

THE RESPONSE OF AFRICAN RELIGION TO POVERTY,
WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO THE UMZIMKHULU
MUNICIPALITY

By

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CHAPTER ONE:

1. General introduction.

This thesis deals with the question: What the response of African religion was and is to poverty? The manifestation of this response in the Eastern Cape district of Umzimkhulu is an additional concern of this project and will provide the necessary context within which the issue of poverty can be addressed.

The easiest and non-confrontational way to deal with the problem of poverty is that of escapism that is the deliberate avoidance of the issues related to poverty, or the creation of circumstances, or arguments that warrant this avoidance. The one example of this is the fatalistic acceptance of poverty as part of what has been predestined. The other example is the use of the codes of authority, custom and ritual as means to block genuine aspirations for alleviating it. While acknowledging the many ways in which African religion can deal with the problem of poverty, this thesis wishes to research those methods with which the problem is faced head-on.

Religion as understood in this thesis is not a simple academic inquiry into the state of affairs and it does not aim at simply offering something new to the body of knowledge. Religion, in as much as it is a means for people to deal with their daily problems, seeks to enhance the quality of human life, or at least it ought to. If African religion truly deserves the name, it must, necessarily, seek to assist its adherents in dealing with problems that

arise as they continue to seek better livelihood. It must help them to detect, analyse, explain and possibly solve life-related problems one of which is poverty.

While it is granted that suffering and death come with the package of living in the natural world, this thesis, nevertheless, wishes to contend that what constitutes the predicament in human life is, in many instances, the negative human influences on these natural phenomena. This thesis, therefore, seeks to address African religion's role in dealing with the evils at play in the destruction of life, in as much as these derive from humanity's own creation. As it is within humanity's capacity to create problems, it is also within its capacity to solve them. The primary question that this thesis wishes to address is: How does African religion purport to give directions that foster moral regeneration with regards to the problem of poverty as an anti-life force?

2. Relevance of study.

There is isiNguni expression that says '*Azibuye emasisweni*' which means that things ought to be returned to their rightful owners. According to isiNguni custom of '*ukusisa*' a destitute or estranged family who comes in from outside to seek refuge in a particular village, is assisted to establish itself with such things as utensils, pots, mats, blankets and so forth. If the poor person happens to have no children, a neighbouring family normally sends one of their children to go and stay with him/her; even cows are lent by neighbours to support the poor family with milk. It is these that after some time when the poor family had established itself ought to be returned to their original owners.

The feeling of '*azibuye emasisweni*' is echoed in the post apartheid South Africa and in the continent of Africa as whole in the call for the return of what is genuinely African. The subtle call for African Renaissance is in fact a call to anyone who still thinks that he/she has a hold on the indigenous Africans and their inheritance to let go. It is a call for Africa's leaders to come forward and claim in the name of their people what belongs to them. It is a call to those who abuse Africa's resources to stop and to allow Africans full control of their continent's resources. It is a call for Africa to find ways to deal with her problems in Africa's own pace and methods.

In his twenty years as a priest the writer has struggled with the reality of poverty in the different communities among whom he has been assigned to minister. For a while before 1994, the writer has been content with blaming the apparent poverty on the political situation of South Africa. After ten years of liberation there is very little improvement in terms of self empowerment and the desire to economic self development. It worries one that people are still looking elsewhere for relief; if it is not the Government then it must be the church, if not the church then it must be NGOs that take the initiative to improve the lives of the people. One is beginning to think that there is more to South Africa's poverty than just the results of the misappropriated political system of apartheid, for if it were the apartheid alone then signs of progress would be seen by now. The assumption that the writer is presently entertaining is that our people have somehow lost touch with the ethic of work, which was the basis for their domestic economics, and consequently they have lost their means to deal with poverty both in terms of self-catering and in terms of serving their neighbours in need.

One's second assumption is that traditional African religion was the normal source from which people got their inspiration as to the ways of tackling poverty issues. For this reason, the writer thinks that researching the response of African religion to poverty will come with needed solutions to the problem of poverty that is so apparent in our country. This assumption is itself backed by a further assumption that traditional African religion is based on the philosophy of relationships. These relationships are wells and springs for life, through them one, willingly gives life to, and draws life from others. This is very important in deliberations about the response of African traditional religion to poverty in as much as it negates, or denies life to someone.

The writer wishes to remind those communities among whom he works and those within the area of his research, the Umzimkhulu Municipality, and any one who might read this work that: any effort towards the alleviation of poverty needs to include engaging people to the realisation that work is a noble and a God-given task through which their corporeality is served and thus peoples' physical needs catered for. The aim here is to encourage and help people to discover God the creator at work as they return to the fields to make them productive once more and in a way recognise their creative abilities as God's images. To steal from a Christian "*The Christian message had to have an influence upon the daily life of the people; the basis of the Transkeians, agriculture, had to be improved (better fields) living conditions had to be lifted (better houses), and the whole daily life had to be based on Christian principles (better hearts)*" (Huss in Dischl 1982: 173).

One's general assumption, on the one hand, is that people are capable of alleviating their poverty and that of others by utilising the land resources, African traditional religion and culture on the other hand has its theories about land and its use. Therefore, one wants to research whether there is still a possibility, at least on this small scale, for the traditional African religious theories about land to be invoked in such a way as to make people see the value of land in their fight against poverty. The writer believes that by bringing out the religious value of the land, indirectly one would be able to sensitise the people that through utilising it they can elevate their status by directing their energies towards maintaining better fields, building better homes and in terms of relationships having better hearts.

African traditional religion teaches that there is community through participation and that this participation is vital in as much as it is meant to give life. The assumption, therefore, is that when people engage with the land in the community of vital-participation the land will produce for them and they will be able to fulfill their religious mandate to love their neighbours through sharing bread the fruit of their labour.

On international or even global level one thinks that researching the response of African religion to poverty will certainly contribute to the body of knowledge in terms of new strategies to fight the evil posed by poverty. Poverty is the root cause of the many pains that ravage the moral fabric of society. (Shorter 1999: 6) says: "*Poverty affects every*

department of life in Africa. Parents cannot afford the pre-payment and sur-charges involved in "free" primary education. Children drop out of school or run away from

home basically because their parents are too poor to bring them up. Poverty is therefore undermining the structure of the family. Poverty is linked to disease, including epidemics like that of AIDS. Lack of clean drinking water is a major cause of disease in Africa . . .”

Finally as an African priest, therefore, a leader who accepts that the continent needs an awakening to its values as part of the larger cosmos, the writer feels that sifting through the hidden traditional African religious experiences one might discover something that will help the continent solve its problems, especially economic problems. In the same act it will offer something to fellow human beings elsewhere. The movements such as African Renaissance, the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the recent World Trade Organisation, are attempts to call us as leaders and academics to be alert to the poverty problem in our world; a problem that needs to be solved by way of offering various methods from the different cultures and traditions of the world. In this line of thought one feels that African religion has also something to offer.

3. Theory.

Researching traditional African themes in the twenty first century can be a rather tedious and difficult task at times. The most obvious reason for this is the lack of personnel (interviewees) in our society that are knowledgeable about traditional life and experience. Again there is very little, in terms of customs and culture that has been preserved in the modern age that helps in the investigation. Artifacts can be found but they are

insignificant if their users are not equipped to give relevant information about them. The present generations are distanced from the past both in feeling and in practice. Idowu (1973: 81) says: *“There is the inevitable, over-operative factors of death. Death carries away from time to time those who are custodians of the cultural and religious traditions, persons who bear their charges in their persons and in their memories. As one generation of these passes away after another, so the traditions become remembered in lesser and lesser detail and, naturally, dislocations, distortions, and gaps occur.”*

The present generations are, further, psychologically alienated from sympathising with their traditional past. This, evidently, is due to the influences of the other cultures that have been directly and indirectly super-imposed on the traditional African culture and thus have either passively looked down upon it, or literally forced Africans to abandon it.

As a result of the problem cited above, it will be necessary to construct some theories on which to base one’s argument or thesis. Though one hopes to expand more on the construction of theories in chapter three one thinks it will be helpful to cite them a bit here and to a certain extent briefly explain how they will be employed for the creation of basic assumptions that will comprise arguments in this thesis. The theories that will prompt my argument are as follows:

3.1. *Basic research theory.*

The thesis researches the theme of poverty within the ethic that is African and religious in essence. As a result of this one first needs to answer certain questions with regard to the concepts presented in the research question. Firstly, is there an understanding of poverty in the African worldview, is this understanding catered for in the ethic of African religion, what would be other theories on which the African understanding of poverty is based? The basic research theory for this thesis, therefore, is to prove that there, indeed, is poverty in the Eastern Cape. To trace its origins by asking where it comes from? To answer the questions: How does it affect black people in particular? And how do those who experience it interpret and deal with it both within their economic strategies and religious sanctions?

3.2. *Theory of authority.*

The writer will be discussing the theory of authority and hopes to be led from thence to the assumption that poverty is very much due to the misappropriation of power. He will be arguing that poverty is perpetuated by the fact that some individuals are benefiting from it. In dealing with the codes of custom and rituals one hopes to, by way of inference, insinuate that religion is likely to sanction certain instances of oppression and poverty.

3.3. Theories about the presence of poverty in South Africa.

The whole issue of poverty in South Africa cannot be thrown at people as a fact, for this reason one needs to present it as a hypothesis at first and then argue whether it is true that there is poverty in South Africa. This will necessarily lead to the construction of statistical theories as proof of the presence of poverty.

3.4. Theories about the history, map, and victims of poverty.

Poverty is not natural or normal and in most cases people need to rid themselves of it, therefore, after proving its presence the thesis will have to construct theories that account for its presence, its history, its map and finally its victims. Since African traditional religion is part of the South African experience, in terms of history and religion it is naturally sensitive to locality and tradition, the thesis will have to construct a theory if not theories on how it responded and is likely to respond (if consulted) in the future, to the ethic rooted in the concern for the poor.

4. Method of research.

The content for this research is the African poor themselves within the traditional African religion as the context. This means a field research. As the writer has said already the field research will comprise both the South African people as the victims and African religion in as much as it is the institution whose response to poverty is in question.

4.1. *Methodology.*

The methodology that the thesis will use will, in the main, be the collecting of data (written and oral). Though it may sound unrealistic to say that one will use observation as part of one's methodology, especially when considering that there is no such thing as people acting poverty, but the writer contends that one can observe people's reactions to poverty. In this sense one will analyse and interpret the end results of poverty by observing what it does to its victims. This is where such issues as the poverty-related diseases (tuberculosis, malnutrition, cholera etc.) criminality and other psychosomatic effects come into consideration.

4.1.1. *The use of traditional isiNguni sayings.*

As part of the methodology, especially with regard to the collection of oral data the text of the thesis will be infused with traditional isiNguni proverbs, idioms, expressions and popular sayings taken either from isiZulu or isiXhosa as the case may demand. In the employment of these one will try to assist the reader by immediately giving as close a translation as possible. In the translation one will try to give both the literal and figurative meaning of the expressions used. The writer is convinced that apart from adding special flavour and texture to the language, idioms, proverbs and expressions also capture some deep meanings behind a peoples' self understanding and the dynamics involved in their culture. *“Language is the expression of human communication through which knowledge, belief and behaviour can be experienced explained and shared. This makes language*

the most efficient means of transmitting culture . . . Identity is closely associated with language . . . so the history of a culture can be traced in its language” (Biyela 2003:v).

4.2. **Methods.**

The specific methods the writer shall use are respectively both personal interviews and questionnaires. One lists personal interviews first because the many people one hopes to interview, given the history of the country, will be illiterate and may be put off by having to fill in a sheet of paper. On the other hand the use of a well-prepared questionnaire sheet will help to get the well thought out experiences of the literate. The writer will try to cover as wide a spectrum as possible. This given, the thesis will be a field-researched theory that includes a bit of participant observation especially as the writer will be trying to get the views across the spectrum within his area of research.

One acknowledges that there is no writer among the authors of traditional African religious themes who has specifically dealt with the issue of African religious response to poverty. However the writer is sure that as they deal with various themes within the African tradition, culture and even religion, some deductions and inferences can be made in regard to one’s thesis about African religion’s response to poverty. So a literature study is one method the writer will use for finding out whether African religion offers any response to the issue at stake. One hopes to sift out from written material on traditional African religious themes those areas that are relevant to the discussion. The

data found through this method will, together with other data, be analysed. In chapter four of this presentation, the writer will give an intensive literature review and through out this presentation the writer will be quoting from the relevant writers.

4.2.1. *A special note on the use of the terms: Africa and African.*

The terms Africa and African or traditional African will in general, be interchangeably used to denote what is happening in the continent and to its indigenous people as a whole. In the main, the terms will be used particularly, to denote the Republic of South Africa and its people. In certain instances the term 'black' will be utilised in the place of 'traditional' before the terms Africa or African. In the case of quotations from other writers such as Mbiti for instance, the terms will take the context of the quote.

CHAPTER TWO: *Definition and elaboration of terms.*

1. *Introduction:*

This chapter is dedicated to the definition of the central themes that will be constantly used in the thesis. The theme to be tackled primarily here, as the topic suggests is that of poverty. The term 'poor' as it is contemporary understood needs, on the one hand, to be summarily defined. On the other hand, since the quest is its operation within the traditional isiNguni understanding, then it will be imperative to try and reconstruct a comprehension and conception of it as is understood in the context of the languages that the abaNguni use. This will help in demarcating the context within which this term will be used at a given time. Since we are dealing with different and sometimes competing cultures, there may be confusion if the term 'poor' is used indiscriminately. With regards to the traditional abaNguni understanding of the term poor, the writer says reconstruct, because from the limited research one has made it seems that while there is a general understanding of the concept, the traditional abaNguni seem to have lacked a deeper and wider experience, and therefore, a proper expression of poverty in its real and all inclusive aspects. Such terms as marginalisation, gender equity etc. are not found in their day to day vocabulary. One does not want it to sound as though the traditional abaNguni are at fault for not possessing such an inclusive understanding of the term. There can be various reasons for the said lack, for example, such issues as gender, race, colour etc. may only have surfaced due to the new cultures that have been since introduced into their life. The argument is simply that they do not have these within their worldview.

2. *What is poverty? (The general accepted definitions)*

Judged by the 'Capability Poverty Measure' (CPM) introduced by the Human Development Report of 1996, poverty is a situation in which people are said to have been deprived of what is necessary for decent living. In the words of Ngwane (1999: 15) such people "*lack the basic capabilities to function adequately.*" If, for example, there are no adequate structures providing for education, work, and skills development and as a result of which, people cannot produce food and shelter for themselves, then they are impoverished. In the first instance, therefore, poverty is a negation, a deprivation of something essential to the development of a person or persons. It is something that negatively affects life of the one to whom it is applied. As a deprivation poverty may not just mean not being given what is deemed necessary for a decent human living in such things as food, shelter and so forth, but the deprivation may occur in the denial of the opportunities for people to get these for themselves. In the second instant poverty does result from the wrong and bias appropriation of people's fruit of labour, so that even given the opportunities to develop and produce, they somehow find themselves denied the free use of their product. This, undeniably, results from economic greed, individualism and consumerism both of which are side effects of capitalism. From this point of view poverty then is: "*. . . the unfulfilment of basic human needs required to adequately sustain life free from disease, misery, hunger, pain, suffering, hopelessness and fear, on the one hand, and the condition of defenseless people suffering from structural injustice on the other. In the other case, such conditions may be summarized as oppression*" (de Santa Ana 1979: 77).

The question 'what is poverty' can be put in a different way, for instance one can ask: When do people and nations begin to be poor? Or as is the case with traditional African worldview, who is behind the misfortune that has befallen the community, the family or the individual? These questions are important, especially to the one who suffers the pangs of poverty, because they determine the course of action to be taken in alleviating it. Faced with the dilemma as Zinkuratire and Colacrai (1999:816) imply, the traditional African person ". . . would seek means and ways of protecting himself, his family and property.

He would go to his family ancestral priest to seek herbal medicine for drinking, smearing, hanging in the roof of the house, or tying around the waist or arms of the children, the wife and himself. These measures would give him security and confidence against his enemies and their curses."

It is interesting to note that poverty does not exist and cannot be discussed outside humanity. As a human predicament it has to be traced back to persons either as its perpetrators or its victims. The Bible, in the book of Job, traces poverty to the beginning of human life "*Naked I came from my mother's womb and naked shall I return. . .*" (Job 1:21). In the same vein Schall (1990: 16) says: "*Poverty is the original state of men and*

nations. We need to know not so much why the poor are poor, but why some are still poor."

It is everyone's duty, somehow, to deal with their nakedness and poverty in the world, and success or failure in this effort depends much on the ideology or method each individual or group adopts. If the ideology (political or religious) adopted does not end up providing what people need for sustenance, then it has failed and thus it needs to be

thrown away. *“The main cause of poverty in the world today remains ideological; it can be wrong ‘metaphysics,’ or it can be political choices of the leaders of the poor about what causes their condition, or failure to grasp what farmers do, what makes them produce”* (Schall 1990: 18-19).

What is poverty then? To the writer’s general understanding it is the failure, inadequacy and or inability on the part of humanity to engage in practical methods of providing for its needs. The writer has introduced the issue of inability in order to cater for those who cannot be personally blamed for their poor state, because, while they may be willing and able to work, they remain poor because they are either not employed, or they are incapacitated in some way, here one considers such people as the physically challenged, children and pensioners. There is also the case of inadequacy in terms of production resulting from the uneven distribution of opportunities and resources. When we talk about needs here, one must be careful not to get tied down to economic ones only. One has to constantly remember that as David Hamburg (in Wilson and Ramphela 1989: 5) says: *“Poverty is partly a matter of income and partly a matter of human dignity. It is one thing to have very low income but to be treated with respect by your compatriots, it is quite another matter to have a very low income and to be harshly depreciated by more powerful compatriots.”*

In the present day definitions, the term ‘poor’ is taken to mean, those who are sidelined by society. Simply put, poverty is a moral negation resulting from a forgetfulness of certain individuals in terms of vital assets. As Broch-Due and Anderson (1999: 10) put

it: It is the “. . . *existence of blank spots in social consciousness*”. With regards to the pastoralist of Eastern Africa, they continue to maintain that “. . . *absolute poverty results in social exclusion (that) necessarily implies the possibility of a decline from prosperity . . .*” (Broch-Due: 3).

This sidelining could be based on such things as color, race, culture, gender, religion, literacy and many other things that lead to situations where the oppression and discrimination of such peoples leave them in a position of being non-persons in terms of being recipients of services. They are left out of major decisions even if those decisions will affect their lives. “*The ‘poor’ here are all those whom society is effectively treating as less than human . . . they are being positively driven outside what the more well-off and powerful take for granted*” (de Santa Ana 1979: 105).

Whether the presence of poverty in our societies, is blamed on the misappropriation of the resources by the haves or the have-nots, the basic definition and explanation of poverty as a concept is that it is “. . . *generally characterized by the inability of Individuals, households, or entire communities, to command sufficient resources to satisfy a socially acceptable minimum standard of living*” (Ngwane 1999: 80).

2.1. *The ‘poor’ an ethical definition.*

Economics is ethics. In as much as it is thoroughly a human activity, economics has many moral implications. As human effort to help people live good and productive lives, it has at its base the deep concern that necessarily takes into consideration “*the*

dignity of the human person, the unity of the human family, the universally beneficial purpose of the goods of the earth, the need to pursue the international common good, as well as the good of each nation, and the imperative of distributive justice”

(The U.S. Roman Catholic bishops’ pastorals in Lutz 1987: 33). What the bishops stipulate here above, is that human dignity, values of human family, beneficial purpose of the goods of the earth distributive etc. are issues of serious ethical concern and if, therefore, these are to be considered in economic discussions one inevitably has to contend that economics, has an ethical perspective as well.

The biggest problem that boggles many is: What system should be used to reconcile the economic needs of either of the two partners in the market? Evidently there are some incompatibilities in the demands of both the consumer and the producer. Ethicists need to be careful in their application of justice as a moral standard because justice as a concept does not always favour the consumer if his/her demands are unfair to the producer and vice versa. So until, a system that satisfies both camps has been found, the tension currently plaguing economics will continue. *“In search for economic justice, we must*

strike a balance between the personal freedom and enormous potential for good inherent in a democratic capitalist society, on one hand, and, on the other hand, the controls necessary to contain the effects of human sin and the abuse of power for selfish advantage at the expense of the less powerful. Through out our national history we have struggled to find the balance” (Lutz 1987: 89-90).

In this thesis the main concern is with poverty in all its forms as something that needs to be eradicated. As such this thesis and surely every person of good will, seeks ways to transform all the situations of poverty in our world. Whether there will be a period in the human history where there will be no more poverty one cannot say save to agree that as long as it appears humans as rational beings, are called to fight it. In this light poverty is or should be as Gibellini (in Villa-Vicencio and de Gruchy 1994: 117) says: “. . . *seen*

as more than an unfortunate mistake of history. It is defined in structural terms as a social category. The poor are seen as ‘a by-product of the system under which we live and for which we are responsible’.”

If one maintains that poverty is a human problem and that economics are human reactions and behaviors in view of consumer/producer attitudes toward the markets, then the norms pertaining to these need to be evaluated and judged in terms of the context of people’s morality. According to (Villa-Vicencio and de Gruchy: 139) ethics “. . . *refers to the set*

of principles with regard to right and wrong in people’s conduct and to a code which may be used to evaluate the norms (such as customs and laws) by which people in a given community live. It is the standard by which people’s morality is judged.”

The basic assumption about the economy is that it is put in place for the single purpose of supporting human beings in their struggle for life. It is a human reality with which, as individuals and groups, people aim and work to care for themselves as corporeal entities and for each as communities and for the whole of creation. As a moral issue economics needs to give a response to these three ethical questions as posed by the U.S. Roman

Catholic Bishops in Lutz (1987: 32 -33): “*What does the economy do for people? What does it do to people? And how do people participate in it?*” These three questions are basic in the understanding of economics in as much as economics have definite and sometimes direct bearing on people as individuals and as communities. That is why the U.S. Roman Catholic Bishops in Lutz (1987: 32 -33) continue to say: “*Economic arrangements can be sources of fulfillment, of hope, of community-or of frustration and even despair. They teach virtues-or vices- and day by day help mould our characters. These affect the quality of people’s lives; at the extreme even determining whether people live or die . . .*”

2.1.1. ***The many faces of poverty.***

One has already alluded to this problem in one’s argument above when it was said that, when discussing about human needs, society should be careful not to get tied down to the economic, or materialistic manifestations of poverty only. It should constantly be remembered that poverty affects people in varied ways. Poverty affects people only partly in physical and economic aspect, but it affects them generally and deeply in matters of human dignity and in this aspect it goes a long way because human dignity is a matter of justice and peace and as such cannot be righted by mere economical fulfillments. “*The suffering of the poor is not limited to material needs. Their life is also characterized by dependency and oppression. They have very little opportunity for their decision-making to shape their lives. What and when they eat, where and when they work, what wages they should receive and what price they should pay, where and*

how they should live, how many children they should have and how to bring them up, what they say and how they should say it, even when they should laugh and when they should cry and how- all these are determined or conditioned by the economic system, political power and religious sanctions controlled by the rich, the powerful and the influential” (de Santa Ana 1979: xvii).

2.1.2. *The proper context within which to tackle poverty.*

It is quite difficult for any one to properly understand poverty, or even to properly respond to it, if one has not undergone personal poverty experience as a person. Outside the personal poverty-experience one tends to become theoretical and purely descriptive about it and usually the response or reaction becomes distant and insensitive and most of the time the approach misses the point. It is important that those who wish to tackle the problem of the poor are somewhat incarnated into the situation of the poor and thus save the situation from within. If this cannot happen then the response to the poverty situation ought to be interpreted by the poor themselves and the priority of directing alleviation programs be given to them as well.

The issue here is that the interpretation one gives about a particular poverty-situation needs to be verified with the people who experience it. Just by the sense of sight one can to a certain extent describe poverty, but this ends with the theoretical description. It is one thing to know poverty but it is another thing to experience it as a person. If the pain, the poor people feel cannot be adequately described even by them, how difficult it is for the

one outside it to explain and address it adequately? This is why it is important that those agencies working for the poor need to involve the poor themselves in the projects of poverty alleviation. de Santa Ana (1979: xviii) was probably thinking of this when he said: *“Besides, groups and agencies from outside the ranks of the poor and the oppressed are likely to see the situation and the problems from a wrong perspective. For example, many from outside see the issue mainly as poverty or scarcity of goods and services. From this perspective or objectification and isolation of the issue, they design programmes to increase the supply of goods and services. But that does not answer the basic demands and aspirations of the people which are essentially their liberation from oppression and dependency.”*

2.1.3. *Economic poverty and its place in ethics.*

To be able to adequately present this topic one should think some kind of definition must be given to meaning of economics, that is, what it is. The basic assumption is that people desire to have certain products for the sustenance of their livelihood and thus become consumers of those things when available. The availability of these products and needs depends on the individuals who produce them. Since the consumer cannot simply take the products from the producer without considering the latter's effort in producing them, some kind of price needs to be agreed upon by the producer and the consumer. The issue here is that both the consumer and the producer *“. . . can reach an equilibrium at which the desires of all consumers to buy and save, and the plans of all producers to sell and to invest, are precisely satisfied at the market prices”* (Zweig1991: 20).

In this consideration the principle of supply and demand plays an important role. The moral issue is created when the producer or supplier has become engrossed in production that is no longer in line with what is necessary for decent living. The moral issue also comes in when the consumer demands the production of items that are not absolutely necessary for his/her well being. These attitudes are exchangeable, on the one hand it may be the supplier who subtly creates the unnecessary needs through abusive advertisements that create unwarranted desires, or it might be the consumer who demands the production of such unnecessary commodities.

It has been mentioned already that poverty is the original state of men/women and this statement is true only if it means that in its childhood stage humanity possesses neither skill nor knowledge to tap the resources at its disposal. In fact almost all traditions when presenting their story of the beginnings do not mention any thing about the problem of scarcity of resources. This leads to the assumption, therefore, that somewhere in human history something must have happened to warrant the obsession of producing food and other goods. With this obsession, eventually, came the issue of choices as to what to produce, how to produce, and how to distribute the products. Another way of looking at it is that perhaps, there was abundance of the earth's resource and due to the greed and consumerist attitudes the issue of choices came to be. This is how the origins of economics can be inferred. *"Faced with the need to make choices among alternatives in the face of scarcity, which keeps all desires from being satisfied simultaneously, each person chooses so as to maximize his or her own personal pleasure and gain"* (Zweig 1991: 23).

The whole issue of economics revolves around the establishment of this equilibrium between what producers aim to put on the table and what consumers demand. Human nature is such that people as consumers wish to get their desires satisfied at a minimum cost, as producers they want to gain more for their products. In this line of thought, economics is the sum total of actions /reactions or simply behaviors of all the people partaking in the different markets of the economy. It must be evident already that presented in this way economics is, at the most, very individualistic and as Zweig (1991: 29) says:

“(it divides) . . . the population into very antagonistically conflicted groups with sharply different interests and problems.”

Since poverty becomes evident mostly in what we see in the every day appearance of people, most people usually define it in terms of economics. There are some specific economic measurement(s), and most of them are based on economic ability, or the lack thereof, that are used to define whether people are poor or affluent. These lead to further classifications where there is absolute, relative and subjective poverty. Absolute poverty is the kind that renders people financially unable to maintain a reasonable life. Relative poverty on the other hand is the kind of poverty where ‘people are poor or poorer in relation to some criterion group even though the poor may be well above the poverty datum line, or some other criterion’. This is what Shorter (1999: 11) means when he says:

“Most poverty, however, is simply the discovery that one has unfulfilled needs. People yearn for the things they see in the hands of others. They discover new needs. This happens especially when they are brought into contact with foreigners who have a better standard of living. Foreigners from western countries possess vehicles,

computers, televisions and video-players and Africans aspire to possess such things, even if they cannot afford them. A new level of relative poverty has therefore been recognized.”

Further to these there is what is called subjective poverty. This kind of poverty is based mainly on the perception of the households' own understanding of their needs. To some extent this kind of poverty-analysis is closely related to what has been termed relative poverty above, because subjective poverty, as Takayama (in Ngwane: 1999: 14) says is “. . . simpler and more concerned with relative deprivation. . .” Deprivation in this sense can according to Kamar (in Ngwane: 80) “. . . be based on comparing the individual's

economic state with either an absolute norm in which case it is called an absolute deprivation, or a normative or relative norm, in which case it is called a relative deprivation.”

2.1.4. ***Structural poverty.***

Poverty is essentially neutral and conjunctural in as much as it affects people as a whole in a particular area. But as soon as it is manipulated by someone or by a certain group of people for their gain, poverty becomes structural. This is what de Santa Ana (1979: 36) means when claiming, about the market, that: “*The law of the market was promoted by*

those who drew benefits from the free operation of the merchant relations. They had the necessary economic conditions to emerge as winners from the free market therefore enabling them to perpetuate their domination. Politically, their aim was to

use power to extend the freedom of the market as far as possible. The more successful they were in doing so, the more firmly established the dependence of others on their hegemonic power. This dependence became and continues to be a structural phenomenon.”

Since the presentation of the problem is based on a particular District in a Province of the Republic of South Africa, it is strongly believed, given the understanding that the country's resources are enough to cater for all its citizens, that the South African problem of 'the poor' particularly presents itself primarily from the point of view of disparity between people in terms of power and position. The financial or economic implications follow only as a logical result. *“There are . . . three interlocking factors*

which, taken together, justify the assertion that poverty in South Africa is unique. First, the width of the gulf between rich and poor and the degree of inequality. Second . . . the extent to which poverty that exists is a consequence of deliberate policy. The third aspect has to do with the way in which material poverty in South Africa is reinforced by racist policies that are an assault on people's humanity” (Wilson and Ramphele 1989: 4).

This applies for the pre-colonial Africa as it does for both the colonial and the post-colonial periods. In the pre-Colonial period the criterion group would have been the nobility and the courtiers. In the Colonial and post-Colonial periods the criterion group is represented by the Western and the Eastern cultures that invaded the African continent. Obviously one needs to acknowledge the cultural exchanges within the continent itself.

In a situation where the stress is on differences and people are treated in accordance to these differences, as the apartheid system did and all forms of caste systems including tribalism continue to do, it becomes easy to sideline the undesirable group and treat it apart from the other. The processes of normal evolution are systematically stunted till it becomes accepted that they are different and therefore it is normal for them to be what they are, poor or affluent. This creates a group within society that accepts their poverty situation as predestined because it shows itself as intrinsic to the group and is perceived as being a style of life that is culturally transmitted from one generation to the next and independent of financial status. It is thought that this is how caste systems survive when people status appears to emerge in the context of social organisation and they are made to accept their identity as given and as such no effort on their part can change their position. To say the least, this stunts progress and discourages any attempt towards development.

In terms of the above argument, one is convinced that what renders a person 'poor' is not necessarily and only his/her deficiency in affluency, but it is the attitude of others that strips him/her off his/her dignity. To this effect Broch-Due and Anderson (1999: 10) say:

“Poverty within the Hubeer (a tribe in East Africa) clan is marked socially in terms of heritage - defined in terms of a cultural mixture of descent and bodily substances - as much as by actual economic standing. Here the trajectories of groups are kept apart by restricting access to political authority. Commoners of inferior status may be thought to have sunk to this through the loss of economic wealth, but the ideology of dominant noble groups among the Hubeer inverts the logic of this: to be a commoner is to be poor, regardless of the number of livestock accumulated.”

During the era of Apartheid in South Africa, blacks were materially better off than some people in India and even in America, but they were worse off comparatively in terms of status. What then constitutes poverty in the country? This question will be further elucidated upon in the section dealing with why there is poverty in South Africa. This leads the writer to contend that, poverty cannot be defined only in terms of a lack in material things. In this regard one tends to agree with Broch-Due and Anderson (1999:10) when they maintain that poverty is: “. . . *a confining marker of social identity.*” There is what they call ‘*structural poverty*’ that is defined as the long-term poverty due to the individual’s personal or social circumstances. There is also what they call ‘*conjunctural poverty*’ and define as temporal poverty into which ordinarily self-sufficient people may be thrown into by crisis situation.

2.1.4.1. ***Structural poverty and politics.***

Adherence to ideologies begets more poverty than the actual lack of material things. “*Actually there is a fair amount of agreement that the earth is quite capable of supporting practically any number of people we might think up if food production were the sole criterion. What causes insufficient food production are fundamentally theories, values and ideologies that interfere with or fail to foster those means of achieving the planet’s capacity in this area. Some seem even to welcome starvation in order to prove their theories. Such controversy will continue to go on since man, the political animal, is really more interested in power than in food*” (Schall 1990: 51).

The conclusion that one comes to as a result of this is that, to steal from Schall, [FOOD IS ALSO POLITICS] and inevitably, therefore, if by food we mean the sum total of people's efforts to satisfy their economical needs then, poverty is definitely also politics. The pre-democratic South African scenery was oddly affected by this politicisation of poverty, in that all its efforts to alleviate poverty tended to consider the problem of the poor whites only and deliberately shut its eyes to the blacks who were in the majority. Once poverty has been deliberately woven into the structures of a country or a community, one, inevitably, is bound to see it affecting every fiber of that country, or community. Mother Teresa of Calcutta said: "*Poverty is not just being without food. It is the absence of love. . . Often in big cities, big countries, people die simply of loneliness, unwanted, forgotten. This is much more bitter poverty than the poverty which is not to have food*" (in Wilson and Ramphela 1989: 181-182).

2.1.4.2. ***Religion and structural-isation of poverty.***

In the histories of almost all the colonised peoples of the world there is always some uneasiness when it comes to the role religion played in the processes of subjugation of the local people. There is always confusion in differentiating between the missionary and the coloniser, between the Bible and the gun. "*The missionaries, as brothers of the white masters, diverted our attention from this world and its demands and turned it towards a final hope in the future, towards a heaven unconnected with this world. . . moreover the South African State was anchored in Christianity by its constitution. The white missionary church leaders gladly laid claim to all the advantages of the*

system: they even interpreted colonialism, in whose frame work Christianity had a chance of expanding greatly as salvation history” (Buhlmann 1980:45).

Following this line of thinking, one can, therefore, allow the logic to flow: if in the case of South Africa, Apartheid was a means to structuralise poverty then as the religion of the ideologue Christianity assisted or at least allowed itself to be used as a tool in its strategies.

The writer wishes to do a critique of religion as religion without pinning it down to any particular denomination. So one question that lingers along is what is the position of African religion with regard to the structural (isation) of poverty? When discussing fatalism it was hinted that in as much as African religion pushes its tenants not to challenge fate, it stunts development. In its subtle doctrine of acceptance of the so-called destinies, the traditional African religion tends to urge people to embrace the structures whatever they are.

Such institutions as community, personal relationships, and ubuntu, under scrutiny, collapse into institutions of dominance and exploitation, used by the powerful and the rich to control and subdue the weak and the poor. Were the tables to be turned the same could be said of the maintenance of the structure by the poor themselves where the institutions of community, relationships and ubuntu would be used by the poor to parasite the goodness of the rich. It is interesting, in fact that the latter is happening in the so-called revolutionary periods where poverty is argued to be as a result of the affluence of certain people in the society. *“What is taught in many religious circles today? Mostly*

this: The poor are poor because the rich are rich. The poor are getting poorer because the percentage gap between the rich and the poor is slightly increasing. The rich are rich because they exploit the poor” (Schall 1990: 21).

To the writer this is nothing but the structuring of poverty from the side of the poor. Such attitudes, as the exploitative structures, about the plight of the poor have never put bread on any one’s table especially on the table of the poor, what they have done, instead is to make people resign to accepting the problem, or to engage in futile struggles of ‘aluta continua’ thus furthering the poverty that they should aim to curb. Experience has shown that poverty does not go away because it is shouted at or it is shouted about. It only will leave us when we begin to work and learn to be productive. In other words the proper place to discuss poverty is not the pulpit (unless when urging people to be productive) but in the fields with dirty hands where people work to earn their living. “*The virtue of*

humility and moderation were designed to prevent us from much emphasis on our not having what others have whether by their work or talent or luck or even corruption. Our dignity does not depend on what we have but on what we are. But we ought normally to have something, and we ought to promote those systems that allow for and encourage the production and creation of new wealth which is the only solution” (Schall: 33).

3. Definition and outline of some central traditional African themes.

In the next section the writer is to give a short, but intensive outline of the three pillars of African Religion i.e. the Supreme Being, the Ancestral Spirits and the Sanctified Community. It is only after this exercise that the argument of elaborating on the definition of the important pillars of the general African worldview will be meaningful, especially to a person who does not readily subscribe to the issues at hand. Probably one needs to give a direction as to what will be discussed hereunder lest the track is lost. For the purpose of this thesis, the writer proposes to relate the discussion of the above themes to the issue of poverty and the response given to it by African Religion. Therefore, for the writer it will not be important to argue for, or against the presence of God (Supreme Being), the ancestral spirits and the sanctified community in African Religion, than what or how these contribute or fail to contribute to the issue of poverty either as perpetrators, or alleviators thereof.

3.1. The structure of African religion.

One way of understanding a phenomenon or an organisation is to check the objects within it. In the effort to present the structure of African Religion, its inventory is hereby presented, or at least the basic and most important elements within it. Obviously, the African Religion has things or objects that are distinguishable as part of its religious data. (Mbiti 1992: 11-120) distinguishes five parts of what he calls part of African religious heritage as follows: 1. *Beliefs*: the way people as a community conceive the universe and

their attitude towards it. 2. *Practices, ceremonies, and festivals*: the group activities: praying, sacrifices, rituals, offerings etc. as means for relating with the objects of worship or veneration in order to enhance people's lives. 3. *Religious objects and places*: things (supernatural, natural and man-made). 4. *Values and morals*: ideas and ideals that are seen as vital in securing people's lives. 5. *Religious officials and leaders*: the personnel for carrying out religious action and conducting religious matters.

Another way of presenting the five interrelated groups of socio-cultural elements is found in Onwubiko (1991: 59-60). He presents them in this way: “(i). *The concept of an*

indigenous name of the Supreme Being- Invisible, Sovereign and Benevolent; (ii). A moral sense of justice and truth, and knowledge that there exists good and evil; (iii). The belief in the existence of the human soul and the belief that this soul does not die with the death of man; (iv) The existence of spirits-good and bad- and the belief that communion with the Supreme Being is possible through the intermediation of these spirits and the ancestors who are believed to be interested in the well being of their living descendants; (v). The existence of myths as rational and philosophic explanations to justify the continuance of some religious practices, the order they follow, and the use of specific symbolic objects as concrete means of strengthening the relationship between man and the transcendental realm of existence, the celebration of all these in feasts and festivals for the purpose of their continuity and culture transmission.”

Another writer who helps present a formula for structuring African religion is Idowu who has this to say: *“Taking Africa as a whole, there are in reality five component elements that go into the making of African traditional religion. These are belief in God, belief in divinities, belief in spirits, belief in ancestors and the practice of magic and medicine, each with its own consequent, attendant cult”* (Idowu 1973: 139).

3.1.1. ***The Supreme Being.***

The African religious worldview believes in a hierarchy of beings and at the pinnacle of which is the Supreme Being (God) who is variously named and described by the different African language groups. In Kagame’s presentation of the ‘Ntu’ philosophy presented (in Janheinz 1961: 102) things/bintu *“ . . . are not capable of acting for themselves . . . they can become active only on the command of a Muntu whether a living man, dead man, orisha or Bon Dieu. None of these Bintu have any will of their own, unless, like animals, they are given a drive by Bon Dieu. . . They stand at the disposal of muntu, or ‘at hand’ for him.”*

It is important to remember that while the orishas and man (living or dead) are high in the Ntu hierarchy, never the less it is Bon Dieu who gives the active drive to the lesser categories of Ntu. In essence, therefore, practices, ceremonies and festivals that form the religious activity in African Religion are first and foremost done in honour of this Supreme Being.

The question at the center of this thesis is: Possessing this supreme power to give the active will or to command the being and action of others in the Ntu category, does the Bon Dieu also allot their destiny in the issue of whether they are to be poor or rich? As the Supreme Being, God is conceived to be the center and source of all other beings. On the level of relationships and sharing God, as the source, shares him/herself with other beings by calling them to being through creation, sustaining, and need be, saving them. Since God is the highest and primary being, in the hierarchy he/she “. . . *simultaneously proposes and disposes the becoming of human beings with a network of consultative relations simultaneously the ontological dependence . . . is defined first and foremost in terms of fundamental relationships*” (Penoukou in Schreiter 1991: 25).

3.1.1.1 *God: a relating reality.*

The writer feels that it may somewhat be disturbing to the reader that the term ‘being’ has been used at length and to any one who has the western philosophical understanding of it, the meaning may be very different from what is actually meant. For the African worldview, ‘being’ is not perceived in terms of essences, substances, nature or ideas. In the African world-view, ‘being’ is thought of in terms of relationships, of community and of solidarity. So, the Supreme Being of our discussion here is the supreme center of relationships, the hearth of community and solidarity. He/she is already engaged and is engaging other beings in relationships. In this world view action does not follow being, but being is action, it is from what a thing does in the community of relationships that it gets its proper name.

In one of the subsections on the definition of terms below, life is defined as the center of all the activities that beings, especially human beings engage in and are obsessed about. All relationships are meaningless for the African if they are not life-preserving and enhancing. If God has any significance to the African of traditional worldview, he/she is so in as much as he/she gives, or does not give life. God is, therefore, perceived and experienced, first and foremost, as part of the universe of the vital force. In fact, God is a reality for the African worldview in as much as he/she is involved in the life-giving relationships and processes. In this sense, God is not outside the reflecting self, but he/she is a reality that continuously penetrates the reflecting self and offering him/herself as the ultimate meaning. This point will be further elucidated in the section dealing with the organic approach in chapter six.

It must be borne in mind that for the traditional African, religion is a matter of practical concerns, more for the individual and community's well being than it is for worship and devotion. In relating to God one, almost instantly, wishes for a response and commitment. The response and commitment that is awaited is considered as reciprocation from God for the response and commitment that the individual has afforded God in the first place. And sometimes these responses and commitments are economically quite expensive, and unless replenished may lead to untold deprivation and pain.

While traditional Africans agree in principle that God is part and parcel of the community of being, they are careful not to simply mix him/her with the other members of this community. S/he needs to be separated from the other deities and spiritual beings. He is

wholly and holy other. God is for every one, the other deities, and the ancestral spirits are limited to their particular families, clans and communities. God's attributes are expressive of cosmological aspirations and values. These aspirations and values are carefully reserved for God and God alone, because while they are what people know God to be, they at the same time are what make him/her separate from other divine and mundane beings. Never mind what powers and influences they might possess, the other beings can never be equal to God. This is well illustrated by Berglund (1976: 35) when he says: "*A third informant, with whom I replaced the name uMvelinqangi with idlozi (shade), said: "Why do you continually confuse things? They are two different ones, as I have been saying. The one is in heaven. The others are just here with us. You must not confuse things and bring about misunderstandings."*

One other interesting factor about the traditional African belief in God is the seeming intimacy they have with him. This is observable in the names or titles they give or describe him by. These denote, in a way, that God is intimately known to them. This of course strengthens the contention that, in one way or the other, God must be seen as relating with the people. AmaZulu, for example, call him '*Mvelinqangi*' which means, he who came first. The question is: he came first as compared to whom? The other Zulu name for God is '*Nkulunkulu*' he who is superlatively great. Again, he is superlative in greatness as compared to whom? Obviously they compare him to all that came as a result of his creative will, hence the name '*Mdali*' creator. Idowu (1973:150) says: "*The names by which Deity is called in Africa are descriptive of his character and emphatic of the fact that he is a reality and that he is not an abstract concept.*"

3.1.1.2. *The Deities/ Spirits.*

In the hierarchy of being the African worldview traces the presence of some spiritual beings who occupy a rank lower than that of God. These, no doubt, have, or can have some aspect of what God is, for them the qualities are not intrinsic but mere endowments derived from their closeness to God, given to each according to rank for the fulfillment of God's purposes. So that the respect given to them as hierophanies and theophanies, is in fact, given to God whom they represent in carrying special duties. Among these are deities, spirits ancestors, the living dead and human elders. They also are a reality for the traditional African worldview in as much as they are engaged in vital relationships. In the spirit of 'to be is to relate or to participate with others' the hierophanies and theophanies are part of the ontological body of life-giving and life drawing entities.

One needs to point out that the divinities are different both in their essence and activity from the ancestral spirits. One way of distinguishing between the divinities and the ancestors is the analysis of the manner in which the two came into being; the ancestors, for all intent and purposes, are of the created order, this is deduced from the fact that they are the dead elder members of the living communities, while with regard to the divinities it seems wrong to say that they were created rather as Idowu (1973: 168) says “. . . *they were brought into being, or that they came into being in the nature of things with regard to the divine ordering of the universe.*”

If the divinities or deities were not created a problem arises as to what their relationship to God is, this has led many to propose the possibility of polytheism in the African religion. To counteract this Idowu (169-170) says: “*All that we have said about the*

unitary control of the created order by Deity applies here. Because the divinities derive from Deity, their powers and authority are meaningless apart from him . . . the divinities were brought into being as functionaries in the theoretical government of the universe. . .the divinities are ministers, each with his own portfolio in the Deity’s monarchical government. Each in his own sphere an administrative head of a department. They are also intermediaries between Deity and man, especially with reference to their particular function.”

The reason why the ancestors feature so prominently in the African ritual is that they, as implied above, are charged with governance in the universe and have particular duties as intermediaries between God and humanity. They are prominent also from the point of view that some of them are perceived to have, some time in antiquity, existed in human form and have since been deified. In this perception they are national heroes with a very keen interest in the events of the earthly communities.

3.1.1.3. ***The Ancestors.*** (*God in the company of his saints*).

There is always a heated debate when it comes to the observable elements of the African ritual. The questions and objections always revolving around the non-mentioning of God in proceedings and since the names of the ancestors are invariably mentioned in these

rituals many people especially those from outside the traditional African experience, conclude that there is no God in the African religion. This has led many to conclude that Africans are engaged in acts of ancestor worship. To this effect Onwubiko (1991: 61) says: “*The effects of belief concerning ancestors is so powerful that some prefer,*

wrongly, to designate the African religion as ancestor worship. What must be affirmed is that the cult of the ancestors is a strong element in African religion, but only an element. . . The cult of ancestors does not represent entirely nor replace religion in Africa.”

Others have come up with such terms as ‘deus otiosus (the hidden God), dues remotus (the distant God), etc. All these are some how apologetically trying to fit a god into the whole issue of African religion. One personally feels there is no need for fighting for the place of ‘God’ in the African tradition, for all its worth, the writer thinks that in the spirit of the phenomenological approach whether in fact there is or there is no god in this tradition it should not be a bother.

Whether one likes it or not, whether one believes it or not there is a general feeling almost everywhere in the world that the dead have something to do in the physical life they once shared. The many stories of ghost, vampires and haunted places always raise this feeling in peoples’ lives. “*Thus there is a general belief that communion and comm-*

unication is possible between those who are alive on earth and the deceased, and that the latter have power to influence, help, or molest the former” (Idowu 1973: 179).

The reason why the ancestors feature so prominently in the African ritual, is that they once participated in the physical experience of the community. *“The African also believes that some quantity of ancestral blood is preserved and transmitted from generation to generation along the lineage”* (Onwubiko 1991: 61-62).

The very same blood now spiritualised runs in veins of the ancestors wherever they are, and makes them ever conscious of their living counterparts whom they represent in the spirit world.

Now that they are closer to God, they are able to present the community’s supplications and aspirations to him/her and through their link with the living elders communicate God’s life-giving gifts back to the community. The implication of this is that, every one to whom the responsibility of life has been entrusted should, whether dead or alive, in one way or another plough it back. *“The ancestor is a departed spirit who stands in particularly close relation to the tribe or the family: the life of the latter has been derived from him and because he is still in existence he is still in a sense one with it; his favour and disfavour has therefore a sharply focused relation to it and is more urgently to be sought or avoided. . .”* (Farmer in Idowu: 179).

The ancestral spirits as the absolute custodians of life after God are given responsibility to transmit it and guard the moral order surrounding it. To this effect the ancestors’ interest in matters of life is not merely a metaphysical one, but it is real and biological.

The relationship between the ancestral spirits and the living members of the community is itself reciprocal. The continued existence of the ancestral spirits depends on the

revitalising memory of the living. A dead person whose memory is not celebrated through ritual is dead indeed. *“From this perspective, life is a cyclic affair a coming and going from this visible human life to the ancestral life and then returning to this life as grand children. Life therefore is a shared reality, received from the ancestors, in this sense, every grand child is his or her grandparent”* (Kirwen 1987: 113).

3.1.1.4. ***Humanity on the pedestal:*** (I believe in God: I believe in humanity).

One wonders why did humanity need to discover God, seemingly life would have been much easier without this discovery, at least in term of personal freedom it would. But, again, how would humanity deal with its apparent limitedness? The other interesting question is: how did humanity discover God? Was it God in the first place that it wanted to discover or did God appear incidentally as humanity wanted to establish its place in the world's reality? It is never known for certain, but the latter position was likely the case.

One believes it was when humanity in this process of self-discovery realised its transcendence and logically traced it to the divine transcendence with whom it immediately sought ways to relate and share. If this were true that initially humanity wanted to comprehend and explain its situation and as it were it stumbled on God and then found itself having to grapple with him/her as a reality, then it had to name him/her and that name spelled out who he/she is. As God became the ultimate meaning, humanity lined itself and other beings alongside him/her, thus knowing and interpreting themselves in accordance to their knowledge of God.

In this discovery certain things became apparent, for instance, it was discovered that there were common destinies between the transcendent God and humanity, in creation and redemption. It became apparent as well that humanity ought to freely and consciously decide to follow and live up to the demands of that discovery. Humanity came to know itself in terms of its participation in the divine qualities of being responsible co-creators and co-redeemers with God.

The discovery of God in some way must have been a humbling experience for humanity in that it had to take a position in the hierarchy and this position was perceived and fitted in accordingly in terms of one's life-giving role. With the discovery of God humanity incidentally also discovered other categories some superior and others inferior to it, but most important was the discovery that it has to relate and participate meaningfully with them as well. This constitutes the sanctified community within which humanity exists. What is evident in humanity's discovery is that God is different yet he is humanity's destiny. As their creator and their destiny God both proposes and disposes their becoming. *"This means two things. First not only do human beings owe their being to the Supreme Being, but also, and especially they can fulfill themselves by entering into dynamics of relations with their creator, only in becoming and remaining a being-there-with the Supreme Being. The second thing the myth explicitly suggests, bears on the intermediate relationships that are necessary if human beings are to realize this historical becoming of theirs which has been projected, cast forth by their creator. In other words the human being can become complete only in becoming a being - there- with others"* (Schreiter 1991: 33).

3.1.1.5. *The sanctifying community.*

This chapter has shown that there is not just an inter-dependence between the elements of the traditional African hierarchy, but that the relations are reciprocal. This reciprocity constitutes the members of the hierarchy into an ever participating, relating and sharing community. It is not just the material gifts that are shared or used as items of participation and relations, but it is a giving of self that is symbolised by these. It is important to remember the symbolic use of material objects in ritual ceremonies, for instance the custom of 'ukuchinsa' spilling a bit of drink in honour of the 'abaphansi' the ancestral spirits, among the abaNguni. The earth that eventually receives the beer that is spilled will never reciprocate by giving back in kind but never the less it is honored as the abode of the ancestors. Community, therefore includes every possible being, hence it is no surprise to find God being discussed together with the ant, man together with a stone and so on. This is so because beings influence each other for better or for worse. Tempels (1959: 143) says: "*Nothing moves in this universe of force without influencing other*

forces by its movement. . . the life of the 'muntu' is not limited to his own person, but that it extends to all ontologically subjected to him . . ." To put it in another way (Shutte 1993:54) says: "*The human person is like a live electric wire which ever exudes force in all directions. . .this is like an aura around the person. . .It gives forth into the traffic or weltering pool of life in community the uniqueness of each person and each object.*"

This community is said to be sanctifying because it elevates its participants to a level they could never attain as individuals. A simple root or bark, for example, is elevated to a status far beyond its essence when because it belongs to a type of tree, it is deemed very necessary for the ritual of 'ukubuyisa' bringing the dead home. *"If the ancestral*

communion of the living and the dead constitutes a 'mystical body', it cannot be merely the dignitaries who have their obligations towards their subject, but the opposite must hold true. The vital force emanating from the head to the members is circulating also from the members back to the head. . ." (Bujo1990: 77).

3.2. Definition of subservient themes.

The important and centrifugal issue of symbiotic relation between creatures in the traditional African deliberations has already been pointed out. The first thing that has come to the fore is that community is very central if beings are to share on a deeper level. Secondly, it has become apparent that life and its processes are an obsession about which every being is, or should be preoccupied. Thirdly, the above presentation has shown that it is important that a principle for safeguarding the values of community and life ought to be put in place. This principle is 'Ubuntu' translated to mean the humane way in the actions of beings as they deal with each other. These three pillars are essential to the African tradition, without them the community would be disoriented, fragmented and disintegrated. They are the pillars on which the whole life and its meaning depend. Through these special pillars and frames, a person of the traditional African background distinguishes, defines, and understands him/herself.

3.2.1. *Ubuntu.*

In defining 'Ubuntu' one needs to note that there are many and varied ways in which this concept can be defined. First and foremost 'Ubuntu' has a practical significance. It is an attitude to life and community. It gets its true meaning from the person (Umuntu) acting differently from the other creatures. Action follows being; and (Umuntu) a human being will act in a humane (ubuntu) way that is using his/her reasoning powers. It has a religio-philosophical definition, where it is used to classify the different beings. This is illustrated well in the 'NTU' philosophy of (Kagame in Janheinz 1958: 101-102) here he distinguishes four categories that has 'Ntu' as the uniting force. For the purpose of this dissertation my interest is on Muntu the category of rational and moral beings for as Janheinz says ". . . *Muntu includes the living and the dead . . . Muntu is therefore a force endowed with intelligence*' . . . *Muntu is an entity which is a force . . .*"

Already from this quotation it can be appreciated that ubuntu as the guide in moral decisions and judgment essentially involves rational beings of which God is the source, so that one cannot be 'umuntu' unless he/she has been endowed with it by God. What distinguishes umuntu from other things is the force with which he/she was endowed, in this view ubuntu is a tool with which the person shows godliness in being and action. When umuntu does something, traces of God the Great Muntu must be found in it. One purports Bujo (1990: 75) to mean this when he says: "*However, if life and especially human life comes from God, the African also knows that God uses his ancestors to communicate this life to him. . .*"

Ubuntu has a pure philosophical meaning when it is used to denote humanness that is the essence of the being called a human. It has also an ethical and a behavioral meaning when used to denote the particular manner human beings do things.

When a person says that one does not have ubuntu, he/she in fact is meaning that: the manner, the culprit has adopted in his/her act, lacks feeling in terms of love, compassion, tenderness and respect. A person who has failed in the practice of ubuntu is called in isiZulu '*inswelaboya*' meaning that he/she lacks only fur to be complete animal. And if any one is such, one wonders how he/she has turned to be so when considering that the genes that run in his body came from the ancestors who have communicated life and its values to him. "*The original ancestor continues to live in his descendants and is, after*

God, at the origin of the existence of the present generation. . ." (Bujo: 75).

This can only mean that one has adopted a manner of action, or being that contradicts what his/her forbearers stood for. In its practical sense, ubuntu constitutes a series of behavioral patterns which a person adopts and as actions into which he/she engages oneself and by which he/she is engaged by the community. It is the whole process of metamorphosis into full human hood. What is full human hood one might ask? In view of what will be said about life, full human hood must be the possession of life and the ability to safeguard and preserve it and its processes within the sanctified community.

Ubuntu, therefore, constitutes all the positive actions done in the consciousness that life is primarily a divine initiative belonging to God, and given or lived in proxy for him.

“ . . . this same God and the ancestors have taken care to equip the clan community and the tribal group with the moral order, with regulations and taboos in view of the well-being of their offspring” (Bujo 1990: 75).

Ubuntu, therefore, can be defined as the putting of this moral order in action in the process of socialisation - a process whereby the person is made to fit within the structures of a given society. It is a process of actualisation - a process by which the individual realises, in practice, his or her latent potentialities, responsibilities and roles. And thirdly, ubuntu is a process of humanisation - a process by which one is taught and infused with the values and the joy of participation and sharing in the community using these same talents and potentialities.

As the property of society, ubuntu is humanity's tool to secure and preserve the self and the world from returning to the primordial chaos and disintegration. It is the main means by which human beings fight the anti-life forces. Ubuntu is an institution through which humanity fights such evils as, oppressions, discrimination and poverty. Its targets are all the visible and invisible forces threatening the integrity and dignity of human beings and the integrity of the lesser creatures as well. Thus to be 'Umuntu' (a person) is to partake in the creative and redemptive action; to be in line with the community, to which God and the spiritual realities belong.

3.2.2. *Life.*

In the African worldview, though there are different levels of being, all have one thing in common: propagating, securing and defending life. Life constitutes the struggle by all beings to adapt to the environment. It is the individual's ability to succeed in all his/her efforts right through the given circumstances of life. Further than this the African talks of life as a force that issues from every being and influences other beings and their destinies.

This is what Shutte (1993: 54) means when he says: "*The human person is like a live*

electric wire which ever exudes forces in all directions . . . this is like an aura around a person, . . . It gives forth into the traffic or weltering pool of life in community the uniqueness of each person and each object."

Though one may be alive in terms of the biological processes he/she may be diminished in terms of the vital force. A frail, old, or even dead person may be very vibrant in his/her vital force through which he/she influences others. Janheinz (1961:111) says: ". . . *But*

this force, the wisdom that gives happiness, intelligence, the principle which distinguishes man from all other living things, exists in 'pure' form only in the dead: it is a force from their kingdom. In this sense the wise man is 'nearer to the dead' and has already a 'share in their nature'. On the other hand, man is able to strengthen his ancestors to let the magra flow upon them through honor, prayer and sacrifice."

The festivals mean nothing, as food and drink, song and dance, if they do not at the end increase the vital force of the participants. The physical celebrations are mere symbols of

the intended celebration of life. For the traditional African, therefore, the 'poor' in terms of life are those, who, no longer have the vital link with the community. Material poverty fairs very low when compared to the vital force. This characterises the vibrant spirit one finds among traditional Africans even under extreme conditions. After all life, in all its forms is believed by traditional Africans to be a gift from God. "However, if life and

especially human life comes from God, the African also knows that God uses his ancestors to communicate this life to him. The original ancestor continues to live in his descendants and is, after God, at the origin of the existence of the present generation. He had transmitted his own vital force to those of his descendants who in their own turn have already joined the dead, but remain nevertheless responsible for the welfare and sustenance of the life in their clan" (Bujo 1990: 75).

3.2.2.1. *Life a shared reality.*

Life is primarily a divine initiative. It belongs to God before anything else. Beings possess life only when God has shared it. In this sense, to have life is to have been allowed to participate in God who is the source thereof. God bestowed the duty of the preservation of life and its prolongation on the ancestors. The ancestors, in the name of God, established a moral order that guides the community in maintaining the lives of their offspring. To this Bujo (1990: 75) says: "*If biological life comes from God through mediation of the ancestors, this same God and the ancestors have taken care to equip the clan community and the tribal group with the moral order, with regulations and taboos in view of the well-being of their offspring.*"

The physiological fact that, living beings have an innate potential to procreate and propagate life, leads us to assume that life is a thing to share. How one shares it, or fails to share it places the whole matter on ethical level, so that issues like modern techniques in birth control and family planning (pills, condoms, sterilisation and abortion) pose great threats to the traditional African moral dogmas about life. The issues at stake here are the methods and reasons modern men and women put forward to support these anti-life attitudes. At the most the modern attitudes show little care and willingness to share life. Mbiti (1991: 104) says: “*Anything that deliberately goes towards the destruction or*

obstruction of human life is regarded as wicked and evil. Therefore anybody who, under normal conditions, refuses to get married, is committing a major offence in the eyes of society . . .”

It worries the traditionalist that the promotion of life, for the modern persons, has to be understood in terms of the availability of material resources. One argues this because some commercial advertisements, in promoting birth control mechanisms strum on the issue of small families and they argue that because they have fewer offspring they are spending less materially. One is reminded of a commercial advert where the lioness boasts to the hyena that because it has only two cubs and the hyena has many, its cubs are comparatively healthier and strong. The whole issue of population explosion is argued in terms of the scarcity of resources.

It further worries the African when the issue of child bearing has to be considered within the scope of human rights because for the traditionalist of the African background, one

strengthens his/her rights by the ability to reproduce. He who boasted of many offspring had a sure way of living forever, for to die and leave no one to remember you is considered to be the real death and this is feared by every one. *“Through marriage and child bearing, the parents are remembered by their children when they die. Anyone who dies without leaving behind a child or close relative to remember him or pour out libations for him is a very unfortunate person. Therefore marriage is intimately linked up with the religious belief about the continuation of life beyond death”*(Mbiti 1990: 111).

The traditional African view of life is rooted in the belief that life is a divine prerogative. In this case all arguments against the propagation of life are simply resulting from greed and as such, are anti social and sinful. For the traditional African the meaning of life is that it is passed on, shared and cherished. Twesigye (1969: 107) says: *“Umuntu participates in Ruhanga’s divine intelligence and skills of creativity. . .God has mercifully and gratuitously given these qualities as gifts to the human beings (abantu) so that they would participate in His divine nature and become His intelligent and responsible representatives in the world.”*

Obviously this divine intelligence and skills of creativity is primarily expressed in being procreative in child-bearing, which is realised in the giving of physical life to some body. Any thing seen to be against the processes of propagation and preservation of life must be prevented with all the might, because it directly offends God and is disruptive to the moral order he established. If the moral order is disrupted then the consequences will be harsh. For this reason, the community is duty bound to defend itself against such threats.

In the view of the traditional African 'propagation' does not merely mean biological birth-giving. It means rather, the holistic process of nurturing that constitutes acting generously and hospitably towards others. These are ranked on the same level as being procreative in as much as they affirm life. When one rescues another from a life-threatening situation he is said, among the abaNguni, to have given birth to him/her. This is captured well in such expressions as '*Ungizalile, ungenze umuntu*' meaning that the one who acts in saving manner recreates, brings to life, give birth to and makes human beings out of those whom he/she helps. Being kind to others, in allowing them to share one's life giving possessions (food and shelter) one acts salvifically. Every one is expected always to be life affirming, hence, to help someone in need is no big deal. Traditional Africans permanently look for the good of others. Such a thing as poverty, at least in terms of material things cannot be so devastating because everyone shares readily and willingly.

The spirit of sharing stems from a tradition that says: In reality no one owns any thing, personally and individually, all is owned in proxy either for the real owners, the ancestors and/or through them for God. Beings exist and participate together in community, one can say that none possesses another exclusively. In this sense the cow is not owned but it allows its products to be used for the enhancement of the life of the community, it participates with its vital forces. "*Bantu languages, it is true, do not have words with a strong meaning of 'possession'. Such verbs as 'to own' or 'to possess' are usually translated by the equivalents of 'to be with' or 'to hold', 'to grasp' They do not have the finality of the western concept of ownership or possession*" (Shorter 1999: 13).

To belong is tantamount to having, this is well captured in the Zulu expression *'intandane enhle ngumakhothwa unina'* figuratively this means the one who still has a mother lacks nothing or put negatively *'ukwanda kwaliwa ngumthakathi'* meaning that only a witch gets hurt when people increase. The abundance of people on whom one can rely on is necessary not only for the actual orphans but for anyone who is in need of help. The bigger the circle of those to rely on, the better the lot of the needy person. The expression that says *'ukwanda kwaliwa umthakathi'* has the deeper meaning that says the anti life forces thrive when people are not united. In the absence of the sanctifying and protecting community, their spells and curses are thrown at whom so ever they want.

The members of the community cover each other's back sides (*bembozana izinqa*). The baSotho refer to assistance as to *'ho ema nokeng'* which is similar to the covering of one's back. When people are together as a community and share together the little they have in the act of (*ukudlelana, ukugqokelana, ukukhalisana* etc.) respectively translated to mean to eat, share dressing attire, cry and mourn mutually and reciprocally. To the same effect Shorter (1999: 15) says: *"Shared poverty is linked to community and social cohesion in Africa. This is even noticeable in the slums and low-income areas of Africa's cities and towns, and it is even more evident in traditional village society, where it is a value that is linked to the ideal of neighbourhood and 'good company'. . . .The scant possessions of one individual are used by others. Frequently the same shirt or coat is seen on the backs of different individuals in the African village. . . . Generally speaking, in traditional African village society, being was more important than having and sharing meant giving oneself, one's labour and one's praise."*

It is very normal to hear umZulu saying: '*Siyabonga*' or umXhosa saying '*siyabulela*', when expressing gratitude. Both these verbs are in the plural form. The tendency in this situation is to ask: 'You and who else?' But it is proper for umZulu or umXhosa to say 'we thank you' because he/she conceives the gift as not only meant for him/her alone. For if you have given me food you have given it for the use of my family as well, because even if I eat it alone now, it is likely that when I come home I will be filled and thus my portion of food will help fill someone else who will be hungrier than myself. So I thank you for such a one as well.

The theology of sharing stems from the acknowledgment that the other has the same needs as every one else. This, alone, calls for an unlimited consideration of the equality of persons in terms of their needs. This is the basis of the face to face relationship where one sees oneself totally in the other. The problem that devours another person may one day devour you in the very same way it does your neighbour. This is a reminder that no one is immune from the human predicament. This challenges one to offer assistance to anyone in trouble, hence the Xhosa say '*inkungu ilala kwiintaba ngeentaba*' or the Zulu equivalent '*inxeba lendoda alihlekwa*' meaning that, what you see happening to someone may happen to you in the future. In this kind of relationships everyone is called to reserve a space for another in one's heart. As abaNguni say: 'In giving, one stores for the future, one throws on top to receive at the bottom.' (*Phonsangasenhla ulindele ezansi*)

3.2.3. *Community.*

There are many definitions that can be given to the term 'community' and there are many different types of communities, for example Spearhead (1979: 46) distinguishes four different types of communities: *potential community, where there is a common field of*

experience, . . . the formal community where there is a common understanding of that experience in shared meaning and continuous exchange. . . actual community, where there is common judgment arising from that understanding . . . willed community, where there is common commitment to the same activity.

For the writer, what is given above is nothing but the different steps that people adopt in the process of forming community. What is called potential community does not and cannot end with the experience of the common field, it, essentially, has to lead to the second step of rational understanding and sharing amongst those who have the experience. People do not experience the common field as animals do, for example, when there is drought the need for water that they all experience individually leads them to exchanges that form them as the actual community that will lead them to taking reasonable judgments about the commonly understood experience. Now that they have debated about their plight they are led to what is called willed community, a community that works together in the same, commonly approved and accepted, activities. When traditional Africans talk of a community they mean: “. . . *the set of relations between*

persons that enable persons to exist and grow as persons. A common way is to distinguish it on the one hand from individualism and on the other from collectivism.

. . . It is not simply the aggregated sum of individuals. Instead it is a collectivity in the truest sense namely one where there is an organic dimension to the relationship between the component individuals” (Mankiti in Shutte 1992: 48).

In this sense a community can be described in terms of a group of people who distinguish and know themselves as interacting and cooperating thus becoming a relating organic structure. Their interactions are founded on their realisation of the common factor such as residence, blood, ancestry, environment, faith and so forth. *“A community is a union of human persons held together by an underlying principle, or by sharing the same values. This underlying principle unites the members in their very persons and makes them come to know and love each other”* (Spearhead 1979: 46).

