Christianity under indigenous leadership in Zimbabwe: Whither the Church's inculturation of the Shona views on death and afterlife

by

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I declare that the above thesis is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have

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Summary

Early Christian missionaries alienated Shona people from their culture and traditional religion. Essential elements of Shona religion were rejected because they were thought to be entertaining paganism, fetishism and idolatry. More than a century of Christianity in Zimbabwe has passed and some Shona still hold on tenaciously to their ancestral religion. The missionaries did not understand Shona language and may have been ignorant of the significance of the Shona religion to the Shona people. However, with the transfer of power from colonial masters to black rule, one would have expected parallel changes concerning creative integration of indigenous cultural values with the Gospel. But today, forty years after independence, not a single Church denomination in Zimbabwe (Mainline Churches, Evangelical Churches and Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches) seems to have made any 'meaningful adaption' of the Shona views on death and afterlife, in the light of the Bible, and in particular, the Gospel. Several elements in Shona traditional beliefs on death and afterlife have been proposed for inculturation. In spite of the proposals put forward by various scholars, even the indigenous Church leaders in Zimbabwe seem to have failed to fully adapt the Shona views into the Christian Gospel message, despite the fact that they fully understand and appreciate the Shona culture and values. A literature review will help to extract information from current and past studies underlying this field. The principles followed on comprehending and solving problems, and the methods and methodology employed in the study, will be made explicit. A detailed examination of the Shona views on death and afterlife which the Zimbabwean Church is expected to possibly incorporate into their worship, and the precepts on the eschatological perspective of Christianity on death, resurrection and afterlife, will be conducted. Definition and analysis of the terms 'dialogue' and 'inculturation', and the progress achieved on dialogue and inculturation, by the Church in Zimbabwe, will follow. The challenges confronting the Church in Zimbabwe, and the Shona Christians, will be investigated, while theological arguments will be employed to identify gaps in knowledge in the previous literature. The study will suggest possible proposals on the way forward.

Key Terms

Death and afterlife; ancestral spirits, rituals of honour; inculturation; interfaith dialogue; witchcraft.

List of abbreviations and acronyms

Cor.: Corinthians

Deut.: Deuteronomy

AM: *Africae Munus*

EA: *Ecclesia in Africa*

EG: *Evangelii Gaudium*

EN: *Evangelli Nuntiandi*

NA: *Nostra Aetate*

ZINATHA: Zimbabwe National Traditional Healers' Association

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Table of Contents

Chapter 4
The Shona views on death and afterlife

Chapter 7
The theological arguments, further findings, and Conclusion

Clarification of key concepts

Chikuva: place in the traditional Shona kitchen where cooking utensils are kept. In some Shona places it also used as a traditional family altar.

Chimutsamapfihwa: substitute wife given to widower to replace a deceased wife.

Chisi: the traditional Shona *mhondoro* rest day, sanctioned by ancestral spirits, when no work may be done in the fields.

Doro remvura: literally beer for water denoting *donhodzo* (beer that is meant to cool or comfort a deceased's spirit)

Kenōsis: self-emptying

Kudarika uta: a ritual to test widow's fidelity, performed at *kurova guva* ceremony.

Kurova gata: involves family members of the departed consulting a *n'anga* or several *n'anga* to enquire on causes of death.

Kurova guva: ceremony of calling home the spirit of the deceased, where it is incorporated into the ancestral realm as a *mudzimu,* to take care of the living descendents.

Kutanda botso: appeasement of an offended deceased's (usually the mother) spirit in which offender is reduced to a beggar going about wearing sackcloth.

Mombe yenheedzo: beast slaughtered to accompany the deceased.

Mukwerera: rainmaking ceremony.

Mumvuri (bvuri/mvuri): shade/shadow of dead person who dies grieved.

Muzukuru: grandchild, nephew, niece.

N'anga: traditional healer/ witchdoctor/diviner.

Ngozi: an avenging aggrieved spirit.

Nyaradzo: consolation ceremony.

Preparatio evangelica: preparation for / antecedent to the preaching of the Gospel.

Sahwira: ritual friend.

Shavi, (plural - ***mashavi***): alien spirits.

Shungu: emotional distress.

Zorora murugare: rest in peace.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Rationale

This is a research in the field of eschatology: the study of last things. This will be briefly discussed in chapter 5. Traditionally, most Shona people actively interact with spirits of their dead. Thus, it is true to say that Shona beliefs in ancestral spirits, ghosts and witchcraft have great impact on the whole Shona life. The Shona life has high eschatological orientation that has not been satisfactorily investigated theologically. This research provides a theological attempt to explain the purpose of this present life and human destiny from the Shona and Christian perspectives.

A critical dialogue of the Shona religiosity and the Gospel should shed light on this pertinent issue. The study will scrutinize possible divergences on the Shona and Christian beliefs and critically examine the challenges faced by the Christian Church in Zimbabwe. Modification, expansion or dismissal of some cultural practices will be unavoidable for a creative dialogue of Shona eschatological beliefs and practices with the Gospel. Alternative workable solutions for the Shona people will be proposed. Because Christians are historically and culturally conditioned, it is common to see many Shona Christians swinging between the two belief systems. This is usually the case where the Church is thought to have failed to offer its adherents workable solutions to the chronic fear of the spirits of the deceased, and also to conceptualize the extent of the effect of these diverging beliefs and fears, on its followers.

Both the Shona and Christian religions co-exist as important religions which have something to offer to their respective followers. The Shona religion has something to offer to the Shona eschatological life which the Christian religion seem to be found wanting. This study seeks to scrutinize the rationale of integrating two separate religions, and the extent to which the diverging views may be adapted to fit into each other, without compromising the Gospel and/or quintessential Christian beliefs. At this juncture, it is important to ask why the Shona people

have lived double lives (dual observances); whereby they follow the Christian teaching during the day and revert back to traditional practices during the night.

A balance will be struck regarding the actual inculturation, as we explore points of agreement and disagreement, and assess the extent to which the Shona and Christian belief systems on death and afterlife may influence each other. The phenomenological approach will be employed in the study of the Christian Church and the Shona people.

1.2 Background information

Zimbabwe (formerly Southern Rhodesia) is a country in the southern part of the continent of Africa. Its capital city is Harare. Zimbabwe is landlocked; sharing borders with Mozambique in the east, Zambia in the north, Botswana in the west, Namibia in the Caprivi Strip extending from Victoria Falls in the west and South Africa in the south. The name Zimbabwe is derived from the Shona words *dzimba dzemabwe*, (houses of stone). The Shona people are by far the largest and most dominant ethno-linguistic group in Zimbabwe. They are a group of Bantu people who account for about 82% of Zimbabwe's population (Chimhanda 2014)[1]. The major Shona linguistic groups (in numerical order) are the Karanga, the Zezuru, the Manyika, the Korekore, the Rozvi and the Ndau. Again, the three largest groups are the Karanga, the Zezuru, and the Manyika (Ezika Matshobana)[2]. Figure 1 below shows the map of Zimbabwe's main linguistic groups.

The Shona forefathers occupied Great Zimbabwe under the umbrella name Hungwe[3] (E. Matshobana[4]). These were raided by the Mbire[5] who also founded the Monomutapa Empire.

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[1] Chimhanda, F. 2014. "The Liberation Potential of the Shona Culture and the Gospel: A Post-feminist Perspective*".* From *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae vol.40 suppl.1* Pretoria. http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1017-04992014000200018 accessed 09/07/15

[2] Matshobana, Ezika. *The History of the Shona Tribe in Zimbabwe*. From www.bulawayo1872.com/history/shona.htm - accessed 15/06/15

[3] These are the original inhabitants of the country of Zimbabwe (Welsh Asante K. 2000. *Zimbabwe Dance*. Trenton: Africa World Press, page 19).

[4] Matshobana, Ezika. *The History of the Shona Tribe in Zimbabwe*. From www.bulawayo1872.com/history/shona.htm - accessed 15/06/15

[5] The Mbire were the conquerors who crossed the Zambezi River about 1000 years ago from present day Malawi. Ibid pp. 19

This Empire occupied most areas of the present day Zimbabwe, and Great Zimbabwe[6] was the centre of activity. The Monomutapa Empire was moved and replaced by the Rozvi Empire[7]

Figure 1
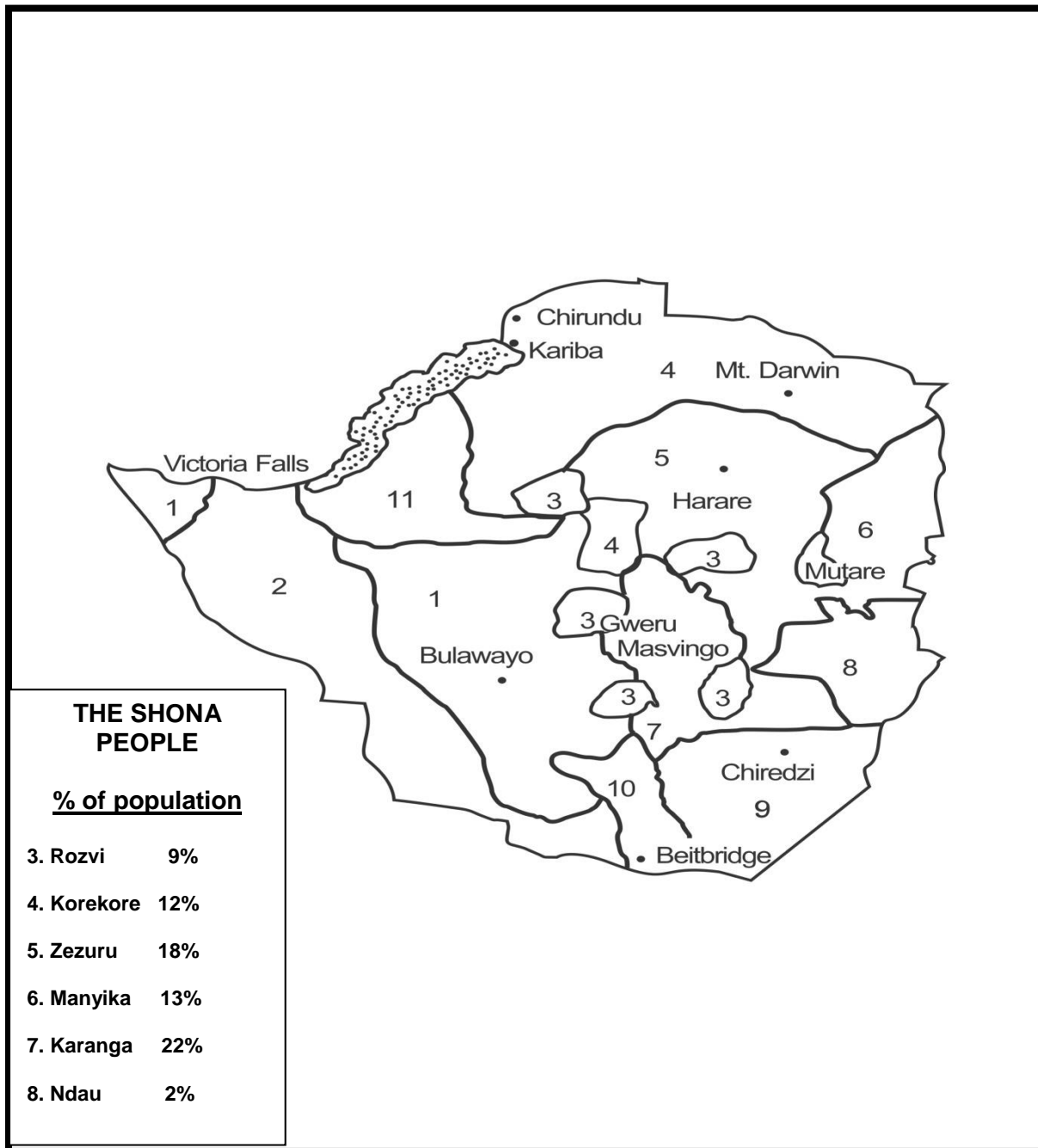
Map of Zimbabwe showing the Shona linguistic groupings.

The map contains the following legend:

THE SHONA PEOPLE

% of population

3. Rozvi   9%

4. Korekore   12%

5. Zezuru   18%

6. Manyika   13%

7. Karanga   22%

8. Ndau   2%

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[6] Great Zimbabwe was formerly called Zimbabwe Ruins.

[7] The Empire may have been established by a ruler caller Changamire Dombo 1684-95. He captured some of the most fertile and mineral rich areas. They also drove the Portuguese from their market places. From http://www.britannica.com/place/Rozwi-historical-state-Africa - accessed 25/03/16

which was later displaced during the Mfecane wars by the Ndebele and the Shangane tribes.[8] All these changes resulted in greater migration than before.

There are some migrants who moved North East and North West of Zimbabwe to occupy the Korekore country (Bourdillon 1976:10). Both the terms "Korekore" and "Zezuru" are thought to have had topographical associations, and had no ethnic or tribal nuances (Mwandayi 2011:43). The term Zezuru at first referred to people residing in 'high areas' in contrast to those who were staying in the Mazoe valley and other surrounding valleys (Mwandayi 2011:48). They inhabited central Shona country especially Mazoe. Their unity was preserved by their common culture and language, and their geographic proximity (Bourdillon 1976:13). The term Karanga identifies an ethnic group even though it also points to a dialect spoken by some Shona people, while the term Manyika initially referred to people under chief Mutasa on the north and northwest of the present day Mutare (Beach)[9].

At present, the Karanga in the South, the Zezuru in the central Zimbabwe, the Korekore in the North and the Manyika in the East comprise a majority of the Shona people in Zimbabwe. Today the common language, similar culture and a joint history are still the unifying features that generally characterize the Shona people. The Shona may have arisen from one group of families, under one chief. This may be the reason why famous tribal leaders like Chaminuka, Kaguvi and Nehanda carry indisputable authority, over all Shona tribes (Ezika Matshobana).[10] They put up with the Shona culture that prevailed between Zambezi and Limpopo Rivers. They were engaged in economic activities such as hunting, fishing, mining and trading, only to a limited extent because of the existing natural, social and technological factors (Beach 1986:8).

The Shona traditional religion is a religion which pays attention to the desires and life circumstance of its people. It falls under the term 'African Traditional Religion' but the Shona traditional religion has its own religious systems that are unique to them, although there may be

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[8] http://www.geni.com/projects/Zimbabwe-Tribes-and-People/23140 - accessed 9/11/2015
[9] Beach, D. N. http://context:cdlib.org/xtf/viow?docld - accessed 13/06/15
[10] Matshobana E. "History of the Shona tirbe of Zimbabwe". From http://www.bulawayo1872.com/history/shona.htm accessed 13/06/2015

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some parallels with other folk religions in Africa. There is a common thread of ideals and experiences that are homogeneous among the Shona. The Shona religion is 'traditional' in the sense that the religion is reinforced by an essentially indigenous value system. Kofi Johnson (2004)[11] quotes Opoku thus:

> To call the religion 'traditional' is not to refer to it as something of the past; it is only to indicate that it is undergirded by a fundamentally indigenous value system and that has its own pattern, with its own historical inheritance and tradition from the past.

James Cox (2007:69) would rather use the term 'indigenous' religion to remove some unnecessary theological baggage. He submits that 'indigenous' religion is one that is limited to a given locality, and practiced by inhabitants of that place; with a kinship-based worldview which pays attention to ancestral spirits, which underlie their religious life and religious practices. The methodology and interpretation of the Shona religious practices have been affected by history as it unfolded during such eras as Colonialism, Pan Africanism, African Nationalism, Patriotism etc. Using Schreiter's (1985:124-126) terminology, in his work, *Constructing Local Theologies,* the Shona religion falls under the term folk religion. 'Folk religion' is popular or vernacular religion. By saying it is popular he thinks this is because it is a religion 'of the people'. Bowman *et al* (2012), in their abstract, define vernacular religion as "…religion as people experience, understand, and practice it." In this case it is a religion that belongs to the Shona people. Understanding the political, social, intellectual and economic dimensions of the Shona traditional religion will enable us to appreciate the Shona religion better.

It may be necessary at this juncture to unpack the Mwari cult of the Shona religion in brief, in an attempt to incorporate it into the current discourse. Owomoyela Oyekan (2002: 28) asserts that the Mwari cult goes back to the 17th century with the settling of the Torwa people in the Matopos area. Khami was their centre of operations. They reigned up to the time that they were expatriated by the Rozvi people. The Rozvi are the Mutapa people who remained, and later founded the Mwari cult. The Mwari cult eventually settled on the cave shrines found in the

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[11] Johnson Kofi 2004 "Understanding African Traditional Religion," In *Thinking About Religion,* Volume 4. Fayetteville State University. From http://organizations.uncfsu.edu/ncrsa/journal/v04/johnson_understanding.htm accessed 13/07/15

Matopos hills, while the main shrine was located at the Matonjeni. The most active and known shrine today is at Njelele. Elliot Siamonga[12] submits that:

> The Shona believed that the spirits reside in forests, mountains, caves, hollow trees and pools, closely linking intangible aspects of heritage with the tangible places. The adherents of the traditional Mwari and the ancestral spirit(s) (*sic*) therefore attach great respect to the environment because they argue, by despoiling it they will be depriving Mwari and the spirits of a home to live in.

The priests and priestesses ministered in the shrines as they performed various duties including offering sacrifices and prayers for rains. Rituals were also performed for thanksgiving for Mwari's plenteous harvest. The priests mediated between Mwari and the people by communicating and interpreting his voice. They were also responsible for maintaining the shrines. Mwari's communication was not through spirit mediums, but it was through objects, animals, rocks, etc. Earlier they used the name 'High God' which was gradually replaced by the term Mwari. During the Rozvi confederation, the Mwari cult grew to become some kind of the state religion, which was administered by rulers (*madzimambo*). Tabona Shoko (2007:38) says the Mwari cult was initially founded at Great Zimbabwe in Masvingo before it was moved to the Matopo hills. He submits there is a tradition that traces the Mwari cult to the Shona people located at a place called Guruuswa. There was a time when a voice of Mwari called upon the elders for them to leave Guruuswa and move to some promised land. Guruuswa is a famous place of origin acknowledged by many Shona traditions.

Mwari is thought to have guided the Shona from Guruuswa to their current locations which they termed homelands - *nyika dzino* (these lands). One tradition took Mwari to be the original ancestor of the people, an incorporeal spirit; the first creature in Guruuswa. He is therefore not the 'eternal causeless cause', but the first of all creation (Owomoyela 2002: 28). This tradition sees Mwari as a founding father who is a guardian of all the tribes related to him. He also has some strongly feminine attributes. His greatest praise name is *Dzivaguru* (Big pool). Other names attributed to Mwari are: *Musiki* (Creator), *Musikavanhu* (Creator of people), *Nyadenga* (One who belongs to the skies), *Wekumusoro* (The One above) (Chimhanda 2014).

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[12] Siamonga, Elliot. 2014. *Unpacking the mysteries of the Njelele shrine: Part One*. From https://www.thepatriot.co.zw/old_posts/unpacking-the-mysteries-of-the-njelele-shrine-part-one/ - accessed 5/04/2016

The use of the Shona name Mwari for the biblical God was accepted with reservations. George Nicholas Creary (2011:206-207) observes that:

> Despite the breath of the use of Mwari's name throughout the area between the Zambezi and the Limpopo there seems to be no consensus among different Chishona-speaking groups as to whether Mwari was the high god; speakers of Kalanga, Karanga, Manyika and Ndau in the southwest, south, and east respectively apparently accepted Mwari as the supreme being/creator, whereas speakers of Zezuru and Korekore in the central northern regions did not.

Because of these reservations, the term Mwari was at first used in varying degrees in various Shona areas. Alternative names for God were Jehovah and Yave (especially for the Roman Catholics). Fortune (1973:8) notes that there were some debates in the Roman Catholic missionary circles on the appropriateness of the name Mwari to replace the name Yave. The Shona name Mwari was eventually adopted by the majority, with only a handful in the ranks who were against the name. The "... central and Northern VaShona seemed hesitant about "accepting the divine status of Mwari and agreeing that the name Mwari" was acceptable for the creator/high god" (Creary 2011:207). They were against the adoption as they felt that the name Mwari had contemptible associations which could potentially confuse the simple, because of his godlike attributes. The focus of the people who worshiped it was mainly at the worldly material things. This was not compatible with the Christian faith, and was likely to mislead people. Be that as it may, the Shona name Mwari was eventually adopted in the Christian circles. Today, virtually all Christians use the term Mwari for their notion of God, while the same name is used by those belonging to the Shona traditional religion, especially referring to the voice from the caves. This results in the blending of traditional attributes and the Christian attributes; each affecting the other.

> Western missionaries chose Mwari as the name for God from among many names and titles for a supreme being found in ChiShona, due to the widespread acceptance by the Shona people of Mwari as the creator before the missionaries identified him as such (Creary 2011:207).

Several tribes, including the Shona, the Ndebele and the Venda, are involved in the Mwari cult, although its major concentration is in the southern Shona areas. While it is largely located in Matopos hills in the Matebeleland region, as noted above, the cult basically remained a Shona

tradition. The Ndebele only adopted the cult at later stage, when their kings would appeal to and ask the oracle in the event of a drought or when some advice was needed.

The online encyclopaedia wikipedia[13] submits that:

> Nowadays, between 60% and 80% of the Shona are Christians. Besides that, traditional beliefs are very vivid among them. Therefore some people consider the Christian model split as low as 25%. The most important features are ancestor worship (the term is called inappropriate by some scholars) and totemism.

Such discrepancies in numbers of the Shona who are Christians arise from the fact that the definition of what Christian faith is, varies with whether people are liberal or conservative in the way they perceive Christian faith. Such websites as Everyculture[14], whose authors do not advocate for pluralism in Christian faith would inevitably come up with much lower percentages of Shona Christians.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

This sub-section gives a prelude to the problem that this study seeks to undertake.

1.3.1   Preamble to the statement

Early Christian missionary work in Zimbabwe colluded with colonialism. They were part of the Rhodesian Pioneer Column who became partakers in marginalizing indigenous people. Since Shona religious traditions tapped mainly from oral traditions handed down, it is possible that these may have been inaccessible to the white missionaries. The missionaries did not understand Shona language and may have been ignorant of the significance of the Shona religion to the Shona. It was the only religion originating from the Shona traditions. This collusion tarnished authentic evangelization among the Shona people of Zimbabwe. The missionaries alienated Shona people from their culture and traditional religion. Death and afterlife concerns are the bedrock of the Shona traditional religion. Yet essential elements of Shona religion were rejected because they were thought to be entertaining paganism, fetishism and idolatry. Thus, the Shona

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[13] www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/shona_people - accessed 13/06/15
[14] www.everyculture.com - accessed 23/10/15

were seen as uncultured and wicked, and the crucial fibre of their beliefs was rejected as mere superstition and barbaric, while everything African was "labelled evil, syncretistic, and non-Christian" (Kamudzandu 2007:280). Indigenous religious and cultural values were changed to comply with Western standards. Early Western missionaries negated and alienated Shona Christians from traditional beliefs and consequently, quintessential beliefs on the hereafter. But after more than a century of Christianization, the Shona religion is very much alive so that in situations of crisis (illness, death, drought, pestilence, war), some Shona Christians are caught between absolute submission to Christianity and backtracking to their traditional religion for solutions to their problems (Bourdillon 1993:25). It seems inculturation was kept at bay. More than a century of Christianity in Zimbabwe has passed, and some Shona still hold on tenaciously to the ancestral religion.

In Shona religion today, the medium of transmission of knowledge is still oral. As was in the past, this 'real' knowledge is orally passed down to practitioners such as spirit mediums and traditional healers. The teaching is given only to people with the right to know, and who show the aptitude to handle such knowledge. This definitely eliminates travellers, colonial administrators and field researchers. Because of this, 'outsiders' were kept at a safe distance, only to be told stories, like what happens in children's Sunday school classes.

However, with the transfer of power from colonial masters to black rule, one would have expected parallel changes concerning creative integration of indigenous cultural values with the Gospel. But today, forty years after independence, not a single Church denomination (Mainline Churches, Evangelical Churches and Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches) seems to have made any 'meaningful adaption' of the Shona views on death and afterlife, in the light of the Bible, and in particular, the Gospel. It also appears that the Roman Catholic Church's 'formal' efforts to adapt seem to have been let down at implementation stage.

1.3.2   The statement

This research will explore several elements in Shona traditional beliefs on death and afterlife that have been proposed for inculturation. These are explicated in chapter 4. For example, Canisius

Mwandayi (2011) in his work, *Death and After-life Rituals in the Eyes of the Shona*, comes up with interesting proposals. Although various scholars have come up with inculturation proposals, even the indigenous Church leaders in Zimbabwe seem to have failed to 'inculturate' the Shona views into the Gospel message, notwithstanding the fact that they have a clear understanding of the Shona culture and values. The research will also interrogate both early Christian evangelization and post-colonial Christianity where authentic integration of the Shona views on death and afterlife with the Gospel is concerned. **The pertinent research question overshadowing this study is: 'What cultural elements (beliefs and practices surrounding death and the afterlife), should be included in the inculturation of Shona views on death and afterlife by the Christian Church and the Gospel, to ensure that the Shona Christians feel at home in their faith (Church) and their culture, while at the same time not compromising the indispensable elements of the Christian Gospel?'** Further sub-questions are: What has the Church done to integrate or harmonize the essential cultural elements in the light of the Gospel of Christ? Does what has emerged go deep enough? If not, can there be a more authentic (relevant, coherent, and pragmatic) Shona Christian eschatology that is sensitive to the questions the Shona Christians ask today? These questions will inevitably lead me in formulating the gap in knowledge and consequently, lead to my contribution to new knowledge.

1.4 Aims and objectives

This study seeks to investigate the challenges the Church in Zimbabwe is facing in integrating the Shona views on death and afterlife. An attempt will be made to identify, analyze and synthesize the Shona traditional and Christian eschatological beliefs, in the light of the Gospel and Christian tradition, and at the same time coming up with possible proposals the Zimbabwean Church could adopt.

The goals of this research are to:
- Investigate the Shona beliefs on death and afterlife,
- Explore the Christian eschatological beliefs regarding death, resurrection and afterlife,
- Attempt to have a creative dialogue (an inculturation) between the Shona traditional beliefs on death and afterlife and the Christian Gospel,

10

- Give a critical analysis of the term inculturation and its scope, and analyze and synthesize challenges which confront the Zimbabwean church in the inculturation process.

- Propose to the Shona people and the Church in Zimbabwe possible solutions to the challenges they encounter in inculturation.

1.5 Delineation

The aim of this study is to investigate inculturation initiatives adopted by the Christian Church in Zimbabwe (hereafter called the Zimbabwean Church or the Church), if there are any at all. In Zimbabwe, inculturation of the Shona way of life into the Christian Gospel is a song which has been sung for many decades, especially by the academics. The music wanes down as we go into Churches. Yet the Churches are supposed to be the executors and implementers of the inculturation hypotheses. Because of the slow rate of execution of inculturation, focusing on one denomination may not be revealing enough. In order to cast a reasonably adequate wide net, the main area of investigation will be Christian Church in Zimbabwe. An ecumenical approach will therefore be taken since the research will cut across most Christian Church denominations in Zimbabwe.

The Shona people have their own Shona traditional religion. However, a good percentage (as shown above) has accepted the Christian Gospel. The research seeks to explore how the interaction and dialogue between the Shona traditional religion and the Christian Gospel have been, and should be, handled by the Church, and consequently, to come up with some possible recommendations.

From the outset, I acknowledge my presuppositions as a practicing Minister of Religion in the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe (AFM), arguably the oldest and the largest Pentecostal Mission Church denomination in Zimbabwe in terms of numbers, a male, black African and of Shona *Zezuru* ethnic group. These contribute to the naive knowledge I take into the study. Since no interpretation is without *eisegesis* (reading into the text), I understand that I will keep my presuppositions in check so as to be as neutral and objective as possible.

11

1.6 Research Design and Methodology

Research design is the comprehensive plan of action of a study that shows how a research will be done. Mouton (1996:175) asserts that in order to take full advantage of the validity of findings, the main purpose of research design is to plan, organize and execute a research. The study is going to be a qualitative research, and data will be gathered from a small number of people. It is qualitative in the sense that it "deals with a logical problem not a logistical problem", according to Yin, as quoted by Mediha Sahin (2013:8). This means the emphasis is on logic and consistence rather than statistics or figures. The qualitative approach will facilitate study of religio-social and cultural phenomena within the Shona people. Qualitative research is inductive. A hypothesis is not needed to conduct the research. Inductive data analysis will be employed to achieve better appreciation of phenomena. It is a way of comprehending variables in their normal settings, and to elucidate the intermingling realities and experiences of the researcher and the Shona people. Qualitative research will also help comprehension of meanings, beliefs, ideals, experiences and philosophy of the life of the Shona, pertaining to death and the hereafter. The study of the Shona eschatological thinking, which tends to be described and understood subjectively, will be made easier.

Domegan *et al* (2007:24) contend that qualitative research aims to survey and discover phenomena pertaining to the question at hand. The aim will be to understand the Shona people in their social, cultural and religious contexts. Issues will be examined and phenomena will be interpreted in terms of the meaning the Shona people assign to their religio-cultural beliefs on the dead and afterlife (Denzin and Lincoln 2003:3). In this approach the basic elements of analysis are not numbers but words, and the end product will be of theories or description of phenomena being studied. The quantitative research method will not be employed in this study.

Methodology studies how a research is conducted, how things are discovered and how knowledge is acquired. Methodology underlies philosophies that steer research practices and give details why we are employing certain methods. The intention is to use proper procedures in our quest to find solutions. One of the major methodologies will be systematic Christian theology with particular focus on inculturation and eschatology. Shorter (1988:11) asserts that

Christian faith only exists in a cultural form, and there should therefore be continuing exchange of ideas between faith and culture. Inculturation is not just confined to the reading of the Scriptures but it goes on to investigate and to scrutinize the repercussions and nuances of adapting the Shona religious beliefs into the Gospel. There is also a need to question the Christian doctrines. Various other approaches are going to be adopted. These include the; ethnography, anthropological approach, phenomenological approach, grounded theory and case study.

Crotty (2003: 3) asserts that research methods are "the techniques or procedures used to gather and collect data related to some research question or hypothesis". They are research tools or techniques employed in qualitative or quantitative research studies to discover solutions to problems. Various methods will be employed to collect data in the field. Individual and group interviews will be useful in getting first-hand information from participants. There may also be need for non-participant observation where data is collected, from a distance, without interfering and influencing the data sources. Alternatively, participant observation will also be carried out, when the situation so demands, where I will be part of the targeted source of data, and where I participate in the activities being undertaken. Analysis of documents such as Church minutes, encyclicals, doctrines and policies, pertaining to the dialogue between the Shona culture and the Christian Church, will be useful to obtain and comprehend information from various Church denominations. Data analysis will also be employed to make sense of all data collected. Finally, literature review is going to be an important method to discover the gap between what was, what is and what should be. Methods are part of methodology.

Research design and methodology will be discussed in more detail in chapter 3.

1.7 Axiology

David Silverman (2000:201) submits that conducting a research breaks into the private spaces of participants to the research, by the researchers. There is therefore need, by every researcher, to attend to ethical concerns. So, a researcher is obliged to respect the rights, requirements, self-esteem, principles and desires of participants. Interacting with the Church leadership and the

Shona people means I will be invading their private spaces. This raises ethical issues that I, as a researcher, will need to consider during and after the research.

A key ethical concern will be the reduction of the risk of harm. I should be diligent to keep away from all possible harm or discomfort. Where there is a likelihood of harm, there should be a very good reason why the study should be carried out in the prescribed way. Even in such instances there must be strategies in place to ensure that harm or discomfort are minimized, and the participants should be forewarned of the possible harm. Such harm may take different forms such as: physical harm, psychological distress and discomfort, social disadvantage, damage to financial status, etc. There are a variety of ways of reducing the risk of harm. These include protecting anonymity and confidentiality of participants, obtaining informed consent from participants, avoiding deceptive practices and reserving the right by the participant to withdraw.

Data collected should be handled in confidence in its gathering, analysis, data storage and publication. Publication of data may take the form of submission of the thesis to the supervisor for marking. I will respect anonymity and confidentiality of all participants taking part in the research. For confidentiality, access to information that identifies a person is denied to anyone else except the researcher. Concerning anonymity, the identity of the participant is supposed to be concealed, sometimes, even to the researcher. Scott (2005:243) sees anonymity as:

> … the degree to which the identity of a message source is unknown and unspecified; thus, the less knowledge one has about the source and the harder it is to specify who the source is among possible options, the more anonymity exists.

To maintain confidentiality, I should ensure that anyone outside the study cannot link individual participants with their responses. It is wise to gather identifying information only when it is necessary to the study. If it is important to collect and link information that identify participants, such as names, to their responses, then I may need to be creative in order to preserve confidentiality. This may call for use of coding, or to encryption the identifiable data, or to allocate security codes to computerized records. It is important to note that it is not only a duty to protect the data gathered, but it is also a legal requirement. Permission to divulge any confidential information should therefore be obtained from participants.

Data collection devices such as video tapes, audio tapes, interview notes and field notes are going to be employed. These should not contain identifying information. In process of coding, every participant is assigned to an identification code, vigilantly and if possible, technically developed, before the collection of the data begins. I will keep such identification codes separate from the data documents, and only identification codes will appear on the data documents. Confidentiality and anonymity however, may still be difficult to achieve in the context of the current research. Van den Hoonard (2002:8) may be correct in asserting that "promises of confidentiality are easier to make than to keep".

As a researcher I informed the participants of the intention of the study, the type of data and the collection methods, before the study began. Participants were made aware that they are participating in a research, and the part they are expected to play, explaining their roles fully. They were also informed of the possible outcomes and risks involved, and how the data is going to be handled and stored. Finally, I obtained the informed consent in writing.

When conducting a research, it is necessary to avoid deception. However, there are disagreements concerning evasion of deceptive practices. In a secret research, deceptive practices may be an essential element which may therefore be justifiable. 'Secret research' is an instance whereby participants are not informed of the identity of the researcher and motivation of the study. This is normally the case where it is impossible or not feasible to inform everyone in the given scenario what the researcher is doing. This is a crucial issue in participant observation. For example, in observing the Shona doing their traditional rituals, the knowledge of the aims of research by participants and presence of the researcher, may influence the particular phenomenon under observation. This would certainly affect the quality of the findings.

There is need to respect opinions of interviewees and I will keep in check my personal presuppositions as a researcher. The end of the research will be a win-win situation because the interviewees will have been empowered through acquisition of more knowledge attained after the research. The research is based on participants' freely volunteered informed consent. This entails giving participants a full explanation of the research and how it will be disseminated.

Participants were also conscientized on; their right of refusal to participate, how confidentiality will be maintained and on the potential use of the data.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

Quoting Eisenhart, Cynthia Grant and Azadeh Osanloo define (2014:13) theoretical framework as:

> … a structure that guides research by relying on a formal theory…constructed by using an established, coherent explanation of certain phenomena and relationships.

It is a frame of reference that underlie how we define concepts, our observations, research designs, how we interpret phenomena and the generalizations we make. When the statement of the problem has been made, and the research questions have been asked, it is essential to establish present theories or concepts related to the area of study. A theoretical framework is derived from existing theory or theories in current literature. It introduces and describes the theory or concept that gives details why the research problem being studied exists. It informs research questions and methodology, and it gives guidance on what may be noticed and what may not be noticed, and assists in justifying the research problem. Things which are not in the framework will not be noticed. It is therefore needful to make the framework explicit and for me, the researcher, to show that I am familiar with the major concepts that relate to the study. The concepts or theories then become assumptions that are used to describe, expect, explain and control phenomena. I will need to show why I am using or not using certain concepts in the research. Findings will be discussed and assessed in terms of their relationship to the theoretical framework or the line of enquiry that undergirds the study. The aim of the theoretical framework:

> … is not to summarize what has already been done in the field. Instead, it is to ground your proposed study in relevant previous work, and to give the reader a clear sense of your theoretical approach to the phenomena you propose to study (Maxwell 2005:123).

The framework seeks to show that the relationships identified in the study are not based on individual impulses and guesses, but are based on solid facts that we get from authors of previous researches.

Literature review is used to discover how the key concepts that relate to the study have been defined by present scholarship. A vital comparison of how various authors define the concepts then follows. A choice of the best definition that is most suitable to the research is made, and this choice must be justified. These are theories that would have been tested and authenticated by other scholars, and are generally accepted in scholarly literature. I will need to talk about the theories or concepts that other scholars have applied to the area of study, and why given concepts are, or are not suitable for the research. I need to determine the similarities and differences between the current study and earlier researches.

This research will centre on inculturation and the authentic dialogue between the Christian faith and the Shona views on death and afterlife. A discussion will be made on; what dialogue is, the purpose of dialogue, guidelines for effective dialogue and the possibility of interfaith worship. Inculturation, dialogue and worship will underlie the progression of the study. These are critical to the research and will be measured as part of the research. They are key concepts that should be defined within the theoretical framework. Hence Eisenhart's (1991:205) submission that theoretical framework is an arrangement that directs research by relying on a proper theory which is developed by using an established and coherent explanation, of given phenomena and relationships. The theory or theories so selected undergird the researcher's philosophy with regards to how I comprehend and plan to research the topic. They determine my perception and how I make sense of, and interpret the data collected. By adopting the framework, prejudices that may influence me are reduced, as individual viewpoints are met head-on in the process of developing the theories. A good theoretical framework calls for a deep and considerate appreciation of the research problem, research purpose and research questions.

Inculturation is a relatively new concept to the Church today. However, its essence has been there since the foundation of the Church. It is difficult to come up with an all-encompassing definition of inculturation because it is linked to culture which has multiple definitions. An attempt will be made to formulate a definition of inculturation, the aim being to check on its applicability to the Zimbabwean Church as far as it affects the Shona Christians. The main objective is to study the interaction between Christian faith and the Shona cultural thinking on death and the afterlife.

It will be inadequate to talk of inculturation without giving reference to culture, because inculturation seeks to impact a given culture. Culture is a key element in inculturation and understanding culture sets us in a better position to understand inculturation. Even the biblical witness, which underlies the Christian faith, is accessible to us in a particular cultural setting. Scholars have failed to come up with a standard definition of culture because culture is a creation of a variety of disciplines which study human ways of life. Each discipline places emphasis on its own interests.

Culture therefore is a set of meanings and value systems which are dynamic, and is more than tradition, dress, marrying, funeral rites etc. The definition of the term inculturation may only be attempted after looking at this key element of inculturation - culture.

1.9 Literature Review

Findings of previous scholars should underlie my new discoveries as a researcher. In literature review I select literature, from scholars, which will underlie my new discoveries. The literature must be relevant to the current study. The review aims to give a summary of what has been already published by recognized scholars, on the issues related to the dialogue between the Shona views on death and afterlife, and the Christian tradition. To date, I have consulted books and articles from over fifty black Zimbabwean scholars on the matter. This is in addition to the review of the works of other numerous African writers who researched on this area of study. The aim is to familiarize with the substance and concepts associated with the study and to acquire background information about the phenomena under study, in order to identify gaps in knowledge which the current study seeks to close. Ridley (2008:2) sees literature review as:

> …the opportunity to engage in a written dialogue with researchers in your area while at the same time showing that you have engaged with, understood and responded to the relevant body of knowledge underpinning your research.

While William Wiersman (1995:406) contends that the review of the literature gives us the environment and life situation for the research problem, and that it should show that there is need for the current study. This will show that I am conversant with the area of study. It is in the

18

literature review that I identify theories and the previous scholarship which motivated my choice of the topic and the methodology I employed.

Two components can be identified in any literature review. These are the process and the product. The process entails searching literature. Sarah Gash (2000:1) defines literature search as "a systematic and thorough search of all types of published literature in order to identify as many items as possible that are relevant to a particular topic." It is necessary to review several articles although only a few may be incorporated into the literature review report. The 'product' is a written synthesis of the literature.

A good literature review serves several purposes. It provides a connection between current study and previous studies, and shows how the proposed study contributes to existing knowledge. The study being carried out is linked to the larger continuing dialogue in the literature about the area of study; closing the gaps and broadening earlier studies. The literature review is therefore helpful in identifying the gap in knowledge and outlining the 'jumping-off place' for the study: i.e. how the study will filter, modify, or broaden what is already known. A literature review shares with the reader the findings of other studies closely associated with the current study. It is from the review that the importance of the study, as well as the yardstick for contrasting the findings of a study with other results, is provided. The literature review shows my critical aptitude to devise an argument from my perspective. I should show that I have a complete understanding of the field and I am conscious of essential latest substantive and methodological developments.

The current research focuses on whether there has been implementation of authentic dialogue and whether there has been effective adaptation by the Church under indigenous leadership, of fundamental and critical issues pertaining to the Shona religious life as far as death and the afterlife is concerned. A more detailed literature review will be given in chapter two.

1.10   The way forward

Having looked at the research problem, and the aims and objectives of the research, I shall proceed to give an overview of the chapters that follow. The research is going to be divided into seven chapters. In chapter 2 a literature review will be carried out. First, I will start by examining the purpose of the literature review, what I intend to achieve by reviewing literature and why this exercise is important to the research. In 'literature review' I will be looking at literature that underlies my current study. I will select only a few of the massive pool of literature concerning the Shona tradition and the Christian eschatological thinking on death and afterlife. I will also look at literature relevant to the study, but which does not fall under the Shona worldview and the Christian eschatological view on death and afterlife.

Chapter 3 deals with methods and methodology. Here I look at research paradigms. These are the principles followed on comprehending and solving problems. There are some philosophical assumptions necessary, for a well-founded research, and in making appropriate choices, of suitable methods to be adopted in developing knowledge. Since it is the theoretical perspective that informs the methods and methodology employed in research, I will utilize the theoretical perspective and its supporting philosophies. This chapter also looks at the methods and methodology that I will employ in the study of the Shona culture and its adaptation into the Christian faith. Methodology will help me determine how I will conduct the research, how I find out things and how I attain knowledge. Various other approaches such as the anthropological, the phenomenological, the theological and the historical will be used. I also look at research methods; which are the techniques or procedures that I employ in order to gather and collect data pertaining to my research questions, so that I come up with answers to the questions.

Chapter 4 will look at the Shona views on death and afterlife in detail. These are the views that the Zimbabwean Church is expected to possibly incorporate in their worship. I will investigate what the Shona people call death. The Shona view of human nature will assist in the assessment of what happens when a person dies. The death, burial and post burial rituals performed by the Shona will be looked at as these incorporate a large proportion of the Shona life. When a person dies, he or she may become an ancestral spirit who continues to be part of the living family, according to the Shona. These beliefs must be explicit and well understood by the Church in Zimbabwe for the Church to be able to adapt them into the Christian faith. There will also be an

enquiry on other spirits, besides the ancestral spirits. These include alien spirits and avenging spirits. There are mediums that the Shona have to live with. These include traditional healers (*n'anga*), witches and wizards, and today; there is a rise of Satanism. These are unavoidably central to the Shona life. Interaction between the living and the dead among the Shona will be studied, especially in so far as they influence such mediums like the traditional healers (*n'anga*) and witches. All these are part of the afterlife which the Shona people have to grapple with, and which the Zimbabwean church is expected to adapt into the Christian faith. Without full and deep knowledge of these issues, the Zimbabwean Church's attempts at inculturation may not be adequately effective.

The Christian faith, on the other hand, has its own precepts on death and afterlife. Chapter 5 investigates the Christian eschatological perspective on death, resurrection and afterlife. A detailed study of the Christian anthropology; whether a human being is trichotomous, dichotomous or monistic, will unravel differing Christian views on what death is thought to be. The anthropological view adopted will determine how a Church organization will perceive what death is and what the afterlife will be like. The make-up of a human being determines whether a person dies body and soul, or dies body only; with the soul escaping death. How the living should relate to the dead, according to Christian faith, and how the Christian faith views resurrection of the dead, will feature in this chapter. Formulation of these views by the Church in Zimbabwe will help them to determine what Shona beliefs can be adapted into the Christian faith, without the faith losing its soul. It is the Christian eschatological perspective that the Church in Zimbabwe is supposed to check for compatibility with the Shona culture. Hence chapters 4 and 5 will be helpful in analyzing and synthesizing the progress achieved, and the problems confronting the Church in Zimbabwe, as far as the inculturation of the Shona views on death and afterlife are concerned.

In chapter 6 I will briefly look at the terms dialogue and inculturation: the dialogue between the Shona cultural beliefs and the Christian Gospel. An enquiry on how far the Church in Zimbabwe has achieved dialogue and how far it has adapted the Shona views into their worship life, will be made. If the Church is aware of all the information in chapters 4 and 5, then where could they be experiencing problems in their inculturation endeavours? The challenges confronting the Church

in Zimbabwe will be looked at, as well as the challenges confronting the Shona people who have come to Christian faith. Analysis and synthesis will follow, while coming up with possible proposals on the way forward.

Chapter 7 will scruitnize current theological arguments relating to the area of study. An evaluation of the Zimbabwean Church's performance regarding inculturation and the future of inculturation will be made. Proposals will also be proffered to the Shona people, the African/Shona academics and the indigenous Church in Zimbabwe, regarding inculturation. The chapter will end with some concluding remarks.

Chapter 2

Literature review in the dialogue between the Shona and Christian religions

2.1 Introduction

In chapter 1, after looking at the background information relating to the nation of Zimbabwe, the Shona people and their religion, I outlined the problem statement, the aims and objectives, the research design and methodology, and the general overview of the study. Now I proceed to undertake literature review, which summarises selected previous scholarship relevant to this research, in order to obtain background information concerning the dialogue between the Shona religion and Christianity, and to identify gaps in knowledge to be closed by this study.

2.1.1 The purpose of a literature review

In this study of literature, I acknowledge and learn from existing literature; Christian eschatology, the Shona traditional religion, inculturation theory and research methods. Merriam (1988:6) sees literature review as "an interpretation and synthesis of published work". Scholars such as Polit *et al*. (2001:43), argue that literature review should be performed after collection of data. This would ensure that the researcher is not influenced when he or she develops concepts pertaining to the study. They explain that such influence would unavoidably have an effect on the research findings and conclusions in the study. Polit *et al*. thus recommend studying the phenomenon using participants' views, rather than using earlier information obtained through literature review. However, this researcher maintains that literature review is necessary for obtaining background information about phenomena under study, and for spotting gaps in knowledge, which the research seeks to fill. This is supported by Wiersma (1995:406) who argues that:

> The review of literature provides the background and context for the research problem. It should establish the need for the research and indicate that the writer is knowledgeable about the area.

I concur with Boote and Beile's (2005:3-15) summary of the basic purposes for a literature review as follows:

- It makes available a context and good reason for the research,
- It helps identification of gaps in earlier researches,
- It demonstrates where the research is incorporated into the current knowledge base,
- From literature review, the researcher is able to gain knowledge from preceding theories on the subject,
- It shows the degree to which the previous studies have been undertaken on the subject matter,
- It highlights inadequacies in preceding research,
- It is proof that the work aims to provide fresh knowledge in the field of study.

Therefore, it is through literature review that I am able to; discover the research trends in the field, establish the definitions of the major terms which I find in previous researches, institute the knowledge base on the subject, and possibly alter the scope of the research.

Literature review therefore seeks to place the Shona understanding of the here-after in the context of the ongoing dialogue in scholarship. Important insights on the way the current research is connected to the larger body of literature are acquired. In this way, current gaps in literature can be spotted and repetition is avoided. The gaps identified can then be closed and previous studies can be broadened, after discovering: new ways of interpreting earlier research, divergent views or contradictory evidence in literature, and after resolving divergences in previous scholarship. In the final analysis and synthesis, I can make clear contributions to new knowledge on Shona eschatology.

The current research is situated within the context of present literature. This provides a platform for determining the import of the proposed research and serves as a benchmark to compare findings of the current study with other conclusions in related literature. The purpose of this literature review then, is to show that the researcher is well acquainted in the area of proposed study - the adaptation of the Shona eschatological views on death and afterlife, and is conscious of crucial recent substantive and methodological currents in order to refine, modify or expand present knowledge.

2.1.2   How a literature review is conducted

Kennedy (2007:139-147) notes several approaches to literature review, a few of which are briefly discussed below.

- The argumentative review; selectively scrutinizes literature in order to sustain or disprove an argument or an intensely imbedded supposition or a theoretical dilemma that has been established in scholarship, in the past.

- The integrative approach; reviews and critiques present literature in order to come up with new frameworks and viewpoints.

- The historical literature review; chronologically scrutinizes research carried out throughout a period of time, mapping out its evolution within the scholarship of an area of study, to discover developments and the possible route into the future.

- The theoretical review; examines the corpus of the theory that has accrued concerning a subject, an idea, a hypothesis or a phenomenon. It is useful in establishing past and current theories, and how they are related. This enables the researcher to determine the degree to which current theories have been scrutinized, and to come up with new hypotheses that need testing. The researcher is then able to establish that suitable theories are necessary, or that existing theories fail to explain the new or emerging questions arising from the research.

The classes of literature review discussed above will be employed in the literature review of this study, and the thematic review - which arranges literature review around theoretical classes like topics, subjects, phenomena etc., will also be adopted.

The current research focuses on whether there has been implementation of authentic dialogue, and effective adaptation by the Zimbabwean Church, as represented by assemblies in Harare central business district, under indigenous leadership, of the fundamental and critical issues pertaining to the Shona religious worldview and the Christian Gospel. This is a very broad area of study and most of the literature reviewed here touches only specific aspects of the area of concern. Pertinent broad issues to be explored include: the Shona traditional views on death and afterlife, the Christian eschatological views, the theory of inculturation, and the dialogue between the Shona culture and the Gospel.

2.2 The review

The literature review is therefore going to be grouped in the following thematic categories: inculturation theory, the Shona religious worldview, inculturation (the creative dialogue between the Gospel and the Shona culture), Christian eschatological views, and studies which overlap with this research.

2.2.1   Importance of the study

The significance of a research study comes to the fore in literature review. This literature review seeks to satisfy this need for inculturation of the Shona traditional views into the Christian faith. The importance of the study therefore dictates the necessity for a literature review. The study is vital since inculturation is paramount to any sustainable faith system. A brief look at the 'what' and the 'how' of inculturation enlightens us on the significance of the current study and the necessary literature review.

Endeavouring to preach the Gospel in any human situation is a class of inculturation that is identical to evangelism. Another type of inculturation is when it is seen as a course of action in which a faith personified in one culture meets another culture and becomes part of it (Shorter 1988:11). It is when the Church seeks "to understand and celebrate their Christian faith in a way peculiar to their situation and context" (Schineller P. 1990:1). Scholars such as Magesa (1997:5) argue that:

> …contact between Christianity and African Religion has historically been predominantly a monologue, bedevilled by assumptions prejudicial to the latter, with Christianity culturally more vocal and ideologically more aggressive.

Magesa's argument implies that the Christian faith assumes a 'bigger brother status' rather than playing on level ground. The question is whether the imbalance in interaction between the Shona religion and the Christian faith can be corrected without Christianity losing its essence.

There is need to present the Christian Gospel in a cultural form. Even the Scriptures which teach us God's dealings with humanity are heavily entrenched in the culture of the Jewish people. And it is also imperative to note that the Christian faith is a culture on its own. The challenge is how the different cultures are supposed to interact. In our case, how should the Christian and the Shona traditional cultures mingle, without each losing its soul? Can the Shona traditional culture receive the Gospel without losing its identity or can the Christian Gospel accommodate the Shona culture without losing its essence. I think there are four possibilities: i) one absorbs the other into non-existence, ii) the two cultures meet halfway, without each losing its identity, iii) there will be more of one culture and less of the other, iv) the two cultures are not compatible in their essence that they must each run its own race, making sure that there is mutual respect between them.

The Church in Zimbabwe should therefore be cognizant of the ambivalence that its membership finds itself in; where they are Christians during the day and revert to their traditional religion at night. Inculturation of the Gospel and the Shona culture seems to be a concern of some scholars in Zimbabwe, while to the Church leadership, life goes on as normal. Is the Church aware of the need for inculturation? There seems to be a noticeable misunderstanding and confusion between academics and clerics.

This study is significant to the Shona Christian membership which is caught up in this confusion. It is important to scholars who have been arguing for authentic dialogue, between the Christian faith and the Shona traditional beliefs and practices, but they have not received much audience from the Church leadership. It is equally important to the Church leadership in Zimbabwe, who must define the way forward for their followers. The research is also important to me as a minister of religion in a Pentecostal Christian Church. The importance attached to the research gives us a guide on the relevant areas in which literature should be reviewed.

2.2.2   Inculturation theory

Inculturation, in its essence, is a creative dialogue between Christian faith and culture. Swidler, in *The Dialogue Decalogue* (1985), provides guidelines for effectual genuine dialogue. To him,

the aim of dialogue is to learn from each other. Here individuals and groups collaborate and reciprocally respect each other, as they look for common understanding and possible synergies. He advocates for intra-group dialogue; whereby individual groups like the Shona or the Christians should learn authentic dialogue from within the group so that they are able to maintain their identity. Such a proposal will be useful in the scrutiny of the Shona religious life and the Christian Church, both of which should learn to speak the same language from within. For authentic dialogue to be achieved, the entire Church in Zimbabwe should have the same perspective on death, resurrection and afterlife. Swidler's empathetic tendencies, where he proposes that one culture should endeavour to experience the tradition of the other, will be brought to scrutiny, as I analyze the Shona and Christian traditions whose experiences may only be hypothetically compatible, but may not be so in practice.

Spencer-Oatey (2012), in *What is Culture? A Compilation of Quotations,* persuasively knits together some core concepts of culture. She starts by acknowledging the complexity of defining the term culture which, she admits, is notoriously ambiguous. She proceeds to give major attributes which characterize culture. Examples are how culture shapes behaviour, how behaviour is construed, and culture's effects on biological processes. Culture is constructed both individually and socially, and it is dispensed socially and psychologically, in any given grouping. Culture is learned through networking with people as they socialize. Culture is dynamic and the change is effected by both interior and exterior forces. She argues that the three basic components of culture namely; ideas, things and behaviour patterns are subject to additions, diminution, obliterations or alterations. She also tackles various misconceptions of culture like, taking culture to be homogenous, or thinking culture is evenly spread among affiliates of a given group. Spencer-Oatey's insights are going to be helpful as I analyze the Shona culture which is a major component of the subject matter of this study - inculturation.

Barclay in his celebrated work, *Culture: The Human Way* (1986), gives an insightful analysis of the term culture. He maintains that culture is a creation by human beings and a shared entity, where people disseminate individual novelties to others, and that once culture is formed; it gets its own autonomous life, governed by its own laws. He identifies a number of elements in culture such as belief systems and rules. Because of globalization, he sees a reduced amount of tension

between diverse social structures or cultures. Nevertheless, cultures still exist. Barclay's proposals will be helpful to this research as I examine an individual's consequences of belonging to two or more social structures. Within the social structures are found cultures; which are structured clusters of behaviour patterns. Regarding the rules, Barclay contends that there should be rules that preside over the game, and all personal interests are made subordinate to interests of the community. His ideas are going to be resourceful in the analysis of the belief systems of the Shona people, which are primarily passed on through oral tradition and may be inconsistent.

Hanson, in *Meaning in Culture* (1975), proposes for an appropriate comprehension of culture on its own terms. His main areas of concern are: the basis or standard that should be employed for assessing other cultures, the belief systems that should be applied when taking into account cultural relativism (that cultures are valuable in their own right), and the epistemological facet of relativism (which postulates that cultural experience should be appreciated from within the terms of the participants). These arguments will be useful in our quest for authentic dialogue between the Shona and the Christian cultures. His analysis of the rationality and intelligibility of foreign cultures and beliefs will also be insightful to this research.

Niebuhr, in *Christ and Culture* (1951), in over two hundred pages, proposes five different models which describe the way Christianity relates to culture. He speaks of: (1) Christ against culture; where he presents Christ in opposition to culture (1951:45-82), (2) the Christ of culture; where Christian faith and culture are in agreement after the culture is changed by the Christian faith (1951:83-115), (3) Christ above culture; as espoused by Thomas Aquinas in the 12th century (1951:116-148), (4) Christ and culture in paradox; where people are subject to two moralities, that of Christ and that of the world, with their real life being in Christ as advocated by Martin Luther (1951:149-189), (5) Christ transforming culture - where Christians affirm some aspects of their culture while needing to be critical of other aspects of their cultures because not every 'sinful human' culture is good (1951:190-229). The model that Niebuhr proposes for adoption is rich groundwork for inculturation and the extent to which the Christian faith should challenge or change the Shona culture and vice versa.

2.2.3   The Shona religious worldview

Bourdillon, in *The Shona Peoples* (1976), has made a huge contribution to the comprehension of the Shona culture and their thinking on death and afterlife. He (1976:199-232) articulates the fibre that connects the Shona life in-so-far as they interact with their dead, on a day to day basis. The Shona understand that ancestral spirits (the living dead) interact with their living descendants daily in life. There are also other forms of spirits including the avenging spirits and the *shavi* (charismatic) spirits. All these spirits should always be honoured and appeased. This stretches from the way the Shona deceased are looked after; before they die, during burial (there are some burial rituals that should be meticulously followed), after burial (the spirits should be honoured), to the way close and constant communication and interaction is maintained, as long as there are some living descendants who can still remember the dead by name. The spiritual hierarchy starts from the higher god, down to *mhondoro* (lion spirits) and *vadzimu* (family spirits). The last two intermediaries have living hosts; the *mhondoro svikiro* (lion spirit medium) and the *mudzimu svikiro* (family spirit medium). Bourdillon also explores a variety of functionary offices that arise as a result of close interface with the spirits within the Shona. These include: the traditional healers (*n'anga*) - (who are thought to be indispensable figures in the Shona traditional life), spirit mediums for ancestral and alien spirits. Alien spirits include *mashavi* (*shavi*: singular - charismatic spirits), which may be benevolent and good spirits, such as healing *shavi*, or malicious and bad spirits such as those which engage in anti-social activities like stealing or witchcraft. Witches play a pivotal role in the Shona life, in the negative sense though. But these are people the Shona have had to live with.

Bourdillon (1976:233-234) further researches on the menace of *ngozi* (avenging spirits/angry spirits of the dead), whose appeasement, he says, is difficult. Although there is a Shona proverb *mushonga wengozi kuripa* (the best panacea against avenging spirits is reparation), in practice, only a few appeasement rituals have been successful. Even on the social scene, the spirits of the dead take a lead role in the governance of communities, ranging from families, clans, to huge territories. Bourdillon's contributions are going to be invaluable to the current research where studies on the Shona culture are pivotal for an authentic dialogue between the Shona culture and the Christian Gospel.

Chitakure, (2017) in his work; *African Traditional Religion Encounters Christianity: The Resilience of a Demoniszed Religion*, argues that God was already there in Africa when missionaries came. The missionaries denounced the god of the Shona people - a providential god who supplied them with rain and food. He opposed the missionaries for defiling sacred places and for criticizing ancestors who were faithfully taking care of their living descendants. He gives a concise phenomenological exploration of the Shona traditional religion; where he looks at their rites of passage, their perception of God and how ancestors and other spirits are central in the Shona religious life. This piece of work will be highly valuable in our exploration of the Shona worldview concerning death and afterlife.

Aschwanden, in *Symbols of Death* (1987), explores the meaning the Shona people attach to the various symbols depicted in their interaction with the dead. Here the incisive question is: why the Shona people do what they do and what values do they attribute to their activities. He identifies symbols found in the Shona way of life and assesses the import of the symbols. The following few examples suffice. The significance of turning around the coffin/corpse during procession to the grave site is to confuse the spirit of the deceased, in case it wants to come back and cause problems among the living. The spirit of the dead who has not been 'brought home' wanders around because it will be worried about the security of their living family members, and the safety of the property it left behind (1987:246). In this context the Shona say darkness has eclipsed the home (*mushamutema*). As for the washing of the corpse, Aschwanden maintains that the Shona will be cleansing the dead from the dirt of the world (1987:234). Babies are buried in the river bank to enable then to play with water and this is thought, among the Shona, to attract rain. The symbols presented by Aschwanden are going to be helpful in the current study, which seeks to enquire on the adaptation of these cultural activities into the Christian Gospel.

Chimhanda, in *Christ the Ancestor* (2011), asserts that Jesus as a descendent of Adam should be construed as the most senior primogenitor of all ancestors, and a member of the human family. She sees parallelism between Jesus as an Ancestor par excellence (for all humanity), with the Shona ancestors; who are protectors of the social and moral order, and mediators with God. Because the Shona ancestors are actively involved in the daily lives of their offspring here and

now, she discerns a realized eschatology, where punishment and rewards are meted in the here and now. She also submits to the positive role played by a *n'anga* (traditional healer) and compares it to the healing ministry of the African Initiated Churches (AIC's). To her, there is parallelism in the Christian and Shona traditional healing methods. But if the Christian Church in Zimbabwe is aware of all this, why does it still struggle to effectively facilitate for the dialogue between the Gospel and Shona traditional religious views on death and afterlife? This research seeks to uncover the problem and propose a way into the future.

2.2.4   The inculturation of the Gospel

While Majawa, in *Integrated Approach to African Christian Theology of Inculturation* (2005), does not write specifically on the Shona perspective, his contribution to the study of inculturation will be insightful to the Church. He identifies salvific values of African Traditional Religion, in general. He submits that inculturation is a necessary and primary aspect of religious life of human beings. He thinks inculturation is so fundamental that the Church will fail to fulfil its mandate without it. In other words, paying no attention to inculturation will be making a fatal ecclesiastical mistake.

Benyera, in his article, *Presenting Ngozi as an Important Consideration in Pursuing Transitional Justice for Victims: The Case of Moses Chokuda* (2015), surveys the *ngozi* (avenging spirit of a dead person) phenomenon as a traditional instrument for enforcing transitional justice. He sees the phenomenon as a transitional justice tool that shapes people's personal, political and social decisions. He argues that appeasing the *ngozi* spirit can be an effective way for achieving   peace and reconciliation. He calls for the state to officially recognize this system of justice. Chimhanda (2014)[15] echoes the same sentiments thus: "the fear of *ngozi* is a huge deterrent to violence and killing." While Magezi and Muyambo in *Pastoral Challenges and Responses to Fear of Avenging Spirits (ngozi) in Africa: a Biblical Evaluation and Response – a Case of the Shona People* (2011) take a different orientation on *ngozi,* which they affirm as mysterious and fearsome phenomenon among the Shona people. The inclination of their study is to explore

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[15] Chimhanda, F. 2014. "*The Liberation Potential of the Shona Culture and the Gospel: A Post-feminist Perspective". In Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae vol.40 suppl.1* Pretoria.
http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1017-04992014000200018 accessed 09/07/18

whether the Church has put in place a pastoral ministry that is relevant, backed by an appropriate biblical hermeneutic so that its response is based on Scripture. If this is not done people will live in two worlds: the Christian world and the traditional world. They investigate what the Bible teaches concerning the *ngozi* manifestation. *Ngozi* is a dreaded phenomenon among the Shona, as it can be highly menacing; killing one family member after another. I would want to investigate whether his arguments for *ngozi* as a justice system are welcomed among the Shona and how it is viewed by the Christian faith.

Sitshebo, in his thesis titled *Towards a Theological Synthesis of Christian and Shona Views of Death and the Dead* (2000), thinks missionaries were insensitive to Shona traditional ideals and therefore, their pastoral care, with regards to death and afterlife, were not relevant to the Shona. The Church's observances and rituals performed for the dead are not adequate to cater for the needs of the Shona people. He proposes a new contextual reading, reflection and interpretation of the Bible where the Shona are involved as key players. He thinks that the use of the interactive dialogical model, which significantly features dialogue and interaction between the Shona culture and Christian teaching, is a vital device for effective inculturation. If there is going to be genuine dialogue between the Christian Gospel and the Shona views on death and afterlife, the practices of Christianity and the Shona traditional religion must interact openly and freely (2000:100). A contextual reading of the Bible will lead to a rediscovery of Jesus. If by contextual reading Sitshebo means the integration of all the Shona cultural beliefs on death and afterlife into the Christian Gospel, then the Church may end up losing the essence of the Christian faith, and the Church may have problems in accepting and implementing his proposals. While he propagates for an open interaction, there are Shona practices which may not be suitable for open interaction, from the vintage point of both the Church and the Shona tradition. For example, there are some Shona practices which are so secretive that they are not accessible to 'outsiders', like the way the traditional healer operates.

Matiure, in *Archiving the Cultural Legacy of Mbira Dzavadzimu in the Context of Kuriva (sic) Guva and Dandaro Practices* (2013) gives a thorough exploration of the Shona traditional *mbira* instrument, its attributes and its efficacy. He calls the instrument '*mbira dzaVadzimu* (instruments of the Ancestors), a term he thinks refers to both the instrument and the type of

33

music. His basic argument is that the instrument is indispensable in most Shona rituals, including the bringing home ceremonies (*kurova guva*), rituals of honour and rainmaking ceremonies (*mukwerere*). The instrument has the capacity to stir up spirits in mediums. He thinks they also help in preserving stability and solidarity amongst the Shona people. He claims "*Mbira dzaVadzimu* enshrines the Shona epistemology (*chivanhu*) which places ancestral spirits at the centre. *Mbira dzaVadzimu* is the core of rituals like *kurova guva* and directs the whole ritual in a certain direction meant to achieve a common socio-spiritual goal" (Matiure 2013:10-11). It will be interesting to learn how the Church perceives this instrument.

Mwandayi, in his work *Death and Afterlife Rituals in the Eyes of the Shona* (2011), submits that it is beneficial for the Church to incarnate into a variety of cultures in which she ministers, and to share in the inherent values of those traditional cultures. He proposes three approaches namely: integration, independent and substitution approaches (2011:264-290). The integration approach seeks to fully amalgamate the Christian Gospel with the Shona cultural views on death and afterlife. This integration approach, he suggests, should be used in conjunction with two methods of inculturation namely; dynamic equivalence and creative assimilation. The dynamic equivalence seeks to express the Church's teachings in vernacular and cultural forms that are relevant to the Shona experiences, while creative assimilation seeks to incorporate rites, symbols, and linguistic expressions etc. into the worship life of the Church. This dynamic equivalence, which has been applied especially in the Roman Catholic Church, in their endeavour to inculturate liturgies, is a step in the right direction, but does not fully address the fundamental problems faced by the Shona Christian in their quest for genuine Christian faith in so far as death and afterlife issues are concerned. But there still seems to be some essential Shona rituals the Church is failing to integrate into the Christian Church worship.

In the independent approach, Mwandayi proposes the Church to recognize and appreciate Shona traditional practices. He argues that the Church should not interfere with these practices but must leave them to go on independently and only correct the practices where it will be necessary. The Church must be aware of the presence of the spirit in the Shona traditional religion - the spirit which steers people in their search for God (2011:276). The substitution approach advocates for the freedom of the Shona Christian to return to traditional practices without any feeling of guilt

or being apologetic about it. Given the incompatibility of some of the Shona and Christian practices, the researcher is not sure whether Mwandayi is proposing for Niebuhr's 'Christ and culture in paradox' model, where people will be subject to two moralities; that of the Christian culture or that of the Shona culture. If so, this will result in the Shona Christian living two lives and this may not be profitable to them and may also not be acceptable to the Church. Also, the argument that the Church must recognize the presence of the spirit in the Shona religion may not be tenable as there are various forms of spirits, some of which may not be tolerated by the Church.

Mwandayi (2011:275) contends that the Church should encourage use of any of these approaches, depending on the prevailing circumstances. His bone of contention is that there must be pluralism in the Church so that Shona Christians are able to live their faith in a way that conforms to their culture.

Mwandayi (2011:274-276) further proposes the integration into the Christian worship system, of the *n'anga* (traditional healer) whom he claims is a crucial figure in the Shona custom, and whose authority is thought to be from ancestors and alien spirits. He sees a *n'anga* as equivalent to a priest, and that the *n'anga* can assist in the exorcism and warding off of evil forces. Mwandayi makes 'well-reasoned' proposals which he thinks should be adopted by the Church. This research will build on that and will seek to find out why most of these proposals have not been adopted by the Church in Zimbabwe.

Gundani, in *The Roman Catholic Church and the Kurova Guva Ritual in Zimbabwe* (1994), presents the Shona beliefs and practices on death and afterlife as part of the Shona day to day lives. He contends that the *kurova guva* (the bringing home of the spirit) ritual is a dramatization of the common bond between the living and the dead, and is done to induct the dead as an ancestor. He observes that the Roman Catholic Jesuits expected that the rituals would die a natural death as they took them to be ancestral worship.

Various forms of punishment were meted on members who observed the *kurova guva*, but the Shona indulged in many survival activities like performing the *kurova guva* rituals secretly or

disguised them with prayers, while at the same time celebrating in honour of the deceased. These double lives resulted in a series of public debates in the Roman Catholic Church in Zimbabwe, advocating for recognition of death and afterlife rituals; especially the bringing home ceremony. Pressure groups such as the Catholic Association were formed, which forced the Church to change its position and to develop Shona based liturgies and Christian beliefs which could put up with some Shona traditional rites. They also advocated for the equating of ancestral spirits with the communion of the saints, among other issues. After everything was said and done, very little was achieved in terms of implementation. Gundani claims the *kuchenura munhu* (purification of the ancestor) rite - where senior ancestral spirits are called upon to bring the deceased person's spirit to the higher god - was agreed upon, in 1982, as an acceptance of the *kurova guva* rite, but it never took off the ground as some controversial issues, such as consultation of traditional healers, which are fundamental in the *kurova guva* rituals, were not resolved. The implementation of the proposals, therefore, encountered challenges as some Shona priests and catechists resisted the proposals. This research is going to build on Gundani's work in as much as it throws light on the Zimbabwe Roman Catholic Church's failure to officially and formally provide an effective solution to the Shona paradox.

Muchemwa, in *Death and Burial Among the Shona: The Christian Celebration of Death and Burial in the Context of Inculturation in Shona Culture* (2002) seeks adaptation of liturgies of Christian death and burial to the Shona traditional rites of burial. He proposes the use of the integrative method of inculturation. This method of inculturation has its own strengths and inadequacies. It has become apparent to the Church in Zimbabwe that integration is easier said than put into practice. This research will seek to explore and propose to the Church, alternative workable solutions.

2.2.5   Christian eschatological views

Morey, in *Death and Afterlife* (1984:46ff), propagates for dualistic Christian anthropology. To him the Bible does not endeavour to define the essence of the unseen entity within a person. He submits that the term soul has a number of meanings and the meaning must not be limited to the principle of physical life. There is a component of a person that goes beyond physical life - the

one that is the bearer of the image of God. This part of a person is the one that should be accounted for at death. He therefore argues that a person is dualistic, and on death the body goes to the grave while the soul goes to Sheol. He sees Sheol as a place which houses dead people. When a person dies, he or she becomes a disembodied spirit who is capable of talking and making moral judgments. These arguments become more interesting to this study as I compare them with the Shona views of the interaction between the living dead and their living descendants.

Buzzard, in *Life After Death: Resurrection or the Intermediate State* (1992:29-32), builds a monistic anthropology, that will assist developing a theoretical framework of what will transpire after death, at resurrection. Monism involves a holistic view of a human being. All dimensions of life such as body, soul and spirit are believed not to be entities independently existing, but are a unit. It would then be wrong to talk of a disembodied spirit. Buzzard persuasively argues that if Christians are going to be alive with Jesus before resurrection, then death becomes a non-event, since this would imply that life is going to continue in another realm.

Cooper, in *Scripture and Philosophy on the Unity of Body and Soul* (2015), explores the body-soul relationship in human nature, where he seeks to apply the discipline of philosophy to the Biblical doctrine of human nature, in the dualism-monism debate. He gives a Biblical hermeneutic on the unity of the body and soul as it is spelled out in the Old and New Testaments, using some selected texts. Taking the worldview depicted in the Hebrew anthropology, in so far as the body is attributed to the spirit, he argues that words used such as flesh, life-breath etc., point to the fact that God makes up human beings by giving life to their bodies, through the spirit. He also surveys consequences of adopting monistic anthropology in death, resurrection and afterlife. Cooper's insights are going to be helpful as I look into the Shona worldview on the nature of a human being and how this can be incorporated into the Christian Gospel.

Bacchiocchi, in *Immortality or Resurrection?: A Biblical Study on Human Nature and Destiny* (2001:164ff), argues from the vantage point of the meaning of the words Sheol and Hades. He asserts that Sheol was not a place that housed disembodied spirits but it is a sphere of the dead; while Hades was the underworld populated by conscious souls in two regions - the place of

37

torment and the place of blessedness. He contends therefore, that what is in the grave is the whole person, not merely the body.

The debate between monistic and dualistic anthropology, with regards to death and afterlife, presented by these scholars, will be relevant when the arguments are contrasted with the Shona beliefs on their dead coming to life and the Shona treatment of the dead - where honour and respect are accorded to persons whether dead or living. A dead corpse is addressed as if it is a living person.

Dunn's *Jesus and the Spirit* (1985:65-75) gives an insightful discourse on the empty tomb, and will be relevant in the development of the theology of the dead body. To him the tomb was empty and it had to be empty for the sake of the people. He asks how the resurrection could have been proclaimed and understood if the corpse of Jesus was still lying in the tomb. He however submits that the emptiness of the tomb was not essential for Jesus' resurrection. To him, whether earthly bodies are annihilated or not, the hope of resurrection lives on, since resurrection will be God's act of creation, *ex nihilo* (out of nothing). Dunn's interesting contributions on post resurrection appearances of Jesus, in *The Evidence for Jesus* (1975:103)*,* will underlie comparisons with the Shona beliefs on their dead. The Shona claim that sometimes they see and hear their dead, even in attires they used to put on when the dead were alive.

2.2.6   Overlapping literature

Nyamiti, in *Christ as Our Ancestor* (1984), differentiates between parent ancestorship (one between a deceased parent and a living child), and 'brother ancestorship' (one between a deceased brother and a living brother). He asserts that this is the situation prevailing between God the Father (the parent), and Jesus the Son (the descendant), or between Jesus (the brother ancestor) and humanity (the descendants). He calls the death and resurrection of Jesus the Paschal Mystery, which gives His ancestorship a redemptive connotation (1984:26). According to Nyamiti (1984:52), the paschal mystery is the pinnacle of Jesus' ancestral activity, and the Eucharist liturgy (Mass) is the sacramental actualization of the mystery. Jesus' ancestral mediation is therefore attained through the Mass. Nyamiti (1984:54) finds similarity between

Mass and elements found in African ancestorship, where Mass actualizes the mutual contact between ancestor and descendants. Nyamiti's contribution is foundational, and the current research will build on it, although it may be diametrically opposed to Nyamiti's hypothetical proposition of Christ's brother ancestorship, which does not sufficiently account for what both the Shona traditionalist and Christian believes.

Doyle, in *The Concept of Inculturation in Roman Catholicism: A Theological Consideration* (2012)*, explores the theological notion of inculturation with reference to the Roman Catholic Church, which has inherent safeguards which ensure that diverse host cultures are not favoured at the expense of the integrity of the Christian Gospel. He explores the Roman Catholic theological connection between inculturation and incarnation, in comparison with Rahner's use of the term inculturation when he interpreted the Vatican II. He also looks at the challenges that confront the Church as it attempts on inculturation. That the Gospel should not lose its soul will be a major theme in this study. Doyle lays a necessary foundation for the current study.

Pobee, in his work *African Theology Revisited* (1993:135)*, thinks theology is an articulation or naming of "the hopes and fears of people in the light of God's word and self-disclosure." The naming "is about respecting, understanding the language, liturgy, structure, style, architecture, etc. of a distinctive community of discourse", as humanity attempt to eloquently express the word of God in a logical language. He proposes taking theology out of the classroom to the practitioners of the religion which is being studied. He further proposes the African culture must be made the starting point from where theologians must work backwards towards classical Christianity, in order to exploit, for the benefit of Africans, the potential of the Christianity that they inherited. African theology must be concerned with, and applicable to all religions in Africa. He recommends a connection between Biblical scholarship and the African religious worldview, to allow all Africans to talk about God in a manner that is not foreign to them. Hence there is need for a biblical commentary that is contextualized. Pobee brings in interesting arguments. For example, he asks, what must change the other in inculturation: culture or the Gospel, and the extent to which these affect each other without each losing its essence. These proposals will be critically analyzed in this study as I investigate authentic dialogue between the Shona traditional religion and the Christian Gospel.

Kanu's *Inculturation and the Christian Faith in Africa* (2012) facilitates for the amalgamation of a people's culture with the life of the Church. He argues that, with 99% of the clergy today being Africans, the Church must be in a position to redefine its evangelistic mission in order to preserve and surpass current successes. To him the rise of Afro-Christian Indigenous Churches came as a result of missionaries prohibiting new African believers to introduce elements of traditional religion into the Christian Gospel. The missionaries did not appreciate African cosmology. Because today the clergy are now Africans, it should be easy for the Church to evangelize and Christianize African values, cultures and institutions. He then surveys the origins of the notion of inculturation, its theological concepts, and discusses the theological foundation of inculturation such as the mysteries of the Trinity, Incarnation, Creation and Pentecost. The argument he raises is at the centre of this study: if the clergy are mainly Africans where and why is inculturation failing?

Pobee's work, *Skenosis* (1992), is also inspiring. The imagery of *Skenosis* is taken from John 1:14; where it is stated that "the word became flesh and dwelt among us". To him flesh (*sarx*) designates the being, located in a given limited dimension, which was bound within a specific religio-cultural, socio-political and economical circumstance. *Skenosis* (self-emptying) Christology may be taken as a response against the *kenosis* Christology. *Kenosis* focuses on the eternal Son of God who set aside his divine attributes, when he incarnated, according to Philippians 2:7. With *skenosis*, God kindly indwelt the man Jesus who, subsequently fully surrendered self to God. Pobee prefers to use the term *skenosis* rather than contextualization - a term which he thinks is prone to misinterpretation. He maintains that *skenosis* is the "tabernacling of the non-negotiable Gospel of Christ in different contexts" (Pobee 1990:193). He argued that the term is more suitable when transposing the word of God into true African contexts (Pobee 1992:40). This is because it does not lose sight of the eternal Gospel of Christ, and the emphasis is for the Gospel to be expressed in real and specific cultural contexts (Pobee 1992:39). *Skenosis* is an appropriate response to the current state of affairs of African people.

Crotty's (2003:3-10) insights on ontology (what is reality), epistemology (how we know reality), and theoretical perspective (a set of assumptions that underlies our enquiry - the questions we

ask and the solutions we arrive at) will help us to determine which approach to use to acquire knowledge about the Shona phenomena.

Gadamer's hermeneutical philosophy will provide a compass in the quest for the interpretation of the Shona phenomena. Gadamer (1975:358) emphasizes on the need to spell out circumstances on which understanding of phenomena can take place. He thinks that if a reader or researcher needs to successfully interpret phenomena or text, then he or she should be aware of own prejudices and preconceptions, which will influence the interpretation. This makes the interpreter part of the meaning he or she intends to apprehend. To Gadamer, understanding occurs when there is 'fusion of horizons' of the reader/researcher and the text or phenomena being studied. He further argues that meaning is historically understood and one must build up a historical self-awareness for one to be aware of the personal baggage (preconceptions and prejudices) that one carries into the investigation.

The Vatican document called *Evangelli Nuntiandi* (1975-EN)[16], an apostolic exhortation, by Pope Paul VI, emphasizes on the need for the Gospel and Evangelization to make use of some elements of human culture (EN20). Pope Paul VI was emphatic that salvation is offered in Jesus, to the entire humanity, as a gift of God's grace and mercy. He explained that this salvation in Jesus rises above the temporal encounters and existences because it is "a transcendent and eschatological salvation, which has its beginning in this life but which is fulfilled in eternity" (EN: 27). *Evangelli Nuntiandi* calls for a Gospel message that is tailored to people's real persona and social lives. The Church should regulate the exercise of its ministry so that she is able to respond positively to local cultures. There should be dialogue between Christianity and culture to keep away from imposing a European style Catholicism which fails to recognize local culture.

Pope Paul VI (EN: 63) proposes that any evangelization should consider the needs of the target people being addressed. It must use their language, signs and symbols, answer the questions they ask and in order to impact on their concrete life. However, he notes that care must be taken in order to avoid the essence of the Gospel being contaminated under the excuse of transforming it.

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[16] Paul VI, 1975. *Evangelii Nuntiandi: Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Paul VI on Evangelization in the Modern World*. From http://w2.vatican.va/content/paulvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi.html accessed 15/04/16

The unity of the Gospel should not be shattered in an effort to adjust a universal reality to a local culture.

Pope Paul VI (EN: 48) also appeals to popular religiosity in which he acknowledges that people have given expressions in their pursuit for God and for faith. Such expressions, which may have been taken as less pure or despised in the past, need to be rediscovered today. He explains that:

> Popular religiosity, of course has its limits. It is often subject to penetration by many distortions of religion and even superstitions. It frequently remains at the level of forms of worship not involving a true acceptance by faith. It can even lead to a creation of sects and endanger the true ecclesial community. (EN: 48)

An ecclesial leader must therefore be responsive to popular religiosity, and must know how to discover its internal dimensions and values and at the same time be ready to rise above the risk of divergence. When popular religiosity is well oriented, it can result in a true encounter with God in Jesus.

Pope John Paul II in *Ecclesia in Africa* (1995-EA)[17] focuses on inculturation of the Gospel. He explains that: "Inculturation is a hard and fragile task since it raises the question of the church's loyalty to the Gospel and the Apostolic Tradition, in the midst the continuous development of cultures" (EA: 62). Because culture is dynamic, the Church must be engaged in inculturation as an ongoing process. He (EA: 57) further states that:

> It is therefore essential that 'the new evangelization should be centred on a transforming encounter with the living person of Christ' (79). 'The first proclamation ought to bring about this overwhelming and exhilarating experience of Jesus Christ who calls each one to follow him in an adventure of faith' (80). This task is made all the easier because 'the African believes in God the creator from his traditional life and religion and this is also open to the full and definitive revelation of God in Jesus Christ…

Pope John Paul II argues that in inculturation, the Catechesis must incarnate in the various cultures. Such inculturation would include two dimensions - "The intimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration in Christianity" and "the insertion of Christianity in the various human cultures" (EA: 59).

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[17] Paul, John II, 1995. *Ecclesia in Africa: The Church in Africa and Evangelizing Mission Toward Year 2000.* From http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paulii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_14091995_ecclesia-in-africa.html accessed 15/04/16

The Pope (EA: 60) appeals to Paul's epistle to the Galatians (4:4) which teaches that Jesus became incarnate and was made man and dwelt among us (John 1:14). The exhortation then argues that, in the same fashion, the Gospel must incarnate by taking root in the life circumstances of the hearers of the Word. Inculturation is the incorporation of the Gospel message into culture, just as the incarnation of Jesus was an incarnation into a particular culture. Every culture therefore needs to be changed by the principles of the Gospel ideals that:

> Just as the Word of God became like us in everything but sin, so too the inculturation of the Good news takes all authentic human values, purifying them from sin, and restoring to them their full meaning. (EA: 61).

Again, Pope John Paul asserts that inculturation should respect the criteria of it being compatible with the Christian Gospel, and being in communion with the Catholic Church. In all cases, care must be taken to keep away from syncretism. There is, therefore, the need for a thorough study in the discipline of African cultures (EA: 62).

There is also a call for a stance that is open to dialogue for every Christian. This dialogue is essential and should be experienced first of all at all levels of the Church; between various ranks of the clergy, and between conferences or Episcopal Assemblies of various nations of the same continent and those of other continents. The Pope exhorts Roman Catholics to develop an ecumenical dialogue with all baptized Christian believers in order to achieve harmony (EA: 65). He further argues that the pledge to dialogue must also include all Muslims of goodwill and mutual respect is necessary in the Islamic-Christian dialogues. At the same time, it is important to consider the principle of religious freedom, with all its involvements, including external and public manifestations of faith, while avoiding confrontational fundamentalism (EA: 66)

A peaceful and practical dialogue is also required between Christianity and African Traditional Religion, to shield Roman Catholics from wrong influences which direct their ways of life. Dialogue will also help to foster the adaptation of good values such as belief in a Supreme Being. These values can gladly be synchronized with the content of faith. They can even be taken to be groundwork for the Gospel because they have valuable seeds of the word (*Semina Verbi*). This can result in more people opening up to the fullness of the revelation found in Jesus Christ

through the preaching of the Gospel (EA: 67). Adherents of the African Traditional Religion should therefore be dealt with, with great reverence and esteem; avoiding all stereotypes and prejudice (EA: 67).

Pope Benedict XVI, in *Africae Munus* (AM)[18] affirms Africa's commitment in the service of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace. Clause 89 of *Africae Munus* claims that "a divided Christianity remains a scandal since it *de facto* contradicts the will of the Divine Master (John 17:21). Ecumenical dialogue seeks to direct our common journey towards Christian unity as we listen to the word of God." (AM: 89).

Pope Benedict XVI (AE: 92 also claims that:

> The church lives daily alongside the followers of traditional African religions. With their reference to Ancestors and to a form of mediation between man and Immanence, these religions are the cultural and spiritual soil from which most Christian converts spring and with which they continue to have daily contact.

Knowledgeable believers who come to Christ will be helpful in spotting areas of real disagreement and to spell out the very important difference between culture and cult, and to throw away those mysterious elements which are divisive and destructive to families and societies. Let Christians recognize, conserve and promote the spiritual and moral truths that are available in the midst of non-Christians together with their life and culture.

Pope Benedict observes that witchcraft is at present experiencing an upsurge. Old fears are sprouting and generating bonds of subjection that are paralyzing. Africans are worried over their welfare, health, protection from evil spirits, the climate, etc. These worries lead people to choose an option to perform religious traditional practices that contradict Christian teaching. The problem of double membership - to Christianity and to the African traditional religions - remains a challenge. *Africae Munus* proposes to establish what these practices of witchcraft actually mean, through the identification of the several theological, social and pastoral repercussions of this scourge (AM: 93). Witchcraft will be discussed in detail later.

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[18] Benedict XIV, 2011. *Africae Munus: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*. From http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20111119_africae-munus.html (accessed 15/04/16)

The papal exhortations in these three documents will enlighten the study's quest for inculturation of the Shona beliefs on death and afterlife, and how far the local Roman Catholic Church has implemented these apostolic exhortations.

2.3 Principal questions and concluding remarks

Many pertinent questions arise, after examining existing literature. The questions pose a challenge for inculturating Shona beliefs on death and afterlife into the Christian Gospel. If, according to Swidler (1985), authentic dialogue should focus on the Shona tradition learning from the Christian Gospel, and the Christian Church learning from the Shona traditional religious systems, the exercise will be of no value if both sides learn but fail to appreciate and respect the other's culture and belief systems.

Granted Barclay's arguments that every culture has belief systems and rules, we need to find out how inconsistencies in the belief systems and laws governing each culture, can be reconciled. His assertion that the two cultures may both demand to be understood on their own terms (cultural relativism), is plausible but the underlying factor is the action that follows the understanding. If antagonism and lack of mutual respect develops after understanding each other, then authentic dialogue will not be possible. This study will investigate how the Church in Zimbabwe perceives the Shona cultural beliefs on death and afterlife. The Church will need to spell out whether the Christian faith should be against the Shona culture, or should be against some bad aspects of the Shona culture, or should agree with the Shona culture or the two traditions should run parallel as separate and individual entities.

How far can the Shona religious rites, performed at death and after burial, be adapted into the Christian Gospel? It is the writer's contention that inculturation of liturgies is good but does not address the fundamental problems confronting the Shona Christian. Deeper areas of concern need to be looked at. Can, for instance, the Church sing Christian worship songs together with traditional rain making practitioners, during a rain making ceremony? To my mind having same tunes and rhythms, from traditional and daily Shona experiences, may be seen as inculturation, but it fails to address the fundamental challenges confronting the Shona people. Can a charismatic Christian and divine healer, minister healing say, to the same person at the same

time? Even if some parallelism has been observed in the Christian and Shona traditional healing methods, the underlying factor may be the source of power. Challenges will arise if the sources of the power of healing are believed to be different.

It will not be possible for the Church to provide uniform adaptation of the Shona cultural beliefs when the Roman Catholic Church, for instance, teaches that they can honour and address the dead, while the Pentecostal Churches think there is no relationship between the living and the dead. Here Swidler's arguments for intra-group dialogue will be relevant. It will not be possible to have authentic dialogue if the entity concerned has not been able to identify itself. The whole Church as an entity must speak the same language, so must the Shona people. What happens if the Church denominations in Zimbabwe have differing interpretations of Scripture, leading to fundamentally different doctrines, to the extent that, what one denomination sees as authentic dialogue other denominations see the same as demonic? A good number of teachings of the African Initiated Churches' (AIC's) are not based on the Bible. They claim they are led by the spirit, from which they develop their teachings. The quest is to reconcile the teachings and beliefs of the Church, which include AIC's, Mainline, Evangelical and Pentecostal churches. This may be difficult if the encounters with the Spirit, of some of the denominations, cannot be subjected to theological scrutiny. If it can, what will be the basis of the evaluation in the absence of Bible based theology? Experience of the Spirit tends to be subjective and cannot be empirically verified. This is worsened by the fact that there are various forms and categories of spirits. The research will also seek to establish how various Church denominations define the term Biblicist. Is it Christian faith if it is not based on the Bible?

If the nature of a human being is monistic, then the Shona may be justified in addressing their dead when they are in the coffin, and in conducting the 'bringing home ceremony' at the burial site. This is because where the body lies, so will the spirit be. If the nature of a human being is dual, what will the Shona be addressing in the coffin? Will the person be in the coffin or out as a soul? Do the dead become two beings; in the form of the corpse and the departed soul? Is there any resurrection and eternal life in the Shona traditional beliefs? How can the afterlife in the Shona thinking be reconciled to the Christian doctrine of eternal life and eternal damnation?

Mwandayi's proposal for religious pluralism; where two or more religious worldviews coexist in a society, is a quest for both diversity and energetic engagement with diversity. What stance has the Church in Zimbabwe taken with regards to religious pluralism and can it allow, in its teachings, the Shona Christian to be an adherent of another religious belief system? However, religious pluralism goes beyond the scope of this research, as the aim of religious pluralism or inclusivism is peaceful co-existence of two or more religious systems, rather than adaptation.

These are some of the questions that the Church in Zimbabwe will need to answer in order for there to be authentic dialogue between the Shona cultural beliefs and the Christian faith. This study seeks to investigate the salient factors affecting the Church and the Shona Christian. From some of the literature reviewed, it is evident that several scholars have developed theories on how to integrate the Shona culture into the Christian Gospel. As mentioned earlier in this study, the hypotheses seem to have fallen on deaf ears, in spite of the fact that the Church in Zimbabwe has been predominantly led by Shona indigenous leadership, who understand and appreciate the Shona traditional beliefs on the death and afterlife, for the past forty years.

Having looked at the literature review, the next chapter will examine the methodology and methods that are going to be employed in this research.

Chapter 3

Methodology and methods

3.1 Introduction

In chapter two I summarized a selection of previous works, concerning perceptions of the Shona and Christian religions on death and afterlife, and concerning the dialogue between the two religions. The 'what', 'why' and the 'how' of literature review is also explained in the previous chapter. I now turn to the methodology and methods that I am going to employ in the study of the adaptation of the Shona views on death and afterlife by the Church in Zimbabwe. There are usually three approaches adopted in research namely: the qualitative, the quantitative and the mixed approaches. The quantitative approach is not going to be employed in this study. The qualitative approach is the method that is going to be used. Burns and Grove (2003:19) portray a qualitative approach as "a systematic subjective approach used to describe life experiences and situations to give them meanings". Qualitative research is used when the way knowledge is going to be acquired is made to be dependent on the way people interact and perceive phenomena in an event. It is also going to be dependent on how the processes, which characterize the event, are described. It seeks to find out ways in which the world is "understood, experimented and produced" (Mason 1996:4) by people's lives, conduct and communications. It facilitates a better appreciation of the role played by the participants in the event and how they understand their experiences. Qualitative research will be discussed in detail below. In the meantime, a brief discussion of research paradigms will be necessary.

Research paradigms give guidance on how a researcher makes decisions, and how the study is conducted. They are a set of general principles that researchers share, concerning how they should comprehend and solve problems. There are some fundamental philosophical assumptions relating to what makes up a well-founded research, and how the methods suitable for the development of knowledge in a particular study are chosen. Awareness of these philosophical assumptions will improve the quality of research and can help to develop the researcher's imagination. Terreblanche *et al*. (1999:6) define a paradigm as: "… the interrelated practice and

thinking that defines for researchers the nature of their enquiry along three dimensions: ontology, epistemology and methodology". To Morgan (2007:49), paradigm refers to some: "... all-encompassing ways of experiencing and thinking about the world, including beliefs about morals, values, and aesthetics". Elaborating on the notion of a paradigm Kivunja and Kuyin (2017:29) assert that:

> This all-encompassing position could mean that researchers might question what can be researched or whether at all some topics should be researched on moral grounds. Such a position could be useful in directing ethics and ethical decision-making within research, which aligns with questions about axiology. But it might also be restrictive in terms of the human desire to explore and understand our world.

Paradigms are therefore, the belief systems and practices that are adopted by researchers. Such research paradigms intrinsically reflect people's belief systems concerning their world and the perfect world they want to live in (Lather 1986:259). Kivunja *et al* (2017:26-27) submit that:

> … a paradigm comprises four elements, namely, epistemology, ontology, methodology and axiology. It is important to have a firm understanding of these elements because they comprise the basic assumptions, beliefs, norms and values that each paradigm holds. Therefore, in locating your research proposal in a particular research paradigm, the understanding is that your research will uphold, and be guided by the assumptions, beliefs, norms and values of the chosen paradigm. It is therefore important that you demonstrate that you know what each of these elements mean.

A research paradigm should therefore include: ontology (the form and nature taken by reality, and the knowledge we can gather about it), epistemology (how we know reality), theoretical perspective (ways that are used to know something - the nature of people's knowledge and understanding), methodology and methods (how one discovers what can be known and the techniques used to discover), and axiology (ethical considerations). These and their ancillary philosophies, summarize what will be discussed in this chapter.

There are various ideologies or assumptions that underlie these research paradigms. These include positivism, interpretivism, pragmatism and critical inquiry. They will also be discussed below. It is helpful to discuss these underlying assumptions first so that the dimensions of the research paradigm namely: ontology, epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology and methods, and axiology are put in their right perspective, as far as the study is concerned.

3.2 Underlying ideologies

Pragmatism is an ideology that postulates that reality is incessantly deliberated, re-negotiated and given meaning. This is done after considering usefulness of reality in new, unexpected circumstances. It pays less attention to the truth. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003:713) define pragmatism as:

> … a deconstructive paradigm that debunks concepts such as 'truth' and 'reality'
> and focuses instead on 'what works' as the truth regarding the research questions
> under investigation.

Pragmatism seeks what works and it does not commit itself to a given scheme of philosophy or reality. Therefore, the best technique to employ is the one that will facilitate the finding of solutions to the research question. It allows several diverse perspectives and seeks to reconcile the viewpoints through various means, using the most appropriate method. Kivunja *et al* (2017:35) contend that what is required is:

> … a worldview which would provide methods of research that are seen to be most
> appropriate for studying the phenomenon at hand … pluralistic approaches that
> could allow a combination of methods that in conjunction could shed light on the
> actual *behaviour* of participants, the *beliefs* that stand behind those behaviours
> and the *consequences* that are likely to follow from different behaviours ... a
> paradigm that advocates the use of mixed methods as a *pragmatic* way to
> understand human behaviour… this paradigm advocates a *relational epistemology*
> (i.e. relationships in research are best determined by what the researcher deems
> appropriate to that particular study), a *non-singular reality ontology* (that there is
> no single reality and all individuals have their own and unique interpretations of
> reality), a *mixed methods methodology* ..., and a *value-laden axiology* (conducting
> research that benefits people).

In practice, it is not easy to establish 'what works', especially considering the current study where I will be looking at the numerous Shona belief systems, many of which are not standardized because they are passed down orally. Pragmatism takes for granted that value of a given method can be known prior to it being used. This may be erroneous as it is not always the case, since in some instances the usefulness of a research method may only be known after completion of the research, and after findings have been given meanings. The problem with

pragmatism is that it deals with the means and not the end. Because of these limitations, pragmatism will not be employed in this study.

Positivism endeavours to discover grounds on which outcomes are influenced (Creswell 2009:7). It is premised on the philosophical thoughts of August Comte who contended that observation and reason are the most appropriate ways of understanding.[19] Kivunja *et al* (2017:30) assert that:

> … the Positivist paradigm defines a worldview to research, which is grounded in what is known in research methods as the scientific method of investigation. Comte (1856) postulated that experimentation, observation and reason based on experience ought to be the basis for understanding human behaviour, and therefore, the only legitimate means of extending knowledge and human understanding.

Positivism says there is a particular reality or truth which we are able to consider and identify. Reality can therefore be measured apart from the researcher and the apparatus used. In positivism, truth is discovered and presented experimentally (Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit 2004:17). Human behaviour is thought to be static, managed and determined by the outside environment. The ontological stance taken by positivism is realism, which premises that things exist autonomous of the person that knows (Cohen *et al*., 2007:7). This philosophy may not be appropriate in the study of the dialogue between the Shona views on death and afterlife and the Christian Gospel. Positivism is more inclined to quantitative research than to qualitative research because of its lack of subjectivity in understanding human phenomena. Positivism will also not be used in this research.

Another ideology is the **critical enquiry**. Critical theory maintains that realities are socially built entities which are frequently influenced from within. Reality is also constituted historically by virtue of it being a creation of human communal interaction. Scotland (2012:13) argues that:

> The ontological position of the critical paradigm is historical realism. Historical realism is the view that reality has been shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender values; reality that was once deemed plastic has become crystallized... Realities are socially constructed entities that are under constant internal influence... Critical epistemology is one of subjectivism which is based on real world phenomena and linked with societal ideology. Knowledge is both socially constructed and influenced by power relations from within society...

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[19] http://www.victorianweb.org/philosophy/comte.html accessed 30/12/16

Critical research should be capable of causing change without it being changed (Cohen et al., 2007:139). It must completely embrace its political, cultural and historical circumstance and encourage dialogical attitude of equality between the investigators and those participating in the study. The goal of the research must include bringing about transformation that improves participants' life. Scotland (2012:13) observes that:

> Reality is alterable by human action. The critical paradigm seeks to address issues of social justice and marginalism. The emancipatory function of knowledge is embraced. Different theoretical perspectives of critical inquiry include: Marxism, queer theory and feminism. As it is culturally derived, historically situated and influenced by political ideology, knowledge is not value free.

The theory therefore "seeks human emancipation to liberate human beings from circumstances that enslave them" (Horkheimer 1982:244). The goal of the theory is to help people to transcend the limitations of race, class and gender placed on them. The ideology presumes that there is a reality that can be understood; one that is created and modelled by economic, ethnic, social, cultural, political, and gender-based factors, which have evolved for a period of time, into communal structures which have become acceptable as real.

The ideology disputes the guiding suppositions and starts with an assumption concerning what is good, and then it attempts to alter the situation. It "… search(es) (*sic*) for the truth and understanding within the social context" (Reeves and Hedberg 2003:33). Advocates of the critical theory give details of the defects of the present social reality, discover the agents of change, and give both comprehensible standards for censure, and attainable realistic goals necessary for social change. Consequently, they try to dislodge current structures of power and authority, through facilitating for social participation among people who have, in the past, been marginalized, side-lined and controlled. Critical inquiry will be useful in investigating whether the Shona Christians are being marginalized when they pursue their traditional religion. It will help to discover who are the objects and the subjects of marginalization and enslavement. Gender issues may also be factored in.

Scotland (2012:14) says:

> Critical methodologies include: critical discourse analysis (examines how social and political domination is realized in text and talk), critical ethnography (an

ideologically sensitive orientation to the study of culture, … action research (a cyclical process of investigation, action and evaluation which results in a change in practice), and ideology critique (exposes hidden ideology by revealing participants' places in systems which empower or disempower them).

Use of critical discourse analysis (CDA) may be employed in order to come up with authentic findings on the Shona phenomena. CDA is a tool used by researchers who employ the critical inquiry. Van Dijk (2001:352) describes discourse analysis as a:

… type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance and inequality are enacted, reproduced and resisted by a text and talk in the social and political context.

From this definition, we can deduce that critical discourse analysis is analytical in nature, and it looks at the misuse of power by some social institutions on political, ethnical, cultural, or gender grounds. The aim of a critical analyst is to understand, uncover and confront social inequalities that are exposed by the discourse analysis. Scotland (2012:13-14) sums up the features of critical enquiry:

The critical paradigm is anti-foundational; it... asks the axiological question: what is intrinsically worthwhile? Thus, the critical paradigm is normative; it considers how things ought to be; it judges reality… Critical methodology is directed at interrogating values and assumptions, exposing hegemony and injustice, challenging conventional social structures and engaging in social action… Critical methods enable realities to be critically examined from a cultural, historical and political stance.

Interpretivism premises that:

… all knowledge and therefore all meaningful reality as such is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context. (Crotty 2003:42).

Reeves and Hedberg (2003:32) assert that there is a strong belief among interpretive researchers that reality is made up of a person's subjective experiences of the outside world. This implies the world is understood from experiences of individuals. The knowledge acquired is socially created and not objectively established (Carson *et al*., 2001:5) and perceived. Therefore, meaning is not discovered but created, and the construction is conveyed in a basically social context. Therefore, for us to comprehend our communal world we need to view it from the perspective of people that are involved in it (Cohen *et al* 2007:19). Kivunja *et al* (2017:33) argue that interpretivism:

…makes an effort to 'get into the head of the subjects being studied' so to speak, and to understand and interpret what the subject is thinking or the meaning he or she is making of the context… Emphasis is placed on understanding the individual and their interpretation of the world around them. Hence, the key tenet of the Interpretivist paradigm is that reality is socially constructed…

The interpretive epistemological interpretivism is one of subjectivism whose foundation is the actual existential experiences. The world does not exist unconnectedly of people's knowledge of it (Grix, 2004:83). Interpretivism recognizes no single reality or truth. Because of this, reality requires to be given meaning. Interpretivist research "is guided by the researcher's set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied" (Denzin and Lincoln 2005:22). This approach is emergent and mutual in nature, because human beings have the aptitude to adapt. It is not possible to acquire prior knowledge of social realities which are affected by time and context. The goal is to comprehend the time and context bound reasons, motives, meanings and other subjective experiences. "The ontological position of interpretivism is relativism. Relativism is the view that reality is subjective and differs from person to person" (Scotland 2012:10).

This interpretivism, which is hermeneutical in nature, will be employed by the researcher. The interpretive approach will be helpful in this research in the quest for understanding the Shona and Christian phenomena, regarding the integration of the Shona views on death and afterlife into the Christian Gospel. It will be handy in interpreting symbols and meanings attached to rituals that are performed during the interaction between the 'living dead' and their living descendants, and the Shona way of life in general. The philosophies that underlie interpretive research are hermeneutics and phenomenology. These will be discussed later in this chapter.

3.3 Ontology

As is expected of every researcher, I should articulate my ontology in the process of formulating a research design. Ontology is a discipline of philosophy that deals with assumptions that are made in order to be able to believe that something is sensible or to believe the essence of the phenomenon under investigation (Scotland, 2012). Crotty (2003:10) defines ontology as the "study of being", which looks at the type of world under investigation, the manner of existence

and the makeup of reality. The fundamental inquiry in ontology is 'what is reality'? It studies how reality is viewed.

> Ontological assumptions are concerned with what constitutes reality, in other words *what is*. Researchers need to take a position regarding their perceptions of how things really are and how things really work. (Scotland 2012:9).

In the current study, this entails studying the Shona religious worldview. In particular, the Shona beliefs and practices concerning death and the hereafter will be studied. It has to do with assumptions about how the Shona world is structured and the nature of the Shona phenomena.

Ontology may be **realist**. David J. Chalmers[20] says:

> ... ontological realism is often traced to Willard Van Orman Quine (1948), who held that we can determine what exists by seeing which entities are endorsed by our best scientific theory of the world.

The **positivistic realist** perceives reality as something that already exists out there. It is thought to be a law of nature which is waiting to be discovered. Such a realistic ontology, in which it is presumed that there is a realm of cause and effect that exists, is inappropriate for the study of the Shona and Christian views of death and afterlife, as these do not fall into the category of laws of nature awaiting discovery. Consequently, the positivist realistic ontology will not be employed in this research.

Ontology may also be **critical realist**. According to MacIntosh and O'Gorman (2015:61):

> Critical realists assume that there *is* a reality that exists independently of human perceptions, but that our access to this reality is always limited and skewed *by* those perceptions. Our perceptions are both physically limited (e.g. we can't see into the past or future) and ideologically limited (e.g. we are biased by personal experiences).

For the current study, critical realists premise that there is a deity out there that exists independently of the Shona people's perceptions, and access to this deity is restricted by their worldview. The researcher, as the most important instrument, affects what he or she intends to measure, by virtue of her/his presence. This will be the case for example, in a direct observation of a Shona traditional like the rain-making ceremony, or the *gata* (spiritual autopsy) ritual. Critical ontology will, to a limited extent, be employed in some areas of this research.

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[20] Chalmers, David, J. *Ontological Anti-Realism*. From http://consc.net/papers/ontology.pdf - accessed 23/07/16

In **relativist interpretive ontology**, knowledge is thought to be a social construction which is only found out through interpretation by an individual. "Objective reality can never be captured. I only know it through representations." (Denzin and Lincoln 2005:5). Therefore, unchanging and structural frameworks are avoided in favour of individual and flexible research structures which are well-suited with understanding meanings during human social interaction. What an individual perceives is thought to be reality. The presupposed ontology on the Shona and Christian realities is that they are groups of people who have their own interpretations, thoughts and meanings regarding God. The interpretative ontology will be the researcher's choice in this study.

This research will be conducted under the assumption that there is no direct access to the real Shona religious worldview, and that a solitary external Shona reality does not exist, and that reality is local and specific. Local realities are concerned with the personal belief systems, perceptions and ideals of individual Shona people. The perception of the Shona people is affected by their beliefs and value systems. They create reality actively and socially. That means they actively construct their own subjective reality, like the interaction between God, the living and the living dead - where the spiritual and the physical worlds are fused. This is done through the mind actively constructing meaning and order to the prevailing phenomenon in question.

3.4 Epistemology

While ontology asks what reality is, epistemology looks for ways reality can be known by a researcher. Epistemology is the process of comprehending and elucidating how we arrive at the knowledge acquired (Crotty 2003:3). According to Kivunja *et al* (2017:27) epistemology describes:

> … how we come to know something; how we know the truth or reality … It is concerned with the very bases of knowledge - its nature, and forms and how it can be acquired, and how it can be communicated to other human beings. It focuses on the nature of human knowledge and comprehension that you, as the researcher or knower, can possibly acquire so as to be able to extend, broaden and deepen understanding in your field of research.

The significant question is on the kind of knowledge that can be gained by employing varying methods of enquiry. Epistemology looks at the nature and structures of knowledge (Cohen *et al*., 2007:7). It gives a philosophical basis for making a decision on the possible nature of knowledge and how to ensure that the kind of the knowledge is sufficient and legitimate (Maynard 1994:10). This area of research paradigm asks questions such as: (a) how we can know reality; how knowledge is created, obtained and transmitted, (b) how the researcher and the knowledge he or she seeks to discover are related - whether the researcher is an outsider or is part of the knowledge. So there should be a clear relationship between the one seeking knowledge and what is to be known (In this study the researcher is an insider; being both a Shona and a Christian), (c) what the features, presumptions and principles that determine the course of acquiring knowledge are, and the achievement of the results, (d) whether there is a possibility of sharing and repeating the process by other people, to facilitate appraisal of the value of research and the dependability of the conclusions.

In **interpretive epistemology**, the basis for knowledge is that reality is comprehended through perceived knowledge. It pays attention to the specific and the concrete (Carson *et al*. 2001:6), and aims to know specific contexts. It sees reality as *multifaceted and subjective*, and these multiple realities rely on other systems of meanings. This further complicates the process of understanding and giving meaning in terms of fixed realities. The researcher and the participants will depend on each other as they mutually interact. As the researcher, I will not conduct the study with a *tabula rasa* (blank slate) but I have prior insight of the phenomena under investigation. Yet the prior insight is not adequate to develop a fixed research design because the perceived reality is multifaceted and unpredictable. I will therefore remain open to new knowledge during the study processes. This new knowledge is acquired through communication with the participants.

The epistemological view adopted (i.e. whether interpretive, positivist etc.) will determine the interface between the researcher and the goal of the study. This epistemological view depends on the ontological view that has been taken up. Since the ontology chosen for this study is interpretive, it follows that the epistemology chosen in the study will be subjective. Here

knowledge is dependent on individual interpretation, and it is, to a lesser extent, socially constructed and affected by power relations from within the Shona people.

3.5 Theoretical perspective

The methodology and methods adopted in a research are informed by the theoretical perspective. To Crotty (2003:7) theoretical perspective is: "… the theoretical stance informing the methodology and thus providing a context for the process and grounding its logic and criteria". A theoretical perspective is a list of assumptions concerning reality which underlie the enquiries we make and our resultant responses. The relevant question in theoretical perspective is 'which approach should be utilized to obtain knowledge concerning a given phenomenon?' As seen above, the ontology of this study is concerned with the meanings and interpretations that the Shona people and the Church in Zimbabwe make with regards to death and afterlife. I also stated that the epistemology is interpretive, where reality needs to be constructed and interpreted. It follows then, that **interpretivism** is the theoretical perspective that underpins this research, and that the underlying assumption is that reality needs to be constructed and interpreted. This is because the study involves people who are conscious of what they will be doing. They act deliberately and develop meanings as they conduct their lives. By so doing, they construct their own social world. Interpretivism is the chosen perspective because human beings are unique species who cannot be generalized. A single event can be interpreted in various ways, so the Shona and Christian phenomena, regarding death and afterlife, should be viewed through the eyes of both the researcher and the participants.

Various philosophies will be employed to support this theoretical perspective. These include, critical theory (discussed above in section 3.2), symbolic interactionism, hermeneutics and phenomenology (discussed under methodology below).

3.5.1   Symbolic interactionism

Holloway (1997:150) asserts that symbolic interactionism is:

58

An approach in sociology which focuses on the interaction of human beings and the roles they have. The model of the person in symbolic interactionism is active and creative rather than passive.

Symbolic interactionism is a key theoretical perspective in social science that is rooted in phenomenology, which places emphasis on the subjective meaning of reality[21]. People are believed to define themselves within the context of their socialization. People see themselves from the perspective of how other people view them, and they develop a self-perception of themselves. The main argument of symbolic interactionism is that human phenomena are encompassed in symbols, where reality is constructed and interpreted through language and communication symbols. It pays attention to the language and symbols that assist in giving meaning to life experiences.

This means human action and interface can only be understood through the exchange of meaningful communication and/or ciphers. People are social realistic actors who will continually adapt their conduct to match the behaviour of others. As they interact with their world, they alter their behaviour to conform to the meaning they decipher from their social interactions. A person's behaviour and self-identity are therefore decided by the way he or she interacts with other people. Interactionism makes out meanings, and how the meanings and the resultant actions taken are influenced by the interactive processes. Cooley (1922:184-185) summed it up a century ago in saying:

> The thing that moves us to pride or shame is not mechanical reflection of ourselves but an imputed sentiment, the imagined effect of this reflection upon another's mind. This is evident from the fact that the character and weight of that other, in whose mind we see ourselves, makes all the difference with our feelings.

Reality, as we know it, is a sum total of social construction by lively and imaginative participants, through this communication and interaction. It is only an interpretation of a given situation. Reality is therefore mainly a social product. This is true of the Shona religious life. The Shona create reality as they interact with others and they assign meaning to the reality they create. All phenomena that are humanly important like culture, belief systems, self, mind and society, materialize from, and are dependent on, symbolic interaction for their existence.

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[21] https://www.boundless.com/sociology/textbooks/boundless-sociology-textbook/sociology-1/theoretical-perspectives-in-sociology-24/the-symbolic-interactionist-perspective-157-3185/ - accessed 07/08/16

Meaning of a phenomenon is drawn from how people assign meanings and define the phenomenon. The meanings they derive influence their actions. Therefore, this method of interpretation acts as a mediator between the actual deed and any tendency to act (Bogdan and Taylor 1975:15). While people may do things in line with the confines of an organization, it is the individual meaning derived, not the organization, which decides what they do. Terms may be determined by norms, social roles and goals, and the resultant penalty for certain deeds may be stipulated, but they do not decide how an individual will act (Bogdan and Taylor 1975:15).

The question is 'what meanings are developed by people in course of their interaction with others? In the case of the Shona for instance, we can ask: 'what values do they derive from the interaction between the 'living dead' and their living descendants? Studying human and social interaction calls for the understanding of these meanings. It is imperative to be cognizant of the fact that these meanings can be changed through human creative capabilities, and individuals may affect a variety of meanings that shape their society. Therefore, people do not merely act in response to their environment, but they also have the aptitude to disrupt that process and to imagine different responses to gestures. People's response to phenomena is varied and they do that nearly all of the time. People can only change if they can interpret the actions of others.

According to Blumer (1969:2-7), the principles of symbolic interactionism can be summarized thus:
- Human action towards things is based on the perceived meaning of things.
- The meanings that human beings have, develops from their social interaction.
- The way the people interact with each other determine and change meaning.
- Social actions arise from the fitting together of individual lines of action.

Symbolic interactionism has several weaknesses:
- Symbolic interactionism pays attention to micro-level (i.e. individual) interaction, ignoring the macro-social structures such as value systems, norms and traditions.
- Because in interactionism the researcher is a participant observer, bias and subjectivity may be unavoidable, but this is an issue every researcher needs to watch out for.
- Interactionists may be too vague in their research and very disorderly in their theories.

- The encyclopedia.com[22] says that meaning of a phenomenon is in the action that it causes. If actors do not agree on the meaning of a symbol, then the resultant meaning becomes uncertain and communication is problematic. In practice, the meaning of things varies and is dependent on the processes of interpretation and compromise of the participants. In the process of interpretation, participants interpret each other's reactions in order to come up with greater agreement on the meanings of the symbols used. This means determination of meaning depends on negotiation - the mutual modifications and accommodation of the individuals who are participating in the interaction procedure. It follows then that meaning in interactionism is emergent and problematic.

Despite all these setbacks, symbolic interactionism is a useful tool in participant observation to be conducted by the researcher. The Church in Zimbabwe and the Shona people in their traditional lives are entities of interacting personalities in which roles and selves are shaped, as each character influences other characters.

3.5.2   Hermeneutics

Interpretation is critical where there is need for dialogue between two religious traditions, like the Shona religion and Christianity. Hermeneutics is the theory and methodology of interpretation which seeks to grasp the message that the author/speaker wanted to communicate. Paul Ricoeur (1981:43) defines hermeneutics as the theory of how we come to an understanding as we undertake to interpret texts. To Kerdeman (2014:375), "Hermeneutics is the theory and philosophy of understanding and interpretation". She further notes that the definition of interpretation has been a debatable matter. Epistemologically (the philosophy of knowing and knowledge), "interpretation is a method or cognitive strategy we employ to clarify or construct meaning. The goal is to produce valid understanding of meaningful "objects" such as texts, artefacts, spoken words, experiences, and intentions." Ontologically (the philosophy of being and existence),

> ... interpretation is not an act of cognition, a special method, or a theory of knowledge. Interpretation, instead, characterizes how human beings naturally experience the world. Realized through our moods, concerns, self-understanding,

[22] http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Symbolic_Interactionism.aspx - accessed 23/07/16

and practical engagements with people and things we encounter in our sociohistorical contexts, interpretation is an unavoidable aspect of human existence. (Kerdeman 2014:375).

In hermeneutics, the influence and participation of the interpreter is of extreme significance. Complete neutrality of the interpreter is not possible. In interpretivism there is no right or wrong theory, neither are there dependent or autonomous variables. Knowledge and meaning is a product of interpretation. Here methods such as interviews and observations will feature because they rely on how the researcher subjectively relates with the participants. The idea is to appreciate the world from subjective individual experiences. There is therefore no objective knowledge, as individual experience is a function of human logic. Social constructions like language and shared meaning give access to reality. People observe, comprehend and appreciate phenomena through meanings that they give to reality.

McCartney and Clayton (2002:77) claim that: "… there is no ground for believing that one's own interpretation at any specific point is absolutely correct. As individuals, we will always be on the hermeneutical spiral". This entails that the meaning given to reality or a text is by no means certain. The hermeneutical circle presupposes an interplay between the suppositions of the reader and what the act or text claims. The job of interpretation keeps going, like a circle. This is because a text does not have one unchanging meaning so some degree of *eisegesis* is necessary. The hermeneutical circle begins and ends with human experience. The hermeneutical process is therefore open ended and by no means comes to full completion.

In the historical development of the knowledge of God, the understanding of a text for example, must be open to diverse meanings in different circumstances, even those which the author never thought of. If Christianity is going to be a worldwide religion, Vanhoozer (2005:111-112) says that the:

> ... doctrine's direction must therefore be susceptible of fresh appropriations in new cultural-historical settings… no challenge is more trying for the church than that of having to discern what faithfulness to the gospel requires of us in new intellectual and social contexts.

Ricoeur maintains that a text is both definite and symbolic because it stands for, our created beliefs concerning ourselves and others, how we handle history and our records for future

examination. To him, the decisive ontological question (what do I believe exists?) in hermeneutics concerns the meaning of being, of which he thinks it is impossible to come up with a satisfactory answer. He contends that the best response will be an imprecise one because the truth can only be approached through stories, symbols, ideologies, images and texts (Ricoeur 1981:51). Humanity therefore understands itself through the interpretation of the cultural and linguistic world in which they find themselves in. Ricoeur maintains that language is the most important condition for all experience, and linguistic forms such as symbols, metaphors and texts reveal dimensions of human beings in the world.

Ricoeur emphasizes on 'distantiation'; whereby there should be a distancing (separation) between the writer and the text, since the text takes some independence once it is written. So, readers need to respect the text in its own right and separation between the text and consecutive readers is absolutely necessary. The text then turns out to be the cultural ground where the reader takes possession of the author's thoughts which are removed from the author when he or she puts it on paper. The text depends on both the author and the interpreter, and it crafts the reader anew in his or her current circumstances, by the world that opens up in front of the text. It is vital to comprehend our cultural heritage which we can use as we endeavour to understand how to think (Ricoeur 1981:119).

Meaning of a passage, to Ricoeur, alters according on the reader's state of affairs. However, this is not a full change as the aim of the author and the external reality (for example, love taught and love experienced are two different things) are also contributors to the text's meaning. Thus, the reader's circumstance and experience are important elements in attributing meaning to a text. Ricoeur therefore suggests that the quest to discover the "world behind the text" is no longer the only essential thing. 'World of the text' here looks at the influences on the author, and the historical context underlying the reasons for writing the text. Instead, we would rather pay attention to "world in front of the text" - which is the world created by the reader; bearing in mind the message of the text. Ricoeur (1976:92) writes:

> Not the intention of the author, which is supposed to be hidden behind the text; not the historical situation common to the author and his original readers; not the expectations or feelings of these original readers; not even their understanding of themselves as historical and cultural phenomena. What has to be appropriated is

the meaning of the text itself, conceived in a dynamic way as the direction of thought opened up by the text.

Rita Felski[23] (2012) maintains that Ricoeur coined the term 'hermeneutic of suspicion' to arrest a common spirit that encompasses the writings of Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche, who Ricoeur thought, made up a 'school of suspicion' which was committed to unmask "the lies and illusions of consciousness." These, Ricoeur maintains, are the inventors of a peculiarly new style of interpretation that evades apparent meanings in order to arrive at less visible and less flattering truths. Hermeneutic of suspicion asserts that the literal meaning assigned to a passage seeks to hide the political interests intended by the passage. Ricoeur recognized that there are some power structures and interests that influence the text. The reader should consequently reflect on why a text was interpreted in a given way so that he or she is able to question the soundness of the interpretation. It is also necessary for the reader to take into account his or her own reasons for interpreting a text in that particular way. The text needs to be examined by questioning it in various ways, as the original author's purpose may now be irrelevant and unobtainable.

The function of interpretation then, is to remove the camouflage, and to expose different interests. It surveys what is beneath the surface of the text to expose a more valid aspect of meaning. The subjective purpose or usual understanding of social actors is consequently taken to be deceptive, as it distorts the social reality. This is because they are thought to stay at the level of sheer appearances, and help to hide and misrepresent the reality that must be uncovered by the social investigator in order to show the accurate meaning behind the obvious world. Hermeneutic of suspicion therefore stresses that texts should be assigned meaning with distrust rather than following their authority without due caution. If this line of thinking is adopted, it challenges the conventional interpretation of Scriptures which are foundational to the Christian faith.

All human understanding is thought to be achieved through the oscillation between making an allowance for the autonomous meaning of parts, and the whole unit.

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[23]Felski Rita, 2012. "Critique and the Hermeneutics of Suspicion". In *Journal of Media and Cullture Vol.15 (1)*. From http://www.journal.media-culture.org.au/index.php/mcjournal/article/view/431 - accessed 24/05/16

Understanding progresses from the whole to the part and vice versa. Jeannine Brown (2007:85-86) echoes these sentiments saying:

> If we come to an interpretive decision as we study a text that does not agree with the main point we have discerned, it is time either to revise that interpretive decision or rethink the way we have framed the main point. In fact, the nature of the hermeneutical circle or spiral is just such a back-and-forth between a text's main point, its sub-points, its implications, and so on. The circle moves from the parts to the whole and back again.

Historical critical method is one of the critical approaches applied in hermeneutics. The method leaves out supernatural action. Only human natural rudiments that can be empirically confirmed through human history and experience are recognized as truth. History has to be examined and interpreted. Gadamer's enlightenments on meaning as historically interpreted are an eye opener. He advocates the meta-critical hermeneutical theory because of his view that no single method will result in a perfect interpretation of a text. He evaluates both the interpreter and the hypothetical foundations of interpretation. Therefore, there is no solitary meaning that can be ascribed to a text.

Hermeneutics is the art of understanding and to Gadamer, it is not a method of understanding, but it is an effort to elucidate the conditions conducive to understanding. These conditions include the interpreter's biases and preconceptions (Gadamer 1975:358). One must therefore build up a historical awareness of self so that one is mindful of one's prejudices. It is however difficult to differentiate between true and false prejudices. Interpretations will forever keep changing as history of the phenomena under consideration is received. Reception theory in history places emphasis on the reader rather than the author, and the reader's receptions do not depend on the original meanings of the author. It is readers, not authors, who make the meaning. Understanding can only take place where the passage and the interpreter get together. The passage has the potential meaning, but the actual meaning comes from its interaction with the reader. The interpreter must go into dialogue with the reality at stake in the text. There should, therefore, be a 'fusion of horizons' - the reader's perspective with all his or her preconceptions and biases, and the perspective of the author. Gadamer (2004:340) explains: "All reading involves application, so that a person reading a text is himself part of the meaning he apprehends. He belongs to the text that he is reading".

Understanding is achieved when the differing horizons of the text and the reader are fused. The fusion will only take place where there is crucial affinity between the interpreter and his or her object. Hermeneutics is, therefore, a dialectical procedure where the comprehension of a text always requires an improved self-understanding.

On the other hand:

> …the text has autonomy and enjoys its own *sense* … [and] a text's *structure* imposes certain limits on interpretation. The hermeneutical circle is not a vicious one, for the reader's presuppositions can be 'checked' against the text's formal features (e.g., style, syntax, structure)… [Nevertheless], It is one thing to dissect a text as though it were an inert object, scientifically exposing its grammatical parts and explaining its literary codes, and quite another to treat the text as a dynamic object that actually reaches out and transforms the reader. (Vanhoozer 1998:107).

Proper hermeneutics therefore requires us to pay attention to both the author and the interpreter. For effectual communication there should be a high degree of awareness between the reader and the text, and an encounter is necessary between the two (Vanhoozer 1998:106).

What does this translate to when we reflect on the variety of hermeneutics applied to the Bible? After all, to any historical text, we have the intended reader, the imagined reader, the implicit reader, the explicit reader, the actual reader and the ideal reader. True history is a mixture of the history and understanding of the history. Gadamer calls this the "principle of effective history" (Gadamer 1975:267).

In practice there is barely any interpretation which completely excludes presuppositions. Epoche, which is the withholding or bracketing of own suppositions, is necessary here. Therefore, the interpreter needs to be careful when interpreting the Scripture so that *eisegesis* is kept in check. This is necessary to avoid the interpreter becoming the author. For example, when a supreme court interprets a law in agreement with present-day thinking, it will in effect be altering the original constitutional law because of the re-interpretation. This turns the court into a legislator by making a law rather than it being an instrument of interpretation. Today, biblical scholars who want to re-interpret the Bible in line with modern thought, or the Shona tradition, may fall into the same trap of obscuring the original message. It may be necessary to use the grammatical

historical method to biblical interpretation, where we pay attention to the study of the words employed in Scripture and noting the original meaning of the words - the message God intended to express to the readers. If interpreters adhere to the underlying principle that God desired to communicate to all Christians, of all cultures and ages, then the Bible will talk to all cultures, without having to alter the author's original intention. Be that as it may, it is difficult to determine the underlying principles that God originally intended to convey.

The way the Scripture, which is foundational to the Christian faith in general and the doctrine of the Christian Church in Zimbabwe in particular, is interpreted and understood, is scrutinized through the hermeneutic tool. This justifies the use of hermeneutics as a suitable philosophy in the interpretivist theoretical perspective, for understanding the Christian Gospel and the Shona way of life in Zimbabwe, in so far as they influence each other.

3.6 Methodology

Methodology determines how research is done, how we find out things and how knowledge is acquired. Kivunja *et al* (2017:28) say that "Methodology is the broad term used to refer to the research design, methods, approaches and procedures used in an investigation that is well planned to find out something …" It is a plan of enquiring, which starts with underlying assumptions and proceeds to research design, then to data collection, collation, analysis and synthesis. Crotty (2003:3) defines methodology as: "… the strategy, plan of action, process and design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods and linking the choice and use of the methods to the desired outcomes". While Scotland (2012:10) asserts that:

> … methodology is concerned with why, what, from where, when and how data is collected and analyzed… asks the question: how can the inquirer go about finding out whatever they believe can be known?

It aims to elucidate, assess and trim down the use of given methods. Methodology is commonly classified as qualitative, quantitative or mixed method, by specifying the way in which data are gathered and scrutinized. A good methodology sets up principles which direct research practices, and seeks to determine proper procedures to be used in searching for solutions, while elucidating reasons for the choice.

Underlying assumptions are fundamental to the way a research is carried out and thus there is need to have clear knowledge regarding them. "Every paradigm is based upon its own ontological and epistemological assumptions" (Scotland 2012:9). The ontological and epistemological positions adopted should have a bearing on the methodology chosen. In this study the interpretive methodology was chosen. The focus is on understanding, interpreting and constructing meaning on the Shona traditional beliefs and the Christian Gospel's teaching on death and afterlife. I as the researcher intend to experience what I will be studying. This inevitably allows opinion and reason to direct my action; thereby partly creating what I will be studying - the meaning of the phenomena. Pre-understanding is necessary for such methodology, and the difference between fact and value judgements is unclear, as influence on the phenomena is from both science and personal experiences.

3.6.1   Research design

The research design is an interpretive, descriptive and investigative study, scrutinized using qualitative methods. As mentioned earlier in the introduction, the qualitative approach will be the method to be used. The term research design:

> … refers to and encompasses decisions about how the research itself is conceptualized, the subsequent conduct of a specific research project, and ultimately the type of contribution the research is intended to make to the development of knowledge in a particular area. Importantly, the process of developing a research design combines three broadly connected and interdependent components: the theoretical, methodological, and ethical considerations relevant to the specific project. (Cheek 2008: 761).

Research design gives the road map of a study that shows how a research will be done. Yin (2003:19) sees it as an action plan that takes us from the research questions we seek to respond to, to the answers that arose from the research. It is through research design that the researcher will be in a position to map, configure and implement the research, to maximize the soundness of the research findings (Mouton 1996:175).

Qualitative research is interpretive (Mason 1996:4), hermeneutic and inductive (Maxwell 2004a:36). It is reflexive and meticulous. Qualitative research methods will be helpful in

studying social phenomena. Qualitative research is a social enquiry that explains how, where and when data are to be gathered and scrutinized, and pays attention to the way the Shona people understand and find sense in their experiences, and in their world (Holloway and Wheeler 2002:30). It surveys the conduct, perception, experiences and outlook of people, and puts emphasis on the comprehension of these events. As a descriptive device, qualitative study pays attention to the description and comprehension of phenomena. It gives a portrayal of circumstances as they unfold naturally. Dynamic and intricate procedures will find full expression. This may be used to validate existing practices, and come up with findings and develop theories. The Shona people, their circumstances, activities and practices will be fully expressed. Attention will be paid to the Shona perception of their religious life and belief systems, interpretation of their experiences, and structure of their social world.

Qualitative research is inductive in the sense that it is investigative. Its aim is to discover phenomena; where a new epoch is under investigation or when we have limited knowledge concerning the target area. It does not begin with a set of assumptions to test, like what is done in quantitative research. The investigation is on the full character of the phenomena and its associated factors (Polit *et al* 2001:19). It discovers and sets the criteria for classes and patterns in the data. An exploratory study is needed because there are high levels of ambiguity and unawareness as far as interaction of the Shona religious tradition and the Christian Gospel are concerned. The actual problem relating to authentic dialogue between the two religious traditions appears not to be well understood. This study aims to discover salient factors, in the two religious traditions, which may offer solution to the problem of the integration of the Shona eschatological views into the Christian gospel.

The study's design is qualitative in the sense that hypothetical and phenomenological data are gathered. Qualitative research presumes that an entire phenomenon is studied without breaking it down to several variables. It is also not reduced to linear causal relationships. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1992:29-32) qualitative research has the following key features:
(1) Data is derived from the normal setting while the investigator is the major data collection tool.
(2) Its primary aim is to describe, and secondarily to scrutinize.

(3) The main worry of the researcher is on the process and not on outcomes or products.

(4) Data are analyzed inductively and the findings influence what is sought after, through data gathering, data scrutiny and theory development, concurrently.

(5) The main focus is to assign meaning to things i.e. how events are viewed and interpreted by the participants. What people say or do are a function of the manner they assign meaning to their world.

Characteristics of qualitative research may be grouped into two categories. The first category is those characteristics referring to people. The people include the participants we seek to include in the study - their expressions, actions, interpretations, works, meanings and productions, and the researcher, who collects, assigns meaning to data and reports on the findings. The second category of characteristics is those that refer to the context. Context here means the experiential social scene where participants, or participants and the researcher, interact.

This study is oriented towards a holistic understanding of the Christian and the Shona religious systems. Theoretical data is gathered from the analysis of theological perspectives that are assembled from relevant literature, while phenomenological data is gathered from studying and understanding of the Christian and the Shona religious phenomena. The major aim of the research is to study and evaluate the phenomena regarding the religious lives of the Shona people of Zimbabwe in-so-far as it relates to the dialogue between the Christian Gospel and the Shona views on death and afterlife. Qualitative research seeks to "discover the new and to develop empirically grounded theories" (Flick 1998:5). This justifies the use of **qualitative inductive** method as the most suitable methodology for human learning in general, and for this study in particular.

The appropriateness of a method depends on the rationale, context and character of the study being carried out. A qualitative description, of the Christian faith and the Shona people's belief systems, and the inductive analysis of data, are the most appropriate for the study. The reason is that this improves the possibility of some kind of impartiality.

The qualitative approach is useful in the study of the daily religious life of the Shona people in their natural scenery. The aspirations of qualitative research are to explore and establish the problem at hand, especially where there is very little knowledge pertaining to the problem's scope and nature (Domigan & Fleming 2007:24). The complexities and diversities of the Shona traditional religion and the Christian Gospel will be surveyed. In qualitative research, data are presented as descriptive narration with words, and phenomena are understood in their natural setting. This will help interpretation of phenomena in terms of meaning the Shona assign to reality (Denzin & Lincoln 2000:3).

The qualitative approach uses inductive data analysis to allow for a better understanding and clarification of the interacting realities and experiences of the researcher and the Shona people. This allows for the gradual evolvement of a design instead of having a design that is whole when the research begins, as it is impractical to anticipate the result of the interactions because of the varied viewpoints and value systems of the investigator and participants, and the way the researcher and participants influence the meaning assigned to reality and the findings of the study. Qualitative research therefore includes emergent design, since the complete pattern of the research design may be impossible at the beginning of the project. This means understanding evolves as the research advances, as current data gathering and analysis informs the future study. When new information is discovered, it will be necessary to take appropriate action. Flexibility is therefore necessary in exploratory studies.

As a researcher, I will be the main instrument of data collection and analysis. This includes study of literature, interviews, participant observation etc. I will engage the situation and try to understand the various interpretations resulting from the several realities in any given situation. This happens because the researcher and the participant create their own realities. According to Merriam (1998:23) any findings that I come up with arise from my interpretation as the researcher, of the viewpoints of others, which have been filtered through my own views. Because of this, Lincoln and Guba (1985:290) propose that the subjectivity, motivations, biases, interests and perspectives of the researcher should be reduced by identifying them, making them clear and keeping them under control.

The qualitative approach has its obvious flaws. Participants' personal experiences and reflections, which are the main sources of the data collected, cannot be measured objectively. However, effort will be made to scrutinize, examine and assign meaning to data as accurately as possible. Holloway and Wheeler (2002:3) contend that total objectivity may not be possible and qualitative methodology is not entirely precise because people are not consistent in their response to phenomena in a logical or predictable way. Yet it may not be possible to approach a research from a neutral perspective because as a minister of religion, the researcher becomes an insider to the study. In any study, the researcher's role and philosophy impacts on the chosen subject, the goals of the study, the methodology used and the analysis applied. However, objectivity is compulsory, so every effort will be made to set aside all prejudices and preconceptions. Also because of the variation of the reliability of some data source, there can be no guarantee that the sources covered are reliable. Influencing suppliers of data affects the outcomes of the study. Added to this, overlooking some background information may result in wrong interpretation. The presence of the researcher may result in the alteration of responses of participants. Complete and truthful disclosure by participants is possible only when the researcher has earned the trust of the participants. This requires a lengthy period of interaction as the trust may happen after several meetings.

3.6.2   The anthropological approach

An anthropological approach will be employed to make sure there is an informed analysis of the Shona thinking on death and afterlife. This is because qualitative research is inclined to be naturalistic or anthropological. "Anthropological inquiry combines information about people's thoughts gathered through interviews with information collected by observing their behaviour and social interactions" (Goldman *et al* 2013:1). The study will investigate the dialogue between Christian faith and essential cultural elements or Shona religious beliefs and practices. Culture may be looked at theologically and anthropologically. Anthropological study deals mainly with qualitative facets and its aim is the construction and communication of meaning. Meaning is mediated by means of language and acts, and the most excellent technique of comprehending this is by observing and engaging - which are not easily done using 'traditional' study techniques. To understand meaning, one needs to make distinctions between things, and

separating the important from the less important. In social settings like the Shona traditional life, there are minute rites or non-verbal gestures that may be trivialized or may be very significant. Cultural anthropology studies cultural disparity among people. Under the cultural anthropological approach, research methods employed include: cultural immersion - (where participant observation gives the researcher a chance to get an insider view of how and why the Shona do things the way they do), and human ecology[24] - (which explores people's interaction with their environment such as plants, animals, climatic patterns etc.). "Four common qualitative anthropological data collection methods are: (1) participant observation, (2) in-depth interviews, (3) focus groups, and (4) textual analysis" (Goldman *et al* 2013:2). These will be discussed later.

3.6.3   The ethnography approach

Goldman *et al* (2013:1) describe ethnography as:

> … the qualitative process of exploring in depth the whys and hows of human culture, behavior, and expression… The ethnographic method uses multiple data collection techniques including participant observation, interviews, focus groups, and textual analysis to construct a holistic and contextual view of the phenomena under study.

The ethnography approach will help to find out cultural characteristics of the Shona people. It emphasizes on examining the whole culture. It thoroughly develops analytical descriptions of present systems and phenomena, and the comprehension of the shared beliefs and practices of the Shona people and the Christians. The most common ethnographic technique is participant observation in field research. Ethnography is an anthropological discipline which is rooted in cultural anthropology. The significance of the notion cannot be overemphasized since both macro and micro-cultures of the Shona people will be explored. Ethnography branches into two: ethnology - the comparative study of cultural groups like the Shona who have come to Christian faith and those who have not; and ethno-history - which looks at the cultural past of the Shona people, to get the sense of the history of their culture (Germain C. P. 1993:237-268).

3.6.4   The phenomenological approach

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[24] Park, R. E. 1936. In *American Journal of Sociology 42(1)*, pp 1-49.

Creswell (1998:51) submits that phenomenology expresses meaning of lived experiences for more than a few persons, concerning a concept or a phenomenon. Eagleton (1983:55-56) asserts that phenomenology is a science of unadulterated phenomena whose purpose is to go back to the concrete, as shown by the motto: "Back to the things themselves". The main emphasis is to focus on people's personal experiences and the way they interpret their world. The phenomenological approach expresses phenomena as perceived and understood by the Shona people, the Church in Zimbabwe and observers. It will be employed to assist in knowing and exploring Shona reality. This research aims to comprehend social and psychological experiences, from the viewpoint of the Shona people involved (Welman and Kruger 1999:189). The way things appear and are lived, the meaning things adopt in the Shona experiences and the essence of the Shona experiences on death and afterlife, as individuals and societies, will be explored. The phenomena dictate the method of finding the research participants and identifying the category of participants. The phenomenological strategies are generally of value in bringing to the fore, lived experiences and individual perceptions from their own points of view. This helps to keep normative perceptions in check. Although there is close correlation between phenomenology and hermeneutics, as they both involve interpretation, Kakkori (2009:19) spells the difference thus:

> Phenomenology is usually described as studying the essence, and hermeneutics as studying the processes of interpretation. There is a link between hermeneutics and phenomenology, but it is very complicated and there are unsurpassable differences.

3.6.5 The theological approach

The theological method will be one of the primary methodologies to be employed in this study. The theological method is a scientific technique of studying religions, pioneered in the 13th century by Thomas Aquinas (c.1225-1275), who saw theology as a human science of the divine.[25] In the theological method, not only are Scriptures read, but they are also studied, while their insinuations and nuances are analyzed and, doctrines and hypotheses are questioned. This section will look at important theological approaches advocated by various scholars.

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[25] https://www.questia.com/library/religion/theology/theological-method accessed 15/04/20

Rudolf Bultmann focuses on the existential meaning of human existence. His theological approach emphasizes the need to discover the existential meaning pertaining to the existence of humanity and to our present lives. Passages which were produced during the pre-scientific age, with thought patterns differing from ours need to be 'demythologized'. He seeks to understand Christian faith existentially. He maintains that, to Jesus, the nature of humanity: "is not determined by his human quality or the character of his spiritual life, but simply by the decision the man makes in the here and now of his present life" (Bultmann 1934:36).

Lonergan (1904-1984) thinks his "transcendental method" of doing theology could provide the missing "anthropological component" to the natural and human sciences (Lonergan 2003:23-25). His work, *Method in Theology,* amalgamates theology with outcomes of historical research and hermeneutics (how to grasp the meaning that makes up human reality). In *Method in Theology* he does not do theology but he ponders on the method to be adopted in doing theology.

Lonergan's technique sees humanity as subject, who has the capability to make an enquiry, which permits one to ask questions and find out answers, and to ask more questions and to come up with further answers, resulting in growing and progressive results. These results show that humanity has the capacity of transcending self. Humanity was created to question, to wonder, to go beyond the limit of its horizon (Lonergan 1974:80).

Lonergan's transcendental method includes four simple precepts, which are foundational to human consciousness namely: "be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable and be responsible" (Lonergan 2003:53). These precepts are distinct but at the same time related. They are also correlated processes which develop a repeatable pattern, and which give growing and progressive results. The precepts are already operating in us. They are not forced on our being. All we need is to be aware of their action within us. Each of the precepts includes varying levels of conscious action and uniquely participates in reality in a distinctive way. In order to be attentive, the level of consciousness that is required is experience; intelligence requires understanding; reasonableness requires judgment; and responsibility requires decision making.

Twining (2007:19) furnishes us with reasons why Lonergan's method is important within a given community of believers:

- This Method is at the center of genuine living. People's inner freedom will result in integrated living. There will be faith accompanied with comprehension; religious phenomenon coupled to accountability.

- This Method deliberately connects with reality. The love of God is central to reality. Therefore the method helps us to be more open and receptive to love.

- This Method takes cognizance of the dynamic worth of enquiries made by the postmodern people, without dissuading them.

- It also takes cognizance of the mode of human awareness that has always been active within us and so it is at everyone's disposal. One starts by being "attentive, intelligent, reasonable and responsible", with his or her own religious or cultural lived-experience, that is, his or her own horizon. Again, nobody can be deprived of his or her faith or beliefs, as his or her horizon only accepts what he or she is prepared to receive. Everything else will be irrelevant and must be discarded.

- In the Western culture people live for the now and because of that they relegate themselves to becoming "history-less" and "memory-less." Yet history and memory both maintain identity. As a result, the Christian faith risks losing its identity when it loses its historical base.

- This Method gives an off the rack guidance to believers confronted with the present religious changes.

To round it off, a person is both transcended and transcending when this technique is applied. This means, that they live life with an inquiring and zealous inclination in spite of their age. Life is lived as an enjoyably renewed journey.

Another exponent of the transcendental method is Karl Rahner. Rahner and Lonergan both use transcendental method, but in different ways. Rahner thinks that when we do theology the method of talking about God is as vital as the content. His desire is to see theology dialogue with philosophy (Rahner 1978:10). For Rahner, theology entails a philosophical anthropology, and existence of humanity entails the encounter with God. He believed in "philosophizing… within theology itself" (Rahner 1978:10). By 'philosophy', he meant an anthropological philosophy

which pays attention to humanity as the "universal question". Rahner's approach is like Paul Tillich's (1950:60) technique of correlation that correlates "existential questions and theological answers in mutual interdependence". Rahner (1978:33) asserts that:

> Man is a transcendent being insofar as all of knowledge and all of his conscious activity is grounded in pre-apprehension…of being as such, in an unthematic but ever-present knowledge of the infinity of reality.

God has permitted us to know and relate to him. By self-bestowal and self-communication God has given himself to us. This makes God the origin and purpose for humanity and the world (Rahner 1993:84). That the self communication of God is grace, is seen as a mystery at the centre of Rahner's theological method.

Rahner's theological anthropology allowed him to see the detectable effect that grace has on human consciousness. Rahner feels encouraged to offer an elucidation of how Christ can be the universal saviour. For an entity to provide universal salvation to humanity people must be oriented to it and it must be able to affect the entire humanity (Marshall 1987:33). God fashioned humanity who are able to accept grace. According to McCool (1975:185), Rahner talks about the "supernatural existential", where he sees God's offer of grace producing a "supernatural existential" in the person's soul. This is an unending alteration of the person's soul, which changes its natural vitality into an ontological force to God. Rahner's theological anthropology conceives Christ's universal import for salvation, because grace places all people, not just believers, in fresh and better condition. Rahner's thinking on the "supernatural existential" and on revelation is foundational to his famous theory of "anonymous Christians". In this theory he contends that those who fail to candidly acknowledge Jesus Christ and thus do not belong to the Catholic Church "must have the possibility of a genuine saving relation with God" (Rahner 1993:54). He calls these "anonymous Christians". Because, in this transcendental experience, there is already an anonymous and a-thematic knowledge of God, therefore, "an anonymous, implicit Christianity does exist". Rahner (1968:49-50) says "transcendental experience" is one whereby humanity accepts grace and positively responds to it, but without consciously knowing that it is God's offer of salvific grace in Christ.

There is a given element in all humanity that enables them to extend their hand to God and to accept God's grace. This condition drives us both to experience God and experience ourselves as transcendental subjects. Rahner is therefore an advocate for this transcendental anthropology. Transcendental investigations are all about a *priori* (what is before the experience of God). So we need to ask what it is that humanity can know about a doctrine or an issue e.g. humanity has the capacity to know God because human nature is oriented towards God. Humanity encounters the transcendent (God) through its questions, what they know and through questions about self.

Marika[26] (2010) notes several reasons why Rahner thinks this transcendental theological anthropological approach is necessary.

- Because every form of knowledge unavoidably raises questions concerning the person who does the knowing.
- Why has the Church gone without it for many years if it is so important? Rahner argues that the transcendental anthropological theology has always been there as it has been practiced, without thinking, as far back as Thomas Aquina's time. Modern philosophy always demands a theological response, and if Christianity is to be influential to modern people we have to engage this approach.
- The approach makes Christianity plausible to modern people. Many Christian doctrines are incredible to people who have grown up as non-Christians.

3.6.6 The historical Approach

Historical research, according to Berg and Lune (2012:305), "attempts to systematically recapture the complex nuances, the people, meanings, events, and even ideas of the past that have influenced and shaped the present". In the historical approach, I look at events pertaining to the past and describe them in order to appreciate the present and to look forward to what will take place in the future. In other words, I am able to map out the historical progression of the Shona cultural beliefs on death and afterlife, and the Christian eschatological beliefs, through history. By recounting past historical situation, I am able to recreate the past through

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[26]Marika. 2010. *Karl Rahner on Theology and Anthropology*. From
http://marikablogs.blogspot.com/2010/03/karl-rahner-on-theology-and.html accessed 25/04/16

interpretation of the data and determination of how it influences current and future events. A study of, for example, the effects of early missionaries' approach to evangelization of the Shona will be carried out. The approach helps to discover the Shona traditional religion as it was practiced in yesteryear, as compared to the effects of the religion on today's Shona populace. It is in historical research that I am able to discover relationships that the past has with the present, and this helps us understand better, the Christian and Shona cultures in Zimbabwe. The past pattern of interaction between Christianity and the Shona religion shows us the progress in the interaction of the Gospel with the Shona religion, and the respective solutions applied. The historical critical approach and literature review on Christianity and Shona religious life will be conducted in the quest to integrate the Gospel with the Shona culture.

According to Berg and Lune (2012:311), historical research entails seven stages:

- Identifying a topic, proposal, or research question
- Performing an underlying literature appraisal
- Improving the original research proposal and inquiries
- Deciding to employ historical methods
- Identifying and establishing major and minor data sources
- Appraising the genuineness and precision of source materials
- Analyzing the data and producing a narrative elucidation of the results.

There are some drawbacks in using this approach. Emphasis on focusing on the past may result on the neglect of the present and the future. Hence there is need to ensure that the history read into the present and the future is not too much. For instance, if the missionaries corroborated with their colonial counterparts in their failure to understand and appreciate the Shona cultural values, what is the excuse for the failure of the indigenous church leaders of today? Another challenge with the historical approach is that there may be some areas of the Shona way of life which are not comprehensively covered. This is true of the Shona religious practices as most of them are not documented but are passed on orally. These unrecorded events in the history may result in some distortions, as they may be related and interpreted differently. Again, history on its own is not perfect since it is veiled by cultural, scholarly, individual and religious biases. For example one may find scholars who are inclined to supporting and white washing the Shona

religious traditions at the expense of the reality on the ground. This may result in the academia advocating a hypothetical Shona religious phenomenon or Christian tradition that runs parallel to what will be on the ground. Be that as it may, history is still foundational in the understanding of the Shona cultural phenomena and of the Christian faith in Zimbabwe.

3.6.7   Case study

Creswell *et al* (2007:33) define case study as:

> …a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports) and reports a case description and case-based themes.

While Zainal (2007:2) cites Yin's description of case study as an experiential enquiry which:

> … investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context; when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used.

Both definitions show that case study investigates one or more contemporary cases, using multiple sources of information, to come up with themes or descriptions. Case study is a comprehensive description and analysis of a particular situation with the aim of determining its characteristics. It is a method employed in learning and understanding complex phenomena, by exploring and investigating the current real life phenomenon, through comprehensive scrutiny of the context of a restricted number of people, proceedings or settings and their relations. People are studied for a given period, in their natural settings, employing multiple sources of data found in the setting, in order to establish probable responses to the research question(s) and to better understand the phenomena. Case study:

> … enables a researcher to closely examine the data within a specific context. In most cases, a case study method selects a small geographical area or a very limited number of individuals as the subjects of study. Case studies, in their true essence, explore and investigate contemporary real-life phenomenon through detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions, and their relationships. (Zainal 2007:1-2).

Case study is a full-fledged research method especially where we require a holistic in-depth examination of social or behavioural issues. The objective of case study may be to develop a theory, to assess a theory, to tell a story or to draw up a picture etc.

Gullotta *et al* (eds.) (2003:49), cite Merriam who identifies four essential characteristics of a case study. Firstly, a case study is particularistic in that it pays attention to one person, event, process, situation or phenomenon. Secondly, it is descriptive in-so-far as it gives broad detail concerning the phenomenon, that is, the result is a full account of the phenomenon being studied. Thirdly, case study is heuristic in that it enlightens and improves the reader's comprehension of the phenomenon being studied. Finally case study is inductive because it depends on inductive way of thinking that is used to establish concepts and produce hypotheses that come out of the data. From these features I can conclude that the case study approach gives us a superior and contextualized perception of human activity as it unfolds. These features are not mutually exclusive.

Stake (1994:237) identifies three kinds of case studies. Firstly, the intrinsic case study surveys a given case to understand it better. Secondly, the instrumental case study scrutinizes a given case in order to give information or insight on phenomena or to allow for a refinement of a theory. Finally, the collective case study jointly studies several cases to facilitate inquiry into the phenomena. This study will employ both intrinsic and instrumental approaches so that we have a complete understanding of the development of the Shona religious worldview, particularly concerning the afterlife.

In this project, case study is employed as a research method not a research type. Case study methodology will be helpful in recounting the comprehensive experiences and relationships of some Shona people. This will be achieved through direct observation, interviews and interaction with the Shona people, and is not limited to a given method of data collection (Merriam 1998:28). The method is apparently useful in studying witchcraft and activities of traditional healers. Case studies of the results or after-effects, of some traditional Shona rituals and ceremonies, will be performed. The features of case study justify it as a suitable tool for the better understanding of the Shona religious life and for drawing up realistic solutions to the

research problem. Case study will also be useful in studying the Shona traditional mediums and rituals.

There are several advantages of using case study. Case study is suitable for heuristic purposes, where extra variables and hypotheses are identified, complex events are scrutinized and several variables are looked at, because the study has a limited number of cases. Stufflebeam *et al* (2000:283) agree that the philosophy underlying a single case study is improvement, not proof of anything. The aim of a case study here is to define and improve relations between Christian faith and the Shona traditional religion. The case study method is very flexible as it employs several methods of collecting information - from observation, to interviews and testing. It facilitates for the identification and determination of social variables which can only be measured effectively upon consideration of contextual factors. Skills of the researcher are likely to improve through the concrete and contextual experience that the researcher acquires during case studies. Case studies normally produce comprehensive qualitative accounts useful in explaining complications of actual life circumstances which may not be achievable through survey or experimental research. We get a complete and clear portrayal of proceedings pertinent to the study and a blending of the description with analysis, in case studies. It gives a chance to focus on individual actors and to understand how they perceive events.

The problem of the case study is that it fails to focus on unearthing of generalized truths, but places its emphasis on exploration and description of particular cases which may not be generalized. Therefore, case study researches cannot claim to be fully representative, because of their emphasis on what can be learned in a particular case. Yin (1984:21) asks how a researcher can generalize from a single case. However there are some lessons that can be learned from each particular case studied and the results may give helpful clues to the whole range of cases under consideration. Case studies usually produce a substantial amount of paper work, which may be problematic if data are not handled and organized systematically. There are no systematic procedures to ensure methodological measures for case study enquiry (Yin 2009:14-15). Data collected in case studies may be open to conflicting hermeneutic and so they are prone to bias. Case study also tends to confirm researcher's preconceptions through biased verification. This may be overcome by having a disciplined subjectivity.

3.6.8   Grounded theory

The research will also employ the grounded theory. Grounded theory is a qualitative study technique employed to develop theory about a given phenomenon. The theory will be grounded in observation (Trochim 2006). It is therefore the unearthing of a hypothesis from information methodically acquired from social research (Glaser and Strauss 1967:2). In a grounded theory study, the story comes into view, from the way raw data is interpreted. The theory evolves in the course of the real study, and this happens through uninterrupted interaction involving data analysis and collection. The purpose of the study is to produce some broad themes. Such themes will be built up after raw data analysis, especially where participants talk about common issues. The goal will be to develop a theory in cases where it is necessary to discover; the character of problems the Church in Zimbabwe and Shona people are facing in a given social scenery, and how the Shona and the Church are handling the challenges.

Trochim (2006) identifies several key analytic strategies employed in the grounded theory technique: '*coding*' is a procedure which categorizes qualitative data and describes the repercussions and the details of the categories; '*memoing*' is where memos are produced when recording ideas of the investigator as they develop in the course of the research. Then there is need to develop '*integrative diagrams and sessions*' which are employed to put all of the aspects together, so that one can make sense of the data regarding the emerging theory. "Grounded theory doesn't have a clearly demarcated point for ending a study. Essentially, the project ends when the researcher decides to quit" (Trochim 2006)[27].

3.7 Axiology

Kivunja *et al* (2017:28) maintain that:

> Axiology refers to the ethical issues that need to be considered when planning a research proposal. It considers the philosophical approach to making decisions of value or the right decisions... It involves defining, evaluating and understanding concepts of right and wrong behaviour relating to the research. It considers what

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[27] Trochim, William, M.K. 2006. *Qualitative Approaches*. From
http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/qualapp.php accessed 03/09/18.

value we shall attribute to the different aspects of our research, the participants,
the data and the audience to which we shall report the results of our research.

In axiology I need to consider the manner of my ethical behaviour as a researcher. Value systems of all participants should be seriously taken into account. Such values should be explicitly stipulated and they must then direct the way I carry out the research. This entails looking at moral matters relevant to participants and coming up with ways they are going to be dealt with. I will need to establish ways of securing good rapport with participants and how damage or danger can be reduced or evaded. The way I perform the research is determined by the following criteria of moral behaviour: "teleology" (as a researcher I am morally obliged to do what is right. So the conclusions I come up with must be satisfactory to, and representative of, the participants' views); deontology ("… the understanding that every action that will be undertaken during the research will have its own consequence, intended to benefit participants, the researcher, the scholastic community or the public at large"); "morality" (the inherent ethical principles maintained in the course of the study); and "fairness" (being "fair to all research participants and ensure that their rights are upheld") (Kivunja 2017:28).

3.8 Sampling

In qualitative research, no procedures are set in order to establish the size of a sample. It may not be possible to have a foreknowledge of the number of participants in the study. Sample sizes and types may alter in the course of the research. Therefore it is prudent to keep sampling to the point of saturation (Holloway 1997:142). Saturation is when additional sampling produces very little new information. Non-probability and purposive sampling will be used. In non-probability sampling, I will use my own judgment in choosing people who take part in the research. I will base my decision on the knowledge I would have acquired about the phenomena and also on expert advice. Purposive sampling allows me to have a choice of who I may include in the study. This enables me to choose those participants with the potential to supply information that is pertinent to the enquiry.

Sampling allows me to take a small portion of the Shona people and the indigenous church leadership who are representative of the whole population. This helps to cut the cost and time

needed to conduct the research, and also allows for more rigorous data collection. The net effect is to improve the value of information collected. Representative sub-groups of the population, that are of a given interest to the research, will be selected based on their potential to supply valuable and quality data. Participants in the interviews include traditional leaders such as chiefs and headmen, traditional healers and diviners, spirit mediums, lay Shona Christians and the indigenous Church leadership. The pertinent question is whether learning and understanding can be enhanced by including particular participants in the sample (Merriam 1988:48).

The sampling will be random, where participants are selected in proportion to characteristics that are shown by the Shona people or the Church leadership. There will be need to avoid biases in the choosing of the samples. However there is also need to choose participants who are eager to assist in giving information pertinent to the study. I concede that assessing the satisfactoriness of sampling in qualitative research is not easy.

3.9 Methods

Research methods are "the techniques or procedures used to gather and collect data related to some research question or hypothesis" (Crotty 2003: 3), in order to come up with solutions to problems. Research methods are therefore research tools used in qualitative research studies to discover solutions to problems. Methods are part of methodology. Methodology looks at how research is conducted, how we find out things and how we acquire knowledge. These are principles that steer research practices and give an explanation why certain methods are employed. The aim is to employ proper procedures in order to come up with solutions to the research problems.

> Research methods can be traced back, through methodology and epistemology, to an ontological position. It is impossible to engage in any form of research without committing (often implicitly) to ontological and epistemological positions. Researchers' differing ontological and epistemological positions often lead to different research approaches towards the same phenomenon. (Scotland 2012:10).

3.9.1   Procedures to ensure rigor and trustworthiness in data collection

Any research study should incorporate measures that give assurance, of the value of the study, the research processes and its results. Krefting (1991:214-219) argues that research findings are trustworthy when they mirror the reality and ideas of participants. First and foremost, every researcher should set aside any probable prejudices. In data analysis, it is imperative to make use of reflexivity, bracketing and intuiting, in order to set aside individual preconceptions concerning the phenomena under investigation.

Parahoo (1997:263) defines reflexivity as an uninterrupted process in which researchers reflect on their presumptions and those of the participants. The way the participants view the researcher affects the data gathered. This is very hard for any researcher to keep in check. However, every effort should be applied to depict the right image to participants. There is also need to take cognizance of personal feelings and conflicts experienced during the study. It is also difficult to keep one's own prejudices in check. So it is essential to validate the data using member checks. Polit *et al.* (2001:314) say that member checks involves the provision of feedback concerning groundwork findings and interpretation, to participants and getting their feedback; checking whether the initial interpretation does not misrepresent their perspectives. Member checks ensure that the results are credible and that the findings precisely mirror the phenomena at hand. Member checks also require the researcher to go back to the participants to show them how he or she understood and interpreted the data and the findings he or she would have come up with, in order to discuss them with the people concerned. It is wise for participants to confirm the suitability of the researcher's interpretation. This provides a chance for additional explanation of data, and for elimination of prejudices and judgments.

Bracketing is helpful in improving rigor and elimination of biases. Parahoo (1997:45) asserts that in bracketing, the researcher suspends his or her presumptions, narrow-mindedness and viewpoints to avoid obstructing the experiences of the participants. Maximum effort will therefore need to be made in order to stay open minded. Because the researcher will be conscious of own preconceptions and judgments, epoche will be carefully exercised. This will help the researcher to be a neutral observer, who can manage to preserve individual presuppositions. Lincoln and Guba (1985:300) argue for a position of neutrality by researchers, to make sure research data is dependable, truthful and verifiable.

In intuiting, the researcher stays open to the meaning assigned to reality by the participants. Both the Shona religion and the Christian faith assign meaning to certain symbols and rituals, which may have different meanings to the researcher. So there is need for the constant modification of the data until a common understanding is reached. This can only be achieved if participants are not condemned and evaluated.

Various strategies are employed in data collection and analysis to ensure excellence and dependability of the study. Guba (1981:79-80) identifies four strategies namely: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

Credibility: Findings are credible when they mirror the perceptions of the participants being studied. So there is need to check how the research findings are in agreement with the reality. The problem here may be on the relativity of reality and in cases where there may be a number of realities. This means there may not be a standard reality which may be taken as a measuring rod. For reality to be credible, the theoretical notions the researcher comes up with should be capable of being applied to other circumstances of a similar nature. Participants' feedback is essential in instituting credibility (Lincoln and Guba 1985:314). As a participant observer, extended association with participants enhances credibility. This involves taking a long time to study the phenomena under consideration, so that there is a chance to check for any half-truths and to earn the trust of the participants.

Transferability: The findings of the research should be capable of being used elsewhere in similar situations or to similar participants (Holloway 2002:255). Because the researcher is the main tool in the study, the possibilities of biases are very high. Furnishing particulars of the research methods, contexts and the fundamental philosophical assumptions will enhance transferability of the data and the conclusions. The research findings on the Shona religious views on death and afterlife, and the Church's integration of the views into the Christian Gospel should be useful to other spheres of the Shona life and the Church. As a researcher I should be able to explain all processes and procedures I undertake. Methods must be documented well and the motives for employing the methods should be given.

Dependability: Polit *et al* (2001:315) submit that dependability implies to constancy of data in any time and any circumstances. To be dependable, data should be precise and reliable. The methods and the methodological choices need to be documented well so that other people are able to examine them. The underlying assumptions of the study, the multiple techniques of data collection and analysis, and the changing situations that are fundamental to the constancy of the research findings, must be fully described. There is need for an audit trail in the data collection and analysis. This will facilitate for an enquiry audit; where data and appropriate supporting papers are inspected by an external examiner. The data collection and analysis will be documented in order to facilitate for an audit trail to be used by external examiners when they scrutinize the processes employed. This is done by showing the data source, data collection method, management and preparation of the data, and data analysis. 'Stepwise replication'; where other researchers conduct parallel enquiries, which they will use to compare with the data and the conclusions of the researcher, can be a useful method. A reliable research should be precise and consistent (Lincoln and Guba 1985:161). Human phenomena remain subjective and tentative even after putting all these efforts. This is true given that human behaviour, as a function of a variety of influences, is subject to changes and that there are several interpretations of reality.

Confirmability: The collected data must be objective (Polit *et al* 2001:315). This calls for impartiality of the researcher, so that the findings are established from the participants and from the circumstances of the enquiry, not personal drives, interests and viewpoints. The data should not mirror the researcher's suppositions, but the resultant conclusions should be capable of being traced back to source. Seale (1999:45) submits that auditing can also be necessary to ascertain confirmability. This calls for the provision of a self-critical account of how the study was carried out and all the data collected should be archived so that it is available for inspection on demand.

Triangulation is another strategy that may be added to Guba's four strategies above. Brannen (2004:314) defines triangulation as the employing of outcomes from a given set of data to confirm those from a different set of data. Use of several sources helps to find corroborating proof from the dissimilar types of data. For example, Church official documents, direct

experience and personal interpretation, and several techniques of data collection will be employed to get a full perspective on the Shona Christian phenomena and to overcome subjectivity. Subjectivity is reduced as the use of several sources aids data authentication. Triangulation will be applied to appraise this study. Focus group and individual interviews, observation and participant observation, peer reviews and clarification of biases will all be employed.

3.9.2 Data Collection

The ontological and epistemological positions adopted have some bearing on the methods that may be employed for a study. The primary sources of data include Church leadership, Church documents, the Shona, the Shona traditional practitioners, the Shona lay Christians and study of literature. The research will employ a variety of research methods in data collection. These include of interviews (individual, focus groups), non-participant observation (where an individual, group, and location is observed from a distance), participant observation, data analysis, document analysis and literature review. The aim of data collection is to look for meaning by interpreting the collected data.

The following challenges can be encountered during data collection. Situational factors have the potential of adversely or positively influencing participation and reaction of the participants. For example, because an interviewer is present, this can change the atmosphere of the interview. Participants' response can also be influenced negatively by nervousness and exhaustion. I will try to overcome these by putting participants at ease. I will ensure there is a warm, non-threatening environment and relaxed sitting arrangement especially in the case of group activities. I will schedule meetings for data collection in the mornings. Participants' personal traits may also influence the way they respond. Encouragement and ensuring there are strict guidelines during group discussions will be helpful in this instance. This will involve introducing ground rules such as mutual respect of ideas and people, and that only one participant is allowed to talk at any given time. Hurtful comments will require me to rephrase statements in non-offensive and polite way. Audio and video recorded data gathered can be corrupted and

disappear, or can be lost due to loss of power. Back up facilities will need to be made readily available.

3.9.2.1 Interviews

An interview is an essential qualitative research method. Interviews may focus on individuals or 'focus groups'. "Individual interviews allow participants to tell their stories, uninterrupted, in a detailed and coherent manner, without worrying about what their peers may think (as in a focus group)" (Goldman *et al* 2013:2). They are oral quizzes which use a set of pre-planned core questions. One-on-one and group interviews will be helpful to determine the effect of the stand-off between Christianity and the Shona traditional religion on the Shona spiritual beliefs on death and afterlife. Lincoln and Guba (1985:268) identify purposes served by interviews. They say interviews aim to achieve building of a phenomenon. Interviews are also useful in the reconstruction of events that took place in an earlier period, and in the projections of the future. Through interviews, data from other sources can be confirmed and corroborated (triangulation).

A decision needs to be made whether data is going to be collected using interviews. Taking notes during the interview is important although it can be distracting and disturbing to participants (Holloway and Wheeler 2002:237). Audio or video recording is time consuming but is very effective. Some researchers prefer to rely on their memory but memory is not always unfailing. In this research both recording and taking of notes will be employed and the circumstances will dictate most appropriate method to be used.

I drew up an interview schedule of questions. Interviews may be structured, unstructured or semi-structured. In a structured interview, all participants are required to answer identical questions or to react to a set of motivations which are nearly as identical as is achievable (Bernard 1988:205). Structured interviews normally entail quite a thorough interview programme. Therefore, structured interviews, and using a questionnaire are similar. They allow the researcher to ask pre-planned short and clearly worded, closed questions which call for exact answers where alternatives are presented. They also are easily standardized since same questions are asked to all interviewees.

This method is more suitable when the objectives of the research are understood well before hand, so that specific questions are asked.

To Lofland (1971:76), the unstructured interview seeks:

> … to elicit rich, detailed materials that can be used in qualitative analysis. Its objective is to find out what kind of things are happening rather than to determine the frequency of predetermined kinds of things that the researcher already believes can happen.

An unstructured interview frequently features a small number of questions raised by the interviewer. Because of this, it is at times also referred to as the open-ended interview. Unstructured interviews provide the researcher an opportunity to ask open ended questions. "In-depth interviews using open-ended questions aim to capture the mental and experiential world of the informant" (Goldman *et al* 2013:2). Spradley (1979:87-88) asserts that, an appropriate unstructured interview usually begins with a "grand tour" question and no additional question will be required until the respondent says all that has to be said concerning the subject. A "grand tour" question seeks to extract a comprehensive image of the respondent's world (Fetterman, 1989:51). The "grand tour" questions will enable me to appreciate the broad framework in which the Shona people think, the terms they use and the circumstances in which they are applied etc. (Werner and Schoepfle, 1987:318). The "grand tour" question will also give me a foundation to structure additional questions. Usually some probing is done in order to carry on the conversation. Such probing calls for skill so that it broadens rather than choke the scope of the conversation (Bernard, 1988:211-17). The interviewee is able to express himself/herself without restraint as the interview progresses into the form of discussions or brainstorming on an issue. Both the interviewer and interviewee can decide on the direction the interview takes since the interview is not standardized. Questions to be asked will be altered to suit the context, and the interviewer is able to cross-examine the interviewee more deeply on pertinent issues of interest in order to produce rich data.

Semi-structured interviews make use of an interview guide (Bernard 1988:205). They follow all the philosophies of unstructured interviewing, save that the respondents must be kept within boundaries so that they do not drift way past the range prescribed by the interview guide. Goldman *et al* (2013:2-3) echo the same sentiments:

A semi-structured interview uses an interview guide with a core list of open-ended questions and anticipated follow up questions to ensure that researchers ask all participants a minimum set of identical questions, in order to collect reliable, comparable qualitative data. In addition, this interview technique allows researchers to ask spontaneously generated questions to probe for clarification of participants' responses and to follow new, relevant topics that participants raise.

Pre-planned core questions will be asked although the interviewee has the freedom to furnish more pertinent information if he or she pleases. There will be chances for the interviewer to ask more questions, where there will be need to get elaborations. Open ended questions allow participants to put across their views in their own words. They can elicit endless responses, ideas and feelings. Closed questions call for fixed facts (e.g. name) and for short non-speculative answers, and can give pre-defined options, like choosing between A. B. C. and D. These, however, limit response and they fail to extract real feelings and values from respondents.

How the interviews are run will be tailor made to suit participants. The interviews may start as general conversations, in form of unstructured interviews, and then, slowly slot in the issues that are raised in the questionnaire used during an interview. Questions will be raised inductively, progressing from broad to precise, employing semi-structured questions. I will also make use of telephone interviews. This will be necessary for convenience and in cases where geographical distance of interviewees and lack of internet connections in their areas demands use of telephones. Telephone interviews may also be a useful tool in follow up interviews with respondents who will be prepared to provide more insights.

Facebook pages may be opened for the Shona lay Christian and the Church leadership, where constant interaction will be encouraged on issues concerning faith, death and the afterlife. This will provide a forum for e-interviews. Such interviews will both be semi-structured and unstructured, depending on how the conversation progresses. Open-ended questions permit interviewees to reflect and openly divulge, on their encounters and perceptions on the effect of Christianity on their spiritual lives in-so-far as these elements are influenced by their traditional beliefs on death and afterlife.

Silverman (2000:201) asserts that researchers should be cognizant of the fact that in the process of doing their research, they are invading confidential areas of their respondents. It is important then, to consider:

> …conditions and safeguards under which data will be gathered and analysed. What things, for example, can participants keep to themselves, and not be forced to reveal to you or any other people? (Kivunja 2017:28).

There are therefore, some ethical issues which will need to be considered. The researcher will introduce self to interviewees, in order to institute relationship, and will give details on the objectives of the study. Participants will be put in a relaxed atmosphere and the subject matter will be introduced and explained. Permission should be sought to record either on audio or video. Effort will be made to avoid any possible form of damage to participants. This includes humiliation of participants by the researcher or other participants, or uneasiness caused by the questions. Sensitive questions with the potential to cause embarrassment or discomfort should be avoided at all costs. There should be proper management of the interviews so that participants are given an environment to interact effectively. Respondents should be free to talk, in their natural setting, without duress or any undue influence or manipulation. In some occasions further interviews may be necessary until saturation point is reached - when further interviews will yield little new knowledge (Kvale 1996:102). Further interviews may also be helpful in confirming data. Saturation will be reached when several sources repeat the same data.

There are several advantages of using interviews. Specific helpful ideas are a result of the direct interaction with participants. The method is proficient in acquiring comprehensive information. Adequate and comprehensive information can be collected from few respondents.

3.9.2.2 The verbatim tool

The researcher will employ the use of verbatim in this study. Verbatim transcription is writing every word and sound as it is on a recording. It seeks to keep track of the interviews done so that information from such interviews can be used in future, in different ways. The use of verbatim quotations from respondents is an efficient standard in research. This is important as participants in the research are allowed to speak for themselves. According to IndianScribes website, two

types of verbatim transcription can be identified. There is true verbatim which captures words, sounds and non-verbal communications like laughter or pauses and frowns. The second type is the intelligent verbatim where transcription experiences some minor editing of fillers such as um's, er's, ah's, ambient sounds and non-verbal communication which are not significant.[28] Lofland and Lofland (1995:88) submit that:

> … it is generally not necessary for you to transcribe every word, exclamation, or pause that occurs in an interview.... You do not need a verbatim transcription of everything the interviewee said...

However, too much editing may weaken the interviewee's own voice and emotional inclination of the message. Yet editing may be essential to improve readability. Also, it may be undignified to replicate hesitancies and false starts in normal speech. These false starts may not provide any relevant information at all, besides showing that the interviewee was taking time to think. Editing may also be needed to uphold confidentiality. There is therefore need to write out and/or sum up the areas of the interview that are appropriate to the study. Care needs to be taken in attributing the interviewee by gender, job title, financial status etc. If such attributions are joined with speech patterns or expressions of opinion, the result may be that the respondent is identified and confidentiality is threatened. Although more general attributions may be needed, they have a problem of bringing up more general conclusions resulting in loss of meaning.

3.9.2.3 Focus group discussions

Stordy (2012:104) cites Williams and Katz who define focus groups as:

> … small gathering of individuals who have a common interest or characteristic, assembled by a moderator, who uses the group and its interactions as a way to gain information about a particular issue.

According to Morgan (1998:9), focus group discussion is a method of hearing and learning from what participants say and it entails: "a focus on specific issues, with a predetermined group of people, participating in an interactive discussion" (Hennik 2014:1). They enhance the value of the study by facilitating for 'inter subjective experience' of those participating in the study. They seek to extract:

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[28] *The 3 Types of Verbatim Transcription*. From https://www.indianscribes.com/the-3-types-of-verbatim-transcription/ accessed 23/10/2018

… information on relatively unstudied topics for which the full range of relevant domains is not known and the dynamic interaction among participants is of interest. Researchers choose focus groups over individual in-depth interviews when data acquisition will benefit from the dynamic that is created through group discussion. (Goldman *et al* 2013:3).

In focus group discussions, people from comparable experiences are brought together to talk about a given topic, or to discuss particular questions, arranged for the research purposes. Focus group interviews usually bring together a group of six to eight people who are from comparable communal and cultural settings, or who have related encounters or needs. The aim of the group is to talk about a specific subject matter, assisted by a mediator, in a given milieu in which members are made to feel sufficiently at ease to hold a lively conversation. Focus groups may not come to an agreement on the discussions, but they "encourage a range of responses which provide a greater understanding of the attitudes, behaviour, opinions or perceptions of participants on the research issues" (Hennink 2007: 6).

Data are gathered through semi-structured group discussion forums. The goal is to produce information on shared viewpoints, and the shared imports which underlie the viewpoints. It is a focused and interactive gathering with a group, used to discover an area that is hard to observe, or a delicate topic, such as attitudes towards the Shona traditional rituals or Church leadership's decision-making. The group is focused because "it involves some kind of collective activity" (Kitzinger 2005: 56), like the relationship between the living and the dead, or whether the Shona traditional healers' services may be allowable in the Christian faith. And focus group discussions have the potential to "accelerate the natural social processes by which individuals compare opinions with each other" (Stordy 2012:104 citing Doyle, 2004a). The main goal of a focus group is to express and appreciate senses and construal of a given community to be able to appreciate a given matter from the participants' vintage point. A proper focus group conversation is highly dependent on "the development of a permissive, non-threatening environment within the group" (Hennink 2007: 6), where members are made to feel at ease to talk about their views and encounters without fear of any prejudice or mockery by the researcher or other group members. Goldman *et al* (2013:3) identify features which are crucial for focus groups to succeed. There is need to develop a well thought out list of open-ended questions intended to cause participants to discuss targeted subjects. There is also need to carefully recruit participants with

appropriate qualities and experience, who will not react to non-hierarchical group discussions. The researcher moderating the discussion will need to be facilitating the group skilfully.

There are several advantages for using focus group discussions as a device in data collection. Kitzinger (2005: 57) asserts that focus group discussion is a perfect approach for looking at the stories, encounters, viewpoints, beliefs, requirements and concerns of individuals. The method permits the participants to make their own enquiries and outlines, and also to cater for their own interests and worries, using own vocabulary and own conditions. Researchers are able to access diverse communication methods utilized in people's daily dealings; including teasing, jokes, arguments and recapturing historical incidents. Accessing various modes of communicating is helpful because it may not be possible or may not be easy to acquire the perceptions and feelings of persons through requesting them to answer questions that are more straightforward, like what happens in questionnaires. Concerning what they have known and experienced in life, people's daily forms of communication "may tell us as much, if not more" (Kitzinger 2005: 58). Through focus group discussions, researchers can experience the world of the participants, which may not be the case when other research methods are used. Stordy (2012:104) claims that: "focus groups can be more than the sum of individual interviews because participants feel the need to explain themselves and query each other…" Focus groups are likely to reveal varied understandings which may not be possible to be accessed using more orthodox techniques of information gathering. The method is employed to collect data faster and cheaper. It may be more enlightening to put forward personal views in the company of other contemporaries, than individually. Participants can reflect and respond to points of views posed by their colleagues in the event that they do not agree or that it is new information. Participants' interaction stirs new ideas. Group discussions give participants an opportunity to ask questions. This assists the researcher to elicit more pertinent information than can be achieved in personal interviews and also additional information can be made available. Although participants are expected to have related experiences, it is possible to have contradictory views. In focus group discussions, these can be reconciled promptly.

However, group discussions may be more difficult to administer and direct, especially in cases where there are colleagues without discipline who may want to talk while others are talking, or

who do not respect other participants. This will be overcome by coming up with ground rules for participation, to which they are consistently reminded of the rules, time and again. Monitoring might be needed where a few participants want to dominate the discussions. Janet Smithson (2008: 361) argues that, there are some study areas that are not suitable for focus group settings because they involve sensitive issues. For example, areas which are too delicate may call for employment of other techniques like personal interviews. In institutional circumstances, like the Church or the Shona ritual ceremonies, participants may not be comfortable to give their views or talk about their past encounters in the presence of other people.

3.9.2.4 The observation method

Participant observation is employed in cultural anthropology. Here a researcher personally experiences life in a given culture for a lengthy period of time, to observe or be a partaker in the fabric of its daily life, in order to have know-how of the culture from within. I will, as a researcher, learn about meanings that participants assign to their knowledge, conduct and actions. This is called fieldwork; where I will have express and individual contact with the Shona people and the Church leadership to understand them in their natural setting.

In the observation method, the researcher usually "acts" to discover actions of people (Russell H. Bernard, 1988:62). It varies from other techniques in that data does not essentially come about as a reaction to the researcher's stimulus, in this method. The observation method is an organized data compilation method, where I will employ my entire mind to examine the Shona in their natural settings. "Participant observation allows the researcher to assess actual behavior in real time; information gathered in this way can strengthen interpretation of information collected through interviews" (Goldman *et al* 2013:2). The researcher, as a Shona Christian and as an insider, will observe fellow Shona people as they interact with their dead.

Scholars such as David Fetterman (1998:34-35), differentiate between observation from participant observation, the latter of which, he submits: "… combines participation in the lives of the people being studied with maintenance of a professional distance that allows adequate observation and recording of data". There are different definitions of participant observation by

various writers. Fetterman's description of participant observation is perhaps the most acceptable to many research students. To him:

> Participant observation is immersion in a culture. Ideally, the ethnographer lives and works in the community for six months to a year or more, learning the language and seeing patterns of behaviour over time. Long-term residence helps the researcher internalize the basic beliefs, fears, hopes and expectations of the people under study. (Fetterman 1989:45)

For Schensul, Schensul and LeCompte (1999:91), participant observation is: "… the process of learning through exposure to or involvement in the day to day or routine activities of participants in the research setting". As a participant observer, I will collect data through observational methods, where the Shona will be observed as chief actants of their religious life. The aim will be to study how the Shona Christians are participating in the processes, and how the Church is helping the Shona Christians to cope with the demands of their cultural setting. Goldman *et al* (2013:2) advise that it "… is important to ensure that observations of any location take place at different times of the day and week to identify patterns and differences". A lot can be learnt by just observing how they perceive and interpret reality. There will be a challenge with participant observation if it causes a behavior change, especially when people realize that they are being observed. This will be overcome by prolonged engagement as an observer, so that I become familiar and more sensitive with participants. Repeated interactions with participants are necessary until they start feeling at ease.

Guba and Lincoln (1981:193) give us several advantages in favour of participant observation. Participant observation improves the inquirer's aptitude to appreciate intentions, beliefs, worries, interests, unconscious behaviours, traditions and the like. The researcher and his or her subjects will have the same view of the world, so that researchers are able to live in the subjects' time frames, and to capture the incident on its own terms. It also helps to take hold of the culture in its normal setting. This enables the inquirer capture the expressive responses of participants, which can easily be taken hold of, introspectively. The participant observer will be able to build on his or her unspoken knowledge and that of the participants. Goldman *et al* 2013:2) contend that:

> Participant observation is useful at multiple stages of an evaluation: (1) initially, to identify issues that need to be explored with other data collection methods; (2) ongoing, as process evaluation; and (3) following other types of data collection, to

triangulate earlier findings and directly observe the specific phenomena that participants have spoken about.

In non-participant observation, there is restricted interface with the people being observed. Using recording devices such as hidden cameras may be a good option and would capture what even a good observer would not be able to do. Non-participant observation is likely to offer limited insight to enable appreciation of the Shona phenomena being studied. The two methods are therefore used together to complement each other.

3.9.2.5 Study of documents

The claim that second hand data is not required in qualitative research may be a misconception. The reading of documents and other archival data is an imperative data collection method. Study of documents is a vital component of qualitative study. Russell Bernard (1988:294) argues that: "I see no reason to collect new data in the field if there are documentary resources already available that address some of your research questions". 'Documents' refer to all types of written records, like previous literature, minutes of the Church, Church circulars, government policies, statistics, demographic trends, and so on. The full list depends on actual needs, which are only discovered when the researcher is in the field.

3.9.3   Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis is the stage where I elucidate, appreciate and interpret the phenomena being investigated in order to elicit meaning.

> Data for qualitative analysis most often consist of interview and focus group recordings and transcripts, field notes written during participant observation sessions, textual documents, and notes written about the data collection process itself. (Goldman *et al* 2013:4).

Polit *et al*. (2001:383) submit that data analysis is a lively and interactive process that aims to manage, provide structure and draw out meaning from data.

> As the researchers listen to the recordings and read the texts, they commonly take notes on the content and on their developing analytic thoughts. Analysis is an ongoing process that begins as the first data become available and continues to the end of data collection. (Goldman *et al* 2013:4).

An inductive approach to data analysis will be adopted, since this is a qualitative research, where emergent framework will be employed to group the data, and then identification of relationships follows. The aim of data analysis is: to develop the content of the message, to assess attitudes of the speaker towards the message, to determine whether the message contains an opinion of an individual or group, and to make sure whether it is a real or theoretical experience. As a researcher, I take cognizance of the fact that: people differ in the way they appreciate and experience reality. Social phenomena should be put into context for accurate understanding, and outstanding cases may yield insights into a problem or new ideas for further enquiry.

Data analysis aims to identify categories and patterns which may assist in elucidating causal relations in the data base, themes and their relationships. Ideas and meanings that come out from the data are also revealed. It is a process that involves three stages according to Morse and Field (1996:82). *Comprehension* is where I will seek to learn about the activities in order to fully express the Christian and Shona beliefs on death and afterlife, and their philosophy of life. *Synthesis*, involves filtering through data, putting pieces together to make sense of the phenomena. While in *theorizing*, preliminary theories are then developed. Holloway (2002:235) submits that, data analysis takes place concurrently with data collection. There is need for me as a researcher to exhibit healthy uncertainty, which may arise from several tests done on earlier findings in comparison with subsequent facts. Data are coded to make the hunt for the patterns and themes in the data easy (Patton 1990:384). Coding is one way I will use to manage data and store knowledge gained from the interpretations made.

Parahoo (1997:355) proposes some processes that must be followed in order to make sense of the data. Participant answers from the focus group interviews should be written down word for word and understood, for the researcher to be acquainted with the data. There will be need to pull out vital speeches that are appropriate to the phenomenon being investigated. The statements are used to devise meanings, and they are subsequently pre-arranged into clusters. Statements will then be arranged into clusters of themes. The themes will be useful in providing full description of the experiences. Finally, it will be necessary to take the description back to the original

source, to confirm validity. Only then, will I as a researcher be able to determine the Shona experiences.

Interpretation of results then follows. Vikalisa and Samoff (1995:146) submit that in interpretation, the researcher goes beyond the usual level of factual data, and looks into issues further than the obvious, and what can be garnered from the facts. After interpretation, the development of the hypothesis or the theoretical framework can safely be done.

3.10   **Conclusion**

A discussion of the research paradigm set the stage, followed by the underlying assumption that will govern this research. The theoretical perspective, which looks at the approach adopted to acquire knowledge, will help to inform the methodology and methods. Of interest here are theories, such as symbolic interactionism and hermeneutics, which are insightful in the development of meaning of phenomena. A discussion of how the research is conducted, how things are discovered and how knowledge is gained was also made. The following approaches have been identified as useful to the research: - the case study, the anthropological, the ethnography, the phenomenological, the grounded theory and the historical approaches. The theological approach to research has been identified as a major method in this study.

Various data gathering techniques have been identified. These entail such methods as; the interviews (including the verbatim tool), focus group discussions and participant observation. The collation, analysis and synthesis of data together with the strategies to ensure data quality and trustworthiness have been put in perspective. It has been seen that the qualitative research's use of multiple methods will be a handy tool to the study of the Shona and Christian phenomena in question.

The discussion on research paradigm and methodology has now prepared the ground for two primary investigations. The next two chapters centre on thorough investigations of the Shona religious beliefs on death and after life, and the Christian eschatological views. Literature review will play a major part in the investigations, although there will be chunks of information from

fieldwork. This is followed by the exposition of the theories surrounding the two terms pertinent to the study. These are dialogue and inculturation. That section will look at the meaning of the terms, and how the Church in Zimbabwe has handled the issue of dialogue and inculturation of the Shona views on death and afterlife, and the way forward.

Chapter 4

The Shona views on death and afterlife

4.1 Introduction

The aim of this study is to investigate how far the Church in Zimbabwe has adapted the Shona views on death and afterlife into the Christian Gospel, and what challenges they are facing. To achieve this, there is need to determine that which must be adapted. Inculturation involves the authentic dialogue between the Shona beliefs and the Christian faith. This chapter seeks to establish the Shona beliefs on death and afterlife which must 'dialogue' with the Christian Gospel. This investigation is going to mainly rely on literature review and phenomenology. Knowledge gained through story-telling will be utilised. Story-telling produces, conserves and passes on knowledge from one generation to another. Story telling is going to be helpful in investigating knowledge in communities. To J.B. Lee (2009:2), "Reclaiming, story-telling and retelling our traditional stories is to engage in one form of decolonization"

4.2 Death

> Death is the most common reality; the most profound being of all beings…which confronts every person, group or nation …In Africa, there is no rite or event that demands so much ceremony, numinosity and dread as does death. (Berry Muchemwa as cited in Mwandayi 2011:56).

Death is equally feared among the Shona people as it is among the Christians. Paul gives the impression that death is humanity's number one enemy (1 Corinthians 15:26), whose power is going to be eventually usurped by resurrection at eschaton (1 Corinthians 15:55-56). In the Shona thinking, no person should die; human life should go on and on, making death something unnatural (Gelfand 1973:144). In Mbiti's (1971:131) thinking: "Death transposes the music of life from one key to another, from the rhythm of the physical to the spiritual world." It is a move from the perceptible to the spiritual ontology. Here the spirit, which is thought to be the real essence of a person, is not destroyed but moves to live into the sphere of ancestors (King 2013).

According to the Shona, life is not destroyed by death since it is only the condition of life that changes. Baloyi L. (2014:264) attests to this phenomenon:

> … an African worldview understands death as an integrated and continuous developmental life process which is inseparable from the interwoven connections between the visible and invisible ontologies. People do not cease to exist once they are physically dead, instead, they transcend to the spiritual world to live in the community of the living dead.

The use of such words as, *waenda* – (he or she has gone), *wapfuura* – (he or she has passed on to the next destination), *washaika* – (he or she has disappeared), *wazorora* – (he or she has rested), or *watisiya* – (he or she has left us) (Kaguda 2012:62), all point to the fact that death is understood by the Shona as a translocation from one form of existence to another. This translocation does not destroy the relationship between the living and the "living dead" (Mbiti 1969:25). On the other hand, death is dreaded because it detaches a person from his or her own people, and from ancestral spirits. This takes place when the spirit of the dead is thought, by the Shona people, to be wandering around until the bringing home (*kurova guva)* ceremony. Before this 'homing of the spirit', the Shona say "*musha mutema*" (the deceased's home is overshadowed by darkness). However, Aschwanden (1987:212) contends that some Shona people are not afraid of death because it is thought to be something natural. It can even be taught to children at an early age. He further argues that many do not fear death since it gives them access into the ancestral domain, where they can significantly work together with the living to help them in their life endeavours. Mwandayi (2011:222) submits that:

> The ancestors, as Laurent Magesa would note, are not separate from the family lineage or clan from which they come but are rather part and parcel of it and in the same relationship, the father will always be the father, mother as mother and so on. The expectations from them will also not change but remain similar to those that govern the social order among the living.

However, to those that dread death, it is a sorrowful experience which separates a person from self and from the divine. These polarised views may be hard to reconcile, but it is generally accepted that the Shona are afraid of death because it ushers humanity into the unknown. Although it is a dreaded event, death is perceived as the commencement of a person's more intimate relationship with all of creation. Death inaugurates the communication between our

present world and the world that is not seen (Anderson).[29] However, the separation from the living, and the uncertainty surrounding whether the dead will be accepted by the ancestral spirits, results in fear of death among Shona. One respondent from the Zezuru people contends that: "There is uncertainty about attitudes to the recent deceased, which falls between the two extremes of love and respect on the one hand, and dread and despair on the other".

The Shona perceive death as separation of the soul and the body; where the person is temporarily cut off from both the living and the ancestral spirits. According to Aschwanden, the Shona believe death dissects a person into the body and soul. At death the relationships between humanity and the earth are broken. He further introduces another interesting element of death: "As the development into a genuine person after death is only possible through that person's fertility, man's infertility is also called "death"" (Aschwanden 1989: 216). A person's infertility is also called death. This is because the Shona believe that the status of being a person is conferred back to the deceased by his or her children. This would imply that if the deceased has no children his or her physical death is final. He or she possibly immediately joins the "community of collective immortality of spirits" according to Mbiti (1969:26). The Shona believe that it is the body which dies while the spirit of the dead remains as the actual person (Aschwanden 1987:244). There is no dichotomy, in the Shona thinking, between the soul and the spirit which are both generally referred to as *mweya*.

The body of the dead is more dreaded, tabooed and respected from the point of death to burial and thereafter. Contact with the dead corpse is avoided as the cause of the death of the deceased person is thought to be still loitering around the body, and there will be chances of the living being hit again by the misfortune that obliterated the deceased's life. Here services of a traditional healer *(n'anga)* may be called for, to protect the living and the community. The *n'anga* usually uses special medicines and performs some rituals (Aschwanden 1987:233). If the body is treated in a disrespectful way, the kith and kin of the deceased risk punishment. Although the dead body and the departed spirit are assumed separated at the point of death, the Shona maintain a slack link between the two. For example, addresses made to the deceased corpse

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[29]Anderson, Allan. 2006. "African Religions". In *Encyclopedia of Death and Dying*. From http://www.deathreference.com/A-Bi/African-Religions.html#ixzz4WPOUotyf (accessed 24/01/2017)

during burial rituals, as we shall see later in the study, point to this loose connection. An incident was witnessed by the writer whereby a coffin which was being lowered into the grave went loose and dropped to the bottom of the grave. Many relatives present were gripped with fear, with the eldest family representative 'crying' to the people who were lowering the coffin into the grave 'you are inviting avenging spirits' (*munotora ngozi.*).

The Shona have very complex eschatological beliefs. They believe a dead person cannot be destroyed (*munhu wafa haarovi*); death does not destroy existence, and a person does not vanish into nonentity but lives on. This is believed to be true even to someone who was clandestinely murdered. All the deceased will eventually make the living know their presence. One Karanga respondent narrates an incident of a woman who was secretly murdered. After a while she appeared to her daughter in a dream showing her the position where her remains were. When the daughter visited the place, they found the skeleton of the deceased at exactly the place the daughter had been shown in the dream. The deceased is thought to have traversed from the natural to the supernatural sphere. They are believed to have acquired supernatural powers which they previously did not possess while they were on earth. These powers are greater than those that the living possess. However, one respondent reports of a mentally deranged son who disappeared three decades ago, and is assumed dead, and has had no trace whatsoever to date. Could he have failed to make his presence known? I did not get any answers to this question.

The Shona hierarchical chain of command stretches from Mwari, their god, the 'living dead', then the living elders and the rest of the living. Ter Haar *et al* (1992: 77) cite Igor Kopytoff who rejects the dichotomy between ancestors (dead elders) and living elders, arguing that there is no considerable difference between dead ancestors and living elders. Both the dead ancestors and the living elders are highly revered, although, as noted above, the dead ancestors are thought to have acquired supernatural powers. Aschwanden (1987:17) submits that for the Shona people:

> ... death is not the end of life but the beginning of a new existence in which the deceased moves towards the peak of individual development ... Life is extinguished but the person is not obliterated ... The person does not die but life ends. (Aschwanden 1987:15).

Affirming the developmental motif, Baloyi (2014:264) asserts that: "For indigenous African people, dying marks a further developmental milestone which is not separate from life

developmental processes and stages". Therefore, the Shona see dying as a growth into a different category of being, where the dead are elevated to the condition of collective immortality. To Aschwanden (1987:212), death is only the 'beginning' of an individual development. However, the Shona beliefs seem to be silent on the 'full development' of the deceased. This may be because the fate of the dead is determined by the longevity of the lives of the living descendants who can still remember the deceased. The Shona do not tell us what happens when the deceased is no longer remembered and has ceased to be a member of the living families, to become a member of the community of spirits.

At death, it is only the state that changes but the essence of the deceased remains the same. When the deceased is brought back, through the bringing home ceremony, the Shona believe that it is not part of him or her that is brought back, but the entire person. It is not clear whether by 'entire' the Shona mean the body and the soul. This is why the writer submits that the Shona notion of death as separation between body and spirit is not solid. If 'entire' implies both body and soul, this confirms the hallucinatory statement like 'I saw my deceased father just as he was, when he was alive' which the writer has witnessed from a respondent. Many Shona who I interviewed were not clear on visions and dreams concerning the dead. They cannot explain what they will actually be seeing.

John Mbiti (1969:25) coined the term the "living dead". This term expresses a person who is deceased, but is still remembered by the living who knew the deceased when the deceased was living on earth. If there is remembrance of the deceased, then they are not really dead, but they are the 'living dead' who remain in a state of personal immortality, which is: "... externalised in the physical continuation of the individual through procreation, so that the children bear the traits of their parents or progenitors" (Mbiti 1969:25).

Bediako (1992:324) cites Mbiti who analyses death in terms of the African concept of time. His analysis, although done in the Swahili context, is compatible with Shona beliefs, probably because of the Bantu roots. He divides the African concept of time into three main characteristics: (a) as a two-dimensional long past and present entity with no future, (b) as a concrete and specific entity related to events but not mathematically, and (c) as an entity that

107

moves backwards into the past. He differentiates the past - a period beyond which nothing can go, which he calls in Swahili, *Zamani*, from the present, the *sasa*, - the "experiential extension of the now moment". To Mbiti, history in the African perception does not move forward to an end of the world, but the African concept of time moves backwards into the past, the *Zamani*. Death, according to Mbiti, moves a person gradually from the now period (*sasa*) to the past (*Zamani*). Humanity's route of existence moves backwards. As a person grows, he or she is moving slowly from the now period to the past and on death, a person does not immediately disappear from the now period but continues to exist in the form of remembrance by the surviving relatives and friends. When the last person who remembers the deceased dies, the deceased goes beyond the horizon of the *sasa* period. Mbiti defines this as the total death whereby the deceased sinks into *zamani*. Mbiti plays down the now period which he anchors on the past period, and which he thinks, must be understood as such. To him the 'golden age' is in the past and not in the very short or non-existent future (Mbiti 1969:24). In African thought, history is not moving towards the end of the world and: "The notion of Messianic hope of final destruction of the world has no place in the traditional concept of history" (Mbiti 1969:23). And Mbiti thinks that a belief in the continuation of life after death for African peoples:

> …does not constitute a hope for a future and better life. To live here and now is the most important concern of African religious activities and beliefs. . . . Even life in the hereafter is conceived in materialistic and physical terms. There is neither paradise to be hoped for nor hell to be feared in the hereafter. (Mbiti 1969: 4–5).

Without the past period (*zamani*) the present generation would not exist; the African traditions and customs would lose their present significance, and there would be no sphere of the community of ancestors, yet these are essential for goodwill and safety of the present generation of the living (Mbiti in Bediako 1992:326). Mbiti's thinking agrees with Nurnberger's (2007:96) claims that the ancestor cult is a venture into the past. However, this past wields power over the present. Although it may be true that the traditional African is more focused on the past than Western people, Mbiti's two-dimensional concept of time may not be representative of the whole of Africa. However, Byang Kato (1975:60-61) thinks otherwise - that the African lives a life which exhibits that he or she is aware of the future.

To Mbiti (1969:26), dying is a process which stretches from the point of death to the time when no living person remembers the deceased by name. This is compatible with the Shona thinking that children of the deceased give him or her, the status of a person, until he or she is no longer remembered, and he or she ceases to communicate with the living. Thus, Mbiti's eschatology presumes an immortality of the community of spirits. However, he, like Aschwanden, does not tell us the destiny of the spirits in the 'collective immortality'. The Shona afterlife is backward looking as espoused by Mbiti and they have no future hope to look forward to, beyond the period when the living dead cease to be remembered by the living, and the interaction between the two ends. Mbiti thinks there are the dead, who are immediately forgotten after death, possibly because of the deceased's infertility. These are in effect ex-communicated, and move 'into a state of non-existence'. This, Mbiti asserts, is the most horrible punishment available, which he equates to the Christian view of hell. If this is true, it follows then, that even the dead who are no longer remembered by name by their living members of the family, thereby entering into the state of 'collective immortality' also enter into a state of non-existence; which Mbiti claims is a place of the worst possible punishment. Could they all be going to hell? I will take this up later when I attempt to inculturate this section into the Christian thinking. To the Shona, it seems no other hypothetical destiny of humanity is postulated. Many respondents professed ignorance, or showed lack of interest on their destiny, while they focussed on their present existence.

It is interesting that Mbiti, like the Shona, bases the immortality and activity of the departed on the remembrance and actions of the living. In Christian thinking, immortality is associated with God. Any other entity besides God cannot be immortal until they have been changed at resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:52-54). A 'personal immortality' which Mbiti (1969:25) proposes - which only exists as long as the finite living human beings remember the deceased, may be a self-contradictory notion. The state of personal immortality is not determined by the deceased or some super force but by the living. This means the state of personal immortality has nothing to do with the dead or their state, but has something to do with the living. In Christian thought, immortality is usually linked to eternity and the two are free from limitations of time. The notion of a conditional 'personal immortality', before time comes to an end, may be fallacious.

According to Pathisa Nyathi (2001:5-6), writing on the phenomenology of the Ndebele religion, whose sentiments are similar to those of the Shona people, the scalar chain on the living dead takes two branches. On the one side, there will be the living dead who were good; while on the other side will be the evil living dead. Pathisa thinks that there is a direct interaction between the 'good' living dead and God, while there is anarchy among the evil living dead because they are not answerable to any higher force above them. Of particular interest here is the interaction of the living, with the bad living dead. The living dead who were evil become the source of all evil things including witchcraft. It requires a lot of religious effort to thwart evil effects of the spirits and mediums of these evil living dead. It is not clear whether there is a place for Satan and his angels in the Shona thinking, and whether these evil living dead could be the angels of Satan.

4.3 The Shona nature of humanity

In this section I seek to briefly investigate how the Shona view the nature of humanity. Is a human being trichotomous, dichotomous or monistic? Monism believes a human being is comprised of only one part - an indivisible unit (Woodward 2006:1). Trichotomism divides a person into three identifiable constituent parts namely; the soul, the spirit and the body, while dichotomism does not differentiate between the soul and the spirit. Aschwanden (1989:212-213) submits that in the Shona thinking:

> Man ... is, as a living being, an indivisible unit of body and soul, thus ultimately a "duality within unity"... Only death - meaning evil - has created a dual and opposing structure by separation of body and soul.

To the Shona then, human nature would be determined by the stage reached in existence. A person who is still living is a monistic entity, with no separate identifiable component elements. The entire human being is thought of in terms of either body or soul, without identifying any constituent parts of a person. For example, in the Shona thinking, an ill treatment of a person would attract such a comment as '*usadaro mweya waMwari*' - meaning: 'do not mistreat a soul that belongs to God'. This means the whole body and soul/spirit is viewed solely in terms of the soul. To them, the physical body is a soul and the soul is a physical body. However, at the point of death, the Shona anthropology seems to take a shift as the distinction between the body and soul becomes marked; with emphasis on the lifeless body and the departed soul. A human being

is thus also perceived as dichotomous in the sense that he or she is both material and spiritual. The body is thought to be mortal while the spirit is immortal. This is the argument put forward by Murphree (1969:32) that the Shona perceive the human spirit as immortal and it is not affected by death. Because dichotomy takes the centre stage only at death and that before and after death monistic tendencies prevail, the Shona view of the nature of humanity is difficult to understand. The Shona people maintain a strong connection between the physical remains of the dead person with the departed spirit. The dead body is dreaded as if it still had life. Any mishandling of the corpse is thought to attract retributive punishment. This loose connection would, to my mind, imply that even after death the duality of a person is fluid in the Shona mind.

The Shona also perceive a person as a spiritual personification of a community. This implies a different notion of duality. If one sees a person one sees the collective reality of a family, clan and tribe. An individual thus experiences a communal existence as she or he contributes to the unit; which comprises her or his community. This community includes the unborn, the living and the living dead. This interesting dual nature of a human being as perceived by the Shona has a bearing in many facets of the Shona life.

The location of the soul after death is assumed to be at the grave where the corpse was laid. And as we shall see later, the 'bringing home' (*kurova guva/kugadzira*) ceremony is done at the grave-site, yet what is brought home is not the body but the departed's soul/spirit. The point I am trying to establish is that even after death there are still monistic tendencies. The soul is assumed to roam around in the bush at death, until the bringing home ceremony. Yet the bringing home (*kurova guva*/*kugadzira*) ceremony is performed at the grave site as if the soul and the body are still connected. Monism is therefore still maintained even after death as one Manyika respondent said, referring to the gravesite: "*Ndipo pamusha pake paave kugara*" (this is his new dwelling place). In Aschwanden's (1987:215-216) thinking:

> ... death does not lead to a change in essence but in state only: the indivisible unity of body and soul is maintained ... In general, the flesh (of a dead man) is also the soul, and the soul is the ancestor. But the ancestor is also his body because "where the bones lie, there, is the ancestral spirit".

There are therefore contradictions that accompany most monistic thinking, as both monism and dualism seem to be maintained. At death, evil destroys the unity and creates a dualism. The

111

dualism emerges clearly in the form of a black and white shadow; the white shadow (*bvuri*), which represents the soul, must leave at death. However, some Shona people with strong monistic tendencies maintain that both shadows must disappear; because a person is an indivisible unity and so are his shadows (Aschwanden 1987:234).

In the Shona dualism, a person is viewed physically and psychically; hence the notion that a dead man cannot be destroyed. Allan Anderson (2007)[30] asserts that:

> Although there is recognition of the difference between the physical person that is buried and the nonphysical person who lives on, this must not be confused with a Western dualism that separates the "physical" from the "spiritual". When a person dies, there is not some "part" of that person that lives on - it is the whole person who continues to live in the spirit world, receiving a new body identical to the earthly body, but with enhanced powers to move about as an ancestor.

I am not sure if Anderson is not borrowing from the Christian monism here. The soul refers to the partial aspect of a person. Yet to the Shona 'person' (*munhu*) refers to both the soul and the body. This psychical aspect of a person is the one that must be brought home after death. To the Shona, there is no trichotomous human being, since as noted above; there is no distinction between the soul and the spirit of a human being.

4.4 Death, burial and post-burial rituals

Death, burial and post-burial rituals constitute a large chunk of the Shona life, in so far as the Shona interact with their 'living dead'. A ritual is a way of carrying out a religious action or ceremony in a prescribed manner (Mbiti 1975). Baloyi (2014:264) contends that:

> Rituals are representation of cultural performances and rites of passage which mark a people's life experience. Properly construed, rituals are an expression of people's thoughts, emotions, social organization and cultural identities. They are therefore regarded as viable scientific methods of connections and dialogue… rituals are forms of expressions and connections performed by individuals, groups of people or communities in communication with the living-dead and the Supreme Being.

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[30] Anderson, Allan. 2006. "African Religions". In *Encyclopedia of Death and Dying*. From http://www.deathreference.com/A-Bi/African-Religions.html#ixzz4WPOUotyf accessed 24/01/2017

According to Mhaka (2014:374) a ritual has a sacred element and it is the language of religion. Through rituals, people experience, in their daily lives, the unseen realm of the spirit and the invisible world of God or gods. It is through rituals that we are able to comprehend the religious and philosophical outlook of a given people. Different rituals are performed depending on who the deceased is and the cause of death. Through rituals, the link between the physical and spiritual ontologies is preserved and improved (Baloyi 2014:265).

4.4.1 Death rituals

Death rituals must be meticulously performed, if the Shona living members of a family are to be at peace with their deceased relatives. Failing to perform the rituals as required may attract punishment and retribution. Tabona Shoko (2007:86) contends that:

> The Karanga of Mberengwa have an elaborate system of burial rituals. They perform funerary rituals of their deceased relatives in a manner that ensures protection of the well-being of the people. In that respect, the Karanga are extremely afraid of the dead whom they believe to wield more power after death than they did in their lifetime and so have the potential to cause danger in the form of illness, misfortune and death, if the rituals are not properly performed.

4.4.1.1 Preparing the body

When the Shona die, there are some preparations that are performed. There are initial rituals which are performed immediately after death which seek to ensure separation of the deceased's spirit from the community. These are performed so that the deceased's spirit is blocked from returning to the homestead. If the spirit returns it will cause problems to the surviving relatives. This is because the spirit is thought to have entered the conceptual world of the community and they cannot prescribe its reaction to its new environment. This is also true if the spirit had some grudges before the person died. The spirit must stay away until the 'homing' of the spirit (*kurova guva/kugadzira*) ritual is performed. Before this ceremony is performed, the spirit is agitated, unsure and apprehensive.

The elders in attendance when death occurs should make sure that eyelids are closed. To the Shona, separation of the body and soul means both the life and light of a person are gone.

Because the light would have gone, the deceased can no longer see. The eyes are better closed to distinguish between life and death (Aschwanden 1987:232). The hands and the legs are put in the straightened position in preparation for burial. Traditionally the body was postured into an embryo position with legs bent forward towards the tummy, while arms were crossed over the chest (Aschwanden 1987:230). This is the posture a baby takes when it is about to be delivered and the deceased should take a similar posture at death. This traditional posture is being relegated in favour of the straight posture. This ritual, where the corpse is put in the right posture for burial, is called the *kupeta* (folding) ritual. One Manyika respondent maintains that: "... a person should not die with eyes and mouth open as if he or she is an animal. This may anger the deceased who may return with retributive punishment for the living". A Zezuru respondent contends that no crying or wailing is allowed before this *kupeta* ritual is completed. Today, the *kupeta* ritual, performed immediately after death, involves positioning the arms, the legs and closing the eyelids and the mouth. The undertakers usually do the rest of the body preparation.

The preparation of the body also includes washing of the corpse. This is a symbol whereby all evils still adhering to the deceased's body are thought to be removed (Aschwanden 1987:230). It is also believed that if the body is dirty it may not be accepted by the ancestors (Muchemwa 2002:32-33). In some areas the Shona anoint bodies of the deceased. In other areas they do not apply oil as they believe this makes the body more powerful and dangerous, since there is a possibility of the deceased having grudges and returning to avenge himself or herself. In such cases anointing would be encouraged where the deceased is a murder victim, to ensure that he returns for revenge (Aschwanden 1987:230). With a number of the Shona increasingly dying in hospitals, especially in urban areas, the *kupeta* ritual and the washing is now performed at funeral parlours.

The corpse was traditionally wrapped with black and white cloths, representing the two shadows of the body and the soul. Today most Shona dress the body with the best dress the deceased had while alive. The black and white cloths are disappearing from the scene. The wrapped body is placed on a reed mat and placed on a raised clay platform or clay table (*chikuva*), on which clay pots and jars are usually stored in a woman's kitchen. This platform, "... symbolises the

sublimity and dignity of the ancestors ... a symbol of the grave of ancestral spirit" (Aschwanden 1987:250).

Several respondents informed me that *chikuva* is also taken as a sanctuary – a traditional family alter, at which one prays to the ancestors, and a real presence of the spirit of the deceased is assumed. These days the body will be laid in a coffin rather than on a reed mat. If a shadow appears when the body is being wrapped this would be a sign that the deceased has rejected the cloths bought by the son(s). This is especially so if the relations between the deceased and the living were tense.

Of special concern are the last words of the deceased on the death-bed. The Shona will be keen to know the secrets disclosed by the deceased when he or she was bidding farewell. The secrets may involve debts, resources, offences, etc. Some of these secrets may call for immediate attention for the burial to be successful. The last oral testimony of the dying is considered sacred among the Shona and no addition, subtraction or disputation should be entertained. This is still the case even when the testament was made to only one person - it still has to be honoured. It is anathema to put words into the mouth of the dying (Mwandayi 2011:205). Traditionally the word of mouth is received with all the sacrality it deserves. For example, the installation of kings, the blessing and cursing of children is done through the spoken word. One Korekore respondent confirmed; the words of the dying are sacred ("*mashoko emufi anoyera*"). However, this tradition is falling apart in this modern world characterised by greed. Many have been reported to have ignored the words of the departed to give themselves advantage on inheritance. This is not without a cost though, as it may result in the deceased punishing the offenders. Because of these challenges there is the prevalence in written wills.

The preparation of the corpse is not a contentious issue among the Shona Christians. Many Christians and Church leaders who responded feel there is not much difference between the Shona tradition and the Christian faith as far as body preparation is concerned.

4.4.1.2 The two shadows

The spirit of the deceased may hover around the body and may appear as a visible white shadow, as mentioned earlier. Discontentment of the departed is usually manifested through the white shadow (*kumira bvuri*) which hangs around in the room where the dead body lies in state. According to the Shona, only close relatives can see the white shadow. They believe every deceased will have the natural physical shadow and the white shadow. This white shadow, which represents the deceased's spirit/soul, is the one which will in the end become an ancestral spirit (*mudzimu*) (Boudillon 1976:200). According to the Karanga, this white shadow must vanish at the point of death, and must never be seen again. The two shadows seem to confirm the Karanga belief in a dichotomous being (Mhaka 2014:378). There are some rituals which must be performed to placate the aggrieved spirit.

I witnessed *kumira bvuri* at a funeral of a relative. The actual white shadow I could not identify, although many claimed they were seeing it. The eldest son insulted his mother when she was still alive. They did not consult a traditional healer but sought help from an Indigenous Apostolic sect (Johanne Masowe Wechishanu – Madzibaba), who after much prayer and prophesying, the white shadow was said to have disappeared. The son was given some conditions to appease the deceased in order to show penance. This included payment of a beast to the relatives of the deceased mother's spirit. The Apostolic sect did not use the Bible and they did not talk about Jesus. They just sang, prayed and prophesied.

Today, the displeasure of the deceased may be manifested by other incidents than the appearing of a white shadow. There may be some strange incidents like: (i) the coffin becoming too heavy to be lifted by strong men, (ii) the coffin failing to fit through the door way for one reason or the other, (iii) the corpse producing a stinking smell in the room where it lies in state, (iv) grave diggers striking one big rock after another before the grave is dug deep enough (Sitshebo 2000:39). In one such case a Korekore retorted the deceased is refusing burial ("*mufi ari kuramba kuvigwa*"). The help of a diviner (*n'anga)*, or a prophet from an indigenous spiritual sect, is often sought to discover the cause of displeasure. Issues like absence of a ritual friend (*sahwira*), or presence of an unwelcome person or ignoring the deceased's last testament etc. usually come up. The *n'anga* or prophet is expected to prescribe remedial action required for the burial to be successfully concluded. This may be done before or after burial. If no action is

taken, the extended family of the departed may be in danger of punishment. The need to know the cause of the displeasure arises from the fact that an appropriate burial rite should be made to propitiate the anger. When the cause of the displeasure has been discovered, a family elder must accept responsibility and admit to the deceased that the discontentment has been taken note of and corrective action will be taken immediately or in due course. While addressing the corpse the elder will take the crouching posture, while clapping hands, as if to a living person. The Shona believe that whatever is done to the corpse is done to the departed spirit of the deceased.

4.4.1.3 Mombe yenheedzo

A beast is identified and killed by elderly men. The meat is used as food for the people attending the funeral and in some places the beast's hide is used as a burial blanket. The beast is called *mombe yenheedzo*, and it is believed to accompany the deceased on his or her journey, into the unknown world. It serves as a provision (*mbuva*) on the journey. Some prayers are made to the deceased person before the beast is slaughtered. The deceased is properly informed of the beast being slaughtered in her or his honour. The meat is cut in accordance with given prescriptions because there are some parts of the meat which are set aside for certain rituals (*zvirango*) and may not be consumed by the public. Those working at the grave-site will eat the meat without salt. Salt, it is believed by the Shona, will provoke the spirit of the dead to anger.

In many Shona places today, *mombe yenheedzo* is no longer slaughtered as a ritual offering, but for relish purposes. However, some will still not eat the meat even if it is not offered to the deceased's spirit; in case they are told lies and profane themselves. Many Shona Christian respondents vowed they will not eat meat offered to spirits. Some only eat vegetables at funerals, while others do not eat at all. A challenge arose where a Christian, an elder in the family, from a distant place, abstained from all food claiming it is contaminated with demons, and the funeral went for over three days. He went for three days without eating a decent meal.

4.4.2   Burial rituals

Several burial rituals are required to be performed to ensure that the deceased is given proper burial and is not offended. Any ritual improperly performed may attract punishment which may be meted at varying degrees. The mourners would like to avoid this at all costs. However, Allan Anderson (2006),[31] writing on African beliefs in general, submits that witches and sorcerers are not permitted into the spirit world. These should not be given proper burial. The problem may be in identifying who is a witch or sorcerer, and who is not. Most consultations on death are done to establish causes of death, not the state of the deceased; whether he or she was a witch or not. To some Shona people, being cut off from the community of ancestors, when one dies, is the nearest equivalent of hell.

4.4.2.1 Choosing the gravesite

The gravesite location is selected and marked by a suitable relative. This may be a *mukuwasha* (son-in-law) or *muzukuru* (nephew) in some places, but in other places this is usually done by a family elder. Choosing the place where the grave-site will be located is called *kutema rukawo*. The Shona believe the grave is a new house for the deceased and, in the Shona thinking, a person is not given a dwelling place by a stranger but by a family elder. When a member of the Shona family wants to build a new home, a family elder marks the site by plunging a pick into the ground. This ground-breaking ceremony is meant to formally recognise the place as part of the homestead which may also be visited and protected by ancestors. Traditionally no one should construct a house without being blessed by a family elder. This is why an appropriate relative is selected to identify and mark the location of the grave. To the Shona thinking, the grave of their departed relative becomes part of the homestead and it is thought to be the evident connection between the living and the dead.

The location of the grave site depends on the family norms. Most families identify a single place where all relatives are buried. This may be in caves or clefts in rocks or by the river bed. The most common location is an anthill just outside the homestead. Among the Manyika of the Makoni area, they have set mini cemeteries for their localities so that burial places are not

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[31] Anderson, Allan. 2006. "African Religions". In *Encyclopedia of Death and Dying*. From http://www.deathreference.com/A-Bi/African-Religions.html#ixzz4WPOUotyf accessed 24/01/2017

jumbled up. However, the desires of the dead are seriously considered among most Shona. It is common for the deceased to prescribe a burial site before dying. Such prescriptions would need to be observed as problems may arise if the instruction is not followed. The writer has witnessed a situation where grave diggers struck one big rock after another until they dug at the site chosen by the deceased. Many Christians and Christian leaders interviewed had no objection on the marking of the grave site, with some dissociating the grave with the homestead.

4.4.2.2 Digging the grave

A tunnel is dug alongside the bottom of the grave to make sure that exhumation of the body is not easy. Another way is to dig a trough in the centre of the grave, after the standard depth. The trench will be just wide enough to fit the corpse or its coffin. Flat stones, poles, iron bars or metal sheets are laid on top of the trough to seal off the mouth of the trench. These days a concrete mixture is laid on top of the stones or poles, before the grave is filled with stones and soil. This also is done to prevent exhumation by witches (Dachs 1973:153). I am not sure if this is enough to prevent the witches from exhuming the body, since they perform their nefarious acts in the spirit. Witches do not need to dig the grave in order to eat the human flesh in the grave; they eat in the spirit as we shall see below.

In some places, grave diggers are required to keep at least one root they pick from the grave during digging. This root will later be used for the 'eating of the seed' (*kudya mbeu*) ritual, which confers blessings of fertility, provision and security on the younger clan members.

4.4.2.3 Body viewing.

As a way of paying their last respect, relatives of the deceased assemble in the hut or room where the body lies in state. They pray for the protection and providence from the deceased. This is done while taking a certain posture. They crouch in the room where the corpse is laid and they pray while clapping their hands. They bid farewell and notify the deceased that they are now moving him or her to his or her final resting place. The ancestral spirits are also told that their child is now being taken to his or her burial place and they are entreated to welcome him or her.

Members of the public are then asked to bid farewell to the deceased. The body viewing is then done by viewing the face only. In some Shona places body viewing is not done as the rituals performed by the close relatives will be enough. After this rite, Murphree (1969:36) observes that:

> Just before the corpse is taken from the hut a wooden bowl, in which has been placed some *nhope* (unfermented beer which has been specially prepared), is held up outside the door, and the *tsuri*, (a small wooden flute), is blown over it, once to the east and once to the west. It is said that this is to inform the *midzimu* of the arrival of a new member.

This practice is dying down. In many Shona places I visited, the rite is no longer practiced. Many even professed ignorance of the practice.

4.4.2.4 Burial time

Burial is usually done in the morning or late afternoon. Many community leaders will not allow burial at midday. According to Muchemwa (2002:38) ancestors are thought to be active in the morning and late afternoon. During midday the ancestors are believed to be resting or far away. It would be improper to lay to rest the deceased in the absence of ancestors as they will be expected to receive the deceased. If that is done, the deceased will end up as a wandering spirit. This seems to contradict the notion that the homing of the spirit (*kurova guva*) is performed to ensure reception of the deceased (who has been wandering since death) by the ancestral spirit elders. This rule is practiced in all Shona areas visited by the researcher. It is thought to be an abomination to conduct burial between 12 and 1pm, especially at noon.

4.4.2.5 Procession

The corpse is usually carried around the hut, where the body laid in state, before proceeding to the grave-site. This is done, it is believed, to give an opportunity to the deceased to bid farewell to her or his home, and to confuse the spirit (Mwandayi 2011:111) in the event that it wants to come back before suitable homecoming rituals are performed. All adults are expected to join the convoy to the grave site, except some daughters-in-law who remain to clean the room where the body laid in state. They are also expected to prepare food for the mourners. Among the Karanga,

the widow or widower and the first-born child do not go to the grave. They go the next morning, for an early morning inspection called 'waking up greeting' (*rumuko*) ritual. This is also practiced among the Manyika people. None of the respondents asked were able to give an explanation for this.

The sweepings from the hut are linked to the source of death, so they are taken to the grave and interred together with the corpse. Sons-in-law and acquaintances assist in carrying the body to the grave. Traditionally, the body was initially carried with the head facing towards the homestead. (Today the writer has witnessed the fact that undertakers will insist that the head should always be on the front when the coffin is being moved.) After a distance, it is put onto the ground to give rest to the spirit. As death is believed by the Shona to be a journey to the realm of ancestors, rest will always be needed by anyone on a journey. The elders present crouch and salute the deceased's spirit at the resting place, with men clapping hands while women ululate. The body is then turned around once again to confuse the spirit in case it wants to come back to the homestead. There may be several resting places after which the head is now made to face the direction of the grave (Bourdillon 1976:202). This practice of confusing the spirit is fast running out of steam in almost all Shona places. Before getting to the grave the *sahwira* (family friend) or *muzukuru* (nephew) sprays the grave with water mixed with medicine supplied by a diviner, to sacralise the grave, which may have been defiled by witches (Bourdillon 1976:203).

4.4.2.6 The burial

Among the mourners is an important figure called *sahwira* (a ritual or family friend). A *sahwira* is a privileged guest at the funeral. He or she has an unrelenting joking relationship with the deceased's family members, and he or she helps reduce the concentration on mourning, by making jokes and being humorous during the proceedings (Boudillon 1976:201). Among the Karanga, this role is also played by the sisters-in-law (*varoora*). The aim is to diffuse tension caused by mourning.

In some Korekore places, only the *sahwira* is allowed into the grave to receive the body (Magava in Dachs 1973:153). In other places this may also be done by the grandsons (*vazukuru*). In every

121

case no one enters the grave while putting on shoes; they enter into the grave bare footed. The body is thus laid in the grave by the *sahwira*, according to tradition, under supervision of the family elders. In some Shona areas they insist that a deceased woman should be laid on her right side, while a deceased man must be laid on his left side. It is believed that a wrongly placed body can cause the turning of the uterus to the wrong position. This may cause sterility in women and misfortune to men. To reverse the sterility, women are advised to go to the grave of the deceased concerned and strike it with a sling baby carrier (*mbereko*). This can result in the repositioning of her uterus (Aschwanden 1987:258-259).

Before the coffin or corpse is placed in the grave, a reed mat (*rukukwe*) is, in most places, cut into two halves and laid on the floor of the grave. This is thought to provide bedding for the corpse. Traditionally, the *rukukwe* is the most decent thing to sleep on, hence it is necessary to provide the corpse with the bedding (Mwandayi 2011:211). Close relatives throw a handful of soil into the grave, uttering words like 'rest in peace' (*zororai murugare*) or 'go well' (*mufambe zvakanaka*) etc. Various interpretations have been given to the throwing of the soil. Throwing a handful of soil is believed to be a method of chasing away evil and misfortune (*kurasa rushambwa*) by the Zezuru people. My Karanga respondents think this is a way of participation by the relatives, in building the deceased's new home. I witnessed a sad incident where there was a nasty altercation between relatives of the deceased and a Christian pastor, after the pastor barred everyone from throwing soil, claiming it was an evil practice.

The *sahwira* or *muzukuru* must tenderly fill the sides of the corpse/coffin with soil until it is covered, where a tunnel is not prepared. Throwing soil straight onto the body/coffin may be construed as being disrespectful. The poles of the brier which were used to carry the body to the grave and everything else, of no value, which was used in the procession, are broken and thrown into the grave before it is filled with earth. When the grave has been filled with soil, a stone is put on the grave on top of the head of the deceased. Others plant a *mukonde* tree in place of the stone. The Karanga plant *muvigavafi* (that which buries the dead) or the *chizhuzhu* (resurrection plant shrub). This is going to be the spot where people go when they want to make their prayers and supplications to the deceased. The grave is then carefully swept to make sure that footprints of witches can easily be detected the following morning when the 'waking up greeting' (*rumuko*)

ritual is done. Because of this, the elderly relatives will be the last group to leave the grave-site. When everything has been done, they crouch and present the spirit of the dead to the ancestors. They once again pray for the reception of the deceased into the realm of the ancestors and for their protection and providence. They leave for the homestead. When they are close to the homestead, all the mourners disperse and enter it in different directions. It is believed this would keep the location of the grave secret to witches. This is no longer practiced nowadays.

The burial rituals differ with sex and marital status. A married man is buried with some item from his wife, e.g. a dress. For a married woman, consultation with the natal family will be necessary as these should be in full agreement of the necessary burial rituals to be performed. She is buried with a sign which shows that she was married. An unmarried person is buried with a rat or a used mealie-cob tied around the waist to show that no one is to blame for him or her not being married and therefore he or she should rest in peace. Tabona Shoko (2008:437) submits that:

> The rationale is that the deceased died in deprivation and so the maize cob, rat or mortar is meant to neutralise potential danger caused by the spirit, which may come back to seek retribution.

This practice is also waning down.

In some places, a mother takes some soil from the grave back home for use when children who were absent during burial eventually turn up for the funeral after the burial has been done. To circumvent bad luck, a child who was not present during burial takes some of the soil collected by the mother and throws it away, with the mother saying words like 'your child has buried you now' (Aschwanden 1987:262). Among the Karanga, relatives who were not at the burial, take a stone and place it at the head of the grave, when shown the grave. They then kneel or crouch, and introduce themselves to the deceased, conveying their regret that they were absent during burial.

4.4.3 Post burial rituals

There are several post burial rituals that are conducted in the Shona society. These however, may vary from place to place.

4.4.3.1 *Kurova gata*

Among the Shona, death is often thought not to be natural and unavoidable. As attested by Benyera (2016:7172) "… death among the Shona is caused, hence the need to go for *gata* (spiritual autopsy)". It is always attributed to some enemy, witchcraft or avenging spirit (*ngozi*). After burial, the bereaved family will select some members who will be sent on a mission to determine the cause of death and to verify whether the deceased had any complaints. In some areas and circumstances, this may be done before conclusion of the burial. This calls for a consultation of diviner. The procedure is called *kurova gata*. The Karanga call it *kutsvagamusoro* (inquest into cause of death). In some areas the *kurova gata* ceremony is not performed if it is believed that it was a natural death, especially for someone who was aged. *Kurova gata* is thought to be necessary where a sudden or strange death occurred. Living members of the family will be keen to know what caused the death so that they take protective measures to prevent further deaths. The diviner may provide anti-witchcraft medicine or prescribe a form of compensation to the family where the avenging spirits are coming from (Murphree 1969:37-38). The team may seek the services of another diviner to get a second opinion if it is felt that the first diviner failed to confirm their fears. The diviner may establish that it was a natural death; which did not involve witches and spirits. The diviner will also help in revealing whether there was anyone who tempered with the grave after burial.

If the divine healer diagnoses that the death was caused by witchcraft or the discontent of lineage ancestors, the issue must be resolved before the 'homing' ceremony. The spirit is usually appeased, through payment of money or livestock, to redress past offences on behalf of the family.

> The family's failure or success in resolving the cause of death can become visible during *kurova guva* as the procession approaches the gravesite, where they confront possible malevolent spiritual forces, including witchcraft. These forces may be manifest in signs visible to participants, preventing them from completing the necessary rites at the site of the grave. (Kyker 2009:77).

This study has established that there are those who feel that *kurova gata* must be done to determine the cause of death. Yet k*urova gata* has become a bone of contention among many Shona people. Today this practice is dying down among the Shona. Many Shona respondents are

124

avoiding use of traditional healers. One Zezuru respondent claims that consulting traditional healers is usually a source of unnecessary disharmony. Many feel that *kurova gata* is a source of discord, abhorrence and hostility in the family. Here is one response of a man who had lost his child when his father insisted on *kurova gata*:

> Father what will happen if the witchdoctor tells me that it is you who killed my child. Can I go on to kill you after I have lost my child? How will I relate to you after I am told that you killed my son?

On that, he refused to undertake the *kurova gata* ritual, of course with threats of punishment from the father, as the living elder of the family. The third category is those who feel their Christian faith does not allow them to consult diviners and will therefore not do it at any cost.

4.4.3.2 Washing

After burial there are selected places where bowls of water, mixed with herbs, are positioned in such a way that everyone from the grave site may wash. The herb used, called *zumbani,* is a disinfectant that gets rid of any contamination from the corpse. It has bright green leaves with a very strong odour. Hands, feet and faces are washed to get rid of the 'dust of the grave'. Taking grave dust back to the homestead is thought to be asking death to return. If the disease that caused death is brought home it may cause havoc again (Aschwanden 1987:263). This is because there is a general perception among the Shona that death sullies and is contagious. Cleaning is therefore crucial for everything and every person that made contact with the dead corpse. The elderly relatives who left the grave last, are not obliged to wash their hands because, death is already among them. As an alternative to the washing ceremony, in some places the Shona make a deep cut on a tree near the grave. Mourners walk past the tree, spitting onto the cut and proceeding to the homestead without looking back (Aschwanden 1987:264).

This ritual was never practiced in all the funerals that I attended in the various parts of the Shona territory. However, besides Aschwanden's interpretation, use of disinfectants by people who had contact with the dead body makes a lot of health sense. These days, many make sure they use gloves to avoid contamination of contagious diseases. And some funeral parlours seal corpses in the coffins to avoid contact with it.

4.4.3.3 Appeasing a vengeful spirit

Aschwanden (1987:14) contends that when a person is killed by a vengeful spirit (*ngozi*) a ritual to detach the spirit from the corpse should be carried out. A goat is sacrificed and prayers are made to ward off the spirit. Half of the goat is buried by a diviner and a stone is laid over the grave. This, in the Shona thinking, ensures that when the dead returns he or she will not be with the evil spirit which would otherwise inflict more deaths in the family. The Shona believe ancestors do not kill their own family members but they may remove their protection when they are displeased by something, for example, neglect. When they withdraw protection, the families would be exposed to attacks by witches, evil spirits, etc. In such cases a diviner usually stipulates a ritual to be performed in honour of the grieved ancestral spirits. This may entail sacrificing a beast to the ancestor and libations of millet beer.

4.4.3.4 The mourning attire

All close relatives usually pin pieces of black cloths to sleeves of their shirts as a sign of loss of their beloved. Traditionally the Shona relatives also tie *mupfuti* fibres (*makavi*) around their necks (Magava in Dachs 1973:152) or wrists. These are only removed when the mourning period ends, after the 'cooling of the spirit' ceremony. This ceremony is usually held ten days or more after burial (Bourdillon 1976:208). Widows wear black dresses and also cover their heads with black material. The attires are to be put on until the *kurova guva* ceremony; which is usually performed six months onwards from the time of death. Because of poverty, some widows may have no resources to buy new black dresses. In such cases, they are allowed to put on their usual dresses, but they should be turned inside out. It is not allowed to mend the black dresses in the event that they get torn or wear out, as this is believed to attract death. Most of the widows interviewed wore black dresses during the funeral only. Others were not aware of the need for black dresses, and its significance. Widowers wear black arm-bands to symbolize the loss of their other hand - the wife.

4.4.3.5 Custody of the deceased's property

The belongings of the departed are kept in a granary (*dura*) and no one should use them before the inheritance ceremony. However, today the trend is moving toward distribution of the property immediately after burial, to avoid further costs of travelling, especially for those relatives who stay far away.

4.4.3.6 *Rumuko* (waking up greeting)

Early morning following the burial, a group of family members visit the grave-site to check if it has not been tempered with and to ensure there is nothing that may point to the nefarious activities of witches. Today, there are also reports of tempering by thieves who dig the grave to retrieve the coffin from the grave for resale. This is the *rumuko* (**waking up greeting**) ritual. Mwandayi (2011:216) submits that:

> ...the Shona go for a *rumuko*, they would inspect closely to see if there were any signs of tampering with the grave. If there happens to be any signs that something was done to the new grave, a diviner is called in immediately to deal with this evil force.

They also pay their respect at the grave by going into a crouching position and clapping their hands saluting the spirit, rehearsing totem and praise names. They also plead for the reception and care of the deceased.

Some Shona people secretly protect the grave site during the night to stop witches from desecrating the deceased's body. After burial, the grave is considered a sacred place, not to be arbitrarily visited, unless it is for the purpose of showing relatives, who were absent at the funeral, the place where the deceased was laid to rest. The deceased is believed to be in need of rest, so the grave becomes a sacred place except for ritual purposes.

4.4.3.7 Cooling the spirit

A dead person is thought to retain human emotions such as love, hatred, envy etc. As the spirit is still wandering, feelings of revenge may be aroused in her or his 'heart' (Mwandayi 2011:213). This necessitates the rite of 'cooling the spirit', also called beer of water (*doro remvura*). In this

127

rite, the affairs pertaining to the deceased are settled, in order to cool the spirit. The spirit is believed to be homeless, thirsty and wandering in dry land, and is therefore lonely and potentially dangerous. After ascertaining the cause of death, the cooling ceremony is conducted to inform the cause to the deceased, and this marks the end of the official mourning period. Investigation of the cause of deaths must therefore be done before any other ceremony.

4.4.3.8 Goat of anger (*mbudzi yeshungu)*

The deceased will then be informed of his or her killer at a ritual ceremony where a 'goat of anger' (*mbudzi yeshungu*) is offered at the grave. The ceremony starts with moments of remembrance and mourning, followed by singing and dancing with drinking, to 'drown the sorrow' away. At the ceremony, beer is poured over the goat. The goat should identify the person to lead the prayers by shaking off the beer in front of him or her (Aschwanden 1987:273). The identified person will pour the beer onto the grave and offer the spirit drink to satisfy his or her thirst, and bring to an end his or her anger (*shungu*).

The goat is first offered to the spirit to establish whether the sacrifice will be accepted by the departed. It is then sacrificed either at the grave or at the homestead with prayers petitioning the deceased to set aside his or her anger and be at peace with the living family. The goat is killed by strangulation (Aschwanden 1987:281) to signify the deceased's point of death. This killing of the goat is thought to symbolically kill the deceased's anger.   It therefore plays a vital conciliatory role. "To ensure that the deceased's anger is completely done away with, all the meat of the goat of anger must be consumed on the same day and all the bones burnt so that nothing remains" (Mhaka 2014:379). From this ceremony, the deceased's spirit can influence lives of the living in a favourable way, although it would not have attained the full status of an ancestral guardian spirit yet. Very few Shona are conducting this ritual.

4.4.3.9 *Doro remasukafoshoro*

The beer to cleanse the shovels (*doro remasukafoshoro*) or to cleanse tools (*kusuka nhumbi*) or beer of dirt (*doro retsvina*) is a ceremony held one to two weeks after burial. This is a ceremony

128

mainly for the grave diggers who assemble to clean the tools they used for digging the grave. After burial all tools used at the funeral are kept at the deceased's house pending this ritual ceremony. At this ceremony they take stock of all tools used at the funeral. They are then washed and given back to their respective owners. The tools, the stone collectors and the grave diggers are thought to be cleansed by this ceremony. Beer drinking and tribal dancing characterise this ceremony (Mandaza in Clive & Peggy Kilef 1970:57). The beer is dedicated to the spirits and may be treated by a diviner. In some areas *doro remasukafoshoro* is combined with *doro remvura* (beer of water) (Chabudapasi in Clive & Peggy Kilief 1970:64-65). This is another funerary rite which is being relegated to the periphery by the Shona people.

4.4.3.10 Rituals for a person buried away from home.

If a person dies and is buried away from her or his rural home, family elders may be sent to 'take the spirit' home. When they arrive at the burial place of the person, they introduce themselves as if talking to someone alive and they inform the deceased of their mission to collect him or her. They then collect some soil from the grave (*kutora vhu/mudzimu*), and take it with them to the rural home. When they arrive at the rural home with the soil, they conduct a mini funeral at the home, with people actually mourning. All burial processes are followed as is done at an ordinary funeral, the only difference being that they will bury the soil in a new grave. Mwandayi (2011:214) comments on the funerary rituals thus:

> … such a process of reburying and according the proper rites effects 'drying the tears of the dead'. Thus reburial, as 'healing', reasserts their position, acknowledging their identities and affiliates them to their families once again.

However, reburial results in two graves for one deceased person. This poses some challenges, where the centre of activity is concentrated on the notional grave, while the actual grave is ignored. With the number of people being buried in urban centres increasing, the rite is running out of steam. It may be necessary only in cases where, because of extenuating circumstances, the deceased is buried abroad or overseas.

4.4.3.11 *Kurova guva* - the bringing home ceremony

Traditionally, any time between six months and three years after burial, the Shona will celebrate their most significant funerary rite for the deceased; the *kurova guva*/*magadziro*/'homing' rite.

> The traditional ceremony of *kurova guva/magadziro*… is the culmination of all the rituals meant to ensure that the spirit of the deceased rests in peace before being summoned by the 'living living' and authorized by the 'living dead' to return as an ancestor. (Benyera 2014:341).

It is usually celebrated after a worm (*gonye*) is detected. The *gonye* is a certain type of worm that is usually observed moving in the homestead. When spotted, it is thought to be a sign that the body has decomposed and the dead is ready for the bringing home ceremony, to re-establish bonds between the living and the living dead.

The *kurova guva* (bringing the spirit home or homing of the spirit) ceremony is variously called *kugadzira* (to restore), *kudzora* (to bring back), *kutora mudzimu* (to collect the spirit), *bona* etc. It seeks to fulfil several functions. The ceremony seeks to formally communicate with the 'living dead', especially those recently departed to rest in peace. Its goal is also to invite the deceased's spirit home, for the spirit to become part of the living family, and to induct the spirit into the community of ancestors, so that it joins the family spirit guardians. "It enables the eldest living male offspring of the deceased to inherit his father's estate, and lastly, it serves as a forum for the collective and public memorialisation of the dead" (Benyera 2014:341). The ceremony is therefore significant to both the living and the dead. The deceased joins the community of ancestors and the living members are assured care and protection. Up until now the spirit is believed to have been nomadic, and to be dangerous and capable of causing harm.

For the *kurova guva* ceremony to succeed, all actions to be undertaken should be ritually satisfactory. The deceased's spirit should be correctly invoked. Lots of millet bear is required and those who prepare the beer should be right morally and must abstain from sex. Women who can no longer bear children will be responsible for the brewing of the beer. These are assisted by young girls who are below puberty. Both categories are not defiled by menstruation and child bearing, both of which involve blood. Blood is thought to sully the rituals.

The timing of the ceremony is of great importance. It must not be celebrated when people are busy in the rainy season. Also, the thunder and lightning during the rainy season is believed to

frighten ancestral spirits. It must be a time when food is not in short supply. Because of the foregoing, the time between June and September is usually chosen as the most appropriate. Sometimes the ceremony is delayed because of poverty or negligence. If the delay is unnecessarily prolonged, the spirit may strike with illness or some other misfortune to demand action. Delays may also be caused by inheritance disagreements or if there is no-one who is in a position of taking care of the widow(s).

The deceased must have been married with children. The deceased's son notifies the family elder of their intention to bring the spirit of their father or mother home. The elder (immediate kin of the deceased) then decides when the ceremony may be celebrated. Once the date is set the other kin and friends are notified of the proposed event. According to Aschwanden (1987:293) the ceremony is announced first. The deceased is officially informed of the ceremony through an offering (*kupira*). Two containers of beer are prepared and the preparation time is seven days. Fani Omoregie (2007:55) says the consecration of rapoko is referred to as '*kuomberera zviyo*' or '*kureverera zviyo*'. The person who sanctifies the rapoko takes a gourd (*mukombe)* filled with water and lets the water drop into the basket with the grain, drop by drop, as he or she says the following prayer:

> *VaMwendamberi, Nemi VaJunu* (To you Mwendamberi and Junu)
> *Ndimi muri pedyo nesu* (You are the ones closer to us)
> *Tati tava kudzosa mwana Nhamo mumusha* (We inform you that we are 'bringing back home' your child Nhamo from the jungle.)
> *Moudzawo vari mberi kwenyu* (Inform all the elder ancestors before you)
> *Naivowo vagoudzawo vari mberi kwavo* (And may they also inform those before them)
> *Ngavashumewo namadzimoyo ose* (And all the female ancestors)
> *Kuti todzosa mhodzi yenyu mumusha,* (That we are bringing back home your offspring,)
> *Irege kutsakatikira musango*. (That he may not perish in the jungle.) (Omoregie 2007:56)

There are many ways of communicating ritual messages to the neighbourhood. For the bringing home (*kurova guva*) ritual, people usually play drums (*ngoma*), clap hands, ululate, sisters-in-law (*varoora*) walk on knees. Omoregie (2007:61) asserts that such actions need interpretation. The Zezuru of the Chihota use drums to inform the neighbourhood of the bringing home (*kurova guva*) ceremony. The drum, which is known as the 'drum of the grave' (*ngoma yeguva*) is

131

continuously beaten with a given rhythm and beat. The community then gathers at the homestead, a night before the ceremony, to sing, drink and dance the night away, in honour of the spirit. Before sunrise they proceed to the grave-site of the deceased, using an especially prepared pathway, carrying either one of the containers of beer or a goat called *nhora*. Mandaza (in Dachs 1973:154) says a he-goat is used in the case of a deceased man, while a she-goat is used for a deceased woman's spirit. If available, a black goat will be chosen. The individual handling the goat will lead the procession. The goat is offered at the grave "Here is the goat with which we want to bring you home" (Aschwanden 1987:295). The deceased is asked to move out of bush where he or she has been wandering and join other ancestors. In some places, the Shona people go into the forest to fetch a *mutuwa* tree branch, which when brought to the grave, it is believed, will bring along with it the spirit from its wanderings.

At the grave, water is poured onto the goat, with women dancing and ululating, while men will be clapping their hands. The goat must indicate the deceased's spirit acceptance, possibly by shaking off the water from its body or by urinating. If there is no reaction from the goat, this is a signal that the deceased did not accept the offer. This may be because of some anger (*shungu*) in which case another goat of anger (*mbudzi yeshungu*) should be sacrificed. The pouring process is usually repeated until the goat responds favourably. The jar of beer may take the place of the goat, where it is poured onto the grave. Whatever has been used; the jar or the goat will become the symbol of the ancestor which will be taken or led back to the homestead. The goat (*nhora*) or jar is believed to bring the spirit of the deceased into the homestead.

The goat is later sacrificed. While the meat is cooked or roasted, the bones and hooves are destroyed by fire. At the ceremony people eat food without salt. As mentioned above, salt is thought to anger the spirits, which may react by bringing misfortunes in the family. In other places the goat is tied with a black cloth on the neck and is led into the bush near the homestead, where prayers are made to invite the spirit home. The goat which now represents the deceased is escorted back into the homestead (Boudillon 1976:211).

 The blood of the sacrificed goat or the beer in the container, become symbolical signs of the ancestor's blood. At the homestead, they will pour the beer onto the ground while praying:

"Today we brought you home, this beer is your thirst and your tears" (Aschwanden 1987:297). In the hut, a family elder or medium pours the second jar of beer onto the ground while petitioning the new ancestor for care and protection. An appeal is also made to the other ancestors to accept the new ancestor.

In some places a fibre or a stem of a tree is pulled, from the grave site to the homestead, in place of the goat, for the same purpose of bringing the spirit home. During the procession from the grave site to the homestead, there will be stoppages to give rest to the spirit and millet beer is poured to quench the thirsty of the spirit. The fibre or branch is drawn into a hut and placed on a stool (mat for women); like they are welcoming a person in real life, to assume his or her lawful position in the home. This is followed by joyful celebration, eating and playing of drums. After this, the branch is then hung on the wall of the family elder's house. Some erect a grass shelter over the grave at the beginning of the ceremony, to provide a cool shade for the spirit. Some place a branch on top of the grave where beer has been poured and water has been sprinkled, to keep the spirit cool.

After the bringing home ceremony, the son provides a beast (bull for a deceased man and cow for a female) which is ritually killed according to ritual specifications. Certain specified portions of the meat are offered to the deceased's spirit (Aschwanden 1987:308). This is not always compulsory (Bourdillon 1976:209). Three portions of meat are cut to represent the three ancestral groups. The heart or portion from the breast bone stands for the clan, the portion from the cervical hump stands for the clan of the mother of the deceased and a portion from the foreleg represents the clan of the wife of the deceased. The three ancestral groups are asked to accept the new ancestral spirit, so that it is not treated as a stranger. All the three dishes are eaten together by people from the three ancestral groups. Cousins eat as much meat as they like, and because of this they are nicknamed hyenas (*mapere*) (Chabudapasi in Clive & Peggy Kilef 1970:65). Among the Karanga hyenas (*mapere*) are *vazukuru.*

A real communion between the living and the ancestors (including the new ancestor) is believed to have taken place when a spirit medium is possessed and it drinks the blood of the animal that has been sacrificed. The deceased is now introduced to his or her own ancestors and now

becomes a member of the community of ancestors. Commenting on the ceremony, Waire (2009:22-23) submits that: "… it (*kurova guva*) brings the people to eat the meal together, celebrating the salvation of the soul after its transformation to new life in the spirit. It is Easter of its own kind."

These rituals need to be meticulously performed to make sure that everything is done to specification, otherwise it will be rejected by the deceased's spirit resulting in it continuing its wanderings in the bush, and the uneasiness caused by death will keep lingering. The Shona would want to follow all the rules to keep the spirit cool and to settle it properly in the ranks of spirit elders. After the ceremony, it is assumed deceased is now present among the living, through the spirit medium that the spirit possesses. The phenomenon of possession is discussed below?

The bringing home ceremony is one of the most contentious issues when we consider the Shona culture in relation to the Christian faith. To the Shona, everyone who is born has an obligation to take care of his or her parents in this present life, and after they die. In Shona tradition, the bringing home ceremony for a deceased parent is thought to be mandatory for the living descendants, for them to lead a happy and peaceful life.

Three categories of the Shona people have been established. Firstly, there are some Shona who will meticulously observe the bringing home ceremony with reverence and fear. They are proud to bring their dead home so that they are active in their midst. They believe the ancestral spirits guide and protect them in their daily lives. One Zezuru respondent retorts: "*Ndingagorasa sei vabereki vangu, ndivo vadzimu vangu vanondichengeta*" ("How can I neglect my parents, they are my ancestral spirits who care for me"). Such people will do anything to appease and honour their living dead. The second category is those who maintain the conviction that their Christian faith is not compatible with their Shona tradition. One Shona Christian says: "*Unonozvitorera mweya yesvina kubva kumarinda inozokunetsa mangwana*" ("You will be calling evil spirits from the dead who will torment you in future"). The last category I encountered, are the Shona who are neither here nor there. They do not appeal to both the Shona tradition and the Christian faith. They have Nurnberger's (2007:10-11) modernist/postmodernist world view. They just live.

134

They do not think faith life affects them and they leave everything to chance. They have been swallowed with modernity to the extent that they think that the claims of both the Shona tradition and Christian faith are hypothetical. Most respondents in this category were between the ages of thirty to forty-five years. When I asked one Zezuru elderly man to comment he retorted: "*Mirai muone zvavachasangana nazvo pamberi apo, vachayaura*". ("Wait until they meet their fate in the near future, they are going to suffer").

4.4.3.12   Spirit possession

After the bringing home ceremony, the new ancestral spirit (*mudzimu*) is asked if it has something to say.   At this invitation possession may take place immediately or shortly afterwards. Spirits make their presence known by possessing a medium that they choose. The medium chosen becomes the mouthpiece of the spirit. Possession is not a permanent feature but irregular and discontinuous, and this may take the whole day. The deceased is honoured in the host. When the host medium is possessed he or she is made to sit on a mat and there will be a two-way communication, where the living petitions for care and guidance, and present their complaints to the ancestor. Sometimes possession does not suddenly occur, but when it eventually takes place, this is thought to be an authentication of the homecoming of the departed to his or her living descendants. Through the medium, a family spirit elder is able to interact, direct and influence the living members' lives. The presence of the dead is experienced through the medium. To the Shona, possession is of great significance in their religion. Without possession "there would be little that is practical or conducive to survival in the Shona Religion" (Gelfand 1973:133). Sometimes the spirit possesses an animal.

There are several categories of spirits that can possess a host. These include the ancestral spirits (*midzimu*) as above, witchcraft spirits (*varoyi*), avenging spirits (*ngozi*) and alien spirits (*shave*), etc. The type of spirit generally decides the host. For example, the anti-social witchcraft spirit is thought to prefer possessing women, while the fighting shave spirit (*mangoromera*) can possess both sexes. Mediums can also be categorised. For example, a traditional healer (*n'anga*) is one of the busiest mediums because possession must continue over a prolonged period as the host must

135

be under influence of the spirit throughout consultation when he or she diagnoses people's problems in line with the needs of the spiritual world.

In other occasions a deceased seeks to possess a host without being invited. The signal to such an uninvited guest may take the form of the potential host becoming persistently ill. Such sickness is thought not to heal and will not respond to modern medicine, when the potential host refuses to accept the spirit. Bourdillon (1976:239) submits that when the spirit is accepted, the host is inducted in a ceremony supervised by a senior medium that is possessed by the same class of spirit, for a fee. During the ceremony the potential host together with other practicing mediums, are possessed by the spirits. Such ceremonies may call for a lot of effort in the form of music and dance, for possession to occur in some mediums. This may involve singing right tunes which are meaningful enough to the deceased to arouse possession. If the potential host fails to fall into a trance, the senior medium may induce possession using snuff and some medical vapours. For mediums of the lion spirits (*mhondoro*), possession may take place only after some days.

When it has been confirmed that the medium is possessed, the new host is decked with ritual dress. The spirit is then interrogated. Through the medium, it should be able to categorize itself, recognize other mediums in attendance and should be able to narrate its clan history. During the period of initiation, the new host's hair is cut off, enfolded in a cloth and placed outside the homestead. This should be the last hair cut from the head of the host in his or her lifetime. A spirit can desert its human host. Beer is brewed in honour of the spirit. There are some occasions when mediums pretend they are possessed. So, spirit possession will constantly need to be subjected to strict scrutiny.

In general, hosts of senior spirit guardians are highly respected in their societies and they are usually adorned in ritual dresses all the time. Bourdillon (1976:236) says that the spirit mediums decide who becomes a chief. They also control activities of divine healers (*n'anga*) and speak the wishes of the family spirit elders and annoyed spirits. Hosts require certain type of music and dance for them to get into a trance. Here one Korekore respondent emphasized on the importance of the *mbira* instrument in communicating with the spirits.

The *mbira* is an effectual medium of communication with the spirits of ancestors and guardians. In a given spirit possession ceremony there should be a selection of special songs chosen from a wide range of spiritual arrangements. It is in the singing of these songs that the *mbira* is played as a way of inviting the spirits. The player of the *mbira* must be patient and accomplished in order to succeed in invoking a spirit to possess a medium.

Mbira is the name given to both the instrument and music. It is mystical music used to contact ancestors and tribal guardians so that they give guidance to families and communities. Matiure (2013:2) calls the instrument *mbira dzaVadzimu* (ancestor's *mbira*) which he defines as:

… a Shona traditional musical instrument that has been inherited by the Shona. From time immemorial *mbira dzaVadzimu* has been used by the Shona for both sacred and secular purposes. As such, the instrument, its music and traditional objects associated with it have become part of the cultural legacy of the Shona…

Solomon Murungu (2004)[32] gives us the Shona view of the *mbira* instrument.

The instrument's components, embody many spiritual aspects. The metal keys are made from smelted iron ore which is dug out from sacred hills and holy mountains where the Shona chiefs and Shona statesmen are buried. The keys thus personify the presence of ancestral spirits directly on the instrument. The sound board, made from a special kind of tree, *mubvamaropa*, represents a source of shelter and fuel, basic necessities in everyday Shona life. The resonator gourd or *deze*, into which the *mbira* is mounted and propped as a second level amplifier is a special type of dried squash, called *nhangatanga* or the first squash, which is a source of food. It is also used as a water container, *dende*. In its smaller form and dried, the *nhangatanga* squash is used as a drinking gourd, (*mukombe*). The instrument thus symbolizes the basic elements of everyday life in Shona. The *mbira* player adds the final and human dimension to complete a Shona social institution.

The instrument therefore pervades many features of the Shona traditional culture and their ceremonies. Matiure (2013:1) thinks that: "...the most efficacious traditional instrument performed during these ceremonies is *mbira dzaVadzimu*." It is an important way of communicating with the ancestral spirits. It is through such communication that the living get guidance on family and community issues; be it rain, harvests, healing, protection, celebrations, at funerals, homing of the spirit ceremony, etc. It was criticized by the Western missionaries because of its connection to ancestors. Many Shona consider the *mbira* to be an indispensable national gadget in Zimbabwe, which is essential for the wellbeing and prosperity of the people. Matiure (2013:9-10) further contends that:

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[32] http://www.zambuko.com/mbirapage/resource_guide/rg_index.html accessed 16/12/16

The legends have it that the instrument used to have the power to make God (*Mwari*) listen to the plight of the people and respond accordingly. History has it that one of the 1880s great chiefs named Tsuro, who was possessed by the spirit of Chaminuka, had the power to control wild animals, to make rain, and to foretell future events. The chief's power was generated from the *mbira* instrument as evidenced by the following story about the Ndebele who were sent by Lobengula to kill Tsuro: "The old chief (Tsuro) sat on a rock, calmly playing on his *mbira*. His assailants tried to stab him with their spears, but could not even wound him. Some of them had rifles and fired at him, but the bullets fell around him like hailstones, without touching him."[33]

When possessed by the spirit the host falls into a trance and will be under the control of the spirit. When exercising possession, the host will normally be adorned in a ritual dress, though not always, and usually holds ritual staff for use in the operation (usually a small axe or an animal tail). The voice of the medium normally changes to sound like the accent of the deceased when he or she was alive. At times they speak in unintelligible language, equivalent to the Christian *glossolalia*. The medium gets into postures and mannerisms similar to the ones the possessing spirit had when he or she was still alive, which may be different to the medium's usual conduct. Taking snuff usually helps to usher the host into the state of trance. The messages delivered in a trance should be free from biases because the host will not, be aware of or remember, what he or she said in that state. The message is believed to originate solely from the spiritual realm and should be honoured. On arrival of the spirit, those present clap hands to welcome it.

There are occasions when possession is impulsive and short. This usually takes place when the spirit is responding to instant eventualities where spiritual guidance will be required. In all cases, every action and word spoken by the spirit during possession should not be remembered by the medium. The host is protected by the possessing ancestor, and honouring the medium is honouring the spirit. On the other hand, there are taboos which the medium must observe (e.g. not trimming hair or not eating certain foods), of which the host should meticulously observe.

One Karanga respondent observes a general decline in spirit possession. She first participated in the *kurova guva* ceremony for her mother almost two decades ago. During that ceremony there were a lot of spirit possessions. One and a half decades later she also participated in the 'homing of the spirit' ceremony for some relatives, which witnessed not even a single spirit possession.

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[33] http://chirandu.blogspot.com/2007/06/chaminuka.html accessed 16/02/2017

The trend continued in a 2016 ceremony for another relative where there also was no spirit possession experienced at all. She attributed two reasons to this lack of possession. It may be the case that the *mbira* players were not deeply entrenched enough into the music and instrumentation, to attract the attention of the spirits. Alternatively, it may be because the people are modernising the ceremonies so that they lose their lustre and their connection with the spirits.

4.4.3.13   The inheritance ceremony (*Kugara nhaka*)

The inheritance ceremony, in which the distribution of the deceased's estate and widows are dealt with, is normally conducted soon after the *kurova guva* ceremony, although some may do it soon after burial. However, before the inheritance ceremony is done, a deceased man's widow should go through a *kudarika uta* process. In this oppressive process, the deceased's wife is made to jump over the deceased husband's knobkerries, spears and other male implements, which are laid across the house entrance. If she had any sexual intercourse after the death of her husband, she will refuse to jump over them and they will be removed. She would have sullied her late husband's property and the same would need to first undergo ritual cleansing before distribution of the property.   This is an oppressive system, as such treatment is never correspondingly applied to widowers. No beneficiary should supervise the distribution of the property.

The properties of a deceased woman are usually distributed to her kith and kin from her maternal home. A man's belongings, according to the Shona thinking, include the wife, his name, his position and possessions. Customarily the deceased man's name and position goes to the eldest son, but his position as leader of the extended family goes to his younger brother. Living widows of the deceased are expected to accept an inheritor as their husband. However, a widow may decide to object to all relatives of her deceased husband. If she hands the dish/cup given to her, to her son, this shows that she prefers staying single in her home where she will look after her children, with the help of her late husband's spirit. In such cases the marriage will be dissolved.

To accept an inheritor, the widow drinks water or millet beer from a cup offered to her at the ceremony, and passes on the cup to the inheritor of her choice. The potential inheritor will in turn

sip and pass the cup to the in-laws, who also sip to approve their daughter's acceptance of her new husband. In other places they use a dish of water instead of a cup. The inheritor is then encouraged to carefully carry out duties he has accepted. The inheritor is then in charge of the proper distribution of the deceased's estate and liabilities.

4.4.3.14   Hearthstones (*Chimutsamapfihwa*)

Before a woman's *kurova guva* ceremony is finalised, the father or brother of the deceased woman, through the assistance of the deceased's spirit, may offer a sister or niece of the deceased (a brother's daughter) to the widower. The deceased woman's spirit usually possesses the sister or niece, and speaks in the accent of the dead woman. In summary the message is: 'you cannot leave my children alone'. These are joyous occasions where people present commemorate the arrival of the deceased back to her children. The possessed woman replaces the deceased and becomes the new wife. The husband pays no lobola, except a few essentials. The new wife is officially welcomed in the home and she can use the deceased's utensil which up until now have been prohibited and locked in the granary.

In the event that no one is possessed, a dice oracle may be consulted to check if the deceased wishes hearthstones (*chimutsamapfihwa*) to be replaced. If positive, the living husband can stimulate the deceased wife, through prayers, to cause problems, such as illness in one of her consanguine's family, until the husband is given an opportunity to select a girl from his in-laws' family.

4.5 Other Spirits

Besides the ancestral spirits, there are other spirits which the Shona believe are at work in their lives. These are believed to come both, invited and uninvited.

4.5.1   Alien spirits (*mashave*)

These are nomadic spirits of outsiders who died away from their homes. Because they died away from home, proper burial rituals were not performed on their death and so they are not included into the ancestral community. They include spirits of persons who died before they were married, and consequently, for whom the bringing home ceremony (*kurova guva*) was not celebrated, leaving the spirit homeless, wandering around and restless, and this is why they turn into wandering alien spirits (*mashave*). Because they would have been discarded by their own people, the spirits will need to find a new dwelling place for themselves, thereby turning into *shave* spirits. The Shona word *shave* is derived from *kushava* which has connotations of searching. Such spirits wander around in search of a host. If they find a potential host, they cause sickness to the person to make their presence known (Murphree 1969:51). There will be no known living family members, so they try to find habitation in strangers not connected to them. Alien spirits include spirits of people in the neighbourhood, spirits of white people (*shave rechizungu*) and animal spirits (Bourdillon 1976:242). There is no prior information relating to the deceased stranger's life or the animal's life. The spirits cannot be identified or traced by mediums in the neighbourhood.

For Aschwanden (1987:33-4), alien spirits include spirits of those people who were evil in their lifetime, such as witches. The Shona say these are spirits of those people not accepted by God or by the ancestral community. So, they will wander around as evil spirits, lonely and thirsty. They can bring worthless and socially disruptive talents like theft, promiscuity and witchcraft. Most *shave* spirits are more aligned to individual conduct. Many societies usually chase these spirits away.

An ancestral spirit can also be taken as a *shave* spirit if it conveys special aptitudes and talents to its host. However, many Shona distinguish between the two because many perceive a *shave* as a miserable spirit. One spirit can be an ancestral spirit (*mudzimu*) in one medium and a *shave* transmitting special skills, in another family member (Aschwanden 1987:35). Because they are alien, *shave* spirits choose their potential hosts at random. Once received, they will fight to remain in the family. On the death of a host, the spirit is normally transmitted to one of the living kin as the spirit endeavours to remain in the family. These spirits should be honoured intermittently with millet beer.

141

After a *shave* spirit identifies a potential host and makes its presence known, there will be need to perform given rituals as a way of the host accepting the alien spirit. A person possessing a talent or an attribute above that of an ordinary human being (e.g. in fighting, hunting, dancing, playing the *mbira* instrument, healing) is thought to have attained it through either the alien or ancestral spirits. The skills or talents are believed to be received from a *shave* spirit and not inherited. Once possessed, the host does unusual things (Gelfand 1973:129-130). In some Shona places, all unique skills are ascribed to spirits. Such spirits are privately honoured and they do not normally possess their hosts (Bourdillon 1976:243). Aschwanden (1987:35) calls these *shave renyama* (alien spirit of the body) where the host is not possessed but just inherits peculiar talents. A host may be obsessed by two or more *shave* spirits. This may put too much pressure on the host who may fail to fulfil demands from the different spirits, and the results may be lethal.

The host of a dancing *shave* spirit frequently holds a dancing séance to mollify the spirit. This is a highly entertaining momentous occasion with a lot of beer drinking, music and dance. The ceremony is usually held in a period when food supply is plentiful. In some cases, it is performed because the possessing spirit would have demanded it, in form of sickness or divination.

Baboon spirits, which usually possess males, feature prominently in these possession cults and are linked to healing or hunting skills, although they are primarily for entertainment. When they are not dancing, possessed hosts act like baboons. They climb trees or look for scorpions from beneath stones to consume. There are several other alien spirits including the *shave renjuzu* (alien spirits from water creatures). The *shave renjuzu* spirit is acclaimed for its healing and divination powers (Bourdillon 1976:244-245). Mwandayi (2011:244) questions the connection between the *njuzu* spirit, the living members and the living dead.

> What I could not establish, however, is how ZINATHA verifies claims of people who say that they got their healing gift from these *njuzu* spirits since they appear to be extraordinary spirits which hardly have connections with people living on the land.

4.5.2 Avenging/Angry spirits (*Ngozi*)

An avenging spirit (*ngozi*) is an irate spirit of a person who was murdered or someone who died with a complaint. Some Shona maintain that the *ngozi* spirit is not an evil spirit, but it is a spirit of an aggrieved person (Mpofu *et al* 2002). Its aim is to seek vengeance on the family that killed him or her, regardless of the fact that the murder was deliberate or not. It can bring sudden revenge on the people who offended the deceased while he or she was still alive. This may take the form of: family members dying one after another, serious fights within an extended family, shocking misfortunes, poverty, breakdown of a united family etc. When the angry spirit of the departed comes, it will torture the perpetrators of the offense and their extended families. The usual way forward is for the family to seek advice from a diviner, to diagnose the source of the misfortune, and to recommend a necessary action to appease the spirit. This does not guarantee that the spirit will be fully satisfied though.

If a child scolds or beats a parent, the resultant avenging spirit may only cause sickness or suffering, not death, to the person who committed the crime (Gelfand 1973:122). The spirit may make its presence known by manifesting itself through a related person. It will identify itself and spell out the cause of anger and the required remedial action. The process for mollifying the spirit may entail a long and expensive procedure which the offender or his or her family will have to go through. This may include undergoing public penance known as *kutanda bosto*; an intense form of self-humiliation.

> *Botso* (self-shaming) is an institution that is used to appease for intra-family wrongdoing, usually when a child abuses a parent. As a transitional justice mechanism, *botso* works in that it allows the whole community to know the truth as the process involves the perpetrator wandering around the community telling every person he or she meets the wrongs that they committed. (Benyera 2014:339).

This is, more often than not, the case when an annoyed spirit of a departed mother requires the child who offended her to disgrace self by dressing in rags and roving in the village pleading for grain to perform a ceremony in the late mother's honour. A beast should be slaughtered at the ceremony and the perpetrator is not allowed to participate in the ceremony.

Angry spirits may work in partnership with witches. The malevolent spirits are pressed to cause troubles without any just reason. However, the Shona differentiate between angry spirits and

143

spirits of witchcraft. It is wise therefore not to incite someone into an avenging spirit either before death; through ill treatment or murder, say, or after death; through failure to distribute the deceased's property or failure to perform proper burial rituals say. As a result of this, the Shona seek to perform funerary ceremonies, to the book, in fear of arousing angry spirits (Bourdillon 1976:234).

Services of a diviner may be necessary in the process of soothing angry spirits. This calls for a diviner who is an expert in the field of dealing with avenging spirits. Murder cases may call for a payment of a large herd of cattle. Angry spirits of departed fathers may require sacrifice of two to three beasts to appease the spirit. Magezi and Myambo (2011:166) insist that: *"... ngozi* of a murdered person cannot be exorcised", payment is the way.

Besides the spirit returning on its own to revenge, the family of the murdered person may arouse the avenging spirit against the people who committed the offense. Benyera (2015:6762) asserts that:

> However, in order for *ngozi* to function, it must first be invoked. There are various explanations regarding how *ngozi* is invoked… *ngozi* is not in-born and therefore it does not happen automatically. Certain 'things' have to happen for it to take place. These include the invoking or summoning of the deceased's spirit to return and fight the perpetrators as in most cases, it will be the deceased who knows exactly who killed them.

The services of a diviner may also be called for here, or some rituals are performed at the grave of the deceased, to stimulate the departed's spirit to take justifiable action. In this case what is justifiable to the avenging family may turn out to be witchcraft to the offending family. An avenging spirit seeks to kill, steal and destroy.

4.6 Interaction between the living and the dead

Like any other African traditional religion, in the Shona religion there is regular and consistent interface between the living family members and the 'living dead'. Interacting with the dead takes a large portion of the Shona life. Ceremonies such as the *kurova guva*, the rain making (*mukwerere*), and rituals in honour and appeasement of ancestral and *shavi* spirits, are carried out

as an appeal to spiritual powers against illnesses, diseases, droughts, dangers, misfortunes, death and all issues that threaten the welfare of the living. Rituals in honour of *mudzimu*, or *shavi* spirits may be done as a reaction to a catastrophe, misfortune or recurrent and complex illness (Shoko 2007:87-88).

4.6.1   Rituals of honour

The living and the 'living dead' interact daily on a spiritual level. However, this relationship is experienced in the physical. Life of the departed is understood to be an expression of the life of the living i.e. there is a similarity of what takes place after death when compared to what was happening before a person died. Mbiti (1971:157) asserts that the current world is a reflection of life after death. The Shona people believe the dead are within the vicinity of the living; their abode is around the dwelling places of the living (Mbiti 1970:257). This makes the dead, part of the living family members. The aspirations of the dead, and the way they communicate them, are believed to be comprehensible to the living. The spirit world is physicalized. Canaan Banana (1991:81) calls the deceased, the 'living timeless' who time after time interrelate with the living, especially after the *kurova guva* ceremony. Bourdillon (1976:230) contends that interaction with the spiritual realm connects the living with the past, whereby people are pleased that they are in sync with preceding traditions of their ancestors. The deceased should be honoured in a way which they taught their descendants.

One mode of interaction is where the Shona perform rituals in honour of ancestral spirits annually. The other interaction takes place in the cases of misfortunes such as complex illness or death. The custom for reverence of the deceased thus arises because there will be need to ward off trouble. These rituals are performed to petition the ancestral spirits, especially for security and provision. Before the bringing home (*kurova guva*) ceremony, the spirit of the dead are thought to be dangerous and are therefore feared. Once settled by the bringing home ceremony, the spirit of the deceased becomes an ancestral spirit which from then on is considered as a friendly spirit elder who joins the community of the living. It is such a spirit which requires regular rituals of honour. The 'living dead' are believed by the Shona to be mediators between God and the living. The 'living dead' are thought to be bestowed with supernatural powers which

145

they use to look after the living family members. The relationship that exists between the two calls for each party to do its share to maintain the relationship. Each party must carry out its obligations to the relationship. Through ritual sacrifices, the living family members honour the departed and recognize communion between them, while the ancestors cater for the well-being of the living. Constant and regular communication between the dead and the living guarantees long-lasting remembrance of the dead, who in turn protect the living. The Shona believe that as long as they are honoured and remembered their ancestors do not grow old.

The honour is addressed to the deceased head of the family spirit. Such rituals are thought to foster unity, good character, protection and longevity of the family. Services of a medium of the ancestral spirit are useful here, because he or she is the one who passes on the message of the ancestral spirit to the living descendants.

The spirit is offered the millet beer in a small container and where it is told of the ritual in its honour. This is accompanied by the usual petition for protection, and complaints for any negligence by the ancestors. Men and women will rhythmically clap their hands in appreciation to their answered prayers. This will be the beginning of a ceremony that will see people celebrate through drinking beer, music and dancing the night away.

A spirit elder may also be honoured by offering a bull or a black goat to the spirit. The dedicated animal becomes an agent that represents the spirit elder and it is given the name of the departed. It is the responsibility of the living to notify the bull/spirit of any changes that take place regarding cattle or goats possessed by the family. The living head of the family usually addresses the spirit elder through the bull or goat. At times the spirit elder may ask for the beast that has been offered to it to be slaughtered in its honour. If this happens, there will be need to replace the beast by another one. The same will happen if the beast dies a natural death.

Where an animal is needed for sacrifice, it is first dedicated to the spirit elder. It is then slaughtered and small portion of meat is roasted and offered to the spirit in prayer. After the portion is eaten, the remaining meat is cooked and eaten together with beer, ritually prepared for the event. After the meat ritual, beer is presented to quench the thirst of the spirit. The

ceremonies are usually conducted under a *muchakata* (*parinari curatellifolia*) tree or in the main hut of the living family head (Gelfand 1973:136).

Alien spirits, which are homeless and restlessly wandering around, and have no known living descendants, may also require rituals of honour and somewhere to live, in their endeavour to possess a person they are not related to.

4.6.2   Rituals at tribal level

There are four major ceremonies that should be performed each year for the Shona god and for ancestors.   These are the festival to bless the seed, to secure rain, the festival for first fruit thanksgiving and the harvest thanksgiving festival.   Rituals are celebrated in honour of the tribal lion (*mhondoro*) spirits on these festivals or when there is a crisis.

The festival to sanctify the seed is directed and coordinated by a chief. He gathers a variety of seeds and takes a basketful of the seeds to the tribe's principal medium - the medium of the *mhondoro* (lion) spirits. Prayers are made to the ancestors for a high-quality harvest and for safeguarding the fields. People then go back to their homes with a few seed to combine with their seed (Aschwanden 1989:225).

Around April, a thanksgiving festival is conducted in honour of the *mhondoro* sprits, to start the consumption of the new crop.   No produce from the fields should be consumed prior to this thanksgiving ceremony.   At the ritual service, the tribal medium spills beer onto the top soil of the ancestral sacred place called *mutoro* and this is accompanied by prayers.   The first fruits of the crop are dedicated. These will be given to the underprivileged and children afterwards. This is followed by the harvest thanksgiving festival usually celebrated around the month of September.   At the festival people will march to the shrine. Leading the procession will be someone holding a black sheep, behind him or her, will be the medium and the chief, followed by the rest of the group.   The chief's sisters or aunts trail at the end of the procession.   At the shrine the usual follows; prayers, singing and dance. The music will invite the *mhondoro* spirit which will possess the medium to instruct the community as to the way forward.   The sheep is

then slaughtered, and beer, meat and tobacco are presented to the spirit (Aschwanden 1989:226-227). Today the thanksgiving festivals and the festival to bless the seed are rarely performed. For example, seed is bought from shops without any reference to the spirits.

One of the most important festivals is celebrated to ask for good rains for the impending season. This ceremony is conducted in a hut sacred to the *mhondoro* spirit, which has been built on the outskirts of the village, and where the medium dwells. It is here that beer ritually brewed is poured into sacred pots found in the shrine. Murphree (1969:46) calls these *rushanga*, while in other Shona places it is called *mutoro*. Every family is expected to donate grain towards the preparation of the millet beer. The beer will be ritually prepared. The spirit guardian is told of the ceremony to be held in its honour. Every family should be represented at the festival. This promotes a spirit of harmony and togetherness. The day of celebration is a *chisi* and no one in the area should work the fields on the day (Bourdillon1976:261). The ceremony goes to the peak when the chief and the medium arrive at the festival. In the evening there is beer drinking, singing and dance throughout the night. Possession of the medium normally occurs in the early hours of the morning. The possessed medium is then given petitions from the people.

Some places use the services of rain priests, who are experts in the field, at the Matopos. The possessed rain priest usually goes into the forest during the ceremony and comes back carrying a puff udder. He or she plays with the snake and dances with it. Rain is expected to fall after this ceremony (Aschwanden 1989:250). This issue of rain is of paramount importance and this is why in many Shona places there are rain priests called *manyusa* (singular: *nyusa*) chosen to arbitrate between god/ancestors and people. Traditional leaders normally organize the rain making ceremonies in their areas of jurisdiction. According to Benyera (2014:342), at the rain making festival, the land is cleansed of shed blood and any other offences, so that it is capable of receiving the blessings of peace, rain and bumper harvests. The ceremonies re-join and unite the societies with their ancestors.

The procedure for becoming a rain priest is an arduous one. Trainees are appointed and initiated by a voice from a cave at the Matopos. After this initial procedure, there will be singing and dancing to draw the attention of a *jukwa* spirit to come and possess the rain spirit mediums.

148

These are believed to be either spirits of the deceased or they come down directly from the heavens (*varikudenga)* or from the pool (*njuzu)* spirit. When the rain priest returns home, he or she becomes an express envoy from god, who informs people on impending weather patterns and advises on the suitable type of seed to be sown (Aschwanden 1989:233-5)

The spirits may also be appealed to in the case of misfortunes of whole community. Animal sacrifices may be necessary when the community performs special rituals for drought, epidemics or crises. The spirit, through its medium, makes known the reason for the misfortunes, which would have arisen because of violations of customs such as incest, working on a *chisi* (a day dedicated to the lion spirit) etc. The perpetrator of the crime is usually punished. The other rituals which must be performed for territorial lion spirits are as follows: (i) there are prescribed days (*chisi*) which are devoted to the spirits. On such days no person is allowed to cultivate the land, (ii) consultation of the territorial spirits to get consent to erect a building or a dam in the area, (iii) some ceremonies in honour of the *mhondoro* in catastrophic occasions like epidemic diseases or where crops are plagued by insects.

A dead chief's spirit may become a powerful lion spirit (*mhondoro*) of the chiefdom. When a chief is buried, a hollow reed is put on the ear of the deceased and is made to stick out of the grave to the outside. The open end is closed with a leaf which if blown off overnight, the deceased's spirit, it is thought, will soon reveal itself as lion spirit (*mhondoro*). It is a Shona belief that such spirits possess young lions, which will play near the grave from where the spirit emanated. The animals so possessed are believed to be harmless unless otherwise provoked. These incidents are very rare today. The lion spirit also wanders around until it finally enters a human medium. Most lion spirits will manifest themselves through mediums. Both the spirit and the medium are called wild lion (*mhondoro*). The medium must roar like a lion. Lion spirits are related to strength and fearlessness of a lion, and they are guardians of the societies (Bourdillon 1976:253).

Becoming a *mhondoro* spirit medium is almost similar to becoming a medium of an ancestral spirit. The potential medium usually experiences dreams relating to the past, becomes ill, roams around and acts like an animal. The lion spirit's presence in a medium can only be established

by a *n'anga*. The lion spirit can also make its ambitions, to manifest itself in a potential host, known when lions are seen wandering around the residence of a potential medium. However, possession by a lion spirit is not taken at face value. Potential mediums undergo painstaking tests by a senior medium of the region and/or a diviner. The test includes being able to give a convincing description of the life of the spirit, the burial place of the spirit, the spirit's territory etc. Bourdillon (1976:265) asserts that an authentic medium of a lion spirit should also be able to drink warm blood of a sacrificial beast without vomiting and/or dying. When the medium is successful in all the mandatory tests, it is initiated by the senior spirit medium. The Shona believe any impostors feigning possession by a lion spirit, will sooner or later die. The same applies if two people claim to be medium of one spirit; one will eventually die in a short time.

Murphree (1969:44) contends that the term *mhondoro* mainly refers to a respected ancient spirit of the chief's ancestry, which usually manifest through a renowned medium and are classified according to their genealogical seniority. However, some of the highest and most powerful lion spirits, are not linked to mortal existence, and may not be spirits of tribal ancestors. They are thought to emanate from the high god who gives rise to the *Mwari* cult. The function of such lion spirits is mainly to take care of the affairs of the tribe, its land and the chief, especially in terms of rain, soil fertility, epidemics, or other tribal challenges.

In central Shona there are lion spirits which do not arise from chiefly families. However, lion spirits of chiefly families are more prestigious than the spirits of common people. The spirits descending from chiefly families are guardians of the total chiefdom or territories which they represent.

To conclude this tribal section the writer found interesting Bourdillon's observations on the Shona view of the high god (*Mwari*) and its interaction with the living and the dead:

> The Shona rarely speak about the high God and in most Shona country no attempt is made to communicate with him or to influence his actions either by imprecations or ritual. The high God is however, believed to be some personal being above and more powerful than lion spirits, even such spirits as Chaminuka are ultimately subjected to the high God … Far removed from the family spirit elders who are intimately concerned with the private affairs of their descendants, the high God is too remote and his interests are too broad for him to concern

himself with private individual and their problems … Mwari is believed to be too remote to be concerned even with the spirit elders of a family but the Shona believe that the more important lion spirits can communicate with him. (Bourdillon 1976:277-278).

Mwandayi (2011:63) submits that there is a belief, among the Shona, in a 'world above' which is the dwelling place of the high god. The god is given various names, *Mwari* (God), *Musiki* (Creator), *Nyadenga* (Owner of the Heavens), *Dzivaguru* (Great Pool) etc. The Shona also perceive a 'human world' which is their physical location here on earth. Thirdly, there is the 'underworld' (*varipasi*) which is normally linked to the dead, as well as with evil forces. These worlds get connected through various rituals.

The lion spirits are thought to be able to influence *Mwari* to allow rain to fall in their chiefdom. A national or international drought (e.g. the 1970 drought) is usually ascribed to the high god rather than to territorial lion spirits.

> The high God appears to be relevant to the thought of most traditional Shona only in order to explain events which fall outside the domain of the usual spiritual causes, whether because they are too widespread, too trivial or common, or too terrifying. Outside the context of such events, the high God remains unknown and unknowable, and too remote to be interested in troubles of men or to be influenced by their imprecations. (Bourdillon 1976:278)

Certain greater lion spirits are confused and/or merged with the high god. The Mutota medium acknowledged no spirit greater than him and claimed to have the attributes of a high god.

> The oracle at Matonjeni has shown itself antagonistic to Christianity, both to mission churches and to the new independent churches that have grown up in Karanga country, on the grounds that these turn people away from honouring their ancestors in the traditional way…nevertheless, the cult with its network of spirit mediums to support oracle retains a stronghold in the southern Shona country, and its officials can occasionally demand the obedience even of Christians through threats of drought and death. (Bourdillon 1976:281-2).

I will later analyze these Shona views about their high God.

4.7 The place of the traditional healer in the Shona society.

Gelfand (1964:55) asserts that a traditional healer (*n'anga*) is central to the Shona traditional religion:

> He is doctor in sickness, a priest in religious matters, a lawyer in legal issues, a policeman in detection and prevention of crime, a possessor of magical preparations which can increase crops and instil special skills and talents into his clients.

A *n'anga* is believed by the Shona to be someone who is well qualified in diagnosing the unknown. The basis of his or her authority arises from his or her relationship with ancestral spirits or the *shave* cults, especially the revered *njuzu* spirit, or his or her talents as an herbalist, which may also be stimulated by the an alien (*shave*) spirit. The source may depend on how the *n'anga* was initiated into the profession. There are a variety of ways of becoming *n'anga*. It may be through possession by a *shave* spirit. In some cases, the profession is inherited, where it is passed down to an offspring through dreams etc. (Murphree 1969:53). It is common to have a mixture of the above.

The potential host of the spirit usually starts by having dreams whereby he or she will be practicing as a *n'anga*. Persistent illness, which cannot be healed, may follow the dreams. This is a call which the potential host should answer positively. The potential *n'anga* then undergoes on-job training under the supervision of a skilled *n'anga*. Others however, are not taught the trade; instead they are taught the art by the spirit, usually through dreams, where they are shown the physical site where herbs are located in the bush and the nature of ailments they cure. The spirits can also make known information, pertaining to the future or on challenges confronting the clients.

The following discussion briefly analyses the routes a person may take to become a traditional healer (*n'anga*). The commonest, as mentioned above, is spirit possession. A potential *n'anga* is possessed by a spirit of a deceased ancestor who was a healer/diviner during her or his life time, or is possessed by a healing *shave* (alien) spirit. There should be a relationship between deceased and the potential host. This is true only for ancestral spirits. In the case of possession by a *shave* spirit, where no one knows where they come from, it has to be shown that it is a *shave* spirit that wants to possess the host. As mentioned above the potential host is usually attacked by an

incurable illness. On consulting a traditional healer this sick person is advised to accept the divining/healing spirit for him/her to be healed.

Once the potential host accepts, the rituals that are performed should result in the full recovery from the illness. The recovery confirms that a divining/healing spirit desires to possess a potential host. The potential host is then extensively examined by a senior *n'anga* and goes through a similar testing procedure like that of a spirit medium. This examination is needed for the potential host to be received by the whole society as indisputable, and for its activities to be thriving and worthwhile (Gelfand 1964:56). The examination may take a number of years to complete.

The other method of becoming a *n'anga* is by apprenticeship. This is usually the case when an active *n'anga* chooses a family member to take over his or her line of work during his or her lifetime. Such a potential *n'anga* will understudy the profession by accompanying the qualified *n'anga* as he or she attends to clients and during the process of identifying and sourcing herbs in the bush. This on-job training is meant to equip the trainee with expertise to identify and name: herbs, insects, birds, snakes and animals which have properties which are valuable as traditional medicine. The trainee is kept under a watchful eye as he or she identifies some herbs and administers them to patients. This is a progressive study which develops from attending minor cases to more serious cases.

To be a fully-fledged *n'anga*, the procedure of spirit possession and scrutiny follows. A trainee of the well-known Herbal College of Pretoria, for instance, may only become a herbalist and not a *n'anga*. In my opinion it may not be sustainable to completely exclude the spiritual element in this kind of training a *n'anga*. Pure herbalists whose authority is not sourced from spirits may fall short of being a genuine *n'anga*. In practice, most herbalists are under the spell of some spirits which motivate and drive them, although some may not go as far as being possessed by a spirit, in the Shona traditional sense. There are also many who are able to divine with dices. These strictly speaking, may not fit into the *n'anga* category. They use the same apparatus like those used by an expert *n'anga*, such as seed shells, bones and dicers, but they only attend to less serious issues. The probability of giving incorrect diagnosis of the problem is high in the use of

dices. They may end up prescribing unreliable solutions. To be successful, a n'anga has to be a host to some spirit (ancestral, alien or *njuzu*), so training alone may not suffice (Bourdillon 1976:156).

The third avenue of becoming a n'anga is when a person is taken by a *njuzu* (mermaid) spirit (water spirit) to be trained under water. A potential host disappears into the water for several days. When such an incident occurs, the Shona do not mourn the person who would have disappeared, as that may cause the *njuzu* spirits to kill him or her. This was confirmed by one Karanga respondent who reported of a death, in their area, of a man who had disappeared at a pool; where family members mourned and the person was later found dead by the river bank. The potential host will appear from beneath the water with the powerful attributes of a *n'anga*. Occasionally the *n'anga* may visit the water world to enhance his or her divination and healing powers. This route of becoming a *n'anga* is highly esteemed among the Shona, which accords the hosts with high respect. Gelfand (1964:61) says that some of the most famous *n'anga* among the Shona are possessed by the *njuzu* spirits that emanate from the Pungwe River, in the Eastern Highlands.

After going through apprenticeship training and/or ancestral, alien, or mermaid spirit possession, most Shona will perform an induction ceremony which marks the beginning of the new *n'anga*'s career. This is celebrated under the guidance of a senior *n'anga*. The healing/divining spirit is honoured through brewing millet beer and pouring libation. There will be music and dance throughout the night. The ceremony will be concluded by the hair cutting rituals. The *n'anga* is then passed out to start operating with no one overseeing him or her (Bourdillon 1976:166).

The possessing healing spirits are normally honoured yearly with millet beer. An experienced *n'anga* is only required to grace the celebration, as a guest of honour, on the first ceremony. On the ceremonies that follow he or she will be taken as an equal. In return for the honour and appreciation given by the host, the healing or divining spirits, which are the source of the *n'anga*'s expertise, guarantee assistance. After initiation, the *n'anga* will need to build his or her own reputation and goodwill, as success is determined by results. A successful record in healing

or divining is an essential testimonial. Shona people want to see results in order to believe in a n'anga.

A *n'anga* diagnoses and treats inexplicable diseases, especially those which do not respond to modern scientific medicine. Most of such illnesses are caused by witches, sorcerers, ancestral spirits, avenging spirits and alien spirits. All these are associated with the spirits of the dead. A *n'anga* also prescribes preventative medicine against witchcraft, determines what the spirit world needs and the requisite action that must be taken. The *n'anga* uses dices to understand the message of ancestors, especially in cases of death, misfortune or illnesses. Dreaming, visions or inspiration by the possessing spirit are also important tools of a *n'anga*. Furthermore, a *n'anga* foretells what will happen in future, forces evil doers to put right their crimes, establishes causes of death, interprets dreams and some, against the Zimbabwean law, identify witches (Murphree 1969:53).

Murphree further lays down two main diagnostic techniques which a *n'anga* may employ in ascertaining causes of misfortune. The first is the use of divining dices (*hakata*). Divining dices are usually half shells of certain fruit seed, curved wood, bones or ivory. The divining dices are thrown into the air, and the way they land on to the ground is interpreted in accordance with certain standardized procedures (Murphree 1969:54). A professional *n'anga* is skilful in the way he or she manipulates the dices and interprets them for a given situation. Underlying these skills is the spirit behind the divination. This is usually a spirit of a deceased ancestor who was a n'anga in his or her lifetime, a *shave* spirit or a *njuzu* spirit. The possessing spirit is thought to be the one that diagnoses the troubles. This host should therefore be in a trance. The explanation of the throws of the divining dices is subjective and the *n'anga* does not divulge the method used to interpret the throws.

The second technique is the one involving spirit possession. The source of the host's inspiration is spirit possession. Many *n'anga* employ both divining dices and spirit possession. However, there are some who are solely dependent on spirit possession and do not use divining dices. *N'anga* will need an assistant to receive fees and perform rituals such as clapping of hands in prayer to the spirit or passing of snuff to host etc. These rituals will assist in stirring up

155

possession. The host usually puts on his or her ritual attire, while in some instances music and dance may be necessary.

Once the *n'anga* is possessed, the requests of the client are presented, through the assistant, to the *n'anga* who will be in a trance. The *n'anga* will make a diagnosis of the problem, lay down solutions and give answers to questions. Such possession may prevail for some hours. The spirit will speak sporadically while the diviner will be in full trance. When the spirit eventually dispossesses, this is manifested by repeated yawning and stretching by the *n'anga*. The *n'anga* should not remember anything that transpired while in a trance (Bourdillon 1976:157).

Bourdillon (1976:152) submits that a good and authentic *n'anga* should tell the client the problems she or he is encountering, and progressively unearth the truth of her or his situation. The *n'anga* should have foreknowledge of the issue, usually through dreams and even information on how much fees they brought him or her. Showing that the *n'anga* knows the motive for their visit before he or she is told gives the consulting clients assurance in the *n'anga*'s capability.

However, this may not be the reality on the ground for the majority *n'anga*, as the client is normally required to inform the diviner everything pertaining to his or her life. This includes relationships, rivals, historical experiences, etc., to allow the *n'anga* to establish how the client is interacting with spirit guardians. The diviner then identifies likely causes of calamity or illness. These may be anti-social acts of witches, disregard of obligatory rituals which offended ancestors, disregard of particular requirements by the spirits etc. He or she then lays down remedial rituals/action to be undertaken (Bourdillon 1976:158).

There are also less common methods used by *n'anga* in performance of their duties, which may be worth mentioning here. The first one, alluded to by Gordon Chavhunduka (1994:72-73), uses a magical video screen, which is shown on a bare wall in a dark room. Here the parties seeking help are able to see secrets of what actually happened when a calamity like death, illness, loss, etc., occurred. The second technique is employed to detect if there is any witchcraft present. The *n'anga* administers what is called *muteyo* to the community. *Muteyo* is a concoction put

together by the *n'anga* which when people drink, will vomit if they are not guilty. All the guilty would immediately suffer from diarrhoea and may even die. *N'anga* may also offer medicine which will stop people from doing undesirable social acts such as infidelity, witchcraft or incest. Such medicine, like fidelity charm (*runyoka*) is familiar among the Shona. Use of this medicine may result in the adulterers failing to separate, after having sex. They would remain stuck in the sexual activity until they have been apprehended and the *n'anga* has been called to reverse effects of the medicine.

Bourdillon (1976:160) says there are some *n'anga* who specialize in divining while, others specialize in herbals. In the case of a misfortune, it is common for a *n'anga* to establish the spiritual reason for the misfortune and to stipulate ways to mollify the spirit to prevent further catastrophes. Besides preventing the misfortune, it is expedient to make good the mishap again. For example, in the case of illness, after making amends on the wrong that caused the sickness, the disease itself has to be cured. It is here that the *n'anga* may refer the client to herbalist or to modern medicine.

The roles of a *n'anga* tend to be very flexible because of the diversity of activities they carry out and the several sources of their power. In the normal execution of their duties, they will try hard to observe customary norms and ideals of their societies (Murphree 1969:55)

4.8 Witchcraft among the Shona

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines a witch as: (in fiction and folk traditions) "A person (especially a woman) who is credited with having usually malignant supernatural powers" or "… a practitioner of witchcraft …"[34], while the Collins dictionary defines a witch as: "…someone who claims to have magic powers and to be able to use them for good or bad purposes."[35] The word witch has therefore been given various meanings. The word is not limited to women. Writers such as Bourdillon (1976:180; 1977:201) and Gelfand (1973) use the word witch to refer to both men and women. In this study the word witch will be used to refer to refer to both sexes.

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[34] https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/witch accessed 15/12/2018
[35] https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/witch. accessed 15/12/2018

There are some skills among the traditional Shona which are ascribed to spirits of the deceased. One such skill is witchcraft, which is thought to be stimulated by malevolent spirits of the departed. Bourdillon (1976:176) argues that:

> The most powerful witches are believed to be hosts to evil ancestral spirits or to *mashave* (alien spirits) just as the best diviners and healers are believed to be aided by healing spirits ... the physical powers of the witch and the powers of the attendant spirits are closely associated.

Such ancestral spirits or alien spirits are the sources of the witch's power and they may even make the host speak when he or she is possessed. The spirit may perform some evil acts against the will of the host but the host still remains accountable. In a case study I conducted on witchcraft, the host, a niece, who had the same name with the aunt, was refusing to accept the spirit of witchcraft. The aunt was adamant that the niece must join the trade, against her choice. The aunt insisted 'you cannot refuse when you are the bearer of my name'. The spirit of witchcraft made the girl hot tempered, cheeky and physically strong when she went into trance. Because of the niece's refusal, the aunt resorted to force and coercion. This took the form of strange persistent illnesses, inexplicable trances, fainting, fasting, etc. Sometimes her feet were twisted sideward, instead of facing down, resulting in the girl failing to walk, or her body would itch all over. Prayer would instantly reverse these intermittent attacks and bring temporal relief, but total healing and freedom was not achieved. When they went out to perform their nefarious acts of killing people and eating human flesh, she could go for over a week without taking any food. She could lie prostrate, for dead, for a full day. This also happened on the day of her water baptism. She fell prostrate until the time of going to Church. It took intense prayer and divine intervention to wake her up. When she eventually woke up, she went into a trance and was violent right through the three hour Church service. At the baptismal service, she was very violent and it took two men to immerse her into water. Soon after the baptism she came back to her normal self. She later reported that at the time of baptism her aunt was mysteriously heavily wounded on the back and the aunt cried - *wandiurayirei kudaro nhai mwana wehanzvadzi yangu?* (Why have you killed me my brother's daughter?).

The aunt would wake her up at night by calling her name. Because she was refusing to wake up at night, for the profession, the aunt used various techniques to wake her up. One method was to

158

impersonate some other person's voice. The moment she responded to the voice, she would be forced to wake up against her will and join them in their errands. The other method used was to throw a big snake at her. The moment she was scared by the snake, she would wake up and automatically join them.

Witches cooperate to form a society of cultic collusion which finds pleasure in inflicting harm to others. After waking up at night they go to chosen places, where they gather, dance and eat human flesh. They normally meet other witches at chosen places where they sing and dance before doing their anti-social acts. In one incident the writer witnessed, around 8pm, the girl falling into a trance after a prayer. She then started chewing but there was nothing in her mouth. When asked, the girl responded she was eating human flesh at a place over 250 kilometres away. On intense prayer the girl got back to normal. However, in spite of all the efforts applied, the girl was not completely delivered from the spirit of witchcraft. Just when we thought we were about to break loose the spirit of witchcraft the girl relocated to some distant place.

Another incident that the writer witnessed concerning the spirit of witchcraft working against the will of the host was in the writer's extended family. The mother and father are both confessed witches. The couple had several children, but only one bread winner, a teacher. The spirits of witchcraft forced the parents to kill their only bread winner, leaving the entire family in abject poverty. On the funeral, mourners could hear the mother crying "I did not want to eat my daughter, they forced me, and they said it is my turn". Although the parents were responsible and accountable for the death of their daughter, it is the spirits that forced them to perform the nefarious act against their will.

A person may have a bewitching spirit without his or her knowledge, even to the point of bewitching his or her own offspring unaware (Bourdillon 1976:179). The spirit of witchcraft demands to be honoured intermittently and for witchcraft spirits, the rituals may entail evil acts such as sacrifice of a baby. Bourdillon *et al* (1977:204) asserts that: "A person who receives a skill from a spirit must regularly honour his spirit … the spirit must be constantly appeased to obtain its continued support".

For the Shona, witchcraft is thought to be one of the major sources of misfortune. The people who practice witchcraft intend to hurt others because of malice, envy, retribution or some gain. The possessing spirit of witchcraft can direct the host to do certain tasks. For example, he or she can cause an attack by the possessing alien spirit just by mere wishful thinking or by verbal instruction. The writer has discovered financial gain as one of the major aims of witchcraft. One respondent witch confessed to me that witchcraft can be a life sustaining business. One may be assigned to destroy someone's life through causing sickness, disability, death, etc. for a high fee. Another confessed witch says "the trade of witchcraft is big business. I am hired out by big people to kill, disable or inflict pain on someone who would have offended my client and I am paid a lot of money." There are also several prostitutes who are witches that the writer witnessed. These combine both trades of witchcraft and prostitution in their operation. Both the prostitution and witchcraft are inspired by the spirits of the deceased. They use both spirits to lure and manipulate their clients. One respondent reports making up to three thousand United States dollars in a day. She deals with the affluent businessmen, and she can have sex with over ten men in a day and they will all pay excessively high fees for the services without questions. She apparently is also a member of Satanism.

Witches are given mysterious understanding of charms and traditional medicines by the possessing evil ancestral and alien spirits, to help them in their endeavours. Most knowledge of the medicines is very much linked to the spirit of witchcraft. Witchcraft has survived over the years among the Shona. In Zimbabwe it is an offence to call someone a witch. However, most witches in a community will eventually be known. The aims of witchcraft are difficult to determine and Bourdillon (1976:173) had this to say: "The art of witchcraft is believed to be as wide in its scope as the art of a traditional herbalist, and the belief in witchcraft persists strongly in all strata of the Shona society". Witchcraft, it is believed, can work in collusion with natural causes of sickness and misfortune. If someone is involved in a fatal accident say, because he or she was previously involved in accidents without dying, this death will be attributed to witchcraft. Natural causes are the explanation of the way a misfortune took place, while the cause of the misfortune is attributed to witchcraft.

Witchcraft may be hereditary when an evil ancestral or alien spirit is transmitted from, for instance, mother or grandmother to daughter or granddaughter. The ancestral spirit will be the force behind the witchcraft behaviour. A potential host of the spirit of witchcraft may continually experience misfortunes such as sickness, still births and barrenness, until he or she accepts the spirit. A potential host may be given some clues on the spirit's intent to use him or her through the deceased witch appearing to him or her in dreams.

It is possible for the potential host to refuse to accept the spirit of witchcraft, although this may prove difficult. This was the case in the case study above: where a niece was refusing to receive the spirit from her aunt. It proved a mammoth task to completely drive away the spirit, although there were many intervening factors to the equation. The strength of the spirit is vested in the blood line, which provides an entry point that can be forcibly used. In the Shona custom, they normally seek the help of a *n'anga*, to help transfer an evil spirit from a host or potential host to a goat or a fowl, which is subsequently driven away into the bush, after the *n'anga* carries out some rituals. If this fails, accepting the spirit of witchcraft may be a better devil than experiencing perpetual torment like sickness. Aschwanden (1987:119) talks of a *kurasha mudzimu* ceremony which is conducted to drive off forever, evil spirits of this nature. He asserts that if this is not correctly done as in an instance where some family members hold back some of the witch's possessions, the spirit will return. However, the process may be repeated.

It is easier for hereditary witchcraft to be renounced and sent away in its early stages, than later when the host has been fully initiated. It is thought it would not have reached the potential host's blood yet. Witchcraft hardens the heart, the moment the potential host eats human flesh or has committed intense evil and suffering. Restoration is extremely difficult in such cases. Once the medicines a witch takes are in her blood, the Shona say, the cure from witchcraft is almost impossible. The medicine is infused into blood of the potential host through minor incisions (*nyora*). A person may just wake up with those cuts in the body or face without knowing when he or she was cut. The process is believed by the Shona to be permanent when the incisions heal. In the case study above the writer witnessed that the potential host of a spirit of witchcraft is kind of remotely controlled through these healed incisions. Laying hands on the incisions during prayer really weakened the spirit and its power. In various manifestations during prayer, the

161

spirit complained that Christians were interfering with its business, with statements like '*ko iwe urikutsvakei pa mwana uyu*'? (And you what is your business on this child?)

Aschwanden (1987:122-141) identifies categories of tools used by witches which vary from use of medicines, use of spirits, to use of mythological spiritual beings (*zvikwambo/zvidhoma* – goblin spirits). In the first class of tools are alien and vengeful spirits. Most witches are believed to have at least one alien spirit which gives them power. Ancestral spirits are thought by the Shona to offer the strongest security against witchcraft. Since blood is a symbol of ancestral spirit, some Shona people believe that witchcraft cannot be inherited through blood. It is alien spirits that transmit witchcraft. A witchcraft spirit has to be a spirit from an alien clan. An ancestor that passes on witchcraft is an outcast who will still require services of alien spirits to do it (Aschwanden 1987:157). Still, my informant tells me that once an alien spirit has entered a blood line, it will not wish to leave. This is where it is passed on, for instance, from father to child, uncle to nephew, etc. These alien spirits can be influenced by witches. Witches also like to use and hide behind vengeful spirits in their anti-social activities, so that only the vengeful spirits may be seen. In their operations, witches may consult a n'anga for help, where it may be advised to stand behind and employ services of a vengeful spirit, through making sacrifices to the vengeful spirit. "Vengeful spirits are ideal comrades-in-arms for witches because they are easily incited against strangers" (Aschwanden 1987:130). It is also common for witches to work in collaboration with avenging spirits (*ngozi*) where the avenging spirit is tricked to achieve goals of the witch.

The other class of tools employed by witches is the ancestral spirits. Ancestral spirits can be deceived by witches in execution of their nefarious activities. As members of the family, the ancestral spirits are mandated to care for the living and defend them against witches. However, if the spirits are aggrieved by the living, they will withdraw their protection and permit witches to attack. In some instances, the ancestral spirits are overpowered by witches. A witch can also fool ancestral spirits by investigating the totem words of the clan it seeks to attack. It would then address the spirits using the totem as if the witch belonged to the same clan. By so doing, the Shona believe the witch is given access beyond the fortification barrier of the ancestral spirits,

allowing it to strike the living. The easiest ancestors to deceive are those who are unhappy because they are being neglected by the living.

The category of tools incorporating mythological beings, include use of animals, birds, snakes, dwarfs, etc. A *chidhoma* - (*zvidhoma* - plural) - (goblin spirit) is the most common name applied to these beings, especially those of human origin. These mythological beings are called "children" of witches. These may be inherited from a deceased parent or they are bought or a witch can make the animal docile using magic acquired through the inspiration of the spirit of witchcraft. Of the animals, the Shona say the hyena is the most well-known animal used by witches because of its attributes. They are primarily used as steeds. Pigs and humans, especially the husband or the wife, may also be used as steeds. On the overall the real and unreal animals are mythical to the natural eye. Other prominent animals are snakes and crocodiles.

Zvidhoma are usually kept in secret places in the home - main huts, main bedrooms, granaries (*hozi or dura*) and clay jugs (*makate*) which may be placed in any of these apartments. One respondent says some can even stay in the nostrils, especially for those who inhale snuff (*bute*). All species of *chidhoma* have human origin, which have undergone transformation through the magical activity of the spirit of witches (Aschwanden 1987:137). To manufacture a *chidhoma*, a witch involves a human spirit. The human spirit so invoked will retain the personality, talents and gifts that the person had when he or she was alive. In creating a *chidhoma*, Aschwanden (1987:141) maintains that:

> The witch does not create the *chidhoma* by itself … she visits a traditional doctor who practices *uroyi* and asks him for support … The doctor tells her how to "buy" the ancestors of X with a certain gift … she is then given a medicine by him, which she gives to a child at night … the child then falls seriously ill …

It is eventually transformed into a *chidhoma* when the child dies. The writer has heard of an approach that is slightly different from the one presented by Aschwanden. Several of my respondents claim that a *chidhoma* is an amalgamation of a spirit of a deceased person, young or old, with any physical artefact, to which some magic is applied to form the mythological spiritual being. A *chidhoma* is therefore a spirit being. They can be a combination of anything, - water, grass, blood, birds, animals, dwarfs etc., - with a spirit of a deceased person. The owners of *chidhoma* perform their magic to produce the small spirit beings. The being carries the same sex,

character, attributes, form and personality, as the deceased spirit. For example, if the person was disabled when he or she was alive, the mythological being will also be disabled. Some maintain names that they had when they were alive, while others have no names.

A *chidhoma* does not have a life of its own; it is there to serve the interests of its creator or master. They live the life of their owners who 'created' them and they are accountable to the owners, whom they have to please. These living owners are possessed by spirits of the dead or spirits from the underworld that usher them into witchcraft and Satanism. A *chidoma's* core business is to perform the nefarious acts on behalf of its master. This means even if it is sent on a life-threatening mission, it will oblige without questioning. Some go to the extent of satisfying their masters sexually. They do this magically and spiritually to give maximum satisfaction. They can be brainless; they use brains of other entities. Since some have no brains, they are in constant contact with their owners and they can communicate through the ears of the host. A spirit commissioned to work in someone can communicate with another spirit which may be hundreds of kilometres away.

The purpose of goblin spirits is to perform whichever nefarious errands assigned to them, like causing pain in the body, surveillance: where they observe, listen and consistently report on a targeted person's activities. They can sit on someone's brains and cause intermittent or protracted mental disturbances. They can dwell on a person's sexual organs in order to control his or her sexual life. Most of them are still prone to sex and can have sex with a man or woman. Such will make sure that no other person of opposite sex gets too close to the host. This results in many failed marriages, broken love affairs and loss of interest in, if not hatred of, the opposite sex. The spirits can maintain their perpetual presence for very prolonged periods, while performing their given tasks. My respondent testified to a period as long as thirteen years. They work twenty-four-seven when they perform their tasks. This is why a woman married to a *chidhoma*, for example, can easily lose a man at home, in the street, while sleeping, because they will be guarding her all the time. Just like the dead become an indisputable ancestral spirit through his or her children, a witch becomes a powerful *shave* spirit through its *chidhoma*. *Chidhoma* is one of the most dreaded weapons of the witch.

My respondents report that the dark world of Satanists and witches is hierarchical; with bosses and subordinates. Various groups can easily come together for a common cause, but they can also easily fight each other to determine the overall boss of the converging groups. They do not work for nothing; every good act has a trap attached to it. They can indwell someone's body parts, inflict pain, momentarily or protractedly control the brains, and speak through the host, especially when the host falls into a trance like state. This dark world is scientific as far as the human body is concerned. They know where to touch in a human body to cause certain diagnosable ailments like brain tumour, cancer, hernia, etc. They can cause intense pain that resists modern medicine. When the spirits are chased away by prayer, they withdraw resulting in instant healing. One respondent claims that the dark world calls for intense and persistent prayer because the spirits can be very resistant, although they will eventually relent. This may take hours, even days, to force such a spirit to let go; depending on the anointing.

Goblin spirits can influence people's thinking to cause commotion in a family or a setting. They are sent to perform some nefarious acts, to cause confusion in the minds of people. They can indwell spouses in a family to cause unending conflicts which cannot be resolved. Any natural attempt at conflict resolution will always find the right person guilty - it has to be approached spiritually. It is therefore common to find witches working with animals, birds, snakes, etc. (e.g. hyenas, owls, pigeons), which are used as agents, messengers and/or transport, when the witches perform their activities. These are familiars which are sent on nefarious journeys to carry out evil. The animals will either be serving the witches or are used by the witches to bewitch.

In the case study above, the girl could not enlighten us on how they move from one place to another. During execution of their wicked nocturnal activities, witches can leave their bodies asleep in the house while they fly around (Bourdillon 1976:76). Other scholars like Aschwanden (1987:125) say they fly around naked at night. But if the bodies are left asleep in the house what will be flying around naked? Can a spirit be naked? These questions seem to have no answers among the Shona, yet both versions are well accepted. Their main method of travel is flying. They fly so that they can move quickly from one place to another. At times witches are led by the witchcraft spirit to travel naked riding on hyenas, winnowing trays (*rusero*) or people.

One informant also tells me that a *chidhoma* can be killed and be rebuilt by the owners, at a high cost. I could not ascertain what manner of death this one will be, since the being of a *chidhoma* involves a deceased person's spirit.

Another class of tools used by witches is the flesh of human beings. This is used as medicine to poison and to kill. Witches crave for human flesh. They are fond of eating human flesh and desecrating graves to eat flesh from the recently deceased. Witches use human flesh, as arguably their most powerful medicine to inflict harm, or for socially acceptable functions such as good luck in gambling or plentiful harvests (Bourdillon 1976:175). Even if these may bring good fortunes, they remain evil as they bring an unfair advantage over others. To get human flesh one has to kill. So even if they are used for seemingly good purposes, this still constitutes witchcraft. Once a learner witch eats human flesh he or she becomes kind of immunized against death and also helps to obliterate ordinary human feelings of love, patience and pity. They do not have mercy in their vocabulary (Aschwanden 1987:155-156). Witches use their left hands when bewitching people. So, the Shona teach their children never to take delivery of, or give anything using left hand. Now I proceed to scrutinise another phenomenon closely related to witchcraft called Satanism.

4.9 Satanism among the Shona

Information concerning Satanism is just as scarce and sketchy as that on witchcraft since the members remain predominantly secretive and they will not freely divulge their rules of the game. By the grace of God, the researcher managed to collect and collate some information which is of interest to this study.

My first respondent narrates to me the following laborious process through which a potential members goes through. She maintains that to be accepted into the secret society of Satanism, a member undergoes rigorous training by the recruiting superior(s). The trainee is initiated using various procedures. A trainee may be required to have some concoction applied to the whole body, or to take some strange oily drink, or to drink some blood (especially licking human blood), or to eat some strange food, or eat some fresh or rotten flesh, or eat human faeces,

casings or other disgusting things. To some trainees, initiation is through insertion in the body of something like a computer chip. All these initiation methods help the trainee to easily grasp the mysteries of Satanism. Satanists work with levels. A person on a lower level cannot initiate a person of a higher spiritual level in prayer life. A Christian of a higher level in faith can only be initiated by someone of a higher rank in Satanism. My second veteran respondent in the field says:

> "Satanists earmark initiation of certain Christians because they covet the spiritual gifts that the Christians have. These gifts are then reoriented to serve the kingdom of Satan"

As part of the training, a new member may also be obliged to explore an evil forest which is contaminated with demons. The forest will have all kinds of evil warped creatures: animals, reptiles, birds, etc. In the forest, the trainee will be beleaguered by demons and must succeed. In order to exhibit one's firmness or courage, one is not allowed to cry, scream, shout for help or give up. My informant could not locate any such forest. So, it may probably be a mystical forest, which resembles a real forest. Another area to be explored is a book archive, which has big volumes of mystical books. These cover numerous areas such as how to carry out black and white magic, delusions, how diseases are cured, how to inflict pain and/or sickness, how to attract crowds etc.

Part of the training may also involve learning how to subject people under submission by using invocations.[36] Iwhere claims that they are trained to summon one's spirit from the material world into a container in the spiritual realm. The invoked spirit is manipulated and whatever they do to the spirit would impact on the physical body in the physical realm. They can also summon one's spirit into a coffin which is locked and the spirit is suffocated, resulting in natural death of the invoked person. Some invocations are done through a mirror, where a sharp object is used to strike the mirror. This action will cause blood to cover the mirror, and the invoked person will die in the physical. Through these invocations, people are subjected to a variety of suffering and pain, which do not respond to modern medicine, as the cases will be spiritual. Without divine intervention, death would be imminent.

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[36] Iwhere, Grace. Exposition of Satanism. In, *youthsinchrist.weebly.com/former-devil-worshipper-testimony-grace-iwhere.html(accessed 25/10/17)*

Spirits of unbelievers and weak Christians may also be invoked into a dream world, where they are made to eat food prepared with blood. Once one partakes of the blood, one would have been initiated into the dark world. One can start to fly like veteran Satanists. Alternatively, one may be trained to swim in water and is initiated into the demonic operation in water. If one dreams of a mimic pursuing one, this points to initiation into the spirits in the cemetery. Satanists cannot successfully invoke the spirit of a devout born again Christian because it is sheltered by the blood and the name of Jesus, and God guards it like an apple of his eye (Zechariah 2:8b).

The second veteran respondent explains:

> Satanists do not operate in the physical; they usually use spirit because they are taught to remove their souls from their bodies. So, it is their soul which does the act … they incarnate spirits which summon a demon and they give that demon an assignment. For example, if they want to poison someone, they summon a demon. The demon can poison your drink without opening it, because the act will be purely spiritual yet affects the physical.

He further maintains that once one is initiated, one is bound by a code of confidentiality and also bound by some regulations. At this point in time, my informant tells me that "there is no turning back from membership as the consequences will be grave". However onother active member of the secret society remarks that:

> When a witch or Satanist makes a decision that he or she is no longer interested in the profession, it is possible to end it. However, this will not be a one-off event, but may be a long process since the profession usually involves covenants. The covenants will need to be exposed. People must expose their encounters in society.

The first respondent says that when the trainees are initiated, they start living in two worlds: the physical and the spiritual world. They start experiencing unusual feelings and toughened hearts. They can disappear and reappear, and switch to and fro between the two worlds. Their names are now written in the society's book, and one can now attend meetings; where evaluation and performance appraisal is done, and also where latest developments and threats are discussed. Such meetings may be held both physically and spiritually, and some innocent souls may attend the meetings unknowingly.

Demons usually hold their meetings in the air and in cloud nine, to plan against believers and the kingdom of God. Iwhere[37] says that there is an invisible army in cloud nine to block prayers of saints from reaching God, but the Holy Spirit frustrates their efforts. When they gather to meet on the land, they usually plan on how to collect blood. Demons feed on blood because it is one of their major sources of power, in execution of their activities. Blood is the most important part of their diet. Once one enters their realm, one is expected and required to drink blood. Partaking of the blood automatically makes one, half human and half spirit.

Covenants are confirmed through sucking of blood. One is cut throughout the body and the senior agent sucks one's blood and in turn the agent is cut and one sucks the agent's blood. A bloody link which can only be broken by God's power is developed. One's heart is invoked out and hidden under stones, while one is given a stony heart, which is hardened and wicked. Iwhere[38] asserts that human blood is the direct image of God and by feeding on it they intend to annoy and defy God. The demons collect the blood physically and spiritually. They collect blood physically through nefarious activities such as causing accidents. This, they usually do, by varying and influencing an unbelieving driver's eyes through illusions and hallucinations. They collect the blood spiritually through spiritual tubes used by demonic agents. Blood of devout, born again Christians is undesirable because it is hot and bitter since it has a constituent of the blood of Jesus.

There is a place called the Bermuda Triangle in the Pacific Ocean. Grace Iwhere[39] says this is the headquarters of demons on earth. If a ship or an aeroplane crosses the triangle it sinks and disappears. They use the same method to draw together world scientists and learned people for use in the kingdom of darkness. My informant says:

> There is no ship or aeroplane that passes over the Bermuda triangle because that is where the headquarters of Satanism is in the Ocean. But on the land, the headquarters is in New Delhi, India.

This informant also tells me that if one meticulously adheres to given principles and procedures in the secret society, one will be rewarded by, for example, being given powers to easily change

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[37] Iwhere, Grace. *Exposition of Satanism*. From http://www.youthsinchrist.weebly.com/former-devil-worshipper-testimony-grace-iwhere.html accessed 25/10/17
[38] Ibid
[39] Ibid

into a cat, rat, shadow, etc. There are also material benefits like money, property, and improved synergistic relationships with other members. The greater rewards are not without sacrifice. One may need to sacrifice own body parts, own spouse, own child to earn greater rewards.

My second veteran respondent says that the main mandate of Satanism is to win souls from the kingdom of God. This they do by coercion and/or deception, where people are lured by the glitter of this world. The main victims are those from poor backgrounds and those who are looking for flashy lives. Recruitment agents are given and equipped with, everything they need to lure their target group, and they are posted in every institution, government department, para-government, commerce and industry, churches, etc. Many will be befriended by the agents, after being attracted by the lifestyles of the agents. Some are seduced by beautiful ladies or handsome men. Others are born into the system because of the membership of their parent(s). Yet others are given artefacts which provide easy access into them, by native doctors or preachers/prophets, in the guise of solving their social problems. These Satanists mainly target genuine Christians by spiritually oppressing them, usually through dreams; where they are made to eat flesh or to have sexual intercourse, or to play in water or to fellowship with the dead.

My first informant tells me that they frequent the underworld, which is under the sea. This world is well designed and constructed. The people there are very busy, doing researches in factories, laboratories, etc. it is where most things like cars, clothes etc. are designed. Describing a journey into the underworld Grace Iwhere[40] says they went past the first ocean to the rocks, through a bigger underground ocean to another world. It is a world in the water, beyond human sight, a world of no sympathy. It has everything needed in this life today. You are offered the beautiful world, but not without a cost. It requires your soul and your blood.

What is the relevance of Satanism and witchcraft to this study? As I was researching on witchcraft, I discovered a very strong correlation between witchcraft and Satanism. It seems Satanism and witchcraft have, arguably, become the 'in thing' to some sections of the Shona populace. I have also discovered that these are very prevalent among both the educated and the

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[40] Iwhere, Grace. *Exposition of Satanism*. From http://www.youthsinchrist.weebly.com/former-devil-worshipper-testimony-grace-iwhere.html accessed 25/10/17

uneducated, 'postmodernists, modernists or traditionalists'[41]. All my four respondents tell me that there are material, financial and social benefits that accrue to those who are successful in the nefarious acts. The percentage of the participants among the Shona seems to be still low, but the rate of growth is alarming, especially among those who profess Christian faith. The first respondent has worked with Church leaders who have crossed sides to Satanism, while they remained in their respective Churches. They are doing exceptionally well in the material world.

Most goals of operation of Satanism and witchcraft are similar, save that they may differ in their methodology. One respondent member of the Secret Society says: "In practice, the line of demarcation between witchcraft and Satanism is very fine, especially to an outsider looking in." He tells me that a witch will need to be trained in order to become a member of Satanism, and he did not know or has not heard, of any Satanist who was required to join witchcraft. However, it may not be prudent to separate Satanism from witchcraft, considering the similarity of their aims and objectives. The relevant question is how the Church is tackling the problem of witchcraft and Satanism, which is rapidly growing amongst the Shona people in Zimbabwe.

4.10   Relationship between *n'anga* and witches/sorcerers

Aschwanden (1987: 123-124) sees a narrow parallel between *n'anga* and witches. Both a *n'anga* and a witch are hosts to some spirits, be it ancestral and/or shave. They both use secret medicines taught by more senior hosts or by the possessing spirits. They both acquire their knowledge through dreaming. Both the witch and the *n'anga* are inducted into their individual profession in the same way (Bourdillon 1976:177). Aschwanden (1987: 123-124) claims that both *n'anga* and witches have at least one alien spirit as a source of their healing or witchcraft powers respectively. They both sap from the same category of source; which is alien spirits. In practice both witches and *n'anga* have several alien spirits. He further asserts that because both spirits of

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[41] Klaus Nurnberger (2007:9-11) says reality, in traditionalism, is believed to be determined by animistic or dynamistic power. In animism reality is permeated by spiritual beings while in dynamism it is permeated by impersonal forces such as ancestors, witchcraft and sorcerers. Modernity emphasizes on human mastery; where emancipation, autonomy, power and control are the driving forces. And all authority (from church, Bible, cultural traditions, state, family, parents or ancestors) is rejected. Post modernity is modernity taken to extremes; where the goals are individual emancipation, freedom of choice and search for instant gratification.

a *n'anga* and a shave can be inherited, it is difficult to discover who is a witch since the witch spirit can hide behind an inherited ancestral spirit.

Aschwanden picks one example where he infers a *n'anga* as a witch. A *n'anga* that is possessed by an alien healing spirit, sucks blood out of a patient, claiming that in the process the *n'anga* will be sucking out pain and foreign bodies. There are some patients who have died soon after the sucking. To the Shona such a *n'anga* fits the category of a witch. "So the cannibal *shave* appears in the guise of a traditional doctor who is then called a sorcerer" (Aschwanden 1987:158). This leads him to conclude that *n'anga* are: "… an essential basis for understanding and explanation of witchcraft. And remember "*uroyi* (*sic* - witchcraft) came with doctors"" (Aschwanden 1987:158).

A *n'anga,* who is helped by his or her ancestral spirits to get evil powers and charms should be seen in the same light as a hereditary witch. A witch by inheritance is the most treacherous and feared person in the Shona society. The effectiveness of a *n'anga*'s operations depends on the possessing spirit. A *n'anga* can, through the possessing spirit, acquire powerful charms and medicines found in human parts. To get the human parts the *n'anga* has to kill. Yes, some of the medicines are used for 'seemingly good' purposes like success in business or bumper harvests, but death is involved to secure the charms. Bourdillon (1977:201) concludes that:

> Indeed, any traditional healer may use his knowledge for harm and so becomes a witch: in the traditional system, a knowledge of medicines is closely associated with witchcraft. The most powerful 'medicines', whatever their purpose, are believed to be obtained through harming others, possibly even using parts of the human body and so involve witchcraft.

While a *n'anga* normally employs his powers for the good, and a witch uses it to kill, steal and destroy, the dividing line between the two professions is very fine since a *n'anga* also has knowledge of how they can inflict harm, and indeed often, directly or indirectly, inflicts harm just like a witch. Some Shona people claim that all *n'anga* are witches, and are both dreaded and treated with respect (Bourdillon 1976:178). So, a *n'anga* who prescribes or uses charms to harm others for whatever reason is a witch. Bourdillon (1976:180-181) succinctly puts it:

> Although some may say no proper healer would abuse his healing spirit by prescribing poisons in this way and that poisons can be obtained from a man possessed by a spirit of a witch, the more common view is that any traditional

doctor can become a witch by misusing his spiritual powers for his own ends. Even a right-minded herbalist may have 'medicines' which can cause personal harm in legitimate circumstances; he may have and sell, for example, charms against theft, which are supposed to cause the thief's abdomen to swell, and 'medicines' against adultery, with which a man can make a wife's lover severely ill.

If traditional medicines are administered by *n'anga* to harm others or for any evil end, such *n'anga* are witches. Gelfand (1967a:163) talks of some empirically verifiable cases of murder and extortion by *n'anga*. A *n'anga* therefore: "… occupies a very ambiguous position in Shona and is treated with both respect and caution" (Bourdillon 1976:163). A *n'anga* can do good acts through his medicines, but he can also do harm and this is tantamount to witchcraft.

The pertinent question relevant to our study is whether *n'anga*, Satanists, witches and sorcerers can be acceptable in Christian faith.

Now I investigate the Christian beliefs and rituals on death and afterlife, in my search for a point of contact between the Shona traditional religion and the Christian faith.

Chapter 5

The Christian eschatological perspective on death, resurrection and afterlife

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this study is to investigate inculturation initiatives of the Shona views on death and afterlife by the indigenous led Zimbabwean Church. In order to do this we need to have full knowledge of that which should be inculturated. This calls for a detailed study of the Shona views on death and afterlife. This is what chapter 4 is all about. This chapter looks at the other side of the coin - the Christian views on death and afterlife. A reconciliation of the two will help to synthesize and analyse the inculturation endeavours by the indigenous led Church in Zimbabwe, and whether they have been successful or unsuccessful, and why. If Christian views on death and afterlife contradict or agree with the Shona perspective, we are able to make informed proposals as to the way forward.

Since this is a study in the field of eschatology, it is prudent to give a very brief outline of Christian eschatology. McGrath (1994:465) defines eschatology as "the study of final things" or "discourse about the end". The term eschatology refers to various notions involving immortality of the soul, resurrection, end time etc. Christian eschatology focuses on the ultimate destiny of the whole created order and a person's soul. It concerns the nature of the divine, death, the afterlife, end of the world, and the world to come. According to Lup (2013:6), eschatology can be categorized into individual (or personal) eschatology, - which deals with life after death, how the body relates to the soul, whether there will be consciousness between death and resurrection, immortality and so on, and general (or cosmic) eschatology, - which looks at the return of Jesus, resurrection and final judgment, etc. John Sobrino (1978:219-220) submits that Christian eschatology is the belief that "present reality is not capable of revealing God fully … the authentic reality of God will only show up at the end of history". It views end times as completion or perfection of the creation of God, through such events as tribulation and last judgment. The return of Jesus Christ is seen as a central event in Christian eschatology as it ushers in the fullness of God's kingdom.

174

According to Beaumont (2010), there are four principal views of eschatology namely: Preterism, Historicism, Idealism and Futurism. The book of Revelation is central to the discourse of Christian eschatology. For example the preterist approach takes Revelation as having prophetic fulfillment in the past, especially the first century events. Preterism discerns fulfillment of eschatological prophecies; especially in the AD70 destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. Futurism sees prophetic events as occurring in the future just before the end of the world. To the futurist however, Revelation has unfulfilled prophecy, the events of which will take place in future. In the Historicist approach, Revelation shades light on historical events: where passages are matched with people in history and with past events. To the Idealist, Revelation does not refer to the past or future, but are symbolic or allegorical events which deal with people's struggles in life, in the fight of good against evil.

There are three millennial views which are added to these four principal eschatological views. These are the Premillennialism, Amillennialism and Postmillennialism. Premillennilism premises an eschatology that interprets prophecy literally. The Antichrist will overcome the earth, reign for seven years, tormenting Christians. His reign will culminate in the return of Christ; to overcome all evil forces and imprison the Devil. The rule of Jesus will thus be preceded by such events as rapture, tribulation and return of Christ to set up his rule on earth for a thousand years. Premillenialists will adopt one of the three rapture positions namely pre-tribulation, post-tribulation or mid-tribulation. Christ will reign for a thousand years, at the end of which the Devil will be released from prison. A final battle will then ensue, where the Devil and all Jesus' foes will be defeated again, and will be condemned to eternal Hell.

However, Menn (2013:63) thinks that premillennialism is foreign to the early Church as "none of the distinctive beliefs of dispensational premillennialism were present in the apostolic and post-apostolic era". He also argues that Premillenialism fails to sufficiently consider the finality attached with the second advent of Jesus, as it does not address issues such as; single final judgment, single resurrection, the taking away of the curse from the creation etc.

Post-millennialism takes an allegorical approach by teaching that after the Church has Christianized the world, Christ will return and believers will be ushered into an eternal state. It sees Christians taking charge of the world, as it gets better by the day, culminating in the return of Christ. Amillennialists also take an allegorical slant but do not perceive any future rule by Christ. Christ is not returning to establish a millennial rule, but to establish the eternal state. They argue that the one thousand years mentioned in the book of Revelation points to the Church age, which stretches from the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) to Christ's return; when he will defeat Satan once and for all. In this vein Menn, an ammillennialist, believes that the rapture occurs concurrently with the second coming of Jesus, after tribulation has taken place.

5.2 Death

Hebrews 9:27 teaches that '... man is destined to die once ...' this means the rate of physical dying is invariably one for every human being. However, people would like to live as if death does not exist, and when it comes, people tend to deny its reality. How and why did the deceased die? As if the living are more careful and cleverer than the deceased, to evade death. In spite of such an attitude, death can knock on anyone's door; rich or poor, young or old, good or bad. Today, in many cultures, people would want to adorn the corpse and make it look natural and healthy. Corpses are embalmed to slow down the decaying process, they are normally dressed in their best attires and they apply 'make up' so that the deceased looks like he or she is sleeping. This gives the impression that the physical earthly life has not yet come to the end. Yet indeed it will be the end, and we have to admit that after death, the future of humanity holds some rather crucial unknowns.

Various hypotheses have been put forward in trying to define physical death. What would have happened when a person is said to have died? There are two main schools of thought that have been put forward in the Christian thinking. One line of thought is the traditional Christian doctrine which teaches that dying is easy - it is like sleeping and waking up in a different world. This view presupposes that death is termination of the physical life through a separation of the physical body from the soul/spirit. While Augustus Strong (1970:982) defines physical death as: "... the separation of the soul from the body. We distinguish it from spiritual death or the

separation of the soul from God", Oscar Cullmann (1965:19) thinks "Death is the destruction of all life created by God. Therefore it is death and not the body which must be conquered by the resurrection." To Thiessen (1979:337), it is only the bodily functions that cease to operate, when the soul is cut off from contact with the present reality, otherwise the being of a person does not cease with physical death. Generally, most Christian denominations in Zimbabwe and the Shona religion believe that the being of a person is not cut off at death, and that there is consciousness after death. Death is merely a switch from one mode of being to a different one.

The second line of thought is from Christian scholars who think that biblical anthropology does not differentiate between body and soul. They argue that the body and soul are one entity; they both die at death and both await the final resurrection. To them, death for the believer is not a transition from one form of being to another, but the shift from being into non-being. Samuelle Bacchiocchi (2001:36) asserts that the teaching that the soul is immortal and does not die downplays the gravity of death, because the soul is thought to pass through death untouched. To him, to assume a heavenly life of an incorporeal soul before resurrection, denies the body its importance and disregards the necessity of resurrection. John Lavenson (2006:105-106) echoes the same sentiments that belief in an immortal soul diminishes the significance of the bodily resurrection. In resurrection there will be a transformed and embodied life, when God divinely intervenes to preserve life. It is not persistence of an incorporeal soul. A blissful intermediate state makes resurrection superfluous. The final judgment is of no effect if the righteous have already received their blessing, and the wicked are already relegated to the eternal torment of hell. The body and the soul belong together and they have the same fate.

Buzzard (1992:32) argues that people must return to the biblical plan so that they do not superimpose anthropological dualism on Scripture. Some commentators therefore see the view of a soul that can be detached from the body as superfluous in this modern day. "Death entails the whole person…" says Cristiano Barbosa (2011:28). Phan (1994:518-519) submits that death described as the taking apart of the soul from the body, "…though legitimate in its emphasis on the immortality of the soul, is seriously inadequate in describing death as a *human* event." His argument is that if death affects the entire person, then it is illogical to assume that the soul escapes death without being affected in some way. If the soul can still execute acts of

understanding and will, how is it affected by death? Phan therefore affirms the total death hypothesis, because this, to him, is compatible with the assertion that the entire human being dies.

However scholars like Cooper (2015:33) argue that "If monism precludes discarnate existence, it does not fit in the Old Testament anthropology of death and resurrection". Nicholas T. Wright (2003:164-165) does not find the concept that the soul is immortal, not compatible with resurrection. He thinks that the Bible is concerned with human immortality. Immortality and resurrection are not opposing realities. The idea of immortality does not point to incorporeal states, but it entails resurrection. To him, Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:53-54, portrays the notion of immortality to describe resurrection itself - which he sees as an innovative bodily life which will no longer experience death.

These arguments have a bearing on the Christian faith in Zimbabwe. For there to be effective inculturation, the Zimbabwean Church must be able to take a position with regards to what they mean by death. The adaptation of the Shona cultural values by the Christian faith requires that the Church define their own beliefs as to what they are calling death and afterlife.

Development of these two lines of thought leads us to major diverging views as to what takes place when a person dies. A brief survey of the Christian dualism and monism will assist us in understanding the various Christian views on death and afterlife.

5.2.1   The Christian traditional view of death

Theories have been put forward regarding human anthropology as it relates to God. This theological anthropology should be distinguished from social anthropology; which contrasts the physical and social features of human beings in time and space. The nature of humanity is analysed, in so far as it relates to death. There are three basic views of the nature of humanity namely: trichotomism, dichotomism and monism (Erickson 1983:537). Erickson defines trichotomism as the belief that a human being comprises three components; the body, soul and spirit. Proponents of trichotomism appeal to scriptures such as 1 Thessalonians 5:23 and Hebrew

4:12 in support of their view. Dichotomism premises that humanity is made up of the body (material) and the soul/spirit (immaterial). The soul/spirit is taken to be one thing. This is the dualistic Christian anthropology, which arguably has survived the history of the Church. The trichotomous and dichotomous views of human nature assume division of the body and soul/spirit at the point of death. Moreland *et al* (2000:225-226) define Christian monism as "seeing human persons as unified, embodied wholes consisting nothing more than their material stuff." Monism emphasizes the total unity of a human being with no multiple elements. Monists believe that the body and the soul both cannot live independent of each other, and at the point of death, the total life of a human being ceases to exist up to the time of resurrection.

The condition of all humanity from the point of death to the final resurrection is usually called the intermediate state. Gary Habermas *et al* (2004:222) submit that:

> Traditionally, the intermediate state refers to the state of individuals between the time they die until they are reunited with their own resurrected bodies. In this state the person enjoys conscious fellowship with God while waiting for a reunion with a new, resurrected body.

Cooper (1989:8) submits that, to the early Church, the intermediate state was divided into four parts. The first is Hades, which is divided into two component parts; one for the wicked and the other for the righteous. The second is the purgatory which is thought to be a place of cleansing through suffering, for those who die in God's grace whilst requiring perfection. The third is the *limbus patrum;* a place thought to have housed Old Testament saints, who awaited Christ's salvific death and resurrection to take them to heaven. Finally the *limbus infactum* was thought to house souls of infants who died before undergoing baptism rite.

The traditional teaching of most Christian Churches appeal to Philippians 1:23 and argue that Paul is referring to disembodied existence after death, while 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, to them, depicts an embodied existence, after Christ returns. In Philippians 1:23-24, Paul talks of a "…desire to depart and be with Christ, which is by far better but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body." Dualists understand that Paul here is teaching that death (to depart) will usher him immediately into the company of Christ and no delay is implied. In Acts 1:25, Luke teaches that Judas went where he belonged. This defies the doctrine of total extinction at the point of death of the body and soul, until resurrection day.

179

Monists who argue that embodiment is essential for personal existence propose two main alternative eschatologies (immediate resurrection or extinction), between the period a person dies and when he or she resurrects. A third monistic eschatology is also put forward; where God is thought to "supernaturally cause an ontological dichotomy" and where the deceased "survives dissolution of the whole" (Cooper 2015:41). This has strong 'emergent dualistic' tendencies. This is the argument put forward by the material constitutionalists, who postulate that at the point of death, the material body divides or splits into a dead body and another body that continues to make up the person (Cooper 2009:33). This view of a transitional body runs parallel to the incorporeal existence. The intermediary body is thought to be flawed and will only be perfected at Christ's return. Proponents of this view say that this is what Paul is referring to in 2 Corinthians 5:1-8. Paul here refers to the body as the earthly house which will be destroyed. When this body is destroyed, we have another building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. When the body is dissolved by death, who is the "we" that Paul is referring to, that needs a house? This implies the other component of a human being - the soul. We groan because we do not wish to be unclothed or rather the soul does not wish to be disembodied, it desires to be clothed with heavenly spiritual body which is imperishable. However, Oscar Cullmann (1957:237-240) contends that the New Testament does not talk about "intermediate" resurrection of the body, immediately after death.

In the secular world, people are more aware of the conscious life after death, resulting in such researches as the Society for Psychical Research (SPR). Surveys conducted in many countries showed that many people communicated with the spirits of the departed. Osis and Haraldson (1977:130) in their work, *At the Hour of Death,* note that: "Spontaneous experiences of contact with the dead are surprisingly widespread". These arguments have also been used to defend the dualistic anthropology. However monists believe that these encounters are not with the spirits of the deceased but with the evil spirits of the Devil. Even the Church leadership in Zimbabwe detest contact with the dead. This is in contrast to the traditional Shona whose livelihoods are anchored on interaction with their recent dead ancestors. The challenge is on how to reconcile the two worldviews to make the two religious traditions coexist and possibly work for the common good of the Shona populace.

The dualistic anthropology, arguably adopted by traditional Christianity, is best expressed by the Westminster Confession of Faith (1646), which was considered as the authoritative statement of Presbyterian beliefs. It integrated the dualistic anthropology and the intermediate state. The confession states that:

> The bodies of the dead return to dust while their souls, which have an immortal subsistence, return to God. The souls are received into the highest heavens, where they await the full redemption of their bodies, while the souls of the wicked are cast into hell and await judgement of the great day. Those who will be alive on the last day shall be changed without dying, while the dead shall be raised with the same bodies, with different qualities though, which shall be united to their souls forever.

This confession teaches that humanity has two component elements of the body and the soul. These are temporarily detached at the point of death. The believer's soul, which is made perfect in holiness, is ushered into the presence of Christ, to experience a blissful existence. The souls of the wicked are subjected to a penal torment, where the souls will be conscious and active, until the great day of judgement. These two states of affairs are irrevocable but not final. Both the perdition of the lost and the redemption of the saints are not complete until judgement day.

Various scriptures have been cited in support of the intermediate state of the soul. The reappearance of Samuel when he was called by Saul and the witch of Endor (1 Samuel 28:7-20) points a conscious existence of the souls of the dead. The appearance of Moses and Elisha on the mount of transfiguration is also seen as confirmation of the conscious existence of the souls of the dead. The parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:23), and the confession of Jesus to the thief on the cross (Luke 23:43) affirms to the dualists, that there is conscious existence of the soul after death. The prayer of Stephen, at the point of death (Acts 7:59), that "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" is seen as proof of the separation of the body and the soul/spirit at death. In Jude 6 and 7 (KJV), lost angels are said to be "reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgement of the great day, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire". So, there are angels today, which are bound under darkness, awaiting the final judgement. This would imply that there is a place, today, for continuous suffering, in anticipation of the final judgement. 1 Peter 3:19 also talks of proclaiming to imprisoned spirits, while Hebrews 12:23 talks of the spirits of the just which are said to be made perfect and are happy together with the angels in heaven. The

apocalyptic book of Revelations (6:9-11) talks of souls of martyrs which are under the altar praying for vengeance of their persecutors on earth, while in Revelations 5:9, 7:9 and 14:1,3; the souls of the believers are with Christ and the holy angels. In the traditional Christian thinking all these texts affirm existence of an intermediate state. These arguments, to the dualists, imply that roles of the soul do not come to an end when at the point of death, and the soul will be aware of the earthly body that it left behind; a body with weaknesses and limitations. Davies (1967: 299) asserts that the Jewish perceived death as something that was not usual or normal to human beings. Death resulted from sin and the teaching that the soul and the body would reunite in the afterlife was widespread.

A majority of the Church denominations in the Shona areas in Zimbabwe subscribe to the view of human nature which espouses for dichotomism/dualism at the point of death; where the body is thought to be separated from the soul/spirit. They also subscribe to a disembodied existence during the intermediate state and an embodiment at resurrection. Many Church respondents were indifferent on the separate existence of the soul/spirit, while African Initiated Churches interviewed have shown no interest on the theological arguments. The challenge for the Zimbabwean Church, as we shall see later, is how such views can be married to the Shona thinking on death and afterlife. In the Shona thinking, they do not talk about any sin that affects the afterlife, or any perpetual torment or blissful life, after death. Their focus is on their current existential challenges.

5.2.2 The monistic anthropology versus the dualistic anthropology.

The manner in which the body and the soul are related has traditionally and existentially been a religious question which deals with death and the afterlife. The question seeks to address the issue of unity and multiplicity of the nature of a person. Commenting on the dualist-monist debate, John Cooper (2015:31) says that:

> Human life is a fundamental God-related unity of diverse aspects, capacities, and parts which may have distinct roles and functions but are not self-sufficient or isolated from other parts and aspects within life as a whole.

182

Deuteronomy 6:5 and Mark 12:30 imply both diversity and unity of human nature. The exhortation to "love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength" (Mark 12:30), makes use of anthropological terms that infer an essential existential unity. Cristiano Barbosa (2011:28) asserts that:

> ... all the different words used in the Scriptures to describe the human person, such as *body*, *soul*, and *spirit*, express different aspects of the one person, but they are not to be understood as separable parts.

However, the fact that the aspects of a human being are diverse does not prove dichotomy or trichotomy of the nature of a human being. Soul, spirit and body point to aspects of an irreducible whole. The Bible depicts a person as a unified whole, where 'life' does not point to the human soul only, but to the entire person - body and soul. Cooper (2015:31) therefore insists that texts that talk about the spirit, soul and body are not proofs for metaphysical dissection of human nature. This however, does not mean that the texts exclude monism, dualism or trichotomy. The parts are seamlessly sewn up into a whole by God. This however, is not a solution to the problem that the Bible has texts that depict a separation of the body, soul and spirit, when they talk about the afterlife. In general, there is a consensus by both monists and dualists that these anthropological terms body, soul, spirit, heart, mind and will, are varied but interdependent elements of a human being. None of the parties think that the body and soul are separate and autonomous in human life. "All life is ... spiritual. No part is ... religiously indifferent; natural life is not separate from spirituality ..." (Cooper 2015:31).

Bruce Milne (2010: 120-122) also subscribes to monism which holds that a person is an unbreakable unity in which the body and the soul are not component elements of a person, but they are two aspects of a united whole. Monists argue that there is only one basic ingredient in a human being which constitutes the whole person, who has a body and a soul. The pertinent question is whether this one basic ingredient is material or immaterial. There is no general consensus on the nature of the ingredient. However, monists still think their anthropological theology is a holistic view of a person. They think the dimensions of life are diverse and cannot be dissected into autonomous existing entities. The dimensions such as the body, soul and spirit, make up the 'human life' and cannot be separable. Commenting on the understanding of the terms body and soul, Sandra M. Schneiders (2005:170), submits that: "Although in English these

terms each denote a *component* of the human being, in biblical usage they each denote the *whole person* from some perspective or under some aspect."

Could this be tallying with the Shona thinking on the dead? At death, the Shona do not separate the dead body and the soul. The Shona address a dead corpse as if they are talking to a living person. They see visions of their departed in their bodily form, dressed in their normal clothes that they used to put on when they were alive. Yet, as stated above, the Bible, which is the mainstay of Christian faith, depicts a separation of the body and soul/spirit. Whether this has any bearing on the two faiths and how the adherents will interact with each other, is something requiring investigation.

Jon Lavenson (2006:13) argues that the body and soul, if there is any need of their distinction at all, "are born together and they die together". Because a person is a psychophysical unity, if we use the language of 'body and soul', which has dualistic connotation, we fail to adequately express the Jewish perception of a human being. The soul and the body are distinct but not divisible. Both were created at the same time and they will die together. Joel Green (2008:175) affirms that: "Nothing in the created human being is intrinsically immortal. Resurrection and embodied afterlife are God's doing, divine gift."

Lavenson (2006:14) introduces an interesting notion of kinship. He argues that Scriptures teach that the continual existence of a dead person is linked to kinship - i.e. it is linked to the continued existence of the deceased's offspring, in whom God realizes his promises. The dead continue to exist through their descendants, not because of the persistence of immortal disembodied spirits. He maintains that:

> Rather, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob continue to exist after they have died, not, it should be underscored, as disembodied spirits but as the people whose fathers they will always be... In biblical thinking, it is possible to continue even after death, and without either resurrection or immortality in the sense of survival as a bodiless soul. (Lavenson 2006:30).

Lavenson's sentiments become even more interesting when we compare with the Shona thinking on the afterlife, where the 'living dead' is active as long as he or she is still remembered by her or his descendants.

Extreme monists hold the view that, at the point of death a person becomes extinct, only to be re-created on the day of resurrection, identical to the dead person. In the Bible, we do not find any evidence of this concept of re-creation. And the presumed re-creation of a person identical to the one that lived presumes continuity of existence - the very notion that monists deny. Mark Corner (2011:172) argues that:

> If the soul without a body does not cease to exist altogether, then it might be supposed that it can do a little more than linger in a kind of limbo, bereft of the corporeal instruments through which alone it can act effectively.

He is arguing that the soul can only act effectively in conjunction with the body, beside which it is dormant.

Some scholars even claim that there is no soul in the human body arguing that what we are calling the soul is our consciousness which arises from the functioning of the body's mechanism (Cooper 1989:18). Taliaferro *et al* (2008:304) conclude that, since there seems to be no credible grounds for establishing dualism, "some form of materialism is to be adopted in light of its greater simplicity and its *prima facie* plausibility". Some proponents of anthropological monism see consistency of monism with modern neuroscience. David Hume (1739) had doubts that the soul was immortal, arguing that every knowledge is a result of sensory perception of the body. Because when the body dies all sensory perception ends, the soul cannot experience conscious existence when a person dies. Neuroscientists argue that the "higher functions" of the human mind come from the brain and are not a function of the soul (Gijsbers A. J. 2003). Cooper (2009:33) maintains that sciences of the nineteenth century questioned the soul's distinctness. The concept of evolution entails that awareness slowly develops from matter when life forms turn out to be more complex. This provides an explanation of the mental and spiritual capabilities of human beings, without any hypothetical presumptions on the soul. The argument is that it has been proven scientifically that mental functions and personality are a function of the brain. This has led to assertions to the physical basis of the soul. Consciousness and thought are presumed to be products of a functioning brain. To a dead person, the brain is no longer functional, there will be no consciousness.

Because of the scientific orientation, various philosophical theories have been put forward. These include, *inter alia*, emergentism, material constitutionalism and non-reductive physicalism. Cooper (2009:33) asserts that emergentism premises that the soul slowly comes out of the physical body and brain, as it develops, but the soul eventually becomes distinct and achieves its own attributes and powers, and mutually influences the body. Material constitutionalism argues that human beings are constituted or organised by their bodies, but are not identical to them (Kevin Corcoran 2006:136).

This materialism presumes that in a human being there are no immaterial or spiritual elements. It affirms that a human being is composed of matter only. It maintains that intelligence and consciousness are faculties that arise in the development or evolution of the human material world. This is contrary to the Christian faith which presumes that matter and spirit are not one. God is the creator of both material and spiritual realities and their manner of unity is mystery hidden to humanity. Rahner (1969:161) would argue that human materiality is not a temporal reality that will eventually be set aside, but it is a reality that will participate in the fulfilment of creation. Although spirit and matter are united, he refutes the notion of the spirit being derived from matter, in spite of the two being united. God is the source of both the body and the spirit (Rahner 1969:169). I concur with Rahner because this materialism seems to be against the teaching of the Bible and Christian faith. The spiritual element of a human being cannot emanate from the physical. This is why Cooper (2009:36) urges theologians to consider the teachings of the Scriptures. He asks whether the biblical viewpoint is still a norm to the present-day Christian. Most Christian scholars do not accept materialism because it is not compatible with the biblical teaching on human nature, as well as God. The Zimbabwean Church does not accept the claim that there is no spiritual element in a being.

Non-reductive physicalism, especially championed by Nancey Murphy (2006:45), seeks to strike a balance between two extremes - substance dualism (where an individual being is thought to be comprised of body and soul, which are seen to be different realities), and reductionist physicalism (where the human being and human characteristics are thought to solely arise from physical and biological developments: the human being is an entirely physical entity, without any spiritual element in the human make up). Murphy argues that personal and mental actions

emanate from the brain. The soul and the mind are produced by the brain process. The human person is his or her body, and this body is in itself spiritual. A human being has a relationship with God through the body which is a spiritual reality, not because of a spiritual element in its composition. Therefore, Murphy (2006:37) seeks to re-devise the long-established depiction of the human person by reflecting on modern cultural and scientific developments that question dualism and propagate a more monistic or physicalist interpretation of the nature of humanity. Her basic argument is "We are … complex physical organisms … we are spirited bodies" (Murphy 2006: ix). The body is capable of being in a relationship with God and therefore it is spiritual in its own right.

Murphy's (2006:28) non-reductionist physicalism runs parallel to the traditional Christian theological dualistic understanding of a human being, (that the body dies while the immortal soul escapes death and continues until resurrection) which ascribes greater significance to the soul more than it does to the body. She argues that the Christian tradition has used the term soul to explain "biologically inexplicable faculties" like intellectual capacities (Murphy 2006:69). This, she thinks, is no longer crucial in face of advances that have been achieved in biblical studies and in neurosciences. To her then, a human being is a spiritual entity which partakes in God's reality. 'Body' and 'soul' are not antithetical or autonomous entities. She sees human spirituality as rooted in the embodied existence, not in the soul. Murphy uses the term 'spirited bodies' to describe a human being in order to avoid dualistic language, in her description. Norris Clarke (1998:32-33) uses a similar term - 'embodied spirits'.

The scientific approach to human nature, with its emphasis on materialism does not fit into the spectrum of Christian faith as far as the indigenous leadership of the Zimbabwean Church are concerned. All respondents categorically rejected the idea that the soul can be a function of the material body parts like the brain. One Church leader appealed to the Genesis creation myths; that "a person only became a living being after God's breath. The breath did not come from the complex development of the brains or some other part of the body." Even the notion of 'spirited bodies' or 'embodied spirits' was rejected by all, including the African Initiated Churches in Zimbabwe. One respondent retorts that "even Paul's high esteem of the body (Roman 12:1) does not go so far as to declare it spiritual as Murphy does".

As seen above, the view of the nature of a human being is one of a unity of the spiritual soul and the physical body, where the soul survives death and persists until resurrection. John Cooper (2015:33) maintains that if we look at Old Testament texts like Genesis 37:35 (where Jacob hopes to be with his son in Sheol); 1 Samuel 28 (where Samuel returns from Sheol to prophesy the doom of Saul and his sons); Psalms 23:6 (the ultimate destiny of the faithful dead is not clear but the Psalmist hopes to "dwell in the house of the Lord forever"); Isaiah 26:19; Ezekiel 37; and Daniel 12:2 (which speak explicitly about resurrection); we can safely conclude that the Jewish people were realists about an afterlife for humanity. All these texts point to an existence soon after death, which infers a generic dualism. This means that after the body is buried and rotten, what remains of a human being "endures in the realm of the dead" (Cooper 2015:33). He further notes that from texts like Ecclesiastes 12:7; Psalms 16:10 and Psalms 49:15 we can conclude that the Old Testament anticipates assertions of the two stage eschatology, although this is not well developed.

Nicholas Wright (2003:477) thinks that "Christianity appears as a sub-branch of Pharisaic Judaism" which affirms that eschatology consists of two stages of intermediate state and final resurrection. Therefore, despite the claims that the Old Testament depicts a monistic anthropology which does not infer an afterlife, the evidence on the ground shows that it does. Cooper (2015:33-34) submits that during the Second Temple Judaism, which bridges the Old and New Testaments, the Sadducees held that Sheol represents extinction, and they did not believe in life after death, while the Pharisees developed a two-stage eschatology of a conscious intermediate state, until the resurrection and the final judgement, when the Messiah comes; a view that is adapted by the New Testament writers.

Paul (in Acts 23:6-8; 2 Corinthians 5:6-8; Philippians 1:20-22; 1 Thessalonians 4:16 and 1 Corinthians 15:52) presents a two-stage eschatology where the believing dead will fellowship with Jesus until future resurrection. 2 Corinthians 12:2-4 shows that Paul believed in disembodied existence. Luke 23:43 and John 11:25 show us that Jesus endorsed a two-stage eschatology which had no gap in existence or no immediate resurrection. Jesus warns his hearers to be afraid of God who could obliterate both the body and the soul (Matthew 10:28). Acts 23:8

and 1 Peter 3:19 give reference to the spirits of the dead. Gareth Lee Cockerill (2012:656) says that Hebrews 12:22-23 states that readers have come to "Mt. Zion ... the heavenly Jerusalem", whose inhabitants include the "spirits of the righteous made perfect". To him the phrase "spirits of the righteous made perfect" is an apocalyptic phrase for the deceased saints of God who are awaiting resurrection. We can therefore conclude that the New Testament depicts a dualistic anthropology, which asserts a personal existence between death and resurrection, although there is very little description of it. Ladd (1978:38) also thinks that the 'spirits of just men being made perfect', has sentiments of the intermediate state.

Oscar Cullmann[42] does not come up with a well-defined anthropology. While his anthropology tends to dualism (body and soul) his theology is monistic in a sense. He asserts that the first Christians' conception of a full genuine resurrected life included a new body; the spiritual body which the dead will receive at eschaton. To Cullmann, death and eternal life in the New Testament are always linked to the Christ event. This proves to him that to the first Christians, the soul was not inherently immortal. It only became immortal as a result of Jesus' resurrection and through faith in him.[43] Moskala (2015:106) echoes the same sentiments that:

> Immortality is conditional and depends on our positive response to God's goodness, on the acceptance of the gospel. Christ, the Second Adam, took on our mortal human nature, body and soul, to redeem, restore, and glorify it.

I suppose 'to redeem, restore and glorify' our mortal human nature resulted in our souls becoming immortal. This happened when we believed in Christ's salvific work. If I read Cullmann well, his argument here is that a soul, as a separate entity, exists and that all souls were made immortal by Jesus' victory over death. He further argues that Jesus died both body and soul, and overcame death, and that Jesus did not overcome death by his soul continuing to live - which would imply he did not die at all. Jesus could only conquer death by actually dying, both body and soul. On death, a person then must die both body and soul because all life created by God must be destroyed.

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[42] http://jbburnett.com/resources/cullmann_immort-res.pdf accessed 15/05/2014
[43] Ibid page 7

John Cooper devises a theological anthropology he calls 'holistic dualism', which he claims to have extracted from the Scriptures. It stresses the unity of the body and the soul while at the same time recognising its dichotomy. Cooper (2015:32) argues that:

> … the unity and integrity of existence do not require monism - the view that all of human nature consists of or derives from one basic stuff. What unity and integrity do entail is holism - that human life involves an operational part-whole relation.

To Cooper (2009:35) then:

> *Holism* means that humans are created and redeemed by God as integral personal-spiritual-physical wholes - single beings consisting of different parts, aspects, dimensions, and abilities that are not naturally independent or separable.

The term holism is thus used by Cooper (1989:70) to denote that a human being is seen as an integrated unit; as a "psychosomatic unit". Christian faith is holistic when it emphasizes the unit of body and soul. But it is also dualistic when it affirms that God used both the material and the immaterial to create humanity, and "that the soul and body are distinct entities or substances so conjoined that the body is "in" the soul and the soul permeates every part of the body" (Cooper 2015:36).

Cooper (2009:35) goes on to define dualism thus:

> *Dualism* means that our core personalities - whether we label them *souls, spirits, persons, selves,* or *egos* - are distinct and, by God's supernatural providence, can exist apart from our physical bodies after death. The emphasis of Scripture is on holistic unity because God's revealed intention for creation and redemption is that we are whole bodily persons.

Cooper (2009:33) identifies two main kinds of dualistic holism. The first is substance dualism - that the soul and the body are discrete substances adjoined to form a whole person. The second is the soul-matter dualism (also called Thomist dualism) - that soul and matter are one being, constituting the spiritual soul and matter, with the soul informing "matter to constitute a bodily human person". Thomist dualism emphasises that "a human being is one thing, not a conjunction of two things" (Cooper 2009:33).

Cooper (1989:37) argues that the Old Testament anthropology is holistic, while at the same time dualistic, and that there was a general belief in life after death, before resurrection; where a person would exist in a disembodied form, and only to be embodied after resurrection. He thinks

this strongly implies dualism, which is compatible with holism of the Old Testament. Cooper also defends the holistic dualism as the anthropology implied in the New Testament. He concludes that "whatever its composition and decomposition, at death, the divinely designed state of humanity in this life and the life to come is integrally spiritual, mental, affective and bodily" (Cooper 2015:32). To Cooper, the holistic-dualistic anthropology remains the teaching of most Churches. The doctrine is believed by many leading scholars and Christians. Dualistic holism then, is the most dependable conclusion, basing on traditional exegesis and contemporary biblical scholarship. Cooper (2015) maintains that people who snub this dualism still have to come up with credible opposing arguments that are close to being as comprehensive and logical as those of the traditional Christian position.

There are philosophical challenges faced by these monist eschatologies pertaining to a person's identity before and after resurrection. Immediate resurrection implies two different individuals, because it hypothesises two different bodies, (a corpse in the grave and a resurrection body) and yet they claim that persons are tied to their bodies. "Exact similarity is not numerical identity. Identity would be preserved if a soul switched bodies, but that requires dualism" (Cooper 2015:41). If there is going to be non-existence/extinction between point of death and resurrection, then the person's identity has no metaphysical basis, since there will be no continuity between the two embodiments. If persons are indistinguishable with their bodies, then the resurrected being cannot be taken to be the same individual as the deceased. The result may be a case of having multiple copies of the earthly person, all claiming to be that person, and this is not possible. Monists argue that if this is how God brings about eternal life, then personal identity is guaranteed. Extinction until resurrection can be disturbing for the Christian. Telling a believer that when he or she dies he or she will only exist in the form of reminiscence in God's mind is a big blow for the Christian faith. By contrast, a bodiless soul is an ontological link that carries individual identity across the transitional period between death and resurrection. Extinction - recreation cannot guarantee that the re-created persons are the same persons as their earthly prototypes. So extinction fails to resolve the problems of personal identity. Hence Cooper's (1989:187) observation that:

> It is precisely the lack of continuity which raises questions for the monist ... If recreation is immediate, then we clearly have two distinct psychophysical unities with no substantial or causal connection between them.

John Cooper does not believe that there is an immortal soul that escapes death when the body dies. He thinks that it is the person's individual identity that does not die. So he is not looking at existence of a philosophically definable entity, like a soul, which evades bodily death, but that humans can exist without earthly bodies. The soul is a person's persistence, not a spiritual and metaphysically everlasting substance. He insists: "... the ontological possibility of that mode of human existence is all I mean by dualism. Personal existence apart from earthly-bodily existence is possible", says Cooper (1989:162). Cooper is complicating matters even more. What 'personal existence' or 'individual identity' is it, which is apart from the soul and which is not a metaphysical substance, which he thinks has an incorporeal continuity which does not die? Does this have any scriptural backing?

Most Church respondents had no clue on the connection of an individual's identity before and after resurrection. The connection between the earthly body and the transformed resurrection body is not their concern. In their thinking God will not make a mistake to mix bodies and souls. All except one denominational leader portrayed dualistic anthropology, where on death the soul survives death to maintain a person's identity. And to them, the soul is a spiritual and metaphysical entity, not an indefinable existence that is neither bodily nor spiritual. The Zimbabwean Church has never thought in the lines of another body immediately created at death, to result in two bodies representing one person; one in the grave and the other recreated. To them the soul is an ontological connection that conveys individual identity during the intermediate state between death and resurrection.

From the foregoing, I can safely conclude that monist have a tough task of defending biblical monism in the body-soul debate, because of the tension that develops between its view of Scripture and its anthropology. It is difficult for monists to prove that Scripture teaches monism instead of dualism. Biblical passages that infer composition or unity of human life do not portray dualism or monism with certainty. Duality does not point to dualism and holism does not automatically entail monism.

The most logical conclusion from the above viewpoints, according to Cooper (2015:35) is that

God created body and soul/spirit as an existential functional holistic unity. But they are sufficiently distinct that the soul and/or spirit ... by God's power, can exist and respond to God temporarily apart from the body... Thus biblical anthropology is a generic, non-philosophical holistic dualism or dualistic holism.

Hence Cooper (2009:32) notes that "Dualistic holism - the existential unity but temporary separation of body and soul - remains the most tenable view". Important issues are at stake in this body-soul debate, but the Gospel is not, since all participants concur that God created us body and soul, and that he has given us everlasting life through Jesus' salvific work (Cooper 2015:42).

For most of the Zimbabwean Church denominations, most of these arguments remain in the corridors of academia. Most denominations consciously or unconsciously adhere to the traditional Christian dualism, which they seem to have adopted without any reflection. Many respondents (Church leaders) are not even aware of the current dualistic/monistic debates. The Shona culture propounds a rather paradoxical anthropology at death. The dead body ought to be respected as it is the real person. On the day the bringing home ceremony is performed, the deceased person is brought home, while the body will still be lying in the grave. The Seventh Day Adventists believe in the death of the total person; both body and soul. But most of their adherents interviewed still believe in an identifiable soul. This is probably because of the influence of the Shona culture.

5.2.3   The soul sleep

The doctrine of soul sleep, according to Wayne Grudem (1994:810) "teaches that when believers die, they go into a state of unconscious existence, the next thing that they are conscious of will be when Christ returns and raises them to eternal life." *Psychopannychism* is the technical name used for soul sleep (McKim (2014:257). Campbell *et al* (2007:117) say:

> The belief that the soul dies with the body but is resurrected at the last judgment is known as thnetopsychism; the belief that the soul sleeps from the moment of death until the last judgment is known as psychopannychism.

Advocates of the soul sleep doctrine (e.g. Silva 2005:74) contend that death eliminates time when we consider the issue of consciousness of the dead. When a believer dies he or she is

ushered immediately into the presence of Christ before resurrection. On the day he or she is raised from the dead, no time would have lapsed for him or her. The argument is that the dead are unconscious from the point of death until resurrection day when Christ returns. Monists insist that death is a state of unconsciousness and stillness, where there will be no lapse of time. The 'soul sleep' metaphor therefore implies unconsciousness or extinction. Death ends the whole life. The life will only be restored, through resurrection, and the resurrection will only take place at the time Christ returns. Reading from Genesis 2:7 we learn that, to the body, was added a life force and man became a living creature. The claim is, on death, it is the life force that returns to God, not the soul. However, it is thought that this force is not a person's consciousness. If this was the case it would mean that all the dead, saved and unsaved would go to be with God when they die.

Yet dualists will argue that sleep points to separation of the body and soul which will be reunited on waking up at resurrection. Witherington (2014:294) appeals to Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 15:12, where he says Jesus was literally raised "from out of the dead ones", implying that there is a place for the dead somewhere out there in an invisible realm. Tim LaHaye *et al* (2004:329) explain that Paul "... used a Greek term *exanastasin* in Philippians 3:11 which literally means that Jesus was "out from among the dead ones" (see also 1 Corinthians 15:12)."

In this instance monists appeal to texts such as Ecclesiastes 9:5 and Job 14:12. The proof text used is 2 Corinthians 5:1-19. Other texts such as Psalms 13:3, Daniel 2:2, Isaiah 26:19 and Matthew 27:52 are also used to support the concept of soul sleep. The phrase 'present with the Lord' (2 Corinthians 5:8) they argue, merely describes the location of the sleep. Moskala (2015: 106) argues that: "Man has no conscious existence apart from the body, and after he dies his consciousness ceases to operate. Death is a sleep or rest (Psalms 13:3; John 11:11-15; Acts 13:36; Rev. 14:13)."

From these arguments one can discern that there is a tendency to equate unconsciousness, soul sleep and extinction. These cannot mean the same. Extinction has to mean non-existence and it is based on the thinking that a human being is an indissoluble unity whose death means total death of the whole person - body and soul. Even equating soul sleep with unconsciousness may

also not be appropriate as there is a level of consciousness in a sleeping person. The usage of the term sleep is best taken as a metaphor. What is it that is sleeping or unconscious when the body has been placed in the grave? This, strictly speaking, is not monistic anthropology, since, if the soul sleeps when the body is rotten, then it would mean they are two distinct entities; and monism would fail. Some would like to talk of sleep without giving reference to the soul. The question which arises is what is it that would be sleeping after the body is rotten. It would then mean that any monistic anthropology which propagates 'sleep' or 'unconsciousness' after death, may be self-contradictory as this implies a dualistic anthropology.

The theological anthropology embedded in Pauline texts like 1 Thessalonians 4:3-18; 1 Corinthians 15; 2 Corinthians 5:1-10; 2 Corinthians 12:14 and Philippians 1:21-24, shows that Paul affirmed that there is an intermediate state which exists, where the believing dead will be with Christ after their death up to resurrection (Philippians 1:23). Some of the said Pauline texts run parallel to the notion of immediate resurrection, or extinction - recreation. The concept of the intermediate state does not disagree with these texts. However this does not mean that we will find the concept in all the said passages. But James Turner (2014:410) contends that if Paul believed in a paradisiacal intermediate state, he would not have asserted that if Christ's resurrection was not bodily, it would follow that all those who had died in Christ had perished (1 Corinthians 15:18). This argument disregards the likelihood that the expectation of a resurrection to come is part of the reason why the intermediate state is paradisiacal.

Most Zimbabwean Church respondents use the term soul sleep in a way that is not technical, to refer to someone who is sleeping, implying death is not final. They do not go far to define whether in that sleep there is consciousness or unconsciousness. To them the significance of the term sleep is that one day they will wake up. The commonest answer from Christians was the souls of the saints go to be with Christ, while the souls of the wicked go to a place of torment awaiting final judgement, while the Shona traditionalists think that the souls of their deceased wander around the grave-site and in the bush until the bringing home ceremony. The Shona believe in a conscious existence after death. However they do not talk about resurrection as such and it is difficult to connect their concept of the bringing home ceremony with resurrection,

although after the ceremony, the deceased is thought to come back to the living as the 'living dead'.

5.2.4 Analysis of the interpretation of selected biblical texts in support of or against monistic anthropology

In defence of monistic anthropology and Christian mortalism, Old and New Testament texts have been used by different scholars. Same texts have been subjected to a differing hermeneutic. I will briefly look at some common scriptures which have been given varying interpretations by different scholars.

The story of the conjuring of the Prophet Samuel's spirit recorded in 1 Samuel 28:66ff is one such text which has been subjected to varying interpretation. While scholars such as John Cooper (1989:65-6) see this as a typical demonstration of a continuity of a personal identity between death and life, and therefore a conscious existence after death, monists (e.g. Bacchiocchi 2001:169) deny that the séance that occurred at Endor supports conscious existence of disembodied souls. Monists maintain that it must have been a demon mimicking Samuel and not the spirit of Samuel that appeared to Saul. According to Jiri Moskala (2015:115), in 1 Samuel 28:

> ... Saul did not encounter the soul or spirit of the dead Samuel who at that time was in the grave but experienced performance of an evil spirit who played the part of the prophet Samuel in order to completely discourage the king.

Therefore, to monists, the story is not convincing enough to support the argument of conscious existence of the dead. Although most Church denominations in Zimbabwe follow the traditional Christian dualism, all Church respondents agreed with monists that what spoke to Saul was a spirit impersonating Samuel, not the real Samuel. This is because all Christian respondents did not accept communication with the dead. This includes even the Roman Catholic Church in Zimbabwe, which teaches veneration of saints.

Monists have generally been silent on Jesus' teaching in Matthew 10:28: "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul..." This verse 28 defies monism, as Jesus clearly

alludes to the soul and the body, and implies that the body and the soul will be reunited at resurrection. Here Jesus states in plain terms, the distinction and the separation of the soul and the spirit, in a way that is neither metaphorical nor parabolic, to require an interpretation.

Regarding Luke 23:43: "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise", the general argument put forward by monists and mortalists is one of punctuation, which all scholars agree, is not part of the Scripture but a later development; which can essentially change the meaning of a text. Luke 23:43, which is a major proof text for dualists, is said to be erroneously punctuated because, they argue, the comma must be placed following the word "today". Bacchiocchi (2001:177-178) asserts that if the original Greek text, which has no punctuation is literally translated, Luke 23:43 would read "Truly to you I say today with me you will be in paradise" He blames translators who decided both to translate and interpret the text by placing the comma before the word 'today'. Monists therefore argue that placing the comma before the word 'today' would make the bible self-contradictory and would show that Jesus was being dishonest either to Mary (John 20:17) or to the thief (Luke 23:43). It was not possible to be with the thief in paradise the day he died yet he claimed he had not returned to the Father on his resurrection. If the comma is placed after the word 'today' this would imply that the granting of the thief's appeal for eternal life would happen after resurrection. When he died, Jesus went to rest in the grave - the sphere of the departed, and was not in paradise. Parochi (2013:7) asserts that Jesus employs a Semitic idiom similar to "I declare to you today", with 'today' "intended to intensify the significance and solemnity of the statement". Right answers may not be available concerning the punctuation and interpretation of this text. We cannot go back to the speaker to check where the comma should have been placed and the meaning is solely in the hands of the interpreter, who in this case, approaches the text with a baggage of either monism or dualism.

Philippians 1:21-23 has traditionally been used as proof-text to support the doctrine of soul sleep by monists. But Silva (2005:74) argues that:

> ... if Paul had any notion at all that death meant a prolonged sleep for him, then the tension that is so prominent in the passage would be dissolved immediately. It is hardly credible that Paul would have viewed the choice as difficult as he describes it if leaving the work of the gospel did not in fact entail his being in the presence of Christ.

The motivating factor to leave the work of the Gospel, which he treasured so much, was for Paul to be in the presence of Christ, not to be unconscious or extinct. However, monists argue that Paul did not say that he believed he would be with Christ when he died, but he simply said he desired to be with Christ, and this, they claim, would happen after resurrection. It is not a tenable postulation that Paul could not have desired to be with the Lord, instead of living by faith, if this meant unconscious existence. Hence N. T. Wright (2003:24) poses a question that: "Had the post-mortem state been unconscious, would Paul have thought of it as 'far better' than what he had in the present?"

Jon Paulien (2012:44-45) says, in 2 Corinthians 5:1-10, Paul seems to be in favour of the notion of the immortality of the soul when he talks of the body as an earthly tent, and that "being away from the Lord is being present" with the body (2 Corinthians 5:6) and the "presence with the Lord is being away" from the body. He thinks that such an interpretation will be problematic because Paul never spoke of a soul or of any disembodied existence. Paul never talks of the tent being separated from the soul, but that the tent will be destroyed. He asks why Paul would reject the state of nakedness if the intermediate state were one of conscious existence with Christ. Paul desires to be further clothed; an event that will take place at resurrection on the return of Christ, when the mortal becomes immortal. So the building from heaven mentioned in 2 Corinthians 5:4-5 must be thought of as referring to the glorified believer's body at resurrection, which takes the place of the mortal body (the earthly tent) at Christ's return. Bacchiocchi (2001:179) on the other hand argues that the dead will not be conscious of the lapse of time. Because of this unawareness of the lapse of time between death and resurrection, Paul thought that his relation with Christ at death is one of immediacy. This sounds rather reading too much into the text.

Monists claim that if believers are going to meet Jesus at the same time (I Thessalonians 4:13-17) as the dead saints, then the dead believers are still to be united with Christ. If they were already enjoying fellowship with Christ then they would not precede the living. Both the dead and the living will meet Christ at the same time - at Christ's return. Commenting on 1 Thessalonians 4:13-16, Paulien (2012:46-47) contends that Paul never said that the dead are living or conscious, but that they are asleep until the day of resurrection when Christ returns (1 Thessalonians 4:15-16). But what does it mean to say "God will bring with Jesus those who have

198

fallen asleep" (1 Thessalonians 4:14). Some commentators say this means that the dead believers in Christ will return with Jesus when he comes. Paulien (2012:46-47) thinks such a reading is contrary to Paul's thinking that resurrection of the dead occurs when Jesus returns for the second time, not before. He says Paul is saying that God will bring the dead "up from the ground "through Jesus"". So Paul did not think that believers would go to heaven when they die.

In Zimbabwe, monistic anthropological theology has been advocated by a very small proportion of Christian thinkers; especially the Adventists. A higher percentage of theologians and the majority of Shona Christians, together with their leaders, still hold to the dualistic anthropological view. The interpretations above are showing that meaning does not always emanate from the author or from the audience for whom the text was addressed, but the reader also brings meaning depending on the circumstances of the reader. Therefore the right interpretation may never be available.

5.3 Resurrection

Being biblically based, the Christian belief in the afterlife takes its cue mainly from the death and resurrection of Jesus as the first fruits (1 Corinthians 15:20-23). By referring to Jesus' resurrection as the first fruits, Paul connects the resurrection of Jesus with the end time resurrection of saints. He teaches that Christ's resurrection inaugurated the eschatological process of resurrection. The resurrection of Christ as the first fruits, assures the certainty of the coming harvest. By implication then, the general resurrection will be like the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Because Jesus the first fruits, rose from the dead, the harvest has begun. Jon Paulien (2012:44) argues that Jesus' resurrection gives us the guarantee of more resurrections to come (1 Corinthians 5:15). The resurrection of Jesus impacts the entire humanity just as Adam affects the entire human race. Besides being victory over death, Jesus' resurrection is victory over every force that troubles people's lives on earth (1 Corinthians 15:25-27). So resurrection underlies the entire Christian faith. Christians in Zimbabwe affirm the significance of the resurrection of Jesus and of the expectation of the general resurrection. Several denominational heads in Zimbabwe emphasized Paul's declaration of the significance of knowing the power of Jesus' resurrection (Philippians 3:10). To them, resurrection is a source of the believer's sustenance and livelihood.

Every evil power coming against the believer's life is countered by the power of Jesus' resurrection.

To Paul then, the end was inaugurated by Jesus' resurrection. Reginald Fuller (1980:48) concludes that the resurrection of Jesus was thus conceived as the first and determinative instance which inaugurated the general resurrection. Since Jesus death and resurrection took place in time - by the third day, and arguably in space - from the grave, Christians contend that they have every reason to believe that their own resurrection will be temporal (in time) and spatial. At the time of Jesus, the Pharisees believed in resurrection while the Sadducees believed there was no resurrection (Mark 12:18-27). Those who subscribed to resurrection generally understood that resurrection would be an end time event. That Jesus rose before the end of history was an innovation. Jews were not looking forward to individual resurrections separated from the general resurrection. There are no adequate parallels between Jesus' resurrection and resurrections in the pagan world. Nicholas Wright (2003:81-82) maintains that something occurred to Jesus Christ that had not happened to anyone else.

But what is it that we are referring to when we talk about resurrection? Jon Paulien (2012:2) maintains that:

> Resurrection ... refers specifically to the belief that the present state of those who have died will be replaced by a future state in which they are alive bodily once more ... restoring bodily life to those in which it had ceased.

Cullmann[44] says resurrection is a new creative act of God which brings the dead to life. Resurrection is a divine act of creation of the total person, which includes the soul; not just a creation of the body. Walter Brueggemann (2007:33) echoes the same sentiments that: "Resurrection of the body is not a natural transition from one state to another; it is nothing less than a miracle in which God re-creates that which had ceased to exist." While Cullmann[45] argues that: "The resurrection of the body, whose substance will no longer be that of the flesh, but that of the Holy Spirit, is only a part of the whole new creation." This is when the power of the Holy Spirit changes all material, as it is set free from corruptibility. Marcus Borg (2010:20) distinguishes between this resurrection and resuscitation thus:

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[44] http://bburnet.com/resources/cullmann_imort_res.pdf (pp. 18) accessed 15/05/14
[45] Ibid page 17.

Resuscitation refers to the reanimation of a corpse: a person dead or thought to be dead comes back to life, resumes the life that she or he had before and *will die again someday …Resurrection* means something quite different in a first-century Jewish context, it does not refer to resumption of one's previous life, but to entry *into another kind of existence*, a level or realm that is beyond death. (Emphasis original)

The challenge we face is that the Bible does not tell us what actually happened for Jesus to rise from the dead. There was no witness to Jesus' actual resurrection. The resurrection was only a conclusion as a result of Jesus' post resurrection appearances and the empty tomb. Dunn (1985:74) asserts that:

Whether the inference came from heavenly information (as presented, for example, in Matthew 28:6), or as a direct deduction from the events themselves makes no difference, 'Resurrection is a deduction not a datum.'

Resurrection is therefore an event for the age to come and our language today fails to adequately describe events belonging to the eschatological age. There are no historical analogies with which we can connect the concrete faith in Jesus' resurrection. Jesus' resurrection was a transformation from earthly state of existence to a supernatural one. Fuller (1980:33) concludes that:

It is therefore impossible to categorise the Easter appearances in any available this-worldly language, even in that of religious mysticism ... The ultimate reason for this difficulty is that there are no categories available for the unprecedented disclosure of the eschatological within history.

Resurrection thus eludes ordinary human experience because it goes beyond our experiences in history. It is a metaphorical description of an event whose essence is concealed to humanity. In resurrection, humanity become partakers of eternity through the creative act of God, whereby the temporal is turned into the eternal. There is a transformation into a quality of life that transcends temporality. Nicholas T. Wright (2010:18) asserts that: ""Resurrection" is not simply death from another viewpoint; it is the reversal of death, its cancellation, the destruction of its power." It is an end time event where history comes to an end, and there cannot then be witnesses at the point of resurrection because that would imply that history would not have ended. Something beyond history cannot be witnessed historically and is not subject to empirical observation as it is only given by divine revelation (Fuller 1980:22). Because of this, the resurrection of Jesus was only proclaimed but never witnessed or narrated. Any witness would turn it into a historical event.

Resurrection is therefore not a historical event but is an eschatological and metaphysical event. The resurrection of Jesus was a unique and permanent innovation. Mike Warren (2017)[46] contends that it was such a major event that convinced early Christians to set aside Sunday as a day of corporate worship (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2), in place of the traditional Saturday Sabbath. Despite the fact that the Saturday Sabbath was embedded in Jewish life for over a thousand years from the time of Moses, the early church believed that the resurrection of Jesus on the first day of the week marked the first day of creation.

Jesus' resurrection underlies the Christian faith and is the only model to the Christian faith on resurrection. To Edgar Krentz (1991:98): "If there is no proclamation of the resurrection, then there is no gospel, no church, and no Christian theology. The early church is a child of resurrection." After his resurrection, Jesus the preacher turned to be Jesus the preached. Hence Christianity started as a resurrection movement. The eschatological process was inaugurated by Jesus' resurrection from the dead. Because of his resurrection, Jesus' birth and life appeared in quite a new light. This resulted in writers working backwards to Jesus' pre-existence. We may therefore safely conclude that, according to the early Christians, the entire Gospel rests on Christ's resurrection. For example, Paul and Peter frequently imply that it was only after his resurrection that Jesus became Lord (e.g. Romans1:4). Paul places such remarkable stresses on the resurrection of Jesus to the extent that he thinks one needs to "believe that God raised him from the dead", in order to "be saved" (Romans 10:9); and that if Christ did not rise from the dead then Christian faith is worthless and all their proclamations are in vain (1 Corinthians 15:13f). Hence Paulien's (2012:31) assertion that: "... all Christian hope is based on the resurrection as there is no natural immortality that human beings can count on."

Paulien (2012:36-39) discerns some significance of Jesus' resurrection to the Christian faith. By raising Jesus from the dead, God overturned the human verdicts. In resurrection God shows he affirms that Jesus was innocent and that he was not a mere human being. Paul claims that through resurrection Jesus is highly exalted and given the highest throne. He is given prominence over all things (Philippians 2:6-11). Because those who die with Christ in baptism (Romans 6:3-

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[46] Warren, Mike. 2017. *The Public Proofs for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ*. From https://christianciv.com/blog/index.php/2016/03/27/the-public-proofs-for-the-resurrection-part-1/ accessed 05/02/2018

14) are also united with him in resurrection, it means the resurrection power of Jesus is ushered into the present life. Therefore resurrection transforms everything pertaining to today's Christian faith life. Now a believer is free to live a new life and his existence has a new meaning. (2 Corinthians 5:15).

Paulien thinks that the resurrection of the dead is not an individualistic event but a communal one. John Goldingay (1989:318) also affirms this when he says that resurrection:

> … happens to individuals, but it does not happen to them individually. . . it is not the means of them enjoying individual bliss, but of them having a share in the new life and glory of the people of God.

Paulien further contends that according to Hebrews 11:39, deceased saints of the Old Testament have not yet received their final rewards because they are waiting for living saints to be made perfect. Hence Sakae Kubo's (1978:136) conclusion that:

> The righteous dead all rise up together, and those alive receive translation at the same time. We die individually but we rise up together. All enjoy the blessing of eternity together and those alive receive translation at the same time.

So they conclude that the goal of resurrection is restoration of the community.

For us to get more insights from Jesus Christ's resurrection I now turn to a more detailed study of three critical areas involving Jesus' resurrection namely: the empty tomb, the post resurrection appearances and the nature of Jesus' post resurrection body.

5.3.1   The empty tomb

Christian faith, which is founded on the faith in the resurrection, would not have been possible if the disciples had believed in a non-physical resurrection. The earliest proclamation of resurrection thus inferred an empty tomb (Thomas 1973:170). George Palakuzha (2008:163-164) argues that: "... the appearance of the risen Lord and the discovery of the empty tomb were necessary to "catalyse the disciples' robust faith in the risen Lord.""

There is an undisputed claim to the emptiness of Jesus' tomb in all the Gospel narratives. The Christian faith in resurrection is a result of the Gospels' attestation to the emptiness of the tomb

and to the appearance of Jesus after his resurrection. Suffice to point out that the empty tomb was neither recounted nor proclaimed in the Gospels, but because Jesus was raised from the dead, this implied to them, a resurrection from the grave. Resurrection from the grave was the apocalyptic hope of resurrection of the Jewish people. To them the hope of general resurrection also involved transformation into an entirely renewed mode of existence. The Gospel narratives never portray the empty tomb as confirmation of resurrection.

Dunn (1985:66) contends that it was an accepted view that elements of the dead body were necessary for resurrection to take place. In Matthew 27:52-53 dead bodies were reported to have come out of tombs. Because of this thinking, Jews of Jesus' time would go to the tomb where a dead person was laid, to collect the remains of the dead body for safekeeping. These were thought would be useful when the body is reconstructed during the resurrection exercise. This thinking was developed from Ezekiel 37:7-10. After studying Ezekiel, Daniel and Maccabees, Wright (1998) concludes that what began as a metaphor for Israel's fortunes culminated into a belief in the resurrection of the body. The belief in the re-embodiment of the dead was a doctrine taught by Pharisees of Jesus' time, and resurrection never referred to something ghostly. However, Brent Hege (2009:107) argues that:

> ... Paul's claim that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor 15:50) invalidates any appeal to an empty tomb insofar as that tradition presupposes physical resuscitation or revivification of a corpse.

The responses of the Church leadership in Zimbabwe were a mixed bag, ranging from the uncritical resuscitation of the dead corpse to the creative action of God, which will cause the transformation of the body from the perishable to the imperishable state. Only a few denominational leaders were completely switched off that they could not explain what will happen to the bodies at resurrection. Nevertheless, they still believed in a future resurrection. What follows are some theological arguments that are of interest to the Christian faith, in so far as the Christian's ultimate hope is founded on resurrection.

5.3.1.1 Was the empty tomb necessary for the proclamation of resurrection?

The empty tomb was significant to the first Christians in Jerusalem because they were very close to the site where Jesus died. The empty tomb narratives were also important to affirm that the

post resurrection appearances were not hallucinations. Paul Althus (2005:317) contends that the resurrection proclamation: "... could not have been maintained in Jerusalem for a single day, for a single hour, if the emptiness of the tomb had not been established as fact for all concerned." The tomb had to be empty for the early Christians to be able to proclaim Jesus' resurrection.

That Jesus' body was not in the tomb because he had risen was therefore a logical conclusion for the contemporaries. Resurrection faith started with the appearance of the post resurrected Jesus. To Pannenberg (2001:353), the empty tomb is secondary to Jesus' appearances after rising from the dead, and the vacant tomb "takes on significance for the whole subject only in connection with the resurrection appearances." When Jesus appeared to them, they understood why the tomb was empty. Although the empty tomb was not an object of their faith, it was nevertheless associated with that faith and the preaching of resurrection was made rational. The proclamation of Jesus' resurrection would have been meaningless and incredible if the body of Jesus was still lying in the tomb. The proclamation of the resurrected Jesus was made in Jerusalem, not Rome or Athens. And Jerusalem is a place where the empty tomb would have been too notorious to be disputed.

Wright (2003:688-692) however contends that early Christians were a mixed bag in terms of their beliefs on resurrection and may not have shared a common definition of resurrection. There were two common beliefs by the early Christians: that Jesus' tomb was empty and that Jesus appeared to some people after his resurrection. But neither of these beliefs was adequate to trigger the early Christian faith in Jesus' resurrection. However, the blending of the two beliefs was an adequate condition to cause early Christians to believe in the resurrection of Jesus (Wright 2003:688-692). The empty tomb could mean the body was removed or stolen. Although Richard Miller (2010:767) notes that: "… it would have been the body's absence, not its presence, that would have signalled the provocative moment for the ancient reader." The appearances could have been subjective vision, but a blending of the emptiness of the tomb and that he appeared to his followers, implied Jesus had indeed resurrected. Therefore, for the early Christians, the empty tomb was an important component for the proclamation of the Gospel. To Wilkinson (2010:93):

> ... the empty tomb is necessary in demonstrating the transformation rather than replacement of the body, and therefore by implication that God's purposes for the material world are that it should be transformed not discarded.

These arguments, which are not decisive, have left the Shona Christian in a lurch. Is the earthly body necessary for resurrection? The empty tomb hypothesis, the attestations of the Gospels and the early Christians seem to say yes the body will be needed. But on a general note, resurrection, being the creative act of God *ex nihilo*, will not require earthly dead bodies; considering there are some bodies which are annihilated at death.

5.3.1.2 Was the tomb empty?

The best explanation for the historicity of the empty tomb lies on the fact that eyewitnesses could testify that the tomb where Jesus' body was laid was empty, and that Jesus had risen from the dead. William Craig[47] says that the empty tomb is credible as "... it was not an apologetic device of early Christians." Craig[48] further maintains that there is: "... powerful evidence that the tomb of Jesus was actually found empty on Sunday morning by a small group of his women followers. As a plain historical fact, this seems to be amply attested." Dunn (1985:65-68) concurs with him that a historical reconstruction to the 'empty tomb' confirms the fact that the tomb was certainly empty. The burial narrative is historically dependable and this supports the conclusion that the tomb was empty.

This emptiness was important to the first Christians' belief in Jesus' resurrection and they accepted it without reservation. If the disciples had stolen the body they would have made the tomb a place of pilgrimage. Why was their great prophet Jesus' tomb not accorded due honour? From Matthew 23:29 and Luke 11:47 we see a customary practice where burial places of renowned people like prophets were venerated. There was not any tomb veneration among the early Christians and there is no evidence that they accorded any special significance to Jesus' burial place. They did not venerate Jesus' tomb because they knew it was empty. Raymond E. Brown (1973:120) asserts that in the first century, the cult of veneration of tombs of holy men

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[47] Craig William. *The Historicity of the Empty Tomb*. From https://www.reasonablefaith.org/writings/scholarly-writings/historical-jesus/the-historicity-of-the-empty-tomb-of-jesus/ accessed 26/01/18
[48] Ibid

was well established in Palestine. Yet it cannot be proved that the practice of such a ceremony was ever performed shortly after Jesus' death.

Women were thought to be undependable witnesses. The fact that the testimony to the empty tomb was attributed to women attests to its soundness. If they wanted to manufacture witnesses, they could not have attributed the witness to women as no sane person would have believed it. Women were 'second class citizens' in the Jewish social ladder and could not stand as legitimate legal witnesses. William Craig affirms[49] that:

> In fact, the Jewish historian, Josephus says that women were not even permitted to serve as witnesses in a Jewish court of law. Now in light of this fact how remarkable it is that it is women who are the discoverers of Jesus' empty tomb.

In this case it is the women who testified that the tomb was empty because it is how the event was remembered as having taken place. Here the criterion of embarrassment may be applied. The Gospel writers would not have gone out of their way to give accounts that were potentially embarrassing or that hindered their purpose of proclaiming the gospel. To make women the primary witnesses was an embarrassment in ancient Palestine.

We may therefore conclude that the empty tomb narrative is free from any legendary development, and any theological and apologetical patterns do not affect it. The Gospels are not legendary. Matt Lefebvre (2012)[50] quotes C. S. Lewis' *Christian Reflections* (p.209) which says:

> All I am in private life is a literary critic and historian, that's my job. And I'm prepared to say on that basis if anyone thinks the Gospels are either legends or novels, then that person is simply showing his incompetence as a literary critic. I've read a great many novels and I know a fair amount about the legends that grew up among early people, and I know perfectly well the Gospels are not that kind of stuff.

5.3.1.3 Did Paul ignore the empty tomb?

In 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 Paul, in defining the term 'gospel', talks of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus and does not mention the empty tomb. There are arguments that Paul

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[49] Ibid

[50] *Lefebvre,* Matt. 2012. *Historicity of Jesus' resurrection appearances*. From https://warrantedbelief.wordpress.com/tag/historicity-of-jesus-resurrection-appearances/ accessed 06/02/18

missed the empty tomb in his narrative because it was insignificant to him. This may be partly correct as his faith was not founded on the empty tomb but on the risen Christ. William Craig thinks otherwise. He argues that in Paul's formula, the expression 'he was raised' which follows the phrase 'he was buried' entails the empty tomb. This was compatible with first century Jewish thinking, that the remains of the deceased would be raised; hence their practice of preserving the bones of their deceased until eschatological resurrection (Craig 1985:89-95). He further argues that the term 'on the third day' must refer to the day of discovery of the empty tomb, as resurrection itself was not witnessed and therefore could not be dated 'on the third day.' When Paul gives reference to the third day then, he is, in effect, talking about the existence of the empty tomb. Commenting on 1 Corinthians 15:3ff, David Wilkerson (2010:93) echoes the same sentiments that:

> ... the juxtaposition of 'he was buried' and 'he was raised' surely implies an empty tomb especially in the context of first century Judaism where resurrection would always be thought about in physical terms.

The continuity in the Pauline formula seems to support the idea of bodily resurrection, which implies an empty tomb.

5.3.1.4 Is the empty tomb relevant for Christian faith in resurrection?

As mentioned earlier, the empty tomb was not an object of faith for the early Christians, and is not a necessary factor in resurrection. We have seen that Matthew 27:52 and John 5:28-29 underlie a resuscitation of dead bodies. But what is going to happen to those dead bodies burnt to ashes? In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul insists on bodily resurrection but differentiates the earthly body from the resurrection body. Dunn (1985:74) maintains that Paul believed in "continuity between the person that was and the person that will be". Yet there will also be a difference which Paul explains analogically as similar to the relation between the body of the seed and the body of the plant (verses 36-38). Paul could not express the body fully because it evades all human historical experiences and there is no direct practical knowledge of the metaphorical term 'resurrection' on this side of life. If Paul's arguments are taken seriously, then the empty tomb was not necessary for faith in resurrection.

Wilkinson (2010:94) maintains that: "the empty tomb is a demonstration of God's purposes in transforming creation," and so it is not necessary for faith in resurrection. While Kelly Anthony (2006:1) thinks otherwise that:

> While Easter faith is not in the empty tomb as such, the empty tomb has a pivotal role for Christian faith in the resurrection of Jesus. Either Christ has really risen or Christians are confronted with a dead and decaying corpse on which to base what would be a rather diluted resurrection faith. The empty tomb is not an idol of human projection but an indicator of God's Spirit transforming human freedom and the cosmos itself into a totally new reality: the "new heaven and new earth." Without an empty tomb, Christian eschatology degenerates into an ideology of wishful thinking and Easter becomes meaningless.

Resurrection, according to Christian faith is a creative action of God that will take place after death. Historically, it is difficult to explain how the faith in resurrection of Jesus would have started if the tomb was not empty; yet theologically the fact that the tomb was empty was not a necessary component in Jesus' resurrection. Whether the present body is annihilated or burnt to ashes, the Christian expectation of the body's resurrection will not die (Dunn 1985:75). Bodily resurrection remains the mainstay of Christian faith. The same can be said of the Shona Christians in Zimbabwe, despite the confusion they experience in trying to define resurrection and the nature of resurrection body.

5.3.2 Post resurrection appearances

The Gospels and the first epistle to the Corinthians tell us that Jesus was seen after his resurrection. The first epistle to the Corinthians was written around twenty years after Jesus died. In the letter, Paul claims that the post resurrected Jesus showed himself to over five hundred persons, many of whom were still alive (1Corithians 15:6). There were witness still alive, who could attest to this fact when the epistle was written, and Paul invited his audience to verify this for themselves, if they wished. Paul himself, having been converted within three years following Jesus' death, when he had an encounter with him on his way to Damascus, was part of the pool of witnesses. There were still living eyewitnesses from whom his audience could ascertain first hand. James Dunn (1985:69) notes that there may be some contradictory evidences on the post resurrection appearances, nevertheless, "the testimonies would be unfairly judged if lightly discounted as fabrication". Gary Habermas claims that facts dictate that Jesus

showed himself to his followers following his passing away. While claims of discrepancies in the New Testament texts present some problems, resurrection can still be "historically demonstrated *even when the minimum amount of critically admitted historical facts is utilised"* (Habermas 1990:378-379). The data which can be historically ascertained, by virtually all scholars, affirm the literal post resurrection appearances by Jesus. The minimal facts retrieved from the New Testament show that the post resurrected Jesus who appeared to his followers is the same Jesus who had been crucified. If the post resurrection accounts were fabricated, it would have been embarrassing to deliberately incorporate doubt of the disciples themselves (Matthew 28:17), who were the pioneers of their faith.

Inviting his audience that they could cross examine the living witnesses who had an encounter with the post resurrected Jesus; Paul provides evidence which points heavily to the historicity of the account. Matt *Lefebvre*, (2012)[51] observes that:

> It should be noted that Paul is not just listing people randomly in this description. In giving the names of some and the status of others (alive or dead), Paul is open to critical scrutiny. If this disagreed with what the other apostles themselves were teaching… Paul could be exposed. Indications elsewhere in the letter suggest that the Corinthians knew the preaching of others (1 Corinthians 1:12). In the case of the 500 in particular, Paul seems to be inviting earnest inquiry. Why would Paul mention that most of them were still alive unless he was, in effect, saying that they could be asked if there were any doubts?

As mentioned earlier, the combination of the empty tomb and Jesus' appearances after his resurrection became the basis of faith in Jesus' resurrection for the early Christians. By giving reference to living witnesses for cross examination, Paul may have been trying to give proof of resurrection.

However, theologians like Rudolph Otto (1950:222–229) perceive Jesus' resurrection as an imaginative or spiritual occurrence. Other modern researchers like Phillip Wiebe (1997:106–107; 121; 212–222), advocate for a spiritual resurrection rather than a physical resurrection. Today, there is what we call an 'after-death communication' (ADC). Guggenheim *et al* (1996:15) define an after-death communication (ADC) as: "… a spiritual experience that occurs when someone is

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[51] *Lefebvre,* Matt. 2012. *Historicity of Jesus' resurrection appearances*. From https://warrantedbelief.wordpress.com/tag/historicity-of-jesus-resurrection-appearances/ accessed 06/02/18

connected directly and spontaneously by a deceased family member or friend". Ken Vincent (2012:139-140) says that: "Paul's ADC with Jesus occurred about four years after Jesus' death, and he wrote about this experience about 20 years later."

After-death communication could be compared with the Shona thinking on their dead. After the *kurova guva* (bringing home) ceremony for example, they really feel their deceased will be with them albeit in a spiritual form. This falls in the class of Otto's imaginative or spiritual occurrence. We could also place the Shona experiences in the category of after-death communication (ADC). As Vincent notes, Paul had an ADC with Jesus. If Paul had such an experience with Jesus what would be wrong with the Shona having ADC's with their departed? One Zimbabwean indigenous Church leader argues that they are not the same experiences since "our Jesus is not in the realm of the dead and is not counted among the dead because he rose from the dead and lives forever, while our departed forebears are dead and have not yet experienced resurrection."

Despite the ADC claims that may be put forward, all the Gospels affirm the objective physical nature of Jesus' appearances after his resurrection. For Luke and John, it was a bodily Jesus who could walk and talk (Luke 24:15 ff), prepare, bless, distribute and eat food (Luke 24:30,42ff, John 20:9-13). One could touch him (Luke 24:39; John 20:17-27 and Matthew 28:9). Luke and John therefore emphasize on the corporeal connection between Jesus who lived on earth and the one who rose from the dead. John though, avoids producing proof of physicality of Jesus' resurrection body, e.g. Jesus did not eat, Mary is forbidden to touch Jesus (John 20:17), and Thomas did not feel Jesus' wounds.

Paul takes a paradoxical approach to what he saw. In 1 Corinthians 15:8 he equates Jesus' appearances to him with those of earlier witnesses. He thinks his post resurrection encounter with Jesus matched those of his earlier counterparts. In this encounter, Paul implies a bodily resurrection. But in 1 Corinthians 15:3-5 he argues that the post resurrection body was not natural, but was a transformed body which was not flesh and blood. Wright (2010:19) thinks that: "…Paul clearly believed that God would give new life to the mortal bodies of Christians…" On Paul's post resurrection encounter with Jesus, Dunn (1975:103) observes that Paul does not

use the word vision when he narrates his encounter with the post resurrected Jesus on his way to Damascus. Paul sees his encounter as different from his other ecstatic incidents (2 Corinthians 12:1ff, Galatians 1:12, 16). So Paul claimed to have seen Jesus.

Granted that Paul saw the resurrected Jesus, whose body he described as a spiritual body, what is it that Paul saw? Or rather, what kind of seeing was it that Paul experienced. Paul does not give us a clue as to what kind of seeing he experienced - whether it was by the physical eye or by the eye of the mind or of the spirit. Fuller (1980:31) submits that the seeing designates:

> ... not necessarily physical seeing, not necessarily visions in a subjective sense (involving, for example, ecstasy or dreams), but a revelatory self disclosure or disclosure by God of the eschatologically resurrected Christos.

He further argues that the post resurrection appearances do not fit in both the physical seeing and visionary seeing. They were not events which could be empirically verified but they were revelatory incidents which disclosed the Christological and eschatological significance of Christ, and are best defined theologically as revelatory encounters. These show Jesus in his eschatological existence.

But how did the eschatological Jesus appear to the various witnesses? Could it have been a physical or internal experience? Brown (1973: 90-91) makes a semantic analysis of the word 'appeared' in 1 Corinthians 15:5 and Luke 24:34 and says the word:

> ... is a translation of the Greek word *ophthe,* a passive form of the verb "to see". The dative construction employed with the verb suggests a translation "appeared to" rather than "was seen by". A study of this verb in the Greek Bible shows that it covers a wide range of visual experience including contacts with supernatural beings such as God and angels, so that it does not have to imply physical sight. Therefore, we cannot simply assume that when Paul speaks of Jesus "appearing" to him or when he says that he "saw" Jesus (1 Cor. 9:1), he means physical sight of a corporeal being.

'Vision' would not be suitable to describe the incident, because 'vision' has connotations of something privatised, outstanding and limited. This may not be the case with Jesus' post resurrection appearances. How could a vision be available to as many as five hundred people (1 Corinthians 15:6) at the same time? Could they all have simultaneously gone into ecstasy at the same time? Could there be a sight that is not necessarily physical, that could be seen by several

people. Could this be compatible with Paul's depiction of a resurrection body which is both material and spiritual? We have no adequate vocabulary that can express eschatological existence. The seeing that Jesus' followers experienced may have involved an element of revelation. This would make the sight transcend ordinary seeing, because it was an eschatological encounter outside categories of space and time.

To Dunn (1975:103-115), there are different kinds of seeing and this may involve mental perception; which is the apprehension of a given reality by the mind using reason or instinct. The way Paul uses the term 'reveal' (Galatians 1:16) has nuances of the uncovering of a reality, than the actual seeing of a person, yet from the phraseology and the context, the weight falls on the actual seeing with eyes. Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:5-8 seeks to portray his personal encounter equal objectivity as the post resurrection experiences narrated in the Gospels. There is also visionary insight where the actual seeing is concerned but the status of the object seen is uncertain. There is need to determine where seeing occurs; whether it happens in the mind or when mental images are projected or when there is an external reality within the visionary which others cannot see. Paul's seeing may have been in the visionary mode. Yet to him it was a real perception of an encounter of and with Jesus, but the realm of existence cannot be subjected to the limitations of something we can visually describe. Dunn concludes that Jesus' post resurrection appearance to Paul was a visionary experience from heaven (Acts 26:19). What he saw though, was an external and present reality which was non-material, non-objective and non-physical because it could not be empirically verified.

Generally there are three classes of seeing namely; ordinary sight, objective vision and subjective vision. Ordinary sight would entail the object would be able to be seen by anybody in the locality, and objective vision would be dependent upon Jesus revealing himself while subjective vision would be hallucinatory.

Michael Licona (2010:483) notes that: "According to the American Psychological Association, a hallucination is 'a false sensory perception that has the compelling sense of reality despite the absence of an external stimulus.'" A hallucination therefore involves a false perception which cannot be externally verifiable. Gerd Lüdemann (1994:221) recognizes this in defining what he

means by saying, "'Hallucination' nowadays has negative connotations, in the sense of illusion. I follow Simon in also regarding hallucination as vision." However many scholars agree that Paul's seeing was also visionary. Such visions can either be subjective visions (not real) or objective visions (real), both of which cannot undergo empirical verification. Objective visions would be situations where Jesus really appeared and was really visible to those whom he specifically allowed to see him. Such visionary seeing arises out of a revelation. The revelation must have been controlled by the revealer. This would mean the source of revelation determined the image revealed and thus the image was subject to change and was no more limited to the laws of space and time. This may be the reason why Marry Magdalene (John 20:14) failed to recognise the resurrected Jesus. The post resurrection encounter experienced by Jesus' followers going to Emmaus (Luke 24:13ff) also attest to a controlled revelation. The eleven in the upper room could not recognise him (Luke 24:36), so did the seven in the fishing boat (John 20:4). Either they did not believe enough or the revealer manipulated the image or they were blocked from recognising him. Luke 24:16 and 31 states that, 'their eyes were kept from recognising him.' This means the revealer manipulated their vision. Mark (16:12) says that Jesus appeared in another form. From these two texts it would seem the source of revelation controlled either the sight of the visionary or the image being seen. This gave the post resurrected Jesus the ability to appear and disappear, and to enter through locked doors (Luke 24:31, 36, John 20:19, 26).

Hallucinations occur in a particular person's mind and there will be, in reality, nothing happening physically. The hallucination hypothesis places Jesus' post resurrection appearances in the subjective visions category, where seeing is in the context of a dream, vision etc. Matt Perman (2007)[52] argues that:

> The hallucination theory is untenable because it cannot explain the physical nature of the appearances. The disciples record eating and drinking with Jesus, as well as touching him. This cannot be done with hallucinations. Second, it is highly unlikely that they would all have had the same hallucination. Hallucinations are highly individual, and not group projections.

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[52] Matt Perman https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/historical-evidence-for-the-resurrection accessed 31/01/18

Matt *Lefebvre* (2012)[53] observes that "hallucinations might be able to account for the "when" of the testimony to Jesus' post-mortem appearances; it starts to get into trouble in discussion of the "who"".

It may therefore not be possible to harmonise subjective events, even given the essential conditions for group hallucinations of: expectation, emotional excitement and prior information. Glej Licona (2010:178) quotes Gary Sibcy who refutes the hallucination hypothesis thus:

> I have surveyed the professional literature (peer-reviewed journal articles and books) written by psychologists, psychiatrists, and other relevant healthcare professionals during the past two decades and have yet to find a single documented case of a group hallucination, that is, an event for which more than one person purportedly shared in a visual or other sensory perception where there was clearly no external referent.

Therefore, many scholars, including James Dunn (1975:99), reject the hallucination hypothesis.

5.3.3   The nature of the post resurrection body

The reports we get from the Bible concerning the nature of the post resurrection body of Jesus vary. Luke talks of a physical body (Luke 24:39), which had flesh and bones and which could be seen and handled. Keith Innes (2009:141) reminds us that:

> We should always remember that we cannot visualize what . . . the resurrection body will be like. We can only think of [it] in terms of our present experience, from which by definition [it] will differ.

Larkin (1921:136) takes an anatomical approach to the human body and concludes that the blood is the source of bodily corruption and decay. For a human body to be preserved it must be drained of blood. Alternatively the blood must be chemically preserved by an embalming liquid. It is the blood that repairs the tissues of the body which waste away. When a body wastes away, hunger and thirst sets in and the body must have food and drink to repair the waste. On resurrection there will no longer be thirst and hunger (Revelation 7:16). The bodies do not waste away and there will be no need of blood. Larkin agrees with Luke 24:39 that the resurrection body is a body of flesh and bones. He further qualifies the flesh of the resurrection body as non-

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[53] *Lefebvre,* Matt. 2012. *Historicity of Jesus' resurrection appearances*. From
https://warrantedbelief.wordpress.com/tag/historicity-of-jesus-resurrection-appearances/ accessed 06/02/18

human flesh, but as flesh that is adapted to the Spirit. The spiritual body is a body adaptable to the needs of the Spirit. It is a material body with spiritual qualities. David Wilkinson (2010:99) concurs and says:

> The transformed body is not composed of the "spirit"; it is a body adapted to the eschatological existence that is under the ultimate domination of the Spirit... The resurrection body is more than physical but not less, it is animated by the Spirit, dynamic in the sense of purposeful flourishing and freed from the decay associated with sin. Its context is new creation.

Now Paul in Philippians 3:20-21 says that human bodies shall be fashioned like unto Jesus' post resurrection body. On that principle then this implies that the characteristics of Jesus' post resurrection body will be the same characteristics of human bodies when they rise from the dead. Jon Paulien (2012:2) submits that:

> While the resurrected body may be different in many ways, it is as material as the first body, usually arising at the very place of death, wearing clothes, and arising with recognizable, physical characteristics of the former life.

According to Biblical reports, when Jesus rose from the dead he insisted on his identity. Mark 16:12 points out that the post resurrected Jesus appeared in different forms. It is not certain what this actually means, but the reports show that Cleopas and his friend, who were travelling to Emmaus, were talking about Jesus but did not recognise the man they were talking about, when he appeared in their midst (Luke 24:16,31). Yet they knew him very well. Mary Magdalene who also knew Jesus well, also failed to recognise him.

Larkin argues that it is the law of the 'spirit world' that the 'Spirit body' can change into a physical body and back again. Angelic beings seem to possess this attribute. This is seen in the visits of angels to Abraham (Genesis 18:1-8), Lot (Genesis 19:1-3), Daniel (Daniel 8:15-17), Zechariahs (Luke 1:11), Mary (Luke 1:26-35), women at the tomb (Mathew 28:5-7), Peter (Acts 12:5-10) and John (Revelations 1:1, 17:7). Larkin (1921:127) asserts that:

> The "Law of Transformation" will also account for a number of occurrences otherwise unexplainable. For instance, the "Catching Away" of Philip. Acts 8: 39-40. After the baptism of the Ethiopian Eunuch we read that the **"SPIRIT OF THE LORD"** caught away Philip and transported him to Azotus, some 25 miles away. From this we see that the "Spirit of the Lord" has the power to make invisible and transport a human being from one place to another. This is confirmed by experience of the Prophet Ezekiel. In Ezek. 3:14-15, we read- "The

> SPIRIT lifted me up, and took me away" and the Prophet found himself at Tel-abib, on the river Chebar, among those of the Captivity.

However, some minds would like to argue that Jesus did not change form but as the 'revealer', he controlled the vision of those who were seeing him. Luke 24:31-39 seeks to explicitly reject the notion that Jesus' post resurrection appearances was spooky, and the New Testament does not present the resurrection of Jesus as a return to his previous form of terrestrial existence. Thomas Leclerc (2009:104) argues that "After resurrection, it is the same Jesus, but his body has been transformed."

Jon Paulien (2012:32-33) thinks that we can learn from Jesus' post resurrected body, by analysing his post resurrection appearances. It seems the post resurrection body of Jesus was different from the body he had before he died. What kind of a body was it that could appear and disappear at will, a body that was no longer subjected to space and time (John 20:19, 26) and that could enter through locked doors? What kind of body was it that could eat (Luke 24:42f) and that a group of disciples objectively saw ascending without a space suit (Acts 1:9). How do we reconcile such inexplicable activities with a physical body? Either these powers were inaccessible during Jesus' lifetime or he chose not to exercise them. In 1 Corinthians 15:44, Paul talks of a corporeal body that is not natural. Raymond Brown (1973: 89) thinks that Luke and John emphasised on corporeal link between the earthly Christ and the Christ who had resurrected. Their intention of writing was not to analyse properties of the body of Jesus. They therefore presented Jesus as exempt from laws of space (Luke 24:31, John 20:19, 26) and his followers failed to recognise him (John 21:4). Paulien (2012:33) also thinks that the emphasis placed by the Gospels is one of continuity.

> Both Luke and John seem eager to demonstrate that the resurrected body of Jesus was not a phantom or disembodied spirit, but was as real as the body He had lived in before the crucifixion. Jesus' voice was recognizable and it was possible to hold onto Him (John 20:16-17). The scars in His hands could be seen and it was possible to touch them (John 20:20, 27). He did physical tasks like cooking breakfast (John 21:9-12). While the disciples on the road to Emmaus did not recognize Him at first, Luke explains that it was because they were kept from recognizing Him (Luke 24:16). Jesus even ate in their presence (Luke 24:43). But the strongest support for continuity is in verses 36-39 where the idea that Jesus was some sort of disembodied spirit is explicitly rejected. After the resurrection, it is the same Jesus, but His body has been transformed.

The transformation is from perishability to imperishability and in 1 Corinthians 15:50 Paul implies that the resurrection body, though corporeal, is not material in the similar manner as the earthly body is.

So Jesus' post resurrection relation shows continuity with their previous relationship before his death and is not abruptly privatised. He talked, touched, walked, ate as before his death, save that he had a renewed material contact with the people. He involved himself in the fabric of human life, yet he was sovereignly liberated from its limitations. The body was identical yet it was changed; it was now a body that went above constraints of the flesh but at the same time it was able to manifest itself within the order of the flesh. This makes Marcus Borg (2010:20) to argue that:

> Resuscitation intrinsically involves something happening to a corpse. Resurrection could, but need not, mean that the corpse had been affected; a corpse coming back to life is not the point.

We may summarise the Christian belief in resurrection as an act of new creation, involving transformation that will produce the same body with altered attributes, when compared with the earthly body. It is an entirely new eschatological and glorious mode of existence. The term spiritual body must then be linked to the Holy Spirit. The cause and effect system of nature will no longer be the sustaining factor in spiritual bodies, but it will now be the Holy Spirit eternally sustaining the body.

Many Shona Christians who responded could not get into the technicalities of the transformed body. But the fact that the body would not suffer hunger, thirst or fatigue really fascinated them and motivated many to push on with their faith. In face of today's suffering, they have something to look forward to - a blissful future. It seems a life with Jesus in heaven is the major hope that is left, especially for the poor citizenry who are struggling to make ends meet in the harsh Zimbabwean economy.

5.3.4   Bodily or spiritual resurrection?

As mentioned earlier, Davies (1967:299-301) submits that, in the Jewish thinking, the body and the soul would reunite in the afterlife. They believed in literal resurrection. (Isaiah 26:19; Baruch 50:1-4. Psalms 10:9; Daniel 12:2). John' Gospel (5:28) also alludes to a bodily resurrection. 2 Maccabees 7:1-23 teaches that martyrs would be given their bodies, whole. Even the Pharisees of Jesus time generally believed in the re-embodiment of the dead. The term 'resurrection' was never used referring to the spirit. However, because of the Hellenistic notion of immortality of the soul, which had an impact on some of the Jewish thinking, the teaching of literal resurrection diminished but did not die.

However, resurrection was not a fundamental feature of Jewish faith; it only rose to the fore when Christianity arose. First Christians understood Christ rose literally from the dead, in his own former body, and that he showed himself to them and he partook corporeal activities. Scholars such as Brown (1973:111) do not think that the post resurrected Jesus shared his physical experiences with his followers in a balanced way, as he was "no longer bound by space and time laws of ordinary human experience". But Brown (1973 125-128) concedes that Christians are right when they speak of Jesus' resurrection body as a body changed eschatologically. The same Jesus they had known presented himself in a 'transformed resurrected physicality'. George Montague (2011:261) contends that: "My risen body will be my own, not someone else's. One does not lose one's personal identity by resurrection: one finds it in a new way." Matthew, Luke and John present a physically resurrected Jesus (Luke 24:15f, 30, 39, 42f, John 20:9-13, 17, 20-22, 27, Matthew 28:9). They all attest to the objective physical nature of Jesus' post resurrection. For first century Christians then, there was no difference between resurrection and physical resurrection (resuscitation).

Paul thinks that the resurrection of believers will be of the same model as the resurrection of Jesus (Roman 6:8-9, 1 Corinthians 6:14, 15:20, 2 Corinthians 4:14, Philippians 3: 21 and 1 Thessalonians 4:14). He insists on a bodily resurrection (I Corinthians 15:12, 35) but distinguishes the present body from the resurrection body which he calls a spiritual body. Brown (1973:85) thinks Paul takes a paradoxical approach in that he implies a resurrection that is corporeal but at the same time not natural (1 Corinthians 15:3-5); one that is not flesh and blood. There is a consensus from various schools of thought that Paul's view of the post resurrected

219

body was not a simple recovery of the body, but a recreated body that is controlled by the Spirit. Neither Paul's portrayal of the resurrection body nor the core apostolic kerygma in 1 Corinthians 15:1-11 propound a spiritual resurrection of Jesus. They never left Jesus' body in the tomb. Geerhardus Vos as quoted in Hoekema (1979:249-250) argues that the word spiritual in 1 Corinthians 15:44 must be capitalised so that it is clear that Paul is describing the rule of the body by the Holy Spirit.

What then is the relationship between the earthly bodies and the resurrected bodies? Paul's analogy of a seed presupposes that there is no continuity between our bodies on earth and resurrection bodies, because there is a period of disembodiment between death and *parousia*; a period in which the spirit is freed to organise a spiritual body which can adapt to new spiritual environment. Continuity requires that one would receive a new body at the point of death. However, Dunn (1985:17) thinks that there will be continuity between the old and resurrected bodies, but it will not be proportional in the sense that, even in the case of annihilation, Christians' resurrection is still possible because resurrection is a recreation. Francois Bovon (2010:401) thinks that for the Christian believer, there will both be continuity and discontinuity between the present bodies and the immortal resurrection bodies. There is discontinuity because the present bodies are mortal and are not exempt to the "law of sin and death", while the spiritual bodies are immortal. They participate in Christ's victory over death (Brunt 2000:361).

To Brunner (1952:327), the term 'resurrection body' does not mean equating the resurrection with the physical body of flesh, but it points to the person's personality on this side and that side of death. The resurrection body may therefore not simply be the resuscitated earthly body which is made immortal. As Paul notes, (1 Corinthians 15:37-38) the seed sown is not the same as the seed reaped. By using this analogy of the seed, Paul may be aiming to show us the difference and relationship between the planted seed, the plant that grows and the seed that is eventually reaped. The same grape seed that is sown must die in the soil so that a grape plant grows to reap a grape harvest. No grape seed will give mango harvest. Each seed is given its own body (1 Corinthians 15:38). In 1 Corinthians 15:40-41, Paul seems to be saying that there will be differences between bodies of the earth and the bodies after resurrection. Paul's seed analogy therefore seems to epitomize both the continuity and the discontinuity of the resurrection body. The spiritual body is

not similar to the physical body, although there may be continuity between the two bodies. Paulien (2012:34) echoes the same sentiments that in 1 Corinthians 15:35-50 Paul:

> … uses an analogy to describe the similarities and differences between the present earthly body and the glorious resurrected body. The earthly body is like a seed, which when buried in the ground comes forth a plant (1 Cor 15:37, 42-44). There is continuity between a seed and a plant, but there is also discontinuity.

Because Tupper (1974:148) thinks resurrection refers to the changing of the old body into a spiritual body which transcends space and time, to him there is therefore no structural continuity between the two forms of existence. The pertinent question would be that if there was no structural continuity between Jesus' earthly body and his post resurrection body, then what may have happened to his earthly body. Wenham (1984:107) asserts that Jesus' earthly body took a new form because God's new creation was not creation *ex nihilo*, but a "transmutation of the old body". Cullmann (1957:234) thinks that God has to perform a miracle of creation for there to be resurrection, and if God is the creator of the body, then resurrection must be resurrection of the body. He bases his argument in the fact that in the Old Testament the concept of resurrection hope was founded on the faith in creation, this hope had become "an integral part of the Jewish eschatological expectation" during Jesus' time. According to Paul, in resurrection, creation is transformed (Roman 8:18-23; 1Corinthians 7:31) through deliverance of earthly bodies from the burden of sin and corruption. The bodies of the living will not be discarded but transformed, while the bodies of the dead would similarly be transformed.

Paul's comparison between the physical body and the spiritual body does not mean that the resurrection bodies of believers will not be material or physical. The comparison of the seed and the plant contradicts this argument. The resurrected body is spiritual in the sense that it is not subject to death any more, not that it will be non-physical (Paulien 2012:35). The fresh body is liberated from all the negative effects of sin, yet it will still be material and physical like it was before (Padgett 2002:162). This is seen from the characteristics of Jesus' resurrected body, which had attributes that surpassed his body while he was on earth, yet was unquestionably physical in the sense that he could be seen, touched, heard, and could handle and eat food. (Bockmuehl 2004:496).

By 'natural body', Paul must be having in mind, not the physical anatomy, but the body's dominating principle. So 'natural body' would point to a body dominated by nature, while 'spiritual body', points to a body whose dominating principle is the Spirit. According to Wright (2003:360-361) it is a body that has been rid of human mortality and is exempt from death (Romans 6:9). It is not exposed to shame and frailty any more (Tietjen, 2005:96-97).

Paul says "flesh and blood cannot enter the kingdom ..." (I Corinthians 15:50). When Paul uses the term, he may not necessarily be thinking of the physical body. When Paul employs the same term in Galatians 1:16, he meant he did not consult with the minds of other people, and so here, he may have been thinking of not just the physical body. So 'flesh and blood' may not mean a person's material nature, but may be pointing to the weak temporary and temporal character of the natural human body. This would imply that what is corruptible will not inherit that which is not corruptible. The frail earthly body cannot inherit the kingdom of God, not because it is material but because of its corruptibility. Yet in 1 Corinthians 2:15 Paul uses the term 'spiritual' to refer to a physical human being with certain attributes. So when he uses the term, he does not exclude the physical body. The tenable meaning, from the context, is that the term 'flesh and blood' refers to the earthly or natural sinful human being. Acts 13:47 implies Paul believed in Jesus' bodily resurrection.

The term 'flesh and blood' may therefore be a typical Semitic phrase that points to frail human nature which emphasises our weak mortality in comparison to God. The term refers to the conceptual unity and not the material aspect of the body. In 1 Corinthians 15:50, Paul elaborates the same thought in a different way. By using the term 'flesh and blood', Paul is therefore arguing that no natural human being can inherit the kingdom of heaven apart from being transformed (1 Corinthians 15:51). Humanity must become immortal first. The term 'flesh and blood' therefore does not denote the anatomy of a person but expresses the weak, corruptible and mortal character of the earthly bodies, which are not suitable for the kingdom of God. The resurrected body when controlled by the Holy Spirit is an ideal state for fellowship with God.

Having looked at the Shona worldview and the Christian theologies, concerning death and afterlife, I now move to analyse how well the indigenous led Zimbabwean Church has performed

in adapting the Shona views into Christian worship. I will look at how the Christian beliefs contradict or agree with the Shona religious beliefs and practices. A synthesis of the two traditions and their worldviews, and analysis of the inculturation patterns within the Church in Zimbabwe will enable me to evaluate problems the Shona people and the Church leadership in Zimbabwe are facing, and to chart the way forward for the Shona people.

Chapter 6

Inculturation: the theory, and the concrete dialogue between the Shona culture and the Christian faith in the indigenous led Zimbabwean Church.

6.1 Introduction

Religions are diverse frameworks comprising of people's experiences of the divine, which may be very different. For each religion, the adherents are taught to speak a particular religious language which is exclusive to it. There is no universal religious language that all religions can use. Any attempt to decipher the religious languages into an autonomous system of communication which will not pervert, depreciate or give an inconsistent meaning, may not be possible. Yet there are arguments for authentic dialogue, and for inculturation between the Shona traditional religion and the Christian Gospel. In this chapter I shall first look at the inculturation theory in so far as it is linked to the culture of a people and the theory pertaining to dialogue. Inculturation and interreligious dialogue will be briefly discussed here as these theories are foundational to the research.

I will also go on to evaluate some of the results obtained from fieldwork concerning the adaptation of the Shona views on death and afterlife into Christian faith. In doing this, I apply information from chapters 4 and 5 which investigated the Shona and Christian views on death and afterlife. In this chapter there will also be an evaluation of the 'how's' and 'why's' of the reconciliation between the two religious views, which in some areas agree, while contradicting in other fundamental areas of the Shona life. It is an evaluation of the Church and the Shona responses, attitudes and rituals regarding the area of study.

Inculturation may be thought of as a form of dialogue between faith and culture. Before looking at the theory of 'inculturation', a brief discussion on inter-religious dialogue is necessary.

6.2 Interreligious dialogue

Ramadan (2010:5) proposes that when different religions interact, integration must take a central function. During interaction of cultures, there is no place for segregation, pulling out and "obsession with identity". Instead it is necessary to enter authentic dialogue with no party greater than the other, to facilitate for shared enhancement and for parties becoming "partners in action". Uma Onwuta (2006:201) defines dialogue as:

> … a conversation, a process of communication through speech. It is a reciprocal relationship in which two or more parties endeavour both to express accurately what they mean and to listen to and respect what the other person says, however different her or his perspective may be.

The term dialogue has overtones of actions which entail interpersonal relationships, which are very strong, with a strong orientation towards conversation and discussion. When used in the religious field, the word dialogue implies "discussions for mutual understanding held among differing religious bodies" (McKim 1996:147). It is where parties who have diverse views on matters pertaining to faith, have a two-way mutual communication. The communication excludes extremes such as fighting, internal strife and debating, which should be kept out of the communication process. Dialogue may also involve people with precisely the same views on a given subject matter. This is the case with the Shona Christians who want to worship the Christian God, incorporating their traditional culture.

Ataullah Siddiqui[54], in the *Markfield Institute of Higher Education website,* submits that meaningful dialogue is only feasible when parties in a particular dialogue strongly believe that their faith offers something important to their wider community. People of diverse faiths come to co-operate and co-exist with each other. In this modern world, it is not possible for people to cut themselves off from other people just because they hold a religious belief system that is different from them. People have turned out to be mutually dependent citizens, who are part of the global village. Because of the global village setting, people encounter realities of cultural variety. Hereditary belief systems then, develop into components of individual and shared identities. Therefore, religious dialogue does not just involve words, but also incorporates how people and

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[54] Siddiqui, Ataullah. "The Purpose of interfaith dialogue." In *Markfield Institute of Higher Education.* From http://www.mihe.org.uk/the-purpose-of-interfaith-dialogue accessed 10/10/2016

communities interact and relate. This may take the form of neighbours being forced to interact by virtue of them using the same shops, buses, schools, etc., despite the multiplicity of their belief systems. Segregating other people because of difference in belief systems may not be realistic in our modern global village. To have an effective dialogue between the Shona religion and the Christian faith, each party should endeavour:

> … to unlearn acquired misinformation and stereotypes and to begin to appreciate the Other through their lenses. In other words, dialogue with indigenous Africa should, therefore, first of all, be geared towards bringing about a change of perception and attitude in the Self. In this regard, the Self needs as much liberation as the Other. (Azumah 2001:236).

Mwandayi (2011:64-65) cites Leonard Swidler who proposes several guiding principles for effective dialogue. Firstly, the purpose of dialogue should be to learn more truth from each other concerning the subject matter. In our case the Shona religion should learn from the Christian faith and vice versa. (Dialogue is different from a debate where one party monopolizes on what one perceives to be the truth which others need to be taught. The purpose of a debate is to win an argument against a rival. It is oppositional because it aims to show that the other party is wrong by pinpointing weaknesses and faults in their propositions and views). Both the Shona and the Christian religions must keep away from continual debates as they learn, since from the viewpoint of each religion, neither of them will be wrong. Instead of being supreme and monologic, the comprehension of truth should be taken to be relational, and to be a product of the existing historical situation. For inter-group relations to be good, they should be based on mutual support and mutual respect. For such mutual respect to be sustainable, religious and cultural diversities are acknowledged as part of the human tapestry which is rich and varied. Dialogue, then, should be two-way towards a mutual understanding, whereby one is cognizant of the strengths in the viewpoints of others which can bring synergistic results that produce improved practical solutions.

Dialogue should be two sided; there should be dialogue within each religious entity and between religious entities. In this respect, the Shona would be expected to be in dialogue with fellow Shona people in their religion and the Christian believers should be in dialogue with each other, before there can be genuine dialogue between the Shona traditional religion and the Christian Gospel. Knitter (2005:207) argues that:

In order to have a real conversation between two religious believers, therefore, both of them must be as fully committed to their own truth as they are open to that of others. They must want to persuade others of their truth and at the same time be ready to be persuaded by them. That's not easy. Dialogue is demanding.

Swidler (1985:187-193) further proposes that parties to the dialogue should be truthful and sincere. There will be no successful dialogue without trust. He thinks that the participating parties who are taking part in the dialogue should be able to define themselves. In other words, they should ask the implications of being a genuine member of their own tradition. This is because one needs to stay in continuous dialogue with one's tradition. This ensures that any change resulting from interface with other religions is not contradictory to the way one defines one's own tradition. Partners to a dialogue must stay true to their own belief systems, while giving the other a chance to freely practice their faith. This may be difficult for the Shona traditional religion which has no written down precepts, and whose activities - which are based on oral tradition - are usually taught to practitioners only.

During the process of dialogue, each party has to interpret or understand information from the other party. The party being understood must be able to identify self in the interpretation. A dialogue partner's interpretation must not misrepresent the other partner. Each statement made must also be one that can be verified by external observers.

Furthermore, Swidler thinks that parties to a dialogue should not pay attention to matters of divergences, but must be sensitive and prepared to agree with the other participant as far as possible, not forgetting that the integrity of their own traditions need to be maintained. To this, he adds that effective dialogue only takes place between equals. Mwandayi (2011:66) thinks that participants in religious dialogue should have "equality in sacred and secular learning and equality in the level of responsibilities held." In this case the Shona tradition must not look down upon the Christian tradition, and vice versa. This calls for parties to be prepared to learn from each other. Dialogue will be effectual if participants to the dialogue are able to critically look at themselves and their religious practices. A missing self-critical attitude would wrongly imply one's religion has all the right answers, in which case there would be no need for dialogue.

Finally, Swidler proposes what I consider to be one of the most controversial guideline for effective dialogue, namely, that each participant to a dialogue should endeavour to experience the other party's religious tradition from within. Mwandayi (2011:67) argues that there is need "to pass over into another's religious or ideological experience …willingness to walk in the shoes of others", so that one is enlightened and deepened. Experiencing the other's religious tradition from within may be an insurmountable task. In the Shona traditional religion, 'outsiders' are never taught the full secrets of the belief system. In practice, it may be difficult to let go of one's religious experiences and enter into the world of the other. As mentioned earlier, in the Shona traditional religion, the deep secrets are passed down only to the people who have the right to know and who demonstrate ability to handle such knowledge. For example, traditional healers never divulge how they interpret the fall of dices which they use during divination. 'Outsiders' will never get to know and experience how a Shona traditional healer operates. This may also include most of the Shona, who receive help from traditional healers. It will then be more difficult for a non-Shona to enter into the experiential world of a Shona traditionalist. Such are the complexities of the spiritual realm and the impracticability of using Swidler's guide to dialogue through experience.

Onwuta (2006:225-226) cites Thomas Thangarj who identifies four levels at which parties dialogue. Firstly, people dialogue in their day to day lives, in an open and thoughtful spirit, in which they share their challenges and worries, joys and distresses. Secondly, different religious groups work together for the essential progression and freedom of communities. This is called dialogue of action. Dialogue can also be theological, where experts from various faiths seek to improve the appreciation of their particular religious legacies and to understand one another's spiritual ideals. Finally, there is the dialogue of religious experience. This is when people, who are deeply absorbed in their religious cultures, communicate their religious wealth with others. This may take the form of prayer, meditation, etc. All the four categories are necessary in the dialogue between the Shona culture and the Christian Gospel. As Knitter (2005:208) puts it: "… in this dialogue in service of the kingdom, Christians will also be ready to be witnessed to - to learn from others, to be challenged by others, yes, to be corrected by others".

Knitter relates Incarnation to dialogue (2005:205-206) saying:

> If later they were to speak of Jesus as the en-fleshed or incarnated Word of God, they realized that such Incarnation came about as a process of self-giving to the point of self-emptying. Incarnation, therefore, was the result of an act of relating, in which the Divine giver is emptied of the Divine Self in order to give of the Divine Self to others. "Other," therefore, is an essential part of "Incarnation." Christians believe that the becoming-human of the Divine is an act of self-emptying in order to relate to, make room for, the other.

Knitter further argues that one cannot assert to genuinely believe in the kenotic Christ without practicing dialogue of some sort, with other religious faiths. Just as Jesus made himself nothing on behalf of humanity, Christians should open up themselves to persons of other religious societies. The Christian here is emptied of own privilege, whereby the Christian does not put self above others or elevate self at the expense of others or isolate self from others.

Various attitudes towards interreligious relationships can be identified in the Christian perspective. Exclusivism premises that, only those who pursue a given course can be saved. For the Christian, this would be the assertion that salvation is not possible apart from Jesus and the Church (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). The Roman Catholic Church has discarded exclusivism in favour of inclusivism, from the Second Vatican Council (1962-1964/5). In the Vatican II document, *Lumen Gentium,* in *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* of 1964, we read that:

> … those also can attain to everlasting salvation who through no fault of their own do not know the gospel of Christ or His Church, yet sincerely seek God and, moved by grace, strive by their deeds to do His will as it is known to them by the dictates of their conscience. (no. 16).

The inclusivist approach assumes that salvation comes through acceptance by God as a consequence of Jesus' salvific work. Jesus' salvific work benefits all human beings, without requiring their response, making all people saved, including those that do not believe in Jesus, despite the fact that some might be unaware of it. These may include people of other belief systems, in whom the fruit of the Spirit is evident. There are non-Christians who display such fruit as love, joy, peace (Galatians 5:22), just as there are some people who claim to be Christians yet fail to reflect some fruit of the Spirit. Hick (1993a:84) asserts that:

> Inclusivism still rests upon the claim to Christianity's unique finality as the locus of the only divine revelation, and the only adequate saving event. Non Christians can be saved because; unknown to them, Christ is secretly in a way united with them.

Karl Rahner, in *Christianity and Non-Christian Religions*, (Volume 5 of his Theological Investigations), argues that a God who has love would provide a chance to the entirety of humanity to have salvation, without considering Jesus' redemptive work. He maintains that humanity is capable of experiencing grace inside the sphere of their personal religious convictions. This is because of the anonymous function of Jesus Christ, which results in anonymous Christians, who are unaware of their salvation. Inclusivism is thought to avail more avenues for religious liberty and dialogue, an ingredient which may be essential for peace. This approach then contests the notion that salvation should be expressed exclusively in Christian provisos, and calls for the Christian theology to be revisited so that it is compatible with realities of other religions. However, Burggraeve (in Pollefeyt (ed.) 2007:237) is critical of both exclusivism and inclusivism. He thinks that such dialogue begins with a tendency to leave out the other - exclusivism, or by making the other to be like us - inclusivism.

These arguments for inclusivism may result in a flow into pluralism which advocates for a number of genuine contexts of salvation. In pluralist theology, the Ultimate Reality is expressed by all religions and all religions are taken to be parallel avenues to salvation. Such religions are able to orient people towards that Ultimate Reality. The pluralist theology advocates for the "move away from insistence on the superiority or finality of Christ and Christianity toward a recognition of the independent validity of other ways" (Knitter 1988:viii).

Therefore, as far as pluralism is concerned, religions are equal since they all partially articulate the Ultimate Reality and make available avenues to salvation. However, pluralism becomes exclusivistic, to those against pluralistic supposition, and authentic dialogue becomes impossible. Here, a vicious circle can be discerned. Pluralism may also drift into inclusivism, where the most devout adherents of a given religion may have challenges with the relativistic comprehension of their religious tradition. These may be considered by pluralists as not suitable for dialogue.

Garth Read[55] identifies several responses to religious plurality adopted by people. People's responses to diverse religions may not be standardized. Firstly, people may be hostile to one religion but indifferent to another. Secondly, some people may decide to pay no attention to

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[55] https://assembly.uca.org.au/rof/.../whyinterfaith.doc accessed 11/12/15

other religious faiths to the extent that any pursuit of knowledge and understanding of other faiths is taken to be irrelevant. They may have no hostility towards the other religion(s) but they may also see no reason to seek or cultivate relationships with other religious traditions. Thirdly, other people may seek to replace other religions with their own religion mainly because a multi faith society is inconceivable. Any newcomers to such a society are forced to shape up, maintain a very low profile or go back to their previous places of habitation. To such individuals, everyone must switch to their own religion. Pluralists, on the other hand, will argue that all religions are basically the same because they focus on one Ultimate Reality. They identify and emphasize common factors of a variety of religions and they downplay their divergences. The fourth category is thus, one where people, through mutual respect, embrace other religions. They wish to learn about other belief systems and they aspire to build relationships.

The purpose of dialogue can thus be summarized. Firstly, it is vital to know the significant function performed by faiths in moulding people's lives. Religion influences people's cultural, ethnical and national ambitions and self-understanding. Religious beliefs are a deciding factor on people's self-identity. People are able to come to an appreciation of what is required in the growth of the rich fabric of humanity. Dialogue is, therefore, not a method of proselytizing and converting people, as these endorse one's own religious tradition, as the only proper or best religion. Dialogue does not seek to create a common belief system but it aims at fostering shared understanding and high-quality relations. It is needful to see 'the other' as an associate traveller in this life's expedition and as "a person who through his or her religion has some grasp of God, however partial the grasp may be" (Fredricks 2005:215). Obstacles and stereotypes which result in distrust, suspicion and intolerance are broken. Tensions created economically, socially and politically may be conquered. The increased common understanding and high-quality relations is an essential ingredient that brings peace within our people, as they collaborate to promote ideals of community, justice and peace. Dialogue is a combined pursuit of human dignity, social justice, protection of ethical values and freedom in our modern world. Dialogue considers the other person seriously as a person created in God's image, endowed with the same dignity as ourselves. In dialogue, people are invited to mutual respect, despite incompatibility of belief systems of individuals or communities. Its ultimate goal is peaceful coexistence. Hans Kung (cited in Edwards Sachi 2016:16), succinctly puts it that there is:

… no world peace without peace among the religions, no peace among the religions without dialogue between the religions, and no dialogue between the religions without accurate knowledge of one another.

6.3 Inculturation

Inculturation is a fairly new concept to the Church today. It came to the fore nearly nine decades ago (McGary 1995:52). However, its spirit has always been there since the establishment of the Church. It is difficult to come up with a comprehensive definition of inculturation because it is related to culture, which itself, has various definitions. An attempt will be made to formulate a definition of inculturation with a cue to its applicability to the Church, with respect to its effects on the Shona Christians. The main objective is to study the interaction between Christian faith and the Shona cultural thinking on death and the afterlife.

The term inculturation has been variously used. The usage by Melville Herskovits dates back to as far as 1930 (McGary 1995:52). This did not have any theological nuances. Aylward Shorter (1997:10) says that Joseph Masson used the term inculturation theologically in 1962, and from that time, there has been increased usage of the term, with theological connotations, especially in the Roman Catholic circles.

Charles Nyamiti (1991:38) submits that, one of the major goals of inculturation theology is:

> … to scrutinize in a scientific way and to probe more deeply - in the light of the African social and cultural contexts - the understanding of the Christian mysteries, in themselves first and, secondly, in their relevance for our life here on earth and in the world to come.

The quest is to investigate the relevance of the Christian faith for the Shona people, here and now. As Chimhanda (2013:3) puts it: "inculturation is a process of rejection, correction, completion and refinement of cultural elements in the light of the gospel." Therefore, to determine the relevance, good elements in the Shona culture will need to be corrected, elaborated and refined, while the bad elements must be killed or rejected. For this to be properly done one needs to know what culture is.

6.3.1   Culture - the core component of Inculturation

It will be inadequate to talk of inculturation without giving reference to culture, because inculturation seeks to impact a given culture. Understanding culture therefore sets us in a motion to better understand inculturation. Even the biblical testimony, which is the basis of the Christian faith, is given to us in a particular cultural setting. Scholars have failed to draw up a standard definition of culture because culture is an invention of a range of disciplines which focus on the study of human ways of life, and each area places emphasis on its own interests. Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) collate one hundred and sixty-four definitions of culture, classified under seven different categories. It may thus be argued that there may not be a universally accepted definition of culture. Despite several meanings being ascribed to the term culture, "there is nevertheless a common core of shared significance and meaning attached to the word. That is, culture suggests something which is developed, refined, domesticated or cultivated" (Barclay 1986:17). Richard Lewis (2003:13) asserts that culture is:

> …a collective programme of the mind that distinguishes one category of people from another. This is largely true, especially when we examine the societal norms imposed within national or ethnic frameworks. Parents program their children, teachers their students, society its citizens.

From a very early age, a given society is taught to be ingrained in the behaviour and mind-set of a group, through a process called cultural programming. Tehranian *et al* (2009:51) cites C. Geertz's definition of culture as:

> ... an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and their attitudes toward life.

The symbols create the people's philosophy of life and ideology. Such philosophies in turn mould their way of life.

Culture comprises several ideas which people learn, and in some instances invent. All knowledge is a manufactured product of the mind. The knowledge so attained classifies a person's world. From birth, a person is infused within himself or herself, a variety of traditions of his or her culture, beliefs and methods of organising external reality, which is ingrained to be part of that person. The mind is therefore a dynamic force which creates reality for the individual. The way

a person sees reality and acts accordingly, is dependent on the type of world he or she has invented in the mind, although culture is not entirely a function of the human mind since some ideas are eventually discarded. There are some technological devices and physical objects, which emanate from human brains, which store information. For such information to be helpful in a community, it has to be processed by the human mind. The learning process also entails getting ideas from other people, through observing and interacting with their behaviour and manufactured material objects.

In the process of learning, these cultural manifestations are ingrained into an individual in a distinctive way. Two individuals may tap from the same source but still fail to come up with the same cultural pattern. This is because the human mind does not passively decipher data from the external environment, but it sorts and filters out the information it takes delivery of. The result will be an adapted and transformed external stimulus. Therefore, it is an individual's mind, which is already filled with ideas, which interrelates with his or her environment.

Huey-li Li, (2010:408) adopts Margret Mead's distinction between: post-figurative culture (where children are trained by their forebears), co-figurative culture (where all ages of people, learn from peers), and pre-figurative culture (where adults are schooled by their children). In post-figurative culture, change is slow. The past and the future are presumed to be the same i.e. the past of grown persons is the future of every new generation. Elders are not able to visualize change, and a sense of rigid continuity is all they can pass on to their descendants. This is characteristic of small religious groups and is typical of the Shona traditionalist culture. In co-figurative culture, the popular model for members of a community is the behaviour of their colleagues. It is unusual for co-figurative culture to be the only type of cultural transmission. Elders are still central in defining confines in the behaviour of the youthful. In pre-figurative culture, children teach elders new experiences they have never come across before. Peers replace parents as the significant standards of behaviours and later generations reject the present and the past. This is typical of Nurnberger's (2007:10-11) modernist and postmodernist worldview, where people aspire for freedom of choice. This is a challenge that both the Shona and the Christian cultures are confronted with in Zimbabwe.

Culture moulds people's humanity to enable them to determine values and to make correct choices. People express and discover themselves through culture. The Shona thinking on death and afterlife is primarily tapped from the Shona culture. Each culture is ordered around its own value systems, and its particular achievements will be seen in those areas where the culture places the strongest evaluations. All outside value systems brought to bear will need a home-grown re-interpretation if the original value system is to be sheltered from disruptions. That means the introduction of the Christian faith among the Shona requires re-interpretation of the Gospel to avoid disintegration of the Shona value systems. This is because culture contact will result in cross cultural comparison. From such comparison, gaps are identified in the indigenous culture, and features foreign to the culture are adopted, which in turn require evaluation in line with the home-grown value system. Such evaluation makes it possible to insert an alien culture (Christian) into the indigenous Shona culture without upsetting it. The strength of a culture can be measured by how it incorporates the foreign features without experiencing disruption. The pertinent question is whether the Shona culture can absorb the Christian features without the Shona traditional religion being disrupted or without it losing its essence.

Harold Barclay (1986:30-70) comes up with very interesting insights on the study of culture which I shall briefly examine. To him, culture is a collective entity where information is passed on with nominal alteration from one generation to another or from one person to another. It is a communal and dialectic construction which emanates from the social interaction process; making culture a product of ideas existing among people of a particular community. Individuals uniquely build up attained elements, which begin as a novelty in an individual's mind, and are subsequently disseminated to others. Culture is therefore first and foremost a human creation. But when created it attains a life of its own and which is regulated by its own laws. Granted that culture emanates from human interaction with its surroundings, there have to be collective meanings which are produced and sustained by means of the social interaction. Simply put, collective meanings are created in the process of people's natural interaction. To Barclay (1986:33) then, "Culture can entail both a cognitive system within the individual's mind and a system shared within a community".

Barclay (1986:62) also looks at vital elements in culture. One such unavoidable element in any culture of a given society is its belief system. Such beliefs are mostly not based on experiential evidence but they are heavily permeated with faith. Beliefs are always an essential part of any culture of a particular society. People will use 'faith' where they cannot find answers to questions confronting them. Belief closes the gap created by their search for explanations to surrounding phenomena. Beliefs aspire to elucidate why the world is as it is, ranging from the origin of their world, death, suffering and pain, poverty, etc. The Shona traditional religion is an example of such a belief system. Christian faith is another example of a belief system which shapes many cultures all over the world. Beliefs may be rooted in phenomena like myths which contour some patterns of behaviour of a person or a community, through rituals which dramatizes the beliefs or myths.

 Another important component of culture is the rules which govern a given community. In every society there are a set of laws which govern the game. There are also players in the game who shape social structures, such as a family, a village, a town etc. Barclay (1986:66) contends that there are interrelationships between one social structure and another. As the world is quickly turning into a global village because of technological advances, the line of demarcation between one social structure and another, or between one culture and another, daily becomes thinner.

The other important elements of culture are norms and values. A norm is a class of something attractive, and is comparatively situational. Talcott Parsons (1973:43) argues that values help to legitimize modes of more tangible action, whereas norms aid to justify them. Values carry a great deal more moral authority but they have much less 'teeth' in terms of relatively precise situational sanctions. Values and norms do not agree but cross cut each other. Values are a device of preserving the cultural honesty of the orientation, while norms have a communal pre-eminence. They comprise normative mechanisms which serve to regulate and adapt the needs of value integrity.

Every society must have rules to regulate its activities. Barclay (1986:70) asserts that strictly structured communities prescribe acceptable behaviour patterns with immense precision. Because of this, there is a significant degree of conformity. On the other end of the spectrum,

there are loosely structured communities which do not lay down lucid definitions of behaviour patterns. This may be the case with the Shona culture where behaviour patterns widely vary. These will permit a high degree of tolerance of individual deviation. Granted that rules are vital for the continued existence of a culture of a particular community, it may be difficult to come up with a standard behaviour acceptable to each member of any community. It may therefore be difficult to reach a consensus on a normative Shona culture. Barclay (1986:71) argues that because of absence of consensus, there usually will be two cultures running parallel in a given community, namely: the ideal culture (based on the normative behaviour compatible with known precepts), and the real culture (the behaviour actually prevailing on the ground). This real culture arises from the actual behaviour of members in relation to the prescribed normative behaviour which the society fails to live up to. Any society is faced with a big challenge of establishing what is ideal, because what is ideal to one individual may not be ideal to the other individual. Ideals are therefore not easy to determine. A particular culture may prescribe multiple or even conflicting ideals. Because of this, only a portion of the society may own ideals in a given community.

Hanson's (2006:24) explanation of the doctrine of cultural relativism is enlightening in our search for the meaning of the term culture. He maintains that: "… any culture should be understood in its own terms, and not according to concepts or criteria imported from another culture". This cultural relativism is very important when we consider the dialogue involving the Christian Gospel and the Shona culture. However, there are problems encountered because of cultural relativism. One such problem concerns the formulation of the criteria that must be used to evaluate other cultures. To Bennett (2002:46), relativism: "… implies that we have no basis for judging other peoples and cultures, and certainly no basis for declaring some better than others, let alone 'good' or 'evil'". Therefore, the criteria employed for evaluation of cultures are bound to vary with the evaluating cultures. The resultant evaluations are also bound to vary with the evaluating cultures. We have seen that rules and norms are necessary to govern every community. Such rules would establish a culture's ethic. Cultural relativism suggests that only the cultural context, the time and the place can determine whether something can be taken to be right or wrong. All cultures must always be judged in relation to a given set of principles, rules or norms. The standards that are drawn from the said cultures also vary.

Therefore, right or wrong is not inbuilt in things or events themselves. Right or wrong is only apparent when standards of a particular culture have been used, which vary from one culture to another. Consequently, it is ethical rules of an individual that determine whether an act is good in any given cultural setting. Hence evaluation of beliefs and customs of a culture should not be based on the criteria derived from beliefs and customs of another culture. A good example, as we shall see, is the traditional healer, who is highly esteemed in the Shona society, in so far as it concerns the dead and the afterlife. The traditional healer is thought to be an indispensable figure in the performance of the death, burial and 'after death' rituals. Yet in the Christian culture he or she may be seen otherwise. Cultural relativism takes for granted judgment of actions in other cultures, and external standards should not be the measuring rod. The Shona cultural standards cannot be measuring rods for the Christian faith. But for any evaluations to be meaningful, the evaluator must accept the standards applied as valid. If the standards are not acceptable to an individual, he or she may merely appreciate the judgements on their own terms, without accepting them. One may therefore need to test one's own standards whether they are universally valid, so that they may be appropriate to the standards one plans to change. Maria Herrera (1991:513) argues that there is need to:

> ... consider the fact that in studying alien cultures there are no canonical or privileged texts to guide and constrain our interpretation, *and there are no* shared presuppositions to guide our interpretation ...

The other problem is on the nature of people's knowledge of other cultures. Hanson calls this the epistemological facet of relativism. This presumes that cultural phenomena should be comprehended from within the participants' terms. Beliefs and behaviour patterns must be understood well by the natives of a culture and should be compatible with categories and perceptions of the culture to which they belong. However, internal appreciation of other cultures from without is not easy and this may be an impossible task. This may be the case with the Shona and the Christian cultures. Can Christians understand the Shona traditional religion without them being part of it? Hanson (2006:46) argues that if participants alter their "way of thinking, the problems connected with penetrating alien cultures will not appear so hopeless." The question is whether foreign cultures are reasonable and intelligible enough to us so that we

are able to understand them. The rationality of foreign cultures and the internal appreciation of foreign cultures trigger basic questions concerning the epistemological facet of relativism.

Hanson (2006:51) bases the reasonableness and intelligibility of unfamiliar cultures and beliefs on their "implicational" meanings inherent to human phenomena. There is need to establish meanings through understanding how the belief systems are related. In our pursuit for rationality and intelligibility of unfamiliar cultures, we ask questions which centre on individuals; for example, why individuals engage in certain kinds of behaviour. As we try to answer such questions, we discover the intentional meaning which is inherent to human phenomena. The answers identify stimuli which steer individuals to act in the manner they do. This includes their reasons, motives, intentions, needs etc. There are also questions which are directed towards institutions regarding their beliefs, customs and theories. These are questions on behaviour patterns or elements of culture. Answers to such institutional questions show the implicational meaning that pertains to human phenomena. They evidently identify logical relations of contradiction, reinforcement or simple co-existence among the different institutions of culture.

We can establish the implicational meaning of every institution from the manner it relates to institutions of similar culture. The principle of cultural relativism assumes that a culture must be comprehended in its own terms - based on acceptable criteria. And it does not mean that when an alien culture is understood that will be an affirmation of its goodness or truth, rationality or intelligibility. If Christianity understands the Shona culture, it does not imply that the Shona culture becomes rational to the Christian faith. The converse is also true. Understanding foreign cultures here means understanding their "implicational meaning". It does not imply that inner experiences by inmates of a culture are shared by outsiders, but it means that the outsiders now know how the cultural institutions like manners, beliefs, customs etc., are used, in a way the natives use them. To have the know-how of unfamiliar cultures is in fact, to know implicational meanings of such cultures.

The notion of implicational meaning is important to theologians like Richard Schmidt. Commenting on Mbiti's view on African religion, he says "Mbiti calls African religion *preparatio evangelica* (preparation for the Gospel) and sees God's hand at work there just as in

the early history of the Hebrew people" (Schmidt 2008:340). Such a view discerns God's work in the African traditional religion just as God worked with the Hebrew people, thereby placing great value in the African religion. If the implicational meaning of the Shona religion is understood in this way, it will be necessary to acknowledge them as having roots for evangelization. The Shona people were not *tabula rasa* (like a blank sheet of paper) regarding orientation to God when missionaries came. They constantly had faith which was preparatory ground for the Christian faith. However, there are some Shona cultural elements which must be killed in order to restart in a new splendour. Other cultural elements may be corrected, rejected, refined and elaborated, in the process of authentic dialogue between the Shona beliefs on the afterlife and the Christian faith (Chimhanda 2013:92).

6.3.2   Dynamics of culture

Culture is not a compilation of symbols and meanings which can be definitely interpreted. In Thomas Eriksen's (1998:25) thinking, cultures are: "…the ever changing common meanings that are established and changed when people do something together". I have already noted that each culture is revealed through individual behaviour of the respective members of every society. The members are not a carbon copy of each other. The way they assign meaning to the standards of behaviour will vary. This may result in conflict as there will be a struggle for control and power. Such an internal disagreement is a definite catalyst for change. Changes in culture therefore come from both outside stimuli - as in acculturation, and inside influences - as in enculturation. Societies exist and function in a dynamic world. Members of the Christian faith are yearning for change from within. The same applies to the members of the Shona traditional religion. At the same time both institutions are calling for change of the other culture from without.

Granted that humanity expresses and discovers self by means of a given culture, the dynamism of culture menaces such discovery, and a feeling of incompetence and insufficiency may ensue. Earlier accomplishments, meanings in life and value systems quickly lose significance, and there will be a search for more. Because of global changes, the standards may also be affected by the changes to the extent that what used to be normative ceases to be. Since a person is defined by culture, it is necessary to preserve the culture and to pass it on from generation to generation.

Once an individual locates his or her self-identity, it will be possible to establish the identity of a particular society. Because culture is dynamic, individuals must be able to learn the current value systems and traditions. At the same time, they must be in a position to adapt to novel ways of human life which arise by virtue of them acquiring new knowledge and experience. Culture therefore, is a set of dynamic meanings and value systems, which must be learnt, passed on and expressed symbolically using existing modes of life, belief systems and traditions. This means that culture is more than tradition, funeral rites, dress, marrying, etc.

However, Barclay (1986:77) maintains that in many instances those who share a common culture will not want to change it, especially if they have achieved some successes in a particular cultural framework. Christianity endeavours to maintain its culture intact, while the Shona traditionalists also wish to keep their culture unchanged. They would have become familiar with such a framework and can foresee the consequences of each action. Such people are likely to resist changing from the known to the unknown traditions. Yet change to a society and its culture is always unavoidable. Such changes may not be consistent in a particular cultural setting and the pace of change differs in all cultures. Change in some cultures like religion may be so slow to the extent of believing that the system is not changing at all. For example, back then, spirit possession was norm during various Shona traditional ceremonies. Today the trend has changed, with spirit possession becoming very scarce. Yet the Shona still claim to be religiously following the same tradition. As we shall also observe, the burial of the dead in the rural areas is still being practiced, but waning down.

The acculturation (see definition below) process may result in radical change in culture. When cultures come into contact, the weaker culture may be totally absorbed as a community discards its traditions to choose that of a dominant culture. In some instances, both cultures may vanish as they diffuse into a completely new culture. There is a decline in spread of rituals, from the older age group to the younger, resulting in some rituals being lost or neglected in the course of time. Existing Shona practices are being discarded or their function and meaning are being adapted. This research examines the effect of the coming together of the Christian and Shona cultures, concerning death and afterlife.

6.3.3 Terms related to Inculturation

There are a variety of terminologies which are related to the term inculturation. An analysis of these terms will be helpful in better understanding the term inculturation.

6.3.3.1 Enculturation

Enculturation is a process whereby a person learns from his or her own culture, formally or casually. Judith Dwyer (2012:120) sees enculturation as a: "… conscious or unconscious conditioning occurring within that process whereby the individual, as a child and adult, achieves competence in a particular culture." An individual must develop into his or her community's culture and is expected, through cultural transformation, to mature into the same, as one experiences new ways of life. Enculturation is a dynamic way of learning and familiarising to new circumstances as dictated by rules set by the society. Shorter (1997:5-6) would like to confine enculturation to the sociological context, while applying inculturation to the theological context, to the extent that enculturation will be the insertion of an individual into one's own culture, while inculturation may be thought of as the incorporation of the Christian Gospel into customs of a society .

6.3.3.2 Acculturation

Shorter (1997:7) defines acculturation as the encounter between cultures. Acculturation takes into account the multi-cultural dimension of societies, with cultures reciprocally influencing each other. Dwyer (2012:120) says that:

> ...acculturation is a multidimensional process involving the adaptation of language, cultural beliefs and values of one group (usually the minority group) to the norms and structures of another (usually the majority group).

Dhavamony (1997:28) asserts that acculturation occurs when groups of individuals from different cultural setting, experience some direct contact with one another. Modifications in the foundational cultural models of one group, or both, will evidently ensue. For such an encounter to be successful, there should be mutual respect; without any one culture dominating the other.

Acculturation and inculturation are closely related. While acculturation is an encounter between any two cultures, inculturation is an encounter between two cultures, one of which will be rooted in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Therefore, acculturation is an essential precondition of inculturation. Cultures have to come into contact for one to change the other. The Christian faith originating from the Gospel should have an encounter with a particular (Shona) culture for the necessary transformation to take place.

6.3.3.3 Contextualisation

Roy Musasiwa (2007:66) defines contextualisation as "communicating the gospel message in a way that is both faithful to the Bible and meaningful to respondents in their respective cultural and existential contexts." Contextualisation is the life circumstance in which the Gospel is preached. Because it looks at the state of affairs in which the Gospel is preached, some contexts may have nothing to do with the existing culture. Contextualisation of the Gospel and inculturation can therefore denote different things. Contextualisation stresses on context instead of culture. There is a danger of emphasising overly the current context and overlooking the need for continuity with the present and the past. Context looks at a given situation at a given time, while culture involves the total way of life of a particular community. However, contextualization is useful in making us realize that circumstances in particular cultural settings change over time. The way the Gospel is presented in Africa; embellished in the Western culture, may not be effective in Africa.

6.3.4   Definition of the term inculturation

Having discussed culture as a key element of inculturation, and the terms related to inculturation, I now make an attempt at the definition of the term inculturation. Michael Muonwe (2014:97) quotes Crollius who defines inculturation as:

> … the integration of the Christian experience of a local Church into the culture of its people, in such a way that this experience not only expresses itself in elements of this culture, but becomes a force that animates, orients and innovates this culture so as to create a new unity and communion, not only within the culture in question but also as an enrichment of the Church universal.

For there to be incorporation of the Christian experience into the traditions of a given people, there is need to reform either one or the other or both; and the result will be metamorphic, as portrayed by Paul, in 2 Corinthians 5:17, that one who comes to Christ becomes a new creature - an innovative product. The Christian Gospel must be amalgamated with the Shona culture, and there should be an effective and firm bond between the two. In Crollius' definition, the gospel message which leads to a Christian experience must express itself in the elements of a given culture. It is here that Pobee (1993:137) argues that the "self disclosure of God engages people as they are". God's self revelation is revelation to a people through their cultural setting.

Paulinus Odozor (2008:584-586) identifies three classes of inculturation which assist us in defining it. Firstly, he sees inculturation as identical to evangelization. This is the reality each time the Gospel is proclaimed initially in every environment. In such a case, the environment in question is summoned, to receive God's salvation accessible through Jesus Christ. This acceptance results in an alteration of how people perceive reality and results in a change in belief systems. It is on these summonses that dialogue between the Christian faith and the host culture is developed. This first sense of inculturation is inapplicable to most Shona people who are not new to the Christian Gospel. Secondly, appealing to Magesa (2004:5-6), Odozor argues that inculturation is a method in which faith personified in a tradition meets a further tradition and becomes personified in it. It is the effort by a given Church "to understand and celebrate their Christian faith in a way peculiar to their situation and context" (Schineller 1990:1). Odozor further argues that there is a difference between the Gospel of Jesus, and the way in which it is transmitted from one culture to another. Inculturation must therefore be able to make a distinction between the Gospel and the cultural context in which it is transmitted, to enable the host culture to embrace the Gospel without losing its essence.

The third sense of inculturation, Odozor (2008:585) says, is given by Pedro Arrupe (1907-1991), the former Superior General of the Jesuits (1965-1983), who describes inculturation as:

> The incarnation of Christian life and of the Christian message in a particular cultural context, in such a way that this experience not only finds expression through elements proper to the culture in question (this alone would be no more than a superficial adaptation) but becomes a principle that animates, directs and unifies the culture, transforming it and remaking it so as to bring about a 'new creation'.

King (2009:53) says 'Incarnation' is a term that has been employed by African Catholic theologians like Ukpong, meaning: "immersing Christianity in African culture (so that) just as Jesus became man, so must Christianity become African". Arrupe's definition implies that inculturation is a symbiotic blending of traditions and beliefs into a novel unit which is called Christian, resulting from the teaching of Jesus. The Gospel should be presented to local people in a manner that provides a connection to the language, culture and worldview of the people. According to Pope John Paul II (1990)[56], through inculturation, the Gospel comes to life in diverse cultures, whilst the Church is simultaneously "enriched with forms of expression and values in the various areas of Christian life" such as evangelism, worship, theology and benevolent activities.

Arrupe's definition emanates from the fact that "the word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). It is motivated by Jesus' incarnation. In incarnation God limited self in the person and work of Jesus. God who is transcendent, entered the human world of limitedness, in space and time, by becoming a human being. Incarnation may therefore be seen as the model of the inculturation of the Christian faith. It is the perfect model of inculturation. In the process of inculturation:

> ... the theologian's task consists in re-thinking and re-expressing the original Christian message in an African milieu... There is integration of faith and culture, and from it is born a new theological expression that is African and Christian. (Ukpong 1984:30).

This is the challenge that confronts the Zimbabwean Church leadership: to express the Gospel in a Zimbabwean setting in order to make it both Shona and Christian. This is easier said than done where death and afterlife issues are concerned, because both the Shona and the Christian traditions have non-negotiable elements.

To Shorter (1997:11), incarnation points to the continuous dialogue between the Gospel and a given cultural tradition. Christianity came to Africa embellished in a Western cultural form. The culture in which the faith was brought was not, of necessity, a component of the Gospel of Christ. This Western culture needs to be removed to permit the faith to be African. Incarnation

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[56] John Paul II, *Redemptoris missio* no. 52.3–4 (Miller 470–71)

therefore acts as the permanent model of inculturation. Like Jesus' incarnation, inculturation is the grounding of the *humus* so that the secrecy of salvation may be made available to everyone. This is the only means to cleanse all cultures and render them open to life (Crollius 1978:136-139).

Nigel Room persuasively tries to define inculturation in a long and winding way. He tries to appreciate the term as a theological notion which places itself between two terms in sociology, namely: enculturation and acculturation. He examines enculturation in kids who have grown up in a particular culture, who eventually become part of that culture on completion of the process. In acculturation, cultures come together and are transformed, although the dominant culture determines the route followed by the change in cultures. When these two sociological terms are switched into the discussion of theology, where the terms incarnation and conversion are used analogically, incarnation may be taken to be the enculturation of the Christian faith inside a culture, so that it is incorporated as part of it. Room (2005:271) thus argues that:

> … there is an acculturation implied by the prior enculturation whereby the host culture is not only indwelt by Christian faith but critiqued, changed, even transformed by it. Thus inculturation is a process that can be discovered in the creative tension between culture and faith, enculturation and acculturation, incarnation and conversion.

These theoretical definitions shall evolve as Christian experience only when applied by the Shona Christians into their daily lives.

Two kinds of inculturation have been identified - inculturation *ad extra* and inculturation *ad intra*. To Prosper Lyimo (2011:195) inculturation *ad extra* points to the effect of Christian faith on a given culture of a people who accept the Gospel. It expresses how the Christian Gospel influences the culture of a given society (Crollius: 1995:112). It shows how the Christian experience penetrates into a given culture, through encouragement of dialogue between cultures, and making sure that attitudes of veracity, patience and trust facilitate dialogue. It motivates cultures to be open to the Gospel truth. Inculturation *ad intra* refers to how the life of the Church is affected by the Church's existence in an alien culture. It expresses how a culture influences the manner in which the Gospel is expressed and experienced, in a particular culture, mainly in the fields of liturgy, theology, spirituality and discipline.

Having looked at the theoretical aspects of dialogue, culture and inculturation, now I proceed to the real issues pertaining to the Zimbabwean situation. Now that I have put together the Shona and Christian perspectives on death and afterlife, and that I have made a fair attempt at describing the theoretical framework involving dialogue, culture and inculturation, I can now, mainly using the theological methodology, safely look at the progress achieved by the indigenous led Zimbabwean Church in incarnating the Christian Gospel among the Shona people, and the shortcomings that have hindered authentic dialogue and effective inculturation.

6.4 The dialogue in the Zimbabwean Church

Section 6.2 above discussed essential aspects of religious dialogue. One such aspect is that dialogue should be two sided: dialogue within every religious entity and dialogue amidst religious entities. This is the case where the Shona are expected to be in dialogue with fellow Shona people in their traditional religion, while Christians should be in dialogue with each other, before we can talk of genuine dialogue between the Shona traditional religion and the Christian Gospel. Knitter (2005:207) argues that each group should be completely dedicated to their own ideology before they can accept the truths of others. These principles may now be applied: to the Zimbabwean Church, in so far as they have engaged in dialogue amongst the Christian Church denominations themselves; and to the Shona people, in so far as they have synchronized their belief systems from within; and finally, to the Zimbabwean Church, in so far as they have managed the dialogue between the Church and the Shona traditional religion. Research findings from fieldwork are also taken into account here. If intra- and inter-faith dilogue is not well defined, inculturation may not be successful and effective.

6.4.1. The intra-faith dialogue - the reality on the ground

A few issues will be discussed pertaining to what the Christian Church and the Shona believe, within their respective groupings, regarding death and afterlife matters.

6.4.1.1 Totemism

I shall start with totemism. Josef Haekel (2006:1)[57], writing for the Britannica website, defines totemism as a:

> … system of belief in which humans are said to have kinship or a mystical relationship with a spirit being, such as an animal or plant. The entity or totem is thought to interact with a given kin group or an individual and to serve as their emblem or symbol.

It is thought that there is a kinship or spiritual connection with the 'spirit being' (totem). Rukairo Katsande (2015)[58] submits that:

> In Zimbabwe, totems (*mitupo*) have been in use among the Shona groupings since the initial development of their culture. Totems identify the different clans among the Shona that historically made up the dynasties of their ancient civilization. Today, up to 25 different totems can be identified among the Shona ethnic grouping …

As the Shona people relate to the spiritual world, their desire is to comprehend the mysterious and spiritual powers that underlie the natural phenomena. They need to interpret messages that are carried by the natural world like animals, plants, rivers, etc. It is by totemism that people relate to nature. In totemism, some animals or plants are set apart for religious or medicinal uses or for given kinship affinity. Nature therefore provides people with a huge selection of points of contact with the spiritual world.

Tumani Nyajeka (1996:137) argues that: "The *mutupo* (totemism) principle focuses on fostering the primary relationships between animals and humans, animals and deity, humans and humans, nature and humans, the dead and the living." The term 'totem' characterizes features in many people's religions, but it must not be seen as a religion, although it may include some religious elements, in differing degrees. Some relate it to such phenomena as ancestor worship, animism, etc. Nisbert Taringa (2006:206) contends that totems transcend animal names, and that events that are associated with such animals are symbols from ancestors. They can therefore be seen as emblems of social cohesion and religion.

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[57] Harkel, Josef. 2006. *Totemism: Religion*. https://www.britannica.com/topic/totemism-religion accessed 25/05/18

[58] Katsande Rukairo. 2015. *African Totems, Kinship and Conservation*. From https://www.wilderness-safaris.com/blog/posts/african-totems-kinship-and-conservation accessed 25/05/18

Totemism is at the nucleus of the Shona culture. Clans are connected through totems. These stretch back to histories of particular clans. Totems among the Shona are thought to have emanated from individual clan members coveting for a specific animal and its behaviour patterns. Such a chosen animal was taken to be sacred within the given clan and was adopted as a totem. Gracious Mugovera (2017)[59] contends that the choice of the 'spirit being' (totem) was motivated by an instinct to survive, where the totem was thought to positively contribute to the wellbeing of the clan, or the clan would model itself after a vital attribute of the totem, like speed, bravery, wisdom, courage etc. Many Shona appreciate their totems today, through addressing each other using praise names. For example, *soko* (monkey) would be the totem, while *murehwa* is the *chidawo*.

There is a relational thread that connects past generations with the present generations. Among the Shona, ancestral spirits are grouped and addressed through totems. The living are also addressed and greeted through totems. Seven of the ten Shona elders who responded to the questions on totems, were of the opinion that when totems are used, it is well understood that the entire clan - dead and living are called to motion. For example, if my totem is *shava mufakose,* and my mother thanks me for a new dress I bought her "*Maita shava, maita mufakose*" (thank you *shava*, thank you *mufakose*), she will be thanking me, but she will also addressing all and sundry (dead or alive), who fall under the totem *shava mufakose*. Two of the ten respondents were of the opinion that totems were just a way of addressing and respectfully greeting each other. What does the Church think about the use of totemism to the Shona who have come to Christian faith? There were fifteen varied responses from the Zimbabwean Church clergy which may be summarized into two. Ten felt the Church must sever its connections with the dead and therefore see totemism as evil, while five were indifferent because they thought totemism has no bearing on Christian faith. The same is true for the Shona. To two of the ten Shona Christian respondents, totemism is just a way of addressing each other and identifying relations, while to the other eight respondents with a traditionalist orientation, totemism has wide ranging connotations that have to do with ancestral lineage and the well-being of the living. The

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[59] Mugovera, Gracious. 2017. *Totems: Our Cultural Heritage*. From https://www.thepatriot.co.zw/old_posts/totems-our-cultural-heritage/ accessed 25/05/18

argument here is that before we talk of adaptation of the Shona views into Christian faith, the Church needs to look at how this can be effectively implemented. This will be problematic where there is no agreement within the Christian Church or within the Shona culture. Intra group dialogue must be a prerequisite to successful inculturation and in this instance intra group dialogue within the two entities is failing, thereby betraying the whole process of inculturation. The church must speak with one voice regarding totemism.

6.4.1.2 Death and what happens after death

The second issue to discuss is the definition of death and what happens after death. The responses of the majority of the Church denominations in Zimbabwe show that they teach that at death the body is separated from the spirit. All the eight responses received from various Church denominations, except the Seventh Day Adventists, affirm belief in a conscious existence after death, either in a place of torment or in a blissful place. The Adventists in Zimbabwe however, teach that death is death of the total person - both body and soul, which will both be resurrected at eschaton. To them, to believe in a soul that lives on, makes death a non-event. The anthropological nature of a human being has continued to be a debatable issue in the Zimbabwean Church, especially the question of the soul and its fate at death. The Church has failed to agree on what constitutes a human being. The Church will need to clearly define the anthropological human make-up, for inculturation in this aspect to be successful. Is it a body and a separable soul, or there is no demarcation between the body and the soul? Once again, the intra Christian dialogue is failing at source. This throws the Shona Christian in a precarious position and with no definitive answers, inculturation will not be effective. From the Shona viewpoint, their dead are still living and they are not awaiting any resurrection, where the dead body is re-united with the eternal soul, or where both the body and the soul are raised from the dead. Among the Shona, there is also no clear-cut demarcation between the dead body, the deceased's soul/spirit and the grave. Many Shona respondents showed that they fear all the three entities equally. They treat the corpse as if it was still living, the soul/spirit of the deceased is always around to interact with the living, and the grave will always be the sacred centre of activity, provided there is still remembrance of the dead by those who are alive. The Shona traditionalists must define where their 'living dead' is: in the grave or with the soul/spirit?

6.4.1.3 Communication between the living and the dead.

The Shona world consists of the living, the living dead and the unborn. The Shona did not talk much about the unborn, save that they are members of the family. With regards to the living dead, all Shona respondents affirmed a life after the grave. To the Shona, the life is a continuation of the earthly life, without a break. This is why there is very little difference on the way they address a living person and a dead person. The dead person is dreaded more, because he or she is thought to be in another world, where he or she would have assumed greater power. However, with 'modernity' in their midst, four out of nine lay Shona respondents affirmed the desire to sever their ties with the living dead. They maintained that the interaction with the dead was a source of disharmony in many areas of life, that they would rather be free from their domination. On the other hand, five out of nine of the lay Shona respondents still felt the need to maintain close and constant interaction with their dead. There were also some Shona Christians who showed some allegiance to the 'interaction with the dead phenomenon'. The intra Shona dialogue is failing. However, the worst discrepancies are found within the Church in Zimbabwe. Communication with the dead is a contentious issue, with a lot of contradictory theologies being thrown around. The Pentecostals, the Evangelicals, the Roman Catholic Church and other Main Line Churches, and the African Initiated Churches are not speaking the same language regarding communication with the dead.

My respondent, a long serving, well informed and knowledgeable member of one of the biggest African Initiated Churches in Zimbabwe gave me a detailed report concerning the Church's worship activities. I extract from the report, information relevant to interaction with the dead, which is of interest here. The founder of the Church died over four decades ago. The burial place of the founder was turned into a shrine, wherein the remains of the founder are kept. Several rituals are performed annually, at and around the grave site, with music and dance. At their annual conference, the remains of the deceased founder are washed with water, by the inner family, led by the leader, a son, who took over from the father (founder) when he died. The water used to wash the corpse is gathered and it is sprinkled on all members in attendance at the conference. This, my respondent says, has the effect of pacifying members so that they become

251

obedient, docile and unquestioning followers of the Church. Another major event at the annual conference is when they move from the grave to a nearby mountain (*nguva yekugomo* - time to go to the mountain) where the current leader sits on the ground with legs folded (*kupfunya makumbo*), then addresses the late father in prayer, starting with the words: "*baba ndauya navo, ava ndivo vanhu venyu vamakandisiira, ini handina zvokuita navo asi imi munoziva, saka itai kuda kwenyu nokuti ndimi makandisiira pamakafa...*" ("father I have brought them, these are the people you left with me, I don't know what to do with them but you know, so do according to your will, because you left me these people when you died …"). He then thanks the God of the fathers, mentioning their names and eventually blesses the people. Before the conference closes, the leader goes back into the grave, for a prolonged period, and then comes out with water in a large container. Members in attendance at the conference then queue with small containers to receive their share of the water for use back home, when they are confronted with troubles and misfortunes in life. Back home the water is mixed with larger volumes of water, which can be drawn for bathing and possibly drinking, to ward off forces of evil. This is a typical example of a professing Christian Church, an AIC, which is in close and constant communication with the dead.

My Roman Catholic Church respondent categorically rejected divination with regards to consulting the dead. However, he conceded appealing to the dead to intercede on their behalf. The Catholics teach the doctrine of communion of saints, which includes the dead. The communion of saints (*communio sanctorum* in Latin), is the union in the spirit, of Christians who have been baptized; whether they are alive or dead. These include those living on earth, the departed in heaven, and those who are being purified in purgatory, because the soul is taken to be immortal, and personhood to be indestructible. Their argument is that all believers become members of the body of Christ and members of one another (Romans 12:15; 1 Corinthians 12:27), and nothing can separate them from the love of Christ (Romans 8:35-39), including death. The perfected saints in heaven, it is believed, now share in the perfect knowledge of God, and are now in a position to know what will be happening on earth. They now have a share in the supernatural power of God and can intervene on behalf of the living, in earthly affairs. This is the Roman Catholic Church doctrine. I am not sure whether Romans 8:35 stretches to non-separation of the living and the dead.

However these Catholics claim that they do not worship saints but they venerate them. They recognize the difference between veneration and adoration (worship). To them adoration is whereby one surrenders self to God, in total submission, acknowledging that one owes everything to God, and only him must be worshipped. And veneration is where one pays suitable honour to God's 'deserving creation', like saints. To them, veneration of saints is simply honouring them. This is very close to the Shona system of veneration and worship of ancestors. However, all other respondents, from Pentecostal and Evangelical denominations rejected communication with the dead for whatever reason. Many argued that the dead had their time to be consulted during their lifetime on earth. One denominational representative retorted: "the living must not consult the dead. What is perceived as the dead who speak, are actually familiar spirits impersonating the dead."

Scholars like Canisius Mwandayi (2011:159-167) take pains to analyse some Biblical texts like Deuteronomy 18:10-11; 1 Samuel 20:6; 28:7-20; and Luke 16:19-31 to justify necromancy from Scriptures. He argues that the original meaning of necromancy from Scriptures has changed over time and that it is possible, and it may be acceptable to communicate with the dead. Mwandayi (2011:167) submits that: "care was not taken, so it appears, to see if a literal translation into Shona of such biblical terms like divination, necromancy and magician really refer to the same beliefs and practices as in Shona culture." He further argues that we need to understand the terms in the Hebrew language - the original language of the Old Testament, if we are to get better understanding and better interpretation.

From the foregoing arguments it can be seen that there is more confusion in the Church regarding whether there should be communication with the dead, with the pendulum swinging from one extreme (AIC's working with the dead) to the other extreme (the dead do not return to the living), while denominations like the Roman Catholic Church are midway between the extremes. Under such circumstances of failed intra-denominational dialogue, the Church in Zimbabwe cannot effectively help the Shona Christian.

253

A good number of AIC's do not use the Bible or they do not take the Bible seriously. If they use the Bible, the way some of them interpret the Scriptures leaves a lot to be desired. Their activities are very close to the way the Shona religion does its things. Some claim to be led by the spirit only, without use of Scriptures. Their spiritual activities are not subjected to any scrutiny because there are no standards of measure as is the case with the Bible. Many denominational respondents dissociated themselves with most of these AIC's. They say AIC's are lost people who can only be loved as people of God. So, the non-use of Scriptures is also a cause of dissonance resulting in the failure of intra Christian dialogue. This has created antagonism and animosity amongst the Christian faith. In spite of all these disagreements the AIC's have been very helpful to the Shona people in coping with the demands of the Shona life.

6.4.1.4 Resurrection

Resurrection is a future event. Even Israel, God's elect nation, believed there was going to be some resurrection at the end time. When this occurred before their expectation, it left them at sixes and sevens. The trend has continued to date. The Church is not sure of what to expect and when to expect the resurrection of the dead, and what the resurrection will be like. The reason basically being that there are no analogies this side of life with which we can compare. The resurrection of Jesus, which happened unexpectedly, before time, was never witnessed this side of life. In fact, no one can witness an end time event of that nature. There are no categories in this world that can help us to discover what will happen at eschaton. We cannot empirically observe resurrection; neither do we have any worldly language that is capable of fully expressing activities of the end time. In the case of Jesus' resurrection, there are so many unexplained gaps and vacuums that leave us with no full picture of what may have happened to the body of Jesus at resurrection and after resurrection. Coupled with that, there are also varying hermeneutics that are applied to the sketchy and scanty information that we find in Scriptures. Yet the afterlife which the Christian is yearning for, and which has been made a primary goal by many Christians, includes the resurrection of the dead.

There are several disagreements, amongst various denominations, pertaining to the resurrection of the dead. Responses from AIC's in Zimbabwe have been kind of hazy. To manyof them, the

resurrection of the dead is not a central theme and their major concern is the deliverance from the ills of this present life, by the aid of the Spirit. All other respondents strongly believe that there is going to be resurrection of the dead, but without being critical of what will actually happen. They believe that resurrection is a creative act of God that started with Jesus, and is going to culminate at eschaton. However, there is no consensus as to what will be recreated. Is it the body, the soul or both? The argument revolves around whether a Zimbabwean Church believes in a monistic or dichotomous human being, and it is here that intra-Christian dialogue is also failing.

6.4.1.5 Resurrection versus resuscitation

A well-known Zimbabwean Gospel artist, Charles Charamba, sang a song *kwakangosara machira chete* (there remained only grave cloths), referring to the empty tomb of Jesus. I enquired on the relevance of the empty tomb to Jesus' resurrection and two schools of thought evolved from representatives of the various Church denominations in Zimbabwe. The majority of the respondents remarked that the dead body of Jesus was necessary in his resurrection. God resuscitated the old body of Jesus to come up with a transformed body which was suitable for the heavenly realm. Many of them are uncritical in their approach. To them, it is a matter of common sense that if Jesus rose from the dead then his corpse could not have been in the tomb. Only a few critical respondents questioned the necessity of the dead body to the resurrection of Jesus. One respondent asked whether Jesus was going to be resurrected from the dead if he had been burnt to ashes. He therefore saw no necessity of the old body of Jesus to his resurrection, which was a result of God's creative power. The absence of the body, he explained, was only incidental to Jesus' resurrection. How then can the Christian Church in Zimbabwe help the Shona people who do not have resurrection in their vocabulary, if they cannot agree on their definition of resurrection? In the strictest sense, the Shona do not have an eschatology. Their dead return home to be with the living and this is not seen in the lines of resurrection. They are not waiting for any end to come. Unlike the Christian who is consoled with the hope of a blissful future at the end of time, the Shona are looking for their bliss now, as their 'living dead' take care of their welfare today.

6.4.1.6 The nature of the resurrection body

255

The Church in Zimbabwe has also failed to come to a consensus regarding what manner of a body will be a resurrection body. All respondents affirmed that our bodies at resurrection will be fashioned the same way as the post resurrection body of Jesus and that it will be exempt from laws of space. However, such an affirmation does not solve our problems because it is difficult to determine the nature of the post resurrection body of Jesus from Scriptures. Some respondents said the resurrection body will be of a spiritual substance, not flesh; where the Spirit is both the principle and the material. A question that arises is how a spirit becomes a substance. Another group says it is a material body which has spiritual characteristics and is ruled by the Spirit. It is also difficult to define spiritual characteristics of a corporeal body.

6.4.1.7 The use of *mbira* instruments in the Zimbabwean Church

A *mbira* is an instrument mainly used by traditionalists as they interact and communicate with ancestral spirits. All traditionalists interviewed see it as an indispensable instrument in communication with their ancestors. One renowned *n'anga* respondent in Mashonaland West submits that it is an instrument that enables them to sing the right songs which the spirits understand and appreciate. It becomes easier to invite the spirits at their ritual gatherings using the *mbira* instruments. "*Ukavaimbira nziyo dzavasinganzwi havadaviri*", ("if you sing unto them strange songs they will not respond") she responded. To the Shona, the instrument plays a central role during their ritual performances and celebrations. Many Shona then, will associate the *mbira* instrument with the Shona traditional religion. The art or talent of playing the instrument is also known to be induced by the spirits. Traditionalists like Soloman Murungu[60] affirm the importance of the instrument, as an effective medium of communication with ancestral spirits. We need to know how the Church in Zimbabwe perceives the *mbira* instrument. Of the ten denominational representatives that responded, six saw no problem with the instrument. They saw it as an ordinary instrument just like any other instrument. However, four of the respondents associated the instrument with Shona traditional religion, and they felt that using the instrument among the Shona would be like taking them back to traditional religion from where they ran

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[60] Murungu Solomon. *The Shona Religion: Zambuko Projects*
http://www.zambuko.com/mbirapage/resource_guide/rg_index.html accessed 16/12/16

away. One of them retorted "*mbira dzinodzosera vanhu kumashavi kwavakatiza*" ("the *mbira* instruments take the people back to ancestral/alien spirits from where they ran away"). The instrument on its own is harmless. However, the impact it would have on an American player would not be the same impact it has on the Shona because of the differences in the cultural backgrounds and belief systems. The intra Church dialogue in Zimbabwe is also found wanting here. The Church must decide on the utility or dangers of the instrument. Taking the middle ground has a negative impact on the adaptation of the Shona views on the afterlife into Christian faith.

6.4.1.8 Training of a *n'anga*

"A genuine divine healer (*n'anga*) must be possessed by an alien spirit or by an ancestral spirit, otherwise it will be a fake *n'anga*", says one Shona respondent from Mashonaland East province. Two of the seven Shona respondents claimed that a *n'anga* can be trained by an experienced *n'anga* without the intervention of ancestral spirits. The rest maintained that all n'anga are hosts to some spirit/s. It is questionable how a *n'anga* is going to be able to divine or foretell about the future without intervention of the spirits. If *n'anga* can be trained like professional herbalists, then the tension between them and the Christian faith would be reduced drastically. Christianity is sceptical of the services of a *n'anga* because of their connection with ancestral spirits. This tension is not favourable to the Shona because a *n'anga* is an indispensable figure in the Shona cultural life. He or she is needed all-round the Shona life; from birth, livelihood, health, protection, vengeance, death, after death, etc. Again, the Shona are not speaking the same language, whether a *n'anga*'s abilities are sourced from the natural aptitude or from the spirits. This makes it difficult for the Church to help them because of the failure of the intra Shona dialogue.

6.4.1.9 Can the two religions worship together?

Mwandayi (2011:276) claims that:

> If the Church incorporates believing traditional medical doctors into her system, she would be enriched in that she would now be able to cope with that area which most of her priests tend to shun away from, namely: exorcism. Not only is she

257

helped in dealing with the forces of evil but her children find answers whenever they are faced with the hard-to-explain situations of life… The Church should actually seek to work more closely with traditional healers, not only attending to their personal spiritual needs but also guiding and counselling them in their profession. They too love Jesus and are actually continuing the work of God among his people.

Some Church respondents disagree. They claim that "the traditional healers need Jesus and they need deliverance." The pertinent question here is whether the two religions can effectively worship together. A majority of the practitioners interviewed emphatically rejected the idea. Spirit mediums and *n'anga* feel the presence of genuine Christians in their operations will be a source of dissonance. One lady *n'anga* from Mashonaland West says "the spirits are invoked by the way we play our drums, *mbira* instruments and *hosho*. We have our own unique way of doing things and the way the Christians worship would chase away the spirits." One spirit medium says presence of Christians usually emit heat which the ancestral spirits cannot stand. However, a few chiefs interviewed claim they would want all their people in the locality, including Christians, to attend communal rituals like rainmaking ceremonies. This is another area of disagreement among the Shona which has restricted inculturation and has resulted people living double lives.

6.4.1.10   *Chisi*

Chikuse (2011)[61] says:

> In every area under the protection of a *mhondoro* a special day called *chisi* is set aside by the spirit when no work may be done in the fields or gardens. It is a ritual day of rest and was formerly determined by the phase of the moon, but of recent years a certain day of each week, frequently Friday or Thursday is fixed as *chisi*.

Chisi is a weekly religious holy day among the Shona, on which people are not allowed to work. The *mhondoro/gomwe* (local big spirit), elders, chiefs or spirit mediums can declare a day to be *chisi*, in honour of ancestors. "*Chisi* observation is a trajectory of the sacramentally (*sacramentality - sic*) of land … and reflect the grandeur or glory of God, the Creator", says

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[61] Chikuse, K. 2011. *Religion of the Shona*. From http://shona.website/2011/05/17/religion-of-the-shona/ accessed 05/07/18

Chimhanda (2014).[62] The main restriction is on working in the fields and gardens. People are required to refrain from all agricultural activities, but they are free to do other ancillary chores like laundry, cleaning the homestead, socializing, visiting relatives and consulting spirit mediums. It is a time of rest. The Shona saying that *chisi hachiyeri musi wacharimwa* means that punishment will not be meted on the day a person works on the holy day. Most village elders affirmed that they will not immediately punish offenders but that their fate will follow them. If someone breaks the rule and works on the holy day his or her punishment will come later in the form of say, poor harvest, loss of implements or some other misfortunes.

Chimhanda (2014)[63] says: "*Mhondoro Chisi* (rest) day … shows openness to understanding the Christian Sabbath. In rural areas, Shona Christians have two Sabbath days." This is where a problem is arising. Two "Sabbath" rest days a week, during the busy cropping season, is a very long time to be away from the fields, for a rural set up; where most have no resources for weeding and harvesting the crops. The Shona Christian will be off on the *chisi* day and on Sunday for their weekly worship, while most non-Christians will observe *chisi*, but revert to their agricultural activities on Sunday. Because this *chisi* day has never been on a Sunday, the Shona Christians are disadvantaged. The only few Christians that may not be disadvantaged are those who worship on Fridays like Johanne Masowe Wechishanu, if the *chisi* in their area falls on the same day. A sub-chief in Mashonaland East for the past 18 years, who is also a Christian, says he banned *chisi* in his area, with the full knowledge of authorities. He retorts: "*Chisi chacho ndakachirambidza. Izororo rechii? Chisi chacho ndechaaniko? Wamurikuziva chaizvo ndiani? Ndiani wamuri kuremekedza*?" ("I banned *chisi*. What is the holiday for? Whose holiday is it for? Who do you really know? Who are you honouring?"). He claims to be heading nearly ten thousand eight hundred villages, with each village averaging three hundred and fifty families. If his statistics are correct, this is close to three million eight hundred thousand family members, who are not observing their tradition and 'de-sacramentalizing' their land - their source of livelihoods. This has obvious consequences, if Shona beliefs are anything to go by. The Shona are not agreeing amongst themselves.

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[62] Chimhanda, F. 2014. "*The Liberation Potential of the Shona Culture and the Gospel: A Post-feminist Perspective". In Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae vol.40 suppl.1*. Pretoria. From http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1017-04992014000200018 accessed 09/07/18
[63] Ibid

6.4.1.11　The appearance of a white shadow

Mhaka (2017)[64] asserts that "…all Shona do believe in a shadow (*mvuri*) which can appear if the deceased is unhappy with something. It seems the *mvuri*, represents the Shona concept of a soul." The Shona believe that the soul of a deceased person can manifest itself in form of a shadow. However, there is no consensus on this concept of the shadow. While some insisted that the shadow is not white but black, and should disappear at the point of death, (to them a dead body casts no shadow), others think a dead body can cast a shadow, but in the event of the deceased having died angered over some issue, the deceased will manifest the displeasure in the form of a white shadow which may stand vertical when the corpse is in a horizontal position. The majority respondents submit that there are two shadows: one black (the normal shadow) and one white shadow which represents the deceased person's soul. They said this white shadow is not usually visible and must disappear when someone dies. If it does not disappear, this reflects the displeasure of the deceased, and it will be necessary to make amends before burial or soon after burial as the living are directed by traditional healers or some apostolic sect prophets.

In general, the standing of a white shadow is a serious matter among the Shona, which requires urgent attention if the funeral is going to be conducted peacefully and successfully. If the Church is going to be helpful in any way, then the Shona must be in a position to clearly explicate the two-shadow concept. Is it a reality or not? I, as a Shona, once heard of the casting of the white shadow at a funeral of a close relative, but I personally failed to see the shadow, while other relatives confirmed that they could see it. The deceased's eldest son had angered his mother when she was still alive. The Shona tradition must dialogue within itself and come up with an agreed position before the Church in Zimbabwe may be expected to craft ways of adapting this two-shadow phenomenon and how they can be helped.

6.4.1.12　Corollary

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[64] Mhaka, Edison. 2017. "The Shona and the Mysteries Associated with Death and Life After Death: Do the Shona Have Answers to the Mysteries Associated with Death and Life After Death?" In *Padare*. From http://edisonmhaka.blogspot.com/2017/04/the-shona-and-mysteries-associated-with.html (accessed 25/07/18)

The foregoing issues discussed are examples of grey areas of concern that are inhibiting effective adaptation of the Shona views on death and afterlife into the Christian faith. Intra group dialogue has been found wanting. The Zimbabwean Church is not speaking the same language in many areas concerning death and afterlife. This anomaly implies that the Church in Zimbabwe, as a corporate body, may not be able to efficiently and effectively help the 'other' if its house is not in order. The same applies with the traditional Shona people, because their beliefs are not standardized. Even their cultural activities sometimes run parallel, and at other times contradictory. If the Shona do not agree on what they believe in, then 'outsiders' (the Church) will find it difficult to offer standard solutions to their challenges. The Shona must synchronize their belief systems. The important question is on what truth the Shona are committed to, in their cultural philosophy and activities, in so far as death and the afterlife are concerned. And how is the Church going to be able to adapt the Shona ideology when the Church's beliefs are not compatible within itself. In some of the large denominations, the Church has not even drawn up tenets of their belief systems. This has been the case where the denominations have failed to craft their tenets of faith. Those in Mashonaland Central province, for instance, believe differently from those in Manicaland province, yet they belong to the same denomination. It is also the case with the Shona whose cultural philosophy has not been put to writing. Intra-faith dialogue is a necessary prerequisite to effectual inter-faith dialogue, besides which, effective inculturation will be difficult to achieve.

There is therefore need to continuously dialogue with own tradition. People need to know why they do what they do, in observance of their religious rites. Many of the Shona who are deep into their tradition have shown that they do not know why they do what they do, in many areas of their cultural activities. Yet they perform those rituals for all their life. This alienates them from traditions which they are supposed to be masters. Because of this estrangement, they cannot freely and decisively engage the 'other' on matters which concern their religion. The same is true for the Christian followers. Many have failed to come to full grips with their own religion, making themselves passive and estranged followers, and consequently, making their faith irrelevant. A typical example is the practice performed by both the Shona and the Church, whereby they both lay a reed mat on which the coffin will be placed, on the floor of the grave. Another example is the throwing of handful of soil into the grave before the grave is filled with

soil. None of the respondents interviewed from both sides could give a convincing reason; making them empty rituals. Zimbabweans will need to acquaint themselves with their own religions, if they are to dialogue with other religions.

6.4.2. The inter-faith dialogue

Having looked at the intra-faith dialogue within the Shona traditional religion, and within the Christian faith in the Zimbabwean Church, now I examine a few selected issues relating to the inter-faith dialogue between the Shona traditional religion and the Christian faith, in Zimbabwe.

6.4.2.1 Learning from the other

As noted above, any meaningful dialogue calls for serious learning from each other. The Shona traditionalists must learn from the Christian Church; what the Church believes in, the activities they are engaged in, the rituals they perform and so forth. The Church, on the other hand must also be keen to learn the 'deep end' of the Shona traditional life, their belief systems and their rites. This does not seem to be what is obtaining on the ground. From respondents interviewed there is serious rivalry and antagonism between the two religious groups, especially when one talks to the practitioners of both sides.

Traditional healers, spirit mediums and some traditional leaders argued that it is the Western Christian religion that has caused the menace among the Shona people. Some said the presence of Christians in their midst cuts off lines of communication with the spirit realm. Ancestors will not manifest in a medium, in the presence of genuine Christians. They have never bothered to study what the Christian faith is doing because they are enemies from the onset. The Shona, who seem to have an interest in the Christian religion, albeit for a cause, are the Shona scholars. The academics' interests seem to be stimulated by the desire to defend and justify the African religion. However, most of the justifications have been found wanting, as we shall see later, since the main aim of most of the scholars is to defend and justify from the premise that the two religions must be amalgamated. Besides these scholars, most responses showed that the Shona practitioners are not interested at all, in learning Christian faith.

Church leaders, on the other hand have not done enough to learn the Shona traditional religion: 'the how' and 'the why' of the religion. Most have taken the shallow studies at Bible Colleges when they undertook their theological training, if at all they did, and no further. Yet there are some deeper insights of the Shona religion that every Church leader must acquire if they are going to be relevant, resourceful and helpful to the Shona people. A few responses have shown that they respect the Shona traditional religion albeit with reservations in many areas of the Shona life. Otherwise it is safe for me to conclude, from the field study, that most Church leaders think that the traditional religion is demonic and does not deserve a place in the Shona life.

This is a stalemate that the Church in Zimbabwe and the traditional Shona have to sort out if there is going to be some meaningful inculturation of the Shona traditional beliefs into the Christian Gospel. The cries from the academics seem to have fallen on deaf ears. The Church leadership has read the recommendations from scholars but is yet to take any action. This is exacerbated by the unscrupulous recommendations that have been put forward by some scholars, which, to them, do not deserve any attention at all. Indeed, it is a problem of some scholars who make farfetched and impractical recommendations; defending the Shona religion, in the name of theologizing and scholarship. At the end, some scholars take their scholarly work as a debate, unnecessarily defending certain positions, with the aim of winning the argument. Any successful inter-faith dialogue should exclude debates. In practice, as I have learnt from the Shona, there are insignificant arguments that arise between the Shona religion and the Christian faith, which do not take into consideration the fact that these are two separate religions, with different belief systems.

6.4.2.2 Acknowledging the significance of the other

As mentioned above, Ataullah Siddiqui,[65] submits that meaningful dialogue is only possible when parties in a particular dialogue strongly believe that their faith offers something important to their wider community. The 'other' must also acknowledge such a contribution. The

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[65] Siddiqui, Ataullah. *The Purpose of interfaith dialogue.* From http://www.mihe.org.uk/the-purpose-of-interfaith-dialogue accessed 10/10/2016

Zimbabwean Church must recognize the significance of the contribution that is made by the Shona traditional religion to the welfare of the Shona people. Concerning the deep-seated challenges that confront the Shona people, the Church has become irrelevant in some areas of the Shona life because of its approach. Responding to the question on how the Church has helped its followers who are under the attack by evil spirits such as goblin spirits[66], the answers were far from being satisfactory. In some Churches, the spirits do not even manifest, not because they are not present, but because they are not challenged hard enough to make a move. Hence some of the responses have been "the effect of the spirits on our members has been minimal, if any at all, and help is given through prayer and word." Another head of a denomination responded: "The solution is teaching deliverance. And as I have said before there are others who revert to the traditional African ways for solutions." The question would then be, where the Church has failed, that it should let its flock go to strange grasslands. Yet another interesting response was: "We teach them to understand how safe they are in Jesus' power and how they need to exercise their right to freedom from demonic influences, of the evil spiritual world." However, in the midst of this denomination, there are many who are being tormented by the evil spirits. This has reduced the Church's confession to mere lip service which, as an insider I submit, does not move the evil forces at all; keeping the Shona Christian in Church but under bondage.

The Church has not recognized the significant contribution that the Shona traditional religion makes in this area of the Shona life. Some people have gone back to their traditional practices in cases of such problems and they have found help, so the Shona religion is offering something important. This does not mean the Church must accept and embrace the Shona religion in its midst, but it must admit that at least the traditional religion is offering help which they themselves may have failed to offer. This is a necessary precondition for meaningful dialogue. Dialogue calls for co-operation and co-existence between the Church and the Shona traditional

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[66] I am not sure whether what the Shona call goblins are the same with the ones referred to in European folklore; which were attested in stories from the middle ages. In the European folklore a goblin is a monstrous creature, which is mythologically small, mischievous, malicious, greedy, cruel and malevolent, and with magical abilities. While these characteristics match most of those in the Shona thinking, the Shona goblin that I recollect from the field work can take any form besides one of a humanoid. There are others which do not take shapes resembling human beings. These can be in the form of anything - grass, water, leaves, animals, birds - and are magically attached to a spirit of a deceased person. The attributes, the talents, the gifts of the deceased person while she/he was alive, manifest on the goblin spirit. The goblin spirits are accountable to the living person who magically formed them, and they are always busy, day and night, performing whatever nefarious acts would have been assigned to them by their masters. To the Shona goblins are realities.

264

religion. Both parties cannot cut themselves off from each other because of their opposing religious views. After all, whether one is a Christian or not, they depend on each other as Zimbabwean citizens, who share same schools, same busses, same workplaces etc. Individuals and communities will therefore need to interact and share ideas on a day to day basis. They need to put more effort to acquire the right accurate information about the 'other' and avoid unnecessary stereotypes. Therefore, without converting to the Shona traditional religion, the Church should acknowledge the work being done by the Shona traditionalists, and dialogue should start from there. The opposite is also true; the Shona traditionalists should also acknowledge the import of the Church's contribution to the welfare of the Shona people, without them converting to Christianity, and without castigating Christianity.

6.4.2.3 Mutual respect and support

From the way the Zimbabwean Church and the Shona traditionalists have impacted on the lives of the Shona people, we can safely conclude that both parties have earned themselves respect, which must be recognized by the 'other'. The main challenge between the two religions is that they have no respect for each other. The practitioners from both sides perceive the 'other' as the major stumbling block that is hindering the progress of their communities. This can be discerned from statements like the following, which was made by a Shona traditionalist; "Many wetlands have gone dry, sacred places have been tempered with, sacred days are never observed, because of this white man's religion and the result has been droughts, poor harvest and many other calamities, and this has angered the ancestors". Another village head in Mashonaland West says:

> There are some places that are sacred which must always be respected. For instance, a person must not, use a container that was on the fireplace (*pachoto*) to fetch water from spring hole, or take a bath near the spring, because it will cause the spring to run dry. Now these violations by Christians are sacrileges of 'holy' places, and the whole community will end up suffering… Recently we asked for a $1 contribution from each member of the community to fund the *mutoro* (rain making) ceremony and members from Mugodhi Church refused; arguing that "rain comes from God. If a person can make rains fall, then let them make the rains fall off season like in August". It is difficult to live with such people as they spoil things for everyone.

The Christian community also complains. One, from the same area retorts: "If people do not return to God but continue interacting with evil spirits, this land will never be blessed. The dead

265

do not return to the living. That is Satan impersonating our forefathers. It is all demonic." Even at denominational level, seven of the nine responses from Church leadership contended that the traditional religion that is centered on interaction with the dead is demonic and does not deserve a place in their communities. These statements show animosity within single communities at its worst. People in same communities are not at peace with each other because of the diversity of their religious beliefs and lack of tolerance and respect. For a successful dialogue, mutual respect and mutual support are paramount. Both parties need to respect and support each other, after all each cannot cut itself from the other. There is need to recognize cultural and religious diversity, if mutual respect is going to be sustainable. Each party must therefore know the belief systems of the other, their strengths and weakness, and identify any areas where they can possibly work together for the good of the whole Shona community.

6.4.2.4 Treating each other as equals

Two religious entities in a dialogue must approach the dialogue table as equals. The 'big brother' mentality must be set aside if the parties are to achieve meaningful dialogue. Equality does not mean that one now believes in the faith of the 'other'. One must be taken to be who one really is despite divergences in belief systems. A religion is so important to a follower and is resourceful to him or her; hence it becomes the greatest religion for him or her. So who is the 'other' to judge my religion as inferior? This can be a big barrier to effective dialogue. On the other hand, how can one be treated as an equal if one is engrossed with inferiority complex? This seems to be the problem with the Shona religion. The way the advocates of the religion make noise, exhibits someone who is coming from a lesser position. Why are they fighting for admission into Christian faith as if their faith is not adequate? Does the Shona traditional religion need to be linked to the Christian faith for its survival? The Shona traditional religion should be an autonomous religion. Suffice to mention this in passing as I shall discuss this later. What are the scholars begging Christianity for, which the Shona religion cannot do on their own? If the Shona approach the dialogue table from an inferior position, then the 'other' cannot be expected to treat them as an equal partner to the dialogue, resulting in the demise of dialogue.

There are bound to be irreconcilable differences in belief systems between different religions. If dialogue is to be sustainable, emphasis on these differences should be avoided. If the Church has failed to minister healing to its adherent, it would honestly be fair to gracefully release the member to seek help from the Shona traditional religion. The response I received from one head of a large denomination is, to my mind, shocking. He said: "if a Church member is persistently ill and modern doctors have failed to diagnose and treat the disease, we offer prayer and counselling for acceptance to live with the 'thorn in the flesh' and teach them deliverance." Another head of denomination answered: "it may be the will of God as in the case of Paul." In Paul's case God never said it was his will for Paul to have a "thorn in the flesh" (2 Corinthians 12:7-9). Instead God said Paul had sufficient grace to deal with the thorn in the flesh. Similarly, the Church has enough grace to deal with the challenges confronting its Shona followers. If they fail, it is only prudent to accept synergistic efforts from the Shona traditional religion, unless if it is the member who would have failed to believe, because God responds to an individual's faith.

A major problem I discovered in the spiritual realm is that a majority of the Christian faith and the Shona traditional religion followers are not well conversant with the tenets of their own religions. This includes the practitioners like priests, pastors, evangelists, spirit mediums, traditional healers and the Shona community elders. This has resulted in them failing to be self-critical, because they cannot perform strict analysis of own beliefs, practices and worship systems. A lot of rituals performed, in Churches and in the Shona traditional practices, concerning death and the dead, have not been assigned significant meaning at all. I asked why women are not allowed at the grave during burial, at a certain funeral in Manicaland province. All respondents confessed ignorance, save only to say "that is what we do here." In such instance the 'other' is bound to take you for granted. Yet this self-critical analysis is essential in discovering deficiencies of own faith. Only someone who has carried out a thorough self analysis is able to realize that own faith does not carry all correct answers after all. It is therefore a useful catalyst for successful dialogue.

6.4.2.5 The stance taken towards interreligious relationships

In the explication of their tenets of faith, many Church denominations in Zimbabwe have taken certain positions regarding how they relate to other religions. The success of any dialogue is heavily influenced by the various attitudes, which have been adopted through the denominational tenets of faith, pertaining to how the denomination seeks to relate to other faiths. To the majority of the denominations, salvation is only through Jesus as espoused by John 14:16 and Acts 4:12. A very small percentage of the denominations in Zimbabwe, including the Roman Catholic Church, have taken the inclusive approach, which premises that people may be saved outside the Church and faith in Jesus. To them, Jesus' salvific work is an autonomous entity which does not require an individual's response through faith. Inclusivism comes with obvious results of greater freedom and more meaningful dialogue, although it creates a lot of problems for the Church.

When diverse religions engage in dialogue, they acquire adequate knowledge concerning the role played by other religions in shaping lives of their communities. The aim of dialogue is not to generate a common system of belief, or to proselytize and convert other people to their own religious traditions, but to foster high quality relations and shared understanding.

As mentioned earlier, inculturation may be seen as dialogue between faith and culture. Therefore, successful dialogue is likely to breed meaningful inculturation. How has the Church in Zimbabwe performed in inculturating the Shona traditional views on death and afterlife? The following section seeks to answer this and several other questions.

6.5   The Inculturation by the indigenous led Zimbabwean Church

Chapter 4 is an attempt to explicate the most crucial Shona traditional beliefs and practices concerning death and afterlife. The Church in Zimbabwe today is primarily led by indigenous leaders, who, to all intents, should be well acquainted with these beliefs and practices. Unlike the white missionaries, who were outsiders looking in, without 'first hand' knowledge of the Shona traditions; the Zimbabwean indigenous Church leadership are insiders, some with 'hands on' knowledge about the Shona traditional practices. This section seeks to enquire on how the 'owners of the game' have performed, in playing their own game. The song has always been the white missionaries corroborated with the white settlers to undermine the Shona traditional

religion and force through their own culture, which they erroneously took to be part of the Christian faith. Granted the foreign missionaries made their own mistakes because of arrogance and ignorance, the Shona indigenous Church leadership cannot be ignorant of their own culture, and assuming they started getting leadership positions soon after the colonial era, they should by now, forty eight years later, have made inroads as far as adapting the Shona cultural practices into Christian faith is concerned. I will now examine the concrete and practical issues concerning the Shona culture and how the Church in Zimbabwe perceives it. Because of the diversity of the Shona and Christian views on death and afterlife, as seen in chapters 4 and 5, only a selection of issues, which are fundamental to the two traditions, are going to be examined.

6.5.1   Death

The Shona anthropological nature of a human being is primarily monistic. However, we discovered in chapter 4 that at the point of death, the distinction between body and soul becomes marked. This means the Shona are both monistic and dualistic in their anthropology. As monists, they should then speak the same language with the Adventists, who believe that a human being is a unit with no composite elements. At the point of death, the Shona should agree with the majority of Church denominations who believe that a human being is composed of the body and soul. However, in spite of the similarities in thinking, their belief systems are contradictory. While the Adventists are saying a human being is monistic, and when one dies, one dies both body and soul, and he or she is extinct until day of resurrection, the Shona are saying the deceased person lives on to become part of the living family. Asked whether the Adventists can adapt this line of thinking into their Christian faith, the response I received was an emphatic no. All the other denominations which responded are dualists in their theological anthropology. They say the body dies while the soul escapes death to be with the Lord or to be at some place of torment until resurrection day. Although Allan Anderson[67] tries to explain that the Shona dualism is not similar to the Western or Christian dualism - arguing that the entire human being keeps on living in the spirit world as an ancestor - the Church in Zimbabwe does not agree to the living dead persisting among the living. This disagreement is fundamental as it is going to affect

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[67] Anderson, Allan. *African Religions*. From http://www.deathreference.com/A-Bi/African-Religions.html#ixzz4WPOUotyf accessed 24/01/2017

most of the other belief systems of the Shona people. The way the Shona define death, therefore, runs parallel to the Christian Gospel, according to the Church leadership in Zimbabwe, and there is an irreconcilable stalemate.

6.5.2   Burial rituals

Preparation of the dead body is mainly done at the funeral parlours for both the traditional Shona and the Church, although there are some places, especially in the rural areas, where services of parlours are not used. No disputes have been registered by respondents, between the Church and the Shona culture, relating to the *kupeta* (folding the body to put it in right posture for burial) rituals, the washing of the corpse, and the application of some oils, and the dressing of the corpse. Both sides perform basically the same rituals, albeit, for different reasons. In rural Shona areas, the corpse is placed on the *chikuva* (raised clay platform/table). Although there are claims that the *chikuva* is, in some places taken as a sanctuary (a traditional alter), I did not register any disputes on its use, since in most places it is used for convenience purposes. This may be because there may be no stands, on which to place the coffin or the body, when the body lies in state. The significance of the *chikuva* as a sanctuary is waning. The forgoing issues have minimal disagreements. However, these areas of agreements are not critical to the Shona life. Even if these Shona views are adapted into the Christian faith, they are of no effect to improve their religious life.

6.5.3   Last words

We learnt in chapter 4 that the last words of a dying person must be treated with the 'sacrality' that it deserves. This is also another area of agreement between the Church and the Shona religion. The Zimbabwean Church appeals to the last words of Jesus when he declared on the cross: "it is finished" (John 19:30) as eternally binding. One Zimbabwean Church elder says:

> 'It is finished' is one of the most powerful statements in Scripture. Whether we like it or not, whether people respond positively or negatively, the fact remains that Jesus' completed salvific work destroyed all human woes of sin and delivered salvation to humanity. The last testament of a dying man should not be reversed, ignored or tempered with.

The Jewish custom also highly respected the last testament of the dying. The Talmud teaches that the oral testament of a dying person has the same legal effect as written and witnessed orders (Git.13a)[68]. This is attested in the Old Testament: where we find instructions of Jacob in Genesis 49:29, of Joseph in Genesis 50:25, and the advice of King David in 1 Kings 2:1-9, being meticulously observed. Mhaka (2017)[69] contends that:

> According to Shona belief, if the wish of the deceased is not considered, the deceased will make it difficult to transport his body or to dig his grave… Thus death is believed to empower the deceased who becomes more powerful than the living.

Therefore, to the Shona, the dead would have naturally assumed a higher position in the family. If one is expected to obey words of a living elder, then the words of a dying person ought to be revered more. A Zezuru respondent had this comment:

> This has been the trend from time immemorial. We have always observed the last words of the deceased. They did not even need a witness, because it was anathema to put words into the mouth of a dying person. *Unotora ngozi* (you will attract avenging spirits).

So, observance of the last words of the deceased is coupled with some elements of fear of what would happen if instructions were disobeyed. However, with 'postmodernity' (Nurnberger 2007:11) fast creeping into the Shona society, this trend is fading away. Many Shona affirm situations where the living have put words into the mouth of the dead, to give themselves advantage; especially in cases of distribution of the deceased's estate and other inheritance issues. People have become so greedy that they are no longer worried about the misfortunes that may befall them. Be that as it may, the Shona still believe that the last words of a dying person are sacred and must be obeyed. This is an area where the Church in Zimbabwe and the Shona culture seem to be in agreement, and should easily be adapted into the Christian faith life. However, there are still some grey areas, pertaining to the repercussions of the ensuing disobedience. The Church does not believe that the deceased will inflict punishment on the offenders. This is because some believe that there is total extinction at death, while others maintain that the dead are gone and the rest are the 'impersonifications' of the Devil. So, in spite

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[68] The Talmud cited in H. Rabinowicz, *Death,* http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud_0002_0005_0_05010.html accessed 27/07/18)
[69] Mhaka, 2017, opcit

of the agreements concerning the last words of a dying person, the motivations of the two religious traditions differ.

6.5.4 Two shadows

Solomon Murungu (2004) asserts that the Shona believe the deceased have two shadows - a black shadow representing the corpse and a white shadow representing the soul or spirit." To Mhaka (2017):

> The white shadow is supposed to disappear soon after someone's death. If the white shadow does not disappear and instead appears on the wall of the hut where deceased is lying in state, it will be a sign that the deceased is restless and wants something done… This seems to indicate that the Shona believe that a person consists of two separable entities, a soul and a body.

We have seen above, that the Shona believe that a deceased person who dies angered over some issue, will manifest the displeasure in the form of a white shadow, which may appear in the vertical position while the corpse is in a horizontal position. Could this be compatible with the monistic eschatology we discovered in the previous chapter, that argues for an "ontological dichotomy", caused by God at the point of death; where the dead person "survives dissolution of the whole" (Cooper 2015:15)? The material body is thought to fissure into a corpse, and another body that continues to represent the person (Cooper 2009:33). Even if the Shona were to agree with this monistic theological anthropology, the Zimbabwean Church responses have shown otherwise.

Five of the nine Church representatives who responded did not know about the white shadow (*kumira bvuri)* phenomenon. One was not sure if the phenomenon exists. One large Pentecostal Church denominational leader responded that the affected must establish the reasons for the displeasure of the deceased, but he did not explain how this can be done. The Shona usually seek the services of traditional healers (*n'anga*) or apostolic sect prophets. Some of the denominational respondents with a Pentecostal orientation said that they would pray and cast out the spirit. All the responses revealed one thing to me: that the Church in Zimbabwe does not take the manifestation of the white shadow seriously or they associate the phenomenon with some demonic activity, which must be exorcised. Yet from the experience of the Shona, the white

shadow phenomenon is a reality which requires urgent and serious attention. One *Karanga* respondent maintains that:

> If the white shadow is not dealt with at the appropriate time then the burial will not be successful, and the living will be sitting on a time bomb. The entire clan may experience one misfortune after another, until the aggrieved spirit has been appeased, and the offender has made amends.

If the Church associates the white shadow manifestation with demonic activity, this means that they are nowhere near recognition that the *kumira bvuri* phenomenon is a reality which they will need to deal with in their faith system. If they think it is a result of evil spirits, then they must exorcise the spirits rather than talking about it and doing nothing. Some AIC's pray, receive visions and prescribe solutions, although the prescribed solutions have traditionalist nuances.

6.5.5   *Mombe yenheedzo*

We saw in chapter 4 that a beast is slaughtered (*mombe yenheedzo* - called *mombe yenhevedzo* in some Shona places) in honour of the deceased; as a provision for the deceased's journey as he or she travels into the unknown world, with the beast's skin symbolizing a blanket for the deceased on the journey (Dodo 2015:18). The meat serves as relish at the funeral. There are prayers offered to the deceased and some rituals are performed on the meat.

Responding to the *mombe yenheedzo* phenomenon, three of the seven Church denominational respondents professed ignorance. One head of a large denomination said he did know about *mombe yenheedzo*. Another one said "the phenomenon is unknown to the Church. A beast may be slaughtered to feed mourners and not for rituals outside that of Church service." To me, as a Shona, such responses reflect some negligence and 'sleeping on duty', because in most Shona funerals there are beasts slaughtered, except where the people are too poor to provide one. And for most of the slaughters, prayers are made and rituals are performed. This is done at the place of slaughter and an unobservant minister of religion may miss this.

The rest of the responses were based on Paul's teaching on food offered to idols (Romans 14:14-15; 1 Corinthians 8:4-6; 10:27-30). In summary, Paul says: no food is unclean in itself, one may choose to eat or not to eat, depending on one's conscience, for there is only one God - idols are

nothing. However, one's freedom to eat must not destroy the conscience of other believers of weaker faith. Two of the several responses that prominently featured were that "we teach them to pray before eating. God is greater than the rituals and the demonic world." (It is interesting here to note that the respondent refers to the prayers made to the dead as 'the demonic world'). Another response appealed to the faith and conscience of the person eating:

> If the Church member provides the beast, it should be on condition that there will be no rituals performed on it. If the family is providing the beast and they proceed to perform rituals on it then: firstly, they should not participate in the rituals, secondly, depending on their faith and conscience, they can choose to eat or not to eat the meat.

In general then, the Church in Zimbabwe is not ignorant of this cultural practice, but that they associate it with demonic activity. They feel the *mombe yenheedzo* phenomenon makes the Church participate in profane things, since it involves prayers to the dead, which the Church does not agree to. So, failing to adapt this phenomenon into the Christian faith is not because of ignorance of the cultural practice, but because of the incompatibility of belief systems.

6.5.6   Choosing the gravesite and body viewing

Sitshebo (2000:36) remarks that:

> If the deceased has not chosen a grave site, or there is no family burial place, then the family representative will choose where the deceased will be buried. What makes the grave so important is the fact that it is looked upon as the house, or final resting place of the deceased. In a traditional Shona setting, when a member of the family wants to build a house, the family elder or representative marks the spot by thrusting a pick into the ground. The reasoning behind this is that the place is thereby officially recognized as part of the grounds to be visited and protected by the ancestors. In the same way, the grave is part of the community, because it is the visible link with the land of the departed.

Although this practice of choosing the grave-site is waning down because of the use of cemeteries and some designated burial places in some Shona rural areas, it is however, still prevalent in other areas. Munhamu Pekeshe (2014)[70] contends that the 'location of the grave-site' (*kutema rukawo*) is an important facet of the funerary rites. Back then, grave-site location was done by a son-in-law (*mukwasha*) or a sister's son (*muzukuru*), but today the act of *kutema*

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[70] Pekeshe, Munhamu. 2014. *Evolving funeral rites of the Shona*. From https://www.thepatriot.co.zw/old_posts/evolving-funeral-rites-of-the-shona/ accessed 2/8/18

rukawo which is still common in some rural areas, is done by an elderly father representing the family of the deceased.

Herein lies the challenge. To the Church in Zimbabwe, there is nothing wrong in locating an appropriate position of the grave by whoever is appointed to be the family representative. The problem arises when the grave is declared part of the homestead and part of the community. The Church has declared, in no uncertain terms, that this is not permissible - the dead cannot share habitation with the living. One respondent retorted:

> At Easter, we remember Jesus because he died, was buried, but he rose again. So, in Jesus' case we are dealing with someone who is alive. Otherwise the dead are gone and they do not return. And in the grave there is no work, no plan, no knowledge and no wisdom.

The Catholic Church believes in the communion of saints; which comprises the sharing of all people, including the departed. Yet even my Catholic respondent submitted that: "divination is not allowed in our Church. We can nevertheless ask the saints to intercede for us… the dead have a new home in heaven, not here on earth."

Another area of disagreement between the Shona culture and the Christian faith is on the body viewing. Both parties perform the body viewing ritual. The Church says that on body viewing they are merely paying their last respects; bidding farewell and capturing their last and final source of memories of the departed, who they will never see again on this planet earth, probably until eschaton. The Shona, on the other hand, do not even view the body of the deceased. They crouch and petition for protection and providence from the deceased. One denominational leader asked:

> How can they petition for protection yet at the same time they claim that the spirit of the recent dead is wandering in the bush and thirsty, and is potentially dangerous, to the living, until the bringing home ceremony? Can one person be a threat, and offer security and protection to the same people, at the same time?

In practice the body viewing has been a mixture of both the Shona culture and the Christian faith. Relatives go into the room where the body lies in state, and they do their rituals, before everybody else is asked to come in and bid farewell and pay their last respect to the departed. Adapting the *kutema rukawo* phenomenon and the Shona body viewing ritual, into the Christian

worship has been met with stiff resistance by the Church in Zimbