of the call and initiation into being a diviner, which begins with 'prolonged sickness' (Bettison 1954:30) accompanied by dreams and diagnosis by the diviner, is well explained by Bettison (1954: 30-35), Olivier (1976:51-56) and involves the following ritual sacrifices:

- 1) '*Ibhokhwe yokuvuma ukufa*' (Olivier 1976:53) which means literally a goat to admit sickness. According to Olivier the purpose of this goat sacrifice is to let the ancestors know that the person concerned is yielding to the call of the ancestors to be a diviner. This becomes clear from the words accompanying this sacrifice. '*Ewe ke, namhlanje maNgwevu, lo mntwana wenu uyakwamkela ukufa. Kufuneka nimqhube ke, nimvulele nimbonise*' (Olivier 1976:53) which means, 'Today you of the Ngwevu clan, this child of yours is yielding to the call, guide her, open for her and show her'.
- 2) '*Ibhokhwe yentambo*' (Olivier 1976:55) meaning a goat for string (for making string from the skin).
- 3) '*Inkomo yokugodusa*' (Olivier 1976:55) which means a cow with which to accompany the initiate home. This marks the end of the initiation period and with this ritual sacrifice one graduates as a full diviner.

6.4.3.3 Supplication sacrifices

Supplication sacrifices are characterised by petition, the object of which 'can range from

purely material goods to the highest spiritual blessings' (*Encyclopaedia of religion* Vol. 12 1987:549). In all Xhosa sacrifices there is always an element of supplication (the sacrifices discussed above, for example, have implicit requests for health restoration), which explains why there are not many cases of explicit supplication sacrifices. Cases for explicit supplication sacrifices are usually the national or tribal sacrifices for 'rain-making, the securing of fertility of land and crops, the protection of the country against lightning and hail... and the strengthening of the chief's army' (Hammond-Tooke 1974:354). Unfortunately, detailed information about these sacrifices is hard to obtain; available information is skimpy and controverted. We thus have to contend ourselves with mere reports about these sacrifices.

6.4.3.4 *Communion sacrifices*

Communion sacrifices are characterised by the desire to be in good fellowship with the ancestors. They include the following types of sacrifices:

1. '*Ukupha* (to give) – This is a ritual performed for a named communicating ancestor if a homestead head feels he should "give him something" or if the ancestor requests it in a dream' (Bigalke 1969:80, cf. Olivier 1976:40). Thus this sacrifice is a result of a pure filial intuition to offer a feast for the named ancestor. As noted above, however, it has a supplication element as the following statement recorded by Olivier testifies: '*Naku ke mabandla kaPhalo, KaGcaleka, namhlanje kukanje, ndipha uHintsisa. Ke ndicela impilo, inzala, umbona neenkomo. Ndimpha laa nkabi ilubhelu!*' (1976:40). In this statement, the host of the sacrifice announces that he is giving a gift to his ancestor Hintsisa and at the same time he is asking for health, fertility, mealies and cattle.

When *ukupha* ritual is directed to a maternal ancestor, i.e. mother or grandmother, it is called *ibhokhwe yokupha uMama*, which means a goat given as gift to mother (Olivier 1976:39-40). Bigalke refers to the same ritual as '*ukupha iinkobe* (to give boiled maize) or as *ukukhapha unina*' (Bigalke

1969:97). The second alternative name that Bigalke gives, i.e. *ukukhapha unina*, has a meaning of mortuary ritual (see below). However, this cannot be because, as Olivier observes, there is no *ukukhapha* and *ukubuyisa* ritual for women after their death, it applies only to men (cf. Olivier 1976:39).

2. *Izilo* (Ancestor animal sacrifice). This type of sacrifice has two forms, there is a low key sacrifice which is performed after an ancestor animal (totemic animal) has visited the homestead in which a goat is killed. Olivier tells us that this serves to pacify the ancestor animals (cf. 1976:40). A proper *Izilo* sacrifice is usually performed after the *ukubuyisa* (mortuary sacrifice described below) and *ukupha* sacrifice (cf. Bigalke 1969:80, Olivier 1976:40). According to Bigalke, it could be also performed at the recommendation of the diviner (cf. 1969:93).

Olivier states that while the *ukubuyisa* and *ukupha* sacrifices are intended for particular named ancestors, the *Izilo* sacrifice is intended for all the lineage ancestors. Bigalke on the other hand associates the *izilo* sacrifice with a deceased woman diviner of the homestead. If these conflictual explanations are anything to go by, it would seem that the Gcaleka and the Ndlambe Xhosa, among whom these two gentlemen conducted their research, differ in their concept of the *Izilo* sacrifice. A process of this sacrifice is described in detail by both authors in their works.

3. '*Ukuvula umzi* (to open a home)' This sacrifice is performed when one has relocated to a new place and established a new home so that the ancestors will know where their descendants live 'and be invited to join them' (Bigalke 1969:80).
4. '*Ukutshayela inkundla* (to sweep the area between the huts and the kraal) or to *camagusha* (propitiate the ancestors). When a homestead head wishes or (it) has been recommended (to him) by a diviner to perform a ritual (but) may not

have the means to do so. He then offers a goat as a substitute and tells the ancestors that he will soon do the proper ritual' (Bigalke 1969:80). According to Olivier (1976:38), among the Gcaleka this sacrifice is called *Ukungxengxeza*, which means 'to plead'.

6.4.3.5 *Thanksgiving sacrifices*

The recorded cases of thanksgiving sacrifices are those concerned with the celebration of the harvest and safe return from a journey as well as the escape from danger. About the celebration of the harvest Pauw has this to say: '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' (1994:108). He also notes that in the long past, they were a national festival over which the king presided. Hunter, in her field research among the Pondo, observes that sacrifice is usually offered in thanksgiving for a safe return of a man from the mines. She further notes that in the long past, 'men often killed (in thanksgiving) on returning safely from war' (Hunter 1979:251).

6.4.3.6 *Ostracism sacrifice*

This sacrifice has to do with the ritual disowning of a person (usually a son, cf. Laubscher 1937:84) who continually transgresses the norms and kinship expectations. With this sacrifice such a person is officially cut off from the kinship group. In the literature reviewed, Laubscher is the only one who mentions and gives considerable space to this type sacrifice. The rationale behind this sacrifice is of great significance for the kinship dynamics. By ritually cutting off a person who does not uphold customs and tradition, ancestors are made aware that the customs and tradition of which they are the custodians are still being upheld. This sacrifice also serves to inform the ancestors of the disruption of the lineage line caused by the son who by his actions has apostatised, as it were. According to Laubscher, this sacrifice involves the killing of a goat and the cutting of a dog's ear which is 'eaten with the goat's meat' (1937:85). The rationale behind the cutting of a dog's ear and its mixture with the sacrificial meat is not explained.

6.4.4 Death sacrifices

Death sacrifices are also referred to as 'mortuary rituals' (cf. Bigalke 1969:79, Lamla 1971:24, Hammond-Tooke 1974:328). As Lamla observes, these rites mark 'a change in the individual's status; he (or she) is transferred from the mundane world to that of the supermundane' (1971:24). The most noted mortuary sacrifices are the *ukukhapha* (to send off), also known as *izila* and the *ukubuyisa* (to bring back), also known as *ukuguqula* sacrifices (cf. Bigalke 1969:80, Lamla 1971:23, Olivier 1976:36-37, Hammond-Tooke 1974:328, Pauw 1994:120).

The *ukukhapha* ritual occurs a few weeks after the funeral and after about a year the *ukubuyisa* ritual is performed. The purpose of the first ritual is to accompany the deceased to the ancestral world, while the second one serves to reintegrate the deceased back to the company of his living kinship folks as an ancestor (cf. Bigalke 1969:80, Pauw 1994:120)⁷. These rituals apply only to men, although they may be performed for women who died very old (cf. Olivier 1976:36) and for women diviners (cf. Bigalke 1969:86-87). In both occasions, an ox is killed, the difference being that in the former, there is no ritual tasting of the sacrificial portion of the meat (*intsonyama*) while in the latter such tasting is a constituent part of the ritual. The process of both rituals is explained in detail by Bigalke (1969:81-86) and Olivier (1976:36-39).

6.4.5 Important or solemn sacrifices

According to Olivier, among the sacrifices presented above, the most important among the Gcaleka are *ukubuyisa*, *ukupha* and *Izilo* sacrifices (cf. 1976:26). The following are some of the characteristics that distinguish these sacrifices from others (cf. Olivier 1976:26-27, 37-43):

⁷ This implies that the deceased themselves are not the object but beneficiaries of mortuary sacrifice because until these have been performed on their behalf, they neither belong to the world of the living, nor to the world of ancestors. In casual conversations, some people have reported dreams about their deceased father or brother who appear to be in a troubled and unhappy state, which they interpret as due to the fact that mortuary sacrifice has not been performed on their behalf.

1. They are or must be attended by all the lineage members. While in other sacrifices the presence of lineage members is desired whenever possible, in these sacrifices it is a must.
2. The official of the ritual is the lineage head, whereas in other sacrifices, it is the lineage segment leader or head of the house.
3. The officiating lineage head and daughters in law wear special ceremonial garments.
4. A ceremonial dancing is performed.
5. The *izinqulo* (invocation of clan ancestors) is done
6. The sacrificial victim is always an ox.
7. There is *utywala bokushwama* (beer for ritual tasting), whereas in other sacrifices, only meat (*intsonyama*) is ritually tasted.
8. The ritual lasts over three days, whereas in others it lasts over one or two days.

It is these sacrifices that are specifically referred to as *Idini*, a Xhosa word for sacrifice. Olivier tells us that his informants distinguished 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 voorourdiere*' (1976:26). Hammond-Tooke distinguishes other killings from *Idini* killing as *amasiko* (custom) killing, but he notes that *amasiko* are also ritual killings in which ancestors are involved even if only implicitly. He says they are involved because 'at all *amasiko* killings there is always some form of words, addressed ostensibly to the subject of the ritual, or to those present, but intended for the ears of the *izinyanya*' (ancestors) (1978:146).

Although Bigalke mentions *ukubuyisa* only as 'the most important of all' (1969:114) sacrifices, his description of the *ukupha* and *Izilo* sacrifices that he observed among the Ndlambe is the same as that of *ukubuyisa* sacrifice and so it may be inferred that they are as important (cf. Bigalke 1969:115-123). From Bigalke's information, it is difficult to distinguish, among the Ndlambe, the *ukubuyisa*, *ukupha* and *izilo* sacrifices from the others because there is a great overlap of features between them and the rest of the other

sacrifices. There is no doubt, however, that even among the Ndlambe these three sacrifices are the most important sacrifices because, compared to the other sacrifices, they manifest more sacrificial features or elements than these others do.

6.5 Elements of Xhosa sacrifice

The discussion of the elements of Xhosa sacrifice can be done under two topics, the material and ritual elements.

6.5.1 Material elements

The material elements of Xhosa sacrifice consist of the lineage members, the lineage head and the sacrificial victim, beer, *ubulawu* (Home medicine), the spear and the kraal as the altar of the sacrifice. According to Hammond-Tooke 'a lineage is a group of people who can trace their descent from a common ancestor' (1981:25) who is a male. Dead members of the lineage of up to the fifth⁸ generation are the ancestors of all the living lineage members. Therefore when an occasion for sacrifice arises, all lineage members must attend. This is particularly true for those sacrifices that are considered the most important, i.e. the *ukubuyisa*, *ukupha* and *Izilo* sacrifices, because, as Hammond-Tooke (1981:25) puts it, they form the 'congregation' of that ritual sacrifice. For this reason, before an event of sacrifice takes place, all members of the lineage are as much as it is possible, informed because they are a significant element of the sacrifice.

The next element referred to is the official of the ritual. Where it concerns the lineage as a whole, usually it is the head of the lineage or his approved substitute who officiates. We recall here once more that one's rank in the lineage is determined by one's genealogical position. The most genealogically senior member is more close to the ranks of ancestors and is *de facto* their representative. Where the sacrifice concerns one segment of the lineage, it is the lineage segment leader who officiates.

⁸ According to Hammond-Tooke this is due to the fact that as time goes on and as the lineage expands, lineage members beyond the fifth generation are eliminated by amnesia.

The next crucial element of Xhosa sacrifice is the victim. As noted already in the description of various sacrifices, the victim is either a goat or an ox depending on the type of sacrifice. Hammond-Tooke states that it cannot be a sheep because 'it does not cry out when it is killed and the ancestors will then not be "called" ' (1981:26). While this is certainly true for the Xhosa, it is not true for all Nguni tribes, as Hammond-Tooke claims (cf. 1981:26). Among the Fingo (in Xhosa *Mfengu*) for example, and being Fingo myself, I know it for a fact that sheep, instead of goats, are used for sacrifice.

In some sacrifices, like diviner initiation sacrifice and rainmaking sacrifice, the colour of the animal victim is of great significance (cf. Lamla 1971:7, Olivier 1976:55). For these two sacrifices, the colour of the cow must be black. Bigalke reports that the sacrificial animal, even if it is not a cow, is sometimes 'spoken of as "cow" in the invocations' (1969:129) while in fact it may be a goat. It thus appears that a cow is considered the most appropriate sacrificial animal among the Xhosa. The question is why?

There is no evidence that the importance of cows for sacrifice derives from their being associated with the gods or spirit, as it is the case for example in India. From the evidence at hand, the importance of the cow for sacrificial ritual is that it is a material bond between the living and the dead. Cows are inherited from one generation to another (cf. Sansom 1974:164), therefore they are a sign of continuity between the living and the dead. Even those that are acquired, they are regarded as gifts from the ancestors, hence most sacrifices are accompanied by requests for cows. For this reason they are treated with care and even affection (cf. Shaw 1974:94) and are not easily parted with. A cow is thus the most precious and appropriate gift that can be given to ancestors.

Closely connected with the sacrificial victim is the special spear which is used for the killing of the animal, or should we say for beginning the process of killing the victim, because it is used to ritually prod the animal and the killing is completed with other instruments. Each homestead has this spear and on the occasion of sacrifice, whoever is officiating would use it.

The other secondary but important physical elements are beer and *ubulawu* or *iyeza lasekhaya* (home medicine which is a herbal mixture). These two are also used outside the context of sacrifice for the purpose of maintaining contact with the ancestors (cf. Olivier 1976:21-22). According to Olivier, beer '*is n noodsaaklike element by sommige slagrite*' (1976:121) and in those sacrifices in which it is omitted, like *ukubingelela* and *ukukhapha* (cf. Bigalke 1969:112), it is made later (cf. Olivier 1976:121). The number of sacrifices in which *ubulawu* is used differ between the Gcaleka and the Ndlambe. For the former, Olivier lists two sacrifices in which it is used, i.e. *izilo* and diviner initiation sacrifices (cf. 1976:50) while for the latter Bigalke lists six, i.e. *ukuguqula*, *Ukupha*, *Izilo*, *ukuvula umzi*, *intambo* and *ukutshayeleva* sacrifices (cf. 1969:127).

The last important physical element is the kraal. As noted earlier on, the kraal is important because it is the normal place of the ancestors' abode. These seven elements then, i.e. the lineage members, the lineage leader, the sacrificial victim, beer, *ubulawu* and the kraal, constitute the physical dimension of Xhosa sacrifice. One could include other elements like the fire on which the sacrificial portion of meat is roasted, the special tree branches, i.e. *umthathi* and *idwaba* (some types of trees) used for putting the meat on, etc. These elements only serve a utility purpose and have no sacrificial significance (cf. Bigalke 1969:134, Olivier 1976:23).

6.5.2 Ritual elements

The most noted ritual elements for Xhosa sacrifices include the following;

1. Dancing.
2. The use of *ubulawu*.
3. The explanation of the purpose of the sacrifice.
4. The *ukunqula* (invocation of ancestors).
5. The prodding of the sacrificial victim with the official sacrificial spear (*umkhonto wekhaya*).
6. The roasting of the suet (*intlukuhla*)

7. The roasting and tasting of the sacrificial portion of meat (*ukushwama intsonyama*).
8. The ritual tasting of beer (*utywala bokushwama*).
9. The burning of the bones at the completion of the sacrifice.

6.5.2.1 *Dancing*

Dancing is performed on the occasions of solemn sacrifices noted above. It is performed by the lineage together with the senior lineage male members with the accompaniment of songs and clapping of hands, while moving towards the kraal for the beginning of the sacrifice. Apart from describing this ritual dance, authors do not explain its sacrificial significance. I suppose one could look at it as an equivalent of a solemn procession at a High Mass.

6.5.2.2 *Use of Ubulawu (Home medicine)*

As noted above, it is at solemn sacrifices that *ubulawu* is used. Among the Gcaleka it is used at *izilo* sacrifice by all the members of the lineage to wash the whole body: '*Hierna gaan hulle die beeskraal binne en was die hele liggam met ubulawu-medisyne, mans aan die linkerkant en die vrouens aan die regterkant*' (Olivier 1976:42). It is also used at the diviner initiation sacrifice to wash the body of the diviner novice (cf. Olivier 1976:45). Among the Ndlambe, although it features more than it does among the Gcaleka, its use is not clear. What Bigalke notes about it is that it is carried out during the 'procession' and as soon as it reaches the kraal, it is placed somewhere near the kraal. It is only at the *ukupha* sacrifice where he observed that it was 'thrown out of the billycan onto the manure' (1969:120).

6.5.2.3 *Explanation of the purpose of sacrifice and Ukunqula (invocations)*

The explanation of the purpose of the sacrifice applies to all sacrifices. It usually includes a plea to be released from the misfortune in the case of a propitiatory sacrifice, a

petition for health in the case of initiation sacrifice and a request for well-being and fertility in the case of communion sacrifice.

The invocation of ancestors (*ukunqula*) takes place in a general way in all sacrifices. This is because ancestors considered collectively 'are often thought to be present at rituals, even although a particular ritual is not being performed for them' (Hammond-Tooke 1974:329). For this reason, Bigalke concludes that in the explanation of the purpose of sacrifice, in which all ancestors are often addressed in a general way through the clan name, e.g. *Matshawe*, *Mabamba*, *Mangwevu* etc. all the ancestors of the lineage and beyond it are invoked (cf. 1969:130). This general invocation of all ancestors through the clan name is found in all the ritual sacrifices that Bigalke analyses (cf. 1969:81-98). This is also true for some of the Gcaleka sacrifices that Olivier analyses (cf. 1976: 30,33,37-38,41,43,45).

When it comes to solemn sacrifices, i.e. *ukubuyisa*, *ukupha* and *izilo*, the invocations become more specific and focus on named lineage ancestors in whose honour the sacrifice is offered and on other lineage ancestors because, as Bigalke explains, the focus of these sacrifices is on 'lineage solidarity' (1969:130). In these invocations, particular ancestors of the lineage are named and informed about the purpose of the sacrifice. These invocations have no set formula of words for addressing the lineage ancestors, 'the language is that of everyday speech' (Hunter 1979:247).

There is also no set order for naming ancestors in invocations, nor is there a rule to mention them all. Bigalke observed that among the Ndlambe, 'the constitution of the congregation' (1969:131) determined which ancestors to be named. In other words, the one doing the invocations would look at the lineage members present and name those ancestors that would 'combine them all' (1969:131). His knowledge of the genealogy and eloquence of speech is, according to Bigalke, another determining factor for the coverage of the lineage ancestors in the invocations. Olivier states that this does not matter '*omdat die name wat aangeroop word al die ander name insluit*' (1976:48), meaning that the

names called include all the others. The following example of the invocation given by Hunter, although recorded from a Pondo context, is also true for the Xhosa:

Here is your beast, here is the thing you wish (people) of Kiwo, Ntsikanyane, Nogemane, and Gwadiso (1979:247).

Olivier records a lengthier version among the Gcaleka, which goes like this:

Nali ke, mabandla kaZulu, kaCikolo, kaTshangisa, kaSinuka, kaKwethane, nawo kaTywayi, nawo kaRengqo, nanku esitsho ke umzukulwana wakho loo nkabi inguBomoyi utsho (1976:41) which means, 'Listen house of Zulu, Cikolo etc. here is your grandchild as he says with that red ox called Bomoyi'.

So far we have been explaining *ukunqula*, as equivalent to an invocation which has the meaning of calling on a higher power for assistance. We have done so because most authors, mainly African theologians and few anthropologists (cf. Hammond-Tooke 1978:134-5), attach this very meaning to the word *ukunqula*. Another school of thought represented by Hammond-Tooke himself holds the view that the word *ukunqula* is not equivalent to invocation but to worship which has a meaning of admiration, adoration and total devotion to a higher being or symbol. Since Hammond-Tooke is the modern proponent of this view, we will engage him here with the opposite view, but first of all let us hear what he says.

Hammond-Tooke argues that it is legitimate to regard ancestors as being worshipped because they meet most of the criteria that normally qualify a being or entity as an object of worship. These criteria include invisibility and superiority of the object of worship in relation to the worshippers. One criterion that he admits ancestors do not meet is the one proposed by Rudolf Otto, i.e. numinousness, a quality which carries a sense of awesomeness and infinity. However, he questions the necessity of this criterion for the concept of worship. He goes on to conclude 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 relatively egalitarian societies. It is undoubtedly part of the so-called World Religions, on which Otto bases his analysis' (Hammond-Tooke 1978:137).

Hammond-Tooke further argues that the dignity with which rituals are performed and the choice of words used which are 'pregnant with reverence (and the numinous?)' (Hammond-Tooke 1978:141) in addressing the ancestors indicate that ancestors are worshipped. He also appeals to the Xhosa descriptive words of ritual sacrifice like *ukunqula* and *Camagusha*, which according to him have a meaning of worshipping. At the end of his argument he asks the question: 'can the South African Bantu, especially Zulu and Cape Nguni, be said to worship their ancestors?' and he answers himself, 'I conclude that they can' (Hammond-Tooke 1978:147). He then goes on to give the reasons: '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 men' (Hammond-Tooke 1978:147).

In joining those who hold the opposite view, I would like to go back to what was said about the nature of invocations among the Xhosa, namely that their language is that of everyday speech. The examples of the dignity of the invocations from which Hammond-Tooke draws his conclusion that ancestors are worshipped are taken from a Zulu context, and he is not offering a similar example from among the Xhosa. There being no similar example among the Xhosa, a similar conclusion cannot be drawn. Even among the Zulu, the conclusion he makes cannot be final. By his own admission, he says that the one example that he quoted referred 'to a ritual performed at a time of serious illness and thus invested with a highly-charged emotional element'. He then goes on to admit that perhaps 'not all "ritual" is performed with such concentrated attention and piety' (Hammond-Tooke 1978:142).

Secondly I would like to recall the point made earlier on about the ontology of ancestors which has to do with the clarification of their nature as essentially similar to human

beings. Bettison explains this point so well that it is worthwhile putting it exactly as he wrote it.

The ancestral spirits were therefore no different in character from the living. They were viewed as being essentially human with no special attributes or qualities which might make them worthy of man's worship or adoration. They did not derive their abilities from ethical or moral perfection, but merely through consanguinity and death. They were not created as entities whose personalities demanded respect, but rather that they should be respected because they were the ancestors----the custodians of the tribal tradition whose wisdom in past ages could not be questioned (1954:21).

As it can be seen, the argument of Bettison is that ancestor life is only an extension of the present life and therefore those who belong to the ancestor world are not significantly different from the living. His conclusion is that among the Southern Bantu, ancestors are not 'worthy of man's worship or adoration' (Bettison 1954:21). He is joined in his conclusion by a host of other authors, most of whom are African Christians (cf. Mbiti 1969:8-9 Oladimeji 1980:19-20, Lungu 1982:10-12). In view of the above arguments, can the Xhosa be said to worship their ancestors? Contrary to Hammond-Tooke, I conclude that they cannot because the invocations, while they indicate respect, do not suggest a great metaphysical difference between ancestors and the living.

6.5.2.4 *The prodding with the sacrificial spear*

The prodding of the sacrificial animal with the sacrificial spear (*umkhonto wekhaya*) is preceded by the animal being thrown on its left-hand side so that, as Olivier tells us, the right-hand side from which the *intsonyama* is cut is well exposed (cf. 1976:23). This is followed by an act of moving the sacrificial spear 'in the form of a figure eight through the legs of the animal' (Pauw 1994:120). According to McAllister, who studied the performance of sacrifice among the Gcaleka Xhosa, the purpose of this act is 'to "bless" (*sikelela*) the animal' (1997:291). Kuckertz (1990:238), who did his research among the Pondo, says that this act serves 'to consecrate the animal'. which is to be offered to the ancestors. It is not clear why the consecration of the animal is performed in this manner. The only answer McAllister received from his informants was 'that it is a custom handed down from the remote past, [and] they offer no further exegesis' (1997:291).

After this follows the prodding of the animal victim in the stomach with the tip of the sacrificial spear, causing the animal to bellow. For the Xhosa, such bellowing is not interpreted as resulting from the pain the animal feels, as the SPCA⁹ people would, but as an indication that the sacrifice has been accepted and is 'jubilantly greeted by the onlookers' (Bigalke 1969:130) with the cry, '*Camagu*'. It is thus 'not the killing but the bellowing of the animal that is the essential element, because the cry is the medium by which the praises spoken by the ritual elder' (Kuckertz 1990:239) are presented and accepted by the ancestors.

The word '*Camagu*' means 'be propitiated' (Bigalke 1969:110), '*Wees gepaai*' (be appeased) (Olivier 1976:23), 'Blessings' (Hammond-Tooke 1978:144), 'give us your good will' (Pauw 1994:21). Instead of giving a literal translation, other authors have preferred to give the meaning of the word. Laubscher explains it as 'an appeal to the *Izinyanya* (ancestors) for blessing and protection' (1937:67), while Olivier further explains it as a call with intense thankfulness (cf. 1976:23).

6.5.2.5 *Cutting of the suet (Intlukuhla)*

The ritual of the cutting of the suet involves cutting a piece from the fat that protrudes from the stomach of the sacrificial victim after it has been prodded with the sacrificial spear. It is then thrown in the fire and left there until it is totally consumed by the fire. Pauw tells us that the purpose of this ritual is to create a smell to attract the ancestors (cf.1994:120). It may thus be considered as an offering to the ancestors. What is interesting about this ritual is that among the authors consulted, it is noted only by two, i.e. Soga (1931:146-147) and Pauw (1994:120). Soga does not only mention it, but he also attaches sacrificial significance to it. Making reference to the sacrificial tasting of *intsonyama*, which most authors regard as the first sacrificial ritual after the prodding with spear, he says that it 'is the second ceremonial step in the sacrifice, the first having

⁹ Society of Prevention of Cruelty against Animals.

already been performed, namely, the burning of a portion of the fat of the intestines' (Soga 1931:147).

6.5.2.6 *Ritual tasting of the sacrificial meat (Intsonyama) and beer*

The sacrificial portion of the meat (*intsonyama*) is cut from the right shoulder of the animal victim, roasted without salt and is ritually tasted by all the lineage members in the case of solemn sacrifices, and by the beneficiary of the sacrifice in the case of birth, initiation and contingent sacrifices (cf. Biglake 1969:133, Olivier 1976:23). The ritual tasting of the sacrificial meat is called *ukushwama*, and Biglake observes that 'it occurs at all rituals except *khapha* and the *inkobe*' (1969:133) rituals. As noted earlier on, the ritual tasting of beer (*utywala bokushwama*) applies only to solemn sacrifices.

The idea behind *ukushwama* is not well explained by the authors consulted. First of all, it is not clear why the portion of the meat for ritual tasting is taken from the right shoulder. The explanation given by Olivier's informant that it is the best part of the carcass (cf. 1976:24) sounds more like an *ad hoc* opinion than a matter of fact. Laubscher throws some light on the significance of this, but falls short because his explanation relates only to birth sacrifice. He says that meat from the right shoulder given to the mother at *umbingelelo* sacrifice

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 custom have not been violated and that therefore the child, being on the right line of descent, is entitled to their protection and blessings (1937:74).

Secondly there is no explanation of the act of ritual tasting (*ukushwama*). Given this lack of explanation, the rationale behind the act of *ukushwama* can be speculated upon according to the general principles of sacrifice. Among others, a general understanding of sacrifice includes an idea of sharing a meal between the offerer and the recipient of the sacrifice, hence we speak of communion sacrifice (cf. *Encyclopaedia of religion* Vol. 12 1987:551). Applying this principle to *ukushwama*, it can be understood as an act of

sharing a meal among the living lineage members and between the living lineage members and the ancestors. In fact when one considers that according to Hammond-Tooke, among the Nguni, 'in all sacrifices it is commensalism which is being expressed, a communion meal which symbolically unites the living and the dead' (1974:353), such speculation is not off the point.

6.5.2.7 The burning of the bones

The collection and burning of the bones after the sacrifice has to do with the practice of prohibiting removal of any part of the sacrifice from the homestead in which the sacrifice is offered. The rationale behind such prohibition is to prevent parts of the sacrifice being taken by the witches for sorcery purposes. It is not clear how such sorcery would impact on the sacrifice already performed and presumably accepted. It can be speculated that by using the remains of the sacrifice, witches can reverse the effects of the sacrifice, so that, for example, a person who otherwise has been cured through the sacrifice will become sick again.

6.6 The nature of Xhosa sacrifice

Having looked at the elements of Xhosa sacrifice, we can now make a few conclusions about its nature. Such conclusion includes something about the purpose, the essence, the objective and the mood of Xhosa sacrifice.

From the way Xhosa sacrifice is performed, we can now draw some conclusions about its nature. The purpose of Xhosa sacrifice is lineage solidarity, i.e. the need to keep the bonds of unity intact in the lineage and to enforce the rules of behaviour among the lineage members. For this reason, new members are introduced through initiation sacrifices, while dead members are recalled through death sacrifices and perceived disharmony among the members is settled through contingent sacrifices. The focus of Xhosa sacrifice on lineage solidarity is further demonstrated by the fact that while some

sacrifices are open to all, there are those in which only the lineage members are expected to attend.

Bigalke tells us that among the Ndlambe, 'there is a tacit understanding that rituals, unlike *imigidi* (initiation rituals), are not absolute public occasions' (1969:104). Even for those rituals that are open to the public as it were, people who attend them and are not lineage members, are subsumed into the lineage. This is clear from the fact that all people present at open rituals are addressed with the clan name of the hosting house regardless of the fact that some of them do not share that particular clan name. Xhosa sacrifice therefore is a lineage and a clan affair.

With regard to the performance of the sacrifice itself, two elements present themselves as constituting the essence of sacrifice, i.e. the invocation (*ukunqula*) and the bellowing of the sacrificial victim. The *ukunqula* is a formal address to the ancestors about the specific purpose of the sacrifice to be offered. The bellowing is the ancestors' voice of accepting the sacrifice and the assurance that the effect for which the sacrifice was offered is granted. For this reason the bellowing is greeted with jubilation: 'Camagu'. This explains why, in one particular case which Bigalke observed in his field research, the participants were sadly disappointed when the sacrificial victim did not bellow. After four attempts to get the animal to bellow, Bigalke records the following last desperate attempt:

He went back to the ox. He tried hitting in on the stomach with the spear shaft and stabbed again with no result. Bystanders said "Ayivumi" (It does not agree). Hala looking tense tried again. "Speak, speak," shouted the man. Someone said that Afrikander oxen like this usually bellowed easily. The abafana (young men) released the ox and let it stand. Hala, his brother's son and the senior unrelated Bambas (the clan of Bamba) went outside the kraal and held a short discussion. When they came back Old Nale announced that as Hala had never before presided at a ritual he should not hold the spear now and that it should be handed to the lineage heir.

Since this man was not present, his son would be asked to stab. This young man, son of Hala's brother, instructed the abafana to catch the same beast again. When it had been thrown, he beat it with the spear shaft, then stabbed it with the point but it refused to bellow. He made a hopeless gesture. He said it was useless for him to stab because the beast had already been injured by the previous efforts. Bystanders called to him to speak from between the gateposts. He went and stood there and said, "What is it Bambas? We

know the ritual we are performing. Why does the ox not bellow? We want it to bellow and agree with the ritual we are doing". He tried stabbing again, still without result. The beast was untied and driven out of the kraal with the other cattle. He went and stood (1969:116-117).

As the drama illustrates, it is not the killing of the sacrificial victim that is essential but its bellowing because it symbolises the response of the ancestors to the invocations made by the lineage head on behalf of the lineage.

In the general consideration of sacrifice, blood has also been noted as 'an essential part of the sacrificial action' (*Encyclopaedia of religion* Vol. 12 1987:546). According to the information at hand however, there is no pronounced sacrificial use of the blood in Xhosa sacrifice, like pouring it out or sprinkling it. Soga states that it is placed over night in the sick person's hut and is cooked and given to the dogs the following morning (cf. 1931:147). Pauw tells us that it is cooked on the same day 'for male relatives and old men' (1994:111). Because of this lack of significance for blood, therefore, it is the invocations (*izinqulo*) and the bellowing of the sacrificial victim that, to use Thomistic language, constitute the essence of Xhosa sacrifice.

Of the three general objectives of sacrifice, i.e. the consumption, exchange and substitution (cf. Chidester 1992:12), Xhosa sacrifice is largely characterised by the first two objectives. The focus of sacrifice as being on consumption is clear first of all in the speeches of the introduction of sacrifice, particularly the *ukupha* ritual, where intimations of giving ancestors something to eat are made. It also becomes clear when the lineage members partake of the *intsonyama* and when the rest of the meat is 'left in the house overnight so that the ancestor spirits may take their share' (Pauw 1994:121). It further becomes clear when the meat is cooked and distributed among all people present to share.

Exchange as the objective of the sacrifice means that something of value is given to the recipient of the sacrifice with the expectation of some favour in return (cf. Chidester 1992:12). When this element dominates the sacrifice, the sacrifice is classified as a bribe sacrifice (cf. Henninger 1987:550). The element of exchange is certainly present in Xhosa sacrifice. When an offer of sacrifice is made to the ancestors, a request or

supplication simultaneously accompanies it, as the following example recorded by Olivier shows: '*Naku ke mabandla kaPhalo, kaGcaleka, namhlanje kungakanje, ndipha uHintsisa. Ke ndicela impilo, inzala, umbona nenkomo. Ndimpha laa nkabi ilubhelu*' (1976:40). In this address the speaker offers a cow to his ancestor and in the same breath he asks for health, fertility, mealies and cows. Although this statement has the tone of exchange, it is in fact an expression of mutual obligation between the living and the dead members of the lineage. The living are expected to remember the dead and the dead are expected to support and provide the living with well-being and material security.

Substitution as the objective of the sacrifice means that the sin of the one who offers or the one on whose behalf the offering is made and its due punishment is transferred to the sacrificial victim. There is no evidence that substitution forms part of the Xhosa understanding of sacrifice. In fact the notion of substitution does not fit into Xhosa sacrifice because it implies personal sin, which is not catered for by sacrifice but by other disciplinary measures in the society. Xhosa sacrifice concerns itself with 'sins' of omission of one's obligation towards the lineage. Personal sins such as stealing, adultery, etc., when discovered, are taken care of by the society.

Except for the *khapha* sacrifice, all the other sacrifices reflect a relaxed and a festive mood. This is particularly true of the initiation sacrifices. Once the ritual elements have been performed, people begin to sit according to their gender and age and begin to share conversation and tobacco. Once in a while, the buzzing of the conversation is interrupted by the announcement regarding the distribution of meat and beer according to the different groupings of people. With chatting, teasing and sharing of meat, beer and tobacco, the communal character of Xhosa sacrifice is reflected right through the end of the ceremony.

6.7 Conclusion and observations

The purpose of this chapter has been to establish and analyse sacrificial ritual as it was practised and understood in Xhosa traditional setting. We cannot claim to have fully accomplished this task because, since there are no early scholarly records on Xhosa

sacrifice, we have relied on recent records which to a large extent account for Xhosa sacrifice after the Xhosa people had come into contact with Christianity and colonialism. The veracity of these accounts, therefore, cannot be guaranteed. We have nevertheless tried to focus on those elements that are considered traditional by most authors.

I have discovered during this research that most research on Xhosa traditional practice and understanding of sacrifice has been done by white anthropologists and people who are steeped in Western culture. While this has perhaps the advantage of objectivity, since they are investigating from an outsider's view, it also has the disadvantage of prejudice and lack of insight into issues that they describe and analyse. Even though terms like natives, kaffirs, pagans and savages are gradually falling into disuse as terms of referring to African people in recent publications, one still finds unsympathetic and prejudicial interpretation of certain elements of indigenous African culture. Since this is not a discussion of the problem, but an observation, two examples will suffice.

In his explanation of the kinship/lineage dynamics among the Bantu for example, Hammond-Tooke goes on to state that 'safeguarding kin group interest is greater than the value of truth-telling as an absolute', and he concludes that 'this has led to the widespread charge of Bantu mendacity' (1974:360). I find this comment surprising because the instinct to safeguard kin group interest, sometimes at the expense of truth, is a universal sociological fact and it applies to all groups. Tischeler, a sociologist, reports about a group behaviour study done in America in which it was found that individuals were 'willing to give incorrect answers in order not to appear out of step with the judgement of the other group members' (1990:167).

It is also common knowledge that this does not apply only to small groups but to big groups as well, i.e. governments, institutions and Churches. If this is true, why should the mendacious effect of kin group interest be thought to be wide spread among the Bantu only? The logical answer to the question would be that kin group interest has perhaps different effects for different groups. For the Bantu, as it is alleged, it has the effect of mendacity, while perhaps for Europeans it has the effect of veracity. With such a

conclusion, however, one would still need to explain why the same thing has a different effect on different groups if people are basically the same. Could the reason be that the Bantu people are in fact not the same as the other groups? Could it be because one group is primitive and the other Western, or one is savage and the other civilised, or one is black and the other white, or one is pagan and the other Christian? It would be very interesting to know.

The other example is about an author who explains the use of cattle among the traditional Bantu. Among various uses of cattle that this author explains, she says that '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 (cf. 1971:20) is anything to go by, Shaw's explanation of the passage of cattle as a licence to sexual satisfaction is a distortion of Bantu marriage¹⁰. It is equivalent to saying that in the Western culture, the dowry brought by the bride to her husband is her license to have sex with him.

Having said that, it is not all white anthropologists who tend to be prejudiced in their description and analysis of Bantu culture. I have, for example, found Willoughby (1928) to be one of those Western anthropologists who presents Bantu culture with sympathy and insight. What this indicates is that there is a need for anthropologists who are insiders and who are steeped in the Bantu culture.

The inquiry about sacrifice among the traditional Xhosa has established that it was not only practised but also conceptualised. The linguistic analysis of the Xhosa words for sacrifice reveals that the traditional Xhosa did not only 'do' sacrifice, but that they also knew what they were doing. Anthropologists and researchers of various disciplines and interests have thrown more light on the facts and meaning of Xhosa sacrifice. Opinions on the subject, however, still vary and for that reason we have ventured to make a few

¹⁰ This distortion probably stems from viewing Bantu marriage as an individual affair. As Organski states, 'Bantu viewed marriage not as a romantic or even a companionate union between two individuals, but rather as a relationship binding two groups of kin and providing for the birth, care and placement of future

suggestions that we think will help towards an intelligible exposition of Xhosa sacrifice. We have for example suggested that Xhosa sacrifices can be categorised into birth, initiation, contingent, death and solemn categories of sacrifice.

The discussion of Xhosa sacrifice in this chapter has revealed that there are many rituals in which the killing of animals takes place. In some of them, like the initiation rite of boys and girls as well as in marriage, many of the killings serve to provide for the feast and to keep the celebration going. Therefore, contrary to what some authors would want us to believe, not every killing can be regarded as sacrifice.

This analysis of Xhosa sacrifice has further revealed that while ancestors are always part of the everyday life of their descendants, and therefore part of every ritual they make, not all ritual killings are directly concerned with them. This has enabled us to distinguish those ritual killings that can properly be termed sacrifice (*idini*) from those that can be termed customs (*amasiko*). The conclusion of the analysis of the types of Xhosa sacrifice done here is that *ukubuyisa*, *ukupha* and *Izilo* are the rituals that can be properly termed sacrifice while the rest are customs. For the purpose of this study, which is to compare Xhosa understanding of sacrifice with the Eucharistic sacrifice, this distinction is important because it puts things in perspective.

The analysis of the elements of Xhosa sacrifice has shown that it is difficult to be conclusive about what exactly constitutes Xhosa sacrifice. There are various reasons that could be cited for this inconclusiveness. The first one is that the people themselves, among whom researches have been done, have no explanation for some of the rituals and elements connected with sacrifice. When Bigalke, for example, inquired among the Ndlambe about the use of *ubulawu* in ritual sacrifice, the answer he got from his informant was that '*Savela kunjalo*' (cf. 1969:128), which means; 'When we were born it was like that'. Other informants would give explanations when asked but some of those explanations were *ad hoc* opinions and had no objective verification.

children' (1956:35). The emphasis of cattle exchange therefore, is not on personal sexual satisfaction but on creating a family that will perpetuate the lineage.

Another reason is that the use of elements connected with sacrifice vary from one lineage group to another, from one settlement to another, from one Xhosa house to another, from one Nguni group to another. It was for example observed during the course of this chapter that the use of *ubulawu* features more among the Ndlambe than it does among the Gcaleka. The third reason is that some researchers themselves overlook some elements of the sacrifice that others note. For example the burning of the suet (*Intlukuhla*) is reported and explained only by two authors, while the rest are silent about it, including those who did field research on the two houses of Xhosa, namely Bigalke and Olivier. Still others may put more emphasis on elements to which others attach no significance. Pauw for example is the only one among authors consulted who attaches sacrificial significance to the sprinkling of the stomach contents of the animal in the kraal while others merely make mention of this act.

In some cases where there has been a lack of clarity about the meaning of particular rituals and elements connected with sacrifice, we have taken the liberty to speculate on their possible meaning. Such speculations have been deduced either from the general understanding of sacrifice or from the explanation of a similar ritual from another context of investigation. I have, for example, used Hunter and Kuckertz to gain insight into similar Xhosa sacrificial rituals that they explain in the Pondo context. If such speculations are correct, a contribution will have been made towards an intelligible exposition of Xhosa sacrifice. If not, I will be happy to be informed otherwise.

The element of *ukunqula* has generated a lively debate of whether with this ritual the ancestors are invoked or worshipped. After the presentation of arguments for both sides, it was concluded that the argument that *ukunqula* is not an act of worship seems to carry more weight than the opposing argument. While ancestors are obviously superior in terms of power, and command the respect of the living, they are, according to Bigalke, made of the same human spirit, which at death is transformed from *umphefumlo* to *umoya*. The foundation of their superiority and authority does not seem to derive from their metaphysical superiority and distinction from the living, as it is the case with the

Judeo-Christian God. It derives rather from the custom of respect for elders and the obligation of elders to ensure the well being of their descendants. This respect for ancestors does not aim at worshipping them but at preserving tribal traditions, of which the ancestors are the custodians.

The conclusion about the nature of Xhosa sacrifice can be made with reference to its purpose, its essence, its objective and mood. Xhosa sacrifice serves lineage solidarity; put differently, without the lineage, Xhosa sacrifice does not make sense. In other words, Xhosa sacrifice has value for the one who values the lineage. Its essence consists in the invocations in which the ancestors are addressed and in the bellowing of the animal sacrifice through which the ancestors respond.

Since Xhosa sacrifice is meant to serve lineage solidarity it is not surprising that its main objectives are consumption and exchange. By consumption is meant the sharing of the sacrifice through which communion among the members of the lineage, both the living and the dead, is achieved. By exchange is meant an expectation of favour for the sacrifice offered which instils a sense of mutual obligation among the members of the lineage both living and dead. A feeling of being in communion and a sense of mutual support characterise Xhosa sacrifice and this is evident from the festive and joyous mood that pervades it.

The discussion of Xhosa sacrifice in this chapter has shown that the understanding and practice of sacrifice among the Xhosa has been largely, if not entirely, shaped by Xhosa cosmological views as well as by its social structures. One would expect that as these change and develop, the concept and practice of sacrifice will also change. It is the task of the next chapter, to understand how Christianity and modernity have contributed to the shaping of the Xhosa understanding of sacrifice.

CHAPTER 7

SACRIFICE AMONG THE XHOSA IN THE MODERN SETTING

7.1 Introduction

Even though the practice of sacrifice among the modern Xhosa is not as common as it was in the Xhosa traditional setting, it still continues to be part of their life. Press reports about sacrifice being performed by some Xhosa leading figures and celebrities indicate a host of similar unreported occasions among the Xhosa ordinary folks. The author being Xhosa-speaking, and having worked among the Xhosa as a priest, can confirm that the practice of sacrifice among the modern Xhosa is alive and kicking. Reported cases about sacrifices performed in the upmarket environments further indicate how deeply entrenched belief in sacrifice is among the modern Xhosa.

The public practice of Xhosa sacrifice in the modern setting has enabled anthropologists and researchers of 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), 'The resurgence of the ancestor cult among Xhosa Christians'; Staples, (1981) *Christianity and the cult of ancestors: Belief and ritual among the Bantu-speaking peoples of Southern Africa*; Pauw (1975), *Christianity and Xhosa Tradition*; Raum (1972), *Transition and change in a Rural Community*; Oosthuizen (1971), 'The interaction between Christianity and traditional religion'; and Mayer (1961), *Tribesmen of Townsmen*.

A quick scan of these sources immediately reveals that while sacrifice continues to be practised among the modern Xhosa, the manner of practising it and the meaning attached to it has changed or is changing from the traditional practice and understanding of sacrifice. The task of this chapter is to clarify this changed or changing understanding of sacrifice. The approach towards this task is to look at the factors that have contributed to

the modern Xhosa understanding and practice of sacrifice. Thus after giving evidence about the practice of sacrifice from press reports and from other sources, we will proceed to name these factors and briefly explain their impact. After that an attempt to postulate a modern Xhosa understanding and practice of sacrifice will be made.

7.2 Recent incidents of sacrifice

As recently as April 1999, Brenda Fassie, the Xhosa-speaking queen of local pop music, thanked her ancestors for her big come back into the music world. This, according to *Bona* magazine, was after 'a rough-and-tumble life that threatened to wipe her off completely from the music arena' (Mtshali 1999:62). For this occasion, Mabrrrr, as she is affectionately called, 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 aspect of the event like making reference to Brenda's BMW 325i, the money she spent for the occasion, the whole neighbourhood dancing to her latest album at the time, *Vulindlela*.

Yet there are few comments and pictures that characterise the event as sacrificial. There is reference to the occasion being 'graced by the presence of the amaDlomo clan, to which [former] president Mandela also belongs' (Mtshali 1999:62). There is 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 is a picture of men seemingly on the driveway skinning the sacrificial victim(s). There are pictures of men drinking traditional beer. For our purpose here one would have liked a more detailed account of the sacrifice itself than its sensation, but I suppose that is not a fair expectation from a magazine, *Bona* magazine.

A more explicit example of sacrifice in the Xhosa modern setting is the event of Thabo Mbeki's official return to his home village after decades of exile, a visit which took place in December 1998. In describing the event, the *Daily Dispatch* newspaper states that 'he (Thabo) and 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 (1999), in his unofficial biography of Thabo Mbeki, *The life and times of Thabo Mbeki*, also covers this event. While the author obviously had other reasons for narrating this event, he also gives a succinct sacrificial aspect of the occasion, which is given here in full, lest my paraphrasing obscures it.

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 been rounded up and bellowed loudly before surrendering to their fate... Hours later, in a vacant lot behind the Goodwill store, a makeshift kraal of grass huts had been erected. 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 is nothing enigmatic about Thabo. He is 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 African beer, brewed meticulously and proudly by the women of Ncingwana (1999:133).

While the practice of sacrifice among the modern Xhosa is alive and kicking, it is not free of tensions. Some of these tensions result from the environment in which sacrifices are performed and from diverse perceptions of the sacrificial killings. Two recent articles from the *Herald* newspaper and *Drum* magazine, entitled 'Traditional offerings in suburbs must be accepted' (*Herald* 3 Feb. 1999:7) and 'INITIATION: Bibles replace beer' (Mbengo in *Drum* Iss 174, Oct, 1993:12-13), demonstrate this tension.

On the 3rd of February 1999, the *Herald* daily newspaper reported about the slaughter of an ox, possibly for *ukubuyisa* (to bring back) sacrifice¹ in an upmarket Port Elizabeth suburb. The editorial of this paper goes on to state that this occasion went on peacefully without any protest from the neighbours (cf. *Herald* 3 Feb. 1999:4), implying that in the past similar occasions were accompanied by tensions. Apparently, sacrificial killings in urban settings go against municipal hygienic laws and the 'tradition' of former white areas. In view of such tensions the editor goes on to make some suggestions.

¹ This sacrifice is described as marking the end of the year-long period of mourning (cf. Hammond-Tooke 1974:328).

Not all traditions that have their root and development in a rural environment can survive unaltered in built-up urban areas... Perhaps, for the sake of those to whom the dying bellow of a slaughtered ox is upsetting, specially designed conveniently accessible public venues will eventually develop in cities for traditional slaughter' (*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, i.e. between Xhosa tradition and Christianity. In the article, the author reports that 'the young men are given bibles as gifts instead of the usual presents of kieries and sticks' and that the traditional slaughtering and drinking of beer were replaced by 'cakes, biscuits and soft drinks' (*Drum* Iss. 174, Oct, 1993:12). This, however, is seen by the Xhosa traditionalists as 'the churches interference in their culture', while the leader of the Church, bishop Dapula, sees it as a natural development of this ritual (cf. *Drum* Iss. 174, Oct, 1993:12,13).

7.3 Modern Xhosa Sacrifice in the literature

If recent study on the Xhosa practice of sacrifice is anything to go by, all the sacrifices classified by categories in the previous chapter, i.e. birth, initiation, contingent and death sacrifices, are still practised by the modern Xhosa. Within these individual categories however, there are some sacrifices that have faded out and some that have been modified.

7.3.1 Birth sacrifices

The most noted birth sacrifice by authors is *Imbeleko* or *umbingelelo* (A thing with which to carry on the back) sacrifice. There is no indication that the purpose of this sacrifice, i.e. to ensure the good health of the 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 (cf. 1972:181).

This sacrifice is performed by both non-Christian and Christian Xhosa people, with the latter renaming it *idinala yomntwana* (child's dinner) but in essence still being the same as *imbeleko*. Authors read are silent about other sacrifices falling within the birth

category, i.e. *Ukufuthwa* (to be steamed) and *Inqithi* (amputation of the first phalanx of one finger of the left hand). We may thus conclude that these two birth sacrifices have faded or are fading out, while *imbeleko* sacrifice has survived.

7.3.2 Initiation sacrifices

As noted in the previous chapter, initiation sacrifices include *ukwaluka* (boys' circumcision rite), *intonjane* (girls' initiation rite) and marriage. All these sacrifices are still performed, with *intonjane*, as Lamla observes, gradually fading out (cf. 1971:34). According to Raum's research, compared to other sacrifices, very few people performed *intonjane* rite and its accompanying sacrifice. Other authors do not even mention it in the report of their researches. With very few exceptions, as demonstrated by the replacing of boys' initiation sacrifice with the reading of the Bible, *ukwaluka* sacrifice is still widely practised among the modern Xhosa.

Two sacrificial killings related to *ukwaluka*, i.e. *Ngcamisa*, a word derived from the verb '*ukucamagusha*, that is, to announce the ceremony to the ancestors and request their blessings' (Raum 1972:181) and *Ojisa* (to make one roast) sacrifices are still performed. With regard to marriage, *ukutyiswa amasi* (to be fed with sour milk) sacrifice, which is a sacrifice to initiate the bride into her husband's family, is the most noted. The least noted is the *umngcamo* sacrifice, which serves to let the ancestors of the bride know that she is leaving her homestead and to ask them to protect her and give her health. It may thus be concluded that the *umngcamo* sacrifice is also fading out.

7.3.3 Contingent sacrifices

The modern Xhosa perform most of the contingent sacrifices noted in the previous chapter, with the exception of supplication sacrifices like rain and seasonal sacrifices, which are merely reported to be known from the past and some of the communion sacrifices like *ukupha*, *izilo* and *ukutshayelela*. As the press reports about Brenda Fassie's and Thabo Mbeki's sacrifices suggest, the most commonly performed sacrifice is thanksgiving sacrifice because, according to Pauw, modern Xhosa ascribe benevolence

than they do misfortunes to ancestors. 'Altogether it seems that the negative role of the ancestors, their sending 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' (1975:147). Pauw ascribes this tendency to Christian influence, but it may also be due to other factors like the modern economy and medicine, which make people better able to provide for themselves economically and to effectively handle sicknesses through modern medicine. It is here suggested that the less efficient traditional economy and less effective medicine made people to depend on ancestors in these areas, consequently any lack in these needs was perceived as resulting from ancestral wrath.

7.3.4 Death sacrifices

Both death sacrifices, i.e. *ukukhapha* (to send off) and *ukubuyisa* (to bring back) are reported by many authors as being performed by modern Xhosa with some variations. In some cases they are performed in a traditional manner as explained in the previous chapter (cf. Raum 1972:183-184), while in some 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 'merely as a funeral meal' (1981:35), and Pauw in his own research comes to the same conclusion that it is performed 'ostensibly to provide food for the guests' (1975:177).

7.4. Observations on reports and research on modern Xhosa sacrifice

The four press reports about modern sacrifice cited above demonstrate that the practice of sacrifice among the modern Xhosa is a common phenomenon. They also demonstrate continuity between the traditional and modern practice and understanding of sacrifice. Some of the sacrificial elements narrated are recognisable from the discussion of traditional Xhosa sacrifice presented in chapter 6 above. We note, for example, the following sacrificial elements: the sacrificial victims used for solemn sacrifices, i.e. bulls and goats, the dancing, the invocation of the ancestors, the traditional cleansing

ceremony, the bellowing of sacrificial animals, the ritual tasting of beer and the sacrificial potion of meat and the joyous mood of the occasions.²

There are also some discontinuities that are noticeable. In Brenda's case the slaughtering takes place in the drive way, not in the kraal. In Thabo's case it takes place not in a real kraal but in a makeshift kraal. Brenda's clan people ritually taste beer in the bedroom and not in the kraal. For the future we may expect more drastic changes, as the editor of *Herald* suggests - for example, that sacrificial killings may have to take place in a commonly designated place, which will be safer and less controversial than the homes are.

We may also expect a total elimination of the sacrificial significance traditionally attached to some rituals, as Mbengo's article, 'Bibles replace beer', suggests. Worse still, we may expect that some sacrifices will be abandoned completely. In fact some sacrifices, like traditional national sacrifices, e.g. rainmaking sacrifice, seasonal sacrifice and sacrifices related to military activities have died out;³ and others like girls' initiation are on the verge of fading out (cf. Lamla 1971:32-34). The press reports cited above are quite revealing about Xhosa sacrifice in the modern period, but for a complete picture we need to take into account research done on the subject.

Research cited above on modern Xhosa sacrifice shows that there is general continuity between the modern and traditional understanding and practice of sacrifice. Some types of sacrifices 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. Yet the information obtained also reveals discontinuity between the two. Research shows that

² Research cited above simply states that traditional sacrifices continue to be performed in the modern period without giving details about the procedure and the elements of sacrifice. We may therefore presume that the procedure and the elements are still the same because, as we shall see in the pages that follow, authors do indicate where these two settings differ.

³ One example of modern national sacrifice has been the occasional national gatherings at *Ntaba kaNdoda* (Mountain of Man) national shrine, created by Mr. L.L. Sebe, the late president of the former independent Ciskei. Hodgson reports of one occasion on which a national sacrifice was offered on this shrine (cf. 1987:28). As I understand Hodgson, this shrine served mainly to artificially create Ciskei nationalism, which in turn was viewed as giving credence to Ciskei independence (cf. 1987:29-30).

the performance of modern sacrifice in terms of procedure and elements of sacrifice is quite erratic. In some cases elements of sacrifice, like beer, serving meat on branches, burning the bones of the sacrificial victim, etc. are observed while in others they are omitted (cf. Raum 1972:176-186). The reasons for omitting some sacrificial elements while others are included are not clear.

Pauw observes that intentions of sacrifices today are sometimes confused or merged together. One sacrifice for example, can be designated a propitiatory sacrifice, while at the same time it is viewed as a thanksgiving sacrifice (cf. Pauw 1975:175). Unfortunately Pauw does not offer a clear interpretation of this practice, but it may be explained as resulting from the growing ignorance of the various traditional sacrifices and the meaning attached to them (cf. Manona 1981:35-36,38).

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

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

ancestors, prodding of the sacrificial victim with the sacrificial spear, the ritual tasting of the sacrificial meat, etc. are omitted.

Yet the intention of Xhosa Christians to keep Xhosa traditional sacrificial rituals while stripping them of their essential traditional elements is not clear. Worse still, as it will be shown later, a majority of Christians continue to perform pure Xhosa sacrifice while remaining committed to the belief about Christ's absolute sacrifice. Thus similar to the modern Xhosa in general, the belief and practice of sacrifice among Xhosa Christians is equally unclear. It is the intention of the remaining part of this chapter to name and discuss the issues that have contributed to this lack of clarity, with the hope of pointing a way towards clarity. To do that we begin by looking at some of the factors that have influenced and shaped the modern Xhosa practice and understanding of sacrifice.

7.5 Factors determining the modern practice and understanding of sacrifice

The discussion of sacrifice among the Xhosa in their traditional setting showed that already in their "days of independence"⁴ the practice of sacrifice was not totally free of foreign influence. We note for example that already in the early 19th century, the notion of 'prophecy' which came to the Xhosa through Christian influence (cf. Willoughby 1928:116 and Peires 1989:310) was playing a role in the practice of sacrifice among the Xhosa. For example, Mlanjeni, a self proclaimed Xhosa prophet born in 1832, inspired people to offer sacrifice to him (cf. Peires 1989:10). In chapter 6 we also noted that if the Xhosa in their traditional setting are said to have had God as the object of their sacrificial acts, that could only be due to Christian influence because their cosmology and belief system does not support such a claim.

Since the loss of Xhosa independence due to colonialism, Christian influence on Xhosa practice and understanding of sacrifice has become even more pronounced. In addition to that, there has been a host of other factors that have made their mark and continue to do so in the way the Xhosa practice and understand sacrifice. Factors affecting the modern

Xhosa practice and understanding of sacrifice can be classified as political, economical, social, environmental, ideological and religious. The first four factors affect Xhosa sacrifice at a practical level and can thus be broadly categorised as social factors while the last two affect it at a level of understanding and belief and can thus be categorised as mental factors. As we hope to demonstrate in the pages that follow, at worst, these factors have had an eliminatory effect and at best a modificatory effect in the practice and understanding of sacrifice among the modern Xhosa. In other words, as a result of these factors, some sacrifices have been abandoned completely while others have been modified or adapted to conditions created by these factors.

7.5.1 Political factors

Political factors may seem less connected with religion, particularly with regard to the performance of rites, but in actual fact there is a connection. Sacrifice among the Xhosa was not only a family or lineage affair; it was also a tribal affair, or better still a national affair since the Xhosa considered themselves as a nation. National sacrifices such as rainmaking and harvest sacrifices were presided over by the king (cf. Lamla 1971:32). When the then Cape colony government and the succeeding governments gradually withdrew the king's powers, the sacrifices he used to perform as a unitive figure and a guardian of his nation also faded out.

The subjugating group may also directly or indirectly prohibit performance of sacrifice by the subjugated group. Such a situation is well illustrated by the lamentations of Daniel in the Old Testament, where the prophet expresses the frustration and the pain of his people for being unable to offer sacrifice as a result of their subjugation by foreign powers. The pain is clear from the way the prophet addresses God about the problem.

Lord, we have become the least of all nations, we are put to shame today throughout the world... We now have no leader, no prophet, no prince, no burnt offering, no sacrifice, no oblation, no incense, no place where we can make offerings to you and win your favour (Dan. 3:37-38).

⁴ An expression used by Peires to denote the period in which the Xhosa were relatively politically free, which he places around 1650 to 1850 (cf. 1981:viii, 17).

This situation finds an echo among the Xhosa. Hammond-Tooke cites a letter written by the king of the Xhosa 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 that letter the king writes thus:

...kindly let the Magistrate of Komgha know that sometime at the end of November, I and the 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 custom (in Hammond-Tooke 1956:66).

Hammond-Tooke informs us that 'this request was not acceded to...' (1956:66) and although he continues to state that there was a possibility that the government would buy the farm to allow this ritual to take place, there is no record that it eventually did. We may thus presume that the refusal to the king's request marked the death of this type of sacrifice. Political factors have since then continued to negatively affect the practice of sacrifice among the Xhosa. Mayer reports about the conditions in the early '60s under which the migrant workers in East London (a sizable town in the Eastern Cape) had to perform their sacrifices.

Whether the sacrifice is done in a yard or in the 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 in the midst of 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).⁵

Political factors continue to affect the practice of sacrifice even today. Many black South African people who were forcibly removed⁶ from their places of birth are no longer able to perform sacrifices in the vicinity of the graves of their lineage folks as it was

⁵ Mayer explains that the regulations against sacrificial killing were 'primarily hygienic in intention' (1961:152). I would say that primarily the intention was political, because if the Xhosa were considered as permanent residents of East London and accepted as they are, provisions would have been made for sacrificial activities to take place in a free and dignified manner.

⁶ The forced removal of black people was a result of a policy that was political, its aim was to rezone the country along racial lines.

traditionally done. It is quite common to hear middle aged people, while pointing to places that have now been 'developed' and turned into formerly 'whites only' suburbs, stating that such places stand on the graves of their fathers.

Even within 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 in for decades and thus forced to leave the area of the graves of their lineage members, which is the normal environment for sacrifice. Farm evictions also have the effect of scattering the living lineage members who normally form the congregation of the sacrificial ritual. This puts a strain on the performance of sacrifice, as members must now travel distances to attend sacrificial rituals of fellow lineage members.

7.5.2 Economic factors

Economic factors affect the practice of sacrifice in a similar way that political factors do. Out of pressure to adapt to the modern economy people are compelled to leave their places of origin to find work in distant places. Some of them do come back periodically and are able to offer and participate in sacrifices in a manner that is traditionally meaningful, i.e. in the vicinity of the graves of their ancestors and in the presence of their lineage members. For this reason, in my experience, the performance of sacrifices is timed according to the work schedule of the lineage members to enable them to be present. In the author'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 at home for Christmas holidays. The choice of this month, therefore, ensures that all lineage members or at least most of them are present when a sacrifice is performed.

This does not always work out well because some members of the lineage may be working during the month of December or others are too far to come. Concentration of sacrifices into 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 a significant lineage member could not make it because he has had to attend a similar occasion for one of the lineage members somewhere else. The traditional intention of Xhosa sacrifice, i.e. lineage solidarity, is thus not fully realised as some members of the lineage may be absent for certain important sacrificial rituals.

Absence of lineage members is even worse for those who have settled in their places of work because where they stay they are usually the only lineage unit. This has necessitated some adaptation in terms of participants or congregation of sacrificial rituals. Sacrifices in which normally the lineage members would form the congregation have clan members as the core congregation⁷. Bigalke, who did his research among the rural Xhosa, reports of some cases where on account of the absence or shortage of lineage members, clan members, assumed the place of the former (cf. 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 more often 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 occasions and other rituals (cf. 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 setting, this was sometimes a problem, hence there were interim sacrifices, i.e. *ukutshayela inkundla* (to prepare the ground), or *ukungxengxeza* (to plead), that served to appease the ancestors while still making means to provide for the required sacrifice. In the modern period, where on top of inflation sacrifices have become lavish, it can be expected that financial considerations can seriously affect the performance of sacrifice⁸. Raum confirms this in his research on the performance of sacrifice among the

⁷ This is because clan membership is broader than lineage membership and therefore clan members are likely to be spread across a vast area than lineage members would.

⁸ For example the huge expenses of the unveiling of the tombstone which coincide with *ukubuyisa* sacrifice (cf. Pauw 1975:114) are probably the reason why it usually takes a very long time before it is done.

Christian and the non-Christian Xhosa of Ciskei. He concludes that 'Christians, who are better off economically than the Non-Christians, can afford a more elaborate ritual, that is, more frequent sacrifices' (1972:195).

7.5.3 Social factors

Sacrifice, especially Xhosa sacrifice, is not an individual but a communal exercise. Among those who take part in it, it presupposes a common belief about what is being done when it is performed. Thus the word 'social' as meaning the ability to live, inter-act and co-operate in activities of common interest with a common goal is very important for sacrifice. The performance of sacrifice in the traditional setting had a very clear social function, i.e. to instil a sense of belonging among the lineage members and to perpetuate a traditional way of life.

In the modern period, individuals find themselves in the company of people who are neither lineage members nor sharing a way of life with them, which traditional sacrifice served to perpetuate. Instead they find themselves being drawn to other social values which are not enhanced by the performance of sacrifice. Wilson and Mafeje (1963), in their study of the Xhosa people in Cape Town, showed that the practice of sacrifice was more prevalent among those who insulated themselves from the city influence than those who embraced city life. This goes to show that social factors do influence the practice of sacrifice.

7.5.4 Environmental factors

The modern environment is not always conducive for the performance of sacrifice and this is enough to discourage its performance even among those who still find meaning in sacrificing. A man interviewed by Mayer in his research among the Xhosa in East London (a town known in Xhosa as *Monti*) clearly expressed the negative effect town environment has on the performance of sacrifice.

The sacrifices we do in town are 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 need[s] 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 relatives makes the sacrifice in town incomplete. Red relatives matter the most in a sacrifice, because they are the ones living the life the spirits have lived (1961:153).

For those living in the upmarket suburbs, they surely must think twice before they go ahead with a sacrifice. First of all they must obtain permission from various departments of the municipality, i.e. health, cleaning and possibly traffic department. Having obtained the permission, they must inform the neighbours - for 'whom the dying bellow of a slaughtered ox is upsetting' (*Herald* 3 Feb. 1999:4) - in time about the event. After that 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.

7.5.5 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 minimally as possible. While for example they would 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 (cf. McAllister 1981:16-17), which includes performing sacrifices and other rituals. Others on the other hand have fully embraced Christian religion and Western culture as their way of life and have thus dissociated themselves to a certain degree with Xhosa traditional way of life. They adopt 'new values, and many disregard tribalism and its ramifications, of which sacrifice is but one' (Lamla 1971:33).

In the '60s anthropologists categorised the Xhosa who rejected most of the Western and Christian influence as *Abantu ababomvu* (Red people) while those who fully embraced it were categorised 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 ones' (from the smearing of their clothes and bodies with red ochre), are the traditionalist Xhosa, the conservatives who still stand by the indigenous way of life, including the 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 (1971:4).

The *abantu basesikolweni* (school people) group saw themselves as 'civilised' compared to the *abantu ababomvu* (red people) or *amaqaba* (smeared people) group, whose way of life (which includes performance of sacrifice) they saw as 'primitive' (cf. Lamla 1971:33 and 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) group do not perform sacrifice; they do, but 'in their performance of Xhosa 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 but a modificatory effect on the understanding and performance of sacrifice.

7.5.6 Religious factors

Christianity is about the only foreign religion with which the Xhosa 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 understanding and practice of sacrifice. Most authors note that in general the attitude of missionaries towards the Xhosa practice of sacrifice was negative (cf. Hodgson 1984:21, Pauw 1974:425, Wilson et al 1952:130). Most of the material on the interaction between the missionaries and the Xhosa is political, meaning that it concerns itself with the political and cultural implications of the contact. There is very little material if any, by the early missionaries that objectively explores in detail the divergence and convergence between Christian and Xhosa practice and understanding of sacrifice.

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

the Xhosas as whole, which they felt was 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 had to stop everything that goes with his culture.

Thus in theory they (the missionaries) regarded all humankind as potentially equal, but they did not differentiate between Christianity and the accepted norms of their culture. Plows and wagons, cotton clothes, Western medicine, square, upright furniture, square houses built along straight lines, and, above all, formal literacy were regarded as fruit of the Gospel. Traditional doctors and diviners, beer drinking, and expression of what missionaries regarded as nudity and open sexual behaviour were condemned. Male and female initiation rites, male polygamy and the exchange of women against cattle (now referred 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 against Xhosa sacrifice by the missionaries because its rejection was included in the blanket rejection of everything that pertained to Xhosa culture. Their certainty that they were right, since they considered themselves culturally and religiously superior to the Xhosa, made it unnecessary for them to explain and justify the grounds for indiscriminate rejection of Xhosa sacrifice and other customs⁹. Switzer's report about the attitude of the early missionaries towards the Xhosa and their customs seems to be true for the other early missionaries in the rest of Africa as well. African continental theologians have also noted this attitudinal problem of the missionaries with almost the same words as Switzer's (cf. Mbiti 1969:237, Hastings 1976:37-38, Hastings 1989:23-24 and Bourdillon 1990:266-268).

Theron observes, though, that 'there were many individual missionaries who had more understanding for the traditional culture, and who were more positive towards it' (1996:25). Among the Xhosa, one of the early missionaries who could be considered to have been more positive to Xhosa tradition was Van der Kemp. Hodgson has this to say about him:

He ate Xhosa food, lived in Xhosa huts (46), and traveled "on foot, without a hat, shoes or stockings". (47)... At the same time Vanderkemp's spartan existence was undoubtedly

⁹ The problem of the superiority complex and attitude of the missionaries is illustrated in the journal of William J. Shrewsbury, who was a missionary among the Xhosa in the 19th century (cf. Fast 1994).

part of a conscious decision to live out his philosophy of the equality of all men... Vanderkemp was the type of missionary who wants to adapt Christianity to the daily life of the indigenous community. This was in contrast to his successors in the Xhosa mission field who were bent on changing the indigenous way of life to conform to the standards of "Christianity and civilization" as imported from Europe, and who set the example by establishing separate communities at their mission stations (1984:10).

Although Van der Kemp was positive towards the Xhosa 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' (1984:21), but unfortunately Hodgson does not tell of Van der Kemp's theological reasons for objecting to Xhosa sacrifice. Those of us who are interested in the theological reasons for the rejection of Xhosa sacrifice by the missionaries are, therefore, left with no choice but to deduce them from the most general principles of the Christian faith held by the missionaries. Here we would like to point out at least two factors in the faith of the missionaries that are likely to have led them to prohibit converts to practice sacrifice. These factors are (1) belief in one God or monotheism and (2) salvation through Christ or soteriology.

7.5.6.1 Monotheism

Monotheism is characterised first of all by belief in one God who is considered to be the source of everything there is, "the absolute sovereign and the only rightful Lord" (Kraemer 1963 quoted by Theron 1996:118). To God alone praise and honour is due. Among 'world religions' it is Judaism, out of which Christianity developed, that has distinguished itself as monotheistic. According to Hick, however, Judaism has not 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. So perhaps it is better to speak of the early Jewish religion 'as henotheism rather than monotheism' (Deist 1982:15)¹⁰

What added a universal dimension to Jewish monotheism was the perceived military victory of their god over and against other gods. In retrospect, they concluded that such a powerful god must in fact be the only God there is, who is at the foundation of everything. 'By his victories over the enemy Yahweh proved himself 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. Instead of taking military conquests as the proof of God's universality, the prophets appealed to God's universal salvific will¹¹ to demonstrate that God is God not only of Israel but 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 Lord of 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 very nationalistic. One only needs to read the Gospels to see how they still considered salvation by God as their own privileged right.¹² Many parables of Jesus, especially in Luke, who wrote for non-Jewish readers, confront this attitude.¹³ It is really with the advent of Christianity that this universal salvific will of God finds a clear expression and a clear instruction from Jesus to act towards its realisation. 'Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptise them in the name of the

¹⁰ *'Monotheism means that only one God exists; henotheism means that only one God is worshipped'* (Deist 1982:15)

¹¹ By God's universal salvific will we mean the will of God to save all people.

¹² According to Hartman, there was a prevailing mentality among the Jews of Jesus' time that the 'Gentiles' could be sharers in the salvation which by right belonged to the Jews (cf.1963:869).

¹³ Cf. the parable of a good Samaritan Lk. 10:25-27, the account of a foreign leper coming to give thanks to God Lk. 17:11-19, the Pharisee and the Tax collector at prayer, where the latter's prayer is presented as more acceptable to God than the former's Lk 18:9-14, the parable of the transference of the vineyard from Jews to Gentiles Lk. 20:9-19, etc.

Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit' (Mt. 28:19). Monotheism proper is the foundation of this instruction.

In trying to be faithful to this instruction, the missionaries found themselves eager to introduce the Xhosa to the "one true God". Some of them sincerely believed that the Xhosa had no knowledge of this God. Hastings tells us, for example, that Moffat, the first missionary among the Tswana, 'called the Xhosa "a nation of atheists" and he quoted Van der Kemp (the first missionary among the Xhosa) in support' (1994:325). But as the work of Hodgson, *The God of the Xhosas* (1982), tried to show, when the missionaries arrived among the Xhosa, the latter already knew about God. Going by Hodgson's work, it is clear that Moffat's statement that the Xhosa were a nation of atheists is not true.

What is true, as we have tried to show in chapter 5, is that the Xhosa had no personal relationship with God and therefore had no formal worship or supplication directed to God. As the missionaries soon found out, the Xhosa had some sacrificial rituals, which were directed not to God but to the ancestors. These sacrificial rituals were perceived by the missionaries as worship of ancestors. Naturally, they opposed them with all their might because as they perceived them, they offended the supremacy of God. In fact sacrifices directed to the ancestors were seen by missionaries as idolatrous because ancestors were not only human beings but also 'unsaved pagans' (ICT¹⁴ 1985:23). They thus saw them as misguided and false practices, which must be rejected in their totality. This was and still is particularly true of the Protestant and Evangelical churches (cf. Theron 1996:25) who readily quote the Bible to support their position against sacrifice to the ancestors.

At best Xhosa sacrifice was seen as something that could be purified, re-interpreted and incorporated into the Christian faith, this is particularly true of the Catholic Church, at least in principle (cf. Theron 1996:23-4). This approach, for example, would suggest that ancestors and sacrifices directed to them might be viewed in a way similar to the way

¹⁴ Institute for Contextual Theology.

saints are viewed and related to. As it can be seen, the first approach is towards total elimination of Xhosa sacrifice, while the second one is towards its modification.¹⁵

7.5.6.2 Soteriology

Even if Xhosa sacrifice in its traditional setting had been directed to God and not to the ancestors, it would still not be accepted because, according to the Christian view, Christ's sacrifice on the cross is the only acceptable sacrifice to God. Thus the missionaries would have seen Xhosa sacrifice as competing with Christ's sacrifice. The Letter to the Hebrews, which clearly states that 'Bulls' blood and goats' blood are incapable of taking away sins' (Heb. 10:5) and that Christ 'on the other hand has offered one single sacrifice for sins' (Heb. 10:12), would have been used as a biblical support against Xhosa sacrifice. On a theological level, the concept of justification by faith alone and not works would have been cited against Xhosa sacrifice as the Reformers did against Eucharistic sacrifice in the middle ages.

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 the missionaries as 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 because Xhosa sacrifice is concerned with relationship among members of the lineage and not a relationship between an individual and God. As we have seen, it is also concerned not with life after death but with 'prosperity and happiness in this life' (Fast 1994:19), in which even those who are dead continue to participate¹⁶.

¹⁵ 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 'points of contact' between Christianity and 'pagan' beliefs, the only way to be saved is to completely abandon the latter in favour of the former (cf. 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 the Christian faith (cf. Vat. II *Nostra Aetate*, No. 2).

¹⁶ One could say that for the Xhosa, life is all here and now because death was not seen as 'a distinct cessation of life but a continuation in another form, namely as an ancestor' (Fast 1994:10).

For the Xhosa, 'salvation meant help in time of trouble, healing, fertility, protection from sorcery and witchcraft and evil spirits, and success in life's ventures. It did not have to do with salvation of the soul, but rather with prosperity and happiness in this life' (Staples 1981:212). In spite of the influences of the Christian factors mentioned, Xhosa sacrifice has survived or, as Lamla puts it, 'the practice of sacrifice has, to a certain extent, withstood all these onslaughts' (1971:33).

7.6 Analysis of the modern Xhosa understanding and practice of sacrifice.

The present practice of sacrifice among the Xhosa has been shaped by the factors discussed above. Social and environmental factors have had an effect on the physical performance of sacrifice while religious factors have had an effect on the understanding of sacrifice. These two however are not mutually exclusive because changes in the physical elements of sacrifice i.e. the congregation, the officiant and place of sacrifice which are due to political, economical social and environmental factors cannot take place without somehow altering or changing the understanding as well. There is, therefore, an understanding of sacrifice, which results from the way sacrifice is being practised on account of the conditions imposed by social factors. There is also an understanding of sacrifice, which results from belief about sacrifice. In the pages that follow we want to look at what Xhosa sacrifice has come to mean as a result of it being practised in the modern setting and being influenced by Christianity.

7.6.1 Understanding of sacrifice as shaped by social factors

One of the limitations imposed by social factors to the practice of sacrifice today is the scarcity of the lineage members who traditionally formed the congregation of the sacrificial ritual. As noted earlier on, lineage members are substituted by clan members and Staples, 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' (1981:241).

Pauw confirmed this phenomenon among the East London urban Xhosa 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' (1973:169). This practice could mean that the congregational dimension of sacrifice 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 of explaining how the non-lineage members can meaningfully participate in the sacrifice of an ancestor(s) with whom they have no connection.

The second possible interpretation could be that the intention of the sacrifice no longer includes lineage solidarity but is exclusively concerned with one's nuclear family and one's ancestor on whose honour the sacrifice is offered. The presence of other people in this case would be just to grace the occasion, otherwise there is no sacrificial significance attached to their presence. This possibility finds confirmation in Staples, who states that ancestor 'cult now functions as a homestead, or hearth cult. In extreme cases it has become a personalized cult of the individual and his/her ancestors' (1981:240). This is possible because even the scope of ancestors themselves has been narrowed down to the 'minimal lineage segment' (Staples 1981:40), the furthest ancestors being the grandparents, otherwise one's normal ancestors are one's dead parents (cf. Mayer 1961:151). Brenda Fassie, for example visited the grave of her parents when she offered sacrifice in thanksgiving to her ancestors (cf Mtshali 1999:63).

Social and environmental factors have also had the effect of displacing people from their places of origin and thus removed them from the environment of their ancestors, which is a normal environment for the performance of sacrifice. This has heightened the notion of the ubiquity¹⁷ of ancestors, which enables people to regard their present places of residence as fit for ritual sacrifices. Mayer's informant informs us that ancestors "will follow a man whether he goes to Johannesburg or Ghana or England" (1961:151).

¹⁷ The *Ukuvula umzi* (Open a house) sacrifice (cf. Chapter 5) traditionally performed to inform ancestors of one's new place of abode, implied the ubiquitous nature of ancestors; but with more people relocating as a result of political and economic factors, it has come to be taken for granted (cf. Meyer 1961:154-158).

This explains the increase of the performance of sacrifice in urban areas. For those who have not totally severed ties with their place of origin, even though 'the city has already started to take on the shape of a future permanent home' (Pauw 1994:133), the original home is still the preferred place for ritual sacrifice. This is because while ancestors are ubiquitous, they 'are thought of as hovering about their graves near the cattle byre, and around the village of their descendants' (Staples 1981:494).

Modernisation has heightened the role of ancestors as protectors, much to the decrease of 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 them for future responsibility, they have now become the ubiquitous guardian angels of a mobile society protecting persons in their precarious ventures in the city' (Staples 1981:242). With regard to sacrifice, this has had the effect of focusing the intention of the sacrifice more on personal protection and success than on lineage solidarity.

As a result of this change of focus one perceives a proliferation of thanksgiving sacrifices which have to do with personal successes in one's engagement with the modern world.¹⁸ Among thanksgiving sacrifices that have emerged the following are noted by Raum (1972:196-197): return from a journey, return from the mines, return from a court case and jail and passing examinations. Wilson and Mafeje (1973) 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 the case of Brenda Fassie, who thanked her ancestors for success in the music business, proves. As Staples rightly observes, 'Ancestor worship (sacrifice) is undergoing a process of individualization' (1981:241).

¹⁸ McAllister argues that protection and thanksgiving rituals for the economic success of individuals serve to instil an understanding that one's economic success does not result from individual effort but from the corporate effort of the kinship members. Consequently, the fruits of one's success must be used to promote the kinship solidarity and the traditional way of life (cf. 1981:41-49). While this may be true for migrant workers who maintain regular contact with their kinsmen, for those who have settled in the cities the focus of their thanksgiving sacrifice is themselves as individuals and their ancestors.

In the traditional setting communication with ancestors took place through the channels built into the kinship system. Individuals had access to ancestors through the lineage head, whose duty it was to address the ancestors on behalf of the lineage members. The absence of these channels in the city and urban environment has led to a situation where individuals communicate directly with their ancestors.

Many migrants said that in town, if one cannot sacrifice to the spirits to have one's affliction removed, one can pray to them instead. 'In suffering of any kind all you need do is speak to your spirits in the dead of night, when nobody 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 is that 'the intermediary function of the regular officiant seems to fall away' (Staples 1981:489) and that personal prayer to the ancestors may at times substitute for the performance of sacrifice. This is a new development in the understanding and practice of Xhosa sacrifice, which is due to social and environmental factors.

7.6.2 Understanding of sacrifice as shaped by Religious factors

We now turn to the discussion of how religious factors have shaped Xhosa understanding and practice of sacrifice. As already stated, since their contact with Christianity, the Xhosa people have continued to practice sacrificial rituals. It has been seen that there is unanimity among authors that vestiges of ancestral sacrifice can be detected even among those Xhosa Christians who claim to have completely abandoned the traditional belief system in favour of the Christian faith. Raum notes for example that most Xhosa Christians, among whom he did his research, call the marriage sacrifice *ukudlis'amasi* (to feed with sour milk), which traditionally served to introduce the bride to the ancestors of her groom, *idinila yomtshakazi* (bride's dinner). He then goes on to conclude that 'there is very little doubt that the *idinila yomtshakazi* is a synthesis between Christian elements and the traditional *ukudlis'amasi*' (1972:59).

It does appear that the word "*Idinila*" (dinner) among most Christians has become a euphemism for sacrificial ritual. 'Dinners which involve ritual killings, often conducted secretly and with less supporting ritual than is customary, and which appear to serve rather traditional functions are performed at weddings, the outdooring of babies and in connection with burial and post-burial ceremonies' (Staples 1981:504-5). It is clear, therefore, that Christian influence has not eliminated the practice of sacrifice among the Xhosa, at least, not completely. What is also clear, as Raum and Staples note above, is that on account of the influence of the Christian faith, the understanding of sacrifice has changed. What exactly this understanding has changed into, however, is something that is not clear.

Field research by various investigators has also shown that some Christians do not camouflage Xhosa sacrificial rituals but openly perform them as what they are. A survey conducted by Oosthuizen among the Xhosa Christians of 'Victoria East, Middledrift districts, and in the urban area of Zwelitsha' (1971:109), all areas of the former independent homeland of Ciskei, proves this. The result of the survey showed that 'Ancestor worship... is still practised openly by 44% of the respondents' (1971:113). Wilson in her research among the Xhosa of the Keiskammahoek had also discovered that 'Church members... sometimes undertake ritual killings in cases of illness, in addition to wearing necklets made from a beast's tail hairs' (Wilson 1952:198).

Pauw, in his research in an unspecified area among the Xhosa, also comes to a conclusion that 'Christians perform sacrifices of propitiation, thanksgiving, sacrifices for children, and rituals of accompanying or bringing back the dead, in which Xhosa tradition predominates even in the formal aspects of the ritual' (1975:225). These Xhosa Christians embrace both the Christian and Xhosa traditions of sacrifice simultaneously. The remaining task is to explain how people who have embraced Christianity can continue to openly practice Xhosa sacrificial rituals as these two are apparently opposed to each other¹⁹. We begin by explaining the sacrifices known as *Idinala* (Dinner).

¹⁹ It is also true that some Xhosa Christians completely dissociate themselves from traditional sacrifices, as demonstrated by the *Drum Magazine* article on the initiation of boys in which sacrifice was replaced with the reading of the Bible (cf. *Drum* Oct. 1993:12). According to Oosthuizen's survey, however, these are 'a

7.6.2.1 Idinala (*Dinner*)

The *idinala* occasions include "baptismal dinner,"... "bride's dinner" and sometimes "dinner of mourning" (*idinala yokuzila*) after the death of an elderly man or woman in the family. 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 a beast may be slaughtered' (Wilson 1952:198). The grounds for suspicion that these dinners are disguised Xhosa traditional sacrifices is that they are held in similar circumstances in which traditional sacrifices are performed. For example, traditionally, when a child is born, *imbeleko* sacrifice is performed whereas, among Xhosa Christians, when a child is born, a baptismal dinner is held. Traditionally, when a person dies, *ukukhapha* sacrifice is performed, while Xhosa Christians hold mourning dinner and so on.

It is for this reason that Raum explains them as a synthesis of Xhosa sacrifice with some elements of the Christian faith. Pauw explains them as an '*adaptation* of Xhosa tradition to Christian tradition by *modification*, taking the form of *elimination* of certain details, or *simplification*, change of *name*, or the *substitution* or replacement of Western Christian forms for Xhosa forms' (Pauw 1975:225). When one looks at the intentions of some traditional Xhosa sacrifices and the intentions of some Xhosa Christian dinners, the explanation of the latter as a synthesis makes sense.

There is, between the two, some complementarity in some of their intentions. One of the intentions of *imbeleko* sacrifice, for example, is to make the child a full member of the lineage group. From a Catholic point of view, one could proceed and argue that the baptismal dinner is a feast to celebrate the welcoming of the child through baptism into the Christian community. Raum in his research observed that the *ukukhapha*

small percentage' (1971:113). Researchers also report that the first generation of Xhosa Christians who settled in the missions was expected by missionaries to abandon their traditional beliefs (cf. 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 that it was more for the latter reason that they abandoned them (cf. 1981:36), and Pauw explicitly states that 'some (missionaries) favoured a policy of expelling from mission land "those who failed to live a Christian life" ' (1975:207).

(accompanying a deceased person) sacrifice allegedly substituted by Xhosa Christians with *idinala yokuzila* (mourning dinner) was 'even attended by European ministers' (1972:179). According to Raum this is because the *ukukhapha* sacrifice includes the intention of ritual purification which 'is a universal religious concern and not characteristic of a pagan attitude' (1971:88) and 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 sacrifice is that not all Xhosa Christians who hold 'dinners' see themselves as synthesising their faith with their Xhosa tradition. In her research in Keiskammahoek, Wilson observed that 'Christians strenuously deny any connection between their feasts and occasions of pagan ritual...' (Wilson 1952:198). The second problem is that even if Xhosa Christians explain *idinala* as a synthesis of Xhosa and Christian faith, it does not meet the requirement of a synthesis, which would normally involve a merging of two meanings. Pauw convincingly argues that *idinala* is not a synthesis but a superficial modification of traditional sacrifices, which involves naming traditional sacrifices differently and altering some of the ritual elements involved. The following response of a Methodist preacher interviewed by Pauw about *idinala* (dinner) shows that *idinala* is a different name for Xhosa sacrifice:

We no longer make *amadini* (sacrifices) for illness because the ministers taught us that we have one *idini* (sacrifice), that of Jesus Christ. That is *idini* for all our illness. When there is misfortune... it is said (by unbelievers) that the kinsmen of this home [ancestors] are complaining... A beast is slaughtered and they say *kuyanqulwa* (worship takes place). School people make *idinara* (dinner) for the same reason – for misfortune. They also regard it as a complaint of the ancestors... 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 also interviewed by Pauw shows that *idinala* is a Xhosa sacrifice 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 School people slaughter they just have a sort of dinner without the small ritual details (Pauw 1975:176).

Maybe Xhosa Christians should be taken seriously when they say that in holding 'dinners', they are not camouflaging a 'pagan' ritual but are doing something new. Perhaps what they are doing may 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 belief. But until Xhosa Christians, or should I say Xhosa theologians, clarify what is being done when a 'dinner' is held, the suspicion that 'dinner' is a camouflaged Xhosa sacrifice will continue to persist. Pauw gives a succinct observation about the superficiality of *idinala* concept:

These views representing those of many Xhosa Christians reveal that their objections to the traditional *idini* are of a superficial 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" on plates at a table, there is no objection to the ritual. 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).

7.6.2.2 *Dichotomous understanding of sacrifice*

A better word to describe Xhosa Christians who openly practice Xhosa sacrifice while accepting the Christian understanding of sacrifice would be 'heterodox', which when translated literally has 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' also does not come close enough to explain this phenomenon because it has a meaning of understanding the same reality in two ways, for example when being human is understood as being physical and spiritual. For lack of a better expression, we use 'dichotomous understanding' to explain that Xhosa Christians who openly practice Xhosa sacrifice understand it and Christ's sacrifice as both valid beliefs in their own realms. There is thus no attempt to synthesise the two because they are understood and explained separately.

This dichotomous understanding of sacrifice is largely due to the difference between Christianity and Xhosa belief system in their understanding of salvation. The Christian understanding of salvation as presented by the missionaries is largely concerned with being saved from one's sins, which separate one from God. For the most part, Christian salvation consists in being forgiven one's sins and given the grace to overcome sin in one's pilgrim journey on earth as well as being assured of union with God after death (cf. Hastings 1994:270-271).

Xhosa understanding of salvation, on the other hand, as Hommond-Tooke crudely puts it, 'is unashamedly this-worldly' (1974:318). The following description (already seen) of the Bantu speaking peoples' view of salvation is also true for the Xhosa because they belong to this group. 'For the Bantu, salvation meant help in time of trouble, healing, fertility, protection from sorcery and witchcraft and evil spirits, and success in life's ventures. It did not have to do with salvation of the soul, but rather with prosperity and happiness in this life' (Staples 1981:212).

The fact that as early as 1960 between 40% to 60% of the Xhosa were already Christians (cf. Pauw 1974:421) means that the Christian message of salvation proved attractive to them. Obviously there are other factors that contributed to the conversion of the Xhosa to Christianity. The eschatological dimension of salvation can be counted as one of the important contributing factors to Xhosa conversion because although they saw death as a transition into the world of ancestors, the Xhosa nevertheless viewed it with fear and negativity²⁰. It is not surprising, therefore, that the missionary message of Christian salvation as consisting in destroying death by ensuring life everlasting with God after death struck a chord among the Xhosa.

The political and the economic factors which, as noted above, had and continue to have an effect of replacing traditional communalism with individualism, also have their share in rendering eschatological personal salvation meaningful. This, however, did not wipe

²⁰ Efforts to establish the cause of death, when it occurs, through divining and the taboos related to coming into contact with death surroundings suggests a fear and a negative view of death by the Xhosa.

away the traditional Xhosa understanding of salvation as this worldly. While the Christian Xhosa embrace the Christian view of salvation, they simultaneously also hold on to their traditional view.²¹

In the mind of the Xhosa Christian, these two views of salvation do not contradict but complement each other. The Christian view of salvation caters for the concern about life after death, while the Xhosa view of salvation caters for the daily needs and life crises.²² Thus the Christian view of salvation as presented by the missionaries and the Xhosa view of salvation exist side by side and each view is adopted according to the need at hand. If the concern is about the daily practical needs, e.g. need for healing and material well-being, Xhosa sacrifice is resorted to, while for eschatological needs, resort is made to the Christian view of salvation. This is clear from the following response given by a Xhosa informant when asked about what he prays for to God and to the ancestors. "For the things of the spirit I pray to God, for the things of the flesh there are *amasiko* (customs) in connection with the ancestors (*amawethu*)" (Pauw 1975:220).

This dichotomous understanding of sacrifice is also due to the nature of the pluralistic character of the society, which though constituted of different groups, nevertheless allows co-operation among them. What Staples says about religion being not the 'cause of sharp cleavage between groups' (1981:234) among the Southern Bantu, is very true for the Xhosa. Grounds for co-operation among the modern Xhosa are not determined by

²¹ Lungu ascribes the simultaneous holding of opposing beliefs as due to the 'Xhosa logic [which] is weak and makes no attempt at defining boundaries of meanings with strong words which make cut and dry positions' (1982:92). This according to him is the reason why opposing views can be held 'without experiencing any apparent conflict' (1982:93). Arguments of most authors however, lead me to believe that it is not because the Xhosa have a 'weak logic' that they simultaneously uphold opposing views about sacrifice but because it is practicality useful to do so.

²² Daneel lists the inability of the Gospel message, as presented by the missionaries, to address the daily needs and problems of the people as one of the crucial factors that have contributed to the formation of the independent Churches. 'There were few attempts to show people that one's daily work is also a form of worship. In fact, about the whole area of man's physical needs, daily struggle for existence and human requirements the missionary was strangely silent. He could proclaim a gospel of the *soul's* salvation, but not the salvation of the entire *man*. This inability was most clearly expressed in the sphere of *illness*; here the church simply had no message, and it was precisely this vacuum that was later filled by the Zionists with their message of deliverance' (1987:78).

religious convictions as it is with the Jews and the 'Gentiles' for example, but by neighbourliness and lineage membership (cf. Pauw 1975:42 and Manona 1981:37).

A Christian, for example, who would not normally perform a sacrifice may find himself/herself taking part in a sacrifice because of his/her neighbourly or kinship relations with the person hosting the sacrifice. On the other hand a non-Christian may be involved in a Christian service or modified form of Xhosa sacrifice for the same reasons. As Staples puts it, 'There is a great deal of mobility between the groups on the spectrum accompanied by considerable religious interdependence. Christians are expected to take part in many traditional rituals and vice versa' (1981:253-245). Social co-operation, therefore, has a role in the way the modern Xhosa practice and understand sacrifice.

It would, however, be too simplistic to conclude that Xhosa Christians understand Christian salvation as exclusively concerned with the soul and as unrelated to the physical needs and daily struggles of life. Pauw states that a typical recurring answer from Xhosa respondents on the question about the content or intention of their prayer was "I pray about my sins and troubles" (1975:80). This is a short response but it demonstrates a comprehensive view of salvation. Pauw further states that with regard to the question about prayers that have been answered, the following were noted, 'health and sustenance of life; having a family and maintaining good family relations; and immediate economic necessities' (1975:80).

With regard to specific material needs, fulfilled prayers included the granting of the following: 'Good crops, having stock, obtaining a mechanical planter, finding a good job, success in applying for pension, and a gift of clothes...' (1975:81). This shows that Christian salvation is perceived by some Xhosa Christians as, after all, relevant for this life as well. Pauw, however, hastens to explain that 'this is due to recent prayer movements...[and] were it not for their influence, prayer would be more predominantly

concerned with finding the strength and courage to endure the hardships of this life' (1975:81).²³

The practice of traditional Xhosa sacrifice by the modern Xhosa Christians can also be ascribed to the general quest of the indigenous people of South Africa to reclaim their African identity, which includes retrieving customs that were labelled as pagan and savage by the missionaries. These customs, which include communication with the ancestors through sacrifice, are seen by black South Africans in general and by the Xhosa in particular as instrumental in asserting their uniqueness and equality to those who previously regarded them as inferior. They are also seen as instrumental in providing a religious and a political perspective that is informed by African experience. Thus, as Manona observes, 'the resurgence of the ancestor belief and its corresponding cult has not only a religious and symbolic significance, but it exhibits a clear political dimension' (1981:37).

This positive view of African customs, which includes Xhosa sacrifice, has led to some attempts to give a biblical and a theological justification for the practice of Xhosa sacrifice. Biblical justification includes reference to the commandment to honour one's parents (cf. Ex. 20:12), so that ancestral sacrifice, if seen as honouring the ancestors, is not perceived as incompatible with the Bible (cf. Lungu 1982:44).

It is also justified by appealing to Jesus' statement in Mt. 5:17 that He did not come to abolish but to fulfil the law. The conclusion of this appeal to Mt. 5:17 is that Xhosa sacrifice does not contradict biblical teaching 'because Christ did not abolish the Xhosa customs but it is the Church which rejects them' (Lungu 1982:45). It is obvious that these texts cannot go far to make Xhosa sacrifice compatible with the Bible. Moreover, compared to other biblical texts often quoted against Xhosa sacrifice, they carry less weight (cf. Lungu 1982:43 and Van der Walt 1997:119).

²³ The prayer movements that Pauw refers to here are what are known in Xhosa as *Abathandazeli* (those who pray over others) which centre on individuals with a gift to pray for various needs of people especially for healing. The most recent popular prayer healer is *Umama waseChancele* (Mother of *Chancele*).

Theological justification for Xhosa sacrifice is largely based on the explanation of the analogous nature of Xhosa sacrifice to the doctrine of the communion of Saints. One aspect of the doctrine of Saints concerns the nature of the Church as having three divisions, i.e. the pilgrim Church on earth, the suffering Church in purgatory and the triumphant Church of the Saints and Angels in heaven. This doctrine further teaches that these divisions form one Church on account of the unity of faith, and are supportive of each other. The pilgrim Church can thus appeal in prayer for support to the triumphant Church, while the former can also join the latter in praising God and in praying for the suffering Church in purgatory (cf. CCC 954-958).

Theological justification for Xhosa sacrifice is argued along the same lines of communion and mutual support. Just as the appeal to the saints for prayer expresses communion and support between the living and the saints, so does Xhosa sacrifice express support and communion between the living and the ancestors. If the analogy between the saints and ancestors has a pure comparative purpose of stating that just as Christians appeal in prayer to saints for support, so do Xhosa appeal to ancestors in sacrifice for support, the analogy may be regarded as valid. If however, the intention is to interchange meanings between the two, then the analogy does not hold because, according to many authors,²⁴ there is no similarity of meanings and intentions between the two.

First of all the criteria for becoming an ancestor are different from the criteria for becoming a saint (cf. Lungu 1982:88). Therefore, 'saints cannot become ancestors and the ancestors cannot become saints' (Lungu 1982:82). Secondly there is a difference between the intention of appealing to the saints in prayer and the intention of appealing to the ancestors in sacrifice. Sacrifice to the ancestors has the intention of enhancing mutual responsibility, traditional norms and moral taboos among the lineage members. Appeal to the saints in prayer, on the other hand, has a universal character in the sense that they are relevant for the Church as a whole, which is wider than a lineage group. While it is

²⁴ For a detailed discussion of the relationship between saints and ancestors see Staples 1981 and Lungu 1982.

true that popular devotion to the saints includes concern for earthly well being, theologically they are seen as concerned with helping individuals to grow in grace and in their personal union with God.

Staples further states that prayers can also 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 blessings on their behalf' (1981:281). According to his argument, in a similar fashion Xhosa sacrifice can be seen as an offering to one's ancestors in anticipation of their benevolent response to one's offering. Staples' assertion that prayers 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 at the level of popular piety. At the level of the official teaching, however, it finds no support. The official Catholic teaching about the souls in purgatory is that they cannot be of any assistance to the living. Rather it is they who are assisted by the living (cf. CCC 1032). There are, therefore, no grounds for analogy, to say nothing about similarity, between the souls in purgatory and ancestors. Souls in purgatory are prayed for, while ancestors are honoured and appealed to in sacrifice.

The idea that Xhosa ancestral sacrifice as "worship" has God as the ultimate object is widespread among those who would like to see continuity between the Xhosa belief system and Christianity. Soga, a Xhosa and a Christian who has come to be regarded as an authority on Xhosa customs, states that God is worshipped 'through the medium of the *iminyanya* or ancestral spirits, who in the unseen world are nearer to Him, and know more than men on earth' (1931:150). Most of the Xhosa Christians interviewed by Pauw explained the relation of the ancestors to God and the living as almost identical to the relation 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 nearer to God" (1975:218). Yet with all the good intention to accommodate ancestors and the accompanying sacrifices to them within the Christian faith, it has to be said that the communion of saints is not a viable model for this purpose because 'the meanings attached to the ancestors and the saints differ' (Lungu 1982:81).

7.7 Conclusion and observations

In this chapter an attempt has been made to describe and analyse modern Xhosa sacrifice. The sources used covered the area of the Eastern Cape, which is the traditional geographical area of the Xhosa speaking people and in which they continue to be concentrated even today. It is thus hoped that the findings obtained in this research are true for most of the modern Xhosas.

The presentation started off by noting reported cases of sacrifice, which can be taken as a concrete indication that the practice of sacrifice is still continuing among the modern Xhosa. For a more complete picture, we proceeded to look at research done on modern Xhosa sacrifice. From this we noted that there was both continuity and discontinuity between the traditional and the modern practice and understanding of sacrifice. With regard to continuity, it was observed that most of the sacrifices performed in the traditional setting continue to be performed in the modern setting as well.

Discontinuity between the traditional and the modern practice of sacrifice was noted in the way sacrifices are performed and understood. It was observed that the logic behind this discontinuity was not immediately clear, and this prompted us to look at the factors that have influenced modern Xhosa sacrifice with the intention of obtaining clarity about it. Factors that have shaped modern Xhosa understanding and practice of sacrifice were identified as political, economical, social, environmental, ideological and religious and we may broadly categorise them as socio-environmental and religious factors.

Social factors were noted to have had both eliminatory and modificatory effects on the practice and understanding of Xhosa sacrifice. Social circumstances have at worst rendered some sacrifices, like national sacrifices, impossible to perform and at best made some sacrifices strenuous to perform. They have also had major modificatory effects in the modern practice and understanding of sacrifice. The displacing and the scattering of people which is due to political and economic factors has led to the narrowing of the social purpose of Xhosa sacrifice.

As we stated in the previous chapter, traditional Xhosa sacrifice served the social purpose of bonding the lineage members. In the modern period, the presence of lineage members in a sacrificial ritual continues to be something desirable and for this reason, on occasions of sacrifice, efforts are made to inform as many lineage members as possible. To this extent, it can be said that modern sacrifice is a mechanism to undo the destabilising effect of modernity on lineage members²⁵. As we have seen, however, this does not always work, as some members are not always able to attend sacrificial rituals of their kinsmen, and even when it works, it does not do so without strain.

The destabilising effects of modernity on lineage members and the strain involved in bringing lineage members together is changing Xhosa sacrifice from being a lineage affair into a nuclear family affair. Staples suggests that as time goes on it may even become an individual affair (cf. 1981:241). The circumstances imposed by socio-environmental factors make one decide on one's own when, how and with whom to perform the sacrifice. If circumstances do not allow performance of sacrifice, a personal address to the ancestors in a form of prayer is resorted to. If circumstances do not allow members of the lineage to be present, clan members or people of significance to the person offering the sacrifice fulfil the role of the congregation for the sacrificial ritual.

The conclusion to be drawn from this phenomenon is that modern Xhosa sacrifice is a family and personal affair. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that it is becoming a family and a personal affair because the traditional and modern understanding of sacrifice continue to overlap. The growing emphasis on the personal aspect of sacrifice among the modern Xhosa manifests itself in the increasing number of thanksgiving sacrifices for personal success as some of the quoted press examples show. The individualisation of Xhosa sacrifices has led to a situation where it has become difficult to clearly categorise such sacrifices as they are sometimes fused together according to the wishes and circumstances of the individual. It has also become difficult to clearly identify the ritual

²⁵ This is confirmed by McAllister, who says that sacrificial rituals are concerned 'with identifying cognatic and affinal links, clarifying uncertain relationships, exchanging information about the genealogical and physical location of distant kin, conveying kinship information to the younger people, and in this way creating an "imagined" community of kin for those present' (1997:285).

elements involved in Xhosa sacrifice because individuals omit and add rituals as they fit their understanding and situation.

Christianity has had both the effect of elimination and superficial modification of Xhosa sacrifice. The opposing views between Christianity and Xhosa belief system about sacrifice have caused a few Christians to abandon Xhosa sacrifices, while others continue to perform them in disguised forms of '*idinala*' (dinner). At face value, the '*idinala*' concept appears as a synthesis of Xhosa and Christian understanding of sacrifice or as an adaptation of the former into the latter. On close analysis however, it becomes difficult to explain what is being done at '*idinala*' because the principles about sacrifice involved in both beliefs are opposed to each other. The challenge to Xhosa theologians is to clarify this 'synthesis', which at the moment remains amorphous. I hope to do my bit at the closing chapter of this work.

Other Christians, who apparently are in the majority, have opted to embrace both of these traditions without attempting to synthesise them. This practice has developed first of all from the understanding that the spiritual and physical salvation offered by Christian and Xhosa belief systems, respectively, do not contradict but complement each other. This practice is also due to the social culture of co-operation, which is not based on religious affiliation, but on neighbourly and kinship affinity.

As explained earlier, non-Christians are expected to take part in Christian functions and vice versa. Attempts have been made to give Xhosa sacrifice a Christian explanation, but the models used, i.e. the biblical command to honour one's parents and the communion of saints, proved very ineffective. A more viable solution that has been suggested for Christianity is to develop an integrated view of salvation, which will cater not only for the spiritual and eschatological needs but also for physical and daily human needs as well.

The conclusion of our investigation in this chapter is that the nature and purpose of modern Xhosa sacrifice cannot be stated with precision. This lack of precision can be

ascribed to the traditional understanding of sacrifice that continues to overlap with the emerging new understanding shaped by the factors discussed in this chapter. These two understandings continue to exist side by side and to be simultaneously upheld, e.g. by the Christians who simultaneously uphold both Christian and Xhosa views about sacrifice. They also continue to exist in some forms of syntheses that are not clearly defined, e.g. the *idinala* concept.

The emerging new understanding seems to be pointing towards a narrower and personalistic understanding of sacrifice. The concept of ancestors as objects of sacrifice is gradually being reduced to one's parents and the congregation to one's family or homestead members. On an individual level, a development may be expected where both the ancestors, as objects of sacrifice, and the congregation of the ritual sacrifice are not determined by blood or kinship affinity but by the voluntary association, e.g. Churches, clubs, etc. As we say, this seems to be the direction modern Xhosa sacrifice is taking, but it has not totally shed off the elements of the traditional understanding. It thus remains amorphous and a fertile ground of investigation for anthropologists and theologians

PART 3

COMPARISON OF THE TWO TRADITIONS OF SACRIFICE FOR AN INCULTURATED UNDERSTANDING OF THE EUCHARIST

Introduction

The first and the second parts of this work were concerned with the study of Catholic Eucharistic sacrifice and Xhosa sacrifice. This last part will attempt a comparison of these two traditions of sacrifice with the aim of suggesting an integrated understanding of the Eucharist that will be both Catholic and Xhosa. To do that we begin by recapping what has been said about both Eucharistic and Xhosa sacrifices.

The different periods under which the Eucharistic sacrifice has been studied show a variation of emphasis in the way it has been practised and understood in the Catholic tradition. The analysis of New Testament texts on the Eucharist showed that the Old Testament themes of sacrifice, such as atonement, covenant and communion continue to be categories of explaining the Eucharistic sacrifice. The patristic period highlighted the spiritual value of the Eucharistic sacrifice, with more emphasis being on giving praise to God by the participants and on the practical daily life of virtue and concern for others.

The medieval period was occupied with clarifying the nature and effects of the Eucharistic sacrifice, which finally took a definitive shape in the Council of Trent. The period immediately after Trent sought to uphold Trent's teaching on the Eucharistic sacrifice by providing theories of sacrifice that would render Trent's teaching intelligible. Theologians of the modern period have occupied themselves with the ecclesial nature of the Eucharistic sacrifice, i.e. the manner in which the Eucharist can be said to be the sacrifice of the Church. They have also concerned themselves with the ethical implications of participating in the sacrifice, i.e. the quality of one's inner disposition and the mutual social concern ensuing from participating in the Eucharistic sacrifice.

Xhosa understanding of sacrifice itself has been studied in this work under two settings, i.e. the traditional and modern settings. It was noted in chapter 6 that while Xhosa sacrifice can be categorised into various types according to the intention of the sacrifice, the procedure is basically the same. Categorisation of sacrifice has enabled us to distinguish those sacrificial rituals that can be properly called sacrifice and those that are called customs. While Xhosa sacrifice includes all the conventional sacrificial intentions, its most prominent intentions are lineage solidarity and physical and material well-being. Worship in its usual Christian understanding is not part of Xhosa sacrifice since it does not have God as its object. Modern Xhosa understanding of sacrifice is beginning to take a new shape of its own, which is characterised by individualism and adaptation of traditional sacrifices to the modern situation. However, it continues to overlap with the traditional understanding of sacrifice.

CHAPTER 8

COMPARISON OF EUCHARISTIC SACRIFICE WITH XHOSA SACRIFICE

8.1 Introduction

During the presentation of the two traditions of sacrifice, we have sometimes noted how similar and dissimilar these two traditions are. In this chapter we want to consider these similarities and dissimilarities in some detail and in a more systematic manner. Our method of comparison will begin by recapitulating the main points made about each tradition of sacrifice and then proceed to observe how they resemble and differ from each other. We will take the Eucharistic sacrifice as our starting point, in other words we will first give the main points of each period in the development of the Eucharistic sacrifice and then proceed to show how similar or different these points are from Xhosa sacrifice.

I adopt this order of comparison because, in spite of being Xhosa, it is the Eucharistic sacrifice that I am more familiar with than Xhosa sacrifice. In addition to that, due to a long tradition of systematic reflection on the Eucharist, Eucharistic sacrifice is better articulated and conceptualised than Xhosa sacrifice. It therefore seems reasonable to begin with the side that is clear and familiar when comparing the two. The danger of this approach is that the side that is 'clear and familiar' will determine the results of comparison, because it dictates the ideas and concepts to be compared. Being aware of this danger, however, we will try our best to be attentive to the concepts and ideas that are proper to Xhosa sacrifice and to observe how they compare to the Eucharistic sacrifice.

While the present understanding and practice of the Eucharistic sacrifice continues to be informed and determined by the medieval mentality, the other conceptions noted above from the different epochs of Catholic tradition are also, in principle, equally valid Catholic conceptions of this type of sacrifice. Thus a comprehensive Catholic understanding of the Eucharistic sacrifice requires that all these conceptions be taken into

account. Consequently, in order to ensure a comprehensive comparison, the five periods noted above will be compared with the Xhosa understanding of sacrifice individually.

8.2 Last Supper and Xhosa sacrifice

Even though Christians of different denominations differ about the meaning and celebration of the Eucharist, they are all unanimous that it has its foundation in the meal Jesus had with his disciples on the night before he died, i.e. the Last Supper. A comprehensive comparison of the Eucharistic sacrifice with Xhosa sacrifice must therefore begin with this supper.

It was our conclusion in chapter 1 that while later developments of the understanding of the Eucharistic sacrifice cannot all be read into the Last Supper, there were grounds for understanding it as providing a scriptural basis for the sacrificial character of the Eucharist. The Paschal context in which the Last Supper took place, the strong sacrificial overtones of Jesus' words of institution as well as the social implications of participating in the memorial of this supper, highlighted by Paul, were noted as indicating the sacrificial character of this supper. We recapitulate these sacrificial elements of the Last Supper for the purpose of comparing them with Xhosa sacrifice.

8.2.1 Similarities between Last Supper and Xhosa sacrifice

As noted in chapter 1, while the historical identity of the Last Supper with the Passover remains a matter of dispute, there is no doubt that the Gospel writers clearly present the Last Supper as theologically identical with the Passover. This theological transference of the meaning of Passover sacrifice into the Last Supper suggests a number of ways in which the Last Supper can be regarded as a sacrifice, which in turn makes it similar to Xhosa sacrifice. First of all, the Jewish Passover served to recall the first covenant God made with the people of Israel when He rescued them from Egypt. God, by saving the Israelites from Egypt, was choosing them as a people and thereby commencing a deal of mutual obligation between Himself and the Israelites, later to be sealed at the mount of Sinai (cf. Ex. 19). The mutual obligations between God and the Israelites are clearly spelt

out in the decalogue (cf. Ex. 20), and the norms of the Israelites' behaviour and obligations towards one another are set out in the book of the covenant (cf. Ex. 21-24). The purpose of the Passover sacrifice was to fortify these mutual obligations.

Jesus' words of institution over the cup, i.e. 'the new covenant in my blood' (Lk. 22:20, 1Cor. 11:25) lead us to understand that Jesus was sealing a new covenant between God and humanity. The mutual obligations ensuing from this new covenant, however, are not clearly spelt out in the accounts of the Last Supper accounts. We get a hint from John who tells us that before having this supper, Jesus washed his disciples' feet as a lesson for them to love and serve each other. If the Last Supper is viewed in the context of the whole life of Jesus, what he did and taught during his lifetime about God and human relations could be taken as the content of this new covenant.

Paul, who scolds the Corinthians for taking part in the memorial of the Last Supper while behaving uncharitably towards one another (cf. 1Cor. 11:21), further hints that the Last Supper entails certain mutual obligations among participants. From John, Paul and the life and teachings of Jesus, it may be inferred that the memory of the Last Supper has an effect, or is expected to have an effect, of instilling a way or a rule of life that is harmonious with ideals of the Christian faith.

If this inference is anything to go by, it would make the Last Supper similar to Xhosa sacrifice. The latter's purpose, among others, is to maintain the traditional way of life by instilling a sense of mutual obligation and norms of behaviour among lineage members. As we noted in chapter 5, the Xhosa regard ancestors as custodians of the norms and traditions of the lineage. For this reason, those who transgress the norms and traditions¹ of the lineage often incur the wrath of the ancestors which manifests itself in the misfortunes that befall them. Consequently, the performance of sacrifice to the ancestors is an act of submitting oneself to the traditional way of life.

¹ Transgression of norms and tradition includes disrespect for the elders, omission of passage rites that introduce lineage members to different levels of the lineage structure, omission of one's duty towards lineage members, etc.

The Jewish Passover, with which the Last Supper is identified, served to thank God for the liberation of the Israelites from Egypt and leading them to the Promised Land. Thus the connection between the Last Supper and the Passover further qualifies the former as a thanksgiving sacrifice. We stated in chapter 1 that the Last Supper was a thanksgiving sacrifice in anticipation of what Jesus was about to do on the following day. This makes the Last Supper similar to Xhosa sacrifice because, among the various types of sacrifice practised by the Xhosa, thanksgiving sacrifice is one of them.

In Xhosa traditional setting, sacrifices were offered in thanksgiving for good harvest and for safe return from a journey or from war. The adventures and precarious situations of modern life have increased opportunities for thanksgiving sacrifice among the modern Xhosa. As individuals engage with the modern world in various projects and adventures, they have a sense of being protected and supported by ancestors, and they offer thanksgiving sacrifice for success gained in these projects. Hence, as we noted in chapter 7, there are more thanksgiving sacrifices in the modern setting than there were in the traditional setting.

In our analysis of the Last Supper as a sacrifice, we also came to a conclusion that it could also be described as a communion sacrifice. This conclusion was inferred from the institution words of Jesus in which He commanded his disciples 'to take and eat' and 'to take and drink'². We also cited Paul who saw participation in the one cup and one loaf as uniting the participants with Christ and with one another (cf. 1Cor. 10:16-17). Thus communion is a clear feature of Last Supper.

This makes the Last Supper similar to Xhosa sacrifice because as we saw in chapter 6, communion among lineage members through the sharing of the sacrifice is an essential feature of Xhosa sacrifice. All members of the lineage (this is especially true for what I

² For those Churches whose origin goes back to the English Reformation like the Methodist Church, for example, the Last Supper was not a sacrifice but a meal of fellowship between Jesus and his apostles. Among Christians it continues to be celebrated as a meal of fellowship with Jesus and with each other (cf. McGrath 1997:373). Similarly the Xhosa people who have converted to Methodism and other related Protestant Churches have come to regard their traditional sacrifices only as meals which they call *dinala* (dinner).

have described as solemn sacrifices) must attend the sacrificial ceremony and they must ritually taste the sacrificial portion of meat.

8.2.2 Dissimilarities between the Last Supper and Xhosa sacrifice

The sacrificial meaning of the original Passover lies in Jews being saved on the night of their escape from Egypt by the blood of the lamb painted on their door posts. The blood on the door posts served as a sign for an angel of death to *pass over* the houses of the Jews and kill only the Egyptian firstborns, thus sparing the lives of Jewish firstborns. Thus, through the blood of the Passover lamb, the Jewish firstborns were saved. At the Last Supper, Jesus is presented as the new Passover lamb through whom humanity is saved from the wrath of God resulting from the sins of humanity against God. Hence Jesus is presented by John the Evangelist as the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world (cf. Jn.1:29). Thus Jesus is the lamb who atones and expiates for sins.

Even though Christ is referred to as a lamb, it is as a human being and as son of God that he is the sacrificial victim. Christ's victimhood, however, is different because it is out of his own free will in obedience to God that he allows himself to be killed. It is for this reason that Christ is said to be both the priest (one who offers) and the victim. In Xhosa sacrifice on the other hand, the victim is an animal, which though it carries something of the offerer because it belongs to him/her and is therefore part of the owner, is nevertheless not the owner. Thus the concept of victim between the Last Supper and Xhosa sacrifice is different, in the former it has the meaning of self-giving literally, whereas in Xhosa sacrifice it has the meaning of giving something of oneself, or at best a meaning of symbolic giving of oneself.

The metaphoric identification of Jesus as a lamb must have created a problem of understanding because a lamb among the Xhosa was never a sacrificial victim. As noted in chapter 6, the most preferred sacrificial victim among the Xhosa is a goat or an ox, and in some cases a sheep, but never a lamb. Again, the notions of victim are different here, Christ's victimhood, which is symbolised by the lamb, suggests victimhood as consisting

in surrendering oneself without resistance. The victim idea of Xhosa sacrifice on the other hand, i.e. an ox or a goat, which bellow and bleat when killed in sacrifice, suggests victimhood as consisting in making a sound and thus creating communication between the offerer and the object of sacrifice.

The effect of the Passover lamb with which Christ is identified³ was due to its blood, consequently, the saving effect of Christ's sacrifice is also due to his blood. Just as the blood of the Passover lamb, which was smeared on the door posts and deterred the angel of death from striking the firstborns of the Jews, so does the blood of Jesus dissuade God from dealing with people according to their sins. In other words, the blood of Jesus dissuades God from dealing with people according to what their sins have made them to deserve. Put differently, the blood of Jesus appeases God, it atones and expiates for sins. This becomes clear in the institution words of Jesus, i.e. 'my body---given up for you' and 'my blood--- shed for you for the forgiveness of sins'.

As far as Xhosa sacrifice serves to avert the anger of the ancestors which manifests itself in misfortunes and illness, the Last Supper as explained above can be said to be similar to it (Xhosa sacrifice). The difference, however, is that the Last Supper seems to attach great importance to the spilling or pouring of the sacrificial victim's blood, while Xhosa sacrifice does not. As we have tried to show in our discussion of the elements of Xhosa sacrifice in chapter 6, blood is not an essential element of Xhosa sacrifice.

Even though people often speak of *ukuphalaza igazi* (to spill blood) when referring to a sacrificial ceremony, there are no pronounced rites associated with blood. While it is handled with care when the animal is being slaughtered, there is nothing much that is done with it afterwards. Sometimes it is disposed of by being given to the dogs (cf. Soga 1931:147). Willoughby's observation that 'the only significance of the shedding of the blood is that one must kill before one can cook meat' (1923:75) is perhaps an

³ Christ is identified as a lamb victim in order to highlight the perfection of his sacrificial 'victimhood' because in the Bible, lamb 'is a figure of innocence and of helplessness' (McKenzie 1968:491).

exaggeration, but it does confirm the point we are making that blood in Xhosa sacrifice is of no great significance.

The essence of Xhosa sacrifice in its traditional context lies in the invocations and the bellowing of the sacrificial victim. That is why, as we noted in chapter 6, the bellowing of the sacrificial victim is greeted with jubilation because it indicates the acceptance of the sacrifice and the communication of blessings from the ancestors. The difference, therefore, between the Last Supper and Xhosa sacrifice, with regard to the role of the sacrificial victim, is that while for the former the sacrificial victim is important for its blood, for the latter, it is important for its sound. The observation that in Xhosa sacrifice the sacrificial victim is important for its sound is partially confirmed by the fact that among the Xhosa Methodists, in their exposition of the Passion drama on Good Friday, the cry of Jesus on the cross (cf. Mat. 27:46) is presented as the high point of Christ's sacrifice on the cross and a comparable element to Xhosa sacrifice:

"Eli Eli lama sabachthani". The *Ndodana* (young men's guild member or preacher) will say: "Christ has bellowed like a sacrificial beast, therefore *icamagu livumile*" (the sacrifice has been accepted). The Cry from the Cross is interpreted in terms of Xhosa tradition (Lungu 1982:54).

The Last Supper further comes across as a substitutionary sacrifice. This is clear from the institution words 'my body---given **for you**' and 'blood---poured out **for many**', which suggest a vicarious or a representative sacrifice in which the sacrificial victim is seen as taking the place of the offerer or the person for whom the sacrifice is offered. Even though one can make inferences for vicarious sacrifice among the Xhosa, there is no evidence that the Xhosa understood the sacrifices they performed as vicarious in the manner explained above. Willoughby's observation about the Bantu in general, that they 'have no idea of transferring the sin of the worshipper to the victim, or substituting the death of the victim for the merited death of the sinner' (1923:74), is also true for the Xhosa.

Obviously, another difference is that the objects of these sacrifices are not the same. The Last Supper, in the tradition of biblical sacrifice, has God as its object or recipient, while

Xhosa sacrifice has the ancestors as the recipient. The discussion of Xhosa sacrifice covered in this work showed that while there are claims that Xhosa sacrifice has God as its recipient, the evidence in support of such claims is very thin and unconvincing. Some authors, for example, insist that Xhosa sacrifices for rain were directed to God, but provide no convincing evidence to substantiate their claim. As we have seen in chapter 7, attempts to understand Xhosa sacrifice as addressed to God via the ancestors, in a way similar to the communion of saints, have also not been successful because there are no grounds for comparison between saints and ancestors. As it is, these two sacrifices remain different with regard to their recipients.

The Last Supper is also presented as concerned with sin. This is clear from the institution words over the cup, which state that the blood is shed 'for the forgiveness of sins' (Mt. 26:28). Xhosa sacrifice also has sin as one of its concerns. As we have seen, for example in chapter 6, some sacrifices are performed to propitiate the ancestors. There is, however, a difference between the Last Supper and Xhosa sacrifice with regard to what sin is and consequently with regard to what being forgiven, or being granted salvation means. For the former, in line with biblical understanding of sin as the transgression of God's law, being forgiven means knowing, through the declaration of God's representative (in this case Jesus, and in the case of the temple sacrifice, the priest) that one has been reconciled with God. For the latter, where sin manifests itself in the lack of well being, forgiveness or salvation means being restored to well being.

Jesus' institution words over the cup, 'my blood... poured out for many [or for all]' (Mk. 14:24) further mark the Last Supper as intended for all people. While it is true that in terms of participation, the Last Supper was limited to the disciples present at the upper room, in terms of its effect, it was intended for all people. Furthermore, as it later became clear, participation in the memorial of this sacrifice was not to be determined by blood relations, but by faith in Jesus and by ecclesial membership through baptism. Xhosa sacrifice on the other hand, particularly in its traditional setting, is intended for lineage members only both in terms of participation and effect.

8.3 Patristic Eucharistic sacrifice and Xhosa sacrifice

Both similarities and dissimilarities can also be observed between patristic writings on the Eucharistic sacrifice and Xhosa sacrifice. For the most part, especially during the first two centuries, the teaching of the Church Fathers about the Eucharistic sacrifice was not as clearly articulated as it was to be in the Middle ages. Their concern about the Eucharist was first of all to show how it linked up with Old Testament worship and fulfilled it. Justin in particular saw the purpose of sacrifice as consisting in praising and thanking God, and argued that this was better done in the Eucharistic sacrifice than in Old Testament sacrifices. For the most part, Justin and his contemporaries saw the Eucharist as thanksgiving sacrifice, which as we explained in chapter 1 is what "Eucharist" in the Greek language means, i.e. thanksgiving.

The second concern of the Fathers about the Eucharist was its practical implications for the spiritual, the ecclesial and the daily life of Christians. There was less speculation about its nature and more emphasis was put on its practical value, which was often presented in the context of catechism and admonitions. It was with the fathers of the third and the fourth centuries that a systematic exposition of the full sacrificial character of the Eucharist began. As noted in chapter one, the fathers of this period attempted to clarify the nature of the Eucharistic sacrifice by identifying its offerer, i.e. Christ through the priest, its propitiatory character as well as its relationship to the sacrifice of the cross. Having recapitulated the patristic thoughts on the Eucharistic sacrifice, we now proceed to compare them with Xhosa sacrifice.

8.3.1 Similarities between Patristic Eucharistic sacrifice and Xhosa sacrifice

Patristic Eucharistic sacrifice is similar to Xhosa sacrifice first of all because, like Xhosa sacrifice, it is characterised by a lack of concern for speculation about the nature of sacrifice. Like Xhosa sacrifice, the focus of patristic Eucharistic sacrifice is more on the practical value of sacrifice than on its conceptual understanding. The lack of coherent thought in patristic Eucharistic sacrifice is generally explained as due to the stage of development in which Christianity, as a religion, was only beginning to conceptualise its

beliefs and symbols. Prior to the patristic period, except for the typological comparison between the Old and the New Testament, no real systematic analysis of the elements of Christian faith was done. The lack of clarity among the fathers, therefore, was not due to their inability to systematise their beliefs and symbols, but to the fact that they were at the initial stage of the rational or scientific explanation of the elements of the Christian faith.

In chapter 5 we argued that the apparent lack of clarity in Xhosa belief system, which includes sacrifice, should be explained in a similar fashion. In other words, the lack of clarity in Xhosa sacrifice should not be seen as indicating inability of the Xhosa to systematise their belief and symbols as it has been suggested by some anthropologists (cf. Hammond-Tooke 1974:319). It should rather be seen as indicating a stage of development in the evolution of Xhosa belief system as a religion. Thus insofar as Xhosa sacrifice is not clearly articulated, it is similar to patristic Eucharistic sacrifice and it is also similar in its reasons for the lack of clarity.

These two traditions also share a similar understanding about the social implications of sacrifice. They both view sacrifice as relevant for the maintenance of unity among the members of their congregations. St. Cyprian, for example, saw the Eucharist as serving the unity of the Church. Similarly, as we noted in chapter 6, Xhosa sacrifice serves the purpose of lineage solidarity. Both patristic Eucharistic sacrifice and Xhosa sacrifice achieve the purpose of unity among their respective members by encouraging them to keep the norms of mutual behaviour and to avoid what is considered unacceptable.

In chapters 5 and 6, we noted that even though Xhosa sacrifices are open to all people, strictly speaking, it is only the lineage members that form the congregation of the sacrificial ritual. For that reason, it is only the lineage members that ritually taste the sacrificial portion of meat and beer. Similarly, as Justin clearly states, it was only those who have been made part of the community through baptism (cf. Jurgens 1970, Vol: 1 No. 65) who were permitted to take part in the Eucharistic sacrifice by consuming the body and blood of Christ. For this reason, catechumens (those preparing for baptism) were formally dismissed after the liturgy of the Word and the liturgy of the Eucharist

continued without them (cf. O'Collins 1991:32). Today they remain throughout the Mass, but they may not approach the altar to receive communion. Thus for both Xhosa and Eucharistic sacrifice, even today, it is only 'full members of the congregation' who can fully participate in the sacrifice.

Another element that is common between patristic Eucharistic sacrifice and Xhosa sacrifice is the element of thanksgiving. For the former, the thanksgiving sacrifice is for the gift of creation and deliverance from evil by Christ (cf. Dialogues of St. Justin in Dix 1945:159). For the latter, it is for the good harvest obtained, and for safe return from life threatening and dangerous expeditions. Giving thanks for the gift of creation means that patristic Eucharistic sacrifice was, like Xhosa sacrifice also concerned with physical well being. These two traditions of sacrifice are also similar to each other because they both involve some ritual actions.⁴

8.3.2 Dissimilarities between patristic Eucharistic sacrifice and Xhosa sacrifice

The differences noted in the comparison of Xhosa sacrifice and the Last Supper with regard to the elements of sacrifice and its object continue to apply when it is compared with patristic Eucharistic sacrifice. For the fathers, the object of sacrifice is God, while for the Xhosa it is the ancestors. These two traditions also differ in some of the major intentions of sacrifice. In addition to giving thanks, the intention of patristic Eucharistic sacrifice includes praising God, which has the element of worshipping God and singling God out as the only being that is worthy of worship. As we argued in chapter 6, Xhosa sacrifice does not include intentions of worshipping ancestors as they are not regarded as

⁴ Ritual actions of Xhosa sacrifice can be seen in chapter 5. We give here the rituals of Eucharistic sacrifice as reported by Justin:

Having finished the prayers, we greet one another with a kiss. There is then brought to the one who presides over the brethren bread and a cup of water and a cup of wine mixed with water; and, taking them, he gives praise and glory at great length to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and the Holy Spirit. And when he has concluded the prayers and thanksgiving, all the people present cry out saying Amen. And when the one who is presiding has given thanks, and all the people have cried out, those whom we call deacons give the bread and wine and water over which the thanksgiving was made to be received by each of those present, and then they carry it to those who are absent (Quoted by O' Cornor 1988:19).

God but as elders of the lineage that must be respected. What can further be noted as different in the patristic understanding of the Eucharistic sacrifice from Xhosa sacrifice is that the former is clearly presented as relevant for the rest of humanity, hence the reference to Malachi 1:10-11 which speaks of a sacrifice that is offered everywhere among the nations. Xhosa sacrifice on the other hand has no intention of universalising itself, as it is considered relevant only for the lineage members concerned.

One pronounced intention in Xhosa sacrifice is that of propitiation, i.e. appeasing the anger of ancestors, which is expressed by the word *Camagu* (be propitiated) in response to the bellowing of the cow. While the element of propitiation is present in the patristic thought on Eucharistic sacrifice, it does not dominate their thinking and exposition on the subject. Among the fathers considered in this work, for example only two, i.e. St. Hippolytus and Cyril of Jerusalem explicitly make reference to propitiation in the context of the Eucharistic sacrifice.

Patristic understanding of sacrifice has an explicit intention of encouraging those who take part in sacrifice to offer themselves as well, i.e. to be willing to suffer and even to die for their faith (cf. Cyprian) and to be charitable towards others (cf. St. Augustine). In Xhosa sacrifice even though this idea is not excluded, it is not as explicit. The most that is suggested in Xhosa sacrifice about self-sacrifice, is that when one offers sacrifice, one expresses one's willingness to abide by the norms of tradition.

8.4 Comparison between Medieval Eucharistic sacrifice and Xhosa sacrifice

Medieval Eucharistic sacrifice was generally explained as a memorial of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. It was, however, not just a memorial that merely calls to mind a past event, but a memorial that renders the reality and the effects of Christ's sacrifice on the cross present. The memorial nature of Medieval Eucharistic sacrifice rendered it both identical and distinct from the sacrifice of the cross. It was identical to the sacrifice of

the cross because the offerer, i.e. Christ through the priest, and the victim, i.e. Christ under the form of bread and wine, were the same as the sacrifice of the cross.

It was also distinct from the cross because the form in which it was performed was different. Eucharistic sacrifice was unbloody while the sacrifice of the cross was bloody. For this reason, Eucharistic sacrifice was also said to be an event of applying the fruits or the salvific effects of the sacrifice of the cross. At the level of piety, or grassroots level, the applied fruits of the cross were concerned with practical needs and concerns of life such as material well-being, security from natural disasters and wars, guarantees of good health and long life, etc.

On a theological level the fruits of the Mass were concerned with the forgiveness of personal sins and purification of the souls in purgatory. While the intention of giving thanks was part of the sacrifice in the Middle ages, sacrifice was nevertheless understood as primarily concerned with the forgiveness of sins. The effects of the sacrifice of the cross as applied by the Eucharistic sacrifice were regarded as operating both independently of and dependently on the inner disposition of the human agents involved. Put technically, they were regarded as operating *ex opere operato* (by the work performed) and *ex opere operantis* (by the work of the worker). The sociocultural and economic order of the Middle Ages had some bearing on how Eucharistic sacrifice was practised and understood.

8.4.1 Similarities between Medieval Eucharistic sacrifice and Xhosa sacrifice

It was noted in chapter 5 that while the Xhosa believe in the existence of God, they did not perceive God as involved with the daily concerns of life, and this is particularly true of the Xhosa in their traditional setting. For this reason, ancestors, with whom the living are familiar, are the object of sacrifice. A similar observation with regard to how in the Middle ages God became remote to ordinary people was made. This, as we explained, was due to the tendency to over-emphasise the divinity of Christ much to the depreciation of the value of his humanity. As a result of this emphasis, God was seen as approachable through mediators, i.e. the saints. 'The saints filled the gap when the mediation of the one

Son was forgotten' (Cahie 1990:81). For this reason, Masses were often offered in devotion to patron saints, with an implicit suggestion that their mediation would make the sacrifice more effective.

It is true that from time immemorial, the official Catholic teaching about the saints has been that the saints intercede for the living, and the appeal to them has been distinguished as veneration in contrast to worship, which is due to God alone. For the grassroots in the Middle ages, however, where it would appear that people felt closer to the saints than to God, one can wonder whether they were not more aware of the saints than God in the act of offering sacrifice. The following observation on how ordinary medieval folk understood the role of the saints suggests that they probably did not distinguish much who the object of Eucharistic sacrifice was, as theologians did:

As far as the ordinary medieval Christian was concerned, the importance of the saints lay not in the belief that the holy men and women of the past had exemplified an ideal code of moral conduct, nor yet that their prayers to God were received with particular favour, but that they could themselves employ supernatural powers to relieve the sins and sufferings of the living, or at least of so many of the living as prayed to them' (Perham 1980:37).

If the ordinary Medieval Christians were to be asked about the place of the saints in the Eucharist, they would have probably given a theologically correct answer, namely, that the saints are invoked with the intention of asking for their prayers to God. According to the above argument however, it seems that they may have intended more than just asking for prayers of the saints when they invoked them and offered votive Masses in their honour. Thus while the theologians and the official teaching of the Church were clear about the object of Eucharistic sacrifice, at the level of popular piety the saints may have been unwittingly perceived as also objects of the Eucharistic sacrifice. As we have seen in the last chapter, there is also some ambiguity about the object of sacrifice among the modern Xhosa Christians. We saw for example that while they claim to be henotheists, (worshipping God only) their practice of hosting 'dinner' (*Idinala*) suggests a camouflaged offering of sacrifice to the ancestors.

I want to argue that the closeness of the ordinary medieval Christians to the saints is similar to the closeness of the Xhosa to the ancestors in terms of their relevancy for the problems and concerns of life. In view of this apparent relevancy of the saints for everyday life and the lack of clarity about the dogmatic distinction between God and the saints with regard to worship, it seems logical to suggest that the saints were probably not excluded as objects of Eucharistic sacrifice⁵. If this observation has any weight, it would make medieval Eucharistic sacrifice, at least at the level of popular piety, similar to modern Xhosa sacrifice, which ambiguously has both God and the ancestors as its object.

The society of the Middle ages was in some way similar to Xhosa society. It was a basic society that had not acquired efficient means to deal with the forces of nature like lightning, drought, plagues and diseases. Like the Xhosa, who offered sacrifice to their ancestors for protection against these misfortunes, Medieval Christians offered Eucharistic sacrifice in honour of the saints for the same reason. Thus as far as both of these traditions of sacrifice are concerned with physical well-being and both rely on some human mediation, they can be regarded as similar.

According to Medieval theology and Trent's definition, Eucharistic sacrifice benefits both the living and the dead, hence the practice of offering Masses for the dead. If my argument that death sacrifices among the Xhosa are not offered to the deceased themselves but that they are offered on their behalf (cf. chapter 6) has any weight, then one could argue for grounds of similarity in this regard. We noted that in Xhosa belief system the deceased for whom death sacrifices have not been performed are in a state of unhappiness, and they depend on the living to release them from that state by performing sacrifices on their behalf. Until death sacrifices have been performed, the deceased can neither be part of the world of the living nor that of ancestors. Similarly, in the Catholic tradition, the deceased cannot attain the state of beatific vision until they have been

⁵ Crocket lists a number of votive Masses for various needs, 'one of Holy Job against syphilis, one of St. Christopher against sudden death, one each of Saint Roch and Saint Sebastian against pestilence, one of Saint Sigismund against fever' (1989:124), etc.

purified of their sins in purgatory and for this they depend on the living, who assist them by praying and offering Eucharistic sacrifice on their behalf.

8.4.2 Dissimilarities between Medieval Eucharistic sacrifice and Xhosa sacrifice

Although the understanding of the Eucharistic sacrifice as a memorial representation of the sacrifice of the cross can be traced back to the Bible and to the fathers, it found its maturation in the Middle ages. It was in this period that it was argued out and finally put in a definitive form by the Council of Trent. The notion of memorial representation in its theologically argued form, therefore, is proper to the Middle ages. In comparing it to Xhosa sacrifice, both in its traditional and modern settings, one finds no similarity between the two. All Xhosa sacrifices, although they follow the same procedure and may be repeated as necessity arises, are separate and unique from each other.

Another development proper to the Middle ages was the adoration of the Eucharist, much to the decline of full participation by the laity through reception of communion. As Crocket observes, 'the Eucharist was no longer viewed primarily as the common action of the people of God in which all shared. It was viewed rather as a sacred action done by the priest and that inspired awe rather than participation on the part of the people' (1989:122). Crocket goes on to state that this practice was so common 'that the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 was forced to enact legislation requiring the reception of communion at least once a year at Easter' (1989:122-23).

The Council of Trent also endorsed that the laity should take part in Mass by receiving communion, but it went on to state that it does not 'condemn the Masses in which the priest alone communicates sacramentally as private and illicit' (Neuner 1983:1552). This means that while the participation of the laity through communion is desirable, communion by the priest alone is adequate for the validity of the sacrifice. As we have seen in chapter 6, except for those sacrifices classified as *amasiko* (customs) in which only the beneficent ritually tastes the sacrificial portion of meat, in Xhosa sacrifices

proper (*amadini*), it is all the lineage members present that ritually taste the sacrificial portion of meat.

Thus while the validity of Xhosa sacrifice includes a requirement of one designated person to carry out the sacrifice, i.e. to invoke the ancestors and to kill the animal, the eating part of it which is the constitutive element of the sacrifice is not carried out by him alone⁶. Eucharistic sacrifice on the other hand, requires that at least the priest consumes the sacrificial food. Thus while eating is a constitutive element for both sacrifices, for one, i.e. the Eucharistic sacrifice, consumption by the priest alone suffices, while for the other, i.e. Xhosa sacrifice, it extends to include lineage members. For the former, the sacrifice would still be complete if the priest alone consumes, while for the latter, it would be complete if all the lineage members present consume.

While the element of propitiation is also present in both traditions of sacrifice, the understanding is not exactly the same. They are different first of all because they have a different concept of sin. In Xhosa belief system sin is an offence against the tradition of the society of which the ancestors are the custodians. Sacrifice to ancestors serves to bring one back to the traditional way of life and behaviour. Sin in the Christian tradition 'is transgression of the law of God and rebellion against him. It is sin because it is contrary to the will of God' (Theron 1996:119). Although it does not exclude society, sin in Christian tradition is seen as an offence against God personally.

As we have seen in chapter 6, most propitiatory sacrifices among the Xhosa result from the omission of one's obligation and duties towards the lineage, which is brought to one's attention by the ancestors through misfortune. Propitiation in Xhosa sacrifice, therefore has a meaning of responding to a reminder by the ancestors. Propitiation in the

⁶ Here there is no room for speculating about a situation where the one designated to offer the sacrifice may have to consume alone because Xhosa sacrifice, unlike the Eucharistic sacrifice, which can be celebrated without people is never performed without lineage or clan members being present.

Eucharistic sacrifice, on the other hand, means satisfaction or payment for the offences committed against God⁷.

Furthermore, as we have seen in chapter 3, the question of how Eucharistic sacrifice propitiates for sins remains unclear⁸. In Xhosa sacrifice on the other hand, as indicated by the relief from the misfortune that prompted the performance of sacrifice, it makes sense to say that Xhosa sacrifice propitiates for sins. It will be remembered that among the Xhosa, misfortune or sickness is a sign of ancestral anger for some omission of duty or offence against the lineage. This usually calls for the performance of sacrifice, which if it leads to relief from the misfortune is interpreted as having served the purpose of appeasing or propitiating the ancestors (cf. 143-144 above). The propitiatory character of sacrifice is thus clearer in Xhosa tradition than in the Medieval tradition because in the case of the former, there is presumably a way of knowing when the ancestors have been propitiated.

These two traditions of sacrifice also differ in the nature and role of priesthood. In Xhosa sacrifice, the lineage leader is a priest by virtue of his genealogical seniority. In his function as a priest he represents the living to the ancestors, it is through him alone or his representative that the lineage members can offer sacrifice. This is particularly true of the Xhosa traditional setting. The priesthood of the Eucharistic sacrifice, on the other hand, comes through ordination (cf. Neuner 1983: 1709). In contrast to Xhosa sacrifice, where the priest represents lineage members to the ancestors, in the Eucharistic sacrifice, the priest represents Christ, who in turn represents humanity to God. As it has been noted earlier, it is Christ through the priest who offers, hence the Council of Trent taught that the offerer or the priest of the sacrifice of the cross and the Eucharistic sacrifice is the same.

⁷ As we noted in the discussion of propitiation in chapter 3, contemporary theologians have preferred to highlight God's initiative so that the sacrifice as means of propitiation is something that is willed and provided by God, thus the emphasis is not on justice but on God's love for us.

⁸ Because of the lack of clarity on this issue, I have taken the liberty to interpret what Trent's statement that the Eucharistic sacrifice propitiates for sins could mean (cf. 80-81 above).

8.5 Comparison between Eucharistic sacrifice after Trent with Xhosa sacrifice.

With regard to the nature of the Eucharistic sacrifice from Trent to the present, there is nothing new that has not already been noted above which can be compared to Xhosa sacrifice⁹. What is new on the side of the Eucharistic sacrifice in this period is the attempt to redress the exaggerations of the Middle ages which at worst led to a distortion of the nature of the Eucharistic sacrifice and at best led to the neglect of some of its legitimate aspects. As we saw in chapters 3 and 4, theologians and popes of this period as well as the Vatican II Council later have sought to present a holistic view of the Eucharistic sacrifice by calling for the restoration of the aspects that so far have been neglected. The aspects that this period highlights are the communal, thanksgiving and praise aspects.

This makes the Eucharistic sacrifice as understood and explained in this period far more comparable to Xhosa sacrifice than it has been in the Middle ages. It is not necessary though, to go into more detail than we have already done. The similarities drawn between Xhosa sacrifice, on the one hand, and Biblical and patristic Eucharistic sacrifice, on the other, for the most part remain true for this period as well. We will now proceed directly to look at the dissimilarities between this period's understanding of the Eucharistic sacrifice and Xhosa sacrifice.

8.5.1 Dissimilarities between Eucharistic sacrifice after Trent and Xhosa sacrifice.

The dissimilarities that we note here between the Eucharistic sacrifice after Trent and Xhosa sacrifice concern the understanding of the benefits or the fruits of sacrifice as well as the relationship between the act of offering sacrifice and the internal disposition. Unlike Medieval Eucharistic sacrifice, whose benefits, at least at the level of popular

⁹ One point of similarity between the Eucharistic and Xhosa sacrifice that is proper to the early part of this period is the idea that sacrifice consists in something being done to the victim. This concept of sacrifice, as we have seen, led theologians of this period to identify in the Eucharistic sacrifice some actions that could be regarded as an act of doing something to the victim, e.g. the breaking of the host as indicating the "destruction" of Christ. This would compare well with Xhosa sacrifice, which involves the prodding of the animal with spear and its "destruction". This comparison however, is not worth pursuing because, as we have shown, the idea that in the Eucharistic sacrifice something new is taking place is a distortion of the nature of the Eucharistic sacrifice.

piety, were seen as including physical and material well-being, and thus made it similar to Xhosa sacrifice, in this period the benefits seem to be mainly spiritual. The benefits are spoken of largely in terms of grace to help one cope with difficulties and to overcome temptations that threaten personal communion with God in this life and the next. The list of the fruits of the Eucharistic sacrifice presented by Joret (1955:30-52), i.e. feeding the soul, promoting spiritual growth, stimulating fervour for charity, uniting one to Christ and transforming one into God proves the point we are making.

This is also clear from the prayers said at the beginning of Mass, over the gifts and after communion, which end with a typical request to either remain faithful to God and to be found worthy of life eternal. It is true that the Roman Missal has Masses for special occasions and needs e.g. Masses for the sick (cf. RM 32), Masses in time of famine (cf. RM 28), etc., but for the most part, Masses celebrated throughout the year are concerned with spiritual union with God and the granting of eternal life after death. The four Eucharistic prayers, which articulate the intentions and the desired benefits of Eucharistic sacrifice, are uncompromisingly spiritual in their requests. Reading through them one finds no reference to requests for cows, mealies, health, fertility, etc. as one finds in the invocations done in Xhosa sacrifice.

Modern theologians, following the lead of Thomas Aquinas, argue that the act of sacrificing, if it is to bear any fruit, must be accompanied by a corresponding inner disposition of sacrifice. In other words, the acceptance and the ensuing benefits of sacrifice is, according to these theologians, proportionate to one's internal offering of oneself to God which includes obedience to God and contrition of heart. The absence of this interior disposition renders the physical act of sacrifice less effective if not futile, 'for God's glory is not increased by the mere-representation of the sacrifice unless it is joined to a renewed act of self-surrender on the part of those offering it (Jungmann 1976:255).

Apart from the Pondos, among whom Kuckertz discovered that an act of sacrifice is accompanied by an explicit expression of contrition and confession (cf. 1984:9), there is no evidence that this is true for the rest of the other Xhosa speaking people. It may be

argued that the whole act of Xhosa sacrifice is an act of self-surrender to the will of ancestors, but there is no part in its structure, which explicitly expresses this attitude as an essential element of sacrifice. Like the Old Testament sacrifices, it seems that in Xhosa sacrifice the right performance of sacrifice is enough for its validity and effectiveness.

8.6 Conclusion and observations

One major difference that has been noted throughout in this chapter is the fact that the objects of the two traditions of sacrifice being compared are different. Eucharistic sacrifice is offered to God, while Xhosa sacrifice is offered to the ancestors. Two major conclusions can be drawn from this difference: The first one is that because the Eucharistic sacrifice is offered to God, in its intentions it includes worship, while Xhosa sacrifice, as we have argued in chapter 6, excludes this intention. Xhosa sacrifice does not intend to worship the ancestors but to be in communion with them as they continue to be part of the lineage. Secondly, because the Eucharistic sacrifice is offered to God, it is presented as relevant for all people, while Xhosa sacrifice is relevant for the lineage only.

With regard to the elements and ritual of sacrifice, the two traditions of sacrifice being considered here are different from each other. As it has been noted in various contexts, the elements of the Eucharistic sacrifice are sacramental, meaning that they are symbols that signify something else than what they appear to be. The priest symbolises Christ who offers the sacrifice, the bread and wine over which words of consecration have been pronounced symbolise the body and blood of Christ. Xhosa sacrifice, on the other hand, is not a representative sacrifice but a sacrifice in its own right. The lineage leader does not represent or symbolise someone who offers but is himself the one who offers and the animal sacrificed does not represent another sacrificial victim, but is itself the victim of the sacrifice being offered¹⁰. Thus each Xhosa sacrifice is a new sacrifice, while each Eucharistic sacrifice is a perpetuation of the one sacrifice of Christ.

¹⁰ Xhosa sacrifice can be said to be symbolic in a general sense of sacrifice as a symbolic expression of the relationship between the world and the transcendental reality. But with regard to the elements used, it is realistic and original.

The symbolic elements of the Eucharistic sacrifice, i.e. bread and wine, further widen the gap between the two because they are far removed from the elements usually associated with sacrifice in Xhosa tradition. If a traditional Xhosa person were to attend a Eucharistic celebration for the first time, that person would never recognise it for a sacrifice because the elements used are not at all associated with sacrifice in Xhosa tradition.

It is perhaps for this reason that in some areas that share the same understanding of sacrifice with the Xhosa, suggestions, and sometimes experiments of slaughtering and using traditional beer, have been put forward for the celebration of the Mass (cf. *Pretoria News*, March 3, 2000). Needless to say, the difference of the elements used in the two traditions of sacrifice has necessarily led to difference in the way the sacrifice is performed. One tradition involves a real slaughter of the sacrificial victim while the other involves the recalling of the event of slaughter¹¹.

With regard to the meaning or the purpose of sacrifice, the two traditions of sacrifice being compared are more similar than different. They both have the conventional intentions of sacrifice, i.e. thanksgiving, supplication, propitiation and communion. They are, however, different in their emphases. If the present structure of Eucharistic liturgy (cf. chapter 4) is of any significance, it is thanksgiving that is the most prominent intention of the Eucharistic sacrifice. Compared to Xhosa sacrifice in its traditional setting, it is different because as we saw in chapter 6, it is communion or lineage solidarity that Xhosa sacrifice is largely concerned with. Compared to Xhosa sacrifice in its modern setting however, Eucharistic sacrifice is similar because thanksgiving sacrifices among the modern Xhosa are more common than the other types of sacrifices.

An intention that is peculiar to the Eucharistic sacrifice is the intention of self-offering symbolised by bread and wine. It is probably present in Xhosa sacrifice as well because

¹¹ In an informal conversation, Bishop Bucher told me about an incident, while he was still at Lumko Missiological Institute in the late '60s, in which the celebrant was made to stab a loaf of bread. Apparently this was intended to adapt Eucharistic sacrifice to Xhosa sacrifice which has slaughtering as an essential element.

the victim offered, especially the cow, has a special bond with the owner and for this reason it is not easy to part with (cf. Shaw 1974:94). The intention of self-offering however, is not as pronounced and intentional as it is in the Eucharistic sacrifice. Considering that the value of the sacrifice is made to depend on the quality of one's self-offering, self-offering may be regarded as an essential element of the Eucharistic sacrifice. Xhosa sacrifice, on the other hand, does not seem to make interior disposition a significant element of sacrifice.

The Eucharistic sacrifice is again different from Xhosa sacrifice because it encompasses a multitude of intentions in one sacrifice. In the analysis of the structure of Eucharistic liturgy, we saw that it includes at least five intentions, i.e. thanksgiving, self-offering, propitiation, supplication and communion. In Xhosa sacrifice, on the other hand, while these intentions often overlap, they are taken care of in separate sacrifices, hence there are various types of sacrifice. The paradox is that even though the Eucharistic sacrifice has a wider scope of intentions and is arguably more effective, it is performed more often than Xhosa sacrifice which is less comprehensive in its intentions. One of the precepts of the Church requires that the faithful should take part in Eucharistic sacrifice every Sunday, and whenever it is possible during the week (cf. CCC 2042, UM 29)¹². Xhosa sacrifices, on the other hand, are performed once in a while, often as a response to a crisis or at the occasion of initiation¹³.

For the people who participate in Eucharistic sacrifice on a daily basis, one wonders how much conscious they are of it as a sacrifice. Considering that the weekday Masses in convents, seminaries, schools and other Catholic institutions are celebrated very early in the morning when people are not fully awake, one wonders how much aware they are of what they are doing. Considering also that the value of the Eucharistic sacrifice is to a

¹² CCC is Catechism of the Catholic Church and UM is *Eucharisticum mysterium*

¹³ It has been argued that African religion is characterised by fear of ancestors to whom, because of their impetuosity, people have to continually offer sacrifice lest they inadvertently provoke them (cf. Gehman 1989:258). If this argument has any validity, it would be more true for Eucharistic sacrifice, which is more frequently offered than Xhosa sacrifice.

large extent determined by conscious self-surrender of participants, one wonders about the extent to which daily morning Eucharistic sacrifice can be called sacrifice.

It is possible that some people may in fact be quite attentive in the morning than they would be in the evening and thus would be able to appreciate the sacrificial value of the morning Mass. A more serious concern however, is that daily Masses, whether they are in the morning or in the evening, are so short and clinical (a weekday Mass with a few people can easily take twenty minutes) that they tend to be devoid of any festal mood and solemnity.

My opinion is that the frequency of the Eucharistic sacrifice can trivialise its value as a sacrifice. Certainly for a Xhosa person, who is used to occasional sacrifices with elaborate rituals and full active participation of all involved, it would be difficult to understand daily Eucharistic celebration as sacrifice.¹⁴ We will have the opportunity to make some suggestions about this problem in the next chapter.

In relating the Eucharistic sacrifice to Xhosa sacrifice, the question of the content of the intentions is very crucial. As we noted earlier on, one tradition of sacrifice is spiritual in its intention, while the other is practical and this worldly. If the Eucharistic sacrifice is to be meaningful to the Xhosa people, like their traditional sacrifice, it must address the daily concerns of life. We hope to make some suggestions in this regard in the chapter that follows.

¹⁴ Those who are steeped into the tradition of daily Mass may not find it problematic, but it is in view of Xhosa culture, in which sacrifice is a once in a while event, that this observation is made.

CHAPTER 9

TOWARDS AN INCULTURATED UNDERSTANDING OF THE EUCHARIST

9.1 Introduction

The Eucharist is a commemoration of Christ's death and resurrection, which forms the kernel of the Christian faith. Vatican II constitution on the liturgy calls it 'the summit of both the action by which God sanctifies the world in Christ, and the worship which men offer to Christ and which, through him, they offer to the Father in the Spirit' (UM¹ 6). Consequently, to render the Eucharist meaningful to all the members of the Church is to make the passion and resurrection of Jesus meaningful and relevant to the culturally diverse communities of the Church. Rendering the Eucharist meaningful to life is, therefore, not an option but an imperative, if not an obligation.

As noted in the preface of this thesis, this work was inspired by the desire to do just that, i.e. to make the Eucharistic sacrifice understandable and meaningful to the Xhosa people by presenting it in the context of their culture. Since this task presupposes knowledge of both the Eucharistic and Xhosa sacrifices, a somewhat detailed exposition and analysis of both traditions of sacrifice became necessary.

Having presented, analysed and compared the Eucharistic and Xhosa sacrifices, we now come to the final purpose of this work, which is to suggest how the Eucharist can be better understood and practised among the Xhosa. It is suggested here that the Eucharist can be better understood and practised by weaving it into the culture of the Xhosa, hence the sub-title 'toward an inculturated understanding of the Eucharist'. While the topic of this chapter is about the inculturation of the Eucharist as a whole, it is particularly its sacrificial aspect that we shall focus on.

¹ Eucharisticum Mysterium

Since 'inculturation' is a key phrase of this chapter, it seems reasonable to begin by clarifying that concept. What makes this clarification even more necessary is the fact that 'inculturation' is a recent concept in theology, and its meaning continues to be explored and debated by theologians. Our working definition of inculturation here is the one that sees it as an integration of the Christian faith into the culture.² Once we have clarified the concept of inculturation, we will proceed to look at the major elements of both traditions of sacrifice to see what their meaning suggests for a Xhosa Catholic with regard to the understanding of sacrifice today.

Among the points of comparison between the two traditions of sacrifice noted in the last chapter, the major points of difference that were highlighted included the object of sacrifice, the material elements of the sacrifice and the frequency of its celebration. As a way forward, we shall explore ways of understanding these differences in such a way that they do not hinder the integration of the Eucharist into Xhosa culture. After reconciling the major differences between the two, we will proceed to suggest a new understanding of the Eucharist based on its integration into Xhosa culture. Such a new understanding will include suggestions on how the ancestors can be included in the Eucharistic sacrifice, what food elements can be used, how often the celebration should take place, how it can be celebrated and what needs it should concern itself with.

Since the topic of this chapter is about 'inculturated understanding' and not 'inculturated practice' of Eucharistic sacrifice, we shall concern ourselves more with the theological underpinnings of an inculturated Eucharist and less with the gestures and rituals involved. If reference is made to gestures and rituals the purpose will be to clarify a theological point.

² Most authors explain inculturation as an 'insertion' of the Christian faith into the culture (cf. Crollius 1986:34, Shorter 1988:11, Schineller 1990:42). This word has the meaning of introducing a foreign element 'into the body of something' (New Webster's Dictionary 1971:781) so that while the element is in the body, it still remains distinct from it. It seems that a more appropriate word would be 'integration' or 'weaving' because, as it will be seen, it is this meaning that is intended when the word 'insertion' is used in the context of explaining inculturation. We will use 'integration' and 'weaving or weave' interchangeably.

9.2 The concept of inculturation

The starting point of the analysis and discussion of inculturation has to do with how one understands the relationship between culture and God. In his work, *Christianity in Culture*, Kraft distinguishes four positions with regard to the relationship between God and culture: They are God-against-culture, God-in-culture, God-above-culture and God-above-but-through-culture (cf. 1980:104-115).

The first position sees culture as belonging to the power of Satan and thus opposed to God. The second approach 'sees God as either creating, gradually developing, or endorsing a given culture or subculture, and ordaining that all people everywhere if they are to be Christian be converted hereto' (Kraft 1980:107). It would seem that the first missionaries who rejected everything of Xhosa culture operated from these two positions.

The third approach, i.e. God above culture, perceives God as irrelevant for human affairs. One of the examples Kraft gives of this position is the view of God by some Africans as distant and unconcerned about the daily life and problems of people, hence as we noted earlier on, the ancestors become the direct object of their sacrifice. The fourth approach perceives God as not limited or determined by culture 'but as using culture as the vehicle for interaction with human beings' (Kraft 1980:113). This fourth approach, understood as God's use of culture by becoming part of it, is the basis of our working definition of inculturation.

One can be bold and charge the Catholic Church with having failed to appreciate and use African culture as a means of communicating the Gospel. If it had not failed, the need to explore how the Eucharist can be inculturated, which is what we are trying to do in this work, would not have arisen. In principle however, or in theory, one can say that the Catholic Church believes that culture is a vehicle for interaction between human beings and God. This is clearly expressed in Vatican II's *Constitution on the Church in the Modern world*:

The Church has existed through the centuries in varying circumstances and has utilised the resources of different cultures in its preaching to spread and explain the message of Christ, to examine and understand it more deeply, and to express it more perfectly in the liturgy and in various aspects of the life of the faithful' (GE³: 58).

How exactly God uses culture as a vehicle for interaction with human beings, has been a matter of debate among theologians and church leadership. The variety of terms used to express this process of interaction between culture and the Gospel reveals various degrees of how it is understood. A detailed analysis and discussion of the terms related to the process of interaction between culture and the Gospel is found in Waliggo et al (1986), *Inculturation: Its meaning and urgency*; Shorter (1988), *Towards a Theology of inculturation* and Schineller (1990), *A Handbook on Inculturation*.

The terms presented and discussed in these works show a development of thought about the interaction between culture and the Gospel, leading finally to the concept of incarnation as a theological model for understanding inculturation. The other theological model for understanding inculturation, which is still in use but is being challenged, is 'adaptation'. Since inculturation as understood through the model of incarnation has developed in dialogue with and in dispute against inculturation as understood through the model of adaptation, it will help clarify issues if we start off by explaining the latter- that is, adaptation.

Before we proceed with our analysis, let us explain once more what we are trying to do. The question we are dealing with here is about God using culture as a vehicle of interacting with human beings. This act of God's interaction with human beings through culture we call 'inculturation', which, as the word suggests, means weaving the Gospel or the Christian faith into the culture of a particular community. There are two theological models for understanding inculturation, i.e. the adaptation model and incarnation model. We will take these in turn.

³ Gadium et Spes

9.2.1 Inculturation as adaptation

The word 'adaptation' can be explained as a process of making something to fit in a new situation or environment. While it adapts to different situations, it retains its identity. The 'center remains the same, untouched, while peripheral expressions can change or be adapted' (Schineller 1990:17). Inculturation as understood through the model of adaptation presupposes that the Christian faith has substance or essence that remains unchanged in the process of interaction with culture, and accidents that can be changed or modified according to different cultural situations. Vatican II has presented its teaching on interaction between the Christian faith and culture through this model. Since our topic falls under liturgy, let us look briefly at how the Vatican II constitution on the liturgy explains the interaction between the liturgy and local culture.

The Fathers of the Council speak of 'adapting the Liturgy to the temperament and traditions of peoples' (SC⁴: 37). One gets an idea of what the Council Fathers mean by 'adaptation' from the last sentence of the paragraph referred to above: 'She (the Church) sometimes even admits such things (cultural elements) into the liturgy itself, provided they harmonize with its true and authentic spirit' (SC:37). 'Thus, liturgical adaptation is the admission into the liturgy of elements of culture and traditions which through the process of purification can serve as vehicles of the liturgy for the utility or need of a particular cultural group' (Chupungco 1982:48). The criterion for the admission of cultural elements to the liturgy is that they should not be 'indissolubly bound with superstition and error' and that they should be in harmony with the 'true and authentic spirit' (SC:37) of the liturgy.

The second form of adaptation proposed by the constitution on the liturgy pertains to the use of the options given in the Roman rite of the liturgy: 'Provided that substantial unity of the Roman rite is preserved, provision shall be made, when revising the liturgical books, for legitimate variation and adaptation to different groups, regions and peoples,

⁴ Sacrosanctum Concilium

especially in mission countries' (SC:38). As it can be seen, here there is no room for innovation within the Roman rite, but an invitation 'to make use of the possibilities granted by the official books' (Chupungco 1982:49). These options pertain to 'the administration of the sacraments, sacramentals, processions, liturgical language, sacred music and the arts...' (SC:39).

Should the options given in the official liturgical books not be sufficient, the possibility of 'an even more radical adaptation of the liturgy' (SC:40) may be considered. The constitution goes on to state that radical adaptation 'entails greater difficulties' (SC: 40) and for this reason, certain conditions must be met before it can be implemented. These conditions include formal proposals to the Holy See by the local hierarchy, a period of experimentation and employment of experts in the study and formulation of the proposed rite. Known cases of radical adaptation include changing the Roman rite significantly to suite the local situation. The often-cited example of radical adaptation is the Zairean rite of the Eucharist, which after a long period of negotiations with Rome was finally approved in 1988.

Adaptation, then, according the Vatican II, means making use of certain cultural elements that are perceived to be in conformity with the liturgy, making use of options provided in the liturgical books and in extreme cases, creating a local or regional rite. Many authors have registered dissatisfaction with the model of 'adaptation', especially in its first and second form, because 'it does not go far enough to express the reality of an indissoluble marriage between Christianity and each local culture' (Waliggo 1986:11). It selects only those customs that can help to make sense of the Roman liturgical rite without changing its structure and content.

According to Uzukwu, adaptation goes no further than the 'translation of the Latin texts into various African languages, use of African names of God without grappling with traditional religious ideas; accommodating the externals of African life (colour, music, musical instruments) without coming to terms with the fundamental spirit generative of these externals, etc.' (1982:30). Another example of adaptation that comes to mind is

when one tries to explain Eucharistic sacrifice by looking for superficial comparative elements between it and African sacrifice without addressing the question of whether the Eucharist as a sacrifice is meaningful to the people concerned. Adaptation thus fails to get the Gospel inside the culture and is only happy to 'allow extrinsic, accidental, superficial changes in ways of being Christian' (Schineller 1990:17).

Strictly speaking, the interaction between Christian faith and culture through the model of adaptation is not inculturation but acculturation. The latter has the meaning of making contact between faith and culture that is limited to the externals (Chupungco 1989:25-26). The former has the meaning of not only making contact between faith and culture, but also weaving the Christian faith into the culture concerned.

The shallowness of the model of adaptation is not only an issue for theologians but also for the African hierarchy as well. African bishops, representing the whole of Africa and Madagascar at the Roman Synod in 1974, clearly came out against adaptation as an expression of interaction between the Christian faith and culture and opted for the concept of incarnation. In their declaration they stated that "the Bishops of Africa and Madagascar consider as being completely out-of-date, the so-called theology of adaptation. In its stead, they adopt the theology of incarnation" (quoted by Egbulen 1996:26). What implications does the model of incarnation have for inculturation?

9.2.2 Inculturation as incarnation

Incarnation is a technical term used to conceptualise the assumption of human nature by God in Jesus Christ. Through incarnation, God in Jesus Christ was able to exist, act and speak in human fashion. This event, according to the Christian faith, took place in history at a particular place, i.e. Palestine and in a particular culture, i.e. Jewish culture. Jesus weaved himself into the culture of the Jews, and through it communicated, ritualised and effected the salvation he had brought. It is possible to speak of the earthly ministry of Jesus because he 'adopted the cultural concepts, symbols and behaviour of his hearers. His cultural solidarity with the Palestinian communities of his day was a necessary

condition for communication with them' (Shorter 1988:80). Through his death and resurrection however, Christ ceased to be confined to Jewish culture because he transcended the limitation of time and space. 'Resurrection made it possible for him to identify explicitly with the cultures of every time and place, through the proclamation of the Gospel to every nation' (Shorter 1988:83). What this means is that after the resurrection, Christ continues to incarnate himself into every culture and does with the cultures he incarnates himself into what he did with Jewish culture, i.e. communicates, ritualises and effects salvation. In this way, inculturation becomes analogous to incarnation, hence the idea inculturation as incarnation. The concept of the continuous incarnation of Christ is fully endorsed by Vatican II in its constitution on the Church's missionary activity.⁵

If the Church is to be in a position to offer all men the mystery of salvation and the life brought by God, then it must implant itself among all these groups in the same way that Christ by his incarnation committed himself to the particular social and cultural circumstances of the men among whom he lived (AG⁶: 10).

Unfortunately, as we have seen above, when it comes to implementation, it is the adaptation model that the council prefers. There are, therefore, no directions from the council about incarnational inculturation of the liturgy. For now we must rely only on what theologians and liturgists have to say about it.

As it has already been pointed out, incarnational inculturation means the integration of the Gospel⁷ into the culture⁸ of a particular community so that the Gospel is expressed through the culture. Even though many authors use the phrase 'insertion of the Gospel

⁵ Pope John Paul II also endorses incarnation as a theological category for understanding inculturation. 'Just as "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us"...so too the Good News, the Word of Jesus Christ proclaimed to the nations, *must take root* in the life situation of the hearers of the Word. Inculturation is precisely the insertion of the Gospel message into cultures' (Ecclesia in Africa:45-46)

⁶ Ad Gentes

⁷ Here we do not only intend the Gospel as Bible but the totality of the Christian faith which includes 'catechesis, liturgy and sacraments, church art and architecture, church structure, the mission of the church, prayer and spirituality, and Christian theology' (Schineller 1990:83).

⁸ Culture includes world view, social patterns of interaction, rituals, language, concepts, symbols, instruments, art, etc.

into the culture' (cf. Crollius 1986:34, Shorter 1988:11; Schineller 1990:42), which we have preferred to call integration or weaving of the Gospel into culture, no one that I have come across clearly explains what it means. From what has been said about this phrase, it seems to mean a process through which the two are indissolubly linked so that even though we speak of two things, i.e. culture and Gospel, they are in practice indistinguishable. As expressed by Chupungco, integration of the Gospel into culture 'allows people to experience in liturgical celebration a "cultural event" whose language and ritual forms they are able to identify as elements of their culture' (1989:29).

Seen in this way, incarnational inculturation does not only help to make the Gospel relevant and meaningful, but it also entrenches it permanently because it is inextricably connected with culture. Indeed, relating culture to the Gospel through the model of incarnation seems to be the only way to make sure that it survives because, 'by making it a people's religion and a way of life..., no enemy or hostility can ever succeed in supplanting or weakening [it]' (Walligo 1986:13). It is for this reason that the attempt, in this work, to relate the Eucharist to the Xhosa culture will be done according to the model of incarnation instead of the adaptation model.

9.3 Points of consideration for an inculturated understanding of the Eucharist

It would be a good thing to consider the whole of the Eucharistic liturgy for inculturation, but given that our presentation and analysis of the Eucharist focused mainly on its sacrificial aspect, we will limit our suggestions for its inculturated understanding to this aspect. One major point of dispute between the Eucharistic and Xhosa sacrifices is the question of the object or recipient of the sacrifice, which is God for the former and ancestors for the latter. Our first suggestion about an inculturated understanding of the Eucharist will seek to explain how ancestors can be regarded as part of the Eucharistic sacrifice without being seen as competing with God.

In the previous chapter we noted that the material elements of the Eucharistic sacrifice, i.e. bread and wine may cause problems for a Xhosa person to understand the Eucharist

as sacrifice because they are foreign to his/her world. In the light of the incarnational model of inculturation we shall argue for culturally meaningful sacrificial material elements. In an attempt to further make the Eucharist meaningful as a sacrifice in Xhosa context, we will raise the question of the frequency with which it is celebrated and the content of the Eucharistic prayers, and then proceed to suggest viable alternatives.

The suggestions we will make about the inclusion of ancestors in the Eucharistic sacrifice as well as the introduction of culturally meaningful material elements for sacrifice will have implications for the way the Eucharist is celebrated. Thus our fourth suggestion will have to do with how Eucharistic celebration should be carried out, if the ancestors are to be meaningfully included in it. Lastly we will present a variety of considerations under a general topic for further possibilities of rendering Eucharistic sacrifice more meaningful to Xhosa people.

9.3.1 The place of ancestors in the Eucharist

In chapter 7 we noted two groups of Xhosa Christians whose practice of sacrifice appeared to be problematic. There is one group that consciously denies the value of ancestors and consequently the value of sacrifice to them. Yet as we have tried to show, this group unconsciously still has regard for ancestors because it continues to make animal killings that are associated with traditional ancestral sacrifice, even though they do not call it sacrifice but *Idinila* (a dinner). The other group consciously participates in both traditions of sacrifice because it sees one tradition as catering for one type of needs while the other caters for another type of needs. As expressed by Tlhagale, the understanding this group has is that ancestral sacrifice is for 'health, well-being, peace, reconciliation, favour, while Christ's sacrifice is for the forgiveness of sins committed by humankind' (1998:14).

The presupposition of these two approaches is that there is opposition and dichotomy between God and ancestors. Our attempt to come up with an inculturated Eucharistic sacrifice is to end this schizophrenic behaviour, where a person changes personalities

according to the type of sacrifice he/she is involved in i.e. if one is participating in Xhosa sacrifice one becomes Xhosa, and when one is participating in Eucharistic sacrifice, one becomes a Christian. Our aim is to marry the two in a deep and meaningful way, so that one can participate in one sacrifice as both Xhosa and Christian. My argument here is that if the ancestors can be openly included in the Eucharistic sacrifice, then there would be no need for Xhosa Catholics to be involved in two types of sacrifices, i.e. the ancestral and the Eucharistic sacrifices.

In Chapter 7 we noted that Xhosa Christians who appeal to ancestors through sacrifice explain this practice as being the same as honouring the saints and appealing to them for their prayers and intercession to God. Even if this argument were to be granted (and we shall argue here that it be granted), Xhosa sacrifice would still be perceived as different because it is performed separately from Eucharistic sacrifice. Thus though the object of Xhosa and the Eucharistic sacrifice may be the same, their separate performance makes them different.

We want to suggest here that the appeal to the ancestors should be made in the context of the Eucharistic sacrifice so that there is one sacrifice that includes both God and the ancestors. Our line of argument for the inclusion of ancestors in the Eucharistic sacrifice is that like the saints, ancestors are with God, and therefore it is legitimate to include⁹ them.

9.3.1.1 Ancestors as with God

In chapter 7, we argued that the comparison between saints and ancestors does not hold because the two concepts, understood in their respective traditions, do not have the same meaning. Thus there cannot be a cross transfer of meanings between the two concepts without a reinterpretation of at least one of them. Some authors, like Soga and his followers (cf. chapter 7), have taken the liberty to suggest that the ancestors, like the

⁹ It should be noted that they are not included as objects of the Eucharistic sacrifice, which is God only, but as people who by their lives have given witness to God and on whose intercession we can rely because we know them.

saints, are near God and thus justifying sacrificial appeal to them without offering theological grounds for regarding them as being with God. Like Soga and his followers, I want to suggest that ancestors are with God, and therefore it makes sense to appeal to God through them. Unlike Soga, however, I want to go on and provide theological reasons for making this claim.

The principle of God's universal salvific will and the universal significance of Christ's saving power (cf. Nkurunziza 1989:257) is one theological argument that can justify appeal to ancestors in the Christian context. Stated briefly, the principle of God's universal salvific will, i.e. the will of God for all people to be saved, is that God achieves the purpose of saving all people through God's grace operating among them. This grace, however, finds its fullest expression and realisation in the person of Christ, so that the full knowledge of God and total realisation of salvation is found in Christ. Nevertheless those people of other religions who through no fault of their own did not know Christ, but still did their best in the practice of their religion and led good lives, thus co-operating with God's grace, can be said to be with God ¹⁰.

God's salvific will and Christ's universal saving power provide grounds for regarding Xhosa ancestors as being with God. Depending on the view of life after death one adopts, one can argue for the possibility of the Xhosa ancestors as still being able to know and to love God even after death. One such view that would allow for this

¹⁰ Even though some may try, it is very difficult to deny the possibility of Xhosa ancestors having co-operated with God's grace and thus attaining to holiness because the concept of holiness as we have it in Christian tradition is informed to a large extent by European experience and mentality. Woodward tells us, for example, that in the present calendar of saints, religious and priests far outnumber married people, which according to him indicates that celibate religious life is viewed by the Roman church as a better life for holiness than marriage and family life is (cf. 1990:337-346).

In Xhosa mentality, on the other hand, marriage life and performance of one's duties towards one's family is the noblest thing to do and is one of the major considerations for granting a person the status of an ancestor. I suspect that if Xhosa experience had any say in declaring one a saint or as being with God, marriage life would still be one of the major considerations. Until the Second Vatican Council, there was a general tendency in the Catholic Church to see flight from the world and solitary life as the most conducive means of attaining to holiness, whereas as we have seen, among the Xhosa religiousness is best expressed in the context of communal interaction and reciprocity. Thus the way of responding to God's grace is culturally determined and thus there can be no one way of absolutely determining who has or who has not responded to God's grace.

possibility is the one that sees death not as an end of one's ability to make a choice for God but as a moment after which one can still grow into 'a new and complete relationship with God' (Perham 1980:101). In this view, Christ's saving power is seen as continuing to be effective even for those who died without the knowledge and acceptance of Christ. According to this view, Christ 'continues to preach the good news to our African ancestors' who in turn are able 'to respond to his call' (Fashole-Luke 1974:217). One should also grant the possibility that some Xhosa ancestors, both during their life time and after their death, may not have positively responded to God's grace and may thus not be with God but are in hell¹¹ and thus their inclusion in the Eucharistic sacrifice would be in vain.

In the early Church it was the local community which, from its experience of the deceased, accorded him/her the status of a saint by popular demand (cf. Kraus 1995:635, *New Catholic Encyclopaedia* 1967:55). In a similar fashion, I want to argue that those ancestors whom the Xhosa local community, or family, perceives to be with God, according to their own experience of them, must be assumed to be with God and therefore justified to be included in the Eucharistic sacrifice. If this could be granted, this would make Xhosa Christians similar to the Eastern Christians who according to Pato usually include invocation to their own dead parents when requesting prayers and assistance of the saints (cf. 1980:51).

Even those who during their life time have been known not to be leading a good or virtuous life, could it not be argued that after prayers and Eucharistic sacrifice have been offered on their behalf, they are fully¹² united with God and can thus in turn be invoked

¹¹ The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines hell as a 'definitive self-exclusion from communion with God and the blessed' (CCC. 1033), which results in suffering or punishment that lasts for ever (cf. CCC. 1035). Among various interpretations of hell by theologians (cf. Crockett 1996) the one that appeals to me is the one that explains hell as total self-destruction or 'absolute death' (Pinnock 1996:137) or annihilation. Thus to speak of ancestors who may be in hell is to speak of ancestors that are non-existent. Consequently, the ancestors that are included in the Eucharistic sacrifice are those that are with God and those in purgatory.

¹² The qualification 'fully' serves to clarify that even though the souls in purgatory are undergoing purification, they have a partial experience of God, which becomes perfect after the process of purification has taken its unspecified course.

as intercessors and fellow worshippers of God? Crock certainly thinks that this is possible: 'These same saints in heaven join in their prayers with ours, with our almsgiving and other good works, and especially by the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in [on] behalf of the suffering Souls. And in their turn the suffering souls, sooner or later, will make a generous return to their friends and benefactors here below' (1955:231). If that cannot be granted, then the practice of praying for the dead has no meaning.

There are, therefore, three reasons for saying that ancestors are with God. The first is the universal salvific will of God, which enables those who lived and died outside the Christian religion to be regarded as being with God now. The second reason is the personal experience of the deceased, which leads one to believe that they are with God. Thirdly there is the practice of praying for the dead, who in turn, after being united with God, intercede for the living.

If the arguments for regarding Xhosa ancestors as being with God stands, then their inclusion in the Eucharistic sacrifice should not be a problem because uncanonised saints, often referred to as 'all the saints who have done your will throughout the ages', (Eucharistic prayer No. 2) are included in the Eucharistic sacrifice. Given the possibility that some ancestors may not be with God, it would be safe not to include ancestors in the Eucharistic sacrifice by name, but by lineage or clan name. After all, as we have noted in the analysis of Xhosa sacrifice in chapter 6, it is not necessary that ancestors be invoked individually by personal name. Having established the grounds for regarding ancestors as being with God and thus justifying their inclusion in the Eucharistic sacrifice, we now proceed to explain in some detail why and how they should be included in the Eucharistic sacrifice.

9.3.1.2 Reasons for including ancestors in Eucharistic sacrifice

The reasons for which the saints are included in the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice give one a clue about the reasons for including the ancestors. The preface to the Eucharistic prayer seems to suggest that the purpose of including the saints is to be one

with them in the act of praising God: 'And so we join the angels and the saints in proclaiming your glory' (Preface). The content of the Eucharistic prayer itself further suggests another reason for including the saints, i.e. to honour them. 'We honour Mary...We honour Joseph her husband, the apostles and martyrs...we honour Linus, Cletus' (Eucharistic prayer No. 1) for allowing God's grace to operate and bear fruit in their lives. In addition to honouring them, it also has the intention of requesting their prayers and intercession, hence the request 'may their merits and prayers gain us your constant help and intercession' (Eucharistic prayer No. 1).

Similarly, ancestors should be included in the Eucharistic sacrifice for the purpose of inviting them as fellow creatures to join the living in praising and thanking God. Secondly, as people through whom God has graced us with life and other gifts, the purpose of including them is to honour and thank them for the role they played in the lives of the living. They must also be thanked for the role they continue to play, i.e. being the source of unity for the living and being custodians of values and order. Thirdly as people who have lived with us and are now with God, we would ask them to pray for us to God for our needs, both material and spiritual. Having explained the purpose of their inclusion we now proceed to explain how they may be included.

9.3.1.3 Manner of including the ancestors in Eucharistic sacrifice¹³

Ancestors can be included at the beginning of the Mass to become part of the celebration with the living. This can take the form of invocation, which may be done by the most senior member of the congregation. They may again be included in the part of the Eucharistic prayer that remembers and honours the saints. For those ancestors who are still thought to be in need of prayers before they can be with God, they may be included in the part of the Eucharistic prayer that remembers and prays for the dead. Depending on the nature and size of the community, the ancestors may be named, by surname, by clan

¹³ Our line of argument is that the Eucharistic sacrifice is not offered to the ancestors but to God and the ancestors are included in it as being in communion with us in offering the Eucharistic sacrifice to God.

name or referred to in general as 'our ancestors'.¹⁴ This is suggested in view of Bigalke's observation in his research among the Ndlambe that the ancestors named depend on the constitution of the congregation (cf. 1969:131).

Another significant way of including the ancestors in the Eucharistic sacrifice would be to 'offer a piece of the consecrated bread and some of the consecrated wine to the ancestors as in a libation' (Egbulen 1996:92). The intention behind this act would be to invite the ancestors to share the sacrifice in communion with the living. Given the Catholic tradition of belief in the real presence of Christ in consecrated Eucharistic elements, however, and that inculturation is not yet fully accepted, this suggestion may not go down well with most Catholics. It may be seen as an act of disrespect for the consecrated elements.

As Egbulen rightly observes, however, 'libation is not just pouring or throwing away consecrated elements. In this unique ritual, the heavens and the earth come into mutual embrace; the pilgrim church and the triumphant church together celebrate and share the ultimate meal of salvation (1996:122). The question of sharing sacrifice with the ancestors raises a question about the food elements used for Eucharistic sacrifice. Does it make sense to offer libation to the ancestors with foreign food elements like wine? To that question we now turn.

9.4 Food elements for inculturated Eucharistic sacrifice

According to Kabasele, the fact that today we are using unleavened bread and red wine for mass is purely historical. He argues that while it is true that Jesus used wheat bread, possibly unleavened because that was the type of bread used for the Passover meal, there is no evidence that communities of the early Church used unleavened wheat bread. 'What was important for the early Christians, as far as eucharistic elements was [were] concerned, was the "bread" and not the unleavened nature of bread' (Kabasele 1998:51).

¹⁴ In traditional setting, appeal to ancestors was limited to one's kinship ancestors, but as we saw in chapter 6, the change in the social structure, brought about by modernity, has led to the ancestors being extended

He further argues that there is no theological necessity that one should use unleavened wheat bread only.

It is, however, not because of the historical contingency of unleavened wheat bread that Kabasele opposes the universal enforcement of its use but he opposes it for theological reasons. He argues that wheat bread and wine were the ordinary food items of Jesus' time, familiar to ordinary people. Jesus took what was ordinary and transformed it into his body and blood. Kabasele's argument is that even today, the Eucharist must be understood as a transformation of what is ordinary and for many countries wheat bread and wine are not the ordinary food items. He argues that it does not make sense to say in the offertory prayer: *we offer God fruits of the earth and work of human hands* when what is offered is foreign to people offering it and may even be more expensive. He therefore suggests that people should be allowed to use elements that form part of the local food for the Eucharist.¹⁵

If we were to follow Kabasele's argument, for the Xhosa, in their traditional setting, such elements would be bread made from maize and Xhosa beer (*umqombothi*). In the modern setting, however, that would not apply because wheat bread has virtually replaced maize bread. When it comes to the use of wine and *umqombothi*, it is also difficult to determine with certainty which of the two is more frequently used than the other among the Xhosa. What I know for sure, is that *umqombothi* is no longer an everyday alcoholic drink that it used to be in Xhosa traditional setting. It is today used in ritual and sacrificial ceremonies and is usually supplemented with a large supply of modern alcoholic drinks like brandy and beer.

Wine on the other hand, although it is not a popular drink among ordinary Xhosa folks, seems to be more frequently used than *umqombothi*, but compared to other types of bottled, tinned and cartoned alcoholic drinks, it is less frequently used. Thus if frequency

beyond family boundaries. It is now possible to regard departed members of a particular parish as ancestors to those who worshipped with them.

of use is the criterion for the choice of alcoholic drink to be used at Mass in the Xhosa context, the first choice would have to be the bottled and tinned beer or the cartoned sorghum beer and the second choice would be wine, while *umqombothi* would be the last choice.

Yet the choice is not as simple as this. There is a problem with non-traditional alcoholic drinks. The main problem in using wine and other related alcoholic drinks is that they are still regarded as foreign, hence they are to this day called *utywala bomlungu* (a white person's liquor) as opposed to *utywala besiXhosa* (Xhosa liquor). As we are suggesting that ancestors should share in the Eucharistic sacrifice, it makes no sense to offer them something they have never tasted in their lives. Moreover, wine and other related alcoholic drinks are perceived among the Xhosa today as a curse because their use has brought about addiction to liquor, which has resulted in husbands spending money that should be supporting the family in buying *utywala bomlungu* and destroying their lives through excessive drinking. This is also fast extending to the youth, who are making a habit of drinking *utywala bomlungu* and getting addicted to it with the same results of self destruction and lack of respect and co-operation with their parents.

Thus apart from wine and other modern alcoholic drinks not being indigenous drinks, which were used for sacrificial purpose, they have become destructive among the Xhosa. One only has to listen to the prayers of mothers and married women during the prayers of the faithful in Church to ascertain their pain, caused by *utywala bomlungu* to their families. I think therefore, that Xhosa beer would be more meaningful because, first of all, unlike these drinks, which are experienced by ordinary folks as contrary to the theme of the Eucharist, i.e. unity, but instead are associated with the destruction of families and individuals, Xhosa beer is still perceived as bringing people together.

Secondly it is a food item that has been traditionally used for sacrifice. It would render more intelligible the statement that what is being offered is the 'fruit of the earth and

¹⁵ Another author who presents strong theological arguments against use of foreign food elements in the Eucharist is Uzukwu E (1980) 'Food and drink in Africa, and the Christian Eucharist' in *Afer* Vol. 22, No. 6 December 1980, p. 370-385.

work of human hands' because maize, which is one of the main ingredients of Xhosa beer, is locally produced and continues to be part of the staple diet. Furthermore, the beer itself would have been prepared by the community with its hands. As Egbulen observes, "fruits of the earth and work of human hands" refers to the land and the hands of the people that assemble to worship (1996:66).

With regard to wheat bread, there would be no problem in continuing to use it because even more than before, bread has become a common food item among the Xhosa. Perhaps ordinary baked bread would be more ordinary and familiar than the small white hosts which in my experience are even more expensive. If one were to go this way, one would need to provide an explanation because people have become used to the small hosts. If there is no explanation, it may lead to confusion and even rejection.

The position in favour of retaining the use of unleavened bread and wine argues that the use of these elements ensures a symbolic and historical link 'with the rite instituted by Christ. The Eucharist cannot be reduced to the cultural circumstances of everyday' (Shorter 1988:65). Shorter is joined in this observation by Fenwick who states that bread and wine are the primary Eucharistic symbols 'which should in normal circumstances be used' (1995:161). Canon 924 clearly states that bread and wine are, to use scholastic language, the matter of the Eucharist. It thus appears that the use of bread and wine is not only a matter of discipline but also a matter of faith. In view of the above arguments in favour of the use of local food items for the Eucharist, however, one wonders why the use of bread and wine should be seen as a matter of faith.

9.5 Consideration for less frequent celebration of Eucharistic sacrifice

In chapter 8 we noted that one of the major differences between Xhosa and Eucharistic sacrifices is that the latter is performed frequently, even daily, while the former is performed once in a while. We raised a question about the impact of the daily celebration of the Eucharist on its value as sacrifice. We further noted that a Xhosa person coming from a background where sacrifice is a once in a while event would have a problem in understanding the Eucharist as sacrifice on account of its frequency. Thus,

the attempt to offer an inculturated understanding of the Eucharist must address the question of frequency.

In his historical consideration of the frequent celebration of the Mass, Baldovin observes that already in the biblical era, the breaking of the bread seems 'to be a daily domestic form of celebration' (1991:101). He further documents evidence of frequent weekday celebration of the Eucharist in the subsequent centuries. His conclusion is that for the most part, this frequency was due to 'various motivations', like celebrating the anniversary of the martyrs' death, than doing it as 'a matter of course' (1991:102).

Baldovin's final conclusion is that in spite of the evidence of weekday celebration of the Eucharist, from the early Church up to the eve of the reformation, 'Sunday is the common denominator for frequency of celebration in the whole church' (1991:101). If Baldovin's conclusion is anything to go by, it means that where weekday celebration of the Eucharist creates a problem, as it would for a Xhosa person, it may be dispensed with because it is not a matter of course that it should be celebrated daily.

It is, however, his theological reasons more than his historical reasons that I think provide grounds for one to consider reducing or stopping daily Eucharistic celebration if it proves to be a hindrance to the understanding of the Eucharist as a sacrifice. His contention is that daily celebration of the Eucharist is based on an unacceptable absolutisation of the role of the priest and the presence of Christ in the Eucharistic species, much to the depreciation of the value and role of the community in the Eucharistic celebration (cf. 1991:104). When one is operating from this theological position, even if people do not actively participate, either on account of being too few or on account of lack of attention and enthusiasm, Mass would still be valid because the priest who effects the sacramental presence of Christ is there.

Baldovin seems to argue that the sacramental presence of Christ in the species is not for its own sake but for the sake of the people. For this reason he concludes that 'the Eucharist ought to be celebrated when and if it builds up the church as the body of Christ'

(1991:108) and he seems to doubt if that can happen in daily Masses for the following reasons:

1. Daily Mass is a watered down celebration because it cannot be fully prepared for as a celebration.
2. It runs the risk of individualising what is primarily a community celebration.
3. It runs the risk of making one unable to differentiate between daily Mass and Sunday Mass, 'which ought to be the crown of the week' (1991:109).

From Baldovin's and other liturgists' observations (cf. Williams 1978:34-35, Chupungco 1995:107-128, White 1995:145-146) it appears that even within the Catholic tradition, daily celebration of the Eucharist is problematic. It is also clear that there are no strong theological reasons for it to be maintained at all cost. It seems reasonable, therefore, to suggest that where daily Eucharistic celebration blurs the true nature of the Eucharist as explained above, and as it would for a Xhosa person, one could consider reducing it or stopping it completely.

Chupungco suggests that the alternative would be to develop a less elaborate order of the Mass that would distinguish weekday Masses from Sunday Mass (cf. 1995:118-124). I doubt if that would solve the problem, because theologically, Mass is the same regardless of whether the rite is elaborate or not.¹⁶ Baldovin's suggestion that daily Masses could be replaced with another form of public prayer sounds better (cf. 1991:109). After all, Eucharistic sacrifice is not the only event for Christian gathering, just as a sacrificial ritual among the Xhosa is not the only means of social bonding and communication with the ancestors. Occasional brewing and drinking of beer among the Xhosa is regarded as an act of bonding among the living in the presence of ancestors.

¹⁶ Traditionally, elaborate Masses or 'high Masses' were distinguished from low Masses by a broader participation of ministers, e.g. sub-deacons, deacons, servers, etc. and the participation of the laity by singing. According to Crichton however, even this distinction no longer holds because 'the *Ordo Missae* of 1969 emphasizes community participation of the people and admits singing at any and every kind of celebration' (1986:366).

Staunch Catholics may be suspicious of the call for less frequent celebration of the Eucharist and think that one is seeking to imitate the Protestants who celebrate the Lord's Supper once in a while (cf. Bishop 1950:71-73). It may also appear that one is not appreciative of the value of Eucharistic devotion for personal spiritual life and holiness. Thus in bringing this discussion to a close, I want to allay the fears which the call for less frequent Eucharistic celebration might possibly raise.

Firstly, the call for less frequent Eucharistic celebration is not made with the intention to depreciate the value and importance of the Eucharist. In fact it is the opposite that is intended because, as Baldovin rightly states, 'if everyday is expected to be a feast, which the Eucharist is, then no day will be truly festal' (1991:110). To paraphrase him, if the Eucharist is a daily sacrifice, for a Xhosa, for whom sacrifice is a once in a while event, no Eucharist will be truly sacrificial. The call for less frequent celebration, therefore, contrary to the perception that it will reduce its value, is intended to save its sacrificial value.¹⁷ Secondly, it is not my intention to deny or downplay the validity of personal Eucharistic devotion, which for many saints was a source of holiness (cf. Woodward 1991:164,232,238).

It is, however, my intention to point out that the Eucharist is primarily intended for the community and where personal devotion seems to compromise this primary aim, necessary steps should be taken to restore the right balance. As already noted above, there are various other forms of public prayer encouraged by the Vatican II constitution on the liturgy, like Bible service (cf. SC:35), praying the divine Office, viz. praying the psalms (cf. SC:100), which can be used in place of weekday Masses. To these, one could add praying the rosary, the stations of the cross and other locally developed forms of public prayer like Bible sharing in small Christian communities, *imvuselelo* (wakes), etc. It would, however, be pastorally irresponsible simply to drop the weekday Masses

¹⁷ In fact, in view of the shortage of priests, I would go as far as to suggest that it would be better for a priest to celebrate one Mass or at the most two Masses on a Sunday so that he and the people can give the best to it. It would be better for people to experience a festive celebration once in a while, than to have a watered down celebration on a regular basis.

without having these alternatives first in place. It is thus suggested that where the alternatives are not yet in place, the practice of daily Mass should not be dropped.

9.6 Other considerations for an inculturated understanding of Eucharistic sacrifice.

We complete this chapter by noting a few other considerations for an inculturated understanding of the Eucharistic sacrifice, which, because of their brevity, cannot be dealt with under separate topics.

9.6.1 Eucharistic prayer to include concrete and relevant petitions

The first consideration is for the Eucharistic prayer to include concrete and relevant requests in its petitions. It is true that such specific requests can be catered for in the prayers of the faithful, but it would be meaningful to include them in the Eucharistic prayer because it would give the certainty that the sacrifice is being offered for these needs as well. Mention of the following needs should be made in the Eucharistic prayer:

- Prayer for healing
- Prayer for protection against evil spirits
- Prayer for rain and fertility of the land
- Prayer for employment
- Prayer for peace and harmony in the families and entire nation.

It is not suggested here that the content of the present Eucharistic prayer be done away with, but that it should include the needs stated above. It is not a question of either/or, but a question of being comprehensive.

9.6.2 *Camagu* response after consecration

In chapter 6 it was stated that at the bellowing of the sacrificial victim, which as I argued is the peak of Xhosa sacrifice, people respond jubilantly with the word *Camagu*. This word has the meaning of 'be propitiated' (Bigalke 1969:110), 'be appeased' (Olivier 1976:23), 'Blessings' (Hammond-Tooke 1978:144) and 'give us your good will' (Pauw

1994:21). Among the Xhosa Catholics, certainly those among whom I have worked, there is a practice of responding after the consecration words with the words: *Camagu siyavuma Nkosi nguwo umzimba weNkosi/lilo igazi leNkosi*, which mean 'Blessings, we agree, it is the body of the Lord/it is the blood of the Lord'.

The official teaching of the Catholic Church is that the pronouncement of the consecration words marks the moment at which Christ begins to be present sacramentally (cf. CCC 1377) and so one could argue that it is the peak of the Eucharistic sacrifice. It is, therefore, here suggested that the practice of saying '*Camagu*' after consecration be kept and even encouraged because as in Xhosa sacrifice, it is a way of indicating the peak of the sacrificial action.

9.6.3 Communion as *Ukushwama* and not *Ukwamkela* (to receive)

In chapter 6 it was stated that one of the most important ritual elements of Xhosa sacrifice is the ritual tasting of the sacrificial portion of meat, called *intsonyama*, as well as the ritual tasting of *umqombothi* (Xhosa beer) in cases of solemn sacrifices. This act of ritually tasting the sacrificial portion of meat and Xhosa beer is called *ukushwama*. As we noted in chapter 6, it is done only by the lineage members in the case of solemn sacrifices, and by the beneficiary of the sacrifice in the case of birth, initiation and contingent sacrifices (cf. Bigalke 1969:133, Olivier 1976:23). Great care is taken to make sure that only the lineage members or the beneficiary of the sacrifice perform the act of *ukushwama*.

In Eucharistic sacrifice the word used for communion is *ukwamkela* (to receive). It is here suggested that in homilies, hymns, in catechism and prayers, the word *ukushwama* be substituted for *ukwamkela* because it is a Xhosa word for rightful participation in the sacrifice. The use of this word would help to entrench the awareness of the sacrificial character of the Eucharist among participants. It would also save Xhosa Catholics, in cases of Masses where non-Catholics are part of the congregation, the embarrassment of having to tell non-Catholics and those who are not in proper disposition that they may not

receive communion. The use of the word *ukushwama* would make all participants know, without being told in detail and made to feel rejected, that it is those who are Catholics¹⁸ and in proper disposition who may receive

9.6.4 Manner of performing sacrifice at home

Where an occasion for traditional sacrifice arises in a Xhosa Catholic family, the Eucharist, in which the ancestors of the family will be included, should be celebrated in the manner suggested above at the home concerned. Whatever animal is slaughtered, it must be slaughtered solely for the purpose of providing the meal after the Eucharistic sacrifice. What this means is that the animal will be slaughtered without any ritual, because the sacrificial ritual will have taken place at Mass. What we are suggesting here is something similar to the Eucharistic celebration of the early Church, which took place in a homely situation and probably included a real meal (cf. Acts 2:46, 1Cor. 11:17-34).

This should not be difficult to implement because, as Manona (1981:35) and Pauw (1975:177) observe, some sacrifices like *ukukhapha* sacrifices have been stripped of their sacrificial significance and the slaughtered animal merely serves to provide for the meal. What is better, in my suggestion, is that while no sacrificial significance is attached to the animal, the sacrificial meaning of the event is not suppressed or forgotten, but is expressed, albeit with a new meaning, in the Eucharistic sacrifice.

9.6.5 Joyous and festive mood

As we stated in chapter 6, Xhosa sacrifice is characterised by a mood of joy and festivity. Therefore, if the Eucharist is to be experienced as sacrifice among the Xhosa, it must have this feature. Without sacrificing its due solemnity, it must be a joyous occasion that includes interaction among the participants, lively singing and dancing. Part of encouraging joyful and lively participation in the Eucharistic sacrifice is to sing songs

¹⁸ Although it is the practice of the Church to exclude non-Catholics from communion, exceptions are often made in ecumenical contexts. My concern here is not with such exceptions but with the normal practice of the Church.

whose words, melody and rhythm draw from the culture and experience of the Xhosa people.

9.7 Conclusion and observations

It is hoped that the arguments presented here have demonstrated that the survival of the Christian faith depends on it being weaved into the local culture. We call this process of weaving the Gospel into the culture 'inculturation'. Two models of inculturation have been explored in this chapter, i.e. the adaptation and the incarnation models. The official teaching of the Catholic Church as expressed mainly in the documents of Vatican II endorses both of these models. When it comes to practice, however, it is according to the former that the implementation is carried out.

At the level of theological discussion, the model of adaptation has been found to be wanting. The fundamental objection against it is that it does not help to integrate the Gospel deep enough into the local culture. For the most part it remains at the level of externals. Among the authors read for this chapter, there is unanimity that the success of inculturation lies with the model of incarnation, which helps to indissolubly link the Gospel and culture. In view of its depth, we have, therefore, chosen incarnation as the model for integrating the Eucharist into the Xhosa culture.

First, it was necessary to clarify fundamental theological presuppositions for the possibility of integrating the Eucharist, especially its sacrificial aspect, into Xhosa culture. We thus began with the question of the relationship between God and the ancestors, the former being the object of Eucharistic sacrifice and the latter being the object of Xhosa sacrifice. Xhosa Christians who offer sacrifice to the ancestors insist that it is ultimately to God, through the ancestors, that they offer sacrifice because the ancestors are near God. Our contribution has been to offer a theological argument for viewing the ancestors as being with God and thus able to intercede for us to God in the context of the Eucharistic sacrifice whose object is God.

In our theological consideration we began by appealing to faith in the universal salvific will of God, arguing that the ancestors who practised their own religion must be presumed to have been given grace by God to live according to Gods' will and may now be presumed to be with God. While there is a possibility that some ancestors may not be with God, there are also strong grounds for asserting that many Xhosa ancestors are with God.

Having established that the ancestors can be viewed as being with God, and, therefore, like the saints, may be included in the Eucharistic sacrifice for the same purpose that the saints are included, we went on to suggest how they may be included. This is where we ventured to suggest inculturated ways of including them. We suggested, for example, that they may be invited through invocation, that they be named in the Eucharistic prayer and that they may participate in communion through libation.

The rest of the other suggestions were concerned with the Eucharist itself, i.e. the food elements that may be used instead of white small hosts and wine, the frequency of its celebration, the content of its prayers and the alternative expressions for the catechism and the hymns. These suggestions were presented for the purpose of bringing out the sacrificial aspects of the Eucharist in a meaningful way for a Xhosa person. Thus our suggestions here, while they do not totally exclude the practical or the liturgical dimension of the Eucharist, are mainly concerned with its meaning, or its theological dimension. We hope that we have been clear enough in our suggestions and that those whose task it is to put them in practice will have a clearer direction.

CHAPTER 10

GENERAL CONCLUSION

10.1 Introduction

During the course of this work, I have concluded each chapter with a résumé of the points covered in it as well as my own comments and observations about them. These chapters however, are not independent units, but are related to each other and build on each other. The task of this general conclusion is to show how these chapters connect and to make final observations about the contents of this work as a whole.

This work was inspired by the desire to make the Eucharist, especially its sacrificial aspect, meaningful to Xhosa people in terms of its understanding and relevance. To achieve this purpose, it was necessary to have a comprehensive knowledge of both the Eucharistic and Xhosa sacrifices. So we began by looking at the Eucharistic sacrifice, starting from the Old Testament as a background, through the New Testament, the Fathers, medieval and post-Tridentine periods up to the modern period. It was discovered that while there is a basic continuity in the understanding of the Eucharistic sacrifice in these periods, there is some variation in terms of emphasis.

We proceeded to look at Xhosa sacrifice, both in its traditional and modern settings. Like the Eucharistic sacrifice under different periods, the understanding of Xhosa sacrifice in these two settings also revealed continuity and discontinuity. With the full picture of both traditions of sacrifice in view, we went on to compare them. It was this comparison that enabled us to explore possibilities of an inculturated understanding and practice of the Eucharistic sacrifice among the Xhosa.

10.2 Eucharistic sacrifice in historical perspective

It seems to us that it is the New Testament that offers the most comprehensive view of the Eucharistic sacrifice. Our analysis showed that almost all the intentions of sacrifice,

i.e. propitiation, communion, thanksgiving and mutual responsibility among participants are present in New Testament Eucharistic sacrifice. The periods subsequent to the New Testament have tended to highlight one or two aspects, much to the neglect of the other aspects. It was noted in our coverage of the Fathers, for example, that for the most part they saw the Eucharist as a sacrifice of praise and as an inspiration for good Christian behaviour and mutual concern among the participants. The Middle Ages distinguished itself by highlighting the propitiatory character of the Eucharistic sacrifice, and as we noted, much to the neglect of its other legitimate aspects.

The period after the Middle Ages onwards has been characterised by a tendency to react to what was perceived as the exaggerations of the Middle Ages about the propitiatory character of the Eucharistic sacrifice. This is particularly true of some theologians like Bermejo (1985), who question propitiation as a theologically valid category of understanding the Eucharistic sacrifice. Some theologians, like Moloney (1995), while not completely rejecting the notion of propitiation, have called for a new interpretation of this notion. The period after the Middle Ages has also been characterised by the attempt to strike a balanced view that takes other aspects of Eucharistic sacrifice into account. This is particularly true of the magisterial teachings, which follow the pattern of starting off by affirming the teaching of Trent and proceed to highlight the other aspects of the Eucharistic sacrifice.

This historical and systematic presentation of the theology of the Eucharistic sacrifice has helped us to gain a comprehensive knowledge of the subject. From this we can determine what to render meaningful when we try to relate the Eucharistic sacrifice to Xhosa people. To relate this sacrifice to Xhosa people presupposes a knowledge of who the Xhosa people are. Thus in addition to the knowledge about the Eucharistic sacrifice itself, it became necessary to distinguish the Xhosa from the rest of the other tribes in South Africa in terms of their identity, world view and practice and understanding of sacrifice.

10.3 Xhosa Cosmology

Of great significance in the Xhosa world view or cosmology for the subject of this work, i.e. sacrifice, is the notion of God and ancestors. The study of Xhosa cosmology revealed that while Xhosa people in their traditional setting believe in God, the God they believe in is not the object of their sacrifice but the ancestors are. It is hoped that the clarification made in this work about this point has contributed towards putting an end to the unfounded opinion that the Xhosa offered sacrifice to God, thus implying that they worshipped God. While it is appreciated that this assertion is made with the desire to make traditional Xhosa belief system appear compatible to the Christian faith, it has to be said that it does not correspond to the facts as we have tried to uncover them here.

We are not doing the Xhosa people any favour when we impose conceptions of God that they never had so that they can become acceptable to their western Christian counterparts. Instead, we are respecting the Xhosa people when we acknowledge that they had a different way of conceiving and relating with God, which through contact with Christianity has evolved from a non-personal to a personal relationship with God and which today makes them able to worship God. When we take this approach, we are also acknowledging the novelty brought by Christianity in the Xhosa conception of God. We are not pretending that the Xhosa people have always had the Christian concept of God and thus implying that Christian missionary endeavours have been a futile exercise.

What also became clear in the analysis of Xhosa cosmology was that while the Xhosa had ancestors as objects of sacrifice, they did not worship them. Except for one, all the authors consulted on Xhosa cosmology are unanimous that worship, as understood in the Christian sense, is not what the Xhosa people intend when offering sacrifice to the ancestors. In view of the aim of this work to relate the Eucharistic sacrifice to Xhosa people, this observation is of great significance.

If Xhosa people in their traditional setting did not worship ancestors, then it means that they do not have to make a great shift when coming into contact with the Christian faith, which teaches that only God is worshipped. In other words, they do not move from the

understanding of sacrifice as worshipping ancestors to sacrifice as worshipping God. Instead, the concept of worship in the context of sacrifice becomes a new element that can be easily accepted because it does not negate anything that the Xhosa people had believed and practised before.

10.4 Elements of Xhosa Sacrifice

The study and analysis of Xhosa sacrifice showed that while the other conventional intentions of sacrifice are found in it, it is largely characterised by the communion intention. In our exposition of the Eucharistic sacrifice, it also became clear that communion, meaning by that creating unity among the participants and a sense of common ownership of the sacrifice through active participation of all, is one of its fundamental intentions. As we saw, however, over the centuries this intention was almost wiped out by the clericalisation of the Eucharist, where the clergy ran the show and the people became only spectators who 'hear' the Mass for their private personal intentions. Vatican II's document on the liturgy and the vast amount of literature since Vatican II, both by the Magisterium and by theologians, have set out to motivate for the restoration of this intention. For the wider Church, the success of these reforms still remains to be seen, but for the Xhosa Catholics there is reason to be optimistic because their background naturally directs them towards this intention.

When it comes to what may be called the 'essence' of Xhosa sacrifice in its traditional setting, it is our conclusion that it consists in the invocation of the ancestors, which is called *ukunqula* and in the bellowing of the animal after it has been prodded in the naval with the sacrificial spear. In some cases it includes the burning of the suet, which is seen as the ancestors' way of having their share of the sacrifice. It is with reluctance that we make this conclusion because black people sometimes refer to the event of sacrifice as the act of spilling blood, *ukuphalaza igazi*, giving the impression that blood is the major constitutive element of sacrifice. Indeed some authors have explicitly stated that it is by means of blood that communication with ancestors is effected (cf. Tlhagale 1995:55).

From the material read on Xhosa sacrifice, however, there is no convincing evidence that blood is of great significance. As we noted in chapter 6, the one author who records the use of blood in Xhosa sacrifice only makes reference to it as being placed over night in the hut in which the beneficiary of the sacrifice sleeps and that the following morning it is given to dogs. The other elements that we have noted above are found in all the sacrifices that we have categorised as solemn sacrifice, and are reported by almost all the authors read. For this reason we consider them as essential elements of Xhosa sacrifice.

If this conclusion is granted, it means that Xhosa Catholics who still perform traditional sacrifice are not offending or undermining the unique sacrifice of Christ, because they are not spilling blood in competition with Christ's blood. It also means that one should not take it for granted that a Xhosa Catholic fully understands the Christian notion of salvation or forgiveness of sins through Christ's blood because he/she has no background that easily lends him/her to this understanding. These observations are made in view of the fact that our aim is to render the Eucharistic sacrifice meaningful to Xhosa Catholics, and the knowledge of these cultural nuances is important for the catechism on the Eucharist.

The practice of sacrifice in modern Xhosa setting is characterised by two tendencies, i.e. the unconscious integration of Christian and Xhosa sacrifice called *idinala*, and the separate practices of both Christian and Xhosa sacrifices by Xhosa Christians. As a way towards solving this problem of confused and dichotomous practice of sacrifice, we have in this work called for a conscious inclusion of the elements of Xhosa sacrifice in the Eucharistic sacrifice. The chapter on the comparison of Xhosa and Eucharistic sacrifice helped us to determine how major elements of Xhosa sacrifice can be used either as they are or as interpreted to make the Eucharistic sacrifice to be truly Xhosa while it remains truly Christian.

10.5 Inculturated Understanding of Eucharistic Sacrifice

The chapter on the inculturated understanding of the Eucharistic sacrifice identified three major elements of Xhosa sacrifice, which, if included in the Eucharistic sacrifice would

make it more meaningful to a Xhosa person. We identified those elements as ancestors, local food elements and concrete relevant intentions of the sacrifice. As we have seen in the course of this work, we are not the first to call for the inclusion of ancestors in the Eucharistic sacrifice. However, we have done more than just calling for the inclusion of ancestors, we have also attempted to offer a theological justification for their inclusion. If our argument for the inclusion of ancestors in the Eucharistic sacrifice is convincing, then some break-through in the problem of camouflaged *idinala* sacrifices and the performance of apparently opposed sacrifices will have been attained.

Various observers on the African Independent Churches have argued that one of the major reasons for the large exodus to these Churches is that, unlike the “mainline” Churches, they are responding to the needs the people have. In a similar fashion, I want to argue that if the Eucharistic sacrifice were to be seen by the Xhosa people as concerned with their concrete daily problems and needs, there would be no need for them to resort to traditional sacrifices as alternatives to the Eucharistic sacrifice. As it has been stated before, it is not suggested that the eschatological concerns of the Eucharistic sacrifice are of no relevance for Xhosa Catholics; what is suggested is that its concerns should be comprehensive.

In addition to our major argument for the inclusion of ancestors in the Eucharistic sacrifice and the use of local food elements, we have also made some suggestions with regard to the manner and frequency of Eucharistic celebration. It is hoped that these suggestions will further help towards making the Eucharistic sacrifice more meaningful for a Xhosa person. More suggestions could have been offered for the celebration of the Eucharist, but since we had meant our contribution to be mainly theological than liturgical, the few suggestions we have made here should suffice.

Now that we have managed to find some solutions to some areas of the Eucharistic sacrifice that made it less comprehensible and meaningful to Xhosa people, it may seem that we have solved all the problems. One problem that still remains unsolved is the question of how does one include ancestors in a Eucharistic celebration where people of

various clans and families do not share the same ancestors? The solution towards that is to begin to reinterpret the idea of ancestors. The changed social set-up can no longer allow ancestorhood to be solely determined by blood relations. One could view the deceased with whom one had had a meaningful relationship, like friends, colleagues at work, neighbours, fellow worshippers, national figures, etc., as being part of one's ancestors that one shares with people who are not one's blood relatives.

One element that is peculiar to Eucharistic sacrifice and is not a part of Xhosa sacrifice is the element of self-offering. As we noted in chapter 8, Xhosa sacrifice seems to place more emphasis on the performance of the rite than on the interior disposition. This perhaps is an element, which a Xhosa Catholic must learn to develop and appreciate. The Eucharistic sacrifice itself has a lot to gain by relating to the Xhosa people. As we noted, earlier on, while it has communion as one of its major intentions, it has however through the centuries lost it. Thus one could say that by relating the Eucharistic sacrifice to Xhosa, one is reviving this lost intention because it is still very strong among the Xhosa.

10.6 Conclusion

Since its first occurrence in the upper room, the Eucharist has never been the same in its form and in its points of emphasis. It has assumed various culturally determined forms in terms of its celebration. In terms of theology, it has found in the thought pattern of various periods in history expressions that make it intelligible and meaningful. In terms of its pastoral significance, it has responded to needs and questions that are historically concrete and relevant. It is exactly because of its ability to weave itself into the culture, mentality and concerns of the people that the Eucharist has been able to render the reality it represents, i.e. the death and resurrection of Christ, meaningful to them.

As it finds a new home among the Xhosa, our plea in this work is that the Eucharist be allowed to do the same, i.e. to weave itself into Xhosa culture so that the reality it represents may be meaningful in terms of understanding, practice and concerns of the Xhosa people. It is hoped that the suggestions made in this work will help towards this

goal. We also hope that there will be good consultation and co-operation at all levels of the Church towards implementing these ideas because inculturation is not an individual but a community exercise.

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