Community can, therefore, generally be described as a conscious commitment to give and share one and the same life with a limited number of people in a defined geographical area. This giving and sharing becomes the value towards which all center and direct their energies. It thus becomes the binding force that brings families and communities together, leading them to *“. . . common understanding, mutual trust, respect, for personal freedom, mutual responsibility and help”* (Spearhead 1979: 46).

In traditional African view, all that has life share in the source of life itself and under the source of life all are equals as brothers and sisters. When defining life, here above, it has been said that ‘life is a thing to share’ meaning by that, that life is formative of community. Though this life is given to each according to its level and though there is competition for life, no life is treated cheaply. This equality among living things accounts

for the mutual and the symbiotic relationship between them. All are aware that in this symbiotic relationship none can survive without the other and therefore every one, necessarily, seeks to cooperate. The joy of life is celebrated in the company of others. This is done when all live in meaningful participation. Life is therefore a ritual that becomes, efficacious only when all the participants are fully and significantly present and active. The celebration of life calls for the 'many'. As a ritual, life is a very religious thing which evokes moral integrity to all who deal with it. In this thesis, the word community will be used to denote the traditional African's recognition of mutual dependency in the life issues. Due to lack of appropriate terms one shall call this socialism as opposed to individualism. In the words of Kidd (1908:4) the term socialism connotes an "*organization of society in which the means of life (production, distribution and protection) are held in common and in collective ownership.*"

It must be pointed out that 'community' for the traditional African, covers a broader area than the species 'homo sapiens.' It includes every possible being. As it has already been said above, it must not be surprising to find that God is discussed together with the ant, man together with a stone and so on. "*African thought sees different powers in the world, not just a universal 'mana' or dynamism spread over the earth like jam. The powers differ among themselves, divine and human, animal and plant, good and evil. Powers act upon one another, for man is a social being and he also lives in a vital relationship with the natural world*" (Parrinder 1969: 26).

This kind of community does not base itself merely on proximity and juxtaposition, but on participation. It also does not solely depend on biological relations.

The phrases 'I participate therefore I am' and 'I am because we are' emphasise the point about 'being' not being valued for itself, but it as having significance in so far as it is a reality for others and with others. One exists in relation to and as reflecting and reflected in others. It is not unusual to hear a Nguni speaking person saying: I am well, but even more as I see you. Dussel (1988: 9) says: ". . . *strictly speaking one is a person only when one is in a relation of praxis. A person is a person when he/she is 'before' another person or persons, Solitary and alone, in the presence of impersonal nature one ceases in a certain sense to be a person.*" However, in the African worldview, community is forged not only with persons but with all that has life or vital power with which to relate. "*When I am 'face to face' before another in a practical relationship, in the presence of praxis, that person or thing is someone/ something for me*" (Dussel 1988: 9).

Forging community in this manner defies any bias based on biological, cultural, ethnological and racial considerations. Any one who genuinely seeks to participate is de facto a member of the community.

3.2.3.1. *Community the milieu for growth.*

In the section dealing with the stages of humanisation, the actualising and the trans-physical stages were listed as community projects in the historical becoming of its individuals. For traditional Africans the work of grooming people into responsible adulthood is never an individual or solo act. This is logical if one remembers that for traditional Africans a person can never be conceived outside the community, in fact to be out of the community is to have ceased to exist, something that is graver than death itself.

The community is, as it were, the seedbed where the individuals are groomed in the dos and don'ts necessary for their growth and development. From the beginning of one's life it is clearly emphasised that one is not alone in the process of his historical becoming; that he/she was created by God; that he/she is in the watchful care of the ancestors; and that he/she is a member of the present sanctifying community within which he/she was born. This immediately shows that the process of becoming a human person is not and can never be a deed of a single individual. In the one hand “. . . *It (community) must*

consist in the conformity of the individual's being - human to the project of being established by the Supreme Being which is basically communitarian project”

(Schreiter 1991: 34).

It is this community that guides and guards the individual to successful living. “By

conforming to the laws and custom of the group, by consciously interiorizing the group's religious, moral and human values, individuals ensure the coherence and cohesion of a society that will now assist them to assume their particular destinies”

(Schreiter: 34). What is emphasised here is that in the growth and the development (the project of becoming) there is a need for cooperation of all those who participate in a relationship; a solidarity in being, in history, in a reciprocal dependency with others.

3.2.3.2. *Community of relationships.*

A face to face relationship recognises the other as an equal, not something to parasite on. It means accepting and appreciating the other unreservedly as sharing the same values. It does not reduce the other into a passive spectator, but it involves him/her as an active

participator responsible to him/herself and to others. In this way the feeling is both mutual and reciprocal. This mutual appreciation and recognition should not simply be materialistic, where the other is a commodity of manipulation, or of a utility value. Instead the other should be seen as being of value in as much as he/she or it is an independent self actualising and a valuable spiritual being. The other should be able to stand out there as a challenge to and open to be challenged by others. In this way the relational processes should be seen to be both symbiotic and reciprocal, a real and meaningful exchange between equals. One tree does not make a forest, nothing can exist on its own. 'I am because we are or we are therefore I am.' I am essentially and perpetually part of the many, the plural. Excluded or alone I am nothing. It is a situation where one is spent and consumed in the consciousness for the other in community and where the community is spent and consumed in consciousness for the individual.

Victory, security and strength are in members actively involved in symbiotic and reciprocal relationships. It becomes a matter of, touch one- touch all and vice versa. 'An injury to one is an injury to all' as the many South African Trade Unions say'. The glory, or shame of the individual is the glory, or shame of the community. In this line of thought one is really weakened and drained of life when isolated from the community. Such a one as having been isolated for example through ritual pollution needs to be doctored and reinstated to the community.

Why do traditional African people think that the weakness of another will affect them? To them this is simple, if community is expressed through sharing, then the evil and

impurities can be shared as well. And since not only the life affirming processes need to be shared, the community acknowledges the need to protect itself from its members who may be negatively infected.

3.2.3.3. Community of sharing and celebrating.

Livelihood is celebrated in Africa and celebration properly so-called is done with others, this explains the, often misunderstood, fact about the African celebrations. The fact here is that, for Africans there are no such things as private and quiet parties. Every thing is celebrated in the presence of the plural, the many. In most cases parties are referred to as 'umsindo' meaning literal noise. When Nguni people come out of mourning they perform a ritual known as 'ukuxokozela' literally people speaking confusedly. During the mourning period, a month or so after the funeral, the bereaved need, as it were, to be introduced back to the activities of the community. People should not be left in isolation for too long, this may spell death to them in terms of vital participation.

3.2.3.4. The power of being versus the power of having.

While participation and sharing is visible in material goods, the aim is much deeper than this, the desire is to share in one another's spiritual well-being. This point will be elaborated further in chapter nine under the subsection dealing with the theology of presence. Even when one is hindered from participating in the food, song and dance, because of illness, one, nevertheless, enjoys giving one's spiritual gift of the vital force

and receiving that given back by others. If individuals or communities have quarreled, for example, there can be no sharing at table before the reconciliation rituals have been performed. All physical and material participation should be symbolic of what people feel spiritually. *“Zulus believe in corporate personality. It is from this point of view that we see that the conflicts between kinsmen can be very dreadful in the Zulu community consciousness. When kinsmen are involved in a quarrel, a ritual is performed to restore brotherliness which has been destroyed. This is called ‘the communion of cleansing’ (isidloshlanzeko)”* (Khambule 1989: 76).

Calling people together for a feast, extravagant as it may sound, is based on the belief that, they come as spiritual beings. They come along with their ancestors and on their part the ancestors impart blessings wherever they have been invited. It is for these ancestral blessings that the host does not mind wasting food and money. The value of food in the celebration is very relative when seen in the light of the graces that are to be received. The stress is on the power of being rather than on the power of having, if one’s power of being is diminished one’s worth cannot be supplemented by any amount of wealth.

The real source of vital strength is the person living or dead, so in the endeavor to gather life force one seeks to be in the company of others especially in as much as they possess this desired life force. *“Power being essentially power over other human beings, the aims of the universe, the power aimed at could not be a means of production of a set of lifeless objects but only a means of conspicuous consumption with the aim of establishing social assertion . . . It is however true that the aim of human life is to*

acquire the maximum of force then it is necessary to exhibit this force by means of a gift, establishing the existence of one's power in a visible form, in relation to other conscious persons" (Apostel 1981: 321).

There is another aspect around what many people would randomly call extravagance among Africans. In their philosophy of being wealth has no other meaning than to strengthen the power (life force) of the one who owns it. If destroying one's possessions means the spiritual gain, then it matters little how many heads of cattle one slaughters at a go, or in stages. This is what Apostel (1981: 320) means when he says "*Wealth was not capital; it was a means to acquire social prestige and often this occurred by destroying goods, asserting in such a way the power of the one who could destroy so much.*"

3.2.3.5. Community of property.

In the traditional African worldview all things are considered in their hierarchical order and position in that order. Therefore, as there is a hierarchy in position, there ought also to be a hierarchy in possession. God is the proper owner and other beings are subsidiary, or proxy owners. It is God who owns every thing both in terms of proposing their being and disposing it according to his own divine will. In his/her goodness and generosity God gives some of his powers to others who possess them in proxy for him. For this reason those who handle God's things are to be careful to deal with them as God would want, not as they wish. After God, the ancestors are the immediate owners of property

especially those which are necessary for the well being of the community. The amakhosi (kings and chiefs) the elders and the heads of families are the logical earthly representatives of God and the ancestors who administer property for their respective subjects. To emphasise the belonging together of people, certain things are owned communally. Among these are those things to which all have natural rights and, therefore, should not be privately owned, such as land, water, grazing land firewood and game. “ . . . *All un-allotted land that is not required for gardens, together with all wood and water is regarded as common property for the grazing of cattle or for the needs of all the members of the clan.*” (Kidd 1908: 17)

Of course there are territorial claims where (inkosi) the king, or chief, in the name of his subjects owns and administers land and its processes. Through its leader, the king or chief, the community owns the natural resources. In principle, the king, or chief, is the proxy owner of all life and property in the community. He gives the individual heads of families certain rights and responsibilities to administer in his name for their immediate subjects. They own what they receive from him individually but such things as land cannot be sold, because it is never intended for personal ownership. This perhaps explains the absence of proper landmarks in traditional African settlements. The nationalisation of such things as land, water, grazing land and games is a means to prevent selfishness. Kidd (1908: 17) says: “*It is easy to imagine the institution of a carefully thought-out plan of land-tenure devised to prevent scandalous selfishness, . . . and also so as to produce and foster a spirit of camaraderie and social union.*”

The knowledge that all belong to the real owners alerts the present users that material

things are to be treated cautiously as blessings, which when used carelessly, can be withdrawn and or expropriated.

3.2.3.6. *Private property and the place of the individual in community.*

Though tradition ensures that all belong to the inkosi as the representative of the hierarchy, it simultaneously ensures that the individual family heads have security in the claim of the piece of land individually entrusted on them. When the head of the family produces crop from that land he is assured that the fruits of his labour are his. “. . . and

yet a man knows that his gardens will never be taken from him as long as he cultivates them” (Kidd 1908: 17). The issue of ownership was a paradox in

traditional Africa, while in principle no body owns anything personally, all is owned by everybody. All felt at home in being subjects of the king and the king himself felt safe in the possession of the ancestors who were at home in being the subjects of God for whom they act in proxy.

This belonging to the king the ancestors and eventually to God is not just in terms of being subjects, but it means something deeper than this, it means a belonging that requires a filial submission and dependence. The lesser belongs to his/her master as a child who can have no life without him. “*But the Zulus are not worried about that saying:*

‘We are all the king’s men: our bodies, our power, our food and all that we have, is the king’s property’” (Kidd 1908: 7).

This attitude cancels egotistic tendencies to the extent that what one owns is owned in community. Very often, because of this, one replaces all the possessive pronouns with plural ones. My home becomes our home (*kithi, haheso, kwethu*). My wife becomes the wife of our home (*inkosikazi yakithi, umfazi wekhaya*). Failing to address her in these possessive pronouns then at least one ought to call her by her father's name as the daughter of so and so (*ukasobanibani*). She is never mine.

In practice people own certain things individually and personally. In the home, the father owns the cattle and goats personally. This is so because in the African custom he alone can decide when it comes to their use. There are cattle and goats that belong to the wife but she cannot dispose of them without consulting the husband. Of course the husband cannot dispose of such cattle without the wife's expressed consent. There are things that belonged personally to women and children in their respective houses, for example, fowls, pigs, dress and utensils are personal to their owners and husbands avoided imposing their authority over these. All that the women and their children produced through their labor belonged to them and they could barter and sell them at will. For instance, the cattle obtained as lobola for the girls, except those obtained for the eldest daughter, belonged in principle to the house of the girls' mother. *"Each house had certain property and stock allotted to it by the kraal-head, which cannot be alienated from it by him without the approval of the wife of that house, and the produce of the fields tilled by the members of a house belongs solely to it"* (Hamond-Tooke 1962: 37).

There are cattle that belong to the women personally. These are out of reach even to the husband. He cannot use them without the expressed permission of the wife concerned.

The ‘*eyobulunga*’ among the amaBhaca and the amaXhosa, the ‘*liphakelo*’ and ‘*msulamnyembeti*’ among the amaSwati, the ‘*isigodo*’ among the amaZulu are women cattle.

All that has been said up to now may make one wonder as to whether there is any consideration for the individual in a sphere where community is so predominating and over-bearing. To the contrary, the individual has a very important role to play. After all, community is formed by consenting individuals. The individuals’ ability to challenge and to be challenged presupposes the ability to stand out, be numbered and singled out. For the development and progress the individuals now and then need to distance themselves from the community for the purpose of scrutinising and even critiquing its processes otherwise the community will stagnate. In this way one is able to contribute significantly to the development of the community. This ensures one’s critical yet not destructive contribution to the community’s fibre.

This is how individuals with vision are able to conceptualise customs and traditions. (Oruka in Shutte 1993: 15) lists four important points that stick out as pillars of what is called ‘African Philosophy.’ Among these he talks of ‘individual wisdom’ “. . . *the wisdom of wise persons in traditional culture who, though illiterate, are critical independent thinkers who guide their thought and judgment by the power of reason and inborn insight rather than by the authority of the communal consensus.*” There is always room for innovation and improvement. In Africa, inculturation is practiced. As long as the new idea is seen to strengthen the community it is allowed and welcomed.

Traditional African Religion is of its nature very accommodative of others' experiences and the other here does not simply mean the African. Even a foreigner from a totally different culture and background is accommodated. Janheinz (1961: 117) says: "*The*

Christian doctrine, however, did not have the success the missionary hoped for. Far from throwing off their own philosophy and religion and subjecting themselves to the foreign view, the Africans have again and again assimilated the foreign religion to their philosophy and stitched it seamless onto their own system of thought."

3.3. *The 'poor' in traditional African understanding.*

The traditional African's understanding of the term 'poor' is very limited. That is when considered from the oral perspective. Only by way of inference one does get some glimpses of a general understanding of the term 'poor' from other literature on traditional African themes. Otherwise many rural people, when asked about their understanding of the word 'poor' they simply confine themselves to the economic aspect, or its material manifestation, money, food, place to stay and clothing. They never (unless probed) mentioned such issues as spiritual, cultural, political and social poverty. In general Africans do not think that their cultural, political and religious leaders can lead to anyone's impoverishment unless that person deserved it. This kind of explanation has a lot to say on the African's understanding of authority and power as has been already discussed. It can also be attributed to their concepts regarding fate and destiny which will be dealt with later in this dissertation.

The African of a traditional background has some comprehension of spiritual poverty, and this is not treated on the same level as the material poverty. In this spiritual realm, the poor person or a group of persons are believed to be such, as a result of a curse merited personally or inherited from a cursed forefather. For example, there is a distinction between the wealthy and the poor on the basis of such a curse. In this line of thought, one is poor despite his efforts to better the situation in the same line as in the biblical story of Noah's sons Ham and Sam. The Somalians in this line of thought argue that “the *ultimate cause of the inferior position of the boon (the poor) was a curse . . . that the prophet Noah (nabi Nuuh) put on his son Ham. The boon, it is said, are the descendants of this cursed son, whereas bilis trace their ancestry through the line of another son of Noah - Sam. The curse is held to be manifested in a variety of undesirable characteristics displayed by the boon category and by boon individuals. Poverty of both spirit and means is one such trait held to derive from the curse*” (Broch-Due and Anderson 1999: 96).

Traditional Africans know that as a result of misappropriated behavior, certain material sanctions can be imposed on individuals, groups and communities, by either God or the their respective ancestors. This is understandable in that for the traditional African, wealth is never strictly thought of in terms of personal empowerment, but as part of the communal giftedness, so that anyone who may be personally poor is communally rich, in as much as there are wealthy people who are ready to share within his/her community. So, in principle there can be no poor, strictly speaking, within the sharing community. At the risk of repeating oneself, one shall try to reconstruct a definition from what the

traditional African says about the important issues of his/her life. One has already defined the two basic concepts (life and community) that seem to be the guiding forces in the traditional African mind. From these two, the writer thinks, it is possible to extract a somewhat concise definition of the term 'poor' as would be understood by traditional Africans.

In chapter two one tried to define what constitutes normal life in the traditional African worldview. The following is an inference on one's finding in terms of what life is. "*The*

Bantu say, . . .that their purpose is to acquire life, strength or vital force to live strongly that they are to make stronger, or ensure that force shall remain perpetually in one's posterity . . ." (Tempels 1959: 44-45).

As it has been said above the poorest of the 'poor' is the one, who has lost one's vital force. The process of actualisation that one talked about in the ubuntu deliberations is the community's effort to train its individuals to grapple and to preserve life. An unskilled person, in handling life issues, is a hazard to him/herself and the community. The concern for successful life is a preoccupation about saving its processes in their totality. In line with this dissertation it must be said that traditional African religion concerns itself with saving all life and thus seeing to it that nothing is rendered poor by the anti-life forces. This is pivotal in the traditional African thought because on it stands the life, not just of the impoverished individual, but of the community as a whole, the death of one could mean the death of the whole. This is the basic meaning of: 'I am because we are and we are therefore I am.'

3.3.1. *Poverty as being lifeless.*

For the traditional African, a person would be really poor if he/she had a diminished life force. The struggle for the traditional Africans is to have life and have it to the full. One strengthens one's relations in order, as it were, to suck life from those with whom one shares. The whole issue is about protecting life and its processes. Destitution properly so-called would occur in the case where a person had lost his/her life force, or was denied access to it, and more so if one had no access to the rectifying ritual. This is virtually an impossible situation, amidst one's relatives and custom that ensures redemption.

In practice, therefore, there is no such a person as to be incurably and perpetually deprived of the vital force. If such a situation occurred, the conclusion would be that one had faired so badly with one's ancestors that anyone who dared even think of rescuing him/her would be afraid of the wrath of the ancestors. Most of the time such actions, as to deem one an outcast, would already have been detected by the elders of the community. This happened to those who in the biggest of matters have grossly broken tradition. The ordinary painful things such as diseases and other ailments are catered for within the community's arsenal for warding off anti-life forces. The sick are nursed for their sake and for the community's sake because it is believed that as parts of the corporate body when one's vital links are disturbed then the whole group is not well. All pain suffered by the member of the family and community affects all the members and they try by all means to assist the best they can. If the family medical arsenal does not do the trick then the relatives and friends consult the diviner on the sick person's behalf who then gives

them the herbs or charms needed, failing that he/she refers them to the herbalist who is able to give them the right portent. If the sickness is attributed to the spirits, or to the ancestors, the diviner prescribes what ritual need to be done and the relatives take great pain to do as directed.

Sickness and death, as anti-life agents, are well prepared for in the traditional African community which by its nature is life affirming. It is as if all that matters is the protection of life and its processes. As a result, each community, according to its power, has some form of medicine, charm and expert to deal with anti-life forces whenever they appear. In principle the anti-life agents' aim is to eventually weaken the whole community. A wise father, or leader, therefore, does not strengthen the sick person only but all those who are close to him/her. Both he and his enemies know very well that his vital force can be hurt indirectly through his relatives and even live stock.

The institution of a class of the life protecting experts leaves no corner unchecked. There is a class of the witch-detectors (*izangoma*) whose duty is to sniff out sorcerers and anti-life spirits. There is a class of rain, lightning and crop doctors (*izinyanga zezulu*) that pray for rain during droughts, bless the seed before planting and control lightning during storms. There are war doctors (*izinyanga zempi*) that prepare the community for war and there are herbalists to deal with sickness. *“The diviner-the so-called witch-doctor is the man appointed by the State to use all these tremendous forces of nature for the common good of the tribe. He knows how to ward off evil form the tribe, how to doctor the army, how to form a veritable ring of defense around a kraal or a country*

into which charmed circles no wizard who is the enemy of the clan, and no disease, can enter. This clever man knows how to make charm and to induce the crop to grow, he knows how to kill the locusts; and he knows how to prevent the spread of disease, and, in short to secure the well-being of all the members of the tribe” (Kidd 1908: 22).

3.3.2. *The ‘poor’ in terms of community and relationships.*

According to traditional African thinking, one is absolutely poor who has no community to belong to. But where could such a one have come from? How could one exist at all if he/she did not know his father and mother? Even if one’s biological parents would have died, there should be relatives somewhere. In the cases where one would have been lost, or wandered away from his/her biological clan, then, surely, there should be those of his/her extended clan somewhere in that foreign community. In fact, the whole issue of ‘*isiduko*’ (clan name) was instituted to cater for the situations where one was lost. The word ‘*isiduko*’ derives from the Nguni verb ‘*ukuduka*’ meaning to be lost. In the case where the original surname had evolved and people began to call themselves by their great grand fathers’ names, the original clan name was kept alive somewhere in their sub-consciousness. Someone, for instance, may be calling him/herself ‘*Mdutshane*’ after one of the great grand fathers, but as soon as he/she wanders in a different locality where the name ‘*Mdutshane*’ was not known, the search card, ‘*Manci*’ would be used.

In a sense, it is virtually impossible that one is without any community. If community is not provided by the extended family a normal and an immediate way to cater for the individuals, then at least the clan or tribe would be there to see to his/her needs. Even in such case as one would be poor, in terms of the lack of material things, good neighborliness of those around made sure there was food, shelter and clothing for everyone in the community. There were systems in the traditional African community that saw to it that all its members were some how cared and catered for.

Many of the situations that would otherwise render some people really poor were concealed by the institution of 'ubuntu' that called upon everyone to assist by being hospitable and generous. The institution of ubuntu (humaneness) made it easy for the poor to go around begging under the many guises such as '*ukwenana, ukuthekela*' and many other forms through which traditional Africans assisted one another. This is dealt with in Chapter eleven, when dealing with the shock absorbers. But to a critical mind even ubuntu as an institution can be manipulated by the oppressive elements.

In a system where strict hierarchy is adhered to, such as the traditional African communities were, people never seriously questioned their position. They never clamored for positions higher than the ones they believed to be God-given. A commoner never sought to gain a higher position. This is what is elsewhere referred to by the writer as classes without class struggle. One can question even this by asking whether in reality there is such a thing as a struggle less class in a developing society. It can be argued now that even such notions as humaneness and subservience were put in peoples' minds by

cunning people who wanted to perpetuate their advantaged position in the hierarchy.

“The problem is that once the system . . . has asserted itself as the foundation and the law, morality will depend on the actualization of the system. An act will be morally good if it is ‘ad equated to’, if it complies with the ends of the prevailing system . . . the law itself may be unjust . . . but all this lies outside my consideration”
(Dussel 1988: 32).

True, though this might have been the case, one needs to be weary of reading much of the contemporary feeling into the traditional African’s actual state of affairs. This dissertation is not so much about whether there was a class of people called the poor in the African past, rather it is much about how people responded to it in terms of their religion.

3.3.3. The special case of traditional African women and poverty.

Though the matter of women and poverty will be intensively dealt with in chapter seven, one feels almost compelled to set the stage as early as now. This, results obviously, from the overbearing assumption that traditional African custom had no consideration for its women folk. This view or interpretation depends, of course on the perspective from which one looks at the matter. The writer thinks that it is proper to give his own perspective, not necessarily to counteract any other, but to add to the views that stimulate the debate. In traditional African thinking, women fell in the category of children. This was argued mainly from the point of view of their physical strength and capabilities than it was on gender or age, otherwise the women folk were in all other respects equal to their

male counter parts. On the issue of physical strength one must note that in olden days the conditions of living were harsh and demanding so that physical strength was one of the most important pre-requisites. In a warring situation as the traditional African man found himself the women could not survive, hence they were not enlisted. In the attack by wild animals they easily succumbed. This is the reason for women to be seen to follow behind their husbands when on a journey. This was done for protection than to show the subservient role of women.

In African worldview people are children not necessarily because of their age. It is in terms of their inability to protect and to fend for themselves that they fall in this category. A very old senile and mentally retarded persons falls into this category. Older men kill each other just to prove, they are not women, in fact faction fights result from men of one village calling their counterparts of another village in these derogatory terms. In traditional Africa there were laws that prevented the abuse of women. If, for example a woman left her husband due to abuse and ill treatment, he had to pay a cow to her parents as means for reconciliation. Women are generally not excluded in the community rituals. For a proper understanding of how women fit in the traditional African thoughts, one needs to understand the processes of acceptance of the individuals in the community. Acceptance in traditional African consideration occurs on two levels. One is firstly accepted on the level of 'ubuntu' as has been presented already in this dissertation. This means that first, one is considered from the point of view that he/she is; a person and as a person it becomes within one's right to receive care, generosity and hospitality.

The second level of acceptance is the ritual level. Here it is not the matter of the physical or biological appearances that count. Relationships are not centered on personal good sense. They do not depend on one's hospitality and generosity. This level of acceptance demands that things be done because custom decrees them to be done. Since ritual is an ancestral abode, and it can only be efficacious in their own terms, procedures need to be followed to the letter. There can be no personal sentiments involved; there are no added flares whether one is poor or affluent, male or female.

Of the two modes of acceptance, ritual acceptance is superior, therefore, to be accepted ritually means to be given equal rights with the other members. So to say that women are also ritually accepted means in essence that they have equal rights with men. They, therefore, occupy their rightful place in the hierarchy. It is a fact that in traditional African societies (from birth to death) women were part of the elevating ritual processes. Their consideration was not entirely dependent on the whims of males. The very fact that proper manhood, in traditional Africa, could not be achieved unless one had a wife accounts for the women's role in ritually turning boys into men and houses into homes.

CHAPTER THREE: *Umzimkhulu's poverty in context of the Eastern Cape Province.*

1. Poverty in the Eastern Cape.

Much has been said about poverty in South Africa and all of it is true for the Eastern Cape Province as well. What this section of the dissertation seeks to do is to ground and center the issues a bit on the area chosen as part of the study area. The Eastern Cape Province has its particular place in the history of South Africa; in fact some of its experiences differ remarkably from that of other areas in the country. Many of the laws that came to bear on the country as a whole result from the initial experiences and encounters of the two cultures (black and white) and these first occurred as the experience of both the blacks and the whites in the Cape during the frontier wars. The struggle for land, the struggle for power and whatever other struggles were first brewed in the Cape.

The sub headings that will be discussed hereunder are specifically mentioned in as much as they are the direct consequence of the encounters in the Cape. It was from these encounters that some of the attitudes that eventually were to lead to the entrenchment of policies and laws that would govern relationships between the blacks and the whites for a long time. A long time indeed, if one takes into consideration that even today our new democracy is busy trying to unwind the processes that were developed then. The present landlessness of a section of our population was, in principle, decided then. When reading about why the Bushmen, the Hottentots, the Xhosas fought the whites the answer is

simple, there was scramble for land and eventually to lose the wars meant to lose the land. To lose the land meant to lose the living space for oneself and for one's stock hence the issue of population density is also determined by the frontier wars. The foundations of South Africa's economic policies were laid then in the sense that as the indigenous people lost land they lost with it their means of living in other words their economy. Without their normal means of livelihood they had to sell and buy into the economy that was biased against them as the conquered and, therefore, they were to be economically exploited as the system suited the victors. In fact the whole of South Africa's race relations will for a long time be tainted by these historical facts.

1.1. Some general statistics with regards to the Eastern Cape Province.

Of the nine Provinces comprising South Africa, the Eastern Cape Province is statistically the poorest province. According to the Department of Economics and Tourism of KZN 2002, the Eastern Cape Province is the most populous province in South Africa, it is a home to over seven million people accounting for 16% of the population of the whole country. It is said to be one of the poorest. Though one cannot claim to have district by district researched information, one can all the same make a general assumption on the findings of those areas that have been researched. May (1998: 8) says: "*Poverty is distributed unevenly among the nine provinces. Provincial poverty rates are highest for the Eastern Cape (71%) . . . Poverty is deepest in the Eastern Cape, Free State and Northern Province, which together make up 365% of the population but account for 515% of the total poverty gap . . .*"

2. *Economic poverty.*

The Oxford Dictionary defines poverty as '*want of the necessities of life*'. Simply, it is a negation of what is essential for decent human life. This negation can be with regard to physical, spiritual or psychological needs of a person. The term economics according to the oxford dictionary means "*the ability to recoup expenditure with some profit, or the science of production and distribution of wealth*". It can also be used to denote the position of a country, or community as regard to material prosperity. In line with these definitions economic poverty should mean inclusively the lack of cash, credit and co-laterals.

2.1. *Some characteristics of economic poverty and their application to the Eastern Cape.*

Rasmussen in Lutz (1987: 32) gives three guiding questions to bring out the meaning of economics, he says: "*Every perspective on economic life that is human, moral and Christian must be shaped by these three questions: What does the economy do for people? What does it do to people? And how do people participate in it?*" The constant mention of people in these questions shows that economics is essentially a human reality. "*It influences what people hope for themselves and their loved ones.*" As a human reality the economy is shaped by the people and they, in turn, are shaped by it. In terms of the above explanation, therefore, by the expression 'economic poverty' it is meant the lack of means for people to maintain their normal day to day domestic needs. This lack results either from the absence of resources, the inadequacy of the economic system in coping

with the normal demands of the people's livelihood, or the presence of obstacles that block people from making meaningful and appropriate interventions with regard to it, be it in terms of its production or distribution.

In order to check whether the economy fulfills the triple mandate set above, there ought to be standards set in against which to check. When defining poverty (May 1998: 5) says: *“Poverty is characterized by the inability of individuals, households or communities to command sufficient resources to satisfy a socially acceptable minimum standard of living.”* Economic poverty includes a number of items that are necessary for living and, therefore, it cannot be fully explained simply in terms of the absence of a single item. It is in this sense that May (1998:6) claims that: *“Households use their assets to undertake a wide range of income-generating activities, and in doing so exercise a range of claims in many distinctive claiming systems. There are at least four broad categories of assets and claims: human capabilities, natural resources, social and institutional networks, and human-made capital.”*

In terms of the four broad categories listed here above the level of poverty in the Eastern Cape is highest at 71% as compared to the lowest in Gauteng at 17%. Child risk of poverty is highest in the Eastern Cape at 78% as compared to the lowest in Gauteng at 20%. The reason for the difference should be obvious, Gauteng is an industrial area and most of the Eastern Cape comprises the former Homelands. The Eastern Cape was affected and influenced by institutional discrimination which meant that black people in this area as elsewhere in South Africa had no access to physical, financial and human

assets. Since money is the main means through which people normally use to satisfy their needs and to develop themselves money-metric is commonly used as a measure in poverty assessment. Let us now try to rate poverty in the Eastern Cape in terms of the four categories stipulated above.

2.1.1. *Human capabilities and unemployment:*

In terms of quality jobs most of the people from the rural Transkei and Ciskei homelands which are now part of the Eastern Cape are not skilled. This affects their wages. As a result of their illiteracy and lack of skill they have to be relegated to secondary labour market and the informal segment that is characterised by low wages. So education and training plays an important role as a category of assets and claims. “*High levels of*

poverty prevail in rural areas, and agricultural workers are among the poorest households. Average wages in agriculture are well below the minimum living level, workers’ educational qualifications are low, they have few other resources, and they demonstrate little mobility on the labour market. The vulnerability of farm workers is increased because they rely on their employers not only for employment and wages, but also for services such as schools, housing, electricity, medical facilities, water and transport . . .” (May 1998:17).

The problem of the illiterate and unskilled people in employment areas is further stressed and complicated by the fact that even when they are employed, they are always within the risk area of being retrenched.

To find employment is itself a problem for the fundamentally poor person who needs capital even to move from one place to another, who, even if he/she manages to move from home to the possible area of employment will need capital to sustain him/herself at the new place etc. *“The second truth (about unemployment) is that searching for work can be costly, and for some who are unemployed they may simply be too poor to find work”* (Wilson and Ramphele 1989: 86).

It is worth noting that many of those in the informal sector are poor even while employed. A person is poor if his/her daily earnings cannot see him through to the next day. Most of black people employed in the informal sector do not bring their salary envelopes home, because by the time they reach home all their earnings have been taken in payment of transport, loans, or merely sufficed to buy food for the evening.

Apart from the lack of education, skills and even employment in the country an added dimension has come to the fore; the incentive to look for work is absent from many people. Asked why, many would say: it is better to stay home than go to work in conditions that strip you off your dignity as a person. Working for a rude and inconsiderate employer, having to sacrifice leg and limb for meagre salary, having to live in shacks that do not befit a human being etc. are all reasons for what would be called voluntary unemployment.

The inability to secure stable income has hazardous results in the households, the highly affected are the children who are eventually forced to make further links in the chain of

illiteracy and lack of skills and, therefore, become added future burdens in the already ailing family. According to the findings of Wilson and Ramphele (1989: 102) “*The*

resettlement camps within the homelands appear to be particularly hazardous areas in which to raise children. Severe malnutrition in the form of kwashiorkor and marasmus is clearly a major problem in these poverty pockets. In Tsweletswele, a closer settlement in the Ciskei, for example, as many as 10% of the pre-school children surveyed had clinically definable signs of kwashiorkor well above the 3% national average.”

The old people are no less affected by hunger and starvation with the sad result of wasting and pellagra. “*Over a thousand kilometers to the east in the rural Transkei, a*

survey of three widely separated villages found that 50-60 percent of respondents did not consume any meat, milk, eggs, or fish. One third (33 percent) of the families had diets which were deficient not only in quality protein but also in calories, certain minerals and vitamins. In another survey, of a resettlement camp in the Ciskei, it was found that ‘the most striking feature, in the face of all other problems, is the perceived problem of lack of food at Oxtan’, where ‘out of 189 respondents . . . who answered about meals eaten in the previous day 174 (92%) had eaten pap [mealie-meal porridge], 53 (28%) samp, 28 (15%) bread, 80 (42%) tea. Only 5 (3%) had had mealies, 12(6%) cabbage, 3 spinach, 1 beans, 1 chicken, 1 potatoes, 1 fruit, 6 milk. None had had eggs or meat” (Wilson and Ramphele: 104). In this same survey it was found that 61 percent of all the respondents had lost one child or more (Wilson and Ramphele 1989:110).

2.1.2. *Natural resources and their role in poverty rating:*

When the spatial placement has no consideration for the needs of the people, it usually happens that preparations are not done in advance. This is what happened in the apartheid system, the driving force was to move black people to satisfy the whites' needs. The better positioned areas in terms of proximity to working areas, services and agriculture were automatically reserved for whites. *“Under apartheid the poor were shifted to the margins of urban areas and more importantly to the margins of the country thus focusing the core of South Africa’s poverty in the rural areas”* (May 1998: 39).

2.1.3. *Water and fuel.*

In placing people for the satisfaction of the white man's racial divide, the blacks ended in desolate areas, where there was no potable water; where fuel for energy was scarce or nil if not very far from easy access. Eberhard in Wilson and Ramphele (1989: 44) estimated that in certain areas of the former Homelands people had to travel distances of about between 5 and 9 kilometers to and fro just for collecting fuel. The preparation of each load took something like two to six hours. *“Provision of dependable water supplies can have a strong positive effect on food security and income generation for rural women; substantial livelihood gains are likely to be made by releasing labour spent on obtaining water, and providing water for small farming and other enterprises. However, only 21% of households have piped water, and only 28% have sanitation facilities. In rural areas, more than 80% of poor households have no access to piped*

water or sanitation, and 74% of rural African households need to fetch water on daily basis” (May 1998: 29).

Energy is equally necessary for the maintenance of minimum standard of living, so that, for many displaced people poverty meant the inability, or difficulty to obtain basic energy that is essential for cooking, heating and lighting. By energy it is meant such things as *“electricity, hydro-carbon (including coal, gas and paraffin) and biomass (wood, dung, and crop waste” (May 1998: 30).* There is a wide use of paraffin and coal and lately, gas in both rural and urban areas and it is a risk both in terms of safety and health. The problem with regard to South Africa is not so much that there is no access to electricity, for example, the issue at stake is much the politicisation of the services. Wilson and Ramphela (1989: 44) put it so appropriately when they say: *“In South Africa the question is particularly poignant. One of the clearest images of the nature of poverty in the country is the sight of a group of elderly black women, each carrying home a load of firewood weighing up to 50kg, passing underneath the high-tension cables that carry the electric energy between town (and farmsteads) of the Republic. South Africa produces 60 percent of the electricity in the entire continent yet almost two-thirds of the total population (and approximately 80 percent of all Africans) within the country do not have access to that energy for their household requirements.”*

2.1.4. *Social and institutional networks and transport:*

The most important and damning of the social and institutional network in South Africa was the legislation governing the movement of people and the selling of goods especially by black people. Never were people unsure of what was expected from them as were black South Africans. There was a lot of legal jargon and bureaucracy that one needed to go through before securing a job. Life was characterised by constant fleeing; when one spotted a law officer the best was to run because there were so many laws that one could never be sure as to one's guiltlessness. If it was not the pass law, that would arrest you, it was the group areas act, if not the group areas act then it would be the work permit etc.

How does one relieve oneself from poverty if the very act of looking for a job can be a contravention of one of the laws of the country? Just imagine the poor being harassed for hawking fruits and vegetables what on earth can be wrong with this, yet this was a reality in South African towns, cities and even homelands. *"After interviews with 137 street*

traders in 13 of Transkei's small towns, one Carnegie research worker concluded that 'municipal police all over Transkei harass the street traders by confiscating their goods, fining them, and even imprisoning them' . . . in the capital itself, Umtata, new bye-laws have prohibited hawkers from staying in any one place longer than five minutes . . ." (Wilson and Ramphela 1989: 162).

Because of the great distances that people had to travel some times on daily basis as workers, one finds that there is a lot of time and energy that was lost; time that could be utilised in generating income or doing other productive projects and activities. *“Due to the spatial distances resulting from apartheid planning, the working poor spend a large amount of time and money on transport. . .more than 60% of ‘the ultra poor’ walk to work”* (May 1998: 32).

2.1.5. *The social fabrics of the family and crime:*

The whole system of migratory labour and its insistence in placing blacks, a long distance from their work places has impacted negatively on the social network in terms of family life. Husbands lived alone in hostels away from their wives, something that led to unfaithfulness in married life and financially disturbing in terms of family maintenance.

“The break up of the family unit also spawns other social maladies, including the break down of family discipline, promiscuity among young adults which invariably leads to illegitimate pregnancies: the resulting illegitimate, and often unwanted, children, children are the ones who become malnourished in a community” (PCS in Wilson and Ramphele 1989: 106).

Apart from this the South African mind-set was psychologically strenuous to African men who, as Wilson and Ramphele (1989: 208) say, were required *“... to be in two places at once: in the cities as ‘labour units’ to keep the wheels of mining and manufacturing running; and in the rural labour reserves as husbands, fathers, and citizens.”*

It will be untrue to say that the social fabrics break only because the father figure is away, sometimes things go wrong in his presence if not because of his presence. In the presence of inadequate housing and the overcrowding that is often experienced in squatter camps and informal settlements, children are exposed to experiences far above their comprehension and some times a lot of contra-suggestions happen that result in promiscuous activity among children and the youth.

When the economic environment is not right and hunger continues to make its demands, then people try to satisfy their physical needs even through unorthodox ways. Crime results from desperation whether it is the genuine desire to satisfy legitimate needs, or sheer frustration. One other factor that has come to the fore as a result of poverty is that crime is no longer a feature of towns and cities, but that it is as rampant in rural areas and usually in overcrowded and densely populated part of the reserves cf. (Wilson and Ramphela 1989: 154).

Though, Ntsebeza and others did their research in Bathurst, a settlement in the Eastern Cape Province, their findings are not foreign to any other that one might find elsewhere in the province. This is what they say: “*On the other hand the majority of blacks in*

Bathurst are poor and unemployed. Those that are employed earn very low wages. For example, Nolutshanyo residents report that monthly wages rarely exceed R30 for people working on the pineapple farms around Bathurst, R115 for domestic workers, and R250 for people employed in small commercial sector. . .” (Ntsebeza et al 1995:11).

2.1.6. *Unemployment:*

Unemployment plays a very central position in the poverty rating of communities. The Eastern Cape as part of the pre-democratic South Africa suffered in the general plight of the other African reserves in terms of finding employment in the so-called greater South Africa. The pass laws, job reservation and the Homeland system affected them grossly in terms of job hunting and security once one was lucky to obtain it. Using Lower Roza a settlement outside the town of Qumbu in the former Transkei Wilson and Ramphela (1989: 69, 72) say: “*In a study of 200 households it was found that average monthly*

income was R152 (November-December 1983). Some three-quarters (76 per cent) of the households were estimated to have incomes below the HSL and 88 per cent were below the HEL (47:33) . . . If one were to use cattle a measurement for wealth then even in this area, most of the people in the Eastern Cape are very poor. Statistics show that in 1980-1983 “More than half the households in Libode had no cattle at all, and one in five had between one and five beasts. One household in ten had eleven or more.”

2.2. *Livestock as wealth.*

Since this work is predominantly deliberating about poverty as an economic reality for people of the African background, one should think that to a certain extent there is a need to expound on what really comprise wealth especially for the person of a traditional African background. For the Xhosa as indeed for many South African blacks and

pastoralist groups, the saying: ‘*ubuhle bendoda ziinkomozayo*’ (a man’s beauty is not seen in his face but in the amount of cattle he has) is very true. For such people “. . . *the idea of wealth is conventionally situated in stock and its imagery. Conversely, poverty is closely associated with stocklessness . . . Thus ‘the very poor’ would be those who neither owned nor had clear access to livestock. . . Livestock are the main resource as well as the measure of value within the community*” (Underson and Broch-Due 1999: 24).

Even within the above definition one has to obey the economic law that allows for the different levels of wealth as well as of poverty. The Category presented above relates to absolute poverty as opposed to relative poverty which would mean in this case, having sufficient amount of what is necessary to manage as a family. I think this is what Underson and Broch-Due (: 24) mean when they say: “. . . *the true opposite of poverty is not wealth but sufficiency. It is possible to determine rough levels of sufficiency, based on the number of animals required to sustain a family unit under a variety of conditions. A sufficient or viable household herd will be one large enough to reproduce itself to support the household members with milk.*”

2.3. Personnel as wealth.

A rich man is him who has many children which on the one hand implies having many wives; having many wives on the other hand implies having a multitude of relationships with the in-laws. A rich man therefore is him who has control over people in one way or

the other. *“More over as the Maasai definition of a rich man (ol Karsis) – one who has many children-tells us, real wealth resides in (control over) people, including their labour and reproductive power. An elder must have sons to herd and daughters to marry off. Our notion of sufficiency must then include labour as well as stock, since the two are interdependent”* (Underson and Broch-Due 1999: 24).

The growth of the household has to reflect the growth of the stock and vice versa.

The rich households somehow absorb the poverty of other household members. This happens in the case where there is an exchange between labour as given by the poor and subsistence as given by the rich in return. From the South African perspective Bryant (1949: 247) says: *“The Zulus, then, had no special currency or ‘money’. And yet they were not without their rich men. But their wealth was not in pounds, or metal, or shells, but in their ‘stock’- their wives and marketable daughters, and the cows and goats and sheep, which these later produced.”*

In terms of poverty in the pre-colonial period in South Africa as elsewhere in the continent poverty was not so much in terms of lack of land; it was mostly the lack of labour that rendered people poor. A person who cannot work for himself or for any reason employ the services of others was really poor.

2.4. ***Landlessness.***

The question of land is central almost to any economic and political tension. Unless people do something with regard to the distribution of land and its right uses, the world

will never experience peace either politically, economically and otherwise. *“These experiences of food shortages, deterioration of our farmland, and concentration in land ownership suggests a need for rethinking our relationship to the land. All of us have a stake in what happens to the land. For most of us, our separation from the land may further distance us from concern about what is happening on our nation’s food-producing land. Nevertheless, we and our children have an important stake in the fundamental questions: Who should own the land? And How should the land be used”* (Evans and Cusack 1987: 10)?

Land, therefore, is primary in the discussion of the economics of a people. It is important in many respects. In the area of production it is, for example, the land that provides the raw material from which we obtain our final commodities. The relation with the land and its ethic need to be considered from different points of view. It can be considered from the patriotic sentiments of it being ‘the mother earth, or father land’ as is the case in land claims. It can also be seen through the economic considerations where land as a resource is worth only what its market value is, what one can get out of it as a commodity or what one can get from selling its products. Another way of relating to land is that of the anthropocentric views of the ecologist which considers land in as much as it supports the different eco-systems.

2.4.1. *Land within traditional African religion*

The traditional African view hinges around the themes of community, life and relationships. Land is intrinsically intertwined in matters of these themes, firstly, in as much as land is part of the said community, secondly is as much as the life of the said community is sustained with products reaped from the land, and thirdly, in as much as relationships are made meaningful when people exchange gifts through the commodities obtained from the land. Aldo Leopold in Evans and Cusack (1987: 18) says: “*What is*

needed today,. . . is an extension of the understanding of the ethics to include a sense of responsibility to respect and preserve something else that has long been considered mere property- the natural environment. “All ethics so far evolved rest upon a single premise: that the individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts. . .The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals or collectively: the land.”

The success or failure of communities has much to do with their attitudes towards the land. This is very much noticeable between the pastoralists and the agro-pastoralists. One such example is found in the long standing struggle in South Africa between the pastoralist Khoi-san and Nguni groups and the agro-pastoral European counterparts. The decline of the black groups’ prosperity in the face of surreptitious land acquisition by the white groups is marked by each group’s attitude towards land. While one group uses the land flimsily in symbiotic way getting only what it gives the other delves much deeper into it, extracting as much from it as can be gotten out. The attitude towards land is itself

related to the different religious views about it. The group that sees land only as a resource to be tapped, tends to have no sympathy with it while those who see it as a partner in community and relationships tend to respect it. The latter “*seem preoccupied with continuity and the reproduction of eternal order guarded by ancestral spirits*” (Anderson and Broch-Due 1999: 13). The former on the other hand “. . . is characterized by pragmatism, inventiveness and lack of strong bonds to ancestral spirits. . .”

The obvious result is that when two groups with such opposing attitudes meet, the end product would be that on the empirical level those who tap the land as a resource will be more glamorous in their outlook than the traditional ones. This is obvious because in terms of South Africa, for example, the whites with their business like attitudes have better homes, better fields, while the traditional Africans have remained only with better hearts. History will tell which strategy leads to happiness in the end; whether it will be the better hearts that preserve the land or the better fields and homes that disintegrate it.

Only after the issue of land use and ownership has been put in its right perspective can the issue of poverty (as meaning a negation to someone the right to relate to the land for sustenance) be significantly discussed. Unless one has land, one cannot meaningfully relate to it. The soils the waters, plants and animals are in communion with the human beings. One is poor or affluent in terms of what land produces. One is rated poor if he/she has no soil to build, to plough and plant in, no waters to use or irrigate his fields, no plants to eat and feed his stock.

2.4.2. *The impact of apartheid on the evaluation of land*

The South African laws especially those dealing with the distribution of land such as the group areas act the homeland policies etc. declared certain persons unfit for particular areas of the country so that those deemed to be unlawfully loitering in towns and so-called white areas had to be shipped to the reserves and Homelands. What this meant, apart from the pain of forced removals, is that the carrying capacity of the area these people were cramped into was exploding and there, necessarily, was to be scramble for land amongst them. The expression ‘when two bulls are fighting the grass suffers’ became true and literal in many places where the people were packed. Apart from this one needs to remember that in many cases the planning of the reserves and homeland system was carefully orchestrated to deny the blacks any kind of development or progress. The areas given to them were, for the most part, not conducive to any serious farming etc. *“Face to face with nothing. For without soil nothing grows: not trees, nor grass, nor other indigenous plants, nor seeds for harvest. Such pressure on the land creates a downward spiral into deeper impoverishment for those without jobs elsewhere”* (Wilson and Ramphela 1989: 39).

When there is so much crowding of people in a particular area one is sure to get a situation where those who possessed land before losing it and those who had none becoming alarmingly landless. The example given by McAllister in Wilson and Ramphela (1989: 39) reads: *“Thus in the Chata Valley near Keiskammahoek in the Ciskei, over the generation 1946-81 the average size of land fell by 75 per cent from 1.72*

ha. to 0.43 ha. and landlessness increased from 10 to 43 per cent of all families.”

In the bid to reserve the best areas for the white population, the Apartheid system often pushed the blacks to areas that even when spacious could however not sustain them through agriculture. If at all there was arable land there was no financial support, no labour force since men were in towns, mines and farms as migrant labourers. “. . . *there are other reasons why arable land in the reserves is not fully cultivated every year. The most important of these seem to be insufficient labour, insufficient capital, and the high risk of much toil yielding little fruit as a result of drought, theft, or damage to crop by both wild and domestic animals*” (Wilson and Ramphela 1989: 41).

2.5. Population growth and density.

The population density is very determinant to the amount of land people will have in any given situation, so that the more people you have the less land will each have. The pre-democratic South African system did not consider this in its bid for separate development. Writing some time before the democratization of South Africa Wilson and Ramphela (1989: 37) already had this to say in terms of space and population density in the former Homelands of Transkei and Ciskei: “. . . *But in the province as a whole (the Cape Province) rural population density outside the reserves is only 2 persons per sq. km whilst in the Transkei is 55 and the rural Ciskei 82. . . In the country as a whole population density on the white farms is 6 persons per sq. km. In the rural parts of the reserves it is 57, almost ten times greater. The area of the Ciskei is 5300 sq km. which means that it could support 47700 people living permanently on the*

land. Rural population in 1980 was 435000 which indicates that the land has a population density (to say nothing of the animal population) at least nine times its agricultural carrying capacity.”

The argument has always been that poverty in South Africa results from the blacks' inability to use effective birth control, they simply have many children. One wonders whether this problem only began when the whites came to the country, because if the blacks were as fruitful before and could sustain their lives, then it is wrong to attribute poverty to their population dynamics. Again one wonders as to why, if the country had so many people from whom labourers could be obtained, did our labour market have to cross the borders to recruit labourers.

3. The Umzimkhulu Municipality as the study case.

In the Eastern Cape Province the Alfred Nzo District Municipality is the poorest district compared to the other district municipalities in the Eastern Cape Province. According to poverty index figures, poverty levels range at 52.6%” (Alfred Nzo District Municipality: Integrated Development Plan 2002: 7). Considering that the lowest district (Cacadu) has its poverty level down to 26.3%, then one is right to say that Alfred Nzo's poverty levels are alarming. Umzimkhulu Municipality forms the border between the Kwazulu Natal and the Eastern Cape Provinces. The Umzimkhulu Municipality is one of the two local municipalities that comprise the Alfred Nzo District Municipality. It occupies approximately 2725 square kilometers.

3.1. *Physical and climatic structure.*

The Alfred Nzo District Municipality consists of two sub areas: a central plateau with relatively good soils and intermediate rainfall supporting a mixed agriculture; a high plateau leading up to the Drakensburg Mountains with relatively good soils, a high rainfall supporting a mixed agriculture. The Umzimkhulu magisterial district in particular boasts of a very good climatic conditions suitable for agricultural production. Rainfall ranges from 750mm to 1050mm per annum. This suggests that some parts of the Alfred Nzo District Municipality have a sub-tropical climate. It is unfortunate that of the total 7791.3407 hectare only 1203.210 is used for agriculture. If considering that only 354.897 hectare are used for residential, water bodies and mines and quarries, one wonders, what the other 6304.316(ha) area is used for.

3.2. *Population.*

The Municipality has a population of 544107 of which 165426 belong to the Umzimkhulu local municipality. Of these 55% is female. The population density of Umzimkhulu is estimated at 30 persons per square kilometer. In the whole district 46% of the population is still dependent being below the age of 15. Statistics show that about 21525 persons in the Umzimkhulu magisterial district are unemployed. That amounts to about 72% in terms of unemployment rate. *“Unemployment is the most significant problem estimated at 76% for the whole of Alfred Nzo . . . this has a significant impact on poverty levels”* (Alfred Nzo District Municipality: Integrated Development Plan: 8).

3.3. *Poverty levels.*

The Alfred Nzo District Municipality is rated the poorest of all the District Municipalities that form the Eastern Cape Province. “*According to the poverty index figures, poverty levels range at 52.6%, followed by the OR Tambo district Municipality at 49.6%*” (Alfred Nzo District Municipality: Integrated Development Plan 2002:7). According to the survey done by ECSECC 2001 Region E within which Alfred Nzo District Municipality is located, the HIV Aids prevalence from 1997 to 2000 ranged from 12.2% in 1997 to 24.1% in 2000. Between 1997 and 1998 alone it had grown by 9.3%. The conclusion that one comes to in this regard is that the spread of disease is very much connected to the rate of poverty in the area. About 108 children under the age of 5 in Region E are said to die from diarrhea every year. This is about 17.4% of the children born every year. According to ECSECC 2001 75% of the persons in the Umzimkhulu magisterial district are living in poverty. 44% of the households earn between 0 and 6000 Rands per annum. Only 10 households earn R42 000 and above per annum. In whole district municipality the majority of households (78%) earn between 0-R18000 per annum. Employment is a key factor in poverty alleviation. In the whole of Alfred Nzo Municipal District 71196 persons are unemployed and 21525 of these are from the Umzimkhulu local municipality. This means that of the total population of the area about 72% is unemployed.

3.4. *Education.*

About 55% of persons in the Alfred Nzo District Municipality are illiterate 8% of which has no formal education. In the Umzimkhulu magisterial district there is, according to ECSECC 2001, about 52% rate of illiteracy. Accordingly 7% has no formal education, 73% is between grade zero and grade nine, 5% matric only and 1% above matric. This necessarily impacts on poverty levels.

3.5. *Agriculture*

The whole district municipality is predominantly rural and as such its agricultural activity is at the moment at a subsistent level. However, because of the climate and types of soil it has, there is great potential for development. *“Soil types and climatic conditions are suitable for beef, goats, sheep, dairy, sorghum, maize, oil and protein crop, Lucerne, potatoes, cabbage, tomatoes, tropical fruit and nuts, pineapples, chicory and hemp to mention but a few”* (Alfred Nzo District Municipality: Integrated Development Plan 2002:15).

While the district has a lot of available natural resources, the analysis done in order to outline opportunities and constraints and to capture key problems areas and their causes within the district, has shown that most of the difficulties in relation to development in the different codes in the district are as a result, of lack of management expertise, poor infrastructure, lack of technology, lack of clear policy, illiteracy, high unemployment rate, poor road infrastructure and natural disasters such as floods, tornadoes droughts etc.

CHAPTER FOUR: *Tools for investigation.*

1. *INTRODUCTION: Review of literature.*

This thesis researches the theme of African religion's response to poverty, and thus it bases itself on the responses and reactions of the African people to an ethic that result from such a response. In order to be able to register some of the reactions and responses of the African people to this ethic one shall, obviously, have to deal in depth with certain ethical, religious, historical, philosophical and statistical literature.

A wider reading of other relevant literature will help in defining the term 'poverty' as it is generally understood in contemporary debates. Though they are not written on African themes as such, a lot will be taken from other writers on the themes of poverty and economics. In the face of the problem of one's topic, having little, or nothing written on it from the African perspective, one will have to deduce and construct themes related to the demands of the dissertation. Writers like John Mbiti, Benezet Bujo and Augustine Schutte will be important for this work. For example, Mbiti does not deal with the issue of poverty as such never the less, his contribution, and while specifically religious, helps to decipher the traditional African understanding of the term 'poor'.

In the literature there will have to be some historical material to trace the development in the African understanding of the term. Though it is understandable and even appreciated that a simple study of semantics is not sufficient in a thesis like this, the writer feels that

one cannot completely ignore the data that orality has on this issue. He, therefore, proposes that when necessary, especially for emphasis, he will appeal to words and expressions that might help to bring the message home.

SECTION ONE: *Literature:*

Here, the writer aims at giving a few of the main sources he proposes to consult in order to base his assumptions. One's sources will naturally comprise of literature with religious themes, especially on African worldview, history, mainly that of the Eastern Cape, statistics in relations to South Africa and particularly focusing on the Eastern Cape. Other literature will be used as back up thus giving some general muscle to the assumption that the thesis aims to argue. To avoid repeating the bibliography the writer proposes to list only the literature from which the thesis will likely quote intensively as it goes along.

1. *Traditional African religious theme:*

Nurnberger K. "*Affluence, Poverty and the Word of God*" (Lutheran Publishing House Durban 1978). In discussing the thin line between affluence and poverty this material helps to define both concepts. Methods like: the bread line or datum line, the minimum subsistence level and household subsistence level are introduced. There is a discussion about the many facets of poverty, for example, economic and cultural poverty.

Relevance: The relevance of this material is in its attempts to define the term and the theme of 'poverty' as will be discussed in chapters two and five.

2. Religious themes outside the traditional African worldview:

De Gruchy John W. and Villa-Vicencio Charles *“Doing Ethics in Context”: South African Perspectives*. (David Philip Publishers 1994 Claremont 1994 RSA). This presentation deals with different fields of ethics including the African ethic. It sometimes engages the major ethics (socialism, capitalism and Marxism) in a competitive struggle. There is an out line of the struggles of the poor. What is interesting about this book is that it does not wholly sell the African religious and traditional methods as redemptive in the problem of poverty hence in page 143 there is a critique of the African ethic. In general, this book sounds a call towards the dignity of the poor as human beings cf. page 119. When touching the theme of ethics in Black theology (page 125, 127) it tries to answer questions relating to the problem of racialism else where and in South Africa.

Relevance: The thesis is about ethical response to poverty; specifically it wishes to present this response from an African religious perspective. Since the book purports to present an ethic from the South African point of view, it will be useful to the study when it gives an analysis and critique of the African ethic.

De Santa Ana Julio. *“Towards a Church of the Poor”* (Imprimerie L Concorde Switzerland 1979). We found answered in the book to the questions such as what should be the role of religion and culture in alleviating poverty. The book deals with the problem of poverty in relation to what the church can do. In Part one section two the book gives definitions of the concept poverty.

Relevance: In as much as the book gives some extensive history of disempowerment it will help the thesis in grounding its facts. It also has an interesting view of religion in so far as it can be oppressive itself which will help in the discussion of fatalism in chapter five.

Anderson David M. and Broch-Due Vigdis “*The poor are Not Us*”: *Poverty and Pastoralism in Eastern Africa*. (James Curry Oxford 1999) This book discusses poverty in relation to different countries in East Africa and considers it in terms of traditional myths and beliefs. Deliberations are presented from different aspects in which poverty shows itself. For example, such themes as the conjunctural, the structural and concealed aspects are discussed in the book. Such issues as the monization of stock as cause for the destruction of social order is discussed. It presents an argument that stock and land cannot be dealt with separately because to do so is equal to separating people.

Relevance: The book’s definitions of the concept have a lot to offer with regard to understanding poverty in the African worldview. It presents an important point about issues of wealth being basic in human relationships both socially and economically.

Weber Leonard et al. “*Theology of the Land*” (The Order of St. Benedict Inc. Minnesota 1987). This book argues that the problem of poverty is due to our attitudes towards the land. One finds discussed here, the theme of land ethics as religious and ecological in its nature. There is a critique of traditional ethics that is presented as supporting individualism. It also contains other land-related themes such as distributive justice, a community centered land ethic etc. What is interesting in this presentation is its approach

to the whole issue of affluence and poverty. It claims that it is not wrong to be rich and poverty is not a virtue. People should not be made to feel guilty if they are wealthy and those who aspire to it must be encouraged.

Relevance: Chapter ten of the thesis has a section that deals with the ecological aspect of traditional African subsistence economy. This book is very relevant in offering some contemporary themes on the issue of land that are very closely resonated by the traditional African ecological understanding

Schall James V. “**Religion, Wealth and Poverty**” (The Fraser Institute Singapore 1990). The book begins by sounding a warning that we need to be careful not to be lead astray by the ideologies in our attempts to understand and fight poverty. This is a very radical approach to the problem of poverty it challenges most of the so-called accepted stances about poverty and its alleviation. It argues that some times the proponents of a particular theory or ideology will go to the extent of welcoming poverty in order to prove their theory. Man as a political animal is sometimes more interested in power than in food. For the first time one finds in this book one writer who faces the plight of the poor directly. In arguing against what he calls “*the right to be fed*” he points to the fact that the formula can be manipulated into blaming those who know how to produce food for the condition of those who do not know how to produce . . . (more often who are unwilling to learn). This book also acknowledges that as ideologies religion and politics tend to prolong the grip of poverty. “*What we believe, what we hold about the world and man’s place in it decides whether an individual or people will be rich or poor*”. Productivity is the answer to poverty, “. . . *the best way business can help the poor is to provide for a*

growing, fair economy in which the vast majority of the population work for their own living. 'Option for the poor' as a popular slogan contains an intellectual paternalism making the poor only objects of our care and the caring itself tending to exclude the poor ending up with the poor being not urged to help themselves thus, degenerating into being somehow less human."

Relevance: In the event where human societies in South Africa and elsewhere are seeking to address the problem of poverty this book will help the thesis especially in its concluding chapter 'Poverty with a Human face' in presenting workable methods in the struggle against poverty.

Dussel Enrique "*Ethics and Community*" (Orbis Books Maryknoll New York 1988). The book deals with many practical themes beginning with what the Reign of God ought to be, in relation to this Reign what would be sin or even death etc. Of the many writers outside the African experience Dussel's rendering has very close ideas to what the African worldview holds and believes. He touches almost all the pillars of African religious views. His presentation of the importance of human relationships and how these are sometimes expressed through the use of intermediaries such as sharing bread has very deep African resonance. His claim that people are poles of relationship and that to be a person, strictly speaking is to be in a relationship of praxis one is tempted to add (umuntu ngumuntu ngabanye abantu) the African version of this claim. He talks of the "we" of the face to face as the community that resounds the African (we are therefore I am). The Eucharistic Community rooted in mutual respectful love, grounded in charity is celebration. Celebrating with bread the fruit of human labour reverberates the saying

(abantwana bomuntu bahlephulelana intloko yenyoni). In love brothers will share even the head of a bird small as it may be. A face to face love acknowledges the need of the beloved and become practical in satisfaction of that need. “Without the theology of need there is neither eucharist nor community, nor will neither justice, nor reign of God have intelligibility.” The African would say: (*Ukupha ukuzibekela*, or *phonsa ngasenhla ulindele ngezansi*) meaning that there is a sure reward at the end for the one who gives.

Relevance: As can be seen from the brief outline given above, this book will help in the definition of the terms in chapter two. It has very interesting way of presenting some background material for the argument of certain African themes.

3. Themes on poverty and statistical evidence:

Stats SA “*Measuring Poverty in South Africa*” (Statistics South Africa Pretoria 2000)

This publication constructs a poverty map of South Africa. In this effort one is shown the monthly expenditure of the different South African households according their sectors, for example, population group, gender and place of residence. This includes measuring poverty by the standards of living, types of dwelling, access to infrastructure and services, employment, level of education.

Relevance: The important contribution of this material to the thesis will be that it deals with poverty in terms of the different Provinces of South Africa and it from this provincial analysis that one will get statistical evidence especially with regard to the Eastern Cape Province.

Ngwane Alfred K. “*Statistical Analysis of Income Inequality and Poverty In South Africa*” (University of South Africa Pretoria 1999). The dissertation answers the question concerning what is poverty, where it comes from, who suffers because of it, and how to measure it. With the use of statistical evidence it supports its claims about poverty in the country. It discusses the position of South Africa with regards to poverty. It stresses the importance of history in the understanding of the problem of poverty.

Relevance: The contention of the thesis is that one cannot simply state facts, but that there is need to ground the assumptions and arguments supporting them on statistics. In chapters one and five the thesis deals with statistical evidence and the construction of theories about poverty in South Africa. This thesis’ contribution provides information that is very relevant in these regards.

May Julian “*The Composition and Persistence of Poverty in Rural South Africa*” (Funded by the World Bank). This presentation reflects on all the aspects of poverty and those who suffer most from it, women, the aged, children and the destitute. It answers the question of what poverty is by offering definitions and giving answers to the question of where poverty is found in South Africa. It introduces methods by which poverty can be measured such as the objective or social indicators, subjective indicators and the material indicators.

Relevance: This material will be relevant in the presentation of chapters one and five of the thesis that deal with statistical evidence and the construction of theories about poverty in South Africa. Its presentation of measuring methods such as the (HSL) and the (MLL) it will assist in the conclusions that the thesis wishes to arrive at.

2.4. *African philosophical themes:*

Tempels Placide “*Bantu Philosophy*” (Presence Africaine Paris 1959) This book deals with the foundations of African thought. It discusses the importance of the life force (vital force). From this theme will be crucial in developing an African concept of poverty especially when considering the issue of poverty as being lifeless within the African worldview. It must be remembered that according to the African worldview the purpose of living is to acquire life to its fullness. To be means to have life and its force ensuring that it remains perpetually in one’s posterity. The book also touches the important African point when it presents the notion of the interdependence of force where all creatures are found in relationship. There is also a presentation of the idea of evil in African worldview, and evil is deeper than just the carrying out of specific act, but one confesses even the evil intentions and the so-called unconscious evil influence.

Relevance: The thesis will get some points for the presentation of chapters one, two and six dealing with definition of traditional African themes, the structure of the traditional African Religion and its relation to the poor.

Shutte Augustine “*Philosophy for Africa*” (UCT Press PTY Ltd Rondebosch RSA. 1993) The book gives an outline of the basic African thought patterns as enumerated by Senghor that: reality is force, the world is a process of interplay between forces, all force is alive, individual life and fulfillment can only be found in community etc. The book further outlines the traditional African thought in its key terms such as ‘umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu’ where the person is defined not by this or that natural property or set

of properties but by the relationships between him/her and others. Note that 'others' here does not only denote human beings but it includes the natural and social environment.

Relevance: Chapter eleven of this book forms the basis of the discussion of work in the traditional African understanding of work in chapter nine of the thesis. It talks about the complementary relation between the earth and the person who works on it strumming as it were the mutuality in self transformation where the earth gives warmth o the human society and the latter transform the earth by its labour. This is very relevant in the discussion of the ecological perspective.

5. Historical themes:

J. B. Peires "*The Dead Will Rise*": *Nongqawuse and the Great Xhosa Cattle-Killing Movement of 1856-7* (Ravan Press Johannesburg 1989). Here one finds a history of the Xhosa intermingled with their religious worldviews. The writer is trying to set the stage where the politician (in the form of the colonial governors) shows his power to manipulate the religious (the religious Xhosa and his superstition) for his purposes. The book focuses on the debate that went through the Xhosa minds whether to listen to their ancestors or to listen to the imperial government. The story of the cattle-killing centers the political struggle where all situations bad and good could be used for personal and ideological gains.

Relevance: In chapter eight I shall present the different struggles in which the African (amaXhosa) put up against the colonial authorities and this book will help intensively in providing the necessary religious historical information in this regard.

Beinart William and Bundy Colin. “*Hidden Struggles in Rural South Africa*” (Ravan Press (Pty) Ltd Johannesburg 1987). This provides a history of the Xhosa people and traces it, from the beginning of the century. The book firstly discusses the misnomer that all effective events happen in towns and with big political organizations the rural people are dormant and unresponsive. Here one finds discussed the tactics used by the white government to subdue the Xhosa and the latter’s resistance and tactics. According to this presentation the issue around the struggle was always related to land.

Relevance: The material found in this book features very prominently in chapter eight of the thesis especially in the discussion of the different tactics in the amaXhosa’s struggle against colonialism.

SECTION TWO: *The arrangement of chapters:*

The following is the thesis looks like in terms of the arrangement of chapters. One has tried to give some logical presentation of the chapters so that it is easy for the reader to transcend from one chapter to the next.

1. Chapter One: *Introduction.*

This chapter is dedicated to the introduction of the theme of the writer's research, the research question, relevance of study and the theory and methodology. It will also give the reader some review of the main literature proposed for consultation and will end by giving a proposed arrangement of the chapters with topics and where possible sub-topics as they will be found within a particular chapter.

2. Chapter Two: *Definition and elaboration of terms.*

The terms that will be used in the thesis will be defined in order to ground their meaning as will be understood in the presentation. For example, when talking about poverty many people think of it only in terms of economics while in reality poverty affects other aspects of human life. So to the question is: What is poverty? One must expect many answers. Further more this thesis will introduce a number of terms and ideas some of which will not be very familiar since it deals the African worldview that is not English, or European both in thought and expression. Some of the ideas to be expressed in this thesis will take

a different meaning when used to express African ideas. This effort aims at assisting the readers in understanding such terms and the contexts they will be given in this thesis.

3. Chapter Three: *Umzimkhulu's poverty in perspective.*

This chapter presupposes that the reader may not be conversant with the area on which the research will be done. In view of this the writer firstly tries to give a short description of geographical, and/or topographical situation of the area in general. Secondly the writer also tries to give a scant presentation of its socio-political and religious backgrounds. Since it has become apparent that the Eastern Cape as a Province is too large an area for research purposes, the writer narrows the area of research to the Alfred Nzo District Municipality and particularly to the Umzimkhulu Administrative Municipality. With regard to the Eastern Cape, this chapter covers the following topics: Poverty in the Eastern Cape giving some general statistics. It further deals with the themes of economic poverty, landlessness, population growth and density. Lastly it concentrates on the Umzimkhulu Municipality as it is the study case.

4. Chapter Four: *Tools for investigation.*

After taking on the task of presenting this dissertation one has had, immediately to check whether there is enough material from which to get relevant information on the themes that the dissertation requires. This chapter, therefore, tries to list firstly the material that will be used to present the required information and that will help to ground the

arguments necessary to make the presentation meaningful and useful. The first subsection presents the review of literature. Secondly the chapter tries to give a schema as to how actually the dissertation will be put forward. For this reason the second subsection deals with the arrangement of chapters.

5. Chapter Five: *Construction of theories.*

This chapter constructs the theories upon which the thesis aims at basing its argument. These theories will be presented and discussed under the following subsections:

1. *Theory of Authority.* It is assumed that if certain people were not greedy and not using their social, economic and political power at the disadvantage of others, there would not have been so much poverty in the world today. This sub section hopes to discuss the issue of poverty in South Africa in terms of the misappropriation of power both by the African traditional leaders and the colonial authorities.
2. *Poverty in South Africa: Statistical Evidence.* This subsection of the thesis will rely heavily on what economic experts have produced. The Statistics given here will be presented with the relevant comments and conclusions of the original researchers.
3. *Why is there Poverty in South Africa?* This subsection presumes that South Africa as a political unit has its own particular reasons and history for the presence of poverty. It will discuss the social, religious and economic history of South Africa.
4. *Where is Poverty and Who are its Victims?:* Poverty is a human and a justice issue, its discussion, therefore, is meaningful only when related to persons and places. For this reason this subsection tries to deal with the specifics.

6. Chapter Six: *Traditional African religion in relation to the poor.*

This chapter in terms of the requirements of the dissertation goes into the issue of African religion and its ethic or non-ethic in relation to the poor. Its section and subsections cover the following areas: The definition of religion in broader terms; how religion operates; African religion per se; African religion and poverty; religious nihilism; theory of opposites/the issue of good and evil; fatalism; the organic approach; communalism and poverty; critique towards the value of ubuntu; African religion and development; religious sanctions in terms of failure and the wrong use of religion by its tenants.

7. Chapter Seven: *Pre-colonial poor of Africa.*

This chapter aims at answering the question as to whether poverty is part of the general Traditional African experience. Here the position of women, children, the aged, the sick and the social outcasts will be discussed in depth.

8. Chapter Eight: *The poor during the colonial period.*

This chapter will deal with the changes in the traditional African structures as new influences from other cultures came in. One hopes to deal with political, religious and economical transformation in African tradition and culture due to foreign influences especially the Western influences. There will be a section that will trace the history of the South Africans' struggle against destabilizing factors be they political, social and

religious. This will include the establishment of both political and religious movements as means of self-motivation and self-determination by the South Africans right through the history of their encounter with the foreign powers.

9. Chapter Nine: *The poor in post colonial era.*

Here on hopes to deal with the problem of the so-called 'New Poor' of the postcolonial period. This Chapter faces up to the reality of the oppression that is presently felt by the Africans despite of the political independence that has been achieved.

10. Chapter Ten: *The traditional African subsistence economy.*

This Chapter discusses the ways in which traditional African communities dealt with economic issues. It, therefore, attempts to answer such questions as: Who owned what? When was somebody regarded as rich or wealthy? What were the symbols of wealth? In regard of the African worldview where economics revolved around land and livestock, this thesis will necessarily look into the important position of cattle and land in the lives of the people of African traditional background. Further, it will deal with the whole question of the traditional African understanding of work, production and distribution. This will be discussed in relation to the traditional African Communitarian theology of participation. The basic idea of this presentation is to identify a concrete economic reality and then after to look at it from a religious perspective.

11. Chapter Eleven: *The shock absorbers: (Sub-values of ubuntu).*

In this chapter the writer shall deal with how traditional African culture equipped its tenants to handle their giftedness to promote the well-being and cater for the needs of others. The chapter tries to respond to the question: If there was poverty in pre-colonial Africa, how did its religion deal with it? It explores and explains the three subtle, yet most important institutions that have been put in place to boost the individuals' self worth as persons who are loved and capable of loving in return. This, the writer hopes to achieve through the discussion of the three sub-headings that, for lack of words, the writer have called the theology of 'Welcoming, Accompanying and Presence.'

12. Chapter Twelve: *The response of African religion to poverty: Specific references to Umzimkhulu*

This chapter seeks to ground the issue of poverty and the African religion's response to it on the research that has been conducted in the Umzimkhulu Municipality. It endeavours to answer the question: In what form did and does African religion exist in Umzimkhulu? This question aims at investigating the extent to which African religion affected and still affects the life of the people in this area. It further aims at bringing to the surface the religio-cultural practices that the people of Umzimkhulu practiced in the olden days and the extent to which these are done today. To do this, the chapter employs the data that has been obtained through the research methods.

13. Chapter Thirteen: *Poverty with a human face, in need of a human heart: (Way forward).*

After the traditional African religious view has been presented it is important to give suggestions as to how it can be offered as part of the solution to the problem of poverty facing our world. The question this chapter wishes to address is: What can African religion offer as a response to the ethic rooted in the concern for the poor? Has that theology worked within the African communities? In the face of the apparent poverty that Africa experiences right now, what has gone wrong? Here a critique of the African religious worldview will be presented with the view of purifying it before it is sold as a useful commodity for the world community. This should answer the question of why there is poverty in Africa and how it can be alleviated. The argument here is that with its Ubuntu values of 'community' and 'life' traditional African religion can deal equitably with the problem of poverty.

CHAPTER FIVE: *Construction of theories.*

1. INTRODUCTION.

One cannot adequately deliberate on a topic such as: ‘The Response of African Religion to poverty’, without the necessary and researched proofs as to the presence of poverty within the area of research. Further to this one would need to give reasons as to why poverty is there in the first place. After answering these questions one, in line with the assumptions of the topic, needs to show how African religion proposes to deal with it. While one sees or even experiences poverty, it is not enough just to state the obvious. In order, properly, to present one’s assumptions, therefore, one needs to construct theories on which to base the arguments and to reach conclusions required by my research.

2. *The theory of authority.*

“The praxis of sin is institutionalized by way of political, ideological, religious and economic structures. The place we occupy in the social texture determines (although not absolutely) our being . . . It is upon this foundation that we construct our life . . .” says Dussel (1988: 21-22, 24). Who we are is determined by the positioning and the frames within which we find ourselves. As Villa-Vicencio and de Gruchy (1994 118) put it:

“Although we are indeed influenced, and our moral world is shaped, by the institutions we are born into, we also shape and construct these institutions in the likeness of our moral world. Sin is, therefore, related to the quality of our praxis.”

Social animals form themselves into communities and societies by carefully structuring an organisation of the hierarchy of positions within the group. In the lower ranks of the animal kingdom this is simply sorted out by display of physical power, in the higher ranks of the human kingdom, added to physical power other maneuvers such as intellectual power are used. Whether it, be by consensus or force the aim of all authority and power is to dictate or to dominate, and life shows that there are benevolent as well as malevolent dictators in almost all communities. To this effect Johnson (1994: 13) says:

“The power to influence social, economic, political educational and religious events is not distributed equally through any society. Inevitably, a relatively small number of persons, in whom social and political power are concentrated, dominate most societies. This is not necessarily a unitary elite, nor must it act with a single will or be homogeneous. In recent time, it is usually thought of as self-perpetuating leadership arising from bureaucratic institutions and organizations.”

In relation to the topic at hand, the writer’s contention is that, it happens that the so-called ‘relatively small number of persons in whom social and political power are concentrated’ may for ulterior motives turn against the majority or certain part of it and become oppressive and thus impoverishing towards them.

In the light of the above, one may wish to check whether the issue of poverty in the South African context, is not perhaps a result of authority and power that went wrong. This is not true only of the whites, but one finds it operative among the black South Africans in their inter-tribal wars. Unfortunately one cannot present the issue only in terms of the past; it is still a factor presently in relation to racism tribalism, xenophobia and nepotism.

For this reason it becomes imperative that the whole issue of power, authority and leadership be dealt with, though somehow limitedly, if one is to render a correct perspective of poverty especially in its structural format as it seems to be the case in our country.

MacIvar (1937: 336) distinguishes between authority and leadership. By authority he says, is meant “. . . *the power attached to office, involving the respect, the submission, or the reverence accorded to those who represent the office or are vested with its rights. By leadership we mean the power to persuade or to direct men that comes from personal qualities apart from office.*”

From this definition one can see that there is very little difference between authority and leadership and that in most cases these are mutually inclusive and function well when combined, for what respect can one command if he/she has no leadership skills to supplement his/her position? In this dissertation, one wishes to study the evolution of power and authority both within and outside its religious conception and see whether one does not find in it the traits of abuse. It is the writer's contention that no one is born a leader but because of their physical strength, wealth and wisdom, certain people become or are made leaders by others. In all the cases people tend to idolise such persons and often consult and refer to them in times of crisis. These persons become leaders and general organisers.

Authority and power in as much as it is vested in a person or group of persons is not a problem even when abusively utilised, surely there are mechanisms to deal with the abusive person or persons, for example, such abusive person or persons can be replaced. The problem begins as soon as power becomes institutionalised around the person, or persons so that they personally become the structure around which power and authority are conceived. This leads to power and authority, once vested in a person or group, becoming the property of the group or the descendants of the persons, as it happens to royalty and particular race groups, whether such descendants or race possess the qualities in the first instant or not. The question, therefore, is: Why does authority and leadership become hereditary?

Can one earnestly claim that wisdom, wealth and strength are genetically transmitted? Personally, the writer does not believe that in all cases of leadership it is so. One wants to register one's contention that, after tasting power many a leader wishes that it continues in the family and consequently strives to keep it so. This is logical because naturally one would want to prolong what is good and enhancing to one's children and friends. In terms of framing, especially if the frame is enjoyable, one is prone to keep those one loves within a frame that they enjoy. This is better put by Smith in Johnson (1994: 49-50) when he says: "*Stereotypes and cultural myths have been created, largely, through manipu-*

lation of the "cultural memory," which is selective and biased towards those social events which will psychologically enhance the social position of the ruling classes."

Certainly this is what must have happened in the construction and entrenchment of apartheid as Thompson in Johnson (1994: 50) maintains.

Though there are myriad of ways that people use to entrench power, one will analyse only two of them to illustrate one's argument. They are the code of custom and the code of ritual respectively. People are generally prone to removing the power from the one who no longer serves their needs, so it is logical if not instinctive, that those in power will struggle to secure power in and around themselves individually or as groups, as long as possible. The best way to keep power is the institutionalisation of codes to control the masses and to keep them in check as to their loyalties towards the leader(s). With the codes comes a sanction that either rewards or punishes people in accordance to their response or reaction towards them.

The process of entrenching authority and power is simple, at first it poses as psychological persuasion, if this fails, force is used and when this fails, then laws will be put in place to guarantee compliance. As de Santa Ana (1979: 77) says: "*History reveals that human beings have always opposed oppression: frontally, passively, indirectly or by active resistance. Thus the weak and 'unfortunate' become the oppressed while the 'strong' and 'fortunate' became the oppressors. The point here is that a conditioning process occurs before oppression becomes law. Sometimes imposed by force, the conditioning process may be described sociologically as 'practices' which latter become 'habits'. These habits then evolve into social mores, traditions, customs and finally laws.*"

The leader is embodied within the code, so that while one is observed to follow the code, one is in fact showing one's allegiance to the leader. The strength of the code is in the person who stands to gain when it is adhered to, or who stands to lose if it is ignored.

That person is him/her who enforces the strict adherence through sanctions and rewards.

MacIvar (1937: 329) says: “*Sometimes the sanction is the denial of privileges or the cancellation of rights; sometimes it is the imposition of a fine, or in the case of legal code, the loss of liberty or even life.*”

One of the means people use to stay in power is putting in place regulative principles which are described as: “. . . *standards set up by a group for the control of the conduct of its members, in relation to one another and to the group as a whole*” (MacIvar: 328). It is obvious that while some of these principles are meant for the people they govern, others are sorely set and framed in the interest of the dominant group. Unlike natural laws the social regulations carry weight in as much as they have some one to enforce them, because they do not stem from moral conscience the obligation to follow them is man-made and sometimes very harsh to serve personal ulterior motives.

When relating what has been said here above to economical issues as the topic of our discussion demands, one agrees with de Santa Ana (1979: 77) that “. . . *oppression*

probably emerged with the development of civilized cultures where barter and trade were commonplace. Human beings discovered that they could increase their productivity with improved tools and technology (improvements on their own hand and inventions), and by exploiting other human beings.” In line with what has been

said, the writer’s contention is that only if one has authority and power can he/she be in position to manipulate both the resources, tools and personnel and that, this manipulation, in economic terms, has to do with the appropriation of the production.

(Celso Furtado in de Santa Ana 1979: 77) distinguishes two basic forms of appropriation of the surplus, the one he calls “*authorization form*,” which he describes as consisting in the appropriation of a surplus through co-action. The other he calls the “*merchant form*,” that is, the appropriation of the surplus in the framework of barter and exchange. In as much as these forms of appropriation are legitimate means for providing sustenance for the society they are good, but as soon as either of them ends up serving the interests of a particular person or group at the expense of others, in other words if the surplus is no longer evenly distributed to all its producers then they are oppressive and, therefore impoverishing.

2.1. *The code of custom.*

It is in very seldom and isolated cases that leaders include the feeling of others in their considerations. In most cases they simply seek what is comfortable for themselves which, by all means, is forcefully instilled into the minds of the subjects or followers. In the words of Memmi in de Santa Ana (1979: 78) “*Both the oppressor and the oppressed must accept each phase in the conditioning process before oppression is possible. The oppressor must believe that oppression is ‘right’, while the oppressed must accept it as a ‘way of life’.*

This requires either of the two ways. It is done either through indoctrination, or habituation. Indoctrination means infusing the beliefs and the ideals of society with what leadership wants. Habituation means influencing of people such that: “*Apart from what*

they are expressly taught to believe they frame ideas of right and wrong in accordance with the use and wont of everyday life. What is familiar often appears both inevitable and good. What is unfamiliar seem often alien or evil” (MacIvar 1937: 336).

Both these systems are so encompassed that even if one wanted to, there seems to be no way to escape. The very community within which one lives seems to know no other way, the very language spoken and heard, expression and idiom seem to express nothing but what is wanted. The leaders, as MacIvar (1937: 335) puts it “. . . realize quickly that the order they are establishing cannot take root and endure unless by persistent education and propaganda they can mold the minds of the people to the desired pattern of loyalty and conviction. Often they try to repress all unfavorable opinions so that the minds of people, like those of young children shall be subject to no contrary influences.”

2.2. *Ritual as means for social control.*

Since almost everything is ritualised in the traditional African religion, there is no way one can conceive of, or effect change in ritualistic matters. Once a thing has been ritualised it enters the realm of the status quo or the natural order. Such thing, therefore, are unquestioningly accepted as given. Ritual, as it were gives the shape to things and meaning to actions. This is how MacIvar (1937: 338) defines ritual. “. . . a formal rhythmic procedure controlling a succession of acts directed to the same end, a procedure repeated without variation on the appropriate occasions and

distinguished from mere habit or routine in that it is accompanied by a peculiar sense of rightness and inevitability to deviate from it in any way, no matter what the circumstances, is felt to be wrong or undesirable not on utilitarian grounds, but because deviation breaks the rhythm, disturbing the emotional response, the solemn and often mystical rapport between the person and the occasion.”

The writer wishes to contend that those in authority, knowing that anything that is performed ceremoniously with solemnity quickly revokes the sense of respect, or perhaps let us say a sense of fear, they to a certain extent have used ritual as a means for social manipulation and control. In the light of the leader's closeness to God and the ancestors, traditional Africans shy away from opposing the systems imposed by them because to do so does not simply disturb the observable order but affects the realm of the divine. “*When Bantu are asked if they do not sometimes upbraid their ancestors for not protecting them properly, they answer, “How may we address reproaches to them, insult them, or refuse to honour them? Are they not the great ones who already were when we were born?” The chiefs of the race, founders of the tribe, have precedence over the living by so many grades, by so many generations and they are seen to be consequence so near to God, that many confuse them in practice with God himself, or very nearly”* (Temples 1959:151).

Like indoctrination and habituation rituals can be used to affect a certain attitude onto the followers. A clever leader can drill his/her subjects into a special reverence towards his/her person and to those closest to him/her. Once something is elevated to the level of

ritual and therefore has become a consecrated item, people's attitude towards it change.

It is the writer's contention, therefore, that in many cases leaders ritualise their positions, so that to question them becomes tantamount to being sacrilegious. Once it has been established that the very life force can only be received when given by them as its sole and proper custodians, who dares question or contradict them. "*Now among the Bantu,*

the very existence of children apart from their progenitors is inconceivable. They are unable to have force except through their relationship with their parents, for they have a right to it only in dependence upon their elders" (Tempels 1959: 153).

In traditional African worldview such ritualised persons and things are not common place to everyone, to use their name becomes taboo so that anyone who dares treat them blasphemously is hated and shunned by all, because he/she is likely to call harm upon him/herself and/or upon the community as a whole. With the formidable power that the person in power and authority has he/she literally calls the shots and can unquestionably do harm to the one lower than his rank. Tempels continues to say: "*He may restrict his paternal strengthening and so reduce his descendant to a diminished condition.*" African religion in its effort to respond to the ethic rooted in the concern for the poor has to content with the abuse perpetrated by those in authority and power under the guise of ritual. To this effect Tempels 1959: 154) says: "*Such actions on the part of the father*

shows a disposition contrary to the Divine will, contrary to his own life's interests as being one who contains the life of all his descendants; and hence contrary to the interests of the clan and its founders, of whose life-giving force he is the custodian."

3. Is there poverty in South Africa?

The slogans such as 'Affirmative Action', 'Black Empowerment, Rural Development Programme (RDP)' etc. are very topical in South Africa these days. The country has recently staged the Truth and Reconciliation Court (TRC). To someone outside the South African experience, there arises a question as to the meaning and necessity of such catch phrases and institutions. The reply is simple. In the advent of democracy and freedom, the new South African dispensation wants to celebrate by correcting the wrong practices of the past. The wrong that ravaged the country manifested itself predominantly in the poverty of the groups that now need to be affirmed, empowered and developed. The TRC as a tool for justice calls the perpetrators either as individuals, groups and/or institutions to confession, commitment, conversion, and restitution.

These actions are not done to humiliate one group at the expense of another, rather to bring about forgiveness and healing to all the South Africans. By accepting the processes of reconciliation and healing, we as a country simultaneously admit guilt in the way we dealt with one another, we admit having once oppressed and impoverished one another. We admit that our actions brought about poverty and pain and, therefore, that there is poverty in South Africa. "*South Africa, (reports Thurow) is dotted with hundreds of*

destitute villages like Laxey, a kind of geographic pox spread by a two-decade-long program of herding blacks into self-governing 'tribal homelands'. Their residents are apartheid's dispossessed – people who have been uprooted, dumped in a place far away from home and more or less abandoned. For all its gold, its diamonds and

its heart transplants, South Africa has pockets of deprivation worse than the general conditions in some of its poorer black-ruled neighbours” (in Wilson and Ramphela 1989: 220).

In discussing the position of South Africa with regard to the plight of the poor one cannot treat the matter in isolation. The problem of poverty in the country needs to be seen in the wider context of poverty as experienced by the continent as a whole. The question whether there is poverty in South Africa must be deduced from the answers to the wider question of poverty in Africa. Shorter (1999: 6) says: “*Africa is a poor continent. Its*

share of world trade is less than 1%. It contains some of the poorest countries on earth, many of which have an external debt burden exceeding the national income. In a number of these countries up to 40% of the population are technically “destitute”, that is to say: living on less than \$1 per day.”

It is this situation that the dissertation wishes to address, at least in terms of South Africa. Does African religion have an ethic that responds to poverty? How does it purport to use this ethic to help in alleviating poverty? If it is because of landlessness, as Shorter claims, that: “*In the rural areas there is not enough fertile land to go around, and population growth is accompanied by a growing number of landless people . . .*” then the question is: If the land was to be given back would destitution go away? One says this in view of the negative attitudes some of our fellow black African have towards the land. So a further question is: What can African religion offer as a measure to counter act the prevalent negative attitudes towards land by those who are in the trade of land grabbing

and to those who for one reason or another, are failing to utilise, or are destroying the land that they have?

Yes there is enough evidence that there is poverty in the continent, and unless one is too arrogant or too blind to the facts, it would be very difficult to maintain that the conditions mentioned in the above quotation are not applicable to South Africa. In their experience of poverty South Africans share in the poverty of their colleagues elsewhere in the continent. Everywhere as Shorter (1999: 6) continues to say: “A growing underclass –

“the alternative Africa”- is coming into existence because of poverty: street children and street people, hawkers, street vendors, beggars, criminals, drug-pushers, prostitutes, - all those who make a living on the streets.”

Can African religion do something about it? This is the question that my dissertation sets itself to answer.

In the light of what has been said in chapter two in defining what human situations can be rightly designated as poor, one would like to check whether there are such situations in South Africa. For example, if it is true what Mrs. Witbooi in Wilson and Ramphela (1989:14) says that: “Poverty is not knowing where your next meal is going to come from,

and wondering when the council is going to put your furniture out and always praying that your husband must not lose his job.”

One may want to know whether South Africa has such experiences and how broad, statistically speaking, they are. The writer has a deep feeling that, it is not easy to

calculate a human experience in numbers and categories, for one believes that pain is relative to one who experiences it. So, in presenting the extent to which South Africans are poor or rich, one hopes to be sensitive in presenting the statistics. The issue here is that the numbers tend to be static while the experiences they represent always change. In terms of human experience as in terms of their development one can never meet the same person twice. As Wilson and Ramphela (1989: 17) warn statistics can be misused consciously or unconsciously to prove what one wants to prove.

Though the thesis wishes to present a different topic for the presentation of the theory about where poverty comes from and why there is poverty in South Africa, it seems inevitable that even when answering the question of whether there is poverty in this country, one cannot avoid being drawn to the 'why poverty and who is affected' questions. The reason for this is that when talking of South Africa one inevitably has to think of the different political or racial structures, therefore, any thing one says needs to be appropriated to a particular group. For example, when one says there is poverty in South Africa the next question is who is poor and where are the poor found.

3.1. Statistical proof of poverty in South Africa.

As a form of answering the question as to whether there is poverty in South African, let us consider what is presented here. *“In South Africa as a whole, including the reserves,*

the proportion of the total population living in 1980 below subsistence (measured as the urban MLL) was estimated to be 50 per cent. For Africans throughout the

country the proportion was estimated to be nearly two-thirds (60.5 per cent), whilst for those living in the reserves no less than 81 per cent of the households were in dire poverty.” (Simkins in Wilson and Ramphela 1989: 17).

There is definitely poverty in South Africa if one understands poverty as the decline in economic growth especially when such a decline does not tally with the annual population growth rate. The White Paper for Social Welfare 1997:2 says that in the past two decades this has happened in South Africa.

When answering the question about poverty in South Africa as a country one needs to look at the issue in relation to what is happening in other countries, this serves for comparison purposes. Let us consider what Wilson and Ramphela (1989: 17-18) say. “. .

the most striking feature of poverty in South Africa is the degree of inequality that exists. The statistics, rough as they are, show the width of the gulf between grinding poverty and massive wealth. In 1970, the richest 20 per cent of the population in South Africa owned 75 per cent of the wealth, compared with 62 per cent in Brazil and 39 per cent in the United States.”

It is interesting to note that South Africa is not alone in the income inequality problem, it however is rating high when compared with other countries that have the same problem.

Khulu Ngwane (1999: 35) says: “When using the ratio of income share of the richest 20

percent and the poorest 20 percent as the inequality measure, Brazil has the highest inequality, followed by Lesotho and South Africa. Now looking specifically at SADC countries, Lesotho and South Africa have the highest income inequality”

It is said to note that while South Africa is an upper middle-income country in terms of per capita income, a large number of the country's citizens live in poverty. While this is true of many other middle-income countries, South Africa's income distribution is among the most unequal in the world. Our own income and expenditure survey of 1995 gave an overall household Gini coefficient of 0.59 (in Hirschowitz 1997:28 and 83). South Africa is an upper-middle-income country with a per capita similar to that of Botswana, Brazil, Malaysia or Mauritius. Despite this relative wealth, the experience of the majority of South African households live in either one of outright poverty, or of continued vulnerability to becoming poor (in Ngwane 1999:79)

The official unemployment rate was shown to have dropped from a 1994 level of 20,0% to 16.9% in 1995, but risen again sharply to 22,9% in 1997. Since then the rate has risen still further. In terms of population groups, the African unemployment rate was highest across the period, followed by that of coloured, Indian and white people. In 1997, for example, the respective rates were 29.3%, 16.0%, 10.2%, and 4.4%. Within each population group and across all the years the unemployment rate was markedly higher for women than men. In 1997 the overall unemployment rate for women was 28% while that for men was 19%. (Ngwane: 84). This, of course, needs to take cognizance of the differences in earnings between men and women it also needs to consider the effects on those, dependant on these earnings. Hirschowitz (1997: 12-13) maintains that the average household income of a male-headed household was R48000 in 1995 compared to R25000 female-headed household.

There has not been any improvement. *“When looking at the changes within races between 1975 and 1991, it is worth noting that among Africans in the income share of the bottom 40% has dropped from 12.3% to 6.4%. By contrast, the income share of the richest 10% of Africans has increased from 32.5% to 46.6%. Among whites, the similar pattern seems to appear. The income share of the bottom 40% has decreases from 18.7% to 13% while that of the richest 10% has increased from 25.9% to 32.3%. For Coloureds, the income share of the bottom 40% has dropped from 10.9% to 8.9% while that of the richest 10% has increased slightly from 34.9% to 35.4%. Similarly for Indians the income share of the bottom 40% has decreased from 13.7% to 10.9% and that of the richest 10% has increased from 33.8% to 34.6%”*(Ngwane 1999:39).

In considering poverty in terms of South Africa as a country one needs to acknowledge that certain problems are particular to the demographics that the people have set for themselves. While wishing to compare the poverty situation of the country one must be aware that in certain instances poverty in South African is directed from a different source. One needs to consider such things as poverty resulting from the racial divide, therefore, one cannot generalise about poverty in the country when it does not affect everybody across the color spectrum. In South Africa the issue of poverty is politicised while there could be a consideration of poverty as affecting the populace, let us say if there was a drought, one has to further think of the issue as relating to the different race groups. Consider the following quotations *“For Africans throughout the country the proportion was estimated to be nearly two-thirds (60.5 per cent), whilst for those*

living in the reserves no less than 81 per cent of the households were in dire poverty” (Simkins in Wilson and Ramphela 19:17). “Extreme inequality in the distribution of income exists among racial groups and households. The poorest 40% of households in South Africa earn less than 6% of total income while the richest 10% earn more than half of the national income” (White Paper for Social Welfare 1997: 2).

4. *Why is there poverty in South Africa?*

It was mentioned earlier that South Africa needs to be discussed in both the context of the world and of the continent, within the context of the commonly shared destinies. Further, these contexts have to be seen within the history that shaped them. It is inevitable that when arguing the reasons for poverty, one must, while accepting the other causes of poverty, check the contributive historical circumstances. Why then, is Africa in general and South Africa in particular poor? Is one always right to assume that the African poverty results from droughts, misadministration, lack of the incentive to work, political wars etc.? Zweig (1991: 147-151) says: “*The conventional wisdom conveyed by the U.S.*

media- that drought, combined with a general decline in African food production, causes wide-spread hunger- misses the point. It fails to expose the roots of starvation planted deep in a man-made institutional system imposed on the newly independent countries of Africa by a century or more of colonial rule. Dominated by wealthy minorities, these inherited political economic structures direct Africa’s best lands, and more modern productive sectors to the export of low-cost crude agricultural crops and minerals to uncertain world markets. . .”

There is truth in the assumption that you have not conquered your enemy, if you have not occupied him and you have not occupied him if you have not disarmed him. Colonialism would not have affected the foreign lands, negatively if they had not taken full control in terms of both the land and its resources. After all, the very purpose of colonisation had something to do with getting the raw material for the mother countries. “. . . *the colonial states, backed by superior military might, turned over to European settlers vast estates spreading over the most fertile, best-watered lands, pushing the African population into overcrowded, infertile “reserves”* (Zweig 1991: 151).

Colonialism is violent never-mind what angle it is approached from. The best intended occupation of someone else’s territory is always questionable and suspicious and often times ends up in looting either materially or psychologically.

To sustain and prolong colonialism the coloniser had to fabricate systems, policies and laws that ensured permanent dependency and subservient attitude. The case of apartheid is an example of such a tactic. The logic here is that the colonised must be strangled along to accept the system, or be starved to the point of subjugation. This is what Zweig (1991: 151) is implying when he says: “. . . *Discriminatory marketing, extension, and credit facilities, combined with hut and poll taxes to force the peasant to earn cash, left African males with little choice but to migrate to work at foreign-owned estates or mines. Their wives, children, and elders remained at home on neglected reserves, supposedly supporting themselves. The colonial settlers and mining companies then used the fact that the men were separated from “self-supporting” families to justify paying their workers extremely low wages.*”

In enumerating the reasons and causes of poverty as it is generally understood, South Africa, in many respects augurs well with the other countries of the world, however because of its history and racial policies some aspects of its poverty have taken, rather a different outlook, for this reason in trying to present a holistic picture of poverty in South Africa one needs to address these issues as particular and unique to South Africa.

“Apartheid South Africa represented the culmination of the distorted pattern of institutions imposed by the colonial settlers. There, Europeans- a fifth of the population-exercised state power to push all Africans (except those who worked in white-owned factories, farms, mines, or kitchens) onto scattered fragments of land, so-called Bantustans “home-lands”, which constituted barely 13 percent of the nation’s total land area. In the 1980s the Bantustan population reached twelve to fourteen million people, roughly half the nation’s black majority, many of them with neither land to farm nor jobs. Those who could migrate to work for whites at wages far bellow the poverty line. Without land, paid jobs, or social services, the millions of women, children, and old men left behind suffered chronic hunger. Thousands of malnourished children and older folks died annually from curable diseases such as pneumonia and tuberculosis” (Zweig 1991: 151-152).

The uniqueness of the South African poverty may not mean that South Africans are worst off comparatively but as Wilson and Ramphela (1989: 4) say: “. . . *There are three interlocking factors which, taken together, justify the assertion that poverty in South Africa is unique. First is the width of the gulf between rich and poor, the degree of inequality. Second, is the extent to which the poverty that exists is a consequence of*

deliberate policy. The third aspect has to do with the way in which material poverty in South Africa is reinforced by the racist policies that are an assault on people's humanity."

The problem of poverty in South Africa is particular in the sense that it is inevitably politicised. In this sense one can describe the South African aspect of poverty as structural and as such as a violent tool that inflicted pain. Apart from its basic evil of discrimination, the apartheid system turned to be very expensive, the resources that could have been channeled to alleviating poverty was spent just running the system which, to say the least, was itself very impractical. The White Paper for Social Welfare, among others, lists the following as some of impracticalities of apartheid.

4.1. **Disparities:** This means the inequity and ineffectiveness of policies, legislation and programs in addressing poverty. This created significant distortions in the delivery system. What is of importance here is that in a situation of this kind welfare services tend to follow the attitudes that create designated sectors, for example, if the attitude is anti-rural then the bias is in favor of the urban, if it is anti-feminist then it will favor the males, if it is anti-blacks it will favor the whites.

4.2. **Fragmentation:** South Africa always wanted to keep people apart as a result of which different departments had to be created to cater for the so-called homogeneous groups. This led to a lot of duplication, inefficiency and ineffectiveness in meeting the needs. Certainly there was a lot of unnecessary expenditure just to keep the system going

while if there was inter-collaboration between the sectors the program, money could have been saved.

4.3. **Participation:** Of course when there is neither proper means for checking the feeling of the general public, nor for them to freely voice their opinion about what concerns them, there will always be the issue of the legitimacy of the system. This was the case in South Africa. As a result of the lack of participation of the stakeholders in decision-making in matters of social welfare policies, the country constantly lingered on a war atmosphere.

The White Paper has given more systems that were employed in keeping apartheid alive which cannot be discussed here. The interest of this dissertation is to show how all of them impinged on the poor of the country. Wilson and Ramphela (1989: 161) say: “*As far as those enduring poverty in southern Africa are concerned, there are four main areas where the South African state creates additional burden for the poor to bear, . . . Firstly, there is a net of legislation and regulations, the most notorious having been the pass laws, . . . Secondly, there is the whole policy of forced removals in both urban and rural environments which impinge primarily upon the poor. Thirdly, there is the burden of taxation, both formal and informal, whereby the state and its officials extract ‘surplus’ from people who have none to spare in order to use it for purpose that are seldom of direct, or even indirect benefit to those who have to pay. Finally there is the bureaucratic jungle of red tape woven by officials whose actions and inactions can enormously increase human suffering.*”

5. *The history of poverty.*

In the effort to understand the actualities pertaining to poverty one needs to engage in what is called regression analysis, especially, if by this is meant a “*backward movement, a retreat, a return to an earlier stage of development*” as (Ngwane 1999: 16) defines it. In this sense one needs to recognise the importance of history in the study of poverty in relation to a particular country. In the case of South Africa this process is inevitable especially regarding the country’s racial policies of the past.

The consideration of history in the study of poverty, to say the least, is to recognise the influence people have in structuring and perpetuating poverty. In normal circumstances poverty, like disease is neutral that is, it does not affect people because they are of a particular race, cast, gender or culture. However as soon as it can be traced to a conscious system or programme, then one can link it to the history of a particular country, or group in that country. In such a presentation of the history of a country one needs to treat issues as can be found in the different institutions, be they political, social economic, religious and otherwise.

5.1. *South Africa’s social and economical history.*

“Comments frequently heard in informal conversation in South Africa reveal how deeply rooted feelings about dominance can be. ‘The fact is democracy cannot work everywhere. It only works in certain places, under certain conditions.’ ‘Countries

like the United States and Australia can afford to have one man, one vote because the white do not have to relinquish power. They are in the majority. Here, one man, one vote means whites lose power. That's the big difference.' Many white South Africans believe that although they share a society with others, it is only natural that they dominate. Usually, this is not mere bigotry; it has to do with culture, with world view" (Johnson 1994: 1).

The problem of fragmentation formed the base of South Africa's mind-set. Any aspect of service considered had to be thought of in terms of the political status and race, for instance, in 1928 when old age pension was considered and in 1946 the issue of the disability grant, the race issue came to the fore. *"Old age pensions became payable to white people in 1928 and disability grant in 1946. The position of the state's responsibility for African pensioners was that they had their own 'Native custom which makes provision for maintaining dependant persons'. Only in 1943 did urban Africans start to receive pensions. The rationale was that rural African should not be provided with benefits which would 'conflict with or break down their tribal food-sharing habits'."* (Saldrú Handbook in Wilson and Ramphele: 64).

The South African history of poverty has to be linked to the country's general history of dispossession. The fact that when eventually, the southern tip of the continent shifted from simply being a half-way station for the European trading merchants and became part of the empyreal expansion thus becoming subject to the European settlement scheme, the problem of dispossession begun. The scheme, naturally, meant that there was

to be competition with the original inhabitants for better grazing and farming land, and since the invaders had better weapons, they won the day, and demarcated new boundaries as they wished. *“The long process of conquest may finally be said to have culminated in the notorious Land Act of 1913 whereby the conquerors sought to ensure that the land won by conquest should not be lost through the market in the new industrial society that was emerging”* (Wilson and Ramphela 1989: 191).

To prevent the Africans (Khoisan, Xhosa, Zulu, and Sotho) from ever returning back to the conquered areas a string of pass or vagrancy laws were enacted. *“The native should only be allowed to enter urban areas, which are essentially the white man’s creation, when he is willing to enter and minister to the needs of the white man and should depart there from when he ceases so to minister”* (Transvaal Province, 1922: paragraph 267 in Wilson and Ramphela 1989: 192).

It is interesting to note that even when the African showed the willingness to do as it was required, there was to be further dispossession, he entered to minister at the expense of losing his dignity as a human being. The African could not compete in the labour market with his white counterpart. The latter had rights to strike and when they did it inevitably was for the recognition of white rights in the labour market. They clamoured not for workers’ right, but for the white worker’s job security against black competition. This created South Africa’s unique brand of *‘racial capitalism’* (Wilson and Ramphela: 195).

Under all sorts of disguises, the aim of the South African whites was eventually leading to a declaration of white and black republics, respectively. Obviously, because of its

superior military and economic might, the white republic was to be better off comparatively. The black republic, or should we say republics, were to be catered for by the formation of the homelands, or Bantustans. The policies of 1948 after the election of the National Party, power entrenched the strategies of dispossession. To make sure that the so-called black republics remained subservient to the white, such strategies as anti-black urbanisation, forced removals, Bantu education, crushing of organisation and destabilisation as Wilson and Ramphela (1989:205) say, had to be employed .

More than the homelands becoming sovereign independent states, they could not shake off the burden of the policy of 1921 *“The native should only be allowed to enter urban areas, which are essentially the white man’s creation, when he is willing to enter and minister to the needs of the white man and should depart there from when he ceases so to minister”* (Transvaal Province, 1922: para 267 in Wilson and Ramphela 1989: 192).

The native who moves from his republic to the white republic ought to know that he is there on a foreigner’s status and could not do so unless so permitted by the department of foreign affairs. This meant, among other things, that it was very difficult for the people from the homelands to get jobs in the white South Africa. *“Ridiculous as these boundaries might appear to outside observers, their consequences are anything but amusing for all the people whom these apartheid borders exclude from the industrial economy, where the jobs and the wealth of the country are generated”* (1989: 206).

The irony of the whole matter was that the black person in the reserves and in the independent states was meant to stay away from white South Africa and at the same time his labour was essential for the wealth and development of white South Africa. *“With the creation of a cheap labour reservoir for the mines, and with white farmers, roadwork’s and railways becoming the chief priority of government, it no longer made sense to encourage Africans to adopt colonial values: after all, digging for gold hundreds of metres underground was hardly to be a favourite career choice among the growing corps of ‘educated’ Africans. And so it was the tens of thousands of Africans who remained committed to a life on the land that the authorities looked to meet their labour demands”* (Reader’s Digest 1994: 207).

The different legislations were put in place to ensure the success in forcing the African peasantry to leave their land based livelihood for the provision of this labour demand. They were evicted from white owned farms by the anti-squatting laws. Such laws made sure that the now stranded African had to seek work to support himself and to be able to fulfill the other demands of the white man’s laws such as the payment of taxes.

Apartheid as a system sought to regulate human relations to the extent that each group, wittingly or unwittingly, had its package well defined with respect to all that was to happen in the lives of the group’s components. For example, if there was to be education and training this was to be designed such that it spelled the role each category was to play in the future. The black (through Bantu Education) was never to be trained in such a manner as to threaten the white person’s security in the labour market. *“Direct discrimination on the basis of race and gender constitutes one of the major barriers*

for vulnerable groups in the labour market . . . The primary form of discrimination against the working poor is discrimination outside the labour market: the working poor are generally confined to certain occupations because of inadequate access to education and training, locational disadvantages and class background” (May 1998: 20). All these and other apartheid schemes became the major tools for the creation of poverty at least in the class for which it was designed.

1986 should have marked a change when by the removal of the pass laws from the statutes, a certain amount of recognition of the black people was forecasted, but when considering that those who already belonged to the so-called ‘black national states’ were formally excluded from it, the act became a simple brainwashing. This meant, as Wilson and Ramphela (1989: 212) say, that: *“Some 7 million South Africans more than one quarter of the African population, were still deemed to be aliens in the land of their birth. And subject to ‘immigration’ laws that gave them no automatic right of entry to most of the mines, factories, and farms of the South African economy.”*

One can go a long way explaining the process of dispossession in South Africa, but the aim here has been that of citing but a few incidences that constitutes what the thesis is about; that is, pointing out the historical aspect of what one called structural poverty. One needs to conclude this section by showing the financial implication of such a move as South Africa adopted to maintain its policies. This is relevant to the discussion of poverty if one takes into consideration that elsewhere, money, energy, and time that was used could have been channeled towards the rendering of essential services to all.

The waste of time, money and energy was not just on the Government's side but painfully it was harder on the impoverished blacks as well, and most unfortunately because they had none to spare. This becomes very real if one considers the instance as cited by Ehlers in Wilson and Ramphele (1989: 213) "*The shortest bus ride from Kwa-*

Ndebele to Pretoria takes about one hour forty-five minutes. The longest journey lasts about three hours. . . . Thus some of those living furthest from Pretoria catch a bus at 2.30 a.m., arrive in Marabastad at 5.30a.m., and then travel a further hour or more to reach work at 7 a.m. . . . A study for Human Science Research Council in 1982 found that many of those traveling spent more than sixteen hours away from home (up to eight of them traveling and waiting in queues) five or six days every week."

There were psychological effects as well, to be sure. The policy of forcing people to move from one place to another meant a lot of pain, physical and otherwise. One had to live the familiar surroundings to and go to live in a strange area with people one did not know. The old people especially suffered from this. You can imagine the trauma the elderly had when they lost the securities they had cherished for generations when they had to move to isolated and strange communities, to live within lots of social uncertainties. "*By all accounts, even more burdensome than the more obvious aspects of the Group Areas removals-including increased rents and transport costs, and the overcrowding into shoddy, cheaply built houses-was the destruction of the less visible ties that bound communities together and provided a buffer against the ravages of poverty"* (Wilson and Ramphele 1989: 217).

5.2. *Religious background of apartheid.*

As a political, social and even economic strategy apartheid is understood in the light of the above quotation, but one cannot live out the fact that it had religious background as well. As a movement it only began to take a clear, direct and vociferous religious stance after 1948. It was not just a political aspiration to preserve the integrity of the whites, but it was a divine mandate, God had given the country to the whites and it would therefore be morally and theologically incorrect for them to forfeit the right to own the country exclusively. Shutte (1993: 113) says: “*The ideology of apartheid received theological*

justification from the Calvinist Dutch Reformed Churches to which most Afrikaners belonged. From the early days of colonialism the fact that Christianity was part of European culture contributed to the assumption of European superiority. The idea of a Christian missionary effort in South Africa also helped justify colonial expansion. The Calvinist notion of ‘Order of creation’ was used, together with a fundamentalist reading of the Bible, to produce a theory of separate nations as part of God’s plan. This fitted well the political programme of separate development in separate ‘homelands’.”

Of course it will be a fallacy to say that the issue of the superiority of the white race began with the white South African. To this effect Johnson (1994: 2) quoting Lewellen, says: “*Whatever the roots, during the second half of the nineteenth century, European*

ethnocentrism ran rampant as Christianity and the Aryan ‘race’ were seen as the ultimate development of human progress. As a result, ‘white superiority’ emerged as the rationale for Europe’s preeminence in world affairs.”

It is arguable that as religious persons, especially as Christians, people may need a religious and moral rationale to justify their oppression of another. The normal way to oppress another is to strip him off the dignity normally attributed to humans, in which case he is lowered to the level of animals. This failing, the oppression may be argued on the basis of his/her incompatibility with the so-called superior culture, or religion. If this fails, race will be adopted as the moral reason for sidelining the unwanted. *“In the first part of the nineteenth century the British settlers, because of the impact of the Enlightenment, had relatively open-minded and positive images of the Africans. But about the time of the abolition of slavery in 1830s, settler perceptions of Africans became increasingly racist, and images of the Other became increasingly intertwined with white identity . . . Africans were increasingly represented as libidinous, uncontrolled, lazy and disrespectful of established authority. The settlers, in turn, became what the African was not”* (Johnson 1994: 25).

6. Fatalism a possible Cause of poverty.

It is easy to push the blame and simply say that, poverty as experienced by the black South Africans in particular, resulted solely from colonialism and oppression. One thinks that such an approach would be too simplistic and would certainly render one's presentation unrealistic and bias. It would deny the facts of poverty experiences in South Africa prior to the arrival of the white people. It will also fail to answer to the contemporary question as to why after ten years of liberation, the majority of blacks are still poor. Such questions as these are bound to be asked in the post apartheid era,

especially when one observes that our people fail to even manage the little asserts they have. Racial bars have been removed, land is being given back etc. The black South Africans cannot indefinitely argue and blame their poverty on apartheid. Can it be that there are other inhibitions behind their plight?

There is a saying among many enlightened South Africans that is used especially when someone has died and there is suspicion that witchcraft had been used. They say '*phela umuntu omnyama akafi uyabulawa*', the black person never dies he or she is killed. This is very interesting because in isiNguni languages '*ukubulawa*,' to be killed is used for a variety of misfortunes. Such things as sickness, loss of stock, being unsuccessful in studies, failure to secure a job, alcoholism and so forth, fall within the category of '*ukubulawa*'. If the black African has not been thus killed by witchcraft, then the gods or spirits have somehow effected a curse, in which case very little can be done except to resign and accept the fate. In the former category of '*ukubulawa*' one can employ the African medicine and the corrective ritual to effect the change. In the latter the same can be done, but if all fail, one must accept gracefully.

The question here is: Is it not possible that poverty that results from any of these is interpreted as part of one's fate as predestined by either, the gods, ancestors, evil spirits, witches etc. It is this graceful acceptance of the status quo of poverty that the writer wishes to discuss under fate and fatalism as the possible cause for poverty, or for the perpetuation thereof. By fate or fatalism, this dissertation means as Ringgren (1967: 7) says: "*Things happen to man, they come upon him so to speak, from outside, and he has*

no power to change or to control them.” If, indeed things happen to someone and that someone cannot but succumb, then the poor can neither be blamed for, nor can they be coaxed to counteract the predestined poverty that has been thrown to him/her.

One is investigating the plight of the poor from a religious background; therefore, one is interested in researching the possibility of African traditional religion’s effort in interpreting events as well. *“Nothing will- according to their (the Africans) interpretation of the world – happen by chance. There is always a cause behind the events, they are not satisfied with a ‘natural cause’. They see an arrow kill a man, and they know the arrow caused his death, but they ask further: ‘Which person, spirit, god, magician caused the arrow to hit the person who was killed by it’ (Ringgren 1967: 165)?*

In the ancestral world the dead man’s word is ultimate in terms of how the living ought to go about their lives. Once the interpretation of an event has been attributed to the intervention of the ancestors, the case becomes automatically closed. No one dares to argue or even reason with the dictates of the dead. The question here is: What if the dead man asks for the only milking cow in sacrifice, has he not thrown the household into poverty? *“Such an influential force and spirit of death can only inhibit one’s outlook on and approach to life and to the world and in so doing enhance the cyclical spirit of poverty. . . Caught in such a vicious circle, liberation from poverty and development towards a new and meaningful identity and way of life is hardly possible because of the state of mind in which the individual, group and community find themselves” (van Deventer 1989: 67).*

In fatalistic attitudes people tend to accept the status quo as a resignation to the so-called inevitable. Fatalism does not allow for equality or partnership with those to whom it relates. It accepts them only if they play a subservient position, it parasites on their fears. The best way to cope with it is to succumb to its demands. One is allowed to complain but not to attempt change. Things are left to chance, if chance allows bad, or evil to occur, then belief in the same fate or chance optimistically hopes for the good to follow. The same God that has conveniently taken is the same God that will conveniently give, then, umNguni says: ‘*akulahlwa mbeleko ngakufelwa*’ the mother must not throw away the baby’s wrapper when the baby dies because she will need it when another one is born. One gives up hope in oneself yet maintains hope in the intervention of the divine. This constitutes the concept of cyclical time that is often attributed to African thought pattern. The snag about this state of affairs is that people consciously seek change and simultaneously fail to effect it.

The main issue about fatalism is that of shifting responsibility, people get relief from not being personally blamed for their failure or inability to do things. One can imagine the relief in a husband who will not have to squarely face the tensions created by his failure to secure a job. If all the problems in the household or family have an external cause then people can relax and wait for someone to relieve them of the problem. “*When a trad-*

itional Venda family faces a crisis (e.g. poverty) the family will gather and discuss the problem in order to try and find an external cause to their dilemma. The witch doctor will then be visited and the end result is usually the appointment of the specific person as the culprit. Many options can then be exercised. One option is to

negotiate with the appointed culprit in order to gain compensation from him in the form of for instance cattle or money. Another option . . . is to commit a ritual murder on the suspected culprit or to burn his possessions” (de Venter 1989: 72).

In fact in a situation of this kind one is allowed not only freedom to own up to the problem, but also to taking steps towards its solution. So one fatalistically resigns and accept that things ought to be so, hence the isiNguni proverb ‘*Akuvelwa kanyekanye njengamadlebe embogolo*’, figuratively translated to mean people were not created with the same gifts and as such, they ought to accept whatever position they find themselves in. This obviously creates a spirit that criticises aspiration and incentive to improvement and development.

When tracing the steps in the example given above one can see how religion assists groups and individuals to shift their responsibility. The appeal to the religious sanction through the employ of the diviners and the ancestral spirits, strengthens the resolve and almost sanctifies the action that the person might take after the real culprit has been pointed out. Let us say, for instance, that the cause for the apparent poverty in a family has been traced to the ancestral spirits and for one reason or the other the affected family has no means to appease the offensive spirit, who can blame them if they become nihilistic about their plight and just sit and do nothing? In the case where, in anger they commit the said ritual murder on the culprit, where is the blame to be placed? On the actual killers, the sniffing diviner or the culprit? *“The traditional religion thus creates a framework by means of which responsibility can be avoided. Even sin is in this way externalized”* (Bosch in de Venter 1989: 72).

6.1. *Fear and fatalism.*

At some point one acclaims traditional religions for being free in as much as they do not have scriptures, doctrines, ecclesiologies and magisteria. But at some other point the mere absence of these creates a tremendous confusion when certain practical issues have to be interpreted and implemented. The mere fact that these religions are mostly domestic and localised means that their interpretation of events lacks the inclusive maxim. This creates a lot of confusion in practice. African religion is a “*lived religions*” says Onwubiko (1991: 60) and as such they are existential and situational religions. This constitutes a problem in searching for stable and basic truths in them.

As a lived religion, African Religion does not promise a futuristic reward, one gets what comes to him/her now according to what s/he has done, or failed to do now. Such a religion as the traditional African religion is regulative that is, it helps its tenets to be best fitted for participation in the community. It is a domestic religion that says: ‘To be good for god and the ancestral spirits is to be good for other people.’ In this way traditional African religion is a people-centered religion that concerns human relationships in the here and now.

Let us take, for example, what is currently happening at funerals. A custom of putting the mat under and covering the coffin with a blanket has crept in and it always creates such heated debates at the grave site as to whether to tear the mat and blanket or not. The custom is new and probably foreign to the abaNguni people and, therefore, not part of

their religious heritage yet it is causing much fear and confusion. If one fails to do it, it is claimed that the spirit of the dead will be trapped in the grave, if one does it, others claim that he/she is introducing foreign things to the family and thus attracts the wrath of the ancestors. *“Religious freedom is inbuilt in them, in the sense that one flouts religious tenets at the risk of antagonizing himself primarily, with the gods, and secondary with men. If one neglects religious rites he is believed to forfeit the blessing believed to be received through such rites . . .”* (Onwubiko 1991: 60).

There are many fears in the life of people whose lives are controlled from outside if you are wealthy your enemies are many and you need to fear witchcraft, if your children are educated, neighbours will be jealous and they will bewitch them. If it is not them who will bewitch you, then it is you who will be thought of as a witch. This definitely freezes an individual to a point of doing nothing because any action is questionable either in terms of what the neighbours think, or what the action will do in terms of what the ancestors desire. Unfortunately one cannot detect in advance what the ancestors and the neighbours want, one simply imagines its effects and allows him/herself to be hypnotised by it.

In the African worldview, what is elsewhere called religion, is called part of the ‘heritage’ meaning that it comes to us together with all the other things that our forefathers and mothers has passed on in what they ordained to be culture and custom. Anyanwu (in Ruch 1984:162) says: *“We must distinguish, in every religion, its metaphysical and moral aspects. Religion is not merely a belief in God, Heaven and*

Judgment. It creates a worldview.” For this reason African Religion is part of a heritage that people have inherited since time immemorial from their forerunners as (Mbiti 1991: 10) carefully calls it. In fact when talking about cultural, historical, religious and social experiences, the traditional African refers to them indiscriminately as ‘the ways of our fathers.’ These are called in this way because they are perceived as “. . . *the product of the thinking and experiences of our forefathers and mothers, that is men, women and children of former generations*” (Mbiti: 13).

When Anyanwu says that religion creates a worldview, then the next question should be: How far does that world view affirm, or stunt human development and individual self realisation? The basic traditional African worldview is that of community, life and relationships. The important questions in this regard are: Is community as propagated by traditional African worldview life affirming? Are relationships based on equality in terms of being and in terms of achievements? Is the individual a free agent in terms of action and expression etc.?

The very concept of community, especially when considered apart from the aspirations of the individuals, can be terrifying. The individual, in fear of what the community might say, or fearing to transgress the communal sanctions, can be fossilised in a disparate impoverishing position. In many villages in South Africa, for example, fields must not be ploughed before the inkosi or his headman has officially announced that the cattle must be removed from the fields. If one plants vegetables in his fields in winter and they are destroyed by stock he/she cannot blame anybody, because his/her action was out of the

community's sanctions. Stock roams around in winter and everybody knows this. This subtly suggests that people must resign to the fate of having to go on without vegetables in winter. To be, as it were, is to tow the line with everybody else even when aware that what the majority is doing is wrong and against personal development.

7. The map of poverty.

Poverty is an experience felt, understood and expressed by human beings. This section wishes to ground the effects of poverty as experienced by South Africans in general, by the Eastern Cape Province, as the poorest province in particular and prominently, by the people of Umzimkhulu district, as the study area.

7.1. Where is poverty in South Africa?

“In a society in which it is estimated that 50 per cent of all people live below the minimum living level it may seem somewhat absurd to try and single out those categories of people who are particularly vulnerable to poverty. Approximately two-thirds of all black people in South Africa have to exist below the minimum living level. In the reserves or homelands no less than four-fifths of the people find themselves trapped below this survival line. Thus in the most general terms, one can say that those who are black are especially vulnerable” (Wilson and Ramphela 1989: 173).

In discussing the history of poverty, pointers as to where poverty and its victims can be found in South Africa need to be identified. The ideas contained in the mindset behind the creation of black and white republics as presented above, almost a-priori, suggests certain inequities between them. One republic inevitably must score more than the other. This was the very reason for creating them in the first place. Further to this general situation of black and white, there are other considerations to be taken into account, the differences between the rural and city dwellers, for instance, cannot be ignored in the discussion of South African poverty.

For this reason one has to acknowledge as Wilson and Ramphela (1989: 25) say, the importance of where people live as a determinant factor in the degree of poverty they endure. *“The really poor households (with the annual incomes of less than R500) are concentrated on the rural platteland and in the reserves rather than in the towns and cities.”* There is evidence to the claim that there is a bias that favours urbanity to rurality, either because the towns-people are vociferous about their problems, or because they are literate in the majority. Discrimination favours them in the allocation of resources. The rural population is not merely conceived as living in the outskirts of our towns but they also shamefully are conceived as living in the outskirts of the country’s economy to which they are called to generously contribute in terms of the labour they offer as migrant labourers.

The pattern of South Africa’s poverty is definitely modeled on the pattern of the country’s political programme that culminated in what is known as apartheid, and since

apartheid pocketed people according to their political demises, one needs just to visit them within those apartheid pockets. If you wish to find the poor, therefore, you are surely to find them in the reserves, the rural plattelands and the homelands. *“The formation of homelands and self-governing territories, the difference in education systems according to race and other apartheid laws have contributed significantly to the disparities that are noticeable when one looks at the distribution of resources in South Africa”* (Ngwane 1999:1).

7.2. *The most vulnerable.*

Within the rural plattelands, the homelands, and the reserves themselves, one can narrow the plight of the poor still further down to the different situations within the different groups, be they households, and gender statuses, for instance, those households with female household-heads are poorer compared to the male-headed ones. Among the blacks themselves there are divisions in terms of who is really poor and who is poor in terms of political or racial classification. If the assumption that inequality can breed all sorts of bias between people is right, then one can assume that the disparity created thereby are not mere political and racial, they are social as well. Therefore, while acknowledging that the disparities created by the South African political system are at the root cause of poverty at least as far as this affects the blacks, the truth is that, when it comes to social arrangements such things as patriarchal bias in the traditional African structures had its part in the impoverishment of certain sections of the African community.

7.2.1. *The place of women and children in poverty rating.*

One can generalise about the South African situation and say politically and racially all blacks are poor, but in fairness one can go on and say that black women are poorer when society treats femininity as a discriminative factor. The South African black women are actually thrice oppressed. Firstly they were oppressed by the white colonialism, secondly as subspecies in the pervasive racism of the dominant culture, and thirdly as victims of sexist culture of both black and white males. “*Black women share in the reality of a*

broader community: they share race suffering with the black men, with the white women and the third world women, they are victims of sexism and with the poor blacks and whites and other third world people especially women they are disproportionately poor . . .” (J. Grant in Thistlethwaite et al 1990: 209).

There are a number of things that need to be mentioned in relations to women and poverty and it is generally agreed that unemployment is a significant contributor to poverty. Women suffer most in this level because the prerequisite for finding a good job is education. Most of our South African black women are uneducated. They are mostly employed in low paying and mostly informal sectors of our labour markets such as in agricultural farms and domestic services. While some people can argue that the informal sector is the best option if, for example, one thinks that those who are self employed can make over R1900 (the mean monthly wage across all sectors) the fact remains that most of those employed in the informal sector according to SALDRU survey (in May 1998: 18) earn an income lower than the Supplemental Living Level set at R220.10 per month. May (: 18) says: “*There are ‘four markers’ or characteristics of poverty among the self-*

employed: race, gender, age and location. Africans constitute 76% of the self-employed earning less than the SLL, while 60% of all those earning less than the SLL are women. Similarly 67% of the self-employed earning less than the SLL are aged 15-24, while 46% of all those earning less than the SLL are based in rural areas. Hence the most disadvantaged among the self-employed will be African women aged 15-24 in rural areas; 80% of this group earn less than the SLL.”

If the employing sector is informal, it is, therefore, outside the normal area of legislation and policy making of the government, the services and provision of adequate infrastructure such as housing, water and sanitation are very likely to be inadequate, or non-existent. *“Those in informal sector tend to remain in poverty while being still in employment, since the informal sector consists predominantly of workers involved in survivalist activities. It can be argued that the informal sector represents those who, while being employed, are severely disadvantaged in the labour market”* (May 1998: 17).

Another issue that needs to be addressed when presenting the plight of women in the poverty chain is the fact that, they are, in most cases, engaged in unrecognised and therefore unpaid so-called private, community and domestic labour as mothers of their respective families. In most of the cases, working-women do not do so just by way of supplementing the wages of their husbands, but do so as heads of their respective families either as widows and single mothers. Ngwane (1999: 58) maintains that according to the distribution of household income and inequality in South Africa in 1995, of the total

average income per annum of R42 972 the male-headed households received R55 675 as compared to R26 324 of the female-headed households. The needs of a household can never be determined by their gender, therefore, the disparity seen here is unjustified. If one takes into consideration the fact that children have of necessity to rely on the income of their parents or adults in general, children of the poor suffer the most. “*Of the 6.2*

million poor people, approximately 44% are children less than 15 years of age.

These poor children are highly likely to grow up without education and proper care” (Ngwane 1999: 93).

CHAPTER SIX: *Traditional African religion in relation to the poor.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The title of this thesis asks for a response of the traditional African religion to poverty. It is obvious that one will never be able to decipher any ethic from a religion whose structure one does not know. Since the parameters of the thesis are specific in terms of what the writer is researching and, the writer does not purport to give an extensive account of traditional African religion, one hopes, in this chapter, to deal with traditional African religious issues in so far as they have a bearing on the issue of poverty, specifically, and economics, generally. It is important to stress that, in this chapter one does not wish to discuss the structure of the African traditional religion in general, but to do so only as much as this will answer the quests of the thesis. It is important, therefore, to keep in mind the phrase 'in relation to the poor' very close to whatever issue that is presented for discussion.

One believes that, understanding the mechanisms through which traditional African religion operates will assist in understanding the sanctions it imposes on its adherents in relations to poverty. But before even giving the structure one thinks that one needs, somehow, to define what religion is. One hopes that this exercise will, to some extent, show whether one can expect religion to deliberate on economic needs as the topic suggests. If it can, then one should hope to find in it an ethic rooted in the concern for the poor.

2. *What is religion in general?*

Attempts at answering this question should help in deciphering whether traditional African religion has an ethical perspective at all and further, whether that ethical perspective is capable of dealing with issues that are rooted in a theology that concerns itself with the problem of the poor. It is important to understand the point of view from which a particular religion operates because this, a-priori, gives one a preview of what to expect when analysing it. From the definition given by the Oxford dictionary religion is: *“the belief in a superhuman controlling power, especially in a personal God or gods entitled to obedience and worship.”* From the above definition, the thesis is concerned about the two actions that religion expects from its adherents with regard to the so-called controlling superhuman power. They are, firstly, called to obedience. One’s interest here is whether there could be impoverishing aspects in the said obedience and this is interesting from the perspective of the fatalistic attitudes that have been discussed in chapter five above. Secondly, the superhuman controlling power is said to command worship. The interest here is what happens if the believer fails to render the expected worship. Assimeng (1989: 8) says: *“Religion represents man’s belief in the transcendent power which by apprehending its nature and attributes through certain means might be utilized for man’s well being here and possibly in the after life.”*

Assimeng’s definition presents religion as the human action in response to the transcendent power. For the purpose of the thesis’ quest one may want to know: whether humans can or do utilise transcendent power (religion) for the alleviation of poverty or for perpetuating it?

Religion is humanity's response to what is ultimate in human experience of being, in so far as that is a cultivation of one's form of being a conscious being. Human beings are aptly aware of their limits both in knowing and comprehending the issues of life, be it their own life or the general life surrounding them. Anyanwu says: "*Every human being is in need of metaphysics but metaphysics of a collective people is not a logical or reasoned knowledge but religion. People need an account of the origin of the world, of man, of existence and of their destiny. They need something beyond this changing world to which they can direct their expectations, fears, hopes and aspirations*" (in Ruch 1984 :162).

In line with this definition, the thesis seeks to find out, whether African religion has such an ethic as can be said to be rooted in the concern for the poor, and, further does that ethic cater for the expectations, fears, hopes and economic aspirations of the poor in the case where there are injustices?. In other words it seeks to explore the regulative aspect of African religion. This is where one hopes to find whether it has an ethic, and whether or not, that ethic regulates in economic situations.

2.1. *How does religion operate and how does it help its tenants?*

Shutte (1993:168) maintains that religion operates on two planes the sacral and the natural. He says: "*The supernatural is just as real as the natural, if not more so, in the sacral consciousness. In fact it determines what happens in the natural world, human lives included.*" He continues and says that: *In the sacral world view it was the supernatural forces that were in ultimate control of nature and human life.*"

The next question that one needs to ask about religion is why is it necessary? In other words what is its purpose? In short, religion as a sequence of activities and items, used by rational beings, is of necessity purposeful in its essence it must be helping, in some way, to give a direction as to the needs that its adherents want to satisfy. As Ringgren (1967: 7) says: “. . . *it is possible to state on a purely empirical basis that one of the functions of*

what we normally call religion is to help man to adjust himself to the realities of life, to give him some kind of understanding of what happens to him, to enable him to relate himself in some way or other to what he regards as his destiny or fate.”

Religion helps people to adapt to their different situations and environments. It gives them some reason concerning the status quo thus helping them to hold on for a while longer. Speaking about the needs of the displaced and disoriented people political, social, cultural, religious situation has abnormally been altered Getui and Kanyandago in Ringgren (1967: 127) say: “*The lack of outlet for religious expression can create anxiety*

in those who attach high premium to it –an anxiety which no amount of food and medical care could heal . . . they require new security and firmer identities within the uncertainties and impossibilities of their conditions; they need to find meaning in their situation; they want assurances that they are sane in the midst of the madness around them; they need to understand themselves and come up with a new self-definition. These emotional needs can be provided by religion.” In an endeavour to understand, manage and enhance their lives, people employ religion as a ready tool at their disposal. “*In this respect, religion has a compensatory role; it provides*

its adherents with a different and supposedly better and superior type of supernatural rule of justice from which man is given hope of obtaining what he justly deserves in the future society” (Assimeng 1989: 11).

Religion poses itself as a critique of all that threaten to absolutely own and enslave the human spirit. “. . . *religion inevitably puts itself outside society as the particular*

(prophetic) institution that is concerned with the reformation of society as a whole” (Shutte 1993: 166).

It suffices to say that amidst our bafflement about science and technology, we can at least humbly say: ‘we are at least trying to understand them and, at most, are trying to manage to utilise some of them to our advantage.’ This is what MacIvar (1937: 88) “*Man is not*

wholly at the mercy of these elemental facts, for in degree he can utilize them, seize the advantage which they offer him, overcome some of the barriers which they present to his purposes. He cannot control the winds but he can set his sails to catch them. He cannot direct the path of thunderstorm but he can make electricity convey his words and operate his machines. . . .”

3. *African religion or heritage?*

There are two important questions that arise when one speaks of African religion, firstly one could ask: When we talk about African religion, are we talking of the same thing as other cultures do when they talk about religion? This question arises as a result of the lack of evidence within African religion in terms of religious artifacts, for example

shrines, temples etc. Secondly is there one religion in any one part of Africa? This question arises from practical implications and applications since the ancestor cult is very particular to the family to which the ancestors belong, and therefore, the religious action directed to them can only be meaningful when it is performed by their progeny, which means that African religion is a domestic religion and as there are many households, therefore, there are as many religions. In view of what has been just said, the writer wants to advise that while we do not want eventually to say that there is no such thing as African religion, we are careful not to simply define it as others do of their religions.

Anyanwu in Ruch (1981: 161) says: *“In most cases, the African writers want to adapt the African beliefs to those of Christianity and Islam, an effort that is bound to fail.”*

This said, one thinks that in as much as religion refers to the sacred, the numinous in its dealings with the unfathomable, African religion some how fits the description given to religion. *“We must distinguish, in every religion, its metaphysical and moral aspects.*

Religion is not merely a belief in God, Heaven and Judgment. It creates a worldview” (Anyanwu in Ruch: 162).

Mbiti alerts us to the fact that in African languages there is no term for religion, he says that instead there is talk of *“the ways of our fathers”* (Mbiti 1992: 162). African Religion, therefore, is part of a heritage that people have inherited since time immemorial from their forerunners as Mbiti (10) carefully calls it. In fact when talking about cultural, historical, religious and social experiences, the traditional African refers to them indiscriminately as ‘the ways of our fathers.’ These are called in this way because they are perceived as *“. . . the product of the thinking and experiences of our forefathers and*

mothers, that is men women and children of former generations” (Mbiti 1992: 13). “The ways of our fathers” this expression sounds very exclusive and possessive, what if one does not subscribe to those fathers, let us say, for instance, one is not related to them as it might be the case in the ways of the Xhosa sib fathers as compared to the ‘way of the Tsonga sib fathers. As a heritage religion belongs to the specific people naturally. They are born with and into it. Because of its claim to antiquity and because it is a lived religion African Religion as heritage has no scriptures. As part of the household’s artifacts, traditional African religion is no less nor greater a domestic artifact than a pot.

As a heritage, therefore, African Religion forms part of what one receives from the progenitors. It is not conceived as an institution apart from the general inheritance; it is naturally passed on with all the other ways of life that a family, community, or a nation desires to be cherished by their descendants through all the generations. “*In traditional*

African societies there were no atheists. This is because religion, in the indigenous African culture, was not an independent institution. It is an integral and inseparable part of the entire culture” (Onwubiko 1991: 24). “*We must distinguish, in every religion, its metaphysical and moral aspects. Religion is not merely a belief in God, Heaven and Judgment. It creates a worldview*” (Anyanwu in Ruch 1984: 162).

The traditional African religion is regulative; it helps its tenants to be best fitted for participation. It is a domestic religion that says: ‘To be good for God and the ancestral spirits is to be good for all with which life is shared.’ Traditional African religion is a people-centered religion. “*Religious freedom is inbuilt in them, in the sense that one*

flouts religious tenets at the risk of antagonizing himself primarily, with the gods, and secondary with men. If one neglects religious rites he is believed to forfeit the blessing believed to be received through such rites . . .” (Onwubiko 1991: 60).

Traditional African Religion is a world affirming religion in that it aims at regulating how people should live in this world. Goodness and evil-doing do not so much concern the after life or eternity. Even after one has died the concern is that s/he must come back and interact with others in this world. This is contained in the life-death- life theory as Cardinal Gantini calls it. “. . . *the Life/Death/Life triad*” and explains it “. . . *as the stages of the human being’s progressive fulfillment . . . perceived as a series of passages from life to life through death, a kind of successive existential leaps, through which the human being is always as it were ‘re-born’ . . .*” (Omnis Terra N. 268 1996: 200).

4. African religion and poverty.

In this section the writer proposes to answer the three questions that were posed in the opening paragraph of this chapter. The questions, respectively, were: In view of fatalistic attitudes that religious people tend to have: Can religious obedience lead to fanatic adherence to teachings and taboos that may end up impoverishing people? What happens if the believer fails to render the expected worship? If religion is a human action in response to the transcendent power can or indeed does man (when it suits him) utilize transcendent power (religion) for the alleviation of poverty or perpetuating it?

4.1. **Religious nihilism and the perpetuation of poverty.**

According to Ringgren (1967: 7) “. . . *the function of religion is to help man to adjust himself to the realities of life . . . to enable him to relate himself in some way or other to what he regards as his destiny or fate.*” In what way does religion enable man/woman relate themselves to this fate or destiny? One believes that this can be done in two ways. Firstly, one is assisted simply to cope, or to tolerate whatever fate decrees. Secondly, one can be assisted to escape the said demises. Thirdly, one may be helped to face up to the decrees of fate with the very aim of conquering them. “*Through the augury the direction of destiny, and thereby of the action, is given or hinted at in advance. In view of this the human will either surrender in resignation-this is the fatalistic or quietistic attitude; or it may- which is more dramatic and artistically attractive- try to offer resistance*” (Bronndsted in Ringgren 1967: 172).

It seems that many people regard fate as outside the realm of creation; as an impersonal thing that has power of its own and a thing that, left alone causes trouble. God, gods and ancestors on the other hand are the opposite force that counteracts fate, people can plead through prayer and sacrifices for fate to be turned and evil averted. “. . . *the belief in a personal determiner of destiny produces religious behavior, while the belief in an impersonal Fate does not. But the problem is complicated by the fact that both of these attitudes seem to occur together in one and the same religion, even in one and the same person*” (Ringgren: 8).

The issue is further complicated by the other view that seems to suggest that God, the gods, and ancestors themselves, are the determiners of what is to be, so that fate is decreed by them, or they themselves are the particular destinies of man. In this sense, therefore, it is noble to succumb under the demise of one's fate because it equals obedience to God. Indeed if fate is God's will then how can one and the same God be both the giver of good and bad things simultaneously?

4.1.1. *The theory of opposites: as means for tackling the issue of good and evil.*

This ambivalence in the actions of God leads us to the issue known as the principle of opposites where God can be omnipresent and otiosus (hidden) at the same time. He/she is not only immanent but also remotus. This can be said of the moral attributes, absolute goodness presupposes absolute evil, love infers hatred etc. If this is acceptable, then God must exist in a balance of the opposites that are within him/herself. He balances his/her anger with his/her love, his/her power with his/her weakness, and his /her immanence with transcendence, and so forth. I think this is the meaning of 'strong and weak innocence'. The principle of Opposites tries to solve the riddles posed by the presence of opposite in human life and experience. Here are some of the riddles that are encountered in life.

The issue of God and Evil can easily be solved if we allowed for polytheism, but since traditional African religion strongly maintains monotheism and therefore, there is no other god to whom the counter attributes belong, then the self same God must of

necessity possess them as well. Talking of Immana Widengren in Ringgren (1967: 170) says: “. . . *he is a pronounced god of destiny, at the same time good and evil and wholly capricious.*” The issue at stake here is that for every positive attribute that we ascribe to God there seem to be the opposite lurking somewhere and this has to be ascribed to somebody or something and that somebody or something should be as absolute as God is. Many religious people believe that destiny or fate is the normal. Ehnmark in Ringgren (1967: 10) says that: “*It is typical of destiny that it is conceived of as something given, as an order of things. Destiny is understood as something natural, as ‘the way of the world’. That which is one’s destiny is the normal that which follows from the nature of things and life as they happen to be. It is no use to complain about destiny, for there is nobody to listen, for destiny is not a power that governs, but an order that exists.*”

For a religious person who says nothing exists except what God or destiny has decreed there is nothing happening per chance. The order itself is thus decreed by God and to push it further God himself is the order and, therefore the fate.

4.1.2. *Pointers to fatalism in certain isiNguni sayings.*

The isiNguni speaking people have sayings to the effect that people will never be the same in terms of being and of having. ‘*abantwana abalingani njenga neminwe esandleni*’ This is usually used when a parent compares his/her children’s characters and achievements. Another saying talks of the inequality in people generally. ‘*Akuvelwa kanye kanye okwamadlebe embongolo*’ This saying is used to discourage competition

especially if it is likely to lead to unorthodox practices such as witchcraft plunder and jealousy. It says ‘await your turn, but do not be sulky if it does not come for even that may be what god has decreed for you. *“To God belongs what he takes away, and to God belongs what he grants every one has a term; be you patient and consider ”* (Watt in Ringgren 1967: 58).

These sayings and many others like them have a religious background that maintains acceptance of what God has destined for one. To seek to transform one’s fate, especially through unaccepted ways, may be offensive to the divine will and as such warrant further curses and punishment. This is what the question is about: Can one be impoverished as a result of him/her strictly adhering in obedience to God who ‘has decreed that he/she will be poor?’ Can one, in the fear of contradicting fate, suspend all efforts of self improvement and as such perpetuate his/her state of poverty of any kind? *“Man does not unpunished break the laws of righteousness which, for humanity’s own welfare, stand under the omnipotent protection of the gods”* (Ringgren 1967: 20). It is the gods who determine what is righteous and if poverty is decreed by the gods, then it is righteous for a person to endure it.

‘Usizi luyakwazi kubo kwalo.’ This is a saying of the isiNguni speaking people and it, figuratively, means that misfortune is always determined by fate towards those for whom it was designed. Nothing happens by chance we get what we are destined for. Every child is born already in possession of what it will have and not have. That which was meant for you is that which you will get. *“What reaches you could not possibly have missed you,*

and what misses you could not possibly have reached you God's decree is infallibly fulfilled and no human act can ward it off or change it" (Ringgren :59).

'Akwehlanga lungehli' is one of the frequently used phrases by isiNguni speaking people especially when there has been a death in a family. The literal meaning of the phrase is: there is nothing new in what has happened for it has happened to someone else some where. This calls for the bereaved people to accept what has happened as fate or destiny. Indeed everything that happens to a person is believed to be sanctioned by God, spirits and ancestors. Both good and evil come equally from either of these. In good times the isiNguni speaking people say *'amawenu akujongile, or icamagu livumile'*, in recovering from illness or having escaped danger they say *'Inkosi isangingcinile'*, *'idlozi lisibhekile'* or *'icamagu livumile'* All these have a fatalistic character in that they attribute success or failure to some external power. As such they are somewhat critical of any defensive action for fear that one might be seen to be trading, or bargaining with God. In the same meaning the Ruandans say: *"Immana is supreme: he gives and takes, unfettered by the wishes and desires of men. . . .What Immana has let go of no one can bring back, Immana gives to you, you cannot trade with him: if you do, he will drive a hard bargain. No one can take from him to whom Immana has given. . . . Luck and misfortune alternate, and man has only to accommodate himself to the course of events"* (Ringgren 1967: 163).

As a conclusion one wants to say that to any one for whom fate and destiny are conceived not as mere impersonal chance issues, the reaction or response to them is not simply

passive, but it involves the very fabric of what one is made of. Every thing and every condition within which one finds him/herself is connected to the will of some super-human power. Once events are connected to an original Theo-centric order, then their interpretation has to be Theo-centric as well. If the conclusion is that African religion maintains that God predestined what was to happen, then one is safe to say that African religion assists its people to give a theistic interpretation. It is this theistic interpretation that some times fossilises people to inaction that may prolong the evil of poverty.

4.1.3. *Organic approach.*

This is a way of looking at things in such a way that they give meaning to one another, that is, things seen in terms of the meaning they give to other things and the meaning they get from other things. The traditional African worldview hinges around relationships of meaningful participation. *“The profound sense of unity and equilibrium has often been*

described as one of the outstanding characteristics of African culture. Poets like Leopold Senghor and Aime Cesaire have described it. It is a deep sense of unity with people and with nature. ‘There is in African custom an essential harmony, and equilibrium with the land. .’ (Watson 1982: 38). All of life is seen as a related continuum of interrelated beings with man taking a special place. Life itself as life-power back and forth. To endanger the equilibrium is to endanger life and survival itself’ (Van Wyk in van Deventer 1989:50).

The unity of things in the traditional African world view is so important in that it is the source and center of many other aspects of life. The whole philosophy of ‘Umuntu

ngumuntu ngabanye abantu' a person is a person because of other people, hinges on this. There is no conception of life outside the other. Life is always with the many, the plural. In this sense the ethno-cultural whole is centrifugal in terms of being. ". . . *this whole assures salvation, security, strength, success, peace, happiness as well as development, a future, harmony, education and work. . . But when this whole disintegrates, the virtues which it brings about are obviously also affected negatively, and this in turn disrupts the whole*" (van Deventer: 51).

The contention is that even if one were to acknowledge that African religion was contributive to poverty, it would be very difficult to rescue its tenants while they cling tenaciously to the philosophy of the relatedness of things. The logic of the whole African worldview whether philosophical, theological or other wise is based on what van Deventer (1989: 25) calls the "*ethno-cultural Corruptio totalis*". This means that, to preserve the whole one must tolerate the one even when perceived as destructive, for to remove the one, whatever the reason, would mean to disintegrate the whole. The irony here is that preserving the destructive element will in the long run disintegrate the whole. This probably is the basis of fatalistic and impoverishing attitudes of African traditional religion.

This becomes a vicious circle where impoverishing elements are allowed to perpetuate poverty from one generation to the next. And it must be mentioned here that the poverty one talks about is not only the economic poverty but poverty in all its manifestations. In a situation where community is understood in terms of ontological and participative

relationships, a sense of mutual dependency is created and this dependency plays on peoples' psychologies creating fears that if they were to be removed in any way from the community they would cease to exist. Tempels captures the African understanding when he says: "*Nothing moves in this universe of force without influencing other forces by its movement . . . the life of the 'muntu' is not limited to his own person, but that it extends to all ontologically subjected to him: . . . In the same way as every good office, every help and assistance account before all else as a support, an increase of life to him who is the beneficiary . . .*" (Tempels 1959: 143).

If people are to move forward as free creative spirits, there is need that they be allowed some objective distance. I am because we are but I am free to come and go in order to contribute meaningfully to what we shall be in the future. Religion becomes inhibitive to peoples' quest for progress if it emphasises fear and indeed in a world view that creates an attitude or a psychological trend that constantly tells people to be careful lest they offend either God or the ancestors there will always be elements of fear that stunts pro-activity.

This worldview can be very oppressive to a person who wishes to take the progressive route in terms of one wanting to take charge of one's life with the aim of becoming an independent subject in relation to other people and things. The organic approach does not allow for individualism which is important and sometimes necessary if people are to develop. Development necessarily calls people to go out as individuals on a journey of self and world-discovery. This, sometimes, may mean treating other things as objects rather than as sisters and brothers. This definitely changes the terms of relationships

because there will be times where one relates to some person or thing simply as means to some end. *“Tension arises at this point also because of the need to ‘objectify’ nature in order to harness its resources. Agricultural, technological and industrial progress requires an ‘impersonal’ approach to nature and a certain freedom o certain action over against nature. Science requires a certain distance between the observer and the world and a measure of ‘objectivation’. Much can be said in criticism of modern technology and industry but if it makes the difference between poverty and hunger on the one hand and better material circumstances on the other, the choice for technology is unavoidable Some recognition of the ‘rightful autonomy of earthly affairs’ seems essential”* (Vatican 11, Gaudium et Spes Par 36 in van Deventer 1989: 60).

Here one notices the short-fall of the nature–directed religions, they always threaten death to any one who does not tow the line. To guard and guide its tenants into being members of communities such religions create feelings of insecurity. Members are drilled into believing that there is no life apart from the community. There is too much appeal to and capitalisation on peoples’ emotional vulnerability drilled into their psyche through symbols and rituals. From birth to death through to the spiritual realm, one is initiated from one aspect of communal participation level to the next. During the liminal stage, the neophisites are secluded and made to feel lonely and sometimes maltreated to create in them a sense of the pain of being outside the life-giving community. Certain pleasures are withdrawn to create a longing for reinstatement.

4.1.4.. *Communalism and poverty.*

It has been mentioned that African religion is a heritage, an artifact that forms part of domestic requirements and as such it serves to help people in their required participation in the community. In fact, African religion as an institution has as its sole purpose the education of its tenants on the values of communication (sharing) and of the preservation of the life forces within the community. It is for this reason that it is normally held that if one wishes to destroy another he/she succeeds when he/she manages to disorientates the other in terms of his/her religious and cultural beliefs. *“It is a universal fact that religion plays an important part in the human psyche. Taking into account the vital influence which traditional religion has on the whole of African and Venda tradition it speaks for itself that traditional religion would therefore also have a great impact on the psycho-cultural aspect of traditional life in Africa and Venda. The relation between the disruption of religion and the disintegration of the whole needs to e repeated here”* (van Deventer 1989: 62).

The emphasis on the communitarian nature of human beings contained in the catch phrase ‘Umuntu ngumuntu ngabanye abantu’, while applauded in anti-individualism discussions, has some destructive elements when studied from a production-based point of view. The question here is: How does one manage to introduce progressive and developmental aspect to an over-imposing and sometimes conservative community, especially, if the one who does it, is classed as a nobody in terms of the hierarchical status. For instance, if women and children were the ones pushing for progress and the

transformation of the community in the African traditional set up the situation would be very strange, and perhaps even impossible.

The phrase 'I am because we are' is not always positive when seen from the point of view that one's being is determined by the being of others. This, implicitly, mean that if those higher in the determining ladder are negatively charged then the recipients of their determining will, will themselves be negatively influenced. It is very true that we are determined by the socio-cultural circumstances within which we are born and we need to use our natural skills and talents to get out of these natural conditions, especially when they are destructive. It is a fact that we are all born poor and as such it is mere coincidence that some are born into rich families and societies and these have to a large extent been shaped by the leading ideologies into whatever state they find themselves in.

“Poverty is the original state of men and nations. We need to know not so much why the poor are poor, but why some are still poor. The answer to this latter question is as much philosophical and religious as economic and political. The possibility of the latter economics and practical effort depend on the former, religion and thought. Whatever may be said on the grounds of tolerance or skepticism about the different religions, philosophies and ideologies at work in the world, hat cannot be said is that the structure of their beliefs and idea makes no difference to how we live and achieve. Thus the passage from poverty to productivity is prevented not just by lack of work and science, reward or innovation, but mainly by ideas about work, science, reward and innovation. . .
”(Schall 1990:16).

As discussed in chapter five, authority plays a vital role in stabilising people to accepting the status quo. Authority is essentially a tool for the community to maintain the established order, never minding what the order does to the general public. Usually the so-called order is most of the time good in as much as it serves the interests of the few. As always, authority is exercised from the center of the community it never comes from the periphery unless there has been a revolution. “. . . *these communalistic relations and relationships are controlled internally by means of primarily four stabilizing systems, namely status (royalty over general public), sex (men over women), age (the elder over the youth) and kinship (e.g. older brother over sister's children). Traditionally this system of controlling mechanisms is supposed to ensure order and peace within the group and community and is executed by means of authority*” (van Deventer 1989: 74).

In many societies this system fails and the so-called leaders end up being dictators who run the show and it is always the innocent women and children that suffer the results.

Unfortunately, “*The tension that arises between authority and criticism is clearly visible in newly Independent states . . . Criticism and opposition are experienced as a threat to authority itself*” or as Lamb (in van Deventer 1989: 75) quoting Samora Machel says: “*When a class imposes its will, those who refuse to accept this imposition must be forced to conform. Those who oppose this will be suppressed.*”

The other daunting factor about African communalism is that it, unwittingly, takes away responsibility and initiative from its members. In its emphasis that one can only succeed

in the company of others as captured in proverbs that exonerate the indispensability of the multitude such as *Amasongo akhala emabili, ubucu obuhle buhamba ngabubili, kulele kunye ukuba kubili ngaba kuyavusana*’, traditional African communalism renders them useless and helpless when apart from the many. *“The communal emphasis has caused many Africans to feel the center of their identity as being outside themselves, in the community. This has diminished the amount of inner individual awareness and has hampered individual initiative. . .”*

If this attitude remains the basis on which the African operates then one may as well forget about the black person ever growing in terms of development. Development presupposes that initiatives are allowed to individuals to try new avenues; it presupposes that they are given scopes to make mistakes and to learn from them. A community that does not allow its individuals to experiment can never grow in the true sense of the word.

“At the same time there is great need in modern society for individual responsibility and initiative. A high degree of individual inwardness is required. In order for society to advance and improve its quality of life – even to survive in today’s world – individuals are needed who can improvise, who can ‘separate’ themselves from the community and who can take personal responsibility on behalf of others” (Van Wyk in van Deventer 1989: 76).

In the light of what has been said thus far, too much emphasis on communalism can be inhibitive to growth and development and, therefore, can lead people to un-creativity and most of all to dormancy and lack of initiative. It can throw them into unwarranted

dependency in terms of production and distribution and thus stifle them into impoverishing situations.

4.1.4.1. *Critical approach towards certain aspects within the value of ubuntu.*

In chapter two the writer defined the term ‘Ubuntu’ as an institution through which humanity fights such evils as, oppressions, discrimination and poverty. Its targets are all the visible and invisible forces threatening the integrity and dignity of human beings. Mindful of the symbiotic nature of creatures, ubuntu continues its war even to the point of safeguarding the integrity of the lesser creatures as well. Thus to be ‘Umuntu’ (a person) is to partake in the creative and redemptive action.

In this section one wishes to check whether this institution is watertight against possible abuses by either the community itself or its individual members. One tends to contend that African tradition and culture are not immune to the processes of evolution and as such are subject to change for better and for worse. It is this change that needs to be monitored so that one knows exactly what one means by ubuntu in the modern context. For example, many people nowadays appeal to the values of ubuntu as a means to calm others from rightly claiming their rights. An employer who, overwhelmed by strikes for better wages, would say their actions lack ubuntu. The phrase in this case, has been manipulatively used. In a similar manner within the clan community people who claim the right to be cared for on the basis of human relations while contributing nothing to their hosts’ wealth are abusing the ubuntu values. *“Traditional hospitality is nowadays*

being abused as a pretext for parasitism. In traditional Africa, no one was allowed to become a burden to anyone else. After three days, guests were expected to help their host in the fields and in general to earn their keep” (Bujo 1986:68).

Once the concepts such as ubuntu are used uncritically as political, and social-control tools, they lose all what they stand for and create feelings of inadequate demands on the part of the poor and conversely of unwarranted suppression on the part of leaders. With regard to the former Schall (1990: 10) says: “*The ‘right to be fed’ can be turned into a*

formula to blame those who know how to produce food for the condition of those who do not know how to produce adequate food (or more often, who are unwilling to learn because of the commitment to various ideologies which denigrate private property, profits, and individual initiative) see themselves exempt from any duty to make their own peoples producers and distributors. Adequate food supplies then become what is owed than what is produced.” About the latter, he says: “*If this right to be fed in uncritically accepted it can easily become a tool for refashioning society for purposes other than food. It can be used to control people so that there is no political unrest.”*

What one wishes to say is that, the concept of ‘Ubuntu’, randomly used can be an ideologue utilised by both individuals and organisations for their own egotistic purposes. Society ought to be weary of theories and ideologies (including the theories and ideologies deriving from the concept of ubuntu) that tend to suspend the human initiatives in terms of production and distribution. In the case of South Africa, one questions such processes as RDP and Black Economic Empowerment, if by them the

poor are meant to wait or suspend any attempt and effort at improving their lot. RDP should really mean development of the rural poor by engaging them in serious self-help projects and not, as it some time seem to mean, the '*Rand Dropping Programme*', where the poor do nothing, except to queue for Government grants. Black Economic Empowerment ought to mean that education programmes are revitalised to equip the black South Africans with skills that make them marketable in the labour market and capable as producers in private enterprises. "*Ideology in fact is the main cause of hunger along with certain attitudes to work, reward and order. The relation of religion and moral practice to wealth producing is much closer than we are normally willing to admit. Certain doctrines and beliefs will guarantee continuity of poverty*" (Schall 1990: 10).

4.1.5. *Religion and development.*

In the spirit of the African's quest for life, God is the supreme life giving force. He/she, therefore, is experienced first and foremost as a lived and a living reality. He/she is part of the experienced universe of the vital force, and since this universe of vital force is mainly experienced in the interactions of beings enhancing, or diminishing one another's lives and their processes, God is experienced and known in what he/she contributes to this universe of force. On the basis of what God does, people deduce who and perhaps what he/she is.

God is upheld not as an impersonal reality. This warrants him/her to be a relating reality able to communicate what he/she wills and accept the communication that comes from his/her creatures living or dead. This is true if one considers that for traditional Africans the realm of the spirits is not given a separate and static existence. Every reality, properly so called, must have a reference to a person if it is to be considered a reality at all. Since a person is considered a person and alive when in life-giving relationships, all that participates with him/her must of necessity be alive. God therefore cannot be a reality unless he/she is involved in this life-giving relationship. God is therefore not outside the reflecting self, but he/she is a reality penetrating the self and offering him/herself as the ultimate meaning to the one with whom he/she shares. This God who has a bearing through his/her force on the forces of others is obviously a God of religion and thus not simply an object of reflection. He/she is mainly the subject calling for a response and commitment. Society must be reminded that traditional African religion is pragmatic and mainly concerns itself with the individual's well being, than it is for worship and devotion to the sacred for its sake. In relating to God, the pinnacle of religion, one wishes to get a commitment and a response, perhaps similar to the response and commitment one has given to him/her. Traditional Africans do not do things merely for God's sake but want something in return.

In the light of what has just been said, while one admits that traditional African religion certainly contains fatalistic traits, one, never the less, needs to also agree that there is a lively interaction between God and people, the latter supplicating with the former personally or through the other divinities, deities and ancestors for the very purpose of

diverting fate. *“The thought that man’s future is connected with his creation does not, however, end in fatalism. A proverb runs, ‘Immana has a starting-point for everything he does’, i.e. he helps those who help themselves, or ‘You pray to Immana for blessing when sitting by the hearth, and he anoints you with ashes’”* (Inggren 1967: 167).

It is worth noting that people are not simply powerless against fate, they have recourse to averting or even diverting it. So it is not true that they simply accept it. There are, for example, conciliatory rites and rituals in case the misfortune is suspected to come from the ancestors. The question is, however, what if the misfortune persists after the said ritual has been performed? *“If the misfortune does not disappear in spite of the fact that prescribed rites are performed, the cause is attributed to Immana and man has nothing to do but to submit to his will- often with grumbling and complaints expressed in sentences or- some- in prayers”* (Ringgren:168).

5. What happens if the believer fails to render the expected worship?

The central issue in traditional African religion is the maintenance of the unity and keeping the equilibrium. In terms of the desired unity one cannot touch any part of the whole without touching the whole. This is what was discussed in the section about the ‘organic approach’ above. The perception that without this unity, things will fall apart, is very real for the African of traditional background. Togetherness is a life issue, so anything that pulls you away from the life giving community is in fact killing you and in

the process it spells death for the community. In this line of thought, therefore to fail to render the expected worship to the deity (ies) is to disrupt the unity and as such kills the one pulled away and the deity (ies) from whom he/she has been pulled away.

In defining life in chapter two, the writer has shown that its preservation is central to the being and action of traditional African. The writer has said elsewhere that: “*It is necessary to stress the fact that life is the immense corporate condition of being. A condition in which all is steeped, surrounded and infused. . . Everyone coming into it through birth, or exiting it through death (if there is such a thing as exiting the life processes) is to be monitored by all. If not the scale tips off and harm is caused to the natural order*” (Manci 1996: 24).

Everyone, the gods, ancestors, humanity and the created world is governed by this principle: Preserve life and its processes at any cost, or die.

Traditional African religion, in this sense, is both prescriptive and prohibitive, it tells its tenants what is to be done and what ought not be done. It evaluates its tenants in accordance to their attitudes towards the corporate body and its life processes. This is the basis of traditional African morality according to which ones is either a staunch worshiper or a deplorable defiler of the gods. “. . . *the good produced by any one*

member benefits the whole organism, . . . the wrong doing and evil committed by any one member diminishes the vital force of all, making it vulnerable and exposing it to death” (Bujo 1990: 77).

What happens to the one who fails to render appropriate worship to God? The answer is simply that he/she gets stifled in terms of the life-giving process and if this occurs one immediately dies. If no proper precautions had been taken, the community dies with him/her. In order for the community to survive, it must as soon as it detects the culprit, either ritually reinstate him/her failing which it must ostracise him/her.

6. Do people utilise religion for personal ends?

'Kuya ngokuthi ungubani wakwabani, uphila nobani ezindaweni ezinjani.' This is an isiNguni saying that translates: It depends on who you are, what clan or tribe you originate from, what place or position you occupy. In other words, if your influence on the events of life is to have any impact you must of necessity belong to a 'credible' social strata. The caste system every where operates on this line of thought. The lower one's rank is, the lower his/her influence.

It is logical, therefore, to say that if religion offers such an opportunity for any one to direct the event, especially if such directions allow him/her to live well, then one will use religion for such ends. Dussel (1988: 21-22, 24) says: *"The praxis of sin is Institutional-*

lized by way of political, ideological, religious and economic structures. The place we occupy in the social texture determines (although not absolutely) our being . . .

It is upon this foundation that we construct our life . . ."

So whether we are the victims or perpetrators in the systems of oppression, who we are, is determined by the positioning and the frame within which we find ourselves. As Villa-

Vicencio and de Gruchy (1994: 118) put it: *“Although we are indeed influenced, and our Moral world is shaped, by the institutions we are born into, we also shape and construct these institutions in the likeness of our moral world. Sin is, therefore, related to the quality of our praxis.”*

The issue of ritual and its impact on the shaping of peoples’ attitudes has been discussed already. It has been shown how cunning people can manipulate ritual which is generally understood as a religious tool for personal intrenchment into social positions. For this reason the writer said before that those in authority, knowing that anything that is performed ceremoniously with solemnity quickly revokes the sense of respect, or perhaps let us say a sense of fear, they to a certain extent have used ritual as a means for social manipulation and control. In the light of the leader’s closeness to God and the ancestors, traditional Africans shy away from opposing the systems imposed by them because to do so does not simply disturb the observable order but affects the realm of the divine.

CHAPTER SEVEN: *The pre-colonial poor of Africa.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

According to African religious worldview, humanity participates in the cosmic values of justice, truthfulness and freedom. Since these values are the prerogative of Deity, it is proper to assume that this participation by lesser beings is in a proportionate and relative measure. These values are essentially moral aspirations and it is through them that Deity is seen to be actively enhancing the life of those dependent on him/her. Humanity uses, or ought to use these values in the same manner as Deity, when they enhance their life and that of others.

Now let us proceed to answering the question one posed in chapter one. If God through the ancestors is the custodian of the social and spiritual well-being of the members of the community can, he/she consequently be held responsible for sanctioning the impoverishment of any of them? A priori, there is a resounding yes, if we still hold our views about the theory of 'the natural order of things' that we have discussed in chapter five on fatalism as a possible cause of poverty. According to the theory of the 'order of things or the divine ordering of the universe' many things are taken as given and there is no much debate about them. For example, that women are subservient to men is not an issue worth noting. Again in the same chapter five, in the section on the theory of authority, those higher in rank cannot be questioned if they command those lesser in rank.

To the writer, this already poses a difficulty in the discussion that will follow. Questions like: What do we mean by the term 'poor' in the African traditional understanding; what worldview do we use when talking about this subject; is poverty a reality in the African worldview, and possibly many others will come into play. One will try to base one's arguments, in answering these questions, on the assumption that the 'natural order of things' is primarily God's or Deity's prerogative, others participate in it on mandatory levels as ministers of God. As Idowu (1973:169,170) implies this when he says:

“Because the divinities derive from Deity, their powers and authority are meaningless apart from him . . . the divinities are ministers each with his own definite portfolio in the Deity's monarchical government. . .”

Therefore, by inference, one can say that the other created beings in the monarchy have no absolute existence and consequently no absolute will to be and to act apart from the existence and activity of Deity, their participation in and their control over the 'natural order of things' can, by way of deduction, be attributed to Deity. If this be the situation, then our task is an easy one, because in the end no one carries the blame personally, for all that individuals and communities do, good, or bad is at the end, put at Deity's door.

In the opening paragraph it was said that, humanity participates in the cosmic values of justice, truthfulness and freedom. These values presuppose some kind of a moral order in the universe. Any moral order, properly so called must encourage certain actions and discourage others. A moral order implies adjudication of the actions of those on whom it applies. Mbiti (1992: 40-41) says: *“It is considered that the universe is orderly. As long*

as this order is not upset there is harmony . . . There is order in the laws of nature. These function everywhere, and give sense of security and certainty to the universe. If they were completely unpredictable and changed at random, there would be chaos in the world which would endanger the existence of both life and the universe itself”

The whole of the traditional African, being and action, is centered on maintaining the stability and equilibrium in the order of the universe which is the natural abode and stage where life is lived, and where the actions of its enhancement are performed.

The community of beings that interact in the universe is constantly aware that the natural order needs to be guarded, that its individuals ought to be the guides as they make their choices. In case one makes destructive choices the whole structure is likely to crumble.

Mbiti (1992:41) continues to say: “. . . *there is moral order at work among people. It is believed by African people that God gave moral order to people so that they might live happily and in harmony with one another. Through this moral order, customs and institutions have arisen in all societies, to safeguard the life of the individual and the community of which he is part.*”

As a result of the consciousness that there is order in the universe and in nature which should not be disrupted, the community, especially the human/rational element within it, found it necessary that a code of conduct or a behavioral policy be put in place to guide the choices and actions issuing from those choices of its individuals.

Stemming from the belief that the order in its different manifestations issues from Deity, the traditional African is weary that they will, ultimately, offend God (the creator and the sustainer of life) if they do not uphold these orders. So to offend God is to offend their religious values on which stands every thing they are, therefore, “. . . *there is religious order in the universe. . . Because of their basic belief that the universe is created and sustained by god they interpret their life's experiences from that stand-point. The laws of nature are regarded as being controlled by God directly or through his servants. The morals and institutions of society are thought to have been given by god, or to be sanctioned ultimately by him. . .*”(Mbiti 1992: 41).

One thinks that the stage has now been set for the discussion of what the experience of poverty should have been for the pre-colonial Africa. It is basically agreed that poverty of any kind, consists essentially in the abuse of power, human rights and abuse of material goods. These are the maxims against which pre-colonial Africa will be assessed as to whether it had the poor or not.

2. The abuse of power.

The God of Africa, as we have seen, believes in power-sharing, he has given custodianship of the moral order to the divinities, ancestral spirits and to humanity respectively. He did not live it to their whims because if they mess things up, surely there will be retribution, even though it is observable in the immediate ensuing chaos. The ultimate punishment comes from God. For the moment the writer wishes to deal with

poverty as it immediately affects the living, he hopes to deal with the spiritualised version sometime later in this chapter. One wants to assume that it is given that it is part of human nature to have control of situations and peoples within them. This desire to control, if unchecked easily lends itself to domination and dictatorship. Naturally if there is something that insinuates that you are better than someone else, the tendency is that of exploiting the situation and stretch the possibility of gaining further advantages for yourself. This is what abuse of power ultimately means.

In patriarchal societies males strum the string of their superiority, through indoctrination, or habituation. Indoctrination is a system whereby the beliefs and the thought patterns of people are hammered with what the leader wants to be known and lived by. While indoctrination operates directly by imposing opinions and beliefs, habituation on the other hand subtly sips into people's sub-consciousness so that: "*Apart from what they expressly taught to believe they frame ideas of right and wrong in accordance with the use and wont of everyday life. What is familiar often appears both inevitable and good. What is unfamiliar seem often alien or evil*" (MacIvar 1937: 336).

Both these systems are so encompassed that even if one wanted to, there seems to be no way to escape. In the words of Memmi in de Santa Ana (1977: 78) "*Both the oppressor and the oppressed must accept each phase in the conditioning process before oppression is possible. The oppressor must believe that oppression is 'right', while the oppressed must accept it as a 'way of life' . . .*"

The very community within which one lives to know no other way, the very language spoken and heard, expression and idiom seem to express nothing but what is wanted.

In discussing the theory of authority in chapter five, the writer has dealt with ritual as means for social control and said that African religion is celebrated in rituals and this reminds people of how things ought to be in other words, how the 'natural order, moral order and religious order' safe guard the integrity of the community. Mbiti (1992: 41) says: "*Each society is able to formulate its values because there is moral order in the*

universe. These values deal with relationships among people, and between people and God and other spiritual beings; and man's relationship with the world of nature."

The question is: How water-tight is this knowledge that there is moral order in the universe, against people swindling the relationships for personal ends?

The contention in this regard is: Anyone who wants to strengthen his/her position in society, knowing that he/she is embodied within the codes of the religion and that he/she is protected from accusations since religion is accepted by all, uses his/her positioning to gain control over others. Because he/she knows that apart from the protection of the code and ritual he/she loses credence, he/she enforces the strict adherence through sanctions and rewards as stipulated by the ritual or code. One of the means people use to stay in power is putting in place regulative principles which are described as: "*. . . standards set up by a group for the control of the conduct of its members, in relation to one another and to the group as a whole*" (MacIvar: 328).

It is obvious that while some of these principles are meant for the people they govern, others are sorely set and framed in the interest of the dominant group. Unlike natural laws the social regulations carry weight in as much as they have someone to enforce them, because they do not stem from moral conscience, the obligation to follow them is man-made and sometimes very harsh to serve personal ulterior motives.

2.1. Abuse of power with relation to women.

The first question in this regard should be: Are women, in the first place, classified as persons? If they are, then one needs to give reasons for their apparent undermined status both in the traditional and contemporary African society. If they are not classified as persons, then one must ask: To which category of being, do they belong, at least in terms of Kagame's "NTU" philosophy? So far one has not come across a theory, either philosophical, theological, or otherwise, that claims women to be non-persons or lesser than men in their personhood. In terms of life and community, nothing has been proven about their inability to enhance their own life as well as that of others. They have neither been ruled out in their ability to meaningful participation in the life-giving relationships that are so central in community-talk. This said, the fact remains that being woman in African tradition and experience means occupying a lower rank compared to that of men.

"In African societies sex forms a basis of differentiation. In patriarchal societies, women occupy a characteristically humble position in most spheres of life, and are denied some rights and privileges which are enjoyed by men" (Villa-Vicencio and de Gruchy 1994:143).

The first question that comes to mind is: Were African traditional women not aware that something was wrong in the manner their men-folk were dealing with them? If they were, were there no channels through which they could register their objections? One believes that there are more questions that can be posed with regard to the issue of the supposed oppression of the traditional African women. It is sufficient to say, for now that, irregardless of the worldview of whether the traditional African women were aware or not they were oppressed and thus impoverished.

Up to this day, in Africa gender still plays a major role in life, the man-folk are always at the advantage when compared to woman folk. Education, for a long time has been considered a prerogative of boys over girls, domestic chores including the bringing up of children is for women and their daughters. *“The care of the children, and of girls even when adult, all the domestic and agricultural duties, are left, without interference, entirely in the hands of the women”* (Bryant 1949: 602).

This has led to the coinage ‘the place of a woman is in the kitchen’. In the South African scenario the language of ‘gender equity and affirmative action’ has come rather late and is taking perhaps too long to sink in the minds of many and the reason according to Dussel (1988: 21-22, 24) is that: *“The praxis of sin is institutionalized by way of political, ideological, religious and economic structures. The place we occupy in the social texture determines (although not absolutely) our being . . . It is upon this foundation that we construct our life . . .”*

In this regard the status quo, supported by such credible institutions as culture, religion, politics and economic structures, was not easily questioned.

In many cases traditional African women themselves became staunch supporters of the institutions that oppressed them. Is it not them who had the responsibility of training their daughters and did they not train them for good womanhood, that is, to be subservient to their husbands if they got married? On the other hand could they have done any thing about it, were they not products of a race that said, that is the nature of things? Bryant (1949: 602) with regard to the Zulu woman says: “*One would then discover that the*

native women, themselves actually living under these conditions, not only find no fault with them, but desire no change; that they are by no means discontented with their lot, but, on the whole, are quite as happy as we venture to believe, even happier-than are the majority of their European sisters.”

So whether we are the victims or perpetrators in the systems of oppression, who we are is determined by the positioning and the frame within which we find ourselves. As Villa-Vicencio and de Gruchy (1994: 118) put it: “*Although we are indeed influenced, and our*

moral world is shaped, by the institutions we are born into, we also shape and construct these institutions in the likeness of our moral world. Sin is, therefore, related to the quality of our praxis.”

2.1.1. *Practical examples of women oppression in pre-colonial Africa.*

In presenting the place of ‘humanity’ within the hierarchy of being, there is no differentiation, or consideration of roles in accordance to race, gender and age, humanity is treated as a species in terms of its relatedness to God. One supposes that the differentiation is man-made; that it came in the ensuing intellectual scramble for better

positions within the hierarchy; and that, in line with the perceived orders in the universe, nature, and religion, humanity also wanted order in practical day to day running of affairs, in the home, village, in the tribe and in the nation. In this push and pull for a place in the hierarchical community, the law of the jungle became the order of the day, the fittest gained the upper hand against the weak, in this case the women were placed lower in the pyramid using arguments that denigrated them to something lesser in terms of what being human normally should mean. The most devastating fact about womanhood was that it was attacked in its core when women's personhood was said to be impure, weak, and incapable of making intelligent decisions etc.

2.1.1.1. *Women and choices.*

The women in many traditional African societies were generally ranked as minors as Hammond-Tooke (1962: 37) says: "*In the Bhaca law every woman is a minor throughout her life and the family group can only be recognized legally through a male family head.*" As minors they could not make choices and could not own property in the true sense of the word, i.e. with the presumed right to dispose of without securing permission from anyone else. In this regard they owned property in proxy for the head of the family or in his absence the elder son.

Through the custom of '*ukulobola*', women were perceived as part of the property; as items in the homestead. In her home of origin, her father looked at her as means for securing the desired cattle as can be observed in the custom of '*ukugadla ngentombi*'

among the amaZulu. According to this custom, as reported in Bryant (1949: 536) the father told his daughter '*hamba uyofuna izinkomo esokeni lakho*' meaning, go off and seek some cattle from your lover. This '*ukugadla*' did not always go according to the wishes and choices of the girl, she could be sent to secure cattle from any man that the father thought had cattle enough to pay for her. This could be some wealthy man in the village, or the father's friend, whose friendship he wished to strengthen by marital bonds.

“ . . . instead of a girl going thus off or running away to her sweetheart on her own account, she had been ordered to go there by her father (desiring perhaps to bring the matter to a conclusion, and so secure her cattle, which he happened to be in personal need of) then the term 'ukuya kuma' to go and stand would be applied to her . . .” (Bryant 1949: 538).

It is interesting to note that the term '*ukuma*, or *ukumisa*' is also used in other transactions, for example when borrowing money, one says to the lender '*ngimisa ngenkomo*' meaning that, if I fail to pay you back, then you will take the cow, or ox from me. '*Ukumisa*', therefore, is to offer collateral. It is not unheard of, that sometimes fathers when failing to pay back their debts in kind, did in fact give their daughters as collaterals.

There is a big question about the custom of '*ukulobola*', though it is sternly defended as mere exchange of gifts, there is however a strong current that advocates for the argument that it is right to call it the bride price. If it is what the groom or his family pays in order to get the bride then in truth she has become an item for bartering, because as Bryant (592) says: "*The cattle are demanded by the father as the price for his property*

and are no more accepted as a gift than is the money demanded by the shopkeeper for his wares. . . The demand is justified simply and solely by the fact that the girl is his daughter, his property.”

In more ways than one, the girl is never her own, she is a property divided between her father and her mother respectively. She carries in her what is known as ‘*inkomo kamama*’, her mother’s cow, by this is figuratively meant her reproductive parts sometimes referred to as ‘*ingquthu*’ (female reproductive organ). If she has been deflowered, the mother secures assistance from the women of the village to go and demand this cow from the boy responsible for the spoiling. You will hear them, in the villages of Umzimkhulu, shouting slogans like, ‘*uyidlile-nje uzoyibhatala*’ meaning, now that you have eaten it you will pay!

2.1.1.2. *Women and ritual impurity.*

The Bhaca society talk of ‘*umlaza*’ which is some form of uncleanness, this mainly, as Harmon-Tooke (1962: 69) maintains, pertains “. . . to the sexual function of women,

particularly the menstrual blood . . . A woman has it during her periods of menstruation until she has washed, after a miscarriage and for a month after her husband or child has died. . .In most cases it is the male who is in danger from umlaza and, as a possible source of contamination, women are treated with circumspection and avoided. This affects their status in society.”

Perhaps the latter two statements of this quote are the most fundamental in the discussion here to follow. '*. . . it is the male who is in danger as a consequence women are treated with circumspection and avoided*' Does this not suggest that, perhaps it is the male who consequently determines what the woman is? If it is so, then the theory about the abuse of power by males in relation to women is right. '*. . . This affects their status in society.*' Indeed, if that society is male dominated, it is them that will determine who fits in it and who does not. This confirms what was said earlier that the one who wants to strengthen one's position in society, knowing that one is embodied within the codes of religion and that he/she is protected thereby since religion is accepted by all, uses his/her positioning to gain control over others. A person knows that apart from the protection of the code and ritual he/she loses credence, he/she, therefore, enforces strict adherence through sanctions and rewards stipulated by the ritual or code.

The matter of the women's ritual impurity is perhaps, the most unfortunate situation in the traditional African attitude towards its womenfolk, especially because it attacks the women in the very center of their being women when she is in the prime of her life giving stages, that is when menstruating, during pregnancy, when giving birth and after. These, definitely, are the most important periods in any woman's life. At these times, they should be applauded and thanked for contributing to the growth of the human race. ". . .

the supposed ritual impurity of the menstruating woman places her outside full involvement in religious ritual for almost half her life . . . living as a male is considered totally human as exemplified in religious ritual in which the woman's participation stops at puberty (when she 'becomes' a woman) and resumes only at

menopause, when she reverts to being 'a man' because she no longer menstruates, that is, exhibits no sign of the ability to procreate” (Oduyoye 1986: 123,128).

It could be very interesting to listen to traditional African men grappling with the following souls searching questions: Is it not cruel that the woman is punished for menstruation, a physiological occurrence over which she has no control at all? Is it not even worse that after receiving and accommodating a male, in a supposedly love-filled sexual relation, she is shunned by the very male as soon as the fruit of their act of love comes to its fulfillment? Should it not be devastating to the woman when after giving birth to his son/daughter, the man thinks that she is dirty, dangerous and harmful in terms of life and its processes?

2.1.1.3. *Women and power.*

Some people describe feminism as the women's struggle for power. They probably come to this conclusion, because some women within the feminist group are harsh in their approach, but then when fighting for a cause it is necessary now and then not to soft paddle the points. One, particularly, thinks that feminism, more than vying for power, is a cry by women to be included in the issues of life, especially those touching them. As one struggles to come to terms with the issue of feminism, the point that comes to the fore is that, women are definitely asking for a definition of womanhood in terms of what being a human being is. They want to have a definition that will also take into consideration the experiences of the womenfolk in what is known as the human predicament. More than

anything else they do not want to be interpreted in terms of the biological appendages issuing from being women, but they want to be reckoned with in terms of their roles as persons; as persons who are equally called to be- “in the image of God”. This image of God to which all persons are called is not discriminatory on the basis of gender.

One does not suppose there is any person who thinks that his/her mother is struggling for power when she as partner to the father helps to bring about order in the home.

“Feminism has become the shorthand for the proclamation that woman’s experience should become an integral part of what goes into the definition of being human. It highlights the woman’s world and her world view as she struggles side by side with the man to realize her full potential as a human being” (Oduyoye 1986: 121).

This said, the question still lingers on: What brought about the exclusion of women in the important political and social issues? Theoretically, one supposes that it was a matter of ‘the love that went wrong’ one thinks that it may have been as a result of tough deliberations that went on in political and some social aspects of life, that men thought women would be misused. Politics normally lead to battles and women as custodians of life should not be involved in issues that might end in bloodshed or even death. This leads one to the issue of the prejudiced answers males give in their defense for the oppression of women. This will be discussed, shortly hereafter.

Some people may argue that the sidelining of women in important political issues is not true for all the countries in Africa; that, for example, in places like Swaziland the queen

mother reigns with her son the king. And that certain countries, like Asante, are matriarchal to such extents that the Ohemaa (the queen mother) nominates the Ohene (the ruler). Even in these situations it is counter argued that real political power rests with the males. *“As to political power, even the matrilineal, matrilocal Asante are not matriarchal . . . No real political power comes from one’s birth by a particular woman. One may become an Asante ruler or head of the Abusua, yes, but a modern politician, no!”* (Busia in Oduyoye 1986: 123).

2.1.1.4. *Male chauvinistic reply.*

According to the writer’s theory of the love that went wrong, the traditional African men could reply to the allegation that they are oppressive towards the women, and say: Initially it was not the woman who was dirty, dangerous and harmful, but the circumstances out there. For instance, while the woman is in her menstrual periods, she like every one in the initiation period, is weak and, therefore, open to the attack by the anti-life forces. She has to be kept in-doors for protection rather than as punishment. She was not allowed to cook or touch foodstuff because sometimes periods come with pains. Of course from the hygienic point of view, she is dirty while in the process cleansing herself.

Ritually, while giving off blood which was considered a sacred thing in traditional African thinking, she needed to stay off a bit from the daily chores of the house. Some of the sanctions that prevented women venturing in public while pregnant and soon after

giving birth were for the protection of the baby, a new life that she was nurturing. She was not allowed, for example, to pass through a herd of cattle and the reason for this was that she will cause cows to abort their calves if she did. According to writer's theory this is but a hidden meaning behind the real reason, that if she were, accidentally, to be attacked by a bull while passing through the herd the life in her could be endangered. Again since there was this strong belief in witchcraft a pregnant woman or a woman with a little baby would be endangering its life if she were to frequent public places and the weak child could be negatively influenced by anti-life forces, leading to something that anaNguni call '*ukukhazwa yimimoya emibi*'.

To reply to Oduyoye's, rather negative, concern that 'the woman's participation in religious and ritual activities stopped at puberty, when she began to be a woman, and resumed at menopause when she reverted to being a man' the male stance is that this must be seen in a positive light that, women as the cradle for human life, needed all forms of protection that tradition could give. In the inception of womanhood at puberty, the woman shows her power to procreate, a power that is vital for the growth and the development of the community. Is it wrong, then if the community, in gratitude to the woman's power, to show concern and protect her, especially during this very important period in their lives when they are capable of bringing about new life? The issue at the center of this debate is the irony that women are discriminated for being productive instead of being acclaimed. If there are no children in a marriage the woman is said to be sterile without proper investigation. While it is acceptable for males to prove their fertility, women, fear for that they will be labeled as lose, cannot do the same.

On a positive note, the saying that ‘behind any successful man there is a woman’, though not African is very significant in describing the role played by women in traditional African society. A man in traditional Africa is him who has a wife. A home without a wife is looked down upon and it often becomes ridiculed and suspected as belonging to a pervert in society. All women are regarded as mothers, not in the limited sense of bearing children, but wider in the sense of being the ones whom God blessed with the gift of continuity of life in general. Even without children women as peacemakers protect life that would otherwise be destroyed if left to men who often disregard it when at war. When men quarrel and cannot agree it is often the women who intervene and bring both parties into an accommodation

2.1.2. *The other social outcasts.*

The theory of the natural order demands strict vigilance from those who must benefit from it. Every event must be carefully analysed and interpreted before it is accepted. One must constantly remember that the general understanding and acceptance of many things in traditional African worldview has been formalised and classed as sacrosanct rough rituals. There can be no such thing as a new approach or a contextual consideration of things. As it was in the beginning, is now and forever more. This is how MacIvar (1937: 338) defines ritual “... *a formal rhythmic procedure controlling a succession of acts*

directed to the same end, a procedure repeated without variation on the appropriate occasions and distinguished from mere habit or routine in that it is accompanied by a peculiar sense of rightness and inevitability to deviate from it in any way, no

matter what the circumstances, is felt to be wrong or undesirable not on utilitarian grounds, but because deviation breaks the rhythm, disturbing the emotional response, the solemn and often mystical rapport between the person and the occasion.”

2.1.2.1. *The killing of twins and deformed babies.*

The order in nature has determined long ago that people will enter this world in single modes, it is ritually wrong, therefore, that a woman gives birth to more than one baby in a single act of giving birth. On utilitarian grounds, how will she feed them both, is it not that her breasts are meant to feed just one? This is how the traditionalist argued for the killing of twins or at least one of them. This definitely was very oppressive and hence impoverishing to the family and the mother especially, because emotionally she loved both her babies. The same thing happened when because her baby was deformed it had to be done away with. But ritual says: “. . . *deviation breaks the rhythm, disturbing the emotional response, the solemn and often mystical rapport between the person and the occasion.*”(MacIvar 1937: 338

The contention is that there was discrimination in pre-colonial Africa based on the physical ability of its individuals as in the case of cripples, who on utilitarian grounds, were considered to be outside what was regarded as normal because they were unable to fend for themselves and probably seen in terms of the burden they were to the community. In this case as in the case of the abuse of women above, the overriding

questions are: Do these people get specialised maltreatment because they are less human, and if so, is the ruling in terms of their inability to be accommodated in the circle of being? Further, has this inability anything to do with them not being made in the image of God like other human beings? What wrong had they done to the society? These are questions that society does not want to answer lest its wrongs are exposed.

2.1.2.2. *Witches and witch hunts.*

The issue of witchcraft is also argued on the principle of the natural order, undisturbed the natural order does not cause problems, if it does then some one somewhere has tampered with it. Unless the person who disturbs the order is found and ritually cleansed or, killed, or exiled in the case where corrective rituals do not work, natural havoc will continue unabated.

In traditional African worldview nothing happens per chance, every event has a cause. For the traditional African pain, suffering and death are natural to a certain degree, more than that they are caused by some evil forces, some of which are harboured by evil persons who practice evil magic. If the latter is perceived to be case, then a full swing witch hunt is engaged into “*People believe that sorcery, witchcraft and evil magic cause death. Therefore, when some one has died, people often try to find out who used sorcery, witchcraft or magic against the dead person*” (Mbiti: 1996: 117).

The traditional African never got sick, or died - that is in terms of natural causes - but they were bewitched, or killed, and in the search for the witch/killer, the witch-doctors

ended up accusing someone, and because there was no court of appeal the accused were guilty by popular demand than by juridical sanctions. *“Man has developed, however, a further powerful tool, based on culture and language, to bolster the foundations of his society and to ensure its persistence and well-being. This is the system of magical beliefs which proclaims that man is able to control the powerful forces of nature and the ravages of sickness and death”* (Hammond-Tooke 1962: 263).

It is embarrassing to note that, the issue of witch-hunt does not seem to stop troubling and oddly affecting many families and communities, even today one hears of families being dislocated and even killed, for example, in the Northern Province (South Africa) this gruesome discrimination is experienced to such extents that there is a village known as the village of the witches. Our democratic government seems unable to curb this unnecessary marginalisation of innocent people. In this the age of scientific proofs there can be no excuse for why people cling to this myth. Most of the time the accusations can be traced to inter-family jealousies. Those most affected by these senseless accusations are women and the aged.

The whole saga of witch-hunts is fueled by the strong belief that one can get more strength from literally sucking the vital forces of others. Unfortunately, in seeking to be strong, some people are not satisfied by the general and acceptable processes of the positive and mutual influences that are obtained in relationships. For this reason, one still hears of ritual or muti murders where young children are brutally slaughtered by people who believe that by using their limbs, they will get some kind of strength through which

they can command authority and gain recognition in society. The issue of traditional Africans' search for vitality is dangerous to the community, it destroys trust, for how do you trust even your own parents if for some reason, they might be thinking of you as a potential strengthener. In the event of the outbreak of HIV and AIDS many people think that having sex with a virgin their infection will be cured and as a result young girls and baby-girls are being raped and thus affected to death with the virus.

In conclusion, one has to say that the pre-colonial people of Africa in general and of South Africa in particular were as much capable of oppressing others as any other race in the world. The biggest pain is that some of the oppressive elements still persist to today. Such things as *'ukuthwala'* or *'ukugcagcisa'* as it is called in Umzimkhulu, abduction of a girl in marriage, the issue of exiling and killing of those suspected of witchcraft, ritual murders and so forth are still very prominent in the mind of South Africans. This proves that in the final analysis, the essence of oppression results from the negative thoughts and actions people harbour against others and all races are capable of such negative attitudes.

CHAPTER EIGHT: *The poor during the colonial period.*

1. *INTRODUCTION: SECTION ONE: Impoverishing strategies.*

It has already been mentioned that the problem of the 'poor' manifests itself through many and varied facets. Africa had its own indigenous forms of poverty-related problems. As if this was not enough Africa, as a continent, found herself further burdened by new and somewhat strange problems due to what has come to be generally known as the colonial scramble for Africa. Without prejudice to the positive things that the new systems brought about with the coming of both the Western and the Eastern cultures, this chapter wishes to deal with the problems that crept in and some what destabilised the traditional African people.

The one positive thing colonialism brought to Africa is that while struggling to rid themselves of the colonial problems the traditional Africans conversely became aware of the inadequacies of their own systems. They came to see the problem of the 'poor' in their traditional structures. This is true if one considers that in being vociferous about oppression from a different culture, questions about oppression within their own cultures came to the fore. It is more so, when the counter arguments for the apparent misuse of power by the colonialist, is sometimes defended on similar misuses of the complainants. For instance, if one condemns the autocratic rule of the colonial governors the counter argument could be that the traditional amaKhosi were as autocratic if not worse.

In dealing with the problem of the 'poor' in relation to colonialism, one's interest is, in the main, speculated on the destabilisation of traditional African social, cultural and religious structures as a result of external influences. This accounts for what the writer has liberally called the 'paradigm shift'. Though a work like this, is neither meant to be simple history, nor simple politics, and, therefore, not necessarily meant to come to political or historical conclusions, one may be called upon to give a certain amount of political and sometimes an historical explanation in certain instances. This is motivated by the unavoidable fact that many of the influencing factors were deliberately and specifically aimed at politically motivated ends and certainly shaped the history in a manner that these political motives wittingly or unwittingly wanted.

Issues that will be prominent in this chapter will be the influence of colonialism not in general, but in the particular spheres limited by the scope to this thesis. So the writer shall be dealing with its influence on traditional African religion, social and educational systems. It is granted that the traditional African structures were bound at some point in their history to be confronted by the other systems of the shared universe and inevitably a choice was immanent. For this reason the issue at stake here is not a mere decrying of the inevitable encounter that happened between the traditional African cultures and the Western and Eastern cultures, but the way in which this took place, where the traditional African culture was degraded in the process.

Acculturation properly so-called is a natural thing. Encounter and exchange between the different race groups and cultures is normal. It is natural also, that one thinks that his/her culture might have something better to offer to the other, but there ought to be a genuine comparative and phenomenological study of the different systems. The problem arises when the prejudices are allowed to dominate the process of exchange. This is exactly what happened with colonialism, the traditional African experience was deliberately deprived the chance. Derogative titles were thrown at the traditional African to such extents that every thing they were or had, was infinitely inferior if not non-existent. Theirs was savage, barbaric, pagan etc. and therefore, nothing to be reckoned with.

1.1. ***The military conquest: (The culturally impoverished).***

There is an isiNguni saying to the effect that two bulls cannot stay in the same kraal, '*izinkunzi ezimbili azihlali sibayeni sinye.*' It was inevitable that as soon as the European traders decide to establish themselves in Africa the battle for space would ensue. When the white people came to Africa they, obviously, were received as '*abantu*', persons who naturally deserved to be handled with '*ubuntu*' humaneness. Hospitality was offered them, they were given land on which to establish themselves, in certain instances they were given girls for wives, think of the Dunns in Ixopo and the Fynns in Port Shepstone then one sees the extent of the hospitality the white man was accorded.

The problem arose when the white man started to be individualistic in his approach to these gifts, he put fences around the land, he commercialised what was conceived as

common property, he used people as commodities in his profiteering schemes etc. In short he became a king in his own right. The white man did not come to share but to dispossess; he came to change the rules. In the game he established his own captains, the king, where he found one, was to be subservient to the real king back home, the chiefs were to be those he picked, not the ones ritually installed by tradition. *“This led to the birth of warrant chieftaincy, an organ for maintaining peace and order. These warrant chiefs were not as in traditional African community backed by religious and cultural sanctions. Their rule by definition and implication was a rule without traditional and cultural basis, worst still they had no ritual and effective checks to abuses of authority and power”* (Onwubiko 1991: 117).

This point alone was enough to disrupt the social fabric of the traditional African sense of unity, community and political affairs. Wrong people now demanded allegiance and when it was not accepted, force was used, new units, that did not respect sib boundaries, came into existence and people found themselves displaced, colonial agents were put as administrators and were deliberately not sympathetic to the African traditional values. One cannot emphasise enough, how much this situation impacted on the family, clan and the general tribal values.

1.1.1. *Land is the issue.*

If you defeat your enemy in the battle field you then have control over him and over what he owns, at least this is what traditional African believed. When the colonists with their

artillery superiority conquered the traditional African shields and spears, the obvious was to be expected, the land, cattle, other resources and finally people would go. Let us take the case of the Cape Colony as an example in the land issue debate. The history of the frontier battles has no other base other than that, two powers were engaged in the scuffle for land. On the one hand the indigenous people (amaXhosa and the Khoi-san groups) wanted to stay in what was their heritage for centuries, while on the other hand the imperial powers who had just arrived wanted to push inland as much as it was demanded by their need to develop and establish themselves. “*The Ngqika Xhosa longed for the*

lands they had lost through the War of Mlanjeni, and hoped against hope that they might get them back. . . Addressing Sir George Grey, the message sent in Sandile’s name was: . . . ‘Sandile say: am I not your child? Why when I am punished am I deprived of my people? Why am I severed from the grave of my father? The inheritance of the chief is not cattle, it is lands and men, saying this I pray to you my father to whom I have been given. I have no other words. I ask alone for land ’” (Peires 1989: 62).

1.1.2. *Cutting the chiefs to size.*

Here again the example of Sir George Grey, is appropriate. As the colonial power in the Cape, Grey saw the logic that if the African traditional authorities were left economically independent of the colonial power, progress in the strategy to conquer the land would be virtually impossible. So to cut the chiefs to size was necessary in the process “*Grey now proposed, in his own words, to ‘gradually undermine and destroy’ Xhosa laws and*

customs by replacing the Xhosa chiefs' rights to judicial fees with a fixed monthly income in colonial money which would, again in Grey's words, make the chiefs financially dependent on the Government of the country.' The councilors, who assisted their chiefs in return for a share in the judicial fines would likewise receive salaries and would thus likewise become dependent on the government rather than on their chiefs" (Peires: 63).

This was part of the psychology of divide and rule, because the chiefs' assistants were not going to stay with the chief if they could survive without him from the colonial government's financial assistance. There is no doubt that many of them went for this and thus abandoned the traditional structures.

1.1.3. *Divide and rule.*

The colonial authorities must have noticed the difficulty posed by the minor skirmishes they had with the Khoi and eventually the Bushmen when they first touched the South African East coastal region. These were smaller groups of natives but they really defended their territory with all they had. The Khoikhoi managed to launch two formidable wars at the Dutch. *"Shortly after their arrival at the Cape in 1652 the Dutch realized that between them and the native Hottentots - then occupying the country around about the Cape – there was likely to be endless strife until one or the other of the parties was effectually crippled or entirely crushed"* (Molema 1920: 96).

The latter actually happened when after the Hottentots were permanently crippled in 1873 and the mandate to exterminate the Bushmen was given and gladly carried out by Adrian

van Jaarsveld. *“From nook and glen, mountain and valley, the Bushmen were hunted, and whole tribes shot down by hundreds”*(Molema 1920: 97).

It must have also dawned in the colonial authority’s mind, that, if they were to meet a more formidable and better organised group of the natives, as they were bound to encounter such with amaXhosa, new strategies would need to be found and implemented. The situation, they must have envisaged, would be worse if the chiefs of those different amaXhosa clans were to unite. Indeed the inevitable happened in 1779 the amaXhosa came into the picture and as envisaged, were very capable and for four years (1779-1782) engaged the Dutch fiercely in what was known as the first, but not the last of their encounter. They (amaXhosa) were to come back again in 1789 with more determination to push the Dutch and their Hottentots servants out of the Zuurveld. The second inevitability happened, the three amaXhosa chiefs (Hintsisa, Ngqika and Ndlambe) joined forces, and as to rub the salt onto it, the once trusted Hottentots revolted against the Dutch and with their guns joined the amaXhosa just before the 1799 war. *“When the combined Xosa and Hottentot army, better armed and in greater numbers than ever before, invaded the colony, therefore, and at such short notice, it is no wonder that great alarm reigned among the European population of the Cape”* (Molema: 99).

The colonial Authorities, who meanwhile, had changed hands from the Dutch to the British, had by now conceded to the formidable power that the combined amaXhosa had. To be able to rule, this power needed to be somehow undermined. How better to do it than to set the chiefs against each other, and further, what better strategy to employ than to promote one over the others? *“The ama-Rarabe section of the Xosas had divided*

between their rival chiefs, Ngqika and Ndlambe, in 1796. The former of these, Ngqika, had entered into alliance with the British government, under Lord Charles Somerset, who recognized him, to the great dismay of the Xosas, as the Supreme Chief or King of all the Xosas” (Molema 1920: 100).

As part of the logic of cutting chiefs to size, the colonial powers eventually tried and succeeded to fragment the chiefs' lands into smaller and manageable territories in which they put their men as headmen. This is what Beinart and Bundy (1987: 77-78) mean when they say: *“Upon annexation, the Transkeian Territories were divided into*

magisterial districts (twenty-six by 1907) and each district was divided into locations (roughly between twenty-five and forty) under the charge of a salaried headman.” These were to make sure that the laws governing the natives were kept to the letter, rather than them being chiefs and headmen on their own right these imposed native leaders were the eyes, ears and watch dogs for their masters. “After annexation these locations emerged as the basic administrative unit, a development wholly consonant with the Cape government’s effort in the late nineteenth century to confine and diminish the powers exercised by the chiefs.”

This newly found administrative policy was very advantageous to the colonist, through it, they had planted within the native locations, their police, tax-collectors, informers and recruiting agents for their labour markets. Most importantly, these un-ritualised headmen were to be the constant monitors of what the traditional chiefs were subversively planning. *“With the establishment of the office in the 1870s, headmen were initially*

valued as alternative local agencies to the chiefs and as an unofficial police force, it was noted in 1883 that headmen were 'answerable for the good order of their kraals, for detection of robbers, for the restoration of stolen property, the apprehension of thieves. . . .' (Beinart and Bundy 1987:78).

2. Colonising the psyche: (The Psychologically Impoverished)

The best way to effect lasting change or to undermine the social system of any society, is to begin with its youth, the young minds are very easy to manipulate. If you manage to win them to your side they will surely do the rest in convincing their parents and even their society towards what you have given them. This also was a very important tool in the logic of divide and rule. The colonisers used this strategy when they introduced school system to cater for the children of the colonised nations of Africa. The aim was to separate children from their parents and turn them into stern critics of the old traditional ways, and violators of the traditional moral code.

To use Sir George Grey's policy as an example, his method was that Xhosa youth should not just be educated but should be trained in industrial work so that they will be serviceable to the colonial needs. ". . . *he was concerned to create industrial schools for the better promotion of his 'useful servants' economic policy. Five mission schools were selected and set to work teaching the Xhosa the, 'more useful mechanical arts' such as masonry, tailoring, carpentry, shoemaking and wagon-making. Girls were taught needlework and domestic skills . . . as a social engineer, he was concerned*

that his new breed of Europeanized black males should have correctly educated wives and mothers to provide a proper degree of civilization in the home” (Peires 1989: 59).

The aim of the whole process of colonising the traditional African psyche was to prove beyond any doubt that the European life style was superior to that of the traditional African. With the introduction of the health service the African medicine and doctors were thrown overboard. It was conceived by the colonist that the political power and authority of the chiefs rested on the support that the traditional doctors were lending them

2.1. *Money talks.*

In the traditional family structure, the only recognised head of the family is the father; the understanding of the word father contains in it life provider, bread winner and, therefore, the one with the final say in life matters. If the father’s role is changed in terms of provision then he implicitly, could no longer be the one to have the last word. Let us consider, for example, if the only one who earns a salary in a home is the last born daughter, and as such, she becomes the one who determines the procedures in the house. This surely fragments the family structures, the clan and the tribe. How can people be a community when colonial education and the monisation of commodities turn people into independent individuals.

The scenario that the writer depicts here above is better, at least the younger daughter, is caring for the home, what if she has been swallowed up by the town or the city and she

rejects rural life all together? *“The sudden change from agricultural to cash economy introduced to the African youth new avenues of economical independence. . . plunging into white man’s economic demands and unable to get to the top of it, because their earnings never could meet the demands of the affluent life style imposed by city life, the African youth began consciously or unconsciously to neglect their responsibility to their extended family relations ”* (Onwubiko 1991: 121).

The writer has used the home situation to illustrate the money problem, but there were even greater problems that money brought along to the traditional African life. The affluence added on by western education, in reality affected the whole of the African situation. The whole structure of the cultural interchange between the members of a community, were being tested to their limits. *“In the new order the better-off, having acquired a taste for profit, rejected not only the concept of traditional responsibility towards kinship groups, but also the authority of their chiefs. The erection of old values by a section of the peasantry caused great bitterness in the ranks of the ‘traditionalists’ ”* (Oakes 1994:207).

From this quotation, one can safely infer that three types of the ‘poor’ were created by the introduction of the monetary system. The first to emerge was the group of what may be called *‘the culturally impoverished’* represented by the traditionalist (the father and the chief) who lost their children and subjects respectively to the colonial system. The second group can be called *‘the economically impoverished’* (the youths, and the tribe’s people) who without any substantial education if any, were introduced to a new economic system

either as consumers or as exploited labourers. The third category, was that of *'the psychologically impoverished,'* (the Euro-African, or what has recently been dubbed 'coconuts') who have come to think that anything African is bad. In the advent of the discovery of gold and diamonds, a new group emerged, in fact one may say a new society all together emerged because traditional African structures were to change totally and intrinsically.

The leadership in all its levels was affected, kings, chiefs and other influential personnel sold their birth rights and became the white man's recruiting machines. Indeed a new category of the politically poor, composed of a people with no proper governance, had come to stay.

3. Colonialism and the African religion.

Religion can be defined as one of the systems through which people try to adjust their lives to the environment. As Assimeng (1981: 8) puts it: "*Religion represents man's belief in the transcendent power which by apprehending its nature and attributes through certain means, might be utilized for man's well being here and possibly in the after life.*" As it has become an undisputed fact that traditional Africans are essentially very religious, one would wish to know what happened when suddenly such a system was put in disarray. This becomes even more interesting in situations where that system was understood as basic to a people's life. Religion is said to be basic in traditional African worldview, for them faith and life is one and the same thing.

For the traditional African, the world is a religious place, and to be is to be religious. Obiechina in Onwubiko (1991: 4) says: “*Whether in their folklore and mythology, in their symbolism and figures of language in their religious and magical beliefs, they have a total view of the universe as a continuum and a perpetual flow of being experience comprehending the visible and invisible universe, the world of nature and the supernatural and the living and the dead.*” Reiterating the same thing Janheinz (1961: 79) says: “*It is inconceivable to talk of philosophy, theology, politics, social theory, land, law, medicine, psychology, birth, death, burial as separate matters, all find themselves logically conjoined in a system so tight that to subtract one item from the whole is to paralyze the structure of the whole.*”

For this reason one can without exaggeration claim that if anything, directly or indirectly, touches any aspect of the traditional African life then it simultaneously touches his/her religion as well.

The contention here is that in the advent of colonialism, traditional Africans saw the pillars of their beliefs shattered and forcibly replaced by a series of beliefs to which they did not subscribe and they simply did not understand. In the light of what Assimeng (1989: 12) says that religion: “. . . *influences social action, determines social interaction and social distance and can never be completely divorced from other forms of social activities especially those activities that deal with the social and economic order. . .*” it is true that the action of the colonists to discredit African religious beliefs really destroyed its owners. One can appreciate what colonial imposition did to the traditional African relational systems.

As religious persons the traditional Africans were impoverished by the destruction of their religious values. When the colonialist in the gab of religion disrupted and explained away some of the key values of the traditional African hierarchical system, the vital African link with their conception of the spiritual world was severed. “*They (the Missionaries) no sooner come to a place than they begin to actively destroy the religious and therefore the ideological foundation of society- they begin by attracting and recruiting the dejected members of the society – the slave, the twin babies and their mothers and the Osu (cult slaves) etc*” (Onwubiko 1991: 177).

Christianity came with a totally new set of rules, it thus brought a lot of confusion and discomfort to the traditional hierarchical structures. For instance, just by mere pouring of baptismal waters over a person’s head, that person was to consider him/herself equal with everyone, for to be baptised meant one was equally important in the eyes of God. So there was no longer any difference between the child and the adult, man and woman, aristocrat and commoner, chief and subject.

This indeed was very strange for the African of traditional background who, all along had been entertaining the ideals of hierarchy of forces. It is generally agreed that the whole of traditional African worldview is centered around the belief in the ancestral spirits as the founders of communities and through whose power these communities are permanently bound together. When anything destroys this pivotal link the whole structure of the community disintegrates. All authority, that is, all the positions that are held in proxy for the ancestors, become insignificant. Obviously this affects the position of kings, chiefs, elders and parents, thus creating a state of anarchy.

Assimeng's description of the characteristics of traditional African religion is very important when contrasted with the Western religious views. While traditional African religious view is essentially societal, organic and communitarian, the Western religious view is individualistic and mechanistic. According to the Western perception, the individual ought to seek his/her salvation alone because he/she will be judged alone. This contradicts the African view that maintained the value of participation and seeks salvation within the community. This view militates against the whole structure of the traditional African religion that calls the members to the fundamental unity based on the value of the community of being and acting. This can be well illustrated by the example of the Christian sacraments of initiation. Let us consider the sacrament of Baptism as an example. In the eyes of the Christian churches a baptised person is superior to the un-baptised, so that in a patriarchal family when the wife, or a child for that matter, was baptised before the husband she automatically was to lead in spiritual matters.

In a village, the baptised members are superior to their (pagan) political leaders. The baptised look down on the non-baptised members. Since their baptismal state automatically changed their status, they felt and even directly told their traditional leaders that they did not subscribe any longer to the generally accepted rules of the village. This eventually meant that they should establish themselves as separate villages around the mission stations. The minister of their religion automatically became their chief who commanded their allegiance.

It is interesting to note that, the process of proselytising did not always consider the social status of the individual and that most of the time, those regarded as culturally evil by the African traditional system, such as, twins, cripples and other social and religious outcasts, fled to and were readily accepted and protected by the Christian church leaders. Those whom African tradition accused of being anti-social and destructive to the community, for example thieves, deserters, witches, sorcerers and so forth, fled to the missions for protection. They did not just get protection but, eventually, since their new religion was superior, they personally gained a superior status over their traditional counterparts. The social paradigms had indeed shifted. Even within the missionary establishment themselves, there was to be a problem, because while these Africans had fled the wrath of the traditional African culture, they had converted to Christianity not out of religious conviction, perhaps more out of what personal gains this new culture was promising to give. The so-called converts who believed in the reality of witchcraft would not easily subscribe to a leadership of a known witch. But then, the witch who came first to the mission was likely to be more trusted by the missionary.

3.1. Collaboration between the missionaries and the colonists.

It is very difficult to distinguish a good person from bad ones especially in a conflict situation. During the colonial period it must have been very difficult for the occupied blacks to read the intentions of the white people. The missionaries were facing the problem of how to convince the blacks about the difference of their mission and message while their white counterpart the colonists were devastating the blacks for colonial

purposes. In many cases they were perceived simply as white people. The blacks could not pledge allegiance to the missionaries after they had been so badly dealt with by the white colonists. How indeed could they hope that salvation could come from the people of the same colour and culture as the previous ones who came to loot and steal their life, land and political aspirations?

There are always mixed feelings as to the issue whether amaXhosa, for example, came to the mission lands because they were attracted to the gospel message, or they came because they had lost their lands in the frontier wars. In the missionary, they definitely saw ‘*umlungu*’ white man. Even if his ways and motives would be different in that he at least was not as harsh as the colonist, suspicion was always there.

“In the early years of black-white interaction, when the land and resources were plentiful, chiefs had little difficulty in dictating the pace and nature of change in their societies. The story, however, changed appreciably after a succession of defeats in frontier wars which resulted in massive loss of land to the white colonists, and an influx of destitute Xhosa into the mission stations” (Oakes 1994: 151).

To the missionaries the military defeat of amaXhosa and their destitution, and their consequent influx to the mission stations was a blessing. Where the missionaries had failed to lure the natives, the frontier wars had succeeded. One cannot be too much off line, therefore, if he/she came to conclude that in some way, the missionaries collaborated with the colonist either directly or indirectly. *“For reasons that quickly became Abund-*

antly clear, most missionaries welcomed military interventions against the Xhosa: in the frontier equation, defeats equaled landlessness . . . landlessness equaled

shattered morale . . . shattered morale equaled loss of confidence in chiefs . . . which equaled missionary joy as it became easier to wean ordinary clan members from what was considered an indolent way of life” (Oakes 1994: 151).

The attitude of the missionary towards the civilisation of the native did not differ very much from that of the colonist, and in certain instances one observes that, the civilising efforts that took place within the mission stations were aimed at producing well groomed natives for the general white market. “. . . the doyen of South African missionaries, John

Phillip, succinctly outlined in a letter to the Cape authorities in 1820. ‘Tribes in a savage state are generally without houses, gardens, and fixed property,’ he write. By locating them on a particular place, getting them to build houses enclosed gardens, cultivate corn land, accumulate property, and by increasing their artificial wants, you increase their dependency on the colony, and multiply the bonds of union and the number of securities for the preservation of peace. He added that by ‘scattering the seeds of Civilization’ missionaries could appreciably extend British trade and influence” (Oakes:151)..

The very important issue here is to show the front from which some missionaries operated. Many of them as their brothers the colonists, were out to grab as much as they could, their main aim for intervention was to extend British or their respective mother lands’ trade and name. This is why the mission stations resembled, even by names the churches in the mother land. The colonist did exactly the same. Phillip continues: “. . .

Wherever the missionary places his standard among a savage tribe, their prejudices against the colonial government give way , their dependence upon the colony is

increased . . . confidence is restored; intercourse with the colony is established; industry, trade and agriculture spring up; and every genuine convert. . . becomes the friend and ally of the colonial government” (Oakes 1994: 153).

The question is: Did Phillip really mean, ‘friend and ally’ in the true meaning of these terms?

3.2. Saved yet still marginalised.

The newly established missionary villages posed yet another problem in that it was not just another village, but a world of its own where there were no clan relations. Belonging to the convert status meant a complete transformation almost to the point of being recreated. This is what de Gruchy et al (1994: 115) mean when saying: *“In South Africa and other colonial situations, conversion and rebirth resulted for converts in a change of social and cultural identity, which included the assumption of new names and clothes. It often involved a change of location (relocation to the mission station) and entrance into a highly stratified society.”*

Leadership emerged from a different background with new set of values. The consideration of leadership was based on merit than on blood. There were no rituals, or rites followed, but simple appointments were done by the missionary so that even if there was one convert who came from royalty according to the traditional structures he/she was not automatically in line for appointment and perhaps one royal status was the more reason for being shunned in the fear that this would evoke the very system that the white man wanted to destroy.

In traditional Africa, as has been said already, every one was equal in terms of the religious rites and rituals. To every child born into a family was given the same rites as demanded by tradition. Everyone belonging to a certain village, tribe, clan, or nation was equally to be groomed in the manner particular to his/her village, clan, tribe or nation. It is obvious therefore that when traditional Africans converted to the new religion, they hoped to get the same status as their European Indian and Coloured counterparts. Since religion was not entirely devoid of the general colonial aspirations, the black converts found themselves still lingering in the periphery. The colour lines were as much adhered to in the missions as they were elsewhere. Up to very recent, the churches, seminaries, monasteries and convents, schools, old age facilities etc. were established to cater for the different race groups.

The brotherhood and the equality that might have attracted the blacks to the new faith were not as preached. Racial differences were as evident in the churches as it was elsewhere. The 'brotherhood of man' as Villa-Vincencio and de Gruchy (1994: 115) say:

“was to conceal, although it never erased, all class, race, and gender differences in the formation of the self-identity of the Western European person. In this vocabulary which has reached us in a curious combination of Albert Schweitzer’s dictum, ‘The African is indeed my brother, but my junior brother’, and Archbishop Tutu’s controversial statement in the 1980s, ‘P. W. Botha is my brother whether he likes it or not.’”

As events turned out to be within the mission churches both Scheitzer and Tutus's statements are under statements in that the African's junior position in the Christian brotherhood also meant inferiority in term of the resources, so that at the end the structures provided for the so-called juniors were of lower standards and for a long time had to be managed by the so-called 'senior brothers'. Compared to the not yet converted, the African in the mission villages fared well in as much as they were 'protected and cared for' by the missionaries. They were helped to acquire better hearts, build better homes, and to cultivate better fields etc, but they were still poorer if compared to their Western counterparts. This is poverty in terms of what (Nurnberger et al 1978: 41) calls '*relative poverty*' explained as: 'the poor or poorer in relation to some criterion group.' In this case the person is termed 'poor' or poorer because he/she does not fit the maxim set for a particular group. Even though one may be well above the PDL (poverty data line) one still belongs to the marginal group in relation to the criterion group.

The issue at stake here is that when the paradigm shifted and new sets of standards came into being, the black Africans found themselves fishing for values that they perhaps, as yet could not achieve and worse they were not meant to achieve in terms of the colonial racially motivated agenda. In the case of religious expectations, for example they were sincerely looking for equality bases on the Christian brotherhood, but there was none.

4. *African struggles against colonisation.*

‘*Akekho ongakhipha inkunzi esibayeni sayo*’ So says abeNguni in one of their proverbs meaning that literally, no one dares to remove a bull from its craal, every bull has the right to its own enclosure. It is in the nature of things that territories must be defended with all the might that the original owners have. It is natural, therefore, that, in the event of the colonial powers pushing in to dispossess the land from the indigenous people of Africa, terrible wars had to be engaged in from all the fronts possible. As has been illustrated here above, the colonists engaged their battles physically, spiritually, psychologically and otherwise. The blacks had to counter act the attacks from the fronts that the enemy had used. This section deals with the different strategies that the black Africans used as they were fending off the different onslaughts that the enemy engaged.

Normally, when two powers meet, there are expectations from either side, in case, for example, of amaXhosa’s encounter with the Europeans, there were high hopes of both the groups prospering together and even merging into one society. Let us not be naïve here and think that the merging would not be structured, for the amaXhosa, at least, the old patterns were to be followed. It had become almost the case that previously when the amaXhosa encountered other social groups, they won the wars and the incoming groups fell into the amaXhosa’s scheme of things. “*Consequently, the Xhosa saw no reason why*

Xhosa and European should not merge into a single society rather after the pattern of Xhosa and Khoi. They sought to include the Colony within their economic, political and social networks . . .” (Peires 1980: 79).

In this section, one presumes to relate the impact of the economic, psychological and religious aspects of the struggles by the indigenous occupants of the continent. One cannot claim competence in relating the conflicts in the other areas of the continent, while one may now and then use information from sources other than South African, one will by and large confine oneself to the examples of such conflicts as can be found in South Africa and particularly in the Cape.

4.1. *Land and cattle as causes of tension.*

Both the amaXhosa and the colonists had originally thought that their co-existence was going to provide a typical economic situation where both groups would benefit from barter exchanges. But both had not envisaged that the very ideal was to cause bitter conflicts. Firstly their ideas about land were so different, the amaXhosa being communitarian, envisaged an open frontier system, while the colonists being individualistic envisaged tangible and concrete boundaries that they would own personally. The community of property expressed in the isiXhosa expression '*into yomntu ngeyam*' immediately, as it were, clashed with the colonist expression '*out of community of property*'. With regard to the scramble for land Peires (1980: 80) says:

"Whereas the self-confident Xhosa wanted an open frontier, the more vulnerable Colonial authorities wanted a boundary which was emphatically defined and closed."

Of course, the colonial farmers, had genuine reasons for wanting to fence their farms. Fencing definitely protected their stocks from thieving, whether imaginary or actual. There was also the issue of protecting their stock from wild animals. “. . .*But for the African population, they served as a symbol of newly enforced private rights to land and restricted access to land across boundaries that had previously been more fluid*” (Beinart and Bundy 1987: 53).

Secondly as both communities had become rich in cattle the space to accommodate both stocks became increasingly smaller for both to survive. No sooner had amaXhosa realised that in the process of bartering with the colonists, they were robbed off their prized cattle for useless European items, did they raid back their cattle, so-called, and greed cropped in that they took along even the cattle that originally belonged to the white settlers. The colonist on the other hand maintained that the cattle were theirs by right since they had bartered them in an open market but as they recovered them, they also took the cattle that originally belonged to the amaXhosa. It is interesting to note that the issue of stock theft was not always truthfully presented. There is a very strong contention that the colonist farmers sometimes lied, or exaggerated the issue for reasons other than genuine desire for peaceful relations between the colonists and the black people. “*Theft could also, in a sense, be political act, and its incidence a barometer of rural social relationships. For this very same reason, settler demands for action could be a metaphor for their desire to have tighter controls imposed on the African population. Farmers always pointed to the reserved locations, or the farms rented out to Africans as the home s of the culprits*” (Beinart and Bundy 1987:52).

4.2. *Psychological resistance.*

No war can be won by the armed forces alone, the war strategists must use psychological tactics as well. This was the case with the traditional African leaders who some times saw through the colonists' mind and employed tactics other than full and open combat. "A

broadly similar range of tactics and techniques of resistance emerged: there was widespread use of delegations, petitions and litigation; with greater effect, there were a number of delaying stratagems (inability to reach decisions at public meetings, requests for extra time to consider the text of the law and so on); passive resistance measures included the refusal to pay taxes, to register, or to obey orders. . ." (Beinart and Bundy: 17).

Strategies and techniques that appealed to the peoples' traditional identities were also utilised, national cultural symbols were invoked to mobilise the masses. The masses were reminded of the great traditional leaders like Hintsá and their resistance.

The psychological warfare on the part of the colonised involved such tactics as withholding information what others, otherwise called lying. For instance when amaRiligwa, amaBhaca and Ntlangwini, threatened with land expropriation, Le Fleur a Griqua political leader had directly sought to include the African groups in their Griqua land struggles against the colonial settlement, but questioned about this move he ". . . *was keen to deny that he had been involved with African chiefs and people. So sensitive was Le Fleur to the working of the settler mind that he suggested he had specifically stopped calling the meetings on the land question in 1896 because he could see that*

it was exciting African opinion. . . . Similarly, African leaders stressed that they had none but fleeting and inconsequential contacts with Le Fleur. . ." (Beinart and Bundy 1987: 59).

4.2.1. *The nature of the resistance.*

The nature of the resistance was firmly based on the peoples' aspirations for national unity against the colonial oppression. It aimed at uniting the different so-called domestic resistance groupings into one big national movement. The different small rural resistance group had some positive elements, for example, it was from them that leaders who would later prove indispensable for the creation of massive resistance group, came out. "*Le*

Fleur, Enoch Mamba, Ntame Dana and Makobeni Mehlomakhulu - to mention but a few- appear in the case studies as individuals 'linked to the social masses of the country people. . . bring[ing] into contact the peasant masses with the local state administration'. Although they embodied elements of 'derived' and 'structured' ideology, they were firmly rooted in their own local communities and also deployed 'traditional' or 'inherent' ideology" (Beinart and Bundy 1987: 32).

4.2.1.1. *From domestic politics to African nationalism.*

‘*Inkunzi isematholeni*’ is isiNguni expression that says small and insignificant things have potential to development. This was certainly the case with black resistance. It could never begin as a power to be reckoned with immediately. One day, however it would reach its zenith in a bigger movement that would turn history around. In the South Africa, for example, for decades the colonial powers were ever at work trying to put out the different small tribal fires, but it was the consistent lighting up of those fires by the indigenous South Africans that would one day, realise the birth of the engulfing furnace of the National African Congress, and the Pan African Congress, to mention but a few.

This section deals with the development of African nationalism by taking into cognizance its humble beginnings in the aspirations of the small pockets of resistance by individuals and groups, each in its small but with far reaching implications. Thanks to them, South Africa is free and has a democratically elected government headed by the once insignificant native.

4.2.1.1.1. *The role of domestic politics in the formation of South Africa’s political character.*

One needs, first to mention that it is a misnomer always to think that the rural folk is incapable of conducting a meaningful resistance to political issues. One begins this section with an incident that reportedly, occurred within the Bunga (the Transkeian Territories General Council) wishing to enquire about the unrest among the natives in

1928. One of the councilors by the name of Charles Sakwe, responding to the Chairman of the Bunga that he had asked the officers in certain districts to obtain evidence against specified individuals but that none had been forthcoming' said: "*Councilors, he insisted, and magistrates in particular, knew nothing about the Wellington Movement: it was only the natives themselves who knew about the movement thoroughly, because it happened in their midst away in the locations. . . Sakwe was, however correct in hinting that old lines of information, through loyal headmen, constables and informers were under strain; that the people themselves were developing ideas which rejected state control . . . The affairs of rural Africans 'away in the locations' were submerged, and were dropping below the gaze of government of white sympathizers and even African political leaders*" (Beinart and Bundy 1987: 1)

This shows that it is a gross misrepresentation to think that all happens in towns. In fact to think like this is to play in the hands of the capitalist mind that seems to suggest that one becomes a full human being only when he/she begins to interpret life in terms of state's capitalistic economic frames.

In order to be better able to understand rural resistance one needs to think deeper about the impact of their cultural struggle to keep the African integrity intact. "*Rural*

Africanism/separitism had a real material base: peasant/migrants were trying to defend their rights to land, their ownership of cattle and other resources, and their ability to affect local political processes. . . Coquery-Vidrotch has perhaps taken this position to its logical conclusion by claiming that peasant resistance aspire 'not to change power but to reject it'" (Beinart and Bundy: 35).

Though, sometimes not publicly recognised due to its oral nature, African cultural struggles have had far reaching influence in modern political and theological groups. Movements like the Black Conscious Movement and Liberation, Black and African Theologies, argue their political stances on the beauty of being African and the beauty of all its culture and tradition.

4.2.1.1.1.1. *The engagement of the elite in the struggle.*

Here above the writer has argued the importance of rural politics in the struggle that, in terms of experience and in terms of resistance, never mind how inadequate, the rural people were the first to be engaged. Heretofore, one wants to argue that in fact the elite were, after all, unless one wants to divide and rule, the sons and daughters of the rural parents. The only credit on the elite's part was the organisational expertise they had through formal education which allowed them to put forward premised arguments, in a language understood by the colonisers. In their spirit of 'divide and rule' the colonial powers used the opportunity, given by the fact that some young African gentlemen were now educated, to further alienate the traditional chiefs. These young men were readily used in magisterial offices as interpreters and clerks. One is reminded of such a young elite known as Enoch Mamba, about whom magistrate Bell wrote: ". . . *from the time of his first employment. . . he rendered efficient service in the collection of Tax, registration of Huts, in taking the census, and in managing the Intelligence Department of the office in connection with the natives in the District*" (Beinart and Bundy 1987: 84).

With such a prospectus, Mamba was bound to get a position in the political arena especially as he seemed useful to the colonial powers. He was appointed a headmen to underscore the radical traditionalist chief Sigidi. As soon as councilor Mamba was firmly established in the position he turned and challenged the colonial administrative efforts, he opposed almost all the matters put forward by the government for regulating the native lives. For instance, he protested about the draft act of the Union, fought for greater autonomy of the districts, compulsory dipping and so forth. At one time the acting magistrate reported: *“There is no doubt that councilor Mamba is bitterly opposed to the system, and is doing his utmost to create difficulties and wreck the scheme”* (Beinart and Bundy 1987: 97).

Education tends to bring different personalities together and for obvious reasons these establish links that have far reaching consequences. Usually as people study and stay together in boarding institutions a kind of thought pattern ‘comradery’ is created, because they reflect on issues together. *“Healdtown, like the better known Lovedale, must have conferred on its students more than the formal benefits of an education; it also brought them into contact with scholars of their own age from the districts over the Eastern Cape . . . friendships or acquaintanceship established in these boarding institutions were translated in later years into political allegiances”* (Beinart and Bundy 1987: 82).

This political allegiance was to come in the form of the South African Native Congress (SANNC) whose members like Rabusana, J.T. Jabavu and others, all of whom were

students with Mamba at Healdtown, or were familiar to him through politics. The SANC developed into the South African Native National Congress (SANNC) which latter became the African National Congress (ANC).

The African elite (amakoloni as they came to be known) had finally discovered its power and stood firmly as a power to be reckoned with, they used their communicative skill to the full. These educated politicians were invaluable to the resisters, since “. . .*they were able to disseminate information about proclamations and its terms, to draft political petitions and letters and even to discuss issues with the magistrate or government personnel*” (Beinart and Bundy: 157). They were indeed mobilising themselves as opposition to the colonial Bungas. A magistrate in Elliotdale in 1895 reported that: “. . . *a great undercurrent of dissatisfaction’ was agitating the district; that the Glen Grey law was being widely and causing much unease; and that ‘educated men like Jabavu’ were now becoming ‘important authorities’ amongst ordinary Transkeians: and [he warned] we have to look forward to a Native Bond, which will prove a far greater difficulty than the A philander Bond and with growing advancement the Native will discover their power*” (Beinart and Bundy:159)

4.2.1.1.1.2. ***African nationalism.***

As has been shown above, the otherwise small and sometimes fragmentary black African resistance was slowly and painstakingly shaping and brewing itself into a power that would eventually threaten to mobilise and unite, at least all the Transkeian resistance

groups, if not the whole of the Eastern Cape. This unity only needed some outside force to push it to realisation. The Glen Grey Act of 1894, which Rhodes envisaged to be The Native Bill for Africa, provided just that push. Even if this Act did not achieve the effects that were envisaged by the then Government, it however provided the base for what was to rule South African politics for decades to come. The apartheid system and its discriminating policies, in fact all the National Party's ideologies are the inevitable brain-child of this act. Cecil Rhode the then Prime Minister and Minister for Native Affairs, explained the Act's main purpose as “. . . *to force more 'kaffirs' into the wage labour by first limiting their access to land and then by imposing a 10 shilling labour tax on all those who could not prove they had been in 'bona fide' wage employment for at least three months in a year . . . The critical element in Glen Grey formula was the creation of land shortage . . . by limiting the head of each family to just four morgen; and by making the eldest son the sole heir to the family property*” (Oakes ed.1994:206).

This Act was to have very far-reaching effects for both the colonialist farmers and mining magnates who would respectively have the land and labour which they have been clamoring for so long. “. . . *at a time when mine-owners and farmers were calling increasingly stridently for cheap labour, far too few rural Africans were being 'persuaded' to enter the service of the white man.*”

For the Africans on the other hand, this piece of legislation had a negative effect, it touched the nerve centers of their lives, the land and the traditional and cultural values in the smooth running of their homes and communities “*It sought to restructure social*

relations in the cape's African reserves; to accelerate the process of proletarianisation; to redefine the terms of access to the basic means of production, arable land; to reduce the participation of Africans in the Cape electoral system and finally, to create a new level of local administration" (Beinart and Bundy 1987: 139).

On a positive note though, the act was very instrumental in uniting the African resistance, from then on, the antagonistic feelings between the traditionalists and the elite, and between the tribal communities were to be shelved for the greater interest and for the common good i.e. collaboration to preserve the land and the administrative powers.

"Realising the danger the Act posed to their chosen way of life, rural and urban Africans pooled their resources to wage what was at times a highly effective campaign against Glen Grey proposals . . . The masses too, played an important part in keeping pressure on officialdom-by refusing to have their land surveyed and by ignoring tax demands-even in the face of threats to confiscate their cattle" (Oakes1994: 210, 211).

The contribution of the educated (amakoloni) was to prove very valuable in the struggle. Since between them they shared the expertise, they possessed the necessary tools of debating issues, of formulating statements. John Tengo Jabavu, Campbell Kupe, Reuben Damane, Caleb Jafta, and Charles Tonjeni together with some defecting headmen were some of the elite that joined the clamor against the Act.

4.2.1.1.1.3. *The role of the kaffir gossip and the press in the psychological warfare.*

In any war there are two central tools for the dissemination of information or misinformation and the mobilisation or the destabilisation of the thought patterns and consequently the coordinated action of the masses. The writer has liberally singled out the two modes of information, or misinformation, as the press (the formal/informal form of published material, and the kaffir gossip a term coined by Le Fleur to denote the informal stories one gathers at beer drinking parties those gathered by the river when women chat and other such stories as to circulate among the common folk.

In a conflict situation, the so-called 'kaffir gossip', or any other gossip for that matter, plays a very important role because it provides both the conflicting parties with the general knowledge of what the other side is about. Though there is bound to be exaggerations in what is said in these gossips, hints are made that can help the concerned parties in strategising their next moves. The one example of how far a kaffir gossip, or rumour can go is, the 'rural scare' situation reported in the late 1879 to the early 1880s, when in the East Griqualand a rumour was circulated that the natives were being influenced by Le Fleur to prepare for war. Beinart and Bundy (1987: 60, 61) maintain that: "*This led the farmers to put their plan of mutual protection into operation. The East*

Griqualand Mounted Rifles were mobilized and patrols begun . . . Meanwhile Pata and Vusiwe were said to be doctoring their followers. It was said that the war-cry had been heard, or at least that the women were 'making a noise'. . . Evidence collected from the farmers about the extent of African military mobilization was

unconvincing. Most had acted on information of neighbours or of African servants and spies. . . As one field cornet admitted: I cannot say that I observed any of the usual signs among the Natives which usually precede a rising'.”

It is very interesting to note that the farmers are reportedly to have, sometimes, misinterpreted the normal ‘*ingcubhe*’ (first fruit) ceremonies that iNhangwini and amaBhaca communities performed in the month of December. On the other hand, however, one cannot rule out that, it was a form of gossip ‘the rural scare’ from the farmers’ side. They deliberately used the *ingcubhe* ceremonies to have the government quicken their protection. “*The repeated reference to doctoring as a sign of rebellion*

raises an interesting point. The Ntlangwini still held an annual first-fruit ceremony at this time; one of its elements was a ritual in which the men were strengthened for war. Moreover, the first-fruits ceremony usually took place over a month in December/January –a period that coincided with two important phases of the rural scare. . . But it is likely that the leading settlers such as Strachan and Bovill, whom the magistrates cited as being highly influential in the formation of farmers’ thinking, used the ceremony, and the gatherings and the rumours which accompanied it as a means of unifying whites in East Griqualand” (Beinart and Bundy 1987: 67).

4.2.1.1.1.4. *The press' role in spreading information and mobilising the masses.*

The tendency of the press, especially the privately owned publications, is to say things as they are, thus influencing local thought patterns and, most importantly, revealing to outsiders the real political issues of the countries from which they are published. In the former instance the publication, especially their political editorial analysis, may lead local revolutions, and on international level they may lead to criticism and sanctions. As a result, many governments are not very sympathetic towards independent news papers. As early as 1823, Thomas Pringle and Abraham Faure requested permission to start a publication and they were fused. *“It was only February 1823 – and it was not until*

almost 10 months later the he reluctantly gave permission. On 5 March 1824 the first privately own publication, the ‘South African Journal’ (‘Het Nederduitsch Zuid Afrikaansche Tijdschrift’), rolled off the press” (Oakes 1994: 101).

As soon as something touched what the situation really was, Lord Charles Somerset did not hesitate to suppress it. There was another publication going at the same time ‘The South African Commercial Advertiser’ for which Pringle accepted the joint editorship with John Fairbairn. This, again, clashed with the Government and had to close after its fifth publication with the printer Mr. Creig being instructed to leave the colony.

With regard to the African resistance, of immeasurable importance, was the publication of the African controlled news papers, ‘*Imvo Zabansundu*’ (Black opinion) and ‘*Izwi Labantu*’ (People’s Voice). Since they were published in the vernacular, these were widely read and circulated. *“The African news papers such as Imvo Zabantsundu and*

Izwi Labantu played a crucial part in describing and criticizing the Glen Grey measures, helping to create a common vocabulary, and ideology of resistance to the act. Many of those who organised local meetings of protest must have derived encouragement and enthusiasm from seeing accounts of their own activities as well as those of others” (Beinart and Bundy 1987:156).

The impact of these African controlled publications was indeed great, it put the great political African minds together: “. . . *the congress leaders-clergymen, teachers, law agents and the like, moved quickly to build their organization into vociferous political machine. By 1903 it had established 25 branches, mainly in the Cape. The thrust of its campaigns highlighted by pressure groups, petitions and newspaper editorials, was aimed at the British” (Oakes 1994: 281).*

The publications caused a lot of unease within the ranks of the government officials, because they threatened to sweep away their control of the districts right under their feet. Apart from this, what was published said certain things that contradicted what government wanted the people to know.

The news papers revealed the evils behind the legislations and alerted the general public of the implications and consequences of the laws that were being passed by parliament at the time. In other words, the government saw the media as a threat to security within the country, and one most disturbing thing about the media was its call for the attention from the external government critics towards the real issues of South African politics. One

such threatened official was the acting magistrate of Tsomo who “. . . was convinced that a great deal of harm was done by Imvo, whose criticism of the Glen Grey act were ‘harsh, stringent and unjust . . . Even Elliotdale, widely regarded as one of the least progressive of the Transkeian districts, the impact of the new medium of the vernacular press was pronounced. The magistrate there reported in February 1895 that ‘a great undercurrent of dissatisfaction’ was agitating the district; that the Glen Grey law was being widely discussed and causing much unease. . .” (Beinart and Bundy1987: 157).

5. The struggle of the traditional African religion against colonial oppression.

In defining religion the writer has said that, at the most, for the people of the traditional African background, religion is one of the many ways employed as means to cope with the problems posed by their struggle to preserve and defend life and its processes. As a priest in the twenty first century, one has come to realise that the above assertion is still very true for many religious people and this can be measured by the many stipends that people offer for the different intentions most of which are centered around their need to be assisted, through prayer and the Holy Mass, to have their life and its assistants spared and protected. For example, when someone’s daughter/son is going to a university, looking for work, some one’s cattle have been stolen, there is sickness in the family, you name it, people come to the priest to ask for prayers and supplications.

Many would call this superstitious, but it is very real for those who believe in it. Are our armies not prayed for during war times, what is the reason for having military chaplains etc? Religion is much a part of our life than we would like to believe. In the assumption that the African traditional religion, as a long standing institution, had been used in the inter-tribal struggles, there should be no reason to assume that it was not use it in the struggle against colonial powers, in the same way they believed and used it before.

5.1. The Xhosa religious beliefs and the colonial struggles. (The War doctors and prophets)

The traditional African war is prepared and fought from different angles, there is normal consultation between the chief and his consultants on how to implement the physical strategies, there is also the psychological aspect where the armies are prepared and put on a war footing and worked up into a psychological frenzy or hysteria by war songs and cries thus expelling from their minds all fear. The main aim for this activity is to make each warrior adopt the war personally and commit himself to do and accept everything even death unashamedly; to look forward to it as though it was the only important thing in life.

The most important aspect of the psychological preparation for war in traditional Africa is the role played by the war doctor or priest. He was called in to purify and strengthen the armies by medicines and incantations. His portents were believed to weaken the opposition, so that the armies dully physically and psychologically prepared, should approach the war zone with confidence and some arrogance that victory is theirs.

Looking at it retrospectively, very strange promises were made to the warriors, for instance, the belief that if the women folk pass naked in front of the enemy its power diminishes, if certain *izintelezi* (bulbs) and animal fat such as *inyengelezi* are used, the armies will be invisible to the enemy. Amazingly, in the traditional mind there was nothing strange in these assertions, both the people and the prophets believed it would happen. If one were to contend that perhaps the prophet was lying, he would at least have to credit him for being a very good psychological strategist, but then again, why did he participate so fully in the expectations? For example, when the Xhosa armies went against the Colonists in April 1819 under the leadership of the prophet Makana Nxele, “. . . 6000 warriors convinced that Nxele would turn British bullets into water, charged the town” (Oakes 1914:105). Makana was amongst them, could he risk his own life if he did not believe? As Molema (1920:102) puts it: “*Makana went further – he harangued his soldiers on the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the dead chiefs; he guaranteed their invulnerability, for he said the British bullets would turn into water.*”

5.2. Resistance against the missionaries.

For a while the missionaries were tolerated by amaXhosa who thought, and probably rightly so, that they could learn something in what they were offering. “*Initially many*

Xhosa leaders had accepted that their people could benefit by the acquisition of certain of the secular skills offered by the missionaries” (Oakes 1994: 153).

AmaXhosa as a nation were generally very good in assimilating what other cultures brought along. They had, for example, managed to coexist with the Khoisan and to incorporate certain of its elements into their religion. For instance, the word *Qamata* for God was taken from the Khoisan and it was not just the name that was taken but its meaning as well. '*Qamata*' the Khoi God was unlike the original amaXhosa's remote sky God, he was a participating god: ". . . *who was actively involved in human affairs. This can be seen as a profound change in both religious belief and practice*" (Hodgson 1936: 62). In their encounter with Christianity, there was hope that the same could be done. Already in the approach of the two contemporary prophets, Nxele and Ntsikana one can see that this process had begun, the two in their respective ways wanted to knit the two traditions together in order to have them mutually interpretative, the amaXhosa tradition seen from a Christian point of view and visa versa.

The worldview of the black African nations and that of Europeans was not only different but it was in certain instances dimetrically opposed. Let us take, for example, the issue the social outcasts, who within the African traditional worldview were to be shunned and avoided, yet were received, protected and embraced by the Europeans and particularly by the missionaries. For this reason the aspiration of the two communities ever merging seemed impossible right from the beginning. "*For a long time many of the early converts were women who had rejected the oppression of unwanted husbands, accused witches, blind people, albinos, lepers and cripples. . .*" (Oakes 1994: 152).

The worst happened where any person the missionaries took to their side became a stern critic of the African traditional way of life and worse still when these already hated people became spies and sold out the secrets of the tribe. *“With a large number of evangelists supplementing their income by acting either as government spies or land agents, chiefs quite justifiably began to regard them as grave threats to the chosen way of life of the Xhosa. “When my people become Christians, they cease to be become my people,’ commented one chief to the missionary Henry Calderwood” or again one chief commented “I like very much to live with the missionaries if they would not take my people and give them to the government” (Oakes 1994: 153).*

5.3. *The emergence of independent churches as struggle.*

The Christian movement has since its inception been marked by the push and pull between the various groups and individuals, each purporting to claim a position as close as possible to the center. The issue, always, is who possesses a doctrine that closely resembles that of Christ, and, therefore, which of the different Christian groups is really the church of Christ? The scramble is always about who is the lord of the ring. One is always reminded of the squabble between Saints Peter and Paul which would continue to eternity unless they agreed to bury their differences and concentrate on spreading the message. Again, one is reminded of the whole issue of the Reformation that was characterised by protests and schisms, all because groups and individuals had the great quest for belonging.

As late as the twenty first century one still hears the echo of the proverbial 'quest for belonging'. Africans in some quarters of the institutional churches are still, rightly or wrongly differing on certain religious issues, feeling alienated, and sometimes questioning the legitimacy of their positions within the institutional or historical churches. *"Are African Catholics at home but feeling homeless in the Catholic Church in South Africa? Is the local Catholic Church really the 'Father's House' for its many African members? Is it not true that the Catholic Church in South Africa remains in vision and character a Eurocentric Church?. . . In reflecting on these questions ACAPSM came to the conclusion that 'in many ways the local Catholic Church is not yet a real Father's House for us and the many Black African Catholics who constitute around eighty percent of the local Church's membership"* (Pastoral Plan vision in Southern Africa 2000: 1).

Long before such movements as the ACAPSM came into the scene, the Independent churches had realised that there was something very profound in the message about Christ that the Christian missionaries had brought. However there was something lacking in the personalities that the missionaries were. Christ and his message found a place in the African hearts, but the vessels in which he came were, as it were, not fitting in the same hearts. *" . . . the Independents are compensating for the lack of koinonia in the historical churches. In contrast to the sober rationalism of the latter, the former express uninhibited emotional joy in response to the African need for religious celebration"* (Daneel 1987: 18).

It is characteristic of religious movements to present their case modestly as opposed to revolutionaries. The writer remembers that when the idea about ACAPSM was first introduced he was asked to be a founding member. His initial comment was: 'I hope the movement is not going to operate as a Trade Union and hold the church leadership at ransom.' In one's own funny way, one was pleading with one's colleagues to be modest in presenting the issues to the church leaders. The problem with modesty is that, it muffles the truth if not even compromising it.

We are trained to be humble and less revolutionary and this tends to soften our attempts to transform the status quo. We are taught to ask gently: '*... but if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?*' (John 18: 23). Gently as one must be, one must register the pain one feels. Sin is sin. "*... at the heart of this whole movement, directly or indirectly, will be found the sin of the white man against the black it is the failure of the white man to make the Church a home for the black man that the latter has been fain to have the church as his own*" (Neil in Daneel 1987: 19).

Some people tend to simply argue and base the emergence of the Independent churches on the aesthetics, that, for example, the blacks want to be fully engaged with music and dance within the celebration. It is an understatement if not an outright insult to think that allowing music and dance, will address the African concerns. The issue at stake here is how blacks feel as persons; as a race within the white-man's church. In reality black Africans are expressing, from a religious stance, together with the other colonised secular minds, the wrong that is being done to them. The struggle is for land, for culture, for

tradition and for African religious values that have been constantly destroyed. To deny them this, is to deny them a very basic thing, the ability to see what is wrong and to defend themselves against it. “. . . *‘independency is a societal reaction to mission arising out of tribal Zeigeist or climate of opinion in which Christian missions were believed to be illegitimately mounting an attack against African traditional society’*” (Barrett in Daneel 1987: 18).

5.3.1. *The nature of religious struggle: (Black is also religiously beautiful)*

In their quest for belonging and affinity to Christ the African religious personnel seeks to be accommodated in the church of Christ neither as new comers nor second rate citizens. Their belonging to the Reign of God, they argue, is not a result of man-made missionarism but it is part of God’s salvific plan, so that it really should not matter, who brought Christianity to Africa and those who, incidentally brought it, should not claim any superiority on the basis of race, colour and culture. This feeling is at the base of such movements as Ethiopianism which argues their religious position from scripture. “*Bibli- cally and religiously, Ethiopianism presented an explicit proof of the inclusion of Africa in the original and divine plan of God for the world. Strictly speaking it derived its strength from it; even in the area of politics and culture just mentioned. The origin of Ethiopianism both as an African movement and an ideology, is based on Ps. 68: 31-33. . .*” (Onwubiko1991: 103).

It is very interesting to note that the word 'Ethiopia' means '*black faced*'. So the African does not align him/herself with Ethiopia only from a political, cultural and religious perspectives, but essentially from the etymological meaning of the word itself as well.

"The name 'Ethiopian' we owe to ancient Greeks. When the Greeks came in contact with the dusky inhabitants of Africa and Asia, they called them 'burnt faces.' The Greek word for burnt was Ethios and the word for face was Ops. So Ethios plus Ops became Ethiopian" (Jackson in Kush 1983: 141).

It is no wonder that the black religious movements especially when they broke off from the mainline churches in the beginning of the twentieth century, called themselves Ethiopian churches and not surprisingly, were viewed by the former as political organisations. Ethiopia had emerged as a political symbol for many Africans, or should one say, for the Negroids in general. *"Politically, Ethiopia was the only African country which never came under the control of any European colonial power and did enjoy diplomatic recognition and status the world over"* (Onwubiko 1991: 101).

Because of its history, Ethiopia was viewed as a spring board from which the black African person could organise, strategise and even engage the white people on the three strategic fronts from which they were attacking i.e. political, cultural and religious. The colonial oppression as has been mentioned already, showed itself a system aimed at corroding the continent of Africa and its peoples from these three fronts, to fight it, Ethiopianism developed counter strategies using the same three fronts.

The strategy used by the colonial powers had been that of looking down at the traditional African values including the very value of being black and African. To fight it, blackness had to be reaffirmed by statements such as 'Black is not only beautiful but it is Godly'. Ethiopianism claimed that, this beauty was to be reaffirmed politically, culturally and religiously. *"The Ethiopian type churches originated as a reaction against White and*

White-dominated mission churches. Political development and the knowledge that a colonial power had been successfully resisted in East Africa for the first time bred an awareness that God concerns himself with Africa in a special way.. Such texts as Psalm 68:3 . . . are interpreted as a sign that the oppressed Black people have a specially appointed place in God's plan of salvation" (Daneel 1987: 38).

In the event where the black persons had accepted the Christian message but felt alienated in the church of the white person, the tendency became that the black persons sought ways to fulfill his/her yearning for Christ, independent of the Europeans. *"Today*

we want to impress our seal upon Christianity for Africa, we want to make it at home in our world of ideas without at the same time holding up our impress as divine revelation . . . We want to have at last 'our' church. An African 'local church' in which we can feel at home and with which we will be on good terms as we are within ourselves" (Buhlmann 1980:37).

The call to affirm blackness leads to the creation of images and ideologies that assist in the blackening of the core of Christianity that is the blackening of Christ himself. The argument for it, being, how can a Christ of the white person, ever be interested in the affairs of the black alienated person. Here begins the quest for a Christ that identifies with

the aspirations of the oppressed; a theology that expresses the same aspiration, and an ecclesiology that accommodates the people of such aspiration. This is what (Daneel

1987: 46) says about the movement founded by Kimpa Vita in Congo. “*Of particular*

importance, however, was her message that Christ came into the world as an African in Sao Salvador and that he had Black apostles. Here for the first time we encounter the idea of a black Christ; in other words the first inklings of Black Theology. Her proclamation gave expression to a deep yearning: the yearning for a Christ who would identify with the despised African.”

5.3.2. South Africa the cradle of African religious struggles.

As early as 1872, in the minor secession in the Hermon congregation of the Paris Mission in Basutoland the black African leaders within the historical churches showed signs of irritability with regard to the racial considerations in ecclesiastical positions.’ Referring to a tribal church organised in 1884 Sundkler (1961: 38). “*The cause of this important secession was not only opposition to European control, but also a positive desire to adapt the message of the Church to the heritage of the Tembu tribe. As the Queen of England was the head of the English Church, so the Paramount Chief of the Tembu should be the summus episcopus of the new religious organization . . . Of a similar character was a secession from the London Missionary Society at Taung, Bechuanaland, in 1885. . . In 1889 . . . J.A. Winter formed the Lutheran Bapedi Church And the same year an evangelist of the Anglican Church in Pretoria Khanate Napo, formed his own organization, the ‘Africa Church.’*”

This short history serves to say that the irritation of the black clerics was felt almost by all. ABasoto, amaXhosa, aBatwana, aBapedi etc. each in their own way and from the missionary church predominant in their countries, felt the white domination and sought to fight it. The emergence of these tribal churches troubled the historical church leadership. As with the colonial authorities before them, the ecclesiastical authorities were worried sick, when contemplating what would happen should the black African big minds pick up the religious struggle and collect these sporadic tribal movements to greater heights perhaps to nationalistic aspirations as happened with the domestic politics, which through better organisation jumped to national politics. Was there to be a nationalistic black religious struggle? This is what one will try to respond to in subsection 5.3.2.2., below when discussing the rise of Ethiopianism.

5.3.2.1. *The reasons for the secessions.*

The white missionaries gave concessions for their black brothers to be elevated to higher positions in the mainline churches, but lingering behind their minds was the issue of how, really ready, were they to handle the responsibility that comes with the task. Reverend Albert Schweitzer said: *“The Negro is a child, and with children nothing can be done without the use of authority. With regard to the Negroes then, I have coined the formula: I am your brother, it is true, but your elder brother”* (in Kush 1983: 6).

About the first four black Catholic priests to be ordained in South Africa, Fathers Mnganga Muller, Mbhele, Ngidi and Mncadi the latter being the writer’s maternal grand-uncle, there is an oral tradition that says, at a clergy meeting in Ixopo Mariathal a white

catholic lay person, who was at the mission that particular time, rhetorically asked: ‘What do you use the black priests for, for funerals I suppose?’ Whether this is true or not, it never the less, captures the attitudes of the whites at the time, and underlines the irritation of the black leaders that led to racial struggle in the ecclesiastical circles.

The estrangement of the black ecclesiastical leaders was so acute that many felt it was better for them to move house. The following story is an example of the difficulties the black pioneers experienced in the Roman Catholic Church. *“The other significant conflict took the form of a clash between Fr. David Bryant, the author of the Zulu-English Dictionary in 1905 . . . and the Zulu priest Edward Mnganga. In their quarrel, the latter had resorted to physical assault. In revenge, Fr. Bryant and some Trappists white missionaries, in collaboration with the civil whit authorities of the time placed Fr. Edward Mnganga in a government asylum in Pietermaritzburg for twenty five years under the pretext that the was mentally deranged. The placement of Fr. Edward Mnganga in an asylum, with the collaboration of the white civil authorities, clearly points to the fact that those African priests had no protection and security within the church. They were not treated as insiders who belonged to the church in a way equal to that of the white missionaries”* (Pastoral Plan Vision for the Church in Southern Africa 2000: 18-19).

5.3.2.2. *The rise of Ethiopianism.*

History tells us that the Ethiopianistic aspirations began in South Africa as a result of the dissatisfaction of the black clerics about how the streamline churches were handling their affairs, especially with regard to the Africans within their folds. There was so much racial segregation within these churches that one eventually could not separate the church's attitude toward the blacks, from that of the civil state. A black person, in the mind of the white person, could never be civilised even by education. This is so true when considering that father Edward Mnganga was trained in Rome and came out with a doctorate degree but this was not enough. As Dr. Robert (in Kush 1983: 6) maintains:

“Having demonstrated that the Negro and the Caucasian are widely different in characteristics, due to a deficiency in the Negro brain, a deficiency that is hereditary . . . we are forced to conclude that it is useless to try to elevate the Negro by education or otherwise.”

The difference in the Ethiopianistic movement was that, dissident clerics were now seeking allegiances with others of their kind. They were no longer to establish themselves on local and tribal lines. This is exemplified by the Wesleyan minister Mangena Mokone breaking away in 1892 and joining with the other dissidents to form a new religion. Eventually what the white church authorities feared had begun, the blacks were mobilising as a nation against the white nation, however, this was to be from a completely different front, that of religion. The colonial powers had, at least up to then, managed to stamp the political tide by the army and police. How was the Christian power

to stamp it out? Mokone “. . . together with the other malcontents in Pretoria formed a new religious organization (ministers, evangelists, teachers, and ordinary adherents of Wesleyan Church). The name of the new Church was of great significance –the ‘Ethiopian Church’. Mokone’s group was not limited by any mere tribal interest . . . There was a programme . . . evangelization of Africa. Mokone took this to mean the self-government of the African Church under African leaders” (Sundkler 1961: 39)

The Ethiopian Church leadership was not content with uniting the South African blacks, from then on, the attention was directed at seeking working relations further a-field. Learning about the presence of a ‘black church’ in America, the Ethiopian Church leaders, sought to introduce themselves to this group. That is how links with the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) were forged, with the consequence that at one time the whole of the Ethiopian church leadership was persuaded, by Dwane one of its masterminds, to follow him into the AME fold. Of course, this was as good as it lasted, Dwane himself as its architect saw that the linking was not to work because the black

Americans did not subscribe to the slogan ‘Africa for Africans’ in fact how could they, they were fighting their American struggles. If they came to South Africa, were they not going to act as other missionaries, taking all they could back home exactly as the colonists did? “*The American Negro missionaries were, however, just as much foreigners and strangers in the eyes of the Ethiopians as the White missionaries. Therefore, the same propaganda was directed against the A.M.E as against the ‘white’ missions. Thus, for instance, Brander, one of the oldest Ethiopian leaders, claimed that the A.M.E. ‘took, like the old ‘Papae Romanorum’, all moneys collected for the interest*

of the church in Africa to America, and there expended them obviously on purely American interest and not on Ethiopian interests. . . .” (Sandkler 1961: 42).

It is very interesting to note that in most cases, money had a very subtle role to play in the secessions. Dwane left the Wesleyan church because of the dispute about how to dispose the money he had collected in England, Mzimba broke away from the United Free Church of Scotland because he wanted to allocate the sums of money he secured from Scotland as he pleased without regard to the opinion of his superiors. Indeed, money talks even if it tingles in the black coffers. The one who has it, black or white has the last word.

5.4. Superstition and its role in religious struggle.

Under duress, people tend to have all sorts of nightmares and dreams, if these are constant enough, then people tend to hallucinate about them even during the day. It is a psychological trick, that what cannot be achieved in reality is achieved in dreams, or in phantoms. In the case of the stresses that the amaXhosa were experiencing in being constantly defeated by the colonial powers, and seeing themselves losing their land and prized cattle, it is understandable that, they, or at least some of them, would have such hallucinations as Nongqawuse, Mhlakaza and Mlanjeni and Nxele before them, had. There was a need for new, and perhaps more credible, leadership to unite amaXhosa to match the super powers of the British.

Every body believed (though not everyone was bold enough to express it) that the present amaXhosa generation and their possessions (cattle, corn etc.) were somehow defiled and that some sort of ritual cleansing was necessary. Nongqawuse's and the other prophecies were, more than anything, calling the nation to do just that. When one poses to analyse the demands of Nongqawuse's prophecy, for example, the political nature of its injunctions become clear. '*Old women and men will become young again*' obviously to fight amaXhosa wars against the British, after all this was their biggest problem at the time. '*. . .and the ancient chiefs, by whose command these words were spoken, would themselves come to life to lead their people to victory. . .*' The interesting thing about the whole issue is what Molema (1920:169) maintains about the political overtones of the orchestration of the prophecy by Mhlakaza, he says: "*Umhlakaza had gravely*

miscalculated, for his original idea in inventing the command and prophecy was that the Xosas, having nothing to rely on for sustenance, would hurl themselves against the European colonists with that wonderful strength born of despair, and so 'drive the white men into the sea'."

If this be the case, then one is exonerated in one's contention that superstition was also used in the religious struggle against the colonial government. It is normal in a war situation to appeal to patriotic sentiments in order to cheer the boys on amidst defeat and drained morale. Among amaXhosa as among all the traditional Africans, the most important thing was to be on the side of the ancestors, so, to evoke the dead into the struggle against the colonial power was supposed to bring about a new commitment to amaXhosa warriors.

There were other political factors that contributed to the attachment of amaXhosa to the prophecies. In their desperation to get rid of the British they tended to welcome any thing that alluded to the former's weakness. For example, when the news broke out that the English had been conquered by the Russians, amaXhosa were enchanted to know that somewhere, never mind how far, there was some power stronger than the British. The Russians' victory was seamlessly sewn to amaXhosa belief, to a point where the Russians now stood for their resurrected heroes. These risen heroes were going, according to the prophecy, to establish the new order. *"The Cattle-Killing was born partly out of Xhosa frustration at colonial administration and partly out of the hope awakened by the news that the Russians had beaten the English. . . Nongqawuse's promise of a perfect world in which 'no one would ever lead a troubled life' could hardly have accommodated a continued settler presence in Xhosaland"* (Peires 1989: 316).

5.4.1. ***Starved and subdued:*** *(The colonial government utilises the prophecies)*

There is a further contention that the colonial authorities themselves, orchestrated the prophecies as part of their strategy to subdue the amaXhosa, or else how does one defend them for not intervening in time to stop it. It is interesting that even when Maclean and later Brownlee tried to stop it by warning chief Kreli they were reprimanded by Sir George Grey, the then Governor. *"As we have seen, the role of the colonial authorities throughout the Cattle-Killing was one of reacting to crises rather than setting the pace, of waiting on events rather than dictating their course"* (Peires: 219).

During this period, events were quickly interpreted in terms of the prophecy, and sometimes the miscalculated actions of the colonial government, unwittingly confirmed the belief that indeed the new order was operative. For instance, when Grey in 1857, wishing to demonstrate his naval power, sent in a ship by the name 'HMS Geysler' into the Kei river mouth and the plan miscarried and a scout boat sent from the ship overturned, this immediately boosted the belief and the prophecy. "*The news soon spread that the new people had destroyed the ship . . . As the rumour circulated it grew in stature until it was commonly believed that Sarhili's father, the martyred Hintsa had destroyed the Geysler with a wave of his hand, or that Mhlakaza had driven the troops on board mad . . .*" (Peires1989: 122).

A further contention that perhaps, the colonial authorities were part of the plot of the Cattle-Killing saga, is the advantage they, in the person and actions of the then Governor, reaped out of it. Grey had a long standing plan for tempering with the traditional Xhosa way of life and thinking. They, as he strongly believed, could better serve the colony and eventually themselves, if they were engaged in the Western economic system. But how does one effect this, if the traditional subsistence economy, especially if its basis; cattle, are still abundant? Up to this point the colonial authorities had done well, they had taken the land, but this was not felt by the individual Xhosa because land as such had sentimental value, while cattle were what individual homesteads measured their personal worth and wealth with.

'*Ubuhle bendoda ziinkomo zayo*', is one of the many isiXhosa expressions relating to the importance of cattle in their life. This translates to: 'the real beauty or worth of an African man is his cattle. In effect, when you take a man's cattle, you have then, his full attention. The Cattle-Killing saga was doing this, consequent to it, amaXhosa were poor as individuals and as a community. From then on their survival depended on the service they were to give to the white man. "*It was still his (Grey's) intention to destroy the*

stubborn independence of the Xhosa nation, by breaking the political and judicial powers, by encouraging its commoners to abandon their communal and pastoral ethos in favour of wage labour, and by disrupting its territorial integrity. . . None of these aims had changed on account of the Cattle-Killing. The only change was that starvation and disorder made it possible to pursue these aims further and faster than anyone, including Grey himself, had yet contemplated" (Peires 1989: 219).

In fact Grey used the tragedy to the benefit of the colony, when he purposely failed to make food available to the hungry amaXhosa and instead "*utilized the desperate starvation of the people to engineer their mass exodus via colonial labour market, while filling their former lands with white settlers. His plan to subdue the chiefs had a chance now, for he was to blame the tragedy on them. "On the pretence of the 'chiefs' plot', charges were trumped up against the leading Xhosa chiefs, who were tried by military courts and packed off to Robben Island*" (Peires: 317

CHAPTER NINE: *The poor in the post colonial era.*

1. INTRODUCTION.

It would be naïve to think that all the pain of oppression, nepotism, racism and other social, religious or political ills would go away as soon as colonialism was removed. Experience shows that it is part of human nature to gain the upper hand and to maintain it as long as possible. The black Africans and the oppressed in general are as capable of oppression as their white counterparts, were it not so there would have been no discussion of the pre-colonial poor in chapter eight. And again one would not need to talk about racial tensions in the African states in the wake of xenophobic and tribal-based attitudes that tend to surface now and then among black South Africans. *“To suggest that by merely being victims of white oppression, black are incapable of wrong conduct is to be unrealistic about human nature and the persistence of sin even within a community of angels”* (Villa-Vicencio and de Gruchy 1994: 128).

The 27th April 1994 marked the final stage of liberation of the continent of Africa, for indeed South Africa up to that time, was the only African state that was still in the hands of powers other than those of the indigenous people. When the first democratic Government was inaugurated the writer was in Rome, with the bishops and other delegates from the whole African continent, attending the Synod for African. There was great fear that the African National Congress would sweep the stake and gain a majority rule and possibly impose a one party state system. The writer remembers expressing this

fear publicly and one delegate from Ghana reiterating: 'Why should we worry about it, when now it is time for blacks to turn the tables. Is this not what the whites have been doing for decades?' To this the writer said: While we celebrate the change, and enjoy the lime light, some of us South Africans do not want to exchange one dictatorship for another. Thank God, this situation did not happen and even in the last elections of 2004 where the ANC won with overwhelming majority, its leadership is willing to share with all the South Africans. To invite those who did not fare well in the elections into parliament is the noblest thing a government can do extending a hand of peace. Majority rule in such a case means that everybody and not the winning political party has a say in the affairs of the country

2. The gravy train: (Oppressed by the once oppressed)

Archbishop Desmond Tutu has coined many interesting phrases one of which is: '*the gravy train*' by which he warns the post apartheid South African leadership against enjoying the fruits of liberation alone. The leaders are urged to remember the masses whose energies have been spent in the processes of achieving freedom. As one of isiNguni proverbs says: '*ifa leziwula lidliwa yizihlakaniphi*' translated to mean, the inheritance of the fools is enjoyed by the wise, Tutu maintains that if proper caution is not taken, the status quo may be preserved and, or replaced. The very black liberators may, become the future oppressors. Tutu, probably maintains this position as a cleric and a theologian heeding, the call of other theologians like Dussel (1988: 95) who says: "*The authentic theologian can never become the ideologue of a party, however*

authentically revolutionary the party. The theologian will always maintain an eschatological, prophetic reserve, which will announce its presence through a critique stemming from the new Poor. . .”

It is forever true that every political system has its own type of the poor. This showed itself even during the zenith of colonialism, the better abled black African elite, and especially those among them who were economically successful, were already separating themselves from the majority of the peasantry. They for one, no longer subscribed to the traditional way of life and in many cases they rejected the authority of the traditional leaders. Oakes (1994: 207) says: “*The rejection of old values by the section of the Peas-*

antry caused great bitterness in the ranks of the traditionalists. Yet it was a split which had long been inevitable- for quite simply, the majority of the more successful cultivators were no longer peasants. In both deed and attitude they had become capitalist farmers: like their white counterparts, they sought tenants and wage-labourers to work their lands- and, like the whites, they exploited these workers wherever they could.”

The poor are always with us in many ways than we can imagine, they may not, necessarily, be indigenous to the country, but as is the case of the displaced people or refugees, they may be the poor who come from our neighboring countries. They become poor when they are not welcomed in the hosting countries, when they are treated with xenophobic attitudes. They become the new poor who are exploited in the abusive farm and industry systems, where they are outside the constitutional and legal protection of the

hosting country. They become the poor, who provide cheap labour at the expense of the legitimate call for just salaries. So it is a fact that the new poor are created continuously.

Ruch (1984: 318-319) says: “*Where there is freedom there may be domination. In fact, there always is. Then sin appears: someone suffers the effect of the domination. And behold new death, and the new poor-new in the sense of different.*”

The poor are created when Party names and the electioneering slogans are not realised after the elections. The problem arises when political Party leaders who have been voted in because of the promises they made, fail to deliver or do so only for a section of the people, mostly those who are card carrying members of the Party. In general, the masses, and especially, the non-party members are non people. It is these non-people who for this thesis constitute the poor, because they are the voiceless, the oppressed within the so-called liberated countries.

3. Adherence to, and fabricating impractical theories.

Why should one worry about majority rule, or even about the one party state system? Is it not part of the game that the winner takes all? Experience has shown that this attitude tends to have side effects that create what has been dubbed ‘the new poor.’ There are many factors that come into play in the creation of the so-called new poor. When, for example, the new leadership becomes extravagant, in the name of celebrating the newly earned liberation, when the ruling parties form themselves into cliques that are turned inwards forgetting the masses; when they unwittingly, allow the products of their

countries to be exported unrestrictedly at low prices they, in the long run, become responsible for the poverty of their countries. With regard to the latter situation Zweig

(1991: 153) says: “*Nevertheless, often advised by the World Bank and International*

Monetary Fund (IMF) experts, their governments typically sought to encourage peasants to grow even more export crops. Government officials viewed exports as primary source of revenue to finance new schools, hospital, roads, and ports as well as to support their swelling bureaucracies.”

One may argue against Zweig’s presentation and ask: If the money that issues from exporting the country’s resources will result in schools, hospitals and roads being built, why the fuss? One can build a school, but malnourished children will never benefit from it. If their peasant parents are encouraged to utilise all their fertile land for export crops, how will they feed the children? This is a vicious circle that needs to be addressed by most African leaders. What would be the reason to build a hospital, for instance, if no one was sick? It is absurd to create sickness so that one would build a hospital, yet this is what seems to be the case in most African states. We export our resources to get money for repairing the damage done by the very export. This is indeed absurd. It is for this reason that Zweig continues and says: “. . . *in their effort to expand export African Gov-*

ernments tended to neglect the production and storage of foodstuffs to meet their populations’ needs.”

The conclusion, therefore, is that, the poverty that Africa and its people experience results, not from the incapacity of our continent to sustain life. Many of the African

states, have some important resource which, if properly used, could guarantee minimum survival for their respective inhabitants. The causes of starvation and hunger are the unworkable theories and ideologies that some political leaders adopt without serious consideration of the long term consequences. *“Many of the economic maladies of the*

Third World are related to politics . . . Nkrumah in Ghana Nyerere in Tanzania, Toure in Guinea plunged their respective countries into decline by administration or policies motivated by ideology . . .” (Revel in Schall 1990:10).

Some of our leaders still operate as though they were members of school debating teams. They become very passionate and forceful about their theories and ideologies even when they know that in reality they could never work. Some of the political theories that the individual leaders push forward have caused harm to peoples' lives, mostly because they have not been properly researched, analysed and discussed with the people on whom they were to be applied.

It is true to say that any theory ought to be tested in terms of its content and utility, before it is applied in concrete situations. Bujo (1990:123) says even though his context is theological, fits well also for economic matters. He says: *“But we did not do any serious*

reflection on the question whether this product of our enormous industry could be of any use to the everyday practical proclamation of the Gospel in the innumerable villages and parishes of the continent. No wonder, then that not the slightest trace of this immense and, no doubt important labour, can be discovered in lived spirituality, for instance in sermons, catechetical instructions, or pastoral letters.”

The above quote from Bujo can fit well in the area of politics if one were to replace ‘*practical proclamation of the Gospel*’ by practical implementation of political promises, and ‘*sermons, catechetical instructions and pastoral letters*’ with, electioneering speeches and party manifestos. One commends the Government of the ANC in its effort to listen to the grass roots through its system of the ‘*Imbizo*’ or as the term is explained, the talking gatherings where ordinary people can engage the leaders, especially cabinet ministers, by presenting arguments, asking questions, and offering suggestions etc.

One can never build or run a country efficiently by simply being an orator and an idealist, as in religion people should be seen to practice what they preach. In politics, leaders should be people who in some way share the experiences of the masses. This helps them to create and implement working ideologies. Unfortunately this has not been the case with most post-colonial leaders. In most case as Schall (1990:51) implies: “*What causes*

insufficient food productions are fundamentally theories, values and ideologies that interfere with or fail to foster those means of achieving the planet’s capacity in this area. Some seem even to welcome starvation in order to prove their theories. Such controversy will continue to go on since man, the political animal, is really more interested in power than in food.”

4. *The persistence of the sin of oppression.*

In the opening paragraph, the writer mentioned that people do not want to exchange one form of dictatorship for another. The reason for the change of power and authority, is not

a mere putting of new people in position, but is it for the transform of the system? This latter point seems to evade many people especially those in positions. After the elections leaders weary of complaints about their failure to deliver tends to quickly brush off peoples's complaints as unrealistic and unreasonable. The singer Letta Mbulu, has captioned one of her songs '*Not yet Uhuru*' this alludes to the fact that we cannot claim that freedom has come when we are still living in shackles etc. If the status quo that exonerates abuse of the masses by the powerful, even when the so-called powerful are our own blacks then we are not yet free. Oglesby in Villa-Vicencio and de Gruchy (1994: 131) says: "*The Kairos Document reminds us that theology is most often used to*

legitimate the status quo. Status quo theology 'blesses canonizes the will of the powerful and reduces the poor to passivity, obedience and apathy. It divinizes the status quo and demonises the force of opposition or attempts to transform them.'"

4.1. *The effects of colonialism on the colonised mind.*

The colonisers did much damage to the black African mind. The psychological drilling to which the black minds were subjected has so shaped their thought patterns, that it has become almost, if not totally, normal to accept that white is good and black is bad. It has not been until recently that one has noticed how very differently one reacts to a white person than one does to black people. For example, when one's own black people come in one's house, one does not feel that he has to be apologetic about anything, one takes it for granted that they will understand, but as soon as it is a white person all kinds of feelings go on in one's mind, one begins to notice even the dust on one's couch.

Once a person, only on the basis of his/her colour, leads another into an examination of conscience, then something is seriously wrong. This is what happens in the colonised mind as soon as he/she encounters the coloniser. *“According to Fanon, colonial Domination produces a colonized personality in the indigenous peoples. The daily confrontations between the indigenous person and the colonial system inflict successive psychic injuries that lead to, among other things, the erosion of self respect. This is so because colonial oppression, of which racism is but one element, involves the invalidation of a peoples’ entire way of life, including the denigration of their language, dress, food and all accepted social mores”* (Mpako 1994: 18).

Colonial systems have become maxims against which the blacks check whether they are civilised.

As young boys and girls most of us thought that whiteness, or Europeanism, was a vocation or a profession, or at least something one could achieve through learning or something one could grow up to be. After being asked: ‘What do you want to be when you grow up, or what are you learning to be, the young African boy, or girl would proudly answer: ‘I want to be *‘umlungu’* (a European). It may be very interesting to research what the origins of the word *‘Mlungu’* are, because in Tanzania God is called *‘Mulungu* or *Murungu’*. Can it be that abaNguni perceived the white persons as some kind of gods? Any way, while it may be noble to wish to be like the gods, the way things have gone with colonisation one desires the opposite. However, unless one’s psyche has been completely decolonised, this may be harder to achieve since the mind has been completely overwhelmed. *“Direct or indirect colonial indoctrination has been so*

effective in many areas that the aboriginals have come to see themselves as grasshoppers in their own eyes and have become so mentally, despising wholeheartedly their own native cultures and religious values, and ultimately abandoning them and forgetting their basic tenets and practices” (Idowu 1973: 80)

It is a human fact that, once a system or an ideology has been sufficiently drilled into one’s mind, it tends to shape his/her character for a very long time. Colonialism, racism, apartheid, tribalism denominationalism etc. are systems within which we have grown and, like it or not, we are their products. We may try to suppress them but now and then they pop up in our relationships. “. . . *But in practice, in concrete terms, the mechanism of oppression and dependence continues-in disguise- just as it did before. A new element has been introduced: the authorities in the countries concerned have become accomplices in their own suppression as well as victims of It*” (Buhmann 1980: 39).

4.2. *The colonial psychopaths.*

When a person has been disoriented about who he/she should be, he/she also gets confused as to what he/she should want. Disorientation is a psychological sickness. The colonised personality is characterised by a series of disorientations, which include the loss of self worth and dignity, the loss of position and status, the loss of possessions, creativity and incentives. This produces personalities that have no sense of belonging; pilgrims who have no particular destinations, who are, as isiNguni calls them: ‘*imihamba ima*’. The basic assumption that creates the said ‘*imihamba ima*’ is as Mpako (1994: 20)

says: “. . . *the seizure of the productive processes and the subordination of the indigenous cultural whole to metropolitan economic interests creates a distinct deformation of personality.*”

This further, creates a series of mental disorders and attitudes that generally spell the colonised person as essentially sick. In the South African situation, one observes with pain how young people clamour for very useless Western items. It is sickness, for example, that the young single mothers, after getting the minimal child-support grant from the Department of Social Welfare, rush immediately to buy cell phones and leave the babies starving and dependent on their grand mothers’ pensions.

We are victims of what has been dubbed ‘*relative poverty*’, in other words we are paranoid about not being in the same position as our European counterparts, not that we cannot survive without what the white people have, but because we have been conditioned to think that the white man’s life style is better. We suffer from what Mpako (1994: 21) quoting Fanon calls ‘*the White Mask Syndrome.*’ And explains in these words,

“Consequently, as a defense against the burden of his or her race, the indigenous person would imitate the European’s manner of speech, dress, and when possible seek out white sexual partners. . . For the colonized African person, the only possible escape from the tragedy of being black was through entry into the social and cultural milieu of the European. All his efforts to make himself at home in the world were aimed to develop those features of personality and behavior, which would insulate him against his hatred of his own damning color.”

When one suffers from an inferiority complex which, by the way, is a psychopathological sickness, one develops symptoms of unwarranted self accusation, distrustfulness towards anything black, a lingering sense of self damnation and most seriously an innate desire towards self-destruction. That is perhaps the reason behind the apparent over use of alcohol, drugs and violence among the black South African. *“In the colonial world, the emotional sensitivity of the native is kept on the surface of his skin like an open sore which flinches from the caustic agent; and the psyche shrinks back, obliterates itself and finds outlet in muscular demonstrations which have caused certain wise men to say that the native is a hysterical type”* (Fanon in Mpako 1994: 23).

5. *Old wine in new skins* (Things fall apart.)

The leopard is safe on the ground, once it is in the air with the swallows it depends on them for survival. In the same vein the black African is at home within his/her culture, tradition and religious worldview. He/she is safe because he/she knows the rules of the game, once he is lured into a different ball game he/she can play only according to the set of rules as determined by the owners of the new game. In the name of modernity, education and the so-called organised culture and religion, the black Africans have abandoned even what was good and workable in their cultures and traditions. In their gullibility, they have come to accept that everything European is good. In his analysis of Achebe's *'Things fall Apart'* Onwubiko (1991:107) touches this point, though negatively when he says: Achebe *“... is preoccupied with writing an antithesis of the colonial view of the Igbo culture that he almost became himself a 'colonist' writer. In an attempt to*

show that the colonial agents of change, -the new religion, the new road and the trading store are one and the same forces that breaks up the clan, he treats them in a way that makes him neither respect the relationship between religion and culture nor faithful to elements of Igbo religion as essential to the nature of Igbo culture.”

It is such mildness as this, which Onwubiko suckled from Nwafor Orizu as he is proud to suggest, that at the end makes our black African leaders gullible in terms of bringing about and effecting the necessary transformation of administrative, social, political, cultural and even religious processes.

One gets excited when the issue of the African Renaissance is discussed, but then there is a temptation to ask: How African will the renaissance be, when the lives of its leaders and the constitutions of the countries that clamour for it, are still under the spell of America and its western allies? One hears of such slogans as ‘*buying proudly South African*’ and gets amazed to see that the only feature that is, in fact ‘*proudly South African*’ in commodities one buys, is the brand name on the collar or wrapping paper of the items. One has a feeling that if the call to the re-awakening of Africa is to be of any significance, there is a serious need for revisiting the true cultural values of the peoples of this continent. Our stances with regard to the preservation of life, communitarianism, meaningful relationships, for instance, need to be reintroduced.

In terms of religious transformation, the processes of inculturation are stalling, and the reason for this, surprisingly, is not the white missionary as one would have expected, but the very black church leaders, who say they are afraid that if too much power was to be

given to the so-called ordinary people and what they call radical clergy, the liturgy, for example, would not be the same any more. They say that any new thing or should one say, any old thing that is to be included in church matters ought first to be tested against the two maxims, the unity of the church and its compatibility with the universal church. There is a constant call for sensitivity in the area of change and transformation and in most cases this sensitivity is nothing but the maintenance of the status quo. In effect, this means no clapping, no dancing, no drumming etc. in church. Then you ask: How will the liturgy and the faith of the African be inculturated if the starting point is a no to any thing that is basically African? *“The real ‘implantation of the church’ has not yet taken place*

in Africa. We are not yet a ‘local’ church, but merely faded copy of the European churchWhereas Yahweh revealed himself as the God of the history of his people, we have had to take over fossilized forms and formulas from the history of another people” (Buhlmann 1980: 49).

One can guess who would most likely to be offended, when Africanising suggestions are made to the liturgy, if for bread, ‘*ujeqe*’ (mealie bread) or ‘*uphuthu*’ (stiff pap) be used, when it is hinted that for wine African beer and/or amahewu were suggested for the consecrating species. *“We are still celebrating the Eucharist with bread and wine and*

say: ‘Blessed are you Lord . . . you give us this fruit of the vine and work of human hands’ , although many of our simple folk have never in their life seen wine, and cannot identify themselves with this outlandish drink, fruit of the earth overseas! Our black people are still ignored and Christ is made responsible for this disdain, as if god would not share with us our ugali and fufu, and our banana or maize beer or

palm wine; as if the guests at Emmaus would refuse to stay with us and would move on –because we can offer them nothing but ugali and fufu and maize beer and palm wine” (Bujo 1990:121).

6. *His master’s voice.*

No regime ever wants to relinquish power completely, very few leaders really wish to step down, especially, if that will mean that the incoming regime will change their ideologies and ruling strategies. In most cases, when the colonial powers voluntarily stepped down, somewhere in their mind, something said live at least one finger in the pie. Unless capitulated, the imperial powers always wanted to have some control in their former colonies and in most cases they managed to have some people on the administrative level to guard their interests. The example is the South African Homeland system. The Apartheid government could never be expected, in its right mind, to give full sovereignty to persons that were not their allies. The prospective Homeland leaders had to be carefully screened before they could be vested with the right to command millions of disgruntled people, have military forces, and ‘own’ vast territories.

The writer thinks that he is exonerated in the above allegation by the fact that, most of the Homeland leaders, not surprisingly, became opposition parties together with their master (the apartheid government’s ruling National Party) no sooner than the new democratic government was established. They had assimilated the system of apartheid in its totality even when they ran the states that were given to them, their rule was an exact replica of

what their master had been doing for centuries before. In their case, racism was replaced by tribalism and nepotism, opposition was crushed in the same manner as the apartheid regime did, if not harsher, laws were streamlined to suit their bureaucracies etc.

In the area of religion, colonialism is still very operative, especially in the Christian institutional churches. Somehow the church leadership and structures have managed to have themselves declared immune from the wind of change brought by liberation movements. As a result the church is the only colonial structure that is still in command in African affairs and it, surely is keeping guard over the European interest in Africa. Its missionaries exist like implanted hearing devices that keep the mother countries informed about the goings on in the former colonies.

One can rest assured that the information and miss-information they report back home is not only good for their religious bosses, but it filters through to government offices and funding agencies as well. *“They are a product of their race which is distinguished by its unpleasant habit of being always giver and never a receiver. Thus, even the most well-intentioned missionaries will have difficulties in making the adaptation demanded of them. Without being aware of it, they are constantly contradicting themselves. They talk about wanting to respect the African personality, wanting to give free reign to the African church. But as soon as it is a question of concrete matters touching their interests, or convictions, they forget their principle and with all the toughness of their race they defend title of master and throw their opponent out of the ring”* (Buhlmann1980: 52).

Though the latter assertion is embarrassing, to say the least, but it is true that some sectors in our religious institutions do operate as the secret service, where espionage is rampant. The saddest thing of course is that some of our black African brothers and sisters allow themselves to be used for covert actions and thus play subversive roles to the establishment of a true African church.

The sad thing is that a strategy to look down at and to block the emergence of the local black clerical leadership has become in some quarters, the main tool in operation. After almost four centuries of Christianity in South Africa, for example, there is still a subtle assumption that the black African clergy is not yet ready to occupy the leadership seat in many so-called conventional churches. It is still very common that after the death or resignation of a particular white ecclesiastical leader, the post remains vacant for a very long time. When you ask about it, you are sure to have the classical response 'the suitable person is not available'. What and who the suitable persons are one never knows, but when he is finally available it will normally be a black person who either is a friend of one or more of the present white ecclesiastical leaders, who has worked closely with them, has studied in one of the famous colleges in Europe, or at least comes from a 'credible' religious congregations. If this fails they will revitalise a retired white priest.

The candidates for office are, in the final analysis, those who have been well, or at least are supposed to have been well grounded, in the spirit of 'their master's voice'. A movement of black priests calling itself 'African Catholic Priests Solidarity Movement, (ACAPSM) has recently produced a Pastoral Vision Plan, in which they raise this issue

as follows: “*With regard to Leadership, we propose . . . That the agenda of the Church reflects the real concerns of the black African majority in the Church. That the burning desire in many African Catholics to see the local church becoming part of the transforming South African society be factored into concrete pastoral practice of the Church and be treated as one of the urgent priorities.*” (Pastoral Plan Vision for the Church in Southern Africa 2000: 60-61).

It is sad to note that the work done by the churches, or should one say, some of its prominent leaders to topple apartheid, has not been followed through in terms of implementation after the 1994 democratic elections. While all this is done in our South African civil society to correct the structural imbalances, the churches are doing very little in the process of transformation. ACAPSM continues and says: “. . . *That in appointing Africans to positions of leadership in the Church – from the Bishops’ Conference down to the parish level – genuine African talent be identified, accepted and supported. That the tendency to appoint only those who go along with the status quo – while not taking the person’s vision and leadership abilities into serious consideration – be viewed critically as something that retards progress. That more African bishops, with clear leadership qualities and a vision for the future, be appointed. That, where applicable, those bishops who are nearing retirement age voluntarily accept to resign in order to make way for the appointment of African bishops of this caliber*” (Pastoral Plan Vision for the Church in Southern Africa 2000: 60-61).

It is very unfortunate that with regard to the latter statement some of the Roman Catholic leaders fail to sympathise with the country in the process of affirmative action and simply interpret and brush off the contention of their critics and black colleagues as mere clamouring or vying for positions.

There is a coinage among the clerics that says any one who seems over zealous to get the position of a bishop is suffering from '*episcopitise*' so, priests are afraid to come forward and be prophetic in case they are seen to be clamoring for elevation to higher positions. In many ways, the attitude of leaders has stunted genuine tackling of the issues of the racial problems within the church. Acknowledging that most of South Africa's poverty is, in the first instance, resulting from the racial imbalances, and that the churches claim to be the champions for justice and peace, one would think that the churches would be the first to cleaning their back yard.

CHAPTER TEN: *The traditional African subsistence economy.*

1. INTRODUCTION.

To study the economic system of a society apart from its political organisation can be a very difficult project. One might add here that it is as difficult to study the economic system of a society apart from its religious organisation. The reason for this is that the end result of all these systems, the economic system, the political and the religious organisation, is the structuralisation and the organisation of society for the benefit of all the persons of the said society. The dominance of the approach really depends on the system that has been adopted. If the angle from which society conceives of itself is religious, then the context and texture within which things are done will be religious.

“The logic of order sets this conjugating before the political system and the logic of economy works to the same with respect to the economic system” (McIvar 1937: 299).

2. *The meaning of the Phrase ‘Subsistence Economy’*

The etymological definition of the term ‘economy’ refers *‘the laws of the household’* which means that economics, essentially, operate as a small enterprise system to satisfy the minimum needs of a household. In the broader sense economics is one of the means whereby the society organises itself to face the general challenges of life especially those immediate to its needs, like housing, food, clothing and the like. The so-called laws of the

household deal, mostly, with the issue of production, control and equitable distribution. The primary duty of a household is first to identify the needs for its subsistence needs and tackle them systematically, for instance, how much is needed, for how long will the household survive with the amount targeted, and what means are available to achieve them. The term 'subsistence economy', also known as 'consumption economy' generally means: ". . . *producing just enough to meet own needs, as opposed to commercial. . . who produce primarily to sell*" (Aokes 1994: 63). Subsistence economy is non-accumulative, what is produced is fairly distributed among the members who participated in its production. It is a means whereby families self-subsist and self-perpetuate themselves. Subsistence economy is a need-based economy.

In the light of what has been just said, one would like to demonstrate how the traditional African economy was and why people tend to generally call it subsistent. Firstly, we have to remember that in the olden days Africa there was virtually no need to hoard food. Nature provided generously in terms of game for meat, and in terms of wild fruits and vegetables. Secondly, since the earth was for everyone living on it, there were no boundaries to mark private ownership. The earth's products were available to all, so nobody sold or found it necessary to buy anything as such. People took from nature only as much as they needed at a given time. This meant a piece of land for the establishment of one's home, piece of ground for his/her garden, from which to plant and reap what was necessary for the winter season, maize, corn, pumpkins, amadumbe and so on. This garden could be enlarged if the family grew. "*Nguni economy was based on the keeping of herds, hunting and cultivation of the 'slash-and-burn' type. The staple crop was*

sorghum, although maize was observed growing in the Transkei by shipwrecked Europeans in 1635. Added to these were melons, beans, bananas, sugar cane, tobacco and dagga. Some clans, in addition to cattle, also kept sheep, goats and poultry. Hunting produced not only food, but also materials for clothing and trade articles, such as ivory. They made pottery and knew how to mine and work iron” (Oakes 1994:64). See also (Peires1980: 5).

One central feature of the subsistence economy is its human-centeredness. Since it aims at who is to benefit from its engagements, it is ever conscious of the person’s ability and strength. In this sense people are not consumed in production as they are not forgotten in distribution. There is a healthy balance of relationship between the product and the producer. The other character of the subsistence economy is its respect for the means of production and the resources from which come the needed products. In the following sections especially the ones dealing with the attitude to work and the ecological aspects of the subsistence economy, these points will become clearer.

2.1. *The significance of food in social structuring.*

Like other cultures, the traditional African culture knew that food was very important and central to human life. They had experienced the effects of droughts, famine, locust swarms and other natural disasters to appreciate what it means to go without food. The preservation of food, therefore, became part of their general efforts, both as individuals and as communities, in the processes of securing life, strengthening and protecting it

against the anti-life forces. They had come to know that what tempers with the food sources tempers with life itself. Food was celebrated in all the important stages of its production and distribution. The seed was doctored before the planting season; it was doctored during its growing period against such things as hail storms and locusts. Nobody tasted the first fruits before the appropriate ritual ceremony had been performed. There was a great awe in both the production and distribution of food stuff. Food did not just come; it was a gift from God and the ancestors who in the last analysis had the last say in matters concerning it. When handling food and drink, people have to acknowledge the divine presence through the ritual of 'ukuchinsa' or 'ukushaya intshekele' (libation). The texture of a feast or ritual ceremony is marked by the presumed presence of the divinities than by the amount of food. *"The (ingcubhe, incwala and ukweshwama) ceremonies also have a religious aspect, as the tribal ancestors are called to share in the feasting, and the rite is in part a thanksgiving to them for the safe arrival of the harvest"* (Hammond-Tooke 1962: 193)

There were harvest ceremonies and big seasonal feasts and all these were meant to awaken in the community sincere reverence of this very important feature in human life, 'food'. Malinowski has this to say in this regard: *"... food has also a conspicuous role in ceremonies distinctly religious in character. First fruit offerings of a ritual nature harvest ceremonies, big seasonal feasts in which the crops are accumulated, displayed and, in one way or another, sacralized, play an important part among agricultural people. . . All such acts express the joy of the community, their sense of the great value of food, and religion through them consecrates the reverend attitude*

of man towards his daily bread.' He traces the development from fear of starvation to the rise of a feeling of dependence on Providence, and gratitude and confidence in it. . ." (in Hammond-Tooke 1962: 193).

The African of traditional background enjoyed food to a point that many people especially those of different backgrounds concluded that the Africa indulged in eating, something that is an exaggeration if not an insult, all cultures have their gluttons. The *ingcubhe*, *incwala* and *ukweshwama* ceremonies apart from being mere rituals, also took into consideration the other natural effects of food. It alerted the community against the wrong uses of food. For example, people were taught not to jump at food as animals do, that it is necessary to wait until food is properly ripened and prepared.

It is very interesting that the expression '*ubunja*' (acting like a dog) is normally and reservedly use for the particular attitude towards food. When, for example, a child simply grabs the plate without respectfully stretching both hands and simultaneously expressing gratitude he/she is reprimanded for having acted in '*ubunja*, or *ubugovu*' way. The latter expression '*ubugovu*', is normally used for gluttons or for those, especially children who are greedy and jealous. The expression '*abantwana bomuntu bahlephulelana ngisho inhloko yentethe*' captures the aspiration of sharing no matter how small the item.

"Gluckman considers the economic and nutritional aspects of the ceremony as fundamental-a control of the energies developed from new food (which often leads to drunkenness and quarrels, especially if crops of neighbours ripen at different times)-the canalization of pulsing life, both mental and physical, that comes with the end of

dearth and a marked increase in the food supply, and the control of thriftlessness”
(in Hammond -Tooke: 193).

2.1.1. *Food is also politics.*

Perhaps one also needs to discuss the political and military aspects of the first fruit ceremonies. The writer thinks that it is to reduce the true meaning of the ceremony, to think that it was centered merely on the strengthening of the armies. Indeed there was a strong presence of the army and unless people really knew it could be mistaken to be a preparation for war the example of which is reported by Beinart and Bundy (1987: 67) when reporting about a particular situation in Umzimkhulu he writes: “*The repeated*

reference to doctoring as a sign of rebellion raises an interesting point. The Ntlangwini still held an annual first-fruit ceremony at this time; one of its elements was a ritual in which the men were strengthened for war. Moreover, the first-fruits ceremony usually took place over a month in December/January –a period that coincided with two important phases of the rural scare. . . But it is likely that the leading settlers such as Strachan and Bovill, whom the magistrates cited as being highly influential in the formation of farmers’ thinking, used the ceremony, and the gatherings and the rumours which accompanied it as a means of unifying whites in East Griqualand.”

For the writer the first fruit ceremonies in these instances, had a nutritional reason as well in the consideration of the armies. Food is a symbol for strength, it is further a symbol for

the tribe's self-efficiency, both can be shown in the warriors parading in the presence of their chief or king, whose health and strength is logically affirmed in the strength and health of his people, special among them the warriors who defend the values of the community. *"The ritual of the Friday with the killing of the bull further illustrate this.*

The bull must be thrown by the young warriors without ropes, a demonstration of their strength and bravery, and, as we have seen, the bull can perhaps only be understood as the representation of the enemy" (Hammond -Tooke 1962:197).

2.1.2. *Ingcubhe: First fruit ceremonies as celebrating the woman.*

It the spirit of what was said in the opening paragraph of chapter seven, it is very important to note that in the final analysis, the first fruit ceremonies were in essence a subtle tribute paid to the womenfolk, the real agriculturists. It was their crops that were in the center of the celebrations. It is no wonder, therefore, that within the war songs and the military marches, the shrilling voices of women's ululation was heard. In a subdued manner they were celebration the mythical corn-queen 'uNomkhubulwana' the goddess of fertility for whom they were the representatives. *"There was . . . Nomkhubulwana the*

Sky Princess, who first taught them how to cultivate the fields and brew good beer. But she was a myth. The Corn-Mother who was the real fact, who actually wrought the miracle and made the former barren earth to bear fruit, and filled the granaries with corn and the home with charming babies, was that robust and laborious drudge, the Zulu housewife" (Bryant 1949: 297).

3. *The traditional African: A worker and a producer.*

In the advent of industrial societies where the emphasis is on production for its sake, the traditional African understanding of work as means for survival, has been thrown apart and unfortunately, the traditional Africans, if not the black Africans in general have been characterised as lazy. He/she sees no reason for labour when enough has been accumulated for the immediate needs. Lazy indeed for he/she does not see the logic in leaving his/her home to render domestic services that the white man/woman can do for their families. This is what the black African has had to do for centuries as domestic workers, they run the houses, rear children, dig gardens etc, but this in their minds can be done as efficiently by the white madams and sirs. *“A thinking observant stranger visiting South Africa will soon be struck by the obvious inconsistency between the statement he there everywhere hears, namely, that the Natives are a ‘lazy lot’, and the fact he there everywhere sees, that virtually all the hard work there done, is performed by Natives . . . whilst the criticizing Whiteman himself (whenever he can get the chance) confines his physical ‘activity’ to-looking on”* (Bryant 1949: 373).

To suggest, even to a minutest degree, that traditional Africans had no concept of work or indeed, to hint that they did not apply themselves to it is to deny that they had needs, because every living thing, rational and non-rational, is naturally set in motion towards those things that will satisfy their needs. To some extent the climatic conditions in some parts of Africa were conducive for easy life and resources were plentiful, but one must not fall into the pit of concluding that traditional Africans had no need to work. Amidst

this apparent abundance people still needed to collect and prepare the resources before they could use them. *“Life is action. A living being consumes energy and that energy must be replaced. . . ‘Need’ is to be defined as any lack of the necessities of life. Need includes hunger, cold, homelessness, illness, and so on. To be ‘in need’ is to open oneself to the world in search of the elements that will satisfy that need”* (Dussel 1986:114).

In the case where the need pushes the living being to produce what is needed as in the case of the iron hoe ‘*ilembe*’ that umZulu iron smith had to produce then we talk of production. In this sense, then traditional Africans were not just workers they were, in their own right, producers as well. *“But when the useful object is not within reach of one’s need – when it stands outside the pragmatic circle – one must obtain it, ‘produce’ it . . . Now the useful thing, the thing needed, is no longer the object of the openness of praxis alone, the object of need, but becomes the object of poiesis, ‘production,’ as well”* (Dussel 1986:114).

The traditional African went out to seek those needed things in order to make his/her life comfortable and therefore, was involved in the processes of *poiesis*. Among the black Africans, work and production were relative to the needs and were, as such measured according to the needs.

‘I work to live and not live to work’. This is perhaps the best slogan to describe the traditional African’s economic attitude. Here one has no aim for work other than to produce what one needs. Labour is part of being and cannot be seen as an anti-life force.

For the traditionalist work becomes destructive when production and profit re worth more than the producer. “. . . *human work has an ethical value of its own, which clearly and directly remains linked to the fact that the one who carries it out is a person, a conscious and free subject, that is to say, a subject that decides about himself*” (John Paul 11 in Shutte 1993:126).

The worker is at the center of labour he/she directs it and not the opposite, one is drawn to work for nothing else other than the satisfaction of one’s and one’s dependants needs. One produces for specific persons and not just for anticipated numeric, therefore, labor and production are directed and are qualitative than quantitative. The quality of the goods produced, is meaningful to the one who produces them as they are to the one for whom they are produced. This is why no one participates in the products unless the relationships are good. If the receiver of the products is known and loved personally, then the quality of the product bears the characteristics of love as a gift to enhance the receiver.

The goods are gifts from heart to heart before they are simple articles of exchange. They convey the feeling of being known and loved to the receiver and thus evoking a sense of respect, so that to abuse what is given in love becomes equivalent to being ungrateful, and disrespectful to the giver. The product, produced and given in love, takes on the character of the giver who translates him/herself into the gift. That is the reason why traditional Africans refused to participate in a meal with someone unless they were in good terms. One’s food is poison as he/she is poison to those with whom he/she is not reconciled.

There is trans-substantiation where the product takes on the characteristics and the intended meaning of the giver. As the uniting force the product affirms both the producer and the beneficiary in their relationships. This means that work must be done in an atmosphere of freedom, peace and joy an atmosphere of song and calmness in the one who engages in it. There should be no coercion to do it other than the anticipated expression of pleasant joy of giving/donating the product to the loved ones who are anticipated to receive it joyfully. The pleasure, the joy is not motivated by any material gain but by itself, therefore, motivation to work is self empowered, there is no competition between the workers and no slave driving from the management. “*Work of this kind, since it is not the expression of a creative desire, but only a means to satisfy an animal need, has a dehumanising effect on people that shows in the mindless sometimes brutal forms of leisure activity it generates. Life alternates between the forced activity of work and the drugged passivity of leisure. Furthermore the nature of the work is determined by the nature of the product rather than the person of the worker, and this can reinforce its dehumanizing effect*” (Shutte 1993: 130 and 131).

3.1. *Work within the theology of vital force.*

In a philosophy that revolves around the life issues, one's labour is adjudged in terms of its contribution to life, whether it serves to strengthen, or diminish it. In this vein, when the traditional African worked, the purpose had definitely to take either of the two considerations into cognizance. The basic question as to the etiology of work was: Was one working to enhance the life force, or was she/he aiming at its destruction? For indeed there is such a thing as working against life and its processes, when one considers, for instance that witches, in the African worldview, spend sleepless nights working to destroy the life of their victims. Even if the witch-theory was to be pushed away as mere superstition, one would have to contend with neighborhood jealousies and spite which in many cases lead to destruction of property and sometimes to the destruction of life. It is a known fact that many African states spend more time, resources, money and energy just to keep political and racial wars going.

The issue of work and its role in the enhancement of life helps one to reiterate a contention that, in the traditional African thinking, there could never have been a strictly, or a purely economic consideration with regards to labour. Work had as its object, the person and had no meaning if at the end it did not affect relationships. The abaNguni termed un-centered or unfocussed labour as '*ukuphandela emuva njengenkukhu*' literally meaning to push the soil backwards as a fowl. They would further say one carries a log as a monkey '*uthwele ugodo okwenkawu*'. Relationships were prioritised over material gain. Persons became the centers around which every thing revolved. In this regard one cannot

but agree with Tempels (1959: 145) that the Bantu law “. . . *is essentially a law about persons rather than a code concerning good. It is a law about the vital force and life, it is not a law of goods, property and their transference.*”

For the African, therefore, the worker is a person in relationships, before he/she is a producer. Work itself is a redeemer's tool that alleviates the human problem. By his/her labour one acts as a savior, mending and refocusing what has been broken or destroyed after creation. This is so true if one considers that by sharing the fruits of one's labor, one saves those who for one reason, or another, have been degraded (rendered less human) by circumstances usually manipulated by evil, or ant-life forces. This is why when expressing gratitude, especially for the much needed assistance, the abeNguni will refer to the actions in creative and redemptive terms, for example, the one assisted would say: 'ungizalile' (you have given birth to me) 'ungakhile' (you have created, or made me) 'ungenze umuntu' (you have made a person out of me) 'ungikhululile' (you have liberated me). Speaking of the Buluba Tempels (1959: 145) makes this interesting note.

“When a Buluba agrees to lend 110 francs to a man of another clan . . . the borrower will admit, and all the Buluba will agree with him, that he had been “saved”, “delivered” by the lender.”

When umNguni says: 'usebenzile' (you have worked) he/she does not always mean you have been involved industrially in work that involved sweating, or required physical strength. In certain instances, the verb 'ukusebenza' means, simply, that one has done something good, that one has been life-giving in one's actions etc. For instance, when

one sees a storm approaching and rushes to close the windows and rescues the washing of his/her neighbour the neighbour will say in gratitude 'usebenzile, ungizalile etc.' There is no energy involved in closing a window, but a good and a life affirming act was done. In this sense to act lovingly equals affirming the life of the one to whom you show that love. Though one is not quoting him word for word one thinks that Dussel (1988: 10) thinks of this when he maintains that: Praxis is a relation of love for the other for his/her sake- it includes respect, dealing with the other as a sacred being – as holy. Love for the other in view of that other's own reality-without seeking to gain anything from him/her. It is the other as the other that is the object of love.

When the traditional African worked it was definitely not for the accumulation of wealth per se but for the enhancement of life for him/herself obviously, and for all those dependent on him/her. The traditional African worked as someone's father, mother, son, daughter, brother, sister cousin, and neighbour etc. In other words people worked for some one specific and in working they tried to transform themselves into gifts that were to be donated to another.

Work was a commitment to the loved ones. The worker was objectified in the product so that the product itself was subjectified to stand in proxy for the giver. Rejecting the gift was tantamount to rejecting the person who gave it. There is no insult as serious among abeNguni as to refuse the gift that one offers you. In refusing a gift, or taking it disrespectfully, you, in essence, are either saying, the one who is giving it is not on equal status with you, or worse still you are suspecting him/her of witchcraft. With regard to

the former the writer refers the reader to Bryant (1949:210) who says: “*An inferior always received an article from a superior . . . with both hands outstretched side by side, palm upwards (ukukhangeza). To receive with one hand only would imply superiority in the receiver, or at least equality or familiarity between the parties.*”

The work ethic is based on the theory of relationships. One works in order to be better able to serve thus saving others by the fruit of his/her labor. The truth of this is evident when one remembers what the first thing an African of traditional background does when he/she gets his/her first salary, or wins a lottery. His gratitude is expressed in celebrating in honour of his ancestors, obviously, but also to pay back in kind to his friends and relatives for the kindness given him when he/she was in need. The fruits of one's labor are gratuitous gifts from God and the ancestors, therefore, gratitude must be shown. This accounts for the many thanks-giving rituals in traditional African life. The significance of which is in the salvific effects it has on the ontological order, the order of the life force. One can conclude, therefore, that the traditional African economy is based on the general African spirit of celebrating life. It is aimed for specific, known and loved, persons and is meant to evoke in them the sense of belonging to a community that is interested in them not just as unknown clientele. It is meant to enhance someone's life to which it gives priority and preference over monetary value.

Unlike the market-based economy, traditional African economy is not specifically aimed at profit and personal gain. It is not an accumulation-based economy. It is not an economy that provides its particular goods and services to the so-called general public that possesses no name or meaningful relatedness save only as unknown clients for whom one does not care. The traditional African economy is based on production of goods and

services in as much these respond to the demands, it does not create or fabricate the demands in anticipation of the response or reaction of the public. Unlike the economic association which works for the market and solely for profit and thus detached from the personal consideration, the traditional African economy urges people to work for their immediate and specific demands.

As the writer has said already, in the traditional African economy the client is known and, therefore, the product is dove-tailed to suite his/her needs as a relational person. This is perhaps the reason why many a hard liner economist would describe the traditional African as lazy. In fact it ought not to be labeled laziness if one considers that production has no other aim than to satisfy the needs. Once the demands have been met there is no further reason for supplying them. The traditionalist saw no reason for labor apart from its end that, for them was to enjoy and affirm life. They never saw it as means, solely for production. They anticipated no demands beyond what they needed in a particular situation. The personal consideration in production helped, tremendously, to fashion products of quality that would be meaningful for someone specific. It also helped to make the reception by the targeted consumer also a qualitative reception that allowed for no extravagance, destruction and abuse some thing that surely accounts for the absence of alcoholics and drug edicts in traditional African culture.

People knew what they needed and used it as they needed and not more. Their respect for the product stemmed from their respect for the producer. And, because, the products were loving gifts to others there was no force necessary to push or pull the client into using

them. What one sees in the supply and demand economy is that demands are created and monitored by the producer at the expense of the client, where cohesive advertising industry forms part of the economic strategies.

In traditional African economic system the item becomes a gift from heart. If one sells something to another the deal is not concluded by the exchange, but by the utility of the item of exchange. For example, if one buys a cow and it dies soon after the purchase, the buyer has to be given another as a matter of justice. If it fails to give him the needed calves it has to be replaced. *“Should any body regret a bargain he can at time reverse it.*

Purchased cattle (as, for instance, a cow which does not get calves) maybe returned after years, and former owner is bound to take it back and reverse the bargain. If a purchased cow, goat, or sheep dies soon after the purchase, the fat and meat of the dead animal is taken to the former owner, who accepts it and pointing to his kraal, says that it has not died yet, by which he means that he will choose or “form,” as the correct expression says, another cow; goat, or sheep to supplant the dead one” (Wessmann 1908: 36).

This is the basis of the theology of accompanying and presence, where one goes with the other to ensure that the services rendered are qualitative and meaningful for him/her even after the actual exchange has taken place. The joy of this kind of economy is in seeing the other happy and his/her life enhanced. It does not break into the other’s life as a thief to parasite on it; but it comes in humane manners of (ubuntu) and secures lasting interpersonal relationships. It does not create dependency, but allows the other his/her

freedom to choose. This system does not make people to end up being mere consumers, but it gives them scope to fare as free participating agents. This ensures, that at the end of the day, neither the worker (the producer) the employer and the buyer (the client) nor the raw material the (product) is over consumed or manipulated. This produces a tri-dimensional aspect of the traditional African thought of the 'I, Thou and thing' relationship.

3.2. *Work: a Means for forging community.*

When one talks of community, one means essentially a group of people living in the consciousness of one another. A consciousness that does not merely mean the awareness of the other but most importantly the involvement with the other, willing to share deeper with the other in terms of life; a community of love; a community that recreates the other.

“The friendship of many individuals, once scattered but now joined together, once forming a ‘crowd’ but now established in the face-to-face of unity, is what we call ‘community’. A ‘community’ is so called because it holds all things in ‘common’. . . In community all individuals are persons for one another their relationships are ‘practical,’ and this praxis is that of the love that is charity: each serves the other for that other, in friendship of all persons in all things” (Dussel 1988: 11).

The philosophy of relationships, apart from stressing the values of presence *to* the other, also, most fundamentally, expresses the presence *for* the other, welcoming and accompanying the other, as it were, in his/her life's journey. We relate to others through

things and these relational things are obtained from nature through our work. So the fruits of our work provide a connection point between us and the persons with whom we are communing. There are two steps that need to be considered in being community. In the first place, our desire is to touch other persons; calling them to cooperate and participate with us. In the second place we seek the cooperation and participation of impersonal things which involves creativity and transformation of the environs. It has to be kept in mind that the philosophy of relationships concentrates on sharing, which on the empirical level can only be observed as people give one to another the fruit of their labor. To foster the spirit of sharing, from their childhood, humans are taught the values of sharing. Never mind how small an item is, it must be shared. This is what the Nguni mean by sharing even the head of a locust “. . . *And we realize ourselves only through our dependence, on other persons firstly, but also on our impersonal environment as well. Work is the sphere of human life where the personal and the impersonal are most intimately connected. In the personal realm it involves the co-operation of persons in common work; in the impersonal realm it involves the transformation of the world by labour to make it a hospitable milieu for human life*” (Shutte 1993: 124)

It is not only in the good things of life that people are called to help and to share. They are not only to share in the fruit of others' labor but they are called to co-operate, if possible in the production, gathering and processing thereof. While one talks of the 'extended sharing' one must simultaneously allude to 'extended participation. This is behind the famous African expression that says: '*a visitor is only a visitor for three days after this give him/her a hoe.*' When you pass by the way and see others putting up a

house you must help in the hope that one day the same house will provide shelter for you.
'Akudlulwa ngendlu yakhiwa'.

One can miss out on the joys of life if he/she simply waits for the fruit of the labor without actively contributing to its production, or hopes that someone will do things for him/her. In fact no one is meant to slave for others *'Akukho nkwali ephandela enye'*. The person of the abaNguni clan (baffled at the non-participatory attitude of other) indignantly snaps and says: *'nangibukela sengathi ngiyamithisa'* this implies that only time when people are expected not to participate is when the couple is engaged in the act of making of a child. In all other activities every one must participate. *"Like many other aspects of our tradition which share the same fate, African hospitality is, today, being distorted into a vicious parasitism. In the past, a guest staying even only for a few days, would gladly join in the common work in order to earn his own and his host's food"* (Bujo1990: 91).

The Zulus say that the reason why the rock rabbit has no tail is that it kept on hoping that one of the other animals was going to bring one for it. All who wish to enjoy the joys of life must work towards achieving them. *'God helps those who help themselves'* is one of the traditional African expressions that is used to induce people to do something about their plight. In this way all forms of handouts that eventually create unnecessary dependency are discouraged.

3.3. ***Let us bake and break bread:*** (*Work presupposes sharing*)

'*Kudliwa ngandoda*' is an isiNguni expression that means, people are not normally blessed with prosperity simultaneously. The one who has must share with those who do not have. This means, further, that when after toiling, one enjoys the fruits of his/her labour, those around must be welcomed to share and to do so as though they were part of the ownership of what is enjoyed. For the community to physically participate, somebody must have toiled to present the food, the fruit of human work. "*In order to break bread*

together, to share bread . . . there must be bread. Bread is the fruit of toil. At the same time it is made for another. Therefore the relationship it incorporates is not only productive (person to nature) but also practical (person to person) The presiding relationship in the offering of bread to one's sister or brother in the community – and to God in the eu –charist – is practico-productive: to the other is given the fruit of production. This complex relationship is called 'economic' (bestowing, offering, selling, buying, robbing and so on, something to or from someone)" (Dussel 1988:12).

In the African understanding assistance is always given to others, to enable them to succeed in their efforts and to provide the proverbial supply of bread for sharing. The whole issue of '*isipheko*, or *ukuphekisa*' at festivals, points to the interest that people have in promoting another's feast far beyond what they could ever achieve alone. This is also known as '*umxhaso*' literally meaning support given to other. Long before the feast is to be hosted brothers come to pledge their support to the one who has proclaimed a

celebration. One brother says: *'Ngikuxhasa ngenkomo'*, I support with a cow, another *'ngikuxhasa ngembuzi'*, I support you with a goat, and so on. It must be remembered that *'inkomo'* and *'imbuzi'* are sacrificial animals and as soon as they are involved the ancestors are invoked. The one who supports with them is in fact supporting or pledging and implicating the ancestral spirits with the aim of securing some of the blessings. So if the host was going only to slaughter one cow and consequently receive one cow's worth of blessings he ends up having two or more cows and blessings, then there is enough bread, as it were, to feed the whole village. The neighbours will come on with their *'izipheko'* one a calabash of beer, another some samp mealies, another rice etc. They are not happy only to eat but to offer what is to be eaten. This is what one means by extended sharing. *"By sharing food an intimate relationship is reaffirmed, and in that sharing the dead and living are present, not as distinct groups, but as members of a single community"* (Taylor 1963: 147).

The true meaning of the phrase *'I am because I participate'* is apparent here.

'Injobo enhle ethungelwa ebandla', is an isiZulu expression that literally means a beautiful gear is the one that was made in the presence of others. It becomes beautiful because while it is being done others' views on how it should be done are accommodated. Figuratively the expression means work done in solitude seldom succeeds. In the African traditional view, work always has a social dimension in that in it all who participate must come to some sort of consensus as to how it must be accomplished. Let us imagine what would happen at a hunting site, if the hunting party *'ingqina'* had not previously planned on how to approach a leopard, a lion or a buffalo, many would surely be wounded or

even killed. *“It (work) is the sphere where individuals are most dependent on co-operation and agreement with others if their projects are to be successful, and where the community depends most on the willing and intelligent participation of individuals”*(Shutte 1993: 125).

4. The ecological perspective of traditional African economy.

Many anthropologists and students of traditional African way of life have, in one way or another, come across a stalemate when it comes to how the black Africans fit nature into their way of life. The said stalemate has led some to conclude that the traditional African worldview involves animism, understood to mean that things possess spiritual elements; that they have souls; others have concluded that it ends up in pantheism understood as the diffusion of the divine nature in all the things etc.

While it is true that the traditional African conceives of him/herself as being the center of attraction and everything as being there to serve his/her interests, he/she nevertheless, acknowledges him/herself as being in community not only with other human beings but with all supernatural and the natural beings in his/her general world. And these other beings are very alive since they in their different manifestations are imbued with a living force of their own with which they participate in the common good of the community.

They have powers that need to be reckoned with. Mbiti (1975: 62-63) talks about prayers for man's work and emphasises the importance of pleading with the natural things that

are going to be operated on as people work. Let us take the first stanza of prayer 68 for instance. It reads: "*O Earth, wherever it be my people dig, be kindly to them. Be fertile*

when they give the little seeds to your keeping. Let your generous warmth nourish them and your abundant moisture germinate them. Let them swell and sprout, drawing life from you, and burgeon under your fostering care: . . ."

In African traditional worldview nature is treated with consideration, one does not just pick up the tools and work. There is communication with, and doctoring of the tools. When the writer discussed the 'ingcubhe', the first fruit ceremony above, he alluded to the important aspect of doctoring the armies, especially their shields and spears. In analysing the above prayer Mbiti (1975: 62-63) says: "*Prayer 68 . . . summons the earth*

to be kind, fertile and generous to the people who dig, sow and work on it . . . a beautiful expression of man's wish to be in absolute harmony with the earth on which he depends for his livelihood . . . In conclusion the prayer calls upon the earth, the forest and rivers to conspire together . . ."

This is what one wants to call the ecological aspect of work in traditional African worldview. Nature is respected to the point of almost anthropomorphising it. Ecology (traditional African style) is the realisation that if nature is used without feeling and consideration it will kick back. It is as though the traditional African believes that nature has the capacity to avenge itself, which in fact is not entirely untrue when one observes what is happening as a result of the misappropriated actions of the human beings. The ozone layer is said to have been destroyed because of the chemicals we let loose into the atmosphere, the climate has changed because of the destruction of the rain forests, all these, affect human life in the long run.

Work must be considered from its tri-dimensional aspect, all of which revolves around the enhancement and giving meaning to the life. In the first place it enhances and gives meaning to human life; through work human beings make their existence meaningful and bearable. In the second place, work connects humanity to the realm of the divinities and thirdly it reveals the significance of material things, thus showing their potential as indispensable valuables in interpersonal relationships. With regard to the latter work is very important because it calls for respect of the material things one uses. For example, if one deals with the land, if not for its sake, one must respect it at least because of its rightful owners God its creator and the ancestors who are buried in it. *“No distinction can be made between sacred and secular, between natural and supernatural, for Nature, Man and the Unseen are inseparably involved in one another in a total community”* (Taylor 1963: 64).

Land, or the earth in this case, is not simply a geographical thing and part of a simple topological map, but it is more a ‘geological map’ not a simple piece of earth but a *‘field of action’* in the words of Bohannan in Apostel (1981: 306). This is where we talk of the affinity of things where the phrase ‘I am because we are’ becomes significant. The I–Thou and the I– thou (thing) relationship and the face to face reality that breathes life and animates and revitalises the individual and makes him/her/it a member of the sanctified community can only be understood in this affinity.

Through work, human beings with the help of impersonal nature, further improve and transform the environments. The morality of work has to be seen in relation to the preservation of life, its creativity is to be seen in the light of community building. The

basic aim of work is the taming, transformation and in certain instances the recreation of the environment by labor. In this way humans make it a hospitable milieu for human life and for other creatures that depend on humanity for survival. Taming the environs means transforming them into pro-life agents, establishing loving and friendly rapport with them. The fisherman, for example, knows how many of his colleagues have been swallowed by the untamed and antagonistic rivers and as such has realised that:

“Nature’s riches are not to be exploited carelessly, or lightly, going to fish he negotiates with it or its spirit in a personified manner, ‘O, river I beg leave to take fish from thee, as my ancestors did before me.’ This is another example of man wanting to be in harmony with nature: rivers, water, crocodiles, and fish . . . man treats nature as he would treat a friend with respect. . . O river, rise up, engulf your sharp-toothed monsters and permit our young men to enter the water and enjoy themselves with the fish without being harmed” (Mbiti 1975: 67).

People do not only transform their environments into hospitable abode, but they indirectly transform themselves into kind and generous neighbours. As they engage with the natural resources, they discover energies and potentials in themselves and in this way are able to distinguish themselves as masters over other creatures taking, therefore, their rightful position in the universe as the only beings among the creatures that take responsibility for their destiny. Through their power to transform, human beings give meaning to other creatures where an ordinary bulb, a leaf, a cow, a horse etc. realises its potential and destiny as it becomes food, medicine and means of transport and sometimes a connecting point with the world of spirits and the divine. In this way the cow, the horse,

the grass, the stone and so forth, has become a contributor in the transformation of the world and the development of humanity. This is the community and cooperation that human work aims to bring about in the world of relationships. “. . .*but fundamentally all things share the same nature and the same interaction one upon another – rocks and forest trees, beasts and serpents, the power of the wind and waves upon a ship, the power of the drum over a dancer’s body, the power in the mysterious caves of Kokola, the living the dead and the first ancestors, from the stone to the divinities a hierarchy of power but not of being, for all are one, all are here , all are now*” (Taylor 1963: 64).

The worth of the nonhuman creatures cannot be under estimated in the love relationship that is found in the community of beings. They are important partners that need to be taken seriously. It is when they enable humanity to express themselves in their love relationships that lesser creatures reveal their dignity. The worth of persons is observed to be who they really are when they share, or when they fail to share their material possessions. On the level of aesthetics we as human beings are helped by our lesser counterparts to show our self worth. This is what Shutte (1993:125) means when he maintains that as human being develop “. . . *new tools, new means of communication, new source of energy, food medicine, housing, transportation, instruments of learning and education are developed.*”

In religious sphere some of these lesser creatures are animated with spiritual vigor and thus become sacramental. Which means that they become visible instruments for the

inward spiritual fulfillment. This is how totemism comes about, where a cow is no longer a mere source of nourishment as meat, but a sacred tool for communicating with the divine. The nonhuman objects do become religious items. This is what is meant by MacIver (1937: 317) in defining religion in these words “ . . . *religion implies an attitude of man not primarily to his fellow man, but to some power beyond his range, a power regarded by every monotheistic religion as supreme . . . The church is a form of association in which men enter into relations with one another ostensibly determined by a proper relationship to nonhuman being or beings, whether a universal spirit, a local god, a ghost, a dead ancestor, even a stick or stone regarded as imbued with supernatural might.*”

4.1. *Some ethico-theological contemporary resonances of traditional African ecological aspirations.*

A need is felt in the world, for new approaches towards our planet earth, there is an urgent call for saving the planet and ourselves by protecting the little we still have left for the sustenance of life. It has suddenly dawned for certain people and organisations that unless the plundering of the earth’s resources is curbed our future generations will not survive. “*This point cannot be over stressed. If we do not develop a new theology, ethic, and social attitude about land (social ethos), whether it be from nuclear incineration, nuclear winter, or desertification as a consequence of human abuse, the result will be the same – another lifeless planet within our galaxy*” (Weber et al 1985: 69).

There are many causes that can be attributed to the disintegration of our natural ecosystem, but the main and the most important cause as Schumacher in Weber et al

(1985: 71-72) maintains is the: “. . . *disinheritance of future generations and the erosion of our self – understanding of what it means to be human in term of relationships to each other and to all life and its resource base of the whole creation . . . of our relationships to the common heritage of land.*”

The importance of created things derives from their God–given dignity. For this reason to use them without acknowledging that their creature-liness is tantamount to their Godliness. If the relationship between them and humanity is soured then in the final analysis the relationship between humanity and God will also be affected. This is the basis of the traditional African prayers for man’s work discussed in section three above. As Mbiti (1975: 63) in his analysis of the content of the traditional African prayers implies, “. . . *All these sentiments show man’s wish to have a harmonious relationship with nature, without treating nature exclusively as a utility. If man abuses nature, nature will, in return, abuse him.*”

Though, seemingly, the prayers are directed to the creatures that will be engaged with in work, the traditional African cantor knew and unequivocally accepted that the power these creatures have is God’s and it is God who controls them.

The traditional African ecological concerns are not antagonistic to Scripture or vice versa. In the Holy Scriptures especially the Old Testament creation as represented by the land or earth, is presented in a manner that reminds us that God is its primary owner and that our involvement with it is that of proxy and therefore, we cannot use it as we wish. We are creatures ourselves and therefore, we cannot, strictly speaking, talk of using creation, rather we must talk of our relation with it. In this sense we are partners and

colleagues, not its lords and masters. Reflecting on Psalm 104 Freudenberger says: “*We are not free to do with the land as we please; rather the human responsibility is to relate to the land (not to use it) as responsible stewards, as species capable of reflection and able to express gratitude for life and for the created order of planet earth, in its galaxy, that sustains life and human history, that sustains the history of the evolution of this miraculous thing called life and its fullness*”(in Weber et al 1985: 74).

In the section about subsistence economy the writer has constantly mentioned that economy as the law of the house/home concentrates on the day to day needs of the family. It is not interested in the hoarding of things. In the subsistence economic language, enough means the amount needed for the family to sustain its life. The good father/ mother is the ones who has just the right amount to keep the life of the family going. “*Thus, our work and relationships have to be evaluated in the light of whether they restore and preserve the resources and relationships within creation and contribute to the maintenance of full justice and right order (an ecological concept). We are called as a human community to understand the blessings of life, not in terms of bountiful harvests, but rather as steady flow of daily life*” (Weber et al 1985: 75).

5. *Traditional African politic-economy.*

The traditional African economy essentially means the ordinary gathering of things necessary for subsistence. It, therefore, has little to do with accumulation of wealth for the purpose of control and domination. In traditional African thinking positions and economic power are primarily for service. For this reason one cannot discuss the economic issues without taking into account the political aspect of the African on board. If the political arrangement is communalised so is the economic arrangement. The writer has made some in roads to this regard when he dealt with property in chapter two.

In a system where human relations are ranked higher than wealth, there could never be a strict competitive attitude as is required in a strict economic system. The traditional African economy was essentially a loose system guarded by the humane principles of 'ubuntu' where having meant sharing and being meant participating. One's glory came from how much one shared than from how much one owned. Wealth became meaningful as it was shared as gifts with others. ". . . *the land was not the object of economical*

exchange; most lands were either inalienable or only alienable as the consequence of a personal change in personal relations (gift, friendship, marriage, etc.)" (Apostel 1981: 310). The 'many' with whom one participated and shared were the 'many' from whom one got one's being. This accounts for the inclusion of the other creatures in what the traditional African called community. Land and many other material things such as water, wood, game and so forth, formed part of the 'many' in as much as they were seen to be serving the function of the active relations. Land, for

instance, could never be rated as a person's individual right, it belonged to all who had made their imprints on it. The ancestors were as much part of it as were the living both human and otherwise.

Wealth was, therefore, conceived more as a means to establish and strengthen one's vital links. In this sense the 'poor' as part of the '*many*' were carried by the wealth of those with whom they shared. The willingness to share as presented here above is what the writer has called the theology of welcoming, accompanying and presence the means by which traditional Africans shouldered the predicaments of their fellow human beings.

This makes the traditional African economy an anthropocentric and a communitarian economy. The value of the commodity is not in its quantity but in how it serves the community and its individuals. While strict economic systems calls for strong competitive attitude and therefore, engages in the process of eliminating as many competitors as possible, the traditional African economy, on the other hand engages in the process of assimilating and accumulating as many participants as possible. Competition, if one can apply the term to the African of traditional background, is for quality rather than for quantity in production. The one who produces better quality does not enjoy the lime light at the expense of others and whatever recipe one has, has neither a trade mark nor it reserves a copyright.

In this spirit a house, a piece of land could never be seen in terms of a bond, or part of what goes on in the market. For traditional African a house is a home and 'people' live

there, a natural environment for the bringing up and socialisation of children. Land is the common abode for all who live, have lived, will die and eventually be buried in it. Both home and land are the meeting points for the community, living or dead. They belong to the system of personal relationships and, therefore, are public properties that need to be guarded by political arrangement than by selfish economic systems. “*Socialised or communalised goods are removed from the sphere of exchange and of regulating economic forces of supply and demand. In so far as they are communalized they arouse no longer the competitive economic interest, any more than do the winds and the cloud*” (MacIver 1937: 300).

6. *The religious connotations.*

One of the reasons for the difficulty in treating traditional African economy, purely in economic terms, is its close affinity to the traditional Africans’ religious sentiments. It has been mentioned already that in religious sphere some of the creatures are animated with spiritual vigor and they thus become sacramental as is the case with what is called animism and totemism. They cannot be handled purely from the level of their availability for human use. They have been deemed sacred items that have spiritual connections. Further to this the items on which persons work have a life or force of their own. They give their life or force to enhance the greater or superior force of the person for whom they are produced. Re African art Apostel (1981: 332) says: “. . . *the African believes that being is force. There should also be the possibility to find a relationship between African logic and African art; both are ways to extend and accumulate power.*”

This says more if generalised to include all human labour, because it is through human labour that ordinary things are elevated and transformed into items of communication participation and relationship. The grass in maize or wheat becomes bread that calls the neighbours to celebrate, in the form of the 'eucharist', the good gift or offering. Celebrating with "*. . . bread fruit of toil– something made – made for another – not made for its sake or for the sake of mere production and its economic value but to be shared in community - Therefore the relationship it incorporates is not only productive (a person to nature) but also practical (person to person) The presiding relationship in the offering of bread to one's sister or brother in community - and to God in the Eucharist*"(Dussel 1988:12).

Through work persons extend their force and the use of material things serves as the accumulation of their forces to enhance human life. While talking of traditional African art, it is interesting that artists always use symbols that are very expressive of the general traditional African worldview which is preoccupied about life. For this reason the items produced always have elaborate life, fertility and creational symbols such as "*. . .the growth of the tusks and horns of many animals, such as the elephant, the boar, the antelope and the ram. These excrescences are used by tribal peoples in all parts of the world as symbols of fertility (in pursuit of which so many of their ceremonies are conceived) because they so patently embody a principle of growth and increase*" (Apostel 1981: 135). The one who uses them ought to be conscientious lest he/she becomes sacrilegious. For example, cattle as the property of the ancestors cannot be used for mere exchange any thing in which cattle are to be used needs to have a ritualistic

attitude. The sanctions for their use must, at least, be presumed as agreeable to their real owners, the ancestors. The same applies to land whose real owners are the ancestors who lived, died and are buried in it. In Igboland, for example, certain crafts such as sculptures, are produced for religious purposes, it would be profane to use them as economic commodities. So, even when the sculptors could make money from the tourists they would rather starve than make profit from what is sacred something equivalent to the Christian sin of simony.

The production and use of food stuff is considered a religious activity. The goddess or god of fertility is honored by proper production and use of food. This is the reason why any kind of possible pollution is to be carefully guarded against. When working in the fields with crops, or when dealing with live stock one needs to be conscientious about this. People consider it a privilege to produce anything because it is for the divinities and the ancestors that they are working. Obviously this affects the quality of what they produce. *“There was the fear that failure to execute skillfully in woodcarving or blacksmithery or building the walls of a house, could incur the wrath of the ancestors and bring calamity upon the community”* (Ilogu 1974: 94).

If you get something from such religious craftsmen/women you are sure of the quality of the item you get. Their work is more for service and the satisfaction of the clients, first among whom are the divinities and the ancestors. For this reason the producer never sets him/herself to putting a price on the products. It is expected from the good sense of the client to give something for the item produced. Of course within the bartering system one

asks the other what he/she could give in exchange for what one is offering. The prices are controlled in this manner so that it becomes general knowledge what different items cost.

Even within religious sanctions the tri-dimensional aspect of I-Thou and Thing relationships, that one mentioned previously is maintained. For the craftsman/woman work creates a sense of responsibility. To the client it creates a sense of satisfaction. The product itself has a quality of unprecedented endurance. A person's skillfulness is regarded as a gift from the ancestral spirits. In the first instance, to use this skill is to honour the givers thereof. The beauty and quality that comes out in the item are not meant for the aesthetic use only, but it has within it the aspirations for the true, the perfect and divine beauty which of course on the level of aesthetics brings happiness to the person destined to use it.

Work, therefore, other than being for economic gain, is an art through which one recreates and endeavors to capture the images of one's mind as one contemplates the spiritual world. Through work one realises one's dreams. While in strict economic terms this dream is realised in a quantitative atmosphere, in the accumulation of things with the aim of profit, in the traditional African atmosphere, on the other hand, one realises the true purpose of work within as a qualitative atmosphere, in ensuring good relationships with others on all the levels of the ontological corporate body.

CHAPTER ELEVEN: *The shock absorbers against poverty: (Sub-values of Ubuntu).*

1. INTRODUCTION.

All cultures agree that a human person is essentially independent. We are born to be free and the communities within which we are born set themselves to help us to exercise this freedom. For this reason the writer said that, in the actualising stage one is helped by the community to realise and actualise one's latent God-given potentialities. When the individual begins to express his/her individuality there is joy in the community, in fact the stages of a baby's growth are marked by the individual things it can do independently. Such trivial things as the child begins to smile, sit, crawl, utter some words, walk etc. are seen as stages of growth that the community accepts as the expression of its independence and individuality.

There is a Nguni lullaby that is used to encourage the baby to stand and walk. '*wema yedwa umntwana*' literally meaning the baby is standing alone. Figuratively, this means the baby is beginning to be independent. This envisages that as it grows the child as an adult will come and go as it wishes. It can abandon even custom and tradition, or stay within it as it wills. Knowing what misfortunes befall those who abandon custom culture and tradition, the traditional African community through the processes of socialisation and humanisation, ensures that one (though essentially free and independent) never wanders too far away from the community. As much as it can the community teaches its individuals never to use their freedom to oppress and thus lead to the poverty of others.

Relationships are very important in the life of a person and in the traditional African view one may as well be dead than not to be involved in a life-giving relationship with someone. One constantly seeks ways to be connected, personally or through things, with others. For this reason as Anderson and Broch-Due (1999: 52) say: *“There are myriads of cross-cutting pathways linking corrals and courtyards, camp and countryside, are physical signposts conjuring up a social landscape – a web of relationships and potential transactions that might come along these paths. They are the routes to building real and symbolic capital in terms of both humans and herds. .”*

Through these pathways people exchange a lot in terms of social, cultural, political and religious actions. The Nguni speaking people sum up the concept of the path by the proverbs ‘*ikhotha eyikhothayo*’, ‘*izandla ziyagezana*’ the English equivalents of which is tit for tat. These paths range from simple gifts to significant exchanges. The highest exchange is marriage where persons relate through persons and thus the paths are personalised, interiorised and eternalised. The ordinary physical paths between the homesteads, villages and communities end up being social pathways. *“The more livestock that have moved between partners, the more solid the relationship and the more likely that resources will flow from that relationship in times of scarcity. Each ‘rope’ has thus a history, constituted by past transactional sequences, shaping the biographies and social standing of those involved”* (Anderson and Broch-Due: 52).

In the path paradox nothing is excluded. All that is essential for the life processes is necessarily to be embraced. The greatest sin as it was said, previously, is to directly and

purposefully restrain the life processes, since this would be blocking the paths of reciprocity and thus stifling livelihood for someone. This can be done on any level whether physical, spiritual cultural or otherwise. *“If the person neglects the circuit of reciprocal exchange of food and livestock, the movement of life-sustaining forces and flows is constrained, resulting in illness, misfortune and poverty. Vitality, well-being and wealth are -all linked to movement of a wide range of assets along these multiple paths”* (Broch-Due in Broch-Due and Anderson 1999: 52).

In this chapter one wishes to discuss some of the processes through which the traditional African community made sure that its members saw the importance of using their independence and individuality to their benefit as pathways to the benefit of the community within which they lived. The individuals were enticed, as it were, to stay on. There were ways designed to make the persons appreciate their own worth as persons who were loved and cared for; persons who could love and care for others in return. One would wish to discuss the ways, or methods of thus helping the individuals under three sub-topics, which for the purpose of my thesis the writer shall call: the theology of **Welcoming**, the theology of **Accompanying** and the theology of **Presence**, respectively.

2. The theology of welcoming.

When we say; creatures struggle for life, one may be tempted to think of the struggle as a negative thing. For the traditional African however, struggling is not always seen in terms of staying in power or wishing to topple those in power and thus oppressing others. Neither is it seen in terms of the oppressed kicking and screaming for liberation. The traditional African, basically, acknowledges the need of a symbiotic relation between creatures. Though there are classifications or class-stratifications, there is no evidence of class struggle in traditional African structures. The best example to illustrate this is the homestead's celebration where the different social groups are distinguished in terms of the different portions of meat each must get from the slaughtered animal. For example, in the amaBhaca communities of Umzimkhulu, the head (*intloko*) is allotted to men, the leg (*umlenze*) to married women, the breast or chest (*isifuba*) to young men, the front leg and ribs (*umhlubulo*) to girls and the lungs (*iphaphu nentliziyo*) to boys. The classes are clear, you are either a man or a woman, a girl or a married woman, there are no grey areas. If a girl loses her virginity or falls pregnant she can only redeem herself by getting married. In a homestead people know where they sit and sleep. The right side is for males (*icala lamadoda*) and the left side is for female (*icala labafazi*). Even a dog has its place in a traditional African hut *-(sithumbanja)*.

What accounts for the absence of struggle in the traditional African class setup is the acknowledgement by all the parties involved of the mutual dependency of creatures one to another is vital. No creature can afford to annihilate another. While this is so between

all those who share the same ecosystem, it is more so between humans, who are social by nature. Life as a shared reality demands a- priori, that there be mutual acceptance and care between people. This is what Senghor in Shutte (1993: 25) means when he says: *“In contrast to the classic European, the Negro African does not draw a line between himself and the object; he does not hold it at a distance, nor does he merely look at it and analyze it. . . He touches it, feels it, smells it . . . Subjectively, at the tips of his sensory organs, his insect antennas, he discovers the other . . . Thus the Negro African ‘sympathizes’ feels with, abandons his personality to become identified with the other, dies to be reborn in the other, he does not assimilate; he is assimilated. He lives a common life with the other; he lives in a symbiosis . . . Subject and object are dialectically face to face in the very act of knowledge.”*

Though this argument is about knowledge it says a lot also about relationships that are very intimate and extremely emotional where what dominates is not intellectual reason, but the reason of feeling or the aesthetical reason. The evidence of this is observed in the African attitude towards strangers. In preparing food, traditional Africans usually provide something extra in case a visitor comes.

Food plays an important role in the African concept of sharing. Through food as the most immediate commodity, one expresses the basic desire to share. The host in a festival does not sit to eat before he\ she has ensured that every one has eaten. To refuse food to any one is an unjust and the worst thing to do. Even if food is scarce, the African expression *‘kudliwa okuncane kudliwe okukhulu’* (people share in what is meagre as well as in abundance time) is an invitation to all present to participate without feeling that they are

in any way encroaching. Africans consider it an insult for someone to constantly refuse to share at someone else's table. Even if food is less, good manners will demand that one takes at least a cup of tea.

To refuse to eat is categorised as shunning the person's kindness and might be taken to mean that one is at war with the host., or even suspect him/her of witchcraft. As it is bad if one refuses to share his/her food with others, it is as bad to refuse food when it is offered. “. . . *instead of each man keeping all the food for his own consumption, it is*

one of the first duties in the clan to let all others share in the food that is being eaten.

Few things are thought more base than to refuse to share food with others. To eat in secrete is a most base and vile action in the eyes of the Kaffir” (Kidd 1908: 37).

Whatever one gives to a stranger is considered to be too little a thing for any one to worry about. The Nguni people have this saying: ‘*isisu somhambi asingakanani, singangenso yenyoni*’ (the belly of the stranger is not that big, it is in fact as small as the kidney of a bird). This expression tells the host not to worry that the visitor will over tax his/her resources. The visitor is invited to partake in every life-affirming thing that the hosting family does. The writer remembers that as schoolboys they often had to seek refuge from thunderstorms in the nearest homesteads. If a particular home used an anti-lightening charm, it was applied to them as well. As visitors to those homes, they were not excluded, but were to be protected together with all the family members. If the hostin did not do that and something happened to them, the host felt he would be held responsible.

If the visitor comes, the traditional African does not see the reason to grill him/her with questions. It is enough to ask about his village and the direction of his/her journey. In one's answer the character can be detected. There is a mutual reading of hearts. Premonitions are believed in Africa. However, what rules in the practice of Ubuntu is predominantly to see no more in a visitor, than a sister or brother in need. In support of what is presented here above Janheinz (1961: 228) says: "*Psychological explanations are not necessary. Soul image and apparent are identical, the meaning is revealed in the sign. Personalities recognize one another and the boundaries are clearly marked.*"

The kindness offered to a stranger is so great, that as a child one always wished for a relative from afar to pop in. Apart from the presents the visitor brought along, he/she somehow brought with him/her a sense of happiness and calm to the home. For once all seemed to behave at their best, no scolding and punishment from the adults, no unnecessary shouting and screaming from the children. The ordinary day to day squabbles and quarrels seemed to be suspended as long as the visitor was around. "*The arrival of a guest meant a big meal of welcome, perhaps killing a chicken or a goat, all the local family members enjoyed in the special meal with plenty of good food and drink. Every one ate meat which they would not have on ordinary days. It was a special time of happiness for the children and a break from some of the ordinary family chores*" (Healey and Sybertz 1969: 173).

In entertaining the guest, traditional Africans hoped to get some blessings, not just from the visitor him/herself, but from all his/her vital links. The traditional Africans believed

that every one has a host of spiritual beings about his/her being forming an aura through which he/she effects relationships with those he/she meets. These spiritual beings, especially the good ones, are what motivates the individual in his/her well-being and helps him/her influence others and thus blessing them with good will. If their son, or daughter is welcomed the ancestors feel thus welcomed and they shower blessing on the one who thus treats them in their child. Traditional Africans do not always hope for material payment for the service they render, a simple thank you is enough to impart a blessing from the ancestors.

The writer once gave a lift to a man at night (something he normally does not do especially at night). When the stranger was in the car the writer shared with him his fears in giving lifts to strangers, but added that in the stranger's case he felt that help was really needed. As they chatted it became apparent that they were of the same clan name. The man was a diviner, so he interpreted the whole situation simply by saying that the ancestors orchestrated the whole thing. When he disembarked he categorically refused to pay the normal fare and said it would interfere with the blessings that the ancestors wanted to give. The writer does not remember whether in fact such blessings were received in any empirical way, but he at least understood what giving and receiving kindness to a traditional African means.

It happens some times that the stranger wittingly or unwittingly brings a much-needed blessing to the host. With their ability and experiences, strangers can help solve a problem that has baffled their hosts for a long time. It is not uncommon, for example, to

hear that a visitor came from nowhere with a cure, or referred the host to some person with the appropriate cure for an ailment that had bothered someone in the host's family for a long time. One has often heard of a mysterious person who popped in from nowhere and helped to solve a family crisis and then vanished without any trace.

Indeed the visitor brings serenity to a home. Often because of the stranger, the members of a particular home postpone their squabbles. There are issues that, out of respect for the stranger, the hosting family cannot be dealt with while the visitor is around. This has a healing effect, because after the visitor has left, it dawns to the quarreling parties that if their problems could be postponed, then it must have been not that serious after all. In the same vein John Mbiti comments: “*Hospitality and tender care shown to visitors, strangers and guests. In the eyes of African peoples, the visitor heals the sick (African proverb). This means that when a visitor comes to someone's home, family quarrels stop, the sick cheer up, peace restored and the home is restored to new strength. Visitors are therefore social healers - they are family doctors in a sense*” (in Healey and Sybertz 1969: 174).

As children, the writer's parents took great care to send them out when visitors, or any adult person from the neighborhood came. One learned later that, they did this to avoid embarrassing the person. Children tend to show off in the presence of visitors and strangers. They can embarrass one by repeating the family gossips or the visitor asking insulting questions such as when will he/she leave, something that a guest is never asked because it suggests that he/she has either overstayed his/her welcome etc. Apart from this

the way children behave tends to betray the real character of a home and one wants the visitor leave with bad impressions. “*Visitors must be treated with respect when they reach a village, especially by children*”(Marwick 1940: 45).

3. The theology of accompanying.

For the traditional African, sympathy is at the base of all relationships, one always seeks to know the other. To know the other is not just on the rational level, but it means being with and entering the other’s world intimately. This is what was called elsewhere, the reason of feeling. It means communication on much deeper levels than mere words and actions. When one welcomes another the bond is established for ever. The bond thus established is meant to be meaningful in the sense that the parties involved become friends and partners who mutually imprint themselves in each other’s memory so that to forget is an insult that shows that one was not true in the kindness he/she offered. To have forgotten someone’s name, for example, may be very embarrassing, because it shows that one does not care enough about them. Knowing somebody in the traditional African sense means to have him/her in your heart.

This means to be with person wherever he/she is in terms of having him/her in your thoughts. What Singhor calls the, ‘*reasoning of the touch and the reasoning embrace.*’ This embrace does not end even at death. The person one has known remains part of one’s world. This is what one means by the theology of accompanying, being there for the other. ‘I am because we are’, they are because I am, therefore, I am; important for

their being and they are important for mine. This is the meaning of community as is experienced by the traditional African; this has the meaning of the concept 'community' as a being there, a presence a '*face to face*' in the words of Dussel.

When the stranger leaves the house, his/her host is expected to cater for the needs of his/her journey. At least the stranger must be accompanied half way. In theory this emanates from the African belief that people are not readily acquainted with the issues of the foreign world. When someone is born he/she necessarily needs to be accompanied through life's journey. Strangers also are taken not to know the country through which they are traveling. The host, by accompanying the stranger, makes sure that he/she is protected. After all, the stranger may not know the safe routes and shortcuts. "*In rural*

areas when a friend came to visits, the host or hostess would walk them at least half-way back to their home or to their next destination as a gesture of friendship and respect. Part of the tradition says that if lion or other wild animals were prowling about, accompanying visitors protected them until they got near their own village or familiar ground"(Healey and Sybertz 1969: 181).

This may look and sound simple, but in fact it is based on a very important African philosophy, that maintains that from birth the individuals ought to be accompanied by their respective communities. This is done through the steps of humane-isation that one discussed in the section about 'ubuntu'. The theology of accompanying is based on the philosophy that says, life in all its forms and stages, needs to be taken care of, nurtured, enhanced and affirmed. To accompany others in their life journey, African tradition has established certain systems that remove obstacles on peoples' paths.

To anyone who is in need in terms of food, there is the custom of *'ukuthekela'* where one is allowed to go from house to house asking for foodstuff. Together with this there is the custom of *'ukunqiba'* which means the action of the destitute who goes from house to house begging. The other custom is that of *'ukwembulela'* that caters for the other needs like clothing and utensils. It is expected that all who are approached with these requests will give generously. In this category falls the custom of *'ukunana'*, this is the traditional African form of a loan scheme. Usually a person will give the loan even when he/she knows that there is little chance of the loaned item ever being returned. Most of the time one will discourage the debtor from giving it back, especially when paying back means further suffering on the latter's part.

When someone comes into a village to stay and is seen to be poor, the community readily helps with whatever one might need. Before one is able to build one's home, some homestead in the village, readily provides a house for the newcomer. This is called *'ukuxhwarisa,'* or *'ukungenisa'* an equivalent of squatting or providing a place while one is waiting to be assigned one's plot to establish one's home. If one does not have cattle the custom of *'ukunqoma'* and *'ukusisa'* is applied. Through this custom, a cow is donated to the needy person for milk and every second calf is given him/her to establish his/her own kraal *'isibaya'*. Wealthy people used the custom of *'ukusisa'* as a means to prove that their wealth was not secured through anti-social means. Such things as *'ukuthwala'* to secure riches through evil means are shunned by many people. Ritual murders and many other evils are believed to be evil means to secure wealth. Stingy persons are easily suspected of witchcraft, so to clean and clear oneself off this suspicion, one must share.

The son of a poor stranger, or neighbor may be semi-adopted by a wealthy person as a shepherd, or cow-hand '*umfana wokwelusa*'. At the end of every year he is remunerated with a cow or a sheep as the case may be. If his home is nearer, his family is sure to get milk and during ploughing and planting season help will be secured for the boy's home.

A girl about to get married goes around to her relatives and neighbours, asking for household items, brooms, mats, pots and even money. The custom of '*ukucimela*', as this is called, shows the interest of the community to accompany the young bride in her new venture. It ensures that she will not be wanting in terms of the necessities of establishing her new household. In the same category, the young man about to get married is assisted by his father and uncles to secure the lobola cattle.

Generally there is mutual assistance in the life of the village. Even if one is not poor as such, neighbours always come to help through the many work parties that are arranged at the desire of the one needing help. If one is overwhelmed by weeds in his/her fields, the custom of '*ilima*' is applied. If there is shortage of firewood '*isishongo*' is there. The work parties can be arranged for almost all the household needs, for example, in the erection of a new house, cattle kraal, fencing the homesteads etc.

3. *The theology of presence.*

The theologies of welcoming and accompanying constitute the general willingness among traditional Africans to be there for the other. When and wherever there are human beings, a person feels secured and optimistic that his/her lot will improve. In a society where people cherish and respect life, there can never be a worry that one's needs, will go unnoticed.

In case of trouble, what one needs to do is to shout and surely help will come. The African saying: *'ingane engakhali ifela embelekweni'* calls on everyone to communicate his/her pains. There will be no need for anyone to report pain, if there is nobody to harkens and respond. For the traditional African 'presence' is not a simple 'being there' present to be observed like one would answer at a roll call as say: present sir/madam, but it is a being there available to be engaged with or to be engaged in, a participative presence. *"The primal vision is of a world of presences, of face - to - face meeting not*

only with the living but just as vividly with the dead and with the whole totality of nature. It is a universe of I and Thou" (Taylor 1963: 189).

When umZulu greets another he/she says: *'Sakubona'* we see you, this does not simply affirms the action of seeing with the eyes, for indeed a blind Zulu will say the same, but it means a probing recognition that seeks to embrace the totality of the being of the other. After this recognition a deeper probing that seeks to know further follows *'kunjani'*, how are things, your things and the things as you know them (your family, your property, your

neighbours their families and their property etc.) This is not just an inquisitive probing but it is an invitation to the other to spell it out as he/she feels, experiences it. On the part of the enquirer it is an offering and a donation of himself/ herself to help where assistance is required.

Many of the traditional African problems have been solved through the small talk emanating from the sincere response to 'kunjani'. Sicknesses have been healed, because of the proper reply to 'kunjani.' Life's riddles have been solved as a result of 'kunjani' as an invitation to share life experiences. *"If a man would open his heart towards his fellow*

he must keep it open to all other comers - to the stranger, to the dead, to the enchanting and awful presences of nature, to the powers of beauty and terror, to the pain and anxiety of men, to the menace and catastrophe of our time and to the overwhelming presence of God. So many of our Eucharists fall short of the glory of God because, while they seem to concentrate on the real Presence of Christ, they seem to be oblivious to the real presence of men. . ." (Taylor 1963: 192).

If a person in a village, for any reason, fails to be present at the neighbour's feast or funeral he/she must soon thereafter make time to pay a visit to the neighbour - 'ukuyovez`amehlo' literally to show the eyes. This custom among abeNguni is very important, it emphasises that in good or bad times, people must be present to their neighbours to show their face 'ukuvez`ubuso'. To show one's face has the connotation that one was absent from whatever state the neighbour was in not because one was frowning at the neighbour. One's presence is in traditional African tradition, considered

much more than his/her gifts. The individual's presence in human situations enables him/her to experience a linking medium with other individuals on the human or social level. It also provides for him/her a linking medium with the dead and deities on the religious or spiritual level. In a feast, therefore, there is the life-giving eternal presence on all levels. These present a chance for social and spiritual peace among people. "*During*

this particular period people are expected to heal wounds and be at peace with one another. Disputes must be settled, whether they are between men and men or between men and the gods, during this period . . ." (Onwubiko 1991: 46).

The traditional African mission is to affirm him/herself in the enhancement of the life processes. the main aim here is to increase one's vital force, and this is done through the recognition and appreciation of the general vital force of all. It is important, therefore, to secure and strengthen the vital links. To be a person is to be a face to face relationship with others. Hospitality means revitalising others in their needs, to make them valuable persons with whom one can relate.

In times of joy and pain, birth, initiation, marriage, sickness and death, all the members in the neighborhood make sure to be present to celebrate or to mourn. It is not surprising to see even old or sickly members of the community struggling to be there for the bereaved, especially. To be constantly unavailable for others in their feast and funerals merits one to be branded as a witch. It is not important that one serves the other with food, the important thing is that they are there. The reverence given to the aged does not depend on what they contribute physically, but only their presence.

By being there where things are happening one soaks oneself in the feeling. He/she identifies him/herself with others. If it is a festival one enjoys, if it is a disaster one suffers with the paining community. *“Festivals are occasions which give most people the opportunity to establish this extended relationship which bear with it the reciprocal bonds of social interaction. This is so because feasts and festivals presents to the individual, in practical terms and activities, the social, cultural and ideological matrix within which his personality must be shaped”* (Onwubiko 1991: 44).

One cannot emphasise enough how important is the establishment of vital links for the traditional African. Since, in the traditional African's consideration of survival, it is important to constantly enhance one's life, it is equally important to gather around one's self all those who can provide this life. In this consideration, it is the vital force of other beings and mostly that of other people that revitalises one's own being. Like the electric current that needs to be charged by the generator or and batteries, one gets one's strength from the influence of others. For this reason one nurtures and cares even for those who contribute little or nothing to the production chain because it is not what people give in terms of material thing but what they are as spiritual beings that matters, therefore, the child, the sick and the aged have a spiritual value.

Traditional Africans love to celebrate life in the presence of others. This shows the deeper feeling of the fear of loneliness that people perceive as eating one up. The expression *'ukudliwa yisizungu, ukubulalwa yisizungu'*- to be eaten up or killed by loneliness, reveal how people view loneliness. This feeling of always being in the

presence of others is the basis of the traditional African belief that even after death one will not be alone. At death, one will be with the community of the dead relatives. At funerals one often hears this expressed by the relatives in different ways by words like: *'may our dead relatives receive you'*. The very belief that one lives on in his/her descendants after death, shows the desire to be always present and have others present for you.

CHAPTER Twelve: *The response of African religion to poverty: Specific reference to the Umzimkhulu Municipality.*

1. *INTRODUCTION: The aim of the chapter and the reasons for the choice of the area of research.*

In this chapter the writer wishes to discuss the extent to which African religion is alive in the district of Umzimkhulu. One feels that only after this has been established can he/she adequately address the manner in which such a religion is utilised for the eradication or alleviation of poverty by the people. It has been mentioned in the section about methodology that one will deduce one's arguments from what can be observed in the black African poor as they live their traditional religion and particularly when they are seen to use that religion to alleviate their poverty.

In order to ground the assumptions, Umzimkhulu municipal district has been chosen as the area where field research would be done. The choice of Umzimkhulu as the research area was prompted by three reasons. Firstly, the writer was born there and fortunately the bulk of his work experience is being done there, therefore, some of the comments he will make will stem from his observations, analysis and interpretation of the end results of poverty and the traditional religious input to alleviate or perpetuate it. Secondly, since Umzimkhulu Municipality is within the Eastern Cape Province which is statistically the poorest Province, the writer felt that it is a proper context for the study of poverty and its dynamics. The third reason for the choice of Umzimkhulu municipality is that since it is mostly rural, there is a probable chance for the presence and practice of African traditional religion in the region.

2. *The context of the research area.*

The research area is mostly rural except for Umzimkhulu town itself, a one street town, which, in fact, is more a village shopping center than it is a town. Umzimkhulu town has no townships properly so called, except for what is called a R293 township of Ibisi and the recently built RDP houses that have been erected to cater for the many squatters that have encroached upon the town since the early 1990s. *“The current relocation of people from rural to urban areas has resulted in a number of informal settlement developments on vacant land in towns. Invasion of prime land has occurred in some areas due to municipality’s lack of capacity to respond to urbanization pressures and deal with housing demands . . .”* (Alfred Nzo District Municipality: Integrated Plan 2002-2005:16).

According to the general information from the internet *“Umzimkhulu is located in the East Griqualand Region, bounded by KwaZulu Natal towns and villages. It is bounded by Ixopo in the east, Underburg in the North, Matatiel, Kokstad and Harding in the south. Presently it falls under the Eastern Cape region under the jurisdiction of Alfred Nzo District Municipality . . . Umzimkhulu covers a total area of 2725 square kilometers”* (<http://www.umzimkhulu.co.za/History.htm>).

Seen in terms of the Republic of Transkei to which it once belonged before the democratisation of South Africa and the Eastern Cape Province to which it now belongs, Umzimkhulu Municipality is an island of the Eastern Cape Province within KwaZulu Natal.

2.1. *Some short history*

Traditionally Umzimkhulu area was either not populated or sparsely populated, the reason for this, according to the legend, was that it was reserved as pasture for the amaMpondo kings. For a long time the area served as a temporal refugee camp for the many tribes that were dispersed by either the imfecane wars, the so-called One hundred years border war of the East Cape and the Zulu wars. The area was generally known as the 'No mans land' a name given to it by the missionaries. History notes that: "*It was after the Hancoks had driven in the district in about 1847 and closely followed by the Strachan Brothers Thomas and Donald that the district attracted the attention of the British Government*" (<http://www.umzimkhulu.co.za/History.htm>).

It is the Strachans who really played a decisive role in the colonisation of Umzimkhulu.

2.2. *Composition of the population of Umzimkhulu Municipal area*

Umzimkhulu district has never enjoyed the status of belonging to a single tribe or nation, save to say that at some point "*. . . towards the end of 1860s the Governor of the Cape Colony persuaded Griqua captain Adam Kok to move from the Griqua country in Kimberly area and settle in No Mans Land . . . Adam Kok declared the Republic of East Griqualnd and set about carving the area into farms which, to his credit sold to whomsoever had the money or cattle without consideration colour and creed*" (<http://www.umzimkhulu.co.za/History.htm>).

There is very strong evidence of the Griqua presence in the area of Umzimkhulu the bulk of these are in the Umzimkhulu town itself in the area known as Schoonplaas probably deriving from the German word Schon meaning beautiful, the other place where the presence of the Griquas is evident is Rietflei which is adjacent to a village known as Kokshill where Adam Kok is said to have died. Umzimkhulu area or 'No Mans Land' as it was then called seems from its inception to have been a half way station for the different clans or tribes that were fleeing through to the Transkei because of imfecane and Shaka wars. Even to this date the area is shared between the different groups, the predominant groups however, are amaBhaca and iNhlanguwini. There are also patches of amaNdzelu, amaChunu, imiThwane, amaWushe, amaRiligwa, Indians, Colourds, abaZansi and amaMpondo. Recently as a result of Umzimkhulu having been part of the Homaland of Transkei, a contingent of amaXhosa has come to settle in the area.

Different though the tribes of Umzimkhulu seem, they have something in common in that they are part of the abaNguni group forming what is generally known as the Cape Nguni in anthropological classification. This means that in researching the presence of African Religion, one has had to overlook differences in the minor details of the religious practices that one was observing or researching during the research period. In 2001 Umzimkhulu had a total population of 165426

2.3. *Physical and climatic issues.*

The general Alfred Nzo District Municipality area consists of two sub areas “A *central plateau with relatively good soils and intermediate rainfall supporting a mixed agriculture with a lower population density. A high plateau leading to the Drakensburg Mountains with relatively good soils, a high rainfall supporting a mixed agriculture with a lower population density . . .Climatic conditions in Umzimkhulu local municipality are suitable for agricultural production. Rainfall ranges from 750mm per annum, with summer months predominantly warm and winter months cold with frost in some areas*” (ECSECC,2001 in Alfred Nzo District Municipality: IDP 2002-2006:15).

The analysis continues to say that the soil types and climatic conditions found in the AlfredNzo District Municipality are conducive for production of certain types of much needed commodities. “. . . *Soil types and climatic conditions are suitable for beet and dairy cattle farming, goat and sheep farming, the cultivation of cut-flowers, sorghum, maize, oil ad protein crops, Lucerne, potatoes, cabbage, tomatoes, citrus and tropical fruit, nuts, pineapples, chicory and hemp to mention but a few*” (Alfred Nzo District Municipality: IDP 2002-2006:15).

3. *Methods used in data collection.*

The specific methods that the writer has used are respectively both personal interviews and questionnaires. With regard to personal interviews, the writer has utilised the qualitative approach whereby one sought to understand with the interviewees the phenomenon as they understood it. The writer has tried to cover as wide a spectrum as possible and his field-researched theory has included a bit of participant observation which included the writer's presence at rites such as funerals, initiations and weddings.

The writer has used both the unstructured open question format and the structured close question format. The reason for this was that in certain instances due to time constraints one did not conduct the interviews personally, so one constructed the questions in such a way that the respondents had to select the category that best suited their response. For the interviews in which the writer was personally involved he used the open question format this was to allow the respondents some kind of latitude in self expression and interpretation of the questions.

3.1. *Data collection.*

Since the approach is a qualitative one, it uses a "*structured and standardized open-ended interviews,*" (Cohen and Manon in Kheswa 2002:15). The reason for using this method i.e. giving the same questions to the different groups was that one needed somehow to be able to compare the answers so as to be able to tabulate them. Secondly this type of

interviewing allowed for a stress free intercourse between the researcher and the interviewees. The topics were treated lightly in a calm atmosphere especially in the context of the ritual that was being performed at that particular moment, or had just been performed on the person, for instance, the researcher would notice that the interviewee had fresh incisions on his/her neck, a fresh, strap of goat skin on the wrist etc. then the interview would begin from the enquiry that ensued. The responses were recorded by hand and before this was done permission was asked from the interviewees. Further the interviewees were assured that the interview was for study purpose and their responses were not going to be used for any other purpose other than the study in question.

3.2. Types of people involved in the research.

The aim of the research was primarily to establish the extent to which African traditional religion is a reality in the Umzimkhulu Municipality district. It aimed at finding out how African traditional religion was and is practiced. Some questions in the questionnaire sample were particularly directed to the youth with the aim of establishing whether they are aware of the African traditional rituals at play in their homes and communities and secondly to establish possibilities of traditional African religion's surviving in the future. For the latter part of the probe the method of research specifically involved the youth and the middle age interviewees.

3.3. Spatial distribution of the interviews.

In order to get a general view of the area of research, the questionnaires were circulated and distributed into a wide area through the help of other people. The research area included villages like kwaMthwane, Mahobe, Emmaus, Malenge, Lourdes and Umzimkhulu town. The writer particularly solicited assistance from teachers, priests as well as business people. The writer capitalised on assistants' ability and opportunity to meet different categories of people with whom they interact in their particular professions and areas of work.

3.4. The breakdown of the interviewees.

In order to be able to monitor the research samples, the writer gave a limited number of questionnaire sheets. The number of the interviewees was initially 100. At the time of data analysis only 97 questionnaires had been returned of which sixty (60) respondents were females and thirty seven (37) were males. The further breakdown reveals that of the 37 males, thirteen (13) were adult males from 46 years and older, nine (9) were middle age males from 31- 45 years of age and fifteen (15) were the youth aged 13-31 years. The female sample comprised of twelve (12) older women from 46 years and older, eighteen (18) middle aged women from 31- 46 years and thirty (30) youths from 13-30 years.

3.5. Employment and educational status of the interviewees.

The format of the interviewees was as follows: Forty-nine (49) of the people interviewed stay at home and do ordinary house duties. The reason for the big number of those who claim to do ordinary house work is that even those still at school or retired claimed to do some kind of house work such things as collecting wood cooking, mending fences and so forth. Twenty-one (21) said that they were employed; thirty-seven (37) are still at school. Twenty-nine (29) were unemployed. Four (4) were retired. The educational level of the respondents was as follows: Four (4) were business people of whom one is a pharmacist. One (1) owns a buss company, one (1) owns a book shop and one (1) runs a fruit shop. Thirteen were learners (13), six (6) were teachers, three (3) were retired teachers. The bulk of the respondents ranged between illiterate and grade twelve.

3.6. A Schedule of questionnaire and the sample questions.

The questions for the interview were asked mainly, in isiZulu or isiXhosa, for the simple reason that most of the interviewees were not vested in English and most of the time, even those with some knowledge of English find it difficult to express African traditional ideas in it. To further assure the cooperation of the interviewees, the researcher found it necessary to include the title of the thesis for which the interviews were conducted. The writer felt that putting the sample questionnaires within the text of the thesis may render it hard for the reader to make sense of the chapter, therefore, the sample questionnaires and the tables are included as annexure 'A' and 'B' respectively at the end of the text.

4. Interview process.

When using the unstructured questionnaires, to allow the interviewees freedom to express themselves, the participants were approached individually. It has become apparent that in the wake of modernism many black people, especially the youth, are not keen to divulge information that will make them look or sound 'primitive' in the eyes of their peers. One is likely to get a vague response, for instance, when asking a Bhaca girl about what was said to her by the adults at her '*umngquzo*' or '*umhlonyane*' ceremony. Even within the privacy of individual approach the interviewees had to be put at ease by assuring them of the confidentiality of their responses. Permission to lead the interviewees in their responses and take notes during the sessions was requested.

4.1. The use of probes.

In order to clarify certain points probes were used, in this case the interviewer had to be careful not to intimidate the respondents hence the atmosphere within which the interviews were done had to be friendly and reassuring and non-threatening. For this reason most of the interviews were done in the homes of the respondents. The probes were mainly used in the attempt to get reliable information especially where the responses seemed vague. As mentioned above most of the respondents were not very literate the interviews were conducted in the mother tongue.

5. Presentation and analysis of research data

The data that has been collected will be presented and analysed under the different categories in which it was collected i.e. it will show the differences in gender and age group replies. The reason behind this categorisation has nothing to do with gender equity nor does it stem from the perception that the age groups have different rituals or customs. As a matter of fact whether one is young or old he/she becomes part of almost all the rituals that are practiced in his/her home. The categorisation and separation of the responses, therefore, has been done to capture the texture of the responses as males and females, young and old differ significantly in their expressions and emphasis in matters of tradition.

The writer has taken note that with regard to certain poverty-related issues some research and statistics are already in place, his research presentation, therefore, will be supplemented by what has been researched and presented by the Alfred Nzo District Municipality's relevant task teams, the main source of which is the IDP 2002-2006.

5.1. Key to data analysis.

According to the Alfred Nzo District Municipality's IDP 2002-2006, in 2001 Umzimkhulu had a total population of 165426. This means that if one wants to equate the number of the interviewees to the total population, one will have to divide the total by the number of the actual respondents interviewed. In the case of this thesis 165426 which is

the total population of Umzimkhulu will be divided by 97 which is the number of the interviewees. This further means that one will get the number of persons each interviewee represents which is 1705 and represents about 1% approximately.

5.2. Special note to the reader.

Note must be taken that this chapter of the thesis is aimed at answering three basic questions. Firstly it aims at answering the question, whether Umzimkhulu municipality area had and still has some conception in the regard of traditional African religion Secondly the chapter wishes to check whether the black people of this area use some of their traditional African religious elements in combating poverty. Most importantly the thesis wishes to check whether African religion has any future in the region. Thirdly the chapter wants to check the reality of poverty among the Umzimkhulu black people, what its causes are and how they struggle to alleviate it. So the two basic questions at stake here are about religion and poverty.

There were twenty-seven interview questions in all. Nine dealt with the issue of African religion per se four dealt with African religion with regard to poverty and fourteen dealt with the issue of poverty. As has been said already the basic aim in this section is to answer the two question one on religion and another on poverty. The twenty-seven questions will, therefore, be congested to the appropriate answers.

Another general note made to the reader is that in certain instances the numbers do not tally with the original number of the persons interviewed. This is because some questions

had more than one option from which to choose. For example, to the question: What happens to the person on whom a certain ritual has not been done, fifty (50) said that the person becomes insane. Sixty-three (63) said one gets sickly, forty-five (45) one becomes sterile, forty-six (46) said the person would fail to secure employment, sixty (60) said the person has no control of his/her bowl activity. Fifty-four (54) respondents maintain that one becomes unlucky. Forty-seven (47) respondents said that one becomes prone to accidents. If one were to add all these numbers, one would end up with 302 and this would not tally with the 97 interviewees given initially.

6. Understanding traditional African religion:

All of the interviewees showed some knowledge of what traditional African is. They knew what '*isiko*' (custom) is they were conversant with the term '*amadlozi*' (ancestors) and they knew something about '*amasiko*' rituals that are done in their honour.

Something that deserves a particular and special mention is that during the process of the interviews one found that many respondents preferred the term '*inkolelo*' (belief) when talking about traditional African religious way of life. The term '*inkolelo*', strictly speaking, refers to a set of beliefs. On the other hand the term '*inkolo*' (religion) is understood to as referring to faith or religion. One tried to probe from a few of the respondents what was the difference between the two. One male respondent said something like: '*What is done in one family, is not the same as what is done in another, but what is done in the churches is the same.*' This explains what has been grappled with

all along in the thesis, that African religion is essentially a domestic religion. Indeed what is done in one domus cannot be the same as what is done in another. For this reason many respondents thought that the lack of uniformity in the ritual practices of the different family groups constitutes something less than religion strictly so called.

6.1. *The advantage of researching African themes as an African.*

One advantage the writer has had is the opportunity afforded him by the nature of his work as a priest and the privilege he is afforded as a black person. Being a black person, people tended to trust the writer and revealed the secrets that they would otherwise not divulge to people outside the culture. When doing home visits, for instance, one is not hidden away from the main houses, which in many rural homes is the homestead's chapel as it were. Here one finds lots of evidence as to the reality of the people's traditional beliefs. Hanging on the center pillar '*insika*' one can almost count the number of rituals that have been conducted in a particular family. The number of goats' horns, the number of sheep and goats' lower jaws on the inside roofs, the number of ox skulls on top of the roof or craal entrances; all tell the tale of the ritual life of the black African.

6.2. *The African traditional rituals still in practice in the Umzimkhulu area.*

Just by a general survey one can see that religious rituals are very much part of the homesteads in Umzimkhulu. People believe in the operation of the ancestors in their lives and, therefore, apart from what different homesteads do one periodically notices the tribal

ancestral cults like the *'ingcubhe'* for instance. One can almost distinguish the size of the ritual by the period of the year in which it is performed. The bigger ceremonies that would require the slaughtering of cattle usually take place during the winter months between April and July. Timing ceremonies has practical aspects and considerations in terms of food preservation.

Since many people do not have refrigerators, winter serves to preserve the meat. Among the winter ceremonies one finds the likes of *'ukubuyisa'* bringing back the dead, *'umemulo or umngquzo'*, initiating girls to full womanhood and weddings. Other smaller ceremonies that normally require slaughtering small stock such as goats and chickens have no specific time. These include such ceremonies as *'imbeleko'*, an equivalent of child naming, *'ukushweleza'* a minor ceremony to appease the angry ancestors, *'amalathi'*, minor supplications and thanksgiving ceremonies and so forth.

6.3. Responses in relation to African traditional religion.

In general all the people accept that they know traditional African customs and that they practice them at least some time in their lives. Those who, for any reason, had not had traditional initiation rituals performed for them still decry the fact. Even in old age if and when the circumstances allow childhood rituals that were not done are performed. There is a strong belief that failure to do initiation rituals lead to bad luck.

The responses given to the questions relating to the presence of African religion in Umzimkhulu reveal that African religion was practiced and is still recognised by the

different communities of Umzimkhulu. Of the ninety-seven (97) respondents ninety-one (91) which according to the thesis' calculation accounts for 93.80% of the population attest to this. Ninety-four respondents (94) 96.88% admitted to the knowledge of certain actions that were done to prove God's existence. In regard to the contemporal adherence to African religion especially in the matter of ancestor veneration fifty-five (55) 56.68% respondents gave positive answers. Eighty-two (82) 84.51% rated ancestor cult as very high in Umzimkhulu.

Of the three rituals that are common (*umhlonyane, ukubuyisa and ukubonga ithongo*) respectively translated as: initiation of girls to adulthood (twenty-first birthday), bringing the dead back (unveiling) and thanksgiving, 75, (77.3%) 59 (60.81%) and 33 (34%) respondents claimed either to have seen them done or participated in them. The respondents also showed that they really believe in these rituals by admitting that if they are not performed on a person he/she suffers in one way or the other. Sixty-three (63) (64.93%) said that one who has not had a ritual performed on him/her gets sick, forty-five (45) (46.38%) said he/she becomes sterile, forty-six (46) (47.41%) said he/she fails to get a job, sixty (60) (61.84%) said that as a child one fails to control one's bowl action, fifty-four (54) (55.65%) said one would be generally unlucky, forty-seven (47) (48.44%) said that one would be prone to accidents.

6.3.1. *Traits of survival for African religion among the youth of Umzimkhulu.*

With regard to the future of traditional African religion seventy-nine (79) (81.42%) respondents said that traditional African religion has a future while only eighteen thought it does not have a future. The interesting feature in the positive response is that the female respondents were the most positive fifty-four (54) (90%) of the sixty (60) female respondents said yes. The writer's opinion on this issue is that in the Zulu inclined part of the abaNguni group initiation rituals are more elaborate on the female side than they are on the male side

7. *General conclusions about African religion in Umzimkhulu.*

It has been shown in point 8.2 above that in fact there is a lot of evidence concerning the existence of traditional African religion still in practice in the area of Umzimkhulu. In rural and tribal areas of Marambeni, for instance the first fruit ceremony (*ingcubhe*) is still observed. About 77.3% of the respondents have either witnessed or had the initiation to full womanhood ritual (*umnqozo, umemulo, or umhlonyane*) performed. 50.81% of the respondents attest to the practice of 'ukubuyisa' ritual in Umzimkhulu. 34% homesteads still engage in thanksgiving ceremonies.

7.1. *Evidences of belief in God and ancestors.*

93.80% of the interviewees have attested to the presence of a strong belief in the existence of a Supreme Being (God) in Umzimkhulu. This belief did not come with

Christianity but existed prior to it and lately exists along side it. With the belief in God the people of Umzimkhulu attest to the belief in ancestor veneration which 84.52% of the interviewees rated between high and very high. The belief in the existence of the ancestors is supported by the belief that if the right rituals are not performed the people concerned are somewhat punished. 64% respondents support this view when they agree that ritual faulters get sick. 46.38% say the ritual misfits become sterile. Failing to perform a ritual is said (by 47.41% of the respondents) to lead, in certain instances to failure in securing employment. Others claim that it may lead to ill luck '*isinyama*' that may lead to proneness to accidents and sometimes death of the ritual transgressors.

7.2. The future of African traditional religion in Umzimkhulu.

This section of the interview was mainly directed to middle age men, women and the youth. The researcher believes that the chances of African traditional religion continuing to be part of the South African scenario in the future lies in the attitudes of the young people who are experiencing it as done in their families. The survival of traditional African religion in Umzimkhulu also depends on how the older generations are perceived in terms of their convictions and faithfulness as they apply the religion to themselves and to the youth.

From the interviews, the prospects are that African traditional religion has a future in the area of Umzimkhulu. 81.42% of the respondents say it has a future. If one goes along with the assumption that in the male headed societies the male folk is the proper

custodian of the ritual activities then it is true to claim that traditional African religion has a future if 68% of the Umzimkhulu male respondents say yes. The interesting feature in the positive response is that the female respondents were the most positive fifty-four (54) (90%) of the sixty (60) female respondents said yes. The writer's opinion on this issue is that in the Zulu inclined part of the abaNguni group initiation rituals are more elaborate on the female side than they are on the male side. This obviously leads to the conclusion that if those who for whom the rituals are done support them, then the rituals in question are likely to survive.

8. *Understanding poverty: (What the research found.)*

The writer has found out that though people generally understand what poverty is, the African languages have no adequate expressions that capture it. There are words like '*ubuhlwempu, ubuphofu, ububha*' and so forth, but these are very limited in as much as they express the different facets of the concept. To the many respondents poverty was understood only in terms of the lack of material things.

Such things as the absence of clean water, electricity, transport, roads etc. were not considered as part of what could be termed poverty strictly so called. Many males agreed that it is wrong to abuse women but did not agree that abusing women constituted an impoverish element in the lives of women. Many women did not equate abuse against them as an impoverishing aspect; some did not even think that the husband who abuses a woman ought to be reported to the police.

8.1. *What is to be poor?*

When asked what the respondents thought represents poverty, twenty (20) male respondents and thirty-three (33) female said lack of money is at the base of poverty. This accounts for 54.62%. Of the thirty-seven (37) male only eight (8) and only two (2) of the (60) female respondents said it was lack of livestock, therefore, only 10.30% thought that the lack of livestock was at the base of poverty. Sixteen (16) males and twenty-four (24) female respondents said starvation was representative of poverty. This accounts for 41.22%. Only one (1) male and one (1) female youth thought that abuse by husband constitutes an impoverishing factor to women. Only two (2) male youths and one (1) older male confirmed that abuse by employer constituted poverty on the victims.

8.2. *Does physical, sexual and verbal abuse represent impoverishment?*

When asked to rate the extent of women abuse in the area of Umzimkhulu, of the sixty (60) female respondents thirty-one (31) which accounts for 31.95% rated woman abuse as low. Fifty-five (55) accounting for 56.68% rated it between high and very high. Among the male respondents seventeen (17) accounting for 17.52% rated woman abuse as low and not surprisingly eleven (11) of them were the youth who probably do not yet know what constitutes abuse. Of the seven middle age and older male respondents nine (9) (9.27%) rated woman abuse between high and very high.

To the question whether an abused woman should charge the husband or not forty-five (45) accounting for 75% female respondents twenty-two (22) of whom were the female youth said yes. All the eighteen (18) middle aged females said yes. Of the twelve (12) older female respondents seven (7) said no. This shows that the modern female (youth and middle age) sees that there is injustice and oppression in women abuse. Among the male respondents, of the thirty-seven (37) respondents fifteen (15) (40.5%) said yes and twenty-two (22) (59.46%) said no. Again here, of the ten (10) older male respondents seven (7) said no. This reveals that for the older people (male and female) what happens between married couples should be settled amicably without the involvement of outsiders. Of interest here is the fact that among male respondents the number of those saying that abused women should not charge their husbands is more than that of those who say yes, probably this has something to do with the fact that many males abuse women even though they denied in the previous question.

To the question whether the respondents have been abused or whether they have sometimes in their lives abused a woman, ten (10) males and twenty-four (24) women have been abused physically. This accounts for 35.04% of the cases of abuse. Two (2) males and two (2) females have been abused sexually, that is only 4% of sexual abuse. Eighteen (18) males and thirty-two (32) females have been abused verbally, this accounts for 51.53%. Of the thirty-seven (37) male respondents thirty-six (36) 97% admit to have abused women, one admits to sexually abusing a woman.

8.3. *Poverty alleviation customs still in practice in Umzimkhulu.*

This section of the interviews was scheduled in order to check whether traditional African religious customs are still used in poverty alleviating processes. In the assumption that traditional African worldview considers issues in an organic way, questions related to this section were deliberately structured in a general manner. The interviewees were generally asked about the customs and rituals that they participated in or they had observed as something done within their communities.

When asked whether people still assist each other when there are funerals and weddings, all the respondents agreed that there is still a lot of mutual assistance in different areas. Of the thirty-seven (37) male respondents thirty-four (34) 35% said this mutual assistance is very high, of the sixty (60) female respondents forty-eight (48) 49.47% rated the mutual assistance as very high. While this assistance is high one needs to note that in terms of substance people no longer mutually assist in bigger items such as the custom of *'ukusisa'* lending cattle to the poorer members. Of the ninety-seven (97) respondents seventy-three (73) 75% said that this custom is no longer done. This obviously results from the shortage of cattle in the Umzimkhulu communities.

These days, people use money more than they use its collateral so when asked about the financial schemes such as the "stokvel" of the ninety-seven (97) respondents ninety-four (94) 96.88% said that people engage in monetary saving schemes such as *'masingwabisane'* burial societies, *'masiholisane'* monthly salary exchange scheme, *'izitokofela zokudla'* food budgeting schemes and so forth.

The research found that with regard to funerals, there are three well organised burial societies connected with the funeral parlours in Umzimkhulu town alone. These funeral schemes help with such things as the removal of the corpses from the hospitals and homes, storage in mortuaries, provision of coffins, some even provide, the tent for the vigil, food stuff for the funeral ceremony and the beast for the unveiling of the tomb stone a year after the funeral. Almost every village runs small funeral scheme that assists with labour and some small scale financial support to their members. Even if one did not belong to the scheme the community makes an impromptu collection called '*imikhonto*'.

8.4. *Understanding work as a means to poverty alleviation.*

When asked to rate unemployment within the Umzimkhulu Municipal area of the thirty-seven (37) male respondents thirty-five (35) 94.59% said the rate of unemployment is between high and very high. Of the sixty (60) female respondents forty-five (56) 93% rated it between high and very high. For many people employment still means leaving home for work in towns and cities. Surprisingly, many people do not equate work with the alleviation of poverty. For instance when asked why are fields not cultivated many respondents said it was because of laziness. Of 97 respondents 80 (82.45%) said that the main reason for not cultivating the fields is laziness.

8.5. *HIV/AIDS as a poverty measure.*

When asked to rate the extent to which HIV/AIDS is prevalent in the Umzimkhulu communities, of the ninety-seven (97) respondents sixty-eight (68) which accounts for 70% said it was very high. To the question of rating the extent to which households have been affected by the disease forty-one (41) respondents rated it at 42.25%.

9. *Some conclusions with regard to Umzimkhulu and poverty .*

Following the isiNguni expression '*ubuhle bendoda ziinkomo zayo*' the beauty of a man is his cattle, one would normally think that for the African males livestock would be the measure of affluence or poverty, surprisingly the research proved differently. For females one would normally think that poverty should be thought of in terms of the finer things of life such as food, clothing and household items the research confirmed this since only two (2) (2%) female respondents said the lack of livestock is at the base of poverty and twenty-four (24) (24.73%) said it was the lack of food.

Again, one would generally assume that rural economic deliberations should still be based on subsistence economy; that, for example people would prize themselves on their livestock. The research has found this assumption to be very untrue of the Umzimkhulu societies at least. Only 10.3% of the respondents thought that lack of livestock was at the base of their poverty while 54.62% maintained that lack of money was the real cause of poverty.

9.1. *Is there overt poverty in Umzimkhulu?*

As it has been said already abeNguni people have a very limited understanding of poverty as a concept, nevertheless when probed they do come up with a certain degree of understanding of the deeper meaning of the term. Deducing from the responses about the rate of mutual assistance in the area, the research has found that there is.

The poverty of Umzimkhulu as elsewhere in South Africa is political, social and economic. On the political level, as history shows, the black people were very much victims of the racial laws of the country. On the social level the research has found out that the level of abuse within families rates at 55.53% in verbal and sexual abuse and 35% in physical abuse. On the economic level the research has found out that unemployment is rated at 93.78%.

If one uses the HIV/AIDS scourge as a poverty measure one concludes that poverty is very high. 78.45% of the respondents do in fact rate it between high and very high, some respondents think the number of homesteads affected by the pandemic is about 45.2%. In 1999 the Rietvlei Hospital Study showed that of the 267 males tested between January and July 160 (60%) tested positive. In the same period of the 418 females tested 256 (61.24%) tested positive. An unpublicised report from Rietvlei Hospital says that in June 2002 of the 30 patients who were anonymously tested 21 were found to be HIV positive.

The one additional factor that accounts for poverty in Umzimkhulu as 82.45% of the respondents say is laziness to engage in such activities as cultivating the vast tracts of good land that the place is blessed with. About two thirds of the 474 farms in the area are not utilised. This situation has lead the local municipality to the establishment of various agricultural projects in the different wards of Umzimkhulu

9.2. Mutual assistance in poverty alleviation.

The research found that the community of Umzimkhulu has many systems in place to curb the scourge of poverty among their members. They use both the traditional and modern methods in fighting poverty. For example, on the level of spiritual poverty rituals such as '*imbeleko, umemulo ukubuyisa*' and so forth, are performed on the individuals to prevent bad luck and sickness. On the social and economic level the society still engage in the traditional customs of '*izipheko*' that is providing food gifts at ceremonies. They assist physically through labour at these ceremonies. Some relatives go to the extent of assisting in paying the bride price etc. The custom of '*amalima*', collecting wood, building houses and cultivating fields are still done. The custom of '*ukusisa*' lending out cattle to the poor is still done in certain areas, 75.23% of the respondents attest to this. According to the research findings 84.51% of the respondents rated mutual assistance to be very high. 96.88% of the respondents said stokvels and other financial schemes are firmly established within the Umzimkhulu communities.

10. *Umzimkhulu and poverty: (The official view)*

All along the aim of this thesis has been to show that African religion has a role to play in the alleviation of poverty. In this section, the writer wishes to apply the findings of the thesis to the specific area that was chosen as the case study to prove this assumption. The first thing that the thesis wants to do is to prove whether Umzimkhulu municipal area is poor or not. According to the Alfred Nzo District Municipality integrated development plan (2002-2005) *“The Alfred Nzo District Municipality is the poorest district, Compared to the other district municipalities in the Eastern cape Province. According to poverty index figures, poverty levels range at 52.6% followed by OR Tambo district at 49.6%” . . . The poverty indicator for Umzimkhulu is 75%. The income levels within the Alfred Nzo are very low with the majority of households (78%) earning between 0-R18000 per annum and only 11% earning R1800-R42000 and 11% earning above R42000”* (ECSEC,2001 in Alfred Nzo District Municipality: Integrated Plan 2002-2005:1).

10.1. *HIV prevalence.*

After discovering how the poor seem to be prone to being the victims of the HIV epidemics, the prevalence of HIV/AIDS has become one of the measures through which poverty is assessed. Whatever the argument is for this fact, it has been proven that HIV parasites on the poverty status of its victims. If this is true then one can expect that the Alfred Nzo District Municipality and consequently Umzimkhulu should have high levels

of HIV infections. *“In terms of HIV prevalence statistics Alfred Nzo is the worst compared to the rest of the province in 2000 approximately 24.1% of the population was HIV positive, compared to the rest of the Eastern Cape which is 20.2% . . . These figures have escalated from 12.2% in 1998 to 24.1% in 2000 which clearly indicates that if this continues unabated the worst should be expected”* (ECSECC, 2001 in Alfred Nzo District Municipality: Integrated Plan 2002-2005:1).

10.2. *Unemployment.*

In the event where people can no longer survive from their subsistence economy, where livestock has dwindled, employment plays a vital role in their lives. Unemployment is very much related to poverty because without its appropriate collateral money becomes the only source of livelihood. In general the communities of Umzimkhulu do not own cattle. The research shows that people do not have cattle this is one reason many respondents have given as the reason for not cultivating their fields. The research further reveals that many people in Umzimkhulu are unemployed. *“The unemployment rates for*

Umzimkhulu, Mt Frere, Mt Eyliff, Maluti are 73%, 86% 74% and 72% respectively”

(Alfred Nzo District Municipality: Integrated Plan 2002-2005: 1)

The unemployment rate for Umzimkhulu is according to ECSECC 2001, 72% which means about 21525 persons are unemployed. Poverty indicators estimate that 75% of the people of Umzimkhulu are living in poverty. The household income percent per annum indicates that 44 % earn between 0 and R6000, 34% R6001- R18000, 11% R18000-R42000 and 10% earn over R42000 an annum. In the whole of Alfred Nzo District

Municipality *“The majority of households (78%) earn between 0-R18000 per annum.*

Only 22% earn an income which is above R18000 per annum. . .” (ECSECC,2001 in Alfred Nzo District Municipality: Integrated Plan 2002-2005:1).

10.3. *Literacy.*

According to the report by ECSECC 2001, 7% of the Umzimkhulu people have no formal education, 73% range between grade 0-9, 5% have matric only, 1% are above matric. In the entire literacy rate in 2001 stood at 52%. *“Of all the magisterial districts*

Umzimkhulu and Mount Ayliff have he lowest literacy rate at 52% of the population who can read and write.”

10.4. *Agriculture.*

Agriculture is one of the key sectors for livelihood in Umzimkhulu, but to ones surprise the communities have abandoned land use. Though this sector has sufficed for decades to support subsistence economy for the area only to keep the households above the poverty line, if used properly it can prove to be the basis of a vibrant economy. At the present moment vast tracts of land are lying unused despite the evident poverty in the area. *“The*

Alfred Nzo District Municipality is predominantly rural and as such agricultural productivity is currently at a subsistence level. As rural municipalities do not have diversified economies to provide enough employment opportunities his sector has the potential to play a pivotal role in uplifting the standards of living of the people as

well as in contributing to the economic livelihood for the region” Alfred Nzo District Municipality: IDP 2002-2005:162).

CHAPTER Thirteen: *Poverty with a human face, in need of a human heart.*

1. INTRODUCTION: *Explaining phraseology and structuring the chapter.*

It must have been observed by now that in the previous chapters the writer was merely presenting the arguments that necessitate the presence and even the absence of poverty in our societies. The writer's, up to now, has been to construct theories without necessarily reaching conclusions, this was a deliberate move for conclusions and directives are to be given in this, the final chapter. What has been discovered thus far is that poverty is essentially a human experience, thus it has a 'human face'. The writer must say, though, that he is not original in the composition of the phrase '*with a human face*' Fritz Schumacher has used it in his '*Technology with a Human Face*'.

In dealing with poverty one has necessarily and seriously to consider the anthropological aspects contained in it. To do this one has to go deeper than just the normal window dressing attitude of attending to poverty in sporadic and spatial circumstances of its manifestations. The '*human heart*' addition to the title has been included, especially, to effect the type of response that is needed in facing up to the problems and challenges posed by poverty in our lives. Secondly, it has been included in view of the requirements of the thesis which do not require only an expositions and presentations for or against poverty in the African religion, but which specifically seek for a response to it. This chapter, therefore, aims at providing such a response and to check whether it has within it the element of heartfelt sympathy worthy of religious people.

In the preceding chapters the writer has investigated how the traditional African culture and religion with their predominant pro-life emphasis, explain the presence of the poor. One has also tentatively alluded to the facts; that poverty existed in pre-colonial Africa as it did during the colonial era and continues to exist in the post colonial period and unless its problem is tackled will continue to inflict pain to our societies. One has alluded also that poverty is a relative concept, and finally; that communalism did not allow poverty to come to the fore and to be recognised. The thesis' enquiry wishes a research into African religion's response to poverty, not as something in the past, but also as something that bothers our present generation. This presupposes firstly, that African religion itself is something alive and responsive to the contemporary problems. Secondly it presupposes that as part of actual religions, it has to face up to and, therefore, find a way of propelling, steering and empowering humanity in its processes of becoming.

As a result of the many oppressing, disintegrating and denigrating circumstances in which humanity finds itself, it seems as though this world has become less a home for many people. People, as a whole, or in their different sections, do not any longer feel affirmed in the freedom and dignity that they should have as sons and daughters of the soil. It has become evident in chapters seven, eight and nine that, at least for the black South Africans, South Africa has for a long period, not been a home. The question, in the center of this chapter revolves around: What then is the response of African religion to this impoverishing situation?

As a matter of structuring the present chapter, the writer proposes, as section one, to interact and interpose with the different (African religious poverty-related) issues as have been raised in the preceding presentation and somehow try to bring them to their logical conclusions. In section two the writer proposes to outline the different ways in which African religion proposes to respond to the ethic that is rooted in the concern for the poor. In section three, he proposes to present a way forward in terms of what caring economics as proposed by African Religion ought to be.

SECTION ONE: *Conclusions on various assumptions within the thesis.*

1. *Poverty in South Africa and its effects on the people of the Eastern Cape.*

As the basic theory on which the whole research hinges, the question about how poverty affects the people of the Eastern Cape presents itself as the base on which the entire argument presented in the preceding chapters and thesis in general is centered. In the first instance one has had to define what poverty is understood to be both in terms of the African traditional worldview and in its modern general understanding. Secondly, one has had to equate one's findings to the situations found in South Africa and in the Eastern Cape with specific references to the Umzimkhulu District Municipality.

The writer found that when judged by the 'Capability Poverty Measure' (CPM), the people of the Eastern Cape lack the basic capabilities to function adequately, which means that they are not able to produce food, erect adequate shelter, secure clean water

improve the infrastructure and so on for themselves. If poverty means a negation and deprivation of something essential for development as persons, then the sketchy historical facts of dispossession that was discussed in chapter eight has proven that black South Africans and those in the Eastern Cape, in particular were negated and deprived of something essential for proper development as persons. One has also found that, while accepting that poverty is mostly manifested in economical facets, it cannot be thought of only in economic terms. It has much to do with personal dignity as well. Again, on this level, one can deduce that the South African blacks and those in the Eastern Cape in particular, are poor because of the colonial superiority which resulted in the racism of Apartheid and its demeaning laws towards the blacks.

1.1. *Economic poverty in the Eastern Cape: (A reflection of the colonial and post-colonial era.)*

One has always to bear in mind that poverty is defined as a lack or a negation of what is essential for decent human living. To equate this definition to any group of people, one must know what the phrase 'what is essential for decent human life' means when applied to them. In the case of the traditional African community of the Eastern Cape decent human living meant to have livestock and wealth meant to having cattle in abundance, as they were predominantly pastoralists, for them to lose grazing lands was to have lost access to, and inadequacy in catering for their cattle.

It was said in chapter three that the Eastern Cape is the cradle of the South African race relations; that all the laws that governed the country for almost three centuries were initiated there and that, in principle, the poverty situation of the black South Africans began there when they lost rights to own land and therefore the right to own property, because to lose land is tantamount to losing the economical prestige which in traditional African understanding meant losing cattle, or the livestock in general. When one rates poverty in traditional African understanding, one can infer that, the people of the Eastern Cape, are as poor as they were during the colonial period, if not worse. Only a contingent of them can recover fully as pastoralists.

In the traditional African view people are the real wealth, because in their relationships they are more valuable than the material possessions. This is what the writer has termed elsewhere '*the wealth of being as compared to the wealth of having*'. To be rich, in the spiritual sense of the term, is to have control over many people. One who loses cattle cries, but the one who loses the family dies. Personnel is considered as wealth from two important points, firstly in its ability to increase through reproduction and thus, extend the chances to relate in terms of joining other groups through intermarriage, and secondly, from the aspect of its contribution towards the group's economy through labour. In the advent of the emphasis on polygamous families the traditional African, in particular umXhosa, lost this control over people and thereby lost the labour force that came with it. Indeed in the introduction of the meager cash wage how could any one sustain the normal Xhosa large family? Looked from this perspective one is safe to conclude that umXhosa is poor.

1.1.1. *The Poverty experience of the Eastern Cape immediately after 1994.*

It is almost accepted by all that of the nine Provinces of the Democratic South Africa, the Eastern Cape is the poorest. Also from the point of view of administration the Eastern Cape rates amongst the worst mismanaged Provinces. When one listens to the news and hears of some government's official being arrested for corruption or of some kind of malpractice be it socially, politically or otherwise it has almost become a foregone conclusion that it is happening in the Eastern Cape. One wants to know why would the Eastern Cape feature so badly when compared to the other provinces? But then, one almost immediately concludes that after being subjected to so much impoverishing history, first by the colonists, then by the nationalist government of the Boers and lastly by the Homeland leadership, the people are desperately insecure to the point of embezzlement of even what is considered their own. The painful thing about it all is that amaXhosa as a people get stigmatised as crooks and a kind of xenophobia is likely to be practiced against them.

There is an urgent need for the quick intervention to heal these past political wounds that have infested the people of the Eastern Cape. If this is not done and done quickly, a bigger problem may arise when in their desperation they become uncontrollable, socially, politically and otherwise. The signs that the Eastern Cape as a province is under enormous duress are staring at government's face and the big question is: How long will they and the millions of the poor South Africans wait, or indeed how long can they wait?

“Is it not perhaps reasonable to expect that, at some point, if there is not a definite

improvement in people's material circumstances, they will rebel and start to take by force what they believe is theirs by right? – Some people argue that the high levels of crime in our society are ascribable at least partly to poverty. Surely we can't afford to run the risk of this scenario becoming a reality” (Pothier 2003:9).

As regards human capabilities, the majority of the people of the Eastern Cape comprise those from the former Homeland of the Transkei and the Ciskei, the majority of whom are not skilled and end up as farm workers depending on the farmers for everything including the provision of educational facilities. Without the necessary literacy and lack of skills they are relegated as secondary labour market, an informal segment that is characterised by low wages. Even if they do manage to be absorbed in the formal labour market, because of their illiteracy and lack of skills, they are always at the risk of being retrenched. Even while employed even if the jobs were secured, the person is poor if his/her daily earnings cannot see him/her through to the next meal. Worse still if finding or staying in the job means being stripped of the person's dignity many people would not even try to find work. As a result of those who fail to secure work and those who have lost the incentive to try, onto the chain of illiteracy and lack of skill is added thousands of children who perpetuate the status quo. Thus, adding further burden on the already poor families.

In the area of natural resources, the placing of the homeland's people was not planned in accordance to what they would need for decent livelihood and this was to be expected if the driving force behind any of the Apartheid's moves had nothing in mind for the black

Africans. What apartheid wanted was for the black South Africans to give way for the development of their white counterparts. Many things pertaining to the resulting problems were thought of retrospectively or not at all and when it was to be done it had to be at the pace fitting the masterminds of the policies. So through forced removals the black South Africans ended up in places where there was no suitable agricultural land, portable water, no fuel no easy access to transport etc.

In terms of social and institutional networks the people of the Eastern Cape like all the blacks in South Africa were affected by the Apartheid laws. Their case however was as homeland expatriates, further complicated by their loss of the citizen status which meant that after their experience of the pass laws, work permit and the group areas act they now had to suffer under the foreigners administrative laws. Now after the democratisation of South Africa this has changed but its effects are still inflicting the former homeland people. Many still struggle in terms of human capabilities and in the area of easy access to natural resources and infrastructure. Therefore, one infers that even in the post democratic government the Eastern Cape is, relatively speaking, still very poor.

1.2. The Poor: Afro- religious style.

African tradition does not have a comprehensive thesis on the issue of poverty. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, it can be that the concept of poverty is relativised and made to affect those for whom it was destined. This is where the whole issue of fatalism comes in. On the same level as with the issue of sickness and death poverty was and sadly, is

still conceived as resulting from the anti-life forces operative in human life. Within the belief that such things as witchcraft and bad omens are at the base of all suffering and pain, one can infer that poverty attacks those who are not medically and ritually protected. In other words poverty is never conceived as a situation that can affect everyone at once save if it resulted from natural disasters such as droughts famine, floods and so forth. The second reason is presumed on the fact that communal living does not allow poverty to surface. Positively it did this by its processes of the extended sharing as presented in the discussion of the three sub-values of ubuntu-the theology of welcoming, accompanying and presence. Negatively, the suppression of poverty is done through placing it within the realms of ritual thus making it a taboo. Some examples of this are found in the discussions of chapter seven, in the sections dealing with the abuse of power.

1.2.1. *Structural African poverty.*

The first conclusion to be deduced from the above is that, like any other human situation, Africa in general and South Africa in particular had its poor; and their poverty was in certain instance structural in that it poised itself as one of the institutional ways to organise and manage the individual and groups within the community. We must remember that exploitation and oppression do not always show themselves as a negative in their primary manifestations. In certain instances even the oppressor does not know that his/her actions will result in oppression and domination. The reason for this is that when the structure is not threatened, its individuals tend to accept and conform to it. It calls for revolutionaries and reformers to review and challenge the structures.

When discussing the code of custom and ritual in chapter five and the abuse of power in chapter seven, the writer has mentioned the issue of psychological persuasion in the conditioning of the masses towards accepting the demands of authority. *“Although the use of force could have played a role, it is likely that early exploitation was based on psychological persuasion whereby a person, in an effort to ‘do a good deed’, did not recognize domination and exploitation. This early form evolved into oppression by demand, force and finally law . . . The point here is that a conditioning process occurs before oppression becomes law. Sometimes imposed by force, the conditioning process may be described sociologically as “practices” which later become “habits”. These habits then evolve into social mores, traditions, customs, and finally laws . . .”* (de Santa Ana 1979: 77-78).

The structuralisation of oppression, because of the concealment of its true colours and because of the conditioning processes involved, has a very strange character in that it makes itself acceptable to both the oppressor who believes that it is right, because it is supported by law and the oppressed who simply takes it as the way things should be, hence subjugating themselves to it fatalistically. As de Santa Ana (1979: 79) continues to say: *“When oppression is accepted as a way of life, it promotes itself. Thus, after several generations of poverty, the poor do not view poverty and its concomitant ills as a problem; they believe poverty is God’s will and that there is no hope for anything different.”*

1.2.1.1. *The Poor in terms of Ubuntu.*

Ubuntu has been defined as actions that issue from the being called '*umuntu*', a person. It can be inferred that when '*umuntu*' is perceived as not acting as he/she is expected to, then he/she has either lost it as a value and', therefore, like in the case of witches can be disposed of without it affecting the consciences of the disposers. With regard to the deformed, intolerably insane, the incurably sick and the incapacitated aged people, the same applies, their disposition is argued on the fact that they are incapable of ever participating meaningfully as '*abantu*' in the '*ubuntu*' actions of the community. This is where the Zulu coinage '*inswela boya*' comes from. A person who has no buntu is animal like save for the lack of fur and as an animal such a person can be disposed of. This conjures well with the definition that poverty is the negation that renders others as non-persons. Stripped off their dignity, their property as in the case of '*ukudliwa*' they have ceased to be either subject of admiration nor are they objects of pity. The custom of '*ukudliwa*', literally means to be eaten up. It occurs when after '*inkundla*' the tribal court has found someone guilty, all or some of his possessions are confiscated and in some cases the culprit is exiled.

1.2.1.2. *Poverty as being lifeless.*

It has been shown that life is the center of being and action for the traditional African, it is a preoccupation about which one is almost obsessed. It is one's strum card in human relationships, one influences and seeks to be influenced by life. One is strong both in

giving life and in receiving it, especially from those who possess it in abundance. From this perspective one does not only feel alive biologically, for indeed one may be a living being but a lifeless entity in terms of vital influence. Thus, the festival as song, food and drink means nothing if at the end they do not impart life to those who partake in them. The conclusion to be deduced from this is that one is really poor who has no life and cannot procure and secure it even through the ritualistic reinstating processes.

1.2.1.3. *The poor in terms of community.*

The Joy of life is always lived within the plural, the many, the community which has been made an arsenal to which life is donated and from which it is regained. '*I am because we are*' becomes a lived reality when I realise who I am by giving myself to another for the sole purpose of gaining stature, tangibility and visibility. Alone I am, as it were, unable to come to the fore, I need others to reflect myself. It is some thing like water that can only be seen when in a container that provides a background for it to be seen. The community in this sense is the background against which one can be distinguished and appreciated. '*I am because I participate*' this means that alone, or in isolated activity my being and action are invisible and insignificant. Apart from the community that reveals me. I, therefore, depend on others both for my being and my action. From this one infers that he/she is indeed very poor who has no community to belong to.

1.3. *African religion as an impoverishment agent.*

The writer has contended in chapter six that African religion is sometimes defined as part of a people's heritage. This contention stems, mainly, from African religion's orality in that it is known and passed on normally and generally with all the other aspects of life. Its adherents observe it in the ritual performances as they do with all the other cultural activities, there is no school to teach religion except the home. It is for this reason that it is called a domestic religion, domestic in the real sense of being part of what the home has in its arsenals for the proper administration of its personnel and goods.

In this aspect one may feel and perhaps conclude that, if African religion, is domestic then there can be no real control, strictly speaking, of it outside the home and eventually every head of the home, in as much as he/she is the president of the ritual actions, is likely to do what he/she wants at a particular ritual period and nobody will question. It is in this area that one presumes the infiltration of abuses. If, for example, the head of the domus decides to sell the only cow without consulting the other members of the house and as a result the family starves can we not say that he/she used his/her religious position to oppress the other members?

African religion is regulative; it trains its adherents to be best fitted in the human community and eventually to the whole world as is conceived by that community. As all religions, African religion demands obedience that is centered on worship for its god and submissive reverence to its spirits and here one is not talking consultative obedience, but

blind and unquestioning obedience, submission and reverence to the ancestral spirits. This submission and reverence is not to be questioned, it is a matter of do or die. Again here one tends to ask: What if the sanctions are oppressive, let us say for instance, one is required to perform a ritual far beyond one's economical capabilities. Can we not conclude that such demands for worshiping rendered even to God are impoverishing?

African religion as other religions aims at helping its tenants to relate and adjust themselves in some way to the realities of life and to what they regard as their destiny. With regard to destiny and fate the questions are: Can people question fate? Is it wrong for one to work one's way out of fate if that fate will mean pain or even death for him or her? The writer is here thinking of one example among the African religious sanctions as practiced by abaNguni, that says a daughter in-law must under no circumstances jump over to the male side of the main house. What if a deadly snake approached from her side of the house, would she be expected to wait for it to strike her and accept it as part of her predestined fate? One once more has to conclude that African religion has a role to play, through some of its sanctions, in the impoverishment of the African people. Its adherence to unworkable and some times ludicrous superstitions such as can be deduced from the Mlangeni's belief that the European guns would spit water, and great cattle killing saga of 1856-7 are evidences for this.

SECTION TWO: *An outline of the different situations of poverty.*

1. INTRODUCTION: *Everything is in religion and religion is in everything.*

Nowadays when you hear or see the prefix 'de' before a word you must know that the concepts and meanings contained by that word are being watered down. If not this, then you must know that an opposing concept is being created to constantly look down and challenge the original and normal significances of the term in question. When, for example, people talk about demystification, demythologising, de-sacralisation etc. they essentially mean that the mystery, the myth and the sacredness behind something must be done away with. And when this is done to anything you can be sure that some body wants to deal with a certain object in a derogatory manner. Once something has lost its dignity and respect it becomes an object of cruel scrutinisation, analysis and denigrations of all types.

One aspect that is to be expected of religion is that it raises its voice against the vices of oppression and its consequent injustices. When someone says it must be stripped off of its power as mystery, myth and sacredness, it is usually to be suspected that there is a form of abuse that is being contemplated or that is to be protected. The demystification of religion always means a contra mystification of some injustice or sin elsewhere. We need to constantly redefine religion and its role in order to appreciate its vital importance in matters of life and death. Shutte (1993:165) says: "*Religion is that human activity (understanding activity as including our cognitive, volitional and emotional powers) that*

has the fulfillment of the whole of our life, or our life as a whole, as its concern . . . The object of our religious activity is the fulfillment of the whole of life, of all our needs, especially the most fundamental, in a complete and final way . . . In fact this is precisely the peculiarity of religion: it is a particular activity that has as its proper object the whole of life. ”

The stress here is on the word ‘whole’. The fulfillment that religion seeks to achieve is not only about those things in our life that concern our relationship to God but it seeks to fulfill holistically, the environs, the persons and objects in terms of what they are, what they have now and will ever have, in short in terms of being and becoming. All these are the components of the ‘whole’ that must be infused with and by religion.

The traditional African religion’s approach to the problem of humanity is very subjective, this accounts for the absence of an intensive discourse and doctrine on heaven. There is very little or nothing about the after life, its issues seem to revolve around the permanent here and now, the lived and experienced now. Even when engaged with the spiritual and the metaphysical, the interest is mainly on how these affect the living. In other words, African traditional religion may be said to be unaffected by the ‘other-worldly’ affairs. It does not equate itself with the social sciences’ objectivity, nor does it fully subscribe to the religious transcendence. This alone leads one to conclude that African traditional religion is very much a circular structure affected by structural precepts some of which can be evil. If one is right about what has just been said, then one must be right also to conclude that African traditional religion is very much immersed in the structural and

non-structural evils of our time and inevitably takes its share in them. *“For the individual social scientist as for the individual theologian, knowledge and activity are not simply a means of self expression but inescapably a contribution to the larger context and activity of the social mechanism for which we as individuals must take our share of responsibility”* (Nurnberger et al 1978: 5).

This thesis seeks to get the response of African religion to poverty, this presumes, of course that African religion has the capability as religion to face up to such demands as have been laid, on the front doors of all the so-called credible institutions, by the ‘upsurge of liberation’. In liberation theology’s language the role of religion is defined as: “. . . .a

call to action towards the goal of social justiceto serve as active agents of social change on behalf of and in connection with the poor, the oppressed, and working people who experience injustice as a daily fact of life in each religious tradition there is an attempt to guide the faithful toward progressive social participation, mainly based on an interpretation of humans’ responsibilities to one another and to God in the light of religious texts, but with some degree of direct social analysis as well ” (Zweig 1991: 4).

The question that arises immediately is whether African traditional religion does have such religious texts or whether without such texts can it delve in matters of liberation. Secondly, has African traditional religion some means to guide its faithful toward progressive social participation etc. This is what the following effort tries to respond to.

2. ***The general response of religion:*** (God is not dead, bring Him back)

The first appeal of any religion, properly so called, is that the world must be given its God-given dignity back. Return God back to the created order and respect it, if not for its sake then for God's sake. If the politicians simultaneously remembered that politics has to do with the organisation of societies and that societies are composed of persons, they would most surely remember also that people belong to God and as such they are essentially religious. Religion is, therefore, also welcomed in politics as politics is welcomed in religion. The writer has used politics only as an example; in fact all the human and nature-directed institutions have to consider the religious nature of the situations they are dealing with. Everything is in religion and religion is in everything.

“There are people who firmly believe that religion should never mix into politics. They hold the view that the two realities are so clearly distinct that they should be kept separate. Religion deals with one's personal relationship with God - they say- and politics have to do with the organization of society in all its aspects: economy, health, education, communication, safety, transport. According to them church and religious leaders in general should stay away from politics never say anything regarding what is happening to people in their every day life, never challenge those in power when they fail to work for the well being of society” (Editorial Worldwide February 2001: 1).

Religion for the traditional African is about the material, the visible and the tangible. Religious practice or action apart from the material is inconceivable. How can you offer

sacrifice in the absence of the goat, the ox, the beer etc? The availability and the lack of the material things are very important for the mundane actions including those that purport to serve the sacred. This leads to the inference that since Godliness is sought for from within the physical human spheres, all matters pertaining to morality, justice and peace are not vertically directed but horizontal. What ever people do with regard to justice and peace is judged here on earth. *“The African aspires to union with God not however by leaving earth but by bringing God down to earth”* (Apostel 1981:143).

2.1. African religion’s response: (Love life in the community)

One of the evident traits of African religion is its pro-life attitude. It is an institution that basically says: what is good is that which gives, protects and secures life and preserves it perpetually. As a life affirming institution, African religion stands out in the fight against anti-life forces. It vehemently opposes all that seeks to mortify the life force and produces death. African religion is a religion that says ‘love life’ for indeed without love there can be no life. It tells creatures to live in a symbiotic relationship with each other and this symbiotic relationship has to be an affirming one where one creature assists and wishes the best for another in the consciousness that its life depends on the life of the other. This is the basis of African religion’s constant call for community. As opposed to collectivity the kind of community that African religion envisages is the influential presence of other persons fully conscious of who they are in themselves as individuals, and of what they are to one another as beings in communion and relationships. This is what Shutte (1993: 79) calls being *‘present fully as a person or putting the person (self) into his/her actions’*.

Community is, according to African religion, the necessary condition for human growth, there is a realisation that though human nature makes each to have desires that need to be satisfied, satisfaction of those desires requires assistance of others. On the one hand one needs to fulfill one's desires as an independent person but in his/her pursuit for this fulfillment one realises one's limitations and discovers his/her need for others. And 'others' here does not only mean people, but it means the other elements of the created order, which means that our self-realisation is both on the social level as human beings and on the natural level as part of the ecosystem. On the other hand one cannot secure the necessary assistance unless the others give of themselves as willing partners in the projects. In this way one needs to accommodate the feelings of one's assistants.

The human predicament arises when in the pursuit of self-realisation and in seeking help from others one does it for purely personal reasons and gains. The problem arises when others are merely used as tools in the profiteering game. The African traditional view seeks always to elevate the dignity of others. There is nothing as horrible as '*ukwehlisa isithunzi somuntu*' lowering another person's dignity. "*Seeking self-affirmation instinctively, it is perhaps inevitable to try to avoid all dependence on others and attempt to achieve it by self-assertion. Desiring community with others so much, it is perhaps inevitable to attempt to create it by dominating or controlling them*" (Shutte 1993: 99).

The other scenario is that of wishing to go it alone from the start which inevitably ends in idolatry of the ever self efficient individual who knows and appreciates others in as much as they are the dominated worshipers of one's inflated self. This is how dictators and

autocrats are created. In the African traditional worldview, the terms ‘dictators and autocrats’ are not used sparingly to mean those who dominate only on social level, a person who abuses and dominates nature is as much a dictator. This is what was discussed in chapter ten in the section dealing with the ecological perspective of traditional African subsistence economy.

Community means not just the coming together of individuals, but it essentially means agreeing to put the efforts together to achieve common goals. Individuals and their ideologies will always remain scattered and as such they will not realise any goal in the proper sense of realisation. “. . . *in spite of our technology people die of starvation and*

disease spread. Nor this is the result of a lack of technical resources. Humanity has reached the point where it has sufficient control over nature to feed, clothe, house and give medical care to everyone in the world. . . The reason that it does not happen is a moral reason and not a political one. Humanity cannot agree to do it” (Shutte1993: 102).

The reason for not agreeing is none other than the failure to be community with some one else. Each one has some idea of what is to be done but everyone thinks that his/her idea is sacrosanct and idolises it to the point of rejecting everyone else’s. “*The main cause of*

poverty in the world today remains ideological; it can be wrong ‘metaphysics’, or political choices of leaders of the poor about what causes their condition, or it can be the failure to grasp what farmers do, what makes them produce” (Schall 1990: 18-19).

With regard to the issue of the poor, African religion calls people to finally come together, in the love of life, to agree in community as to how to feed their hungry, clothe their naked, heal their wounded etc.

2.2. *Make the jungle hospitable: (Re-create abantu).*

'*Abantu*', human beings are not born, but they are at the most made. When the traditional African says: '*umuntu ngumuntu ngabanye abantu*' or '*I am because we are*', he/she is not merely affirming a biological truth of begetting children. In fact the term 'person' is in the African worldview different in essence than the term human. The former gives a sense of non acquaintance that is used for the one who is not deeply and intimately known who has no name whose achievements have not been noticed, who can not be accounted for in the social life of the community etc. For one who is intimately known, people say so and so, calling him/her by name.

The name is important in that it fits one into a particular mode of being. Your name says something of the experience, or the expectations of the family you are born into, some times one earns a name because of what he/she has achieved in the family or community, this is evident in praise names that peers give each other, in fact a name gained in such a manner becomes stronger than the one one gets at birth. For example, king Shaka of amaZulus was more known as '*Ilembe eleqa amanye amalembe ngokukhlipha*' a hoe that supersedes other hoes in sharpness. This is recognition of what king Shaka had achieved, while his birth name Shaka was in fact an insult, this other name and many others he

achieved were more affirming of him as a worthy contributor to amaZulu community. This leads naturally to the second assertion of the African worldview that says: *'I am because I participate'*. It is not who we are but more what we do that makes us human beings, a tree is known more by its fruits than by its stem.

'Umntu', a human being, is fashioned in three stages. At creation, the first stage the person is given the biological features and all the necessary attributes and potentials which are as yet not actualised. With these one can grow to be anything hence the abaNguni call babies *'abantwana'* a diminutive of *'umuntu'* a fully grown person. The babies and children are *'abantwana'* in as much as their humanness and human qualities have not been fully realised and actualised. The second stage is that of actualisation which takes place when the community systematically and progressively assists the individual to realise his/her potentials, vocation and capacities to contribute. The third and last stage is that of transcendence whereby the individual is led to spiritual realities with which he/she can bring about both evil and good for the community. “. . . our capacity for free self- realisation that requires a certain kind of other persons if it is to develop towards fulfillment . . . This development is presented in three stages: from the basic capacity for self consciousness and self determination that makes us persons, through increasing self-knowledge and self-affirmation, to a progressively greater ability for self-transcendence and self donation in our relationships with others. The whole process is made possible by virtue by a complex interpersonal transaction with other persons” (Shutte 1993: 10).

The modus operandi of the traditional African sanctifying community is the celebration, not so much of dance, food and drink but the celebration of a job well done in the making of 'abantu'. Dance, food and drink as such can be celebrated by the primates in the jungle but the jungle is not made hospitable thereby. The making of 'abantu' through humanisation and actualisation, therefore, means taking them away from the egocentricism or individualism of the jungle. 'Ubuntu', the actions of persons in consciousness of others is a realisation of the dignity (*isithunzi*) of others. "African man is basically and universally religious: he is in constant relation with God, the spirits, the ancestors and stands in religious relations with other living things" (Apostel 1981:143). To be found in the center of African religion is neither God nor the spirits, in as much as they are spirits, but they, in as much as they are incarnated in humanity. And the problem of the poor is catered for in the African religious worldview through the systems and programs of 'ubuntu'.

2.2.1. *Classes devoid of class struggles: (Ubuntu and economics).*

'*Akuvelwa kanye kanye*' is an isiNguni saying meaning that people are not the same. This proverb acknowledges the natural factor of the inevitable inequality within human societies and communities in the world. The apparent inequality is not just in the make up of the peoples of the world, but it is also observable in their achievements and sometimes in their capacities and capabilities to achieve. In this situation one must inevitably expect that classes will be created even in those institutions that essentially desire and strictly entrench equality and fraternity such like the home. Among the nine siblings that my

parents had and in spite of all that they did to treat and make us equals, our differences always showed. Boys were boys and girls were girls, and among the boys as a group as among the girls, further division in accordance to capabilities and capacities, showed. What is important in what our parents did is that they taught us to control ourselves in meting out whatever capacity or capability that we individually possessed or for that matter, in dealing with the incapacities that we each had.

Further to this, all parents maintain a phenomenological approach in dealing with their children, one is accepted without being analysed or criticized. Gifted or not gifted parents treat their children the same as one the abaNguni proverb says: '*Asikho esindlebende kwabo*'-meaning that that all ought to be treated equally within what is called home. If this phenomenological approach was to be applied to economics the difference between poverty and affluence would be very much understandable and even synthesised. In most cases when we say some one is rich or poor it is when we have somehow compared their states. Outside this comparison there, strictly so called, are no such realities as poverty and affluence. In such phenomenological approach economics are related to the people as they understand and accept them. The one who has a horse is at home with his horse as transport no less than one who owns an automobile. "*Equally important, a Buddhist*

economy would be highly adaptable and globally diversified to match, as much the possible and reasonable, regional needs and resources, avoiding thereby the frightful international play which is, in reality, a contest between conflicting economic ideologies. . . But we should stop labeling the one 'poor' and the other 'affluent', because a rickshaw may well have the same relative, economic, utility

value in that part of the world as the hover train has in the other” (Nurnberger et al 1978: 201).

In a home, at a very early age the older children are taught not to take advantage of the younger. The younger ones in the same manner are taught not to take advantage over the older ones hiding behind the security they get from the parents. In other words while classes are accepted no class struggle is allowed. The principle of ‘to each according to his/her ability’ was replaced by ‘from each according to his/her ability’ and to each according to his/her needs’. To the saying ‘*akuvelwa kanye kanye*’ is added ‘*kudliwa ngandoda*’ the latter meaning that those who have must share with those who do not have. The training for the avoidance of struggle between the classes is important because as experience has shown antagonistic ideologues can plunge whole society into an imaginable pain and poverty those results, many a times, to atrocities that rock the global community. *“If the right to be fed is uncritically accepted it can easily become a tool for refashioning society for the purposes other than food. It can be used to control a people so that there is no political unrest . . . The “right to be fed” can be turned into a formula to blame those who know how to produce food for the condition of those who do not know how to produce adequate food (or more often, who are unwilling to learn because of commitment to various ideologies which denigrate private property, profit, and individual initiative) see themselves exempt from any duty to make their own people adequate producers and distributors. Adequate food supplies then become “what is owed than what is produced” (Schall 1990: 9, 10).*

Class struggle results from the uncontrolled power of the haves over the have-nots and the uncontrolled demands of the have-nots over the haves. In order to manage this inevitable natural phenomenon of affluence and poverty, a kind of equilibrium ought to be found where the poor and the wealthy can meet somewhere in the middle without necessarily competing and struggling. Both the affluent and the poor must be taught not fossilise their stand-point in terms of what they claim as rights at the expense of what should be their responsibilities. The ubuntu programmes tries to strike this balance, it tells the rich about its responsibilities towards the common base of humanity and it tells the poor also to acknowledge the same with regard to their demands. '*Mus'ukumbulala uzomdinga*' meaning, do not kill him for one day you will need his/her services. In the pursuit of our livelihood we ought not to trample on others for in cooperation with them our task becomes easy and bearable. We are interdependent in the struggle for our self-realisation, ours is a communitarian struggle. '*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*'.

2.2.2. Ubuntu in the area of creativity, production and distribution.

'Inyoni yakhela ngezinsiba zenye inyoni' so says umNguni, when appealing for help in material things. A bird uses the feathers of other birds in lining its nest. This saying is very significant in the understanding of mutuality in looking at work. When the traditional African engages in labour it is given that he/she wants to realise and fulfill him/herself as a person, but in the process one must realise that the participation of others in this self-realisation is essential. To receive others as they willingly and freely donate themselves, entails the same self donation from the one who thus seeks assistance. This

expression, further, says something important concerning the balance of the exchange of goods in the processes of production and distribution. The one bird that uses the feathers of another in building its nest cannot in principle refuse with its own feathers when demanded by another, hence the other isiNguni expressions ‘*izandla ziyagezana*’ and ‘*ikhoth’eyikhothayo*’ with the meaning that people assist one another reciprocally.

The leading question in matters of production is, or should be: Production for what? This question is important for two reasons. In the first instance labour ought to be directed to particular ends. Secondly it puts the objectives of labour in clear perspectives. It tells us who is at the center of creativity and production as well as who will be the beneficiary at distribution points. In the traditional African worldview the person is put at the beginning and end of things so that even in the sphere of work humanity is prioritised both as the producer and the receiver of what is produced.

There is no such thing as producing for the market out there, but production is engaged in so much as it serves somebody out there. Such terms as ‘consumerism’ are not known in the traditional African economics, people’s tastes are not geared and shaped to promoting selling with the aim of getting rich. The market based attitude towards work and wealth, is according to the traditional African thinking, a reduction of people to mere tools of production in which case the sense of time, respect and creativity is lost. “*Not only does this consumer economy produce pollution, wastage of energy, nervous disorders etc . . . but it also robs man the time and creativity to live as man*”(Ruch 1984: 357).

The typical example of this person-directed productivity is the grave, it is not dug and prepared in anticipation that one may, or will die, it is only prepared when actually someone has died, it would be bad omen to prepare for something that has not happened. In fact the whole thing of funeral policies is very troubling in the mind of the traditional African so much so, that when someone dies unexpectedly in a family that has in some way prepared for death they will say: 'They got what they had deserved', in other words they wished death on themselves. In fact this attitude is applicable to a number of things, for example, of a girl who shows signs of attachment to children, it is said that she is likely never to bear children of her own, of a boy who is famous with the opposite sex it is often said: 'he will never marry etc.'

The traditional African aim for production is the increase of the joy of life. The full barn has necessarily to be followed in sequence by the full the house of celebrants. Abundance in crops and livestock is expressed in the abundance in thanks-giving ceremonies. The more one has the more he/she wishes to give and share. Mass production tends to reduce the quality or if there is quality then it is not a loving, concerned quality instead it is a means to lure somebody to buying without taking into consideration the needs that are to be satisfied. On the one hand the seller is not particularly concerned about who suffers through the sale and the buyer on the other hand does not consider the consequent result of what he/she has bought. Ubuntu would in such a situation say, producing for people must have their life's interests at heart as buying must have the same interest. *"Whatever we are producing, we must ask ourselves what we are producing for. If the answer is to accumulate wealth, or to stay in production race we are behaving irrationally. If*

we are producing for “man” we are doing something much more noble but at the same time something much more difficult to understand and to communicate” (Ruch 1984: 564).

It is accepted that people want the best and unfortunately the best is always perceived as something out there. Ubuntu seeks to remind people about the treasure that is within themselves, it says that the best is within oneself. In the pursuit for the self-inflating objects the ego has consumed itself. A person counts for nothing, everybody has come to think that to be somebody is to have something, and that in the absence of possessions one is a nobody. The programmes of ubuntu teach people to value themselves and to demand that they are valued as such. *“The world is then no longer perceived merely as a collection of objects and conditions from which one is for ever attempting to extract the desirable entities and avoid the undesirable ones, but is a continuum of neutral causal events, neither good nor bad by themselves, and arousing therefore neither greed envy, aversion or attachment in us”* (Nurnberger et al 1978: 200).

This is what one has, elsewhere, called the wealth of being as opposed to the wealth of having. So the response of African religion to poverty with regards to production says: “. . . *quantitative affluence does not necessarily guarantee the experience of well being*” (Nurnberger). Put people before and after production; that economics are for the service of humanity and not vice versa. It says: People should under no circumstances be reified; that they should not be reduced to some aspects of the natural landscape which in the same manner as that of rivers, trees and game must simply be used. People are not part of

the wild force to be pacified rather than reasoned with; that what one has learned in the family and community in terms of what human beings are, must not necessarily contradict or be contradicted by what one finds in the place of work. The slogan of the democratic South Africa as can be observed in official public places reads: '*Batho pele*' people first.

2.2.2.1. *Ubuntu as a positive attitude to work.*

In the ubuntu programmes, individuals are constantly affirmed in who they are and in the positive things they do. There is always great joy when somebody, especially the youth, has done something that shows initiative. The stages of the growth in a baby, for example are what parents, as it were boast about, he can smile, he crawls, he can stand alone etc. Such baby praises as '*wema yedwa umntwana*' are used to affirm the child to continue doing good even in the other areas of its life. Mothers peep through windows to observe the sign of growth as their sons and daughters play outside. Fathers get very animated when chatting about the cows their sons have bought with their first salaries etc.

In adulthood laziness is discouraged vehemently, for example, marriagability in both girls and boys is not determined so much by age than by their ability to work. A son who expresses the intention to get married to his parents, especially if the girl is not known, is seriously questioned about her ability to maintain a home. '*Angawakha noma angawuphatha umuzi*', can she build or maintain a home? Is one of the fundamental questions about any person who wants to get married, or is proposed for marriage. Some

people even argue for the maintenance of lobola ‘the bride price’ on this. The young man who proposes marriage must prove his ability to work by producing the amount of cattle that his in-laws want, hence the expression ‘*ubuhle bendoda izinkomo zayo*’. For a man to be recognised for marriage, it matters little that he is handsome and loving to his girl friend, a man must have shown his ability to maintain a certain number of cattle, or at least its equivalent in money, or both. This shows how economic power, in the words of Nurnberger (1978: 62) is, with regards to the creation “. . . *of social prestige and with it self-confidence, daring initiatives and the natural assumption of leadership.*”

Those who have had the privilege to visit Europe, must have seen the differences in the Europeans attitude towards work as compared to the Africans in particular black Africans. This leads one to wonder what has happened to us and unless one really takes time to analyse the differing work situations, one is likely to conclude that the black Africans are outright lazy. The reality is that ownership and production go hand in hand, if in the final analysis the products are not owned by the producers there will be less incentive to produce, something that has not happened for many years in South Africa.

In Europe, in most cases, people produce for themselves personally or for the country that they feel at home in. Political, racial and social alienation has affected production in many ways. People take no care to produce for the person who does not care about them as persons and especially about their needs. If the employer cannot find it in him/herself to affirm the employees as persons how will he/she ever find it worthy to affirm them by equitable remunerations. “*The productivity of labour is not only a function of the*

workers' attitude towards work but also the utilization of labour as a factor of production by the entrepreneur. The more expensive the labour becomes, the more judiciously it is utilized. It is cheap labour which is unproductive" (Nurnberger 1978: 131).

This is at the base of careless production, showing itself, from the employer's side, in the failure to train the workers, in mistreating the workers etc. on the employee's side this evidences itself in the indulgence in alcohol to the point where it interferes with work.

2.2.3. Ubuntu as encouraging respect.

The writer has said already that ubuntu is infused into the person in stages and as such one does not become umuntu in one instance. In this respect one remains an initiate in the programme of ubuntu until one has attained it in full as an adult. What is expected from the initiates is that they respect their elders in all respect. In the effort to attain ubuntu the youth have to be constantly reminded that the attainment of full ubuntu depends on the willingness of their elders to impart it and on the youth themselves to respectfully ask for it. The elders as the owners of ubuntu have more to offer by way of influence and power but this influence and power does not come automatically if and when the youth are not well disposed to receiving it. One, normally gets the fruits of the positive adult influence by the way of blessings that are received only by those who have earned them, the blessings come to one as collaterals for good behaviour towards the elders. There is nothing in the African traditional worldview as bad as being cursed by an elderly person especially when it is pronounced by one who is soon to die.

The most unfortunate thing that has happened in the wake of civilisation is the side-lining of the elderly. Deemed unfit and out of context, as it were, for the modern fast times the elderly are constantly being bundled in institutions. The youth of the now dominant European culture, literally celebrates the absence of the elderly in their lives '*akekho ugogo siyagruva*', granny is not there we are enjoying ourselves. The elders are perceived as spoilers of joy. In their celebration of the cult of youthfulness that underlines many of the modern social practices people are deemed unfit for business and production at the age of sixty-five. The program of ubuntu says this is the period when they are most needed where as matured adults they are apt to offer immensely towards the character formation of the young. Ubuntu sells the idea that moral life is neither conventional nor private.

Governments and state institutions can gain a lot from respect that is encouraged by ubuntu programs. If and when the people that serve as government agents are steeped in the values of ubuntu, many of the scandals we read about will be minimal. The crime that we read about will be decreased dramatically because the members of the public after being encouraged to pursue the values of ubuntu will respect authority. In ubuntu schemes, people are encouraged to encounter each other as persons interested only in sharing life in its fullness. It discourages the bossy types of relations where power is centralised in the leaders. In its '*izimbizo*' and '*izinkundla*' (national and tribal assemblies) types of relations ubuntu encourages consultations. Issues are thrashed out till there is a type of unanimity and only after consensus has been reached the people talk of a majority rule.

SECTION THREE: *Way forward and conclusion.*

1. INTRODUCTION: *The Martha –Mary experience:(Work and prayer in society).*

For too long and sometimes very un-necessarily, religion has preferred, and allowed itself to be confined into a position, like that Mary the sister of Martha in the Gospel, to sit: “. . . beside the Lord at his feet listening to him speak” (Luke 10: 39). While sitting at the Lord’s feet is a sign of discipleship and should be done in order to learn, one needs to change from being a disciple and take the active role of being an apostle who is on the mission to teach what the Lord wants which is: libarte, egalite, and fraternite (liberty, equality and brotherhood).

The interesting thing about the story of Martha and Mary is that it presents the reality of life where there is hunger, not just for food but for the reinstating of human dignity, self pride and identity and these can only be truly satisfied through labour and concern that people have towards the other in a holistic manner. In the Gospel this holistic concern is represented by the hospitable Martha the lady of the house. There is also a real need in our world for contemplation and prayer which can only be satisfied by true listening worship which in the Gospel is represented by Mary. The two are inseparable, life is reflected in faith and faith can only be observed in the way people live.

In sections one and two above, one has given the different conclusions that African religion arrives at with regard to poverty situations and its particular responses to poverty itself. In this section one hopes to present what African religion together with some other current views suggest for the future in matters of economics and its role in alleviating the problem of poverty. It has become clear that the problem of the poor is closely linked to the economic problem; that any effort to liberate the poor and the oppressed cannot be done apart from the same effort being put to liberate their economic scenarios. Further, it has become apparent that one cannot sincerely talk of a liberating theology apart from a liberating economics.

As has been mentioned, religion is in everything and everything is in religion. This means that religion has an important role to play in the reorganisation of the human society. The new society, the new economics and whatever other 'new' will have to take cognizance of religion, but religion itself has to be purified and contextualised in cognizance of the changing world. Perhaps in the future we will have something called the new religion.

There is always a question about whose task it is to deal with the problem of poverty in the world; whether it should be left as the prerogative of the governments or of the churches. One thinks that these should not be leading questions in our struggle against poverty. The leading question perhaps should be: Who is responsible for the presence of poverty? The answer to this question will be embarrassing to both the politician and the religious leader, because while the religious leader may gloat and say it is the politician's unjust economic system, the politician will reiterate and say: It is the religious leader's

unfounded ideologies about utopia that has killed the incentives to work. Both religion and politics are influential through their ideologies about the material state of the world and its people, neither of them should bear sole responsibility in solving the problem of the poor. *“More and more both religion and politics, in so far as they reflect ideology,*

tend to strengthen and prolong the grip of poverty. What we believe then is the main cause of whether we have or have not. What we hold about the world, man’s place in it, what he is capable of doing, with what incentives, for what reason-these questions and more than any others decide whether an individual or people will be rich or poor”(Schall 1990: 15).

2. Poverty of our times.

‘Ikati lifa liklwebhile’ though the cat will eventually die it never the less will leave some scratches on its killer. This is an isiNguni saying that means every creature, never mind how small and seemingly inadequate, struggles before it dies. The poor are characterised by their smallness, their marginalisation results from their inadequacy in self expression, their voice in matters of life is always drowned and overwhelmed by the surging waves of the sea that comprises of the power of the affluent. *“The poor live a life dominated by*

other human beings in their own society and even abroad. The other side of the picture is a collusion among those who have economic wealth, political power, social influence and even religious authority. This collusion among the dominating groups of different kinds makes the lives of the poor one of oppression and perpetual dependency . . . They do not count in the affairs of life. They have no voice in

decision-making processes. They are considered ignorant and worthless. They are treated as expendable ones, the outcasts” (de Santa Ana 1979: xvii).

The poverty of our time is not so much economical, though its measure is visible in the economic manifestations. Poverty as a twenty first century’s experience is much more a qualitative than a quantitative reality. It stems more from the stratification of society into different categories of being than it is from having, or not having material things. In the history of South Africa, for example, certain categories of black people had enough food to feed themselves and their next of kin and sometimes earned the title ‘*amazimtiti*’ the so called exempted blacks, but in the eyes of their white counterparts they were just ‘blacks’ it mattered very little that they owned property, or even had influence.

If one is oblivious of the qualitative aspect of poverty, one is very likely to miss the mark in the efforts to alleviating it. “*It has been said many times that the struggle in South*

Africa was two-fold. Partly, it was about political rights and an end to apartheid and oppression. But it was also about securing a ‘better life for all’ at a material level, about housing, jobs, enough food on the table, and the prospect of dignified and comfortable existence” (Pothier 2003: 9).

AbaNguni have a saying that adequately describes what one means, they say: ‘*ufe namthanyana*’ to the one whose word has counted for nothing. The literal meaning of this saying is that someone has died with food in the mouth. This, figuratively, means that one has been silenced while he/she had something important to say. The use of food in this

expression shows that in traditional African worldview, food does not necessarily bring about life. What is important for the sustenance of human life is how one is valued as a person. *“Besides, groups and agencies outside the ranks of the poor and the oppressed are likely to see the problem from a wrong perspective. For example, many from the outside see the issue mainly as poverty or scarcity of goods and services. But that does not answer the basic demands and aspirations of the people which are essentially their liberation from oppression and dependency. For them poverty is only one aspect of their plight”* (de Santa Ana 1979: xix).

In the traditional African worldview people are celebrated, to be in the company of others is more valued than being in the company of things. People spend hours on end just chatting and when asked about it they simply say: ‘*sothe ibandla*’ meaning, we are mutually basking the presence of each other. This means being with others without necessarily wanting any thing from them other than what they can offer in simplicity- the warmth of their simple selves. The problem of our times is that of itemising people and seeing them in as much as they can satisfy some need. *“The virtue of humility and moderation were designed to prevent us from placing too much emphasis on our not having what others have whether by their work or talents or luck or even corruption. Our dignity does not depend on what we have but on what we are But we ought normally to have something, and we ought to promote those systems that allow for and encourage the production and creation of new wealth which is the only solution”* (Schall 1990: 33).

The future economics, to succeed as a tool to serve human needs, will, necessarily, have to appreciate people for what they are-masters of their destiny. The future society will have to avoid plunging itself, or some of its members as objects, into mere equations for the alleviation of poverty. The future economic system will not be allowed to pose itself as a god/goddess so majestic as to demand the ultimate sacrifice of our sons and daughters. It will remember that, even in dealing with nature we need to sparingly do so, for our sons and daughters will not have a proper and a decent future, if the natural resources are plundered without consideration. The latter is the meaning of the two isiNguni proverbs: '*kwande nalapho uthathe khona*', or '*isisu esihle ngumabonwa ilanga*' both of which have a meaning to the effect that what is done today has to consider what might happen tomorrow, our present celebrations must not mean starvation in the future. The giving and sharing our natural resources should consider the needs of the future, therefore no extravagance and destruction of the natural resources.

2.1. The poor at the centre of solving the problem of poverty.

The biggest pain that the poor feel is not so much that they have lost their economic power than that in the process they are fast losing their say in the matter. They are, as it were quickly, sliding into a position in which they are treated as things and referred to in the third person as though they had died with what ever loss they find themselves in. Zulu (2004: x) says: "*However, my story also points to the disabilities that I believe are constructed by society and which steal away from those affected, the opportunities for self-expression and good life. These are what I refer to as social disabilities,*

imposed on us in various terms of discrimination: cultural stereotypes, prejudiced attitudes and the unfriendly infrastructure that the 'able-bodied' societies construct in the name of mobility and commerce. Such 'disabling' factors need to be challenged head-on for they are the discouraging winds that extinguish the vital, magical flame that burns in our souls". Though Zulu speaks from the perspective of the physically challenged community, his message is very true even for the other disadvantaged people of our societies. The biggest sin of our times is the sin of paternalism that poses in the garb of sympathy while in essence it is a rude, crude and cruel denigration of the position of the poor as persons.

When Zulu describes his hospital experience, he mentions very important issues about human dignity in general, the desire to be in control at least for certain aspects of your life; the desire for signs of positivism in the attitudes of the people dealing with your problems and in the environment around you; the humane interpretation of your different moods etc. He says: *"I hate hospitals, I hate the way that control is taken away from you there. In that world, not much seems to be perceived as a positive sign. You wake up sad one morning and they say you are depressed; you wake up feeling more cheerful the following day and somebody says you are exhibiting signs of schizophrenia. . . You are constantly labeled and tagged. I hated living as a 'case'. . . You become a third person in your own presence. . . My life was suddenly placed in someone else's hands in the name of care, my independence taken away from me."* (Zulu: 2004: 22).

This is another sin of our society, the sin of being too clinical in our approach towards the disadvantaged in our society. They are treated as though they were in the ICU.

The poor are expressive and vocal about their plight. It depends on us whether we listen or not. What the writer wants to note about solidarity is that, it begins with recognising the feelings of the other contained in the ‘*unjani*’ (How are you?) that forms part of isiNguni greeting. How you are in what you feel, how is your skin? This is the meaning behind what Dussel (1988: 61, 62) says that: “By “*sensibility*” (*sensitivity*) here I do not

mean only the sensible cognitive faculty, the senses-sight, hearing, and so on- as a means of the constitution of the “sense” or meaning of what appears in the world. . .No, here I wish to stress sensing itself-the actual sensation of pain, hunger, cold, and so on, or indeed of pleasure, satisfaction, empirical happiness. . . By sensibility then, I mean the resonance of, the impact on, our capacity for “contentment,” for suffering, for joy or sorrow in reaction to some stimulus erupting from the world around us”

In their desire for internal gratification traditional Africans celebrate the outward (ness) of the festival and ritual. This shows that they also, consider the importance of sensibility of the body. Knowing mutuality in feeling aBanguni say ‘*kwehla ngamphimbo munye*’ the nice things are not only for a section of the people but they are nice for others as well. Solidarity means sympathising and empathising with the others. AbaNguni languages have words that capture this, like *uvelwano*, *uzwelo*, *ukusizela*, *ukuhluphekela* and so forth. “*In this case conscience is not so much the application of principles to concrete cases, but a listening, a hearing the voice calling from outside, from beyond the horizon of the system: the voice of the poor calling for justice, calling from the deep within their absolute, sacred right, the right of the person as person*”(Dussel 1988: 38-39).

When one talks of putting the poor at the center of solving the problem of poverty one means giving them the reins, making them in charge of the situation so that it is the poor themselves who opt for whatever solution they want in tackling their problem. The people outside the experience must only assist the poor by making the conditions right and conducive for the poor to do their job. The assistance can, for instance, comprise of such things as providing the necessary material, offering the right skills and techniques etc. In no way must assistance mean jumping in to take control. This is the reason why, one needs to be weary of certain slogans in the struggle with the poor.

The religious catch phrase in circulation at the moment is that of: “*option for the poor*”. What makes the slogan false, is its tendency to romanticise the poor to the extent that they ought to accept their condition. What has to be remembered is that the poor have not chosen to be poor and as such the slogan is false because it makes the condition of the poor a subject for option as if there is virtue in doing so. The irony here is that the opting person never does it for poverty as such, for indeed no sane person wants to embrace poverty. Poverty is a vice not a virtue and as such it must be fought not opted for.

Those who claim to opt for the poor are generally outside the poverty experience of the poor and their opting actions suggest their superiority. Schall (1999: 39) “*The notion of*

“option for the poor” however, has some serious problems connected with it if it is not carefully considered. The first problem is the intellectual paternalism contained within its framework, which urges us to care for or be concerned about the poor. Here the religious person (or ideologue) becomes the one who fulfills this role and

acquires a sense of self-satisfaction while the poor become the “object” of care. The second problem is that the way to aid the poor involves choices on the part of the directors of society. The poor again, in the rhetoric, cannot help themselves but must be helped according to a bureaucratic programme.”

The paternalistic attitude that Schall talks about here is that of making the poor to perceive themselves as the burden of those who come out to assist them. They are not given enough space to interpret their problem neither are they given the responsibility to take their action against what causes them to be poor.

The big issue about this paternalism is that after succeeding in one place it pronounces itself as the champion in the struggle against poverty and seeks to interfere in the interpretation of the so-called poverty situations with the result that at the end poverty is what they say it is rather than what people actually feel. This attitude has disrupted many normal situations for instance in family life where normal interactions between husband and wife, parents and children have been interpreted by strangers and normal people are negatively influenced to revolt against their cultural traits. Society really needs to rethink about the many situations that it has branded as poverty. To this Schall continues and says: “. . . *The final point is the suspicion that there is something wrong about being poor, that the poor somehow are less human because of their economic status. . . What men, women and children are from nature is defective. It is thus necessary to replace this cosmic inadequacy, to change the very being, the very species of man to conform to other, new, man-made norms*” (Schall 1990: 39)

2.2. Striking a balance between the different economic strategies.

The big economic question is: Whose responsibility is it to cater for the needs of society? The government says, and rightly so, it does not have the capacity to carry the load alone, the churches which once fought against the state's supremacy also have changed the stance and now think that the state should deal with the human problems alone. If the Government is of the people, it must stand to reason that, all its people and the institutions that aim at helping them must cooperate in the alleviation of their problems. It is a pity that the church and the government sometimes operate from different plains and because of their opposing strategies a lot of time is wasted in arguments and counter arguments and most of the time this is done at the expense of the poor.

In the post apartheid South African scenario it is encouraging to observe that the government welcomes the Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and the Community Based Organizations (CBOs). The stress is slowly turning the question around from 'what can the government do for us to what individual communities can do for themselves'. Community project or self-help projects are becoming the in thing. The idea of an all caring state may be very destructive in the long run, because once dictatorships take control, not even the church will be able to turn the wheel around and even more so if the state has been given legal incentive to do so. *"In modern times the Catholic Church, under the general concept of subsidiarity, has stood for certain notion in social philosophy. This is the view that while government was indeed legitimate and necessary, there ought to be very large areas of economic, cultural, religious,*

educational and even political independence and autonomy . . . The family in particular had its own justifications, right and independence. The family and voluntary organizations needed economic and political capacities to defend themselves including property or its moral equivalent. . . The legitimacy of Caesar was not to be an excuse for handling all of society over to him. Recently this whole tradition has been transformed, even perverted Religious institutions now tend to downplay the voluntary aspect of society which from a spiritual aspect is its most important side” (Schall 1990: 27).

As an institution geared towards the salvation of the society, religion needs to reinstate its position. While the work of the state is legitimate and necessary it is a fallacy to think that the state will be also salvation to the people.

In dealing with economic affairs one must always distinguish between the moral and the amoral aspects contained in them. For instance, the technical and the instrumental values of production are essentially non-moral, that is, they cannot be subjected to ethical norms and standards. Theirs is to help facilitate production which is itself neutral until the powers that be, begin to engage them either as political affirmations, social stratifications and/or religious items sanctioned for relationships. It is here that normative analysis comes in, because at this stage people as moral agents are involved either as oppressors or as the oppressed. The politician as the organiser of the society, the sociologist as the interpreter of the societal aspirations and the religious leader as the moraliser, converge to structure the most equitable way in which production can better be manipulated to serve society's needs.

The politicians, sociologists and the religious leaders need to know and understand the economist, remembering that, as an institution economics cannot be simply bundled with either of them. The economist has his own agenda, which is to get profit for what he/she has produced. This latter statement is a very important factor in the area of job creation, for example. In most cases, when government says it will create jobs, it essentially means that it will plead with the business personnel to invest in the country by opening firms, factories, industry and other business enterprises. But the business clientele can only invest in this manner if the venture promises them gain of some kind. “*The theory is that*

if government takes care of the ‘economic fundamentals’ this will allow and indeed encourage the private sector to see to the creation of jobs, the building of factories, and the rescue of the poor from their poverty. In practice, though, this is not happening. The Government has done everything asked of it by the private sector, but the jobs are not being created, the skills are not being passed on, the factories are empty. The reason is simple, and it is the reason why the poor will wait in vain for better life as long as their government adheres to its present approach: The Job of the private sector, the big companies, the banks, the mines, the foreign investors, is not to create jobs, or to look after widows and orphans or to see that the illiterate learn to read and write or to feed the hungry. Its job is to make profit, to put money to work to make more money” (Pothier 2003: 9).

In the South African scenario the government has many times promised to create job opportunities but nothing has come. Why? The business men/women have not been assured of their desired goal of making profit with little or no interference from the

government and its allies the trade unions. Unfortunately in the South African scenario the trade unions have been given enormous empower to cripple business, if not to cripple the government itself. The issue is not that, the trade unions are not wanted, in fact in any democracy the trade unions are very much appreciated to represent and protect workers against exploitation and to check against labour irregularities, but the strategies that are used ought to be within the limits of the same democracy. The 'toyi - toyi' type that ends up intimidating and even killing other workers, destroying property etc. is definitely the cause for business cutting down and even disinvesting.

2.2.1. Tolerating the different economic systems.

The African traditional culture and religion are known for their tolerance of and sometimes for their ability to accept and adapt to external influences. The theology of welcoming and hospitality that sees a positive potential in the visitor or new comer allows for these to influence and sometimes to change the normal course of life. The so-called '*ways of our fathers*' or heritage is open ended, what is seen to be positively adding to life processes is joyfully taken in and what does not, or has proven to destroy life is rejected. "*Hospitality and tender care are shown to visitors, strangers and guests.*

In the eyes of African peoples, the visitor heals the sick. This means that when a visitor comes to someone's home, family quarrels stop, the sick cheer up, peace is restored and the home is restored to new strength. Visitors are, therefore, social healers-they are family doctors in a sense" (Mbiti in Healey and Sybertz 1995: 174).

The mistake of many politicians, sociologists and church or religious leaders is that they tend to sympathise with one economic system at the expense of others. They forget the basic truth that none of the economic system is essentially bad, all of them were composed basically to solve the human predicament. Socialism, liberalism, capitalism, etc. are attempts at solving the problem of the poor. Unless these systems are allowed to compete fairly any of them may end up being oppressive as encoded in customs, ritual and legal systems “*It is wisest to allow a thousand flowers to bloom. We should not foreclose on the experiment . . . The secrets of economic vitality are not known fully by anyone, nor are they fully captured in any one model*” (Lutz 1987: 52).

For a country to develop there should be more economic systems and management styles in operation and the competition among them. Only the way in which each serves the interests of the society will determine which system will prevail. The choice as to which economic system, or managerial style is best ought not to be the prerogative of politicians, sociologists and religious leaders, it should be the one chosen by the people. The churches, governments etc. must in this sense administer, support, secure and direct what the masses have chosen. Is this not is the true meaning of ‘*people shall govern*’?

Knowing how human nature is, one cannot end by simply crowning the free market system it also needs some checks and balances. Left on their own people can be very destructive to themselves, to others and to the neighborhood, the environment. The African traditional religion can contribute a lot in this area of guiding the individuals and communities in issue of community relationships where the community becomes a

conscience and guide in terms of human-friendly and healthy production, for instance such things as pollution, the environmental monopoly, excessive production, inequitable salaries etc. will be under the constant eye of the government (the political will) and its counterpart the church (religious aspirations) of the people as they govern their lives.

3. Solidarity the key to Poverty alleviation.

'Akudlulwa ngendlu yakhiwa'! This is one of isiNguni expressions that call on people to cooperate. It literally means that a person must not pass by when others are constructing a house. Figuratively it means people must be in solidarity with others; they should participate in whatever is being done. It is when people are involved as a community that we can talk of capacity building, in this way the initiatives that people take as individuals to alleviate their poverty are affirmed and encouraged with new ideas and resources. The indigenous African tradition and culture is very strong in encouraging solidarity whereby people are taught to work together. In the steps of actualisation and humanisation the young people are grouped together into age groups (*amabutho*) or regiments where they are taught the values of mutual recognition and solidarity. Whether they go hunting, attending circumcision schools, collecting umhlanga, constructing the chief's kraal, or going for expedition even when they are appointed for marriage they are kept in constant feeling of being together. Solidarity requires commitment to be with the group.

3.1. *Solidarity through nature.*

It is very interesting that the character of a person is known by what he/she does more than by who or what one is. To reveal him/herself, therefore, a person needs the things of nature. When we say that one is kind, generous or hospitable, for example, we normally infer these from the way one handles the tangible things of the earth. The qualities of ubuntu are reflected in the world of things. In the words of Dussel (1988: 9) “*Strictly*

speaking one is only a person only when one is in a relationship of praxis . . . Solitary and alone in the presence of impersonal nature, one ceases in a certain sense to be a person.”

Praxis denotes what one has just called ‘*handling the things of the earth*’ in a manner that they place one in the face to face of practical relationship as a term or pole to be reckoned and engaged with. To be someone for another and a referent that is meaningful for the other in practical matters of bread as life. This bread, the thing of the earth is not, in the traditional African worldview just part of what Dussel calls ‘*impersonal nature*’ but it is a very essential part of the community with which and through which one relates and becomes a participating presence to others.

The land (the earth) up to now is the only place from which we get our bread, our livelihood. It is the provider of our relational items. People are rich or poor in terms of what they get or do not get from the land. We know our character and the character of others as reflected through and by the ways in which they use the things of the land, the

earth. In fact they will continue to be, or shall perish because of how they deal with the land, the earth. There is a need to deal with the land in a distinctive way, a relational way, not just with the possessive philanthropist attitude of it as '*the mother earth*' nor should we see it merely as the economic arena where money breeds money. Land should not be treated as mere property, it must be treated as something that demands respect; as something that can hit back if mistreated. In other words we ought to deal with the land as something with a life of its own with which it relates, positively or negatively as circumstances require it to do. "*The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the*

community to include soils, water, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land. The land is not just property; it is not just a commodity; it is not even just a resource. It is not just something to be used for human welfare. The land is something to be valued for its sake" (Leopold in Weber et al 1987: 18-19).

This quotation has very strong traditional African resonances because in the traditional African worldview and understanding, community does not comprise only of the human genre, it rather accommodates all that ever was. That is why the writer discussed the ecological perspective of the African traditional economy in chapter ten, subsection three.

The earth, the land as a partner in relationship cannot be owned and thus, cannot be used; it is not to be worked on, rather it is to be worked with. Shorter (1999: 13) notes: "Bantu

languages, it is true, do not have words with strong meaning of "possession". Such verbs as "to own" or "to possess" are usually translated by the equivalents of "to be with", "to hold", "to grasp". They do not have the finality of the western concept of ownership or possession."

Expressing the same thing about proper relation to the land Ebenreck in (Weber et al 1987: 19) says: “*But to show proper respect for the land, it might be better to speak of “working with” rather than “using.”* Because working with seems immediately to imply a partnership, a gradual shift of language so as to think of farming as ‘working with’ the land rather than ‘using’ it might itself help to promote the ideas of respect for the land.”

3.2. Some isiNguni sayings for fostering solidarity.

There are many isiNguni proverbs that emphasise the values of solidarity and cooperation in work. Here are some of them: ‘*ubucu obuhle buhamba ngabubili*, the beautiful necklace come in twos, ‘*amasongo akhala emabili*’, two bangles make a sound, ‘*imikhombe iyananana*’ meat bowls reciprocate, ‘*ikhotha eyikhothayo*’ the cow groom mutually, ‘*akuhlanga lwalahlana lodwa*’, people of the same stork assist each other, ‘*inyoni or intaka yakhela nezinsiba zenye inyoni*’ a bird uses other bird’s feathers to build its nest. As Mbiti in Healey and Sybertz (1995: 114-15) says about one of the Maasai proverb: “*On the surface . . . (these are simple statements) coming out of living experi-*

ences. However, (these proverbs are) used to refer to more serious matters of working together, joining hands so as to accomplish tasks or objectives which cannot be done by one person. They point to mutuality and helpfulness. Trivial terms are used here symbolically to handle deeper issues of people’s character and working relationships. The human reality is that people are not naturally inclined towards the practice of economic solidarity, the innate instinct in all of us is to push others away resulting in the survival of the fittest. Unless we are intensively

schooled in table manners of considering others, the rule of 'winner takes all' will always apply.

These expressions or sayings elevate the value of being in partnership, of being in communion with the many, with the plural. They cherish the deep desire to belong to the good, positive and sacred community, where there is face to face relatedness of love. They reject domination, competition and comparison. In principle they fight against everything that seeks to pull down the structures of ubuntu. It is very interesting that one does not hear any of these expressions in normal day to day conversations, it is only when something out of place has happened, let us say, for instance, it is when someone either refuses or manages to help another, that you will hear the expression '*izandla ziyagezana*', hands wash each other.

Lessons in solidarity are not acquired through lectures, exhortations and sermons, but they are modeled out by those who want to instill them. *"It is easy, though important to exhort people to practice solidarity. But preaching is not enough. If there is no follow-up in a structured and organized way, exhortation may actually contribute to the malaise, because frustrated expectations are worse than no expectations"* (Missiaen 1998: 18).

Sermons and lectures about the plight of the poor will never put bread on their tables. In the most they prolong poverty in that they create wild expectations where people leave lecture rooms and churches hoping that some rich person will have been touched by the sermon and will give them bread, or they, infuriated by the lecture or sermon end up

engaging in futile struggles that result in further poverty in terms of actual bread, but enriches people only in terms of guns and military equipments. Poverty does not go away because it is shouted at. It will only leave us because we have begun to work and thus become productive. IsiNguni says: *'intonga ayinamzi'* figuratively meaning that, war does not build homes. The proper place to discuss poverty is not the lecture room, or the pulpit, but in the fields with dirty hands; where people are working and productive.

4. The danger of supporting poverty while trying to alleviate it.

The African tradition and culture, while advocating for extended sharing and hospitality has never supported indolence, people are encouraged to work for their up keep. There are very strong proverbs and expressions in traditional African languages that coax people towards doing something about their livelihood. Here are some of them: *'imbila yaswela umsila ngokuyalezela'* which means that people must not always hope that others will do things for them; *'ukhozi olubambayo oluzingelayo'* one who succeeds does so through one's own efforts; *'akukho nkwali iphandela enye'* no person labors for the benefit of another. The classical one is the Swahili proverb that says: *"A visitor is a guest for two days. On the third give the person a hoe"* (Healey and Sybertz 1995: 168). The traditional African communitarian spirit is in some quarters criticised for its stress on extended family and sharing because this leads to extreme parasitism and abuse of the rich members of the family.

The kind of sharing, that encourages people to wait on the effort of others, tends to fossilise the poor into being less creative and inventive. It in fact, perpetuates poverty by looking down at the poor people's innate potentialities and capacities to produce. It further renders them non-persons by not challenging them towards self protection and independence. The poor, given a chance can themselves be very exploitative, so one needs to know why he/she is giving at a particular moment "*In our society, "givers"*

pious though they be, too frequently contribute funds to the "takers" who specialize in the ideas and movements that, in effect make giving impossible. Charity was never intended to mock intelligence. If you do not know, do not give. Or conversely, give but know- in detail" (Schall 1990: 49).

One gets the idea that the poor, overwhelmed by the unfocused gifts may end up saying: 'If there is always a paternalistic 'clever' fool, out there, who wants to provide: why should anyone work' at all? IsiNguni says: '*Ifa leziwula lidliwa yizihlakaniphi*', the wealth of the fools is enjoyed by the wise. One is a fool when he/she allows the poor to constantly suck on him/her when in fact they can work and earn their living. Independence is one of the basic traditional African aspirations, one of the lullabies that celebrates the growth of the child and encourages it to independence and self-sufficiency, in isiNguni is: '*wema yedwa umntwana*'. The idea of '*izife*' (small patches of land) which are allotted to each child in the family to prepare at planting season are ways in which young people are taught to manage land and to be productive. It is a way of educating them about participation in the shared resources of the family and the larger community.

A person who depends on handouts never develops to produce for him/herself. Like a child, the poor ought to be weaned to in order for them to develop their own potentials. Efforts to help the poor, ought to have time limits so that at a later stage they can develop their own methods of curbing and coping with their poverty. It is paternalism to the extreme to deny the poor even their ability as persons to express and even to do something about their predicament. “. . . *Those who would administer wisely must,*

indeed, be wise, for one of the serious obstacles to the improvement of our race is indiscriminate charity. It were better for mankind that the millions of the rich were thrown into the sea than so spent as to encourage the slothful, the drunken, the unworthy. . . . In bestowing charity, the main consideration should be to help those who will help themselves; to provide part of the means by which those who desire to improve may do so; to give those who desire to rise the aid by which they may rise; to assist, but rarely or never to do all. Neither the individual nor the race is improved by almsgiving” (Carnegie in Weber et al 1987: 25).

‘*Isihlali sidla amajwabu*’ so says umNguni about those who believe that there is always somebody out there who will do things for them. The expression literally means that the one who sits and waits eats the leanest meat. Though people generally to share, they nevertheless reserve the best for themselves. One may shy away from saying it straight, but in certain instances, the poor are poor because they are lazy, if not, because they have found loop holes through which they can sponge it out of the generosity of others.

There is a big debate in South Africa at the moment and it is about whether the poverty alleviation programmes will in the long run help the people to fend for themselves. It is true that even if all those who are able to work were employed tomorrow, as Pothier (2003: 9) maintains “. . . *there would still be millions of our people who cannot work:*

children, the elderly and, increasingly, those affected by HIV/Aids. All of these depend on the income of the relatively small number of people employed in formal jobs. Consequently, even someone with a decent wage ends up having to share it with so many dependents that there is nothing left for savings. . . Thus, merely having a job, even a good one, does not always mean you can escape the trap of poverty.”

This is more a reason that people ought to begin seeing that the state cannot carry the load of catering for the poor alone. Some ways of capacitating the poor to seek ways of solving their problems must be found soon. People must be truly liberated from over dependence even on the state.

It is very surprising that the so called able-bodied poor in South Africa have left their fields lying fallow and instead are in queues at the post offices and other social facilities for social grants. Others for old age pension grants while they are only forty or less, others for child support grants even when their husbands and boyfriends are supporting etc. Some of these social grants are scams to abuse the tax payer. The state has no money, it is the tax payer that pays for these so-called social grants and it pains them when their sweat and blood goes for cellular phones and fancy dresses that these so-called single mothers use the grants for. When it pays to be poor who will ever want to be employed?

5. Conclusion.

In the light of what has been presented in this thesis, the response of African religion to poverty is essentially to remind people to live up to their calling as social beings, in the true meaning of the term social, that is, one's willingness to be with the other in meaningful relationships, choosing to be a friend without hoping to get something out of the friendship. It is a response that calls for an open and positive attitude toward the other always seeking the best way in which one can be a life enhancing gift, a trustworthy pillar of support for the other. In terms of economic advancements, African religion's response to poverty is one that calls for the prioritisation of human beings in all that is done 'Batho pele', people first.

African religion's response to poverty is the one that makes sure that the resources through which the life and its processes are sustained are preserved at all cost. It is a response that advocates for the respect and sustenance of nature in the present generation with the view that the next generation will also be in need of its services. It clamours for ecologically sensitive ethic. It advocates for an ethic that curbs abuses in the use of material resources for economic gains.

In a manner of conclusion the writer wishes to capture the central issue of the African traditional religion which according to this thesis calls everyone to respect everyone and everything. To respect means to uphold the rights of the community in its individuals and groups. To respect also means to challenge others about their responsibilities by

conferring upon them their status as human beings at all times. They need to be affirmed by the knowledge that they are in control of their destinies. The catch phrase '*Umntu ngumuntu ngabanye abantu*', aims at elevating the status of human persons in matters of development. The phrase recognises the central fact that to develop, persons depend on the created world for their life and therefore need to respect other creatures with which they share the topography. To succeed in life let us affirm the being of others by conferring upon them the dignity that we accord ourselves. In other words like God in the book of Genesis: ". . . '*Let us make man in our own image, in the likeness of ourselves. . .*'" (Genesis 1: 26), or as the isNguni proverb puts it '*kwehla ngamphimbo munye*' what is good for me is good for another as well.

Annexure A: Sample Interview questionnaires.

1. Questions for personal interviews

Isihloko sezifundo okwenziwa uphando ngazo yilesi: Iqhaza elingabanjwa inkolo yabansundu baseAfrica odabeni lobuphofu kugxilisewe kusiFunda sika Masipala waseMzimkhulu.

Title of the thesis: The response of African religion to poverty with specific reference to the Umzimkhulu Municipality.

1.1. Questions related to the existence of African Religion in Umzimkhulu District.

1. Inkolo yabantu abansundu yayibonakala ngaziphi izimpawu emizimbeni yabo noma ezindlini zabo na?
What traditional African religious signs or symbols can you observe in the persons or houses?
2. Inkolelo yokuthi uNkulunkulu ukhona banayo abantu abansundu lapha eMzimkhulu? UNkulunkulu bambiza ngamaphi amagama na?
Do black South Africans of Umzimkhulu have a belief in God? What names or designation do they give to God?
3. Yiziphi izinto ezazenziwa ngesiko lesintu lapha eMzimkhulu eziqondene nenkolelo ku Nkulunkulu?
What are the traditional things that the people of Umzimkhulu did to show their belief in God?
4. Abantu baseMzimkhulu abansundu bazenza ngaluphi uhlobo lezizinto kulemihla?
In what form do black South Africans of Umzimkhulu show their belief in God these days?
5. Uthuni umbono wakho ngenkolelo emadlozini noma kwabangasekho?
What is your opinion regarding the belief in the Ancestors?
6. Abantu basakholelwa yini emedlozini noma kwabangasekho? Yini ebonakalisa lokhu?
Do people still uphold the belief in the Ancestors? What do they do to show this?

7. Yisho izinto ezimbalwa ezazenzelwa idlozi/ abangasekho noma ezazenziwa kuqale kwabizwa bona.
Mention a few things that were done for the Ancestors or in which they were invoked.
8. Abantu bakholelwa ukuthi kungenzekani kubo uma bengawahloniphi amadlozi?
What do people think will happen to them if they do not respect the Ancestors?
9. Uyakholelwa ekuthini kukhona okubi okwenzekayo kumuntu ongalezelwanga isiko?
Do you believe that if one has not performed the ritual something bad will happen to him/her?
10. Ngamaphi amasiko angasenziwa kulesikhathi sempuncuko?
What customs are no longer practiced in these modern times?
11. Zikhona izimpawu ezibonakalayo emntwini ezibonisa ukuthi amasiko akasawagcini?
Are there certain visible signs that show that an individual does longer practice certain rituals and customs?
12. Kukhona okunye ongathanda ukuphawula ngakho noma ongengeza ngako mayelana nelemibuzo?
Do you have any other comments or additions on the questions you have just answered?

1.2. Questions Related to the Employment of Religion in Poverty Alleviation.

1. Zikhona izinto ezenziwa kususela enkolweni yesintu ukulwa nobuphofu nokuhlukumezeka kwabantu?
Are there things in the traditional African cultural Religion that are done specifically to fight poverty?
 - (a). Bala lezozinto umuntu angazenzela zona noma angazenzelwa ngumndeni wakhe ekulweni nobuphofu?
List things that a person can do for himself or have them done by the family to ward off poverty?
 - (b). Bala lezo zinto umphakathi ezenzela amalunga awo ukuze kuliwe nobuphofu.
List those things which the community does to alleviate poverty in its members.
2. Eziphi izinto ezenziwa ngabantu abansundu ukulwa nenhlupheko eza ngenxa

Yobuphofu/ubuhlwempu?

What do black people do to fight the pain caused by poverty?

3. Isintu sithi 'izandla ziyagezana'. Ubona ngani ukuthi abantu basasiphila lesisho?
One of the African sayings says: Hands wash each other, How do people live by this saying?
4. Uthini umbono wakho ngezitokfela noomasingwabisane?
What is your opinion about stokvels and burial societies?
5. Lisenziwa-nje isiko lokusisa noma ukunqoma ngakini?
Do people still practise the custom of helping the poor, by lending them cattle/live stork?
6. Lisenziwa ngakini ilima noma isishongo?
In your area do people still help each other in cultivating the fields and collecting firewood?
7. Amasimu amaningi nezingadi akusalinywa, ngombono wakho yini imbangela yalokhu?
Fields and gardens are lying fallow, in your opinion what is the reason for this?
8. Uthini umbono wakho ngomxhaso kaHulumeni, ikakhulu 'imali yeqolo'?
What is your opinion about the Government's social grant schemes especially the child grants?
9. Ngokubona kwakho, umxhaso wandisa ubuvila noma cha? Uma uthi yebo chaza.
In your opinion do the social grants increase the rate of dependence and idleness? If yes please explain.
10. Kukhona okunye ongathanda ukuphawula ngakho noma ukukwengeza mayelana nelemibuzo?
Do you have any other comments or additions on the questions you have just answered?

2. Structured Questions.

Yenza uphawu ebhokisini elisho okuvumayo okanye okuphikayo.

Please tick the appropriate boxes.

2.1. Questions related to the existence of African Religion in Umzimkhulu District.

1. Inkolelo yokuthi ukhona uNkulunkulu abantu abansundu eMzimkhulu babenayo endulo?

In the olden days did the people of Umzimkhulu believe in the presence of God?

Ewe Hayi
Yes No

2. Babeyi bonakalisa ngaziphi inzenzo inkolo yabo kuNkulunkulu?

How did they show their belief in God?

Babengenzi lutho ngezinkonzo zokucela imvula
They did nothing the rain supplication services
ngemihlatshelo
sacrifices

3. Kwezintsuku zanamhla uNkulunkulu usadunyisa ngesiko lakudala?

In these modern days is God still honoured with traditional customs?

Ewe Hayi
Yes No

4. Zithini iingcinga zakho ngenkolelo kumathongo okanye kwiizinyanya?

What are your opinions about the belief in the Ancestors?

Intle
It is good

Yimbi ayiqedwe
It is must be stopped

5. Ngomlinganiselo kususela ku: 0-10 wena ungathi kuninzi kangakanani ukukholelwa kwizinyanya kubantu balapha eMzimkhulu.

In the rating of 0-10 how much do you think belief in the ancestors is?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

6. Ayenziwa kwakho/kokwenu lamasiko?

Are the following customs done in your home?

Imbeleko umhlonyane/umemulo ukubuyisa ukubonga ithongo

7. Ingakanani inkolelo yokuthi xa umntu engalenzanga isiko uvelelwa amashwa?

Sebenzisa umlinganiselo 0-10.

How much is the belief that failure to do the custom leads to misfortune? Use the rate 0-10.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

8. Kulezi ezingazantsi, umntu/umntwana ongallengelwanga isiko uvame ukwenza ziphi?

Of the following what does a person for whom custom has not been done do/ fails to do?

Ukugeza ukugula ukuvaleka inzalo ukungaqashwa
Gets mad sickness sterility unemployable

Ukuzichamela/ ukuzikakela ukubanesinyama ukuba namashwa
Uncontrolable bowel activity bad luck proneness to evil

9. Amasiko nezithethe zakwantu ngokucinga kwakho zinalo ingomso apha eMzimkulu?

In your opinion has African Culture any future here in Umzimkhulu?

Ewe Hayi
Yes No

2.2. Questions Related to the Employment of Religion in Poverty Alleviation.

!0. Kwezizinto zilandelayo yeyiphi ongayibiza ngokuthi ithetha ubuhlwempu kumntu?

Of the following, which do you think represents poverty in a person?

Ukungabi nemali
Lack of money

Ukulamba
Hunger

Ukuhlutshwa yindoda
Abuse by husband

Ukuhlutshwa ngimqeshi
Abuse by employer

11. Ngomlinganiselo ka 0-10 ucinga ukuthi mangakhi amadoda ahlukumeza amakhosikazi awo lapha eMzimbhulu?

Using the rate of 0-10 how many men do you think abuse their wives?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

12. Ngokwakho ukucinga umama ohlutshwa indoda kumele ayibophe?

In your opinion should a woman who is abused by her husband lay a charge against him?

Ewe Hayi
Yes No

13. Wena sewake wahlukunyezwa ngumntu oyindoda ngenye yeezindlela zilandeleyo?

Have you ever been abused by a male in any of the following?

Ukubethwa
physically
ngokwesondo ngentetho
sexually verbally

14. Wena sewake wahlukumeza umntu ongumama ngenye yeezindlela zilandeleyo?

Have you ever abused by a woman in any of the following?

Ngokubetha
physically ngokwesondo sexually
ngentetho
verbally

15. Zeziphi izinto abantu balapha emzimkhulu abaxhasana ngazo xa kunomtshato?

How do the Umzimkhulu people help each other during weddings?

Izipheko izipho zomtshakazi ukuncedisa

Abomndeni bancedisa umkhwenyana ngelobolo

Ukucimelisa intombi ezakutshata

16. Ngomlinganiselo ka 0-10 xa kunomphanga/isifo abantu baseMzimkhulu

bancedisana ngangakanani?

Using the rate of 0-10, when there is a death how much do the Umzimkhulu people help each other?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

17. Zisenziwa ezizinto zilandelayo ukunceda umntu onengxaki?

Do people still do the following to help others in trouble?

Ilima isitshongo ukubekela igoqo ilimalokubhanda

18. Isiko lokuthi umntu ongenankomo asiselwe noma anqonywe lisenziwa?

Do people still practice the custom of lending cattle to those who do not have?

Ewe Hayi
Yes No

19. Izitokofela ziyenziwa lapha eMzikhulu?

Is the custom of 'stokvel' done at Umzimkhulu?

Ewe Hayi
Yes No

20. Amasimu nezingadi lapha endaweni yaseMzimkhulu akusalinywa yintoni isizathu?

What is the reason for not cultivating the fields and gardens in Umzimkhulu?

Ubuvila ukungabikho kweenkomo ukungakholelwa ekulimeni
Laziness Lack of cattle non-belief in agriculture

21. Amasimu kwakho/ kowenu asalalinywa?

Are the fields cultivated in your home?

Ewe Hayi
Yes No

22. Zithini iimbono zakho ngemali yoxhaso kwiintombi ezizalele emakhaya?
What is your opinion concerning Government Child support Grant especially with regard to unmarried mothers?

Wandisa ubufebe wandisa ubuvila uyinto entle awuqedwe
Increases prosti- increases good thing must stop
tution laziness

23. Ilobolo kufanele yini liqhubeke likhokhwe?
Should the custom of lobola (bride price) continue?

Ewe Hayi
Yes No

24. Nomlinganiselo ka 0-10 ucinga ukuba baninsi kangakanani abantu eMzimkhulu abanentsholongwane kagawulayo {HIV/AIDS}?
Using the rate 0-10 how many people have the HIV/AIDS virus in Umzimkhulu?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10.

25. Nomlinganiselo ka 0-10 ucinga ukuba mingakhi imizi/amakhaya angakahlaselwa sisifo seHIV/AIDS?
Using the rate of 0-10 how many homes do you think have not yet been affected by HIV/AIDS

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

26. Xa kungakuphoxi ndicela undinike ezincukacha ngawe.
If it does not offend you please supply the following information about your self

Iminyaka Ilali ohlala kuyo eMzimkhulu.
Age Your village in Umzimkhulu

Female

Male

Annexure B: Tables

AFRICAN RELIGION

UMZIMKHULU

TOTAL POPULATION = 165426

NO OF INTERVIEWEES: 97

RATIO 1:1705

1705 REPRESENTS 1% OF THE TOTAL POPULATION

FEMALE REPRESENTATIVES: 60

MALE REPRESENTATIVES : 37

Statistics is given in percentages

	FEMALE	MALE	TOT.POP.
Attestation to the presence of African religion			93.8
Knowledge of certain actions			96.88
Ancestor veneration			56.68
Ancestor cult			84.51
Initiation of girls to adulthood			77.3
Bringing the dead back (unveiling)			60.81
Thanksgiving			34
Failure to perform a ritual leads to			64.93
Sickness			
Sterility			46.38
Failure to get job			47.41
Failure to control one's bowl action			61.84
Bad luck			55.65
Accidents			48.44
Survival of African religion has a future	90		81.42
Survival of African religion does not have a future			18.58

UNDERSTANDING POVERTY

UMZIMKHULU

TOTAL POPULATION = 165426

NO OF INTERVIEWEES: 97

RATIO 1:1705

1705 REPRESENTS 1% OF THE TOTAL POPULATION

FEMALE REPRESENTATIVES: 60

MALE REPRESENTATIVES : 37

Statistics is given in percentages

	FEMALE	MALE	TOT.POP.
What the respondents thought represents poverty			
Lack of money			56.7
Lack of livestock			10.3
Starvation			41.22
Does physical,sexual and verbal abuse represent impoverishment			
Rated woman abuse as low	51.9	17.52	
Rated it between high and very high	56.68	9.27	
An abused woman should charge the husband	46.38	15.46	
Cases of abuse			35.04
Sexual abuse			4
Physical abuse			51.53
Admit to have abused women		97	

POVERTY ALLEVIATION

UMZIMKHULU

TOTAL POPULATION = 165426

NO OF INTERVIEWEES: 97

RATIO 1:1705

1705 REPRESENTS 1% OF THE TOTAL POPULATION

FEMALE REPRESENTATIVES: 60

MALE REPRESENTATIVES : 37

Statistics is given in percentages

	FEMALE	MALE	TOT POP.
Mutual assistance is very high	35	49.47	
Mutual assistance is no longer done			75
Financial schemes such as "stokvel"			96.88
Understanding work as a means of poverty alleviation			
Rate of unemployment is between high and very high	93	97.2	
Laziness is the main reason for not cultivating the fields			82.45

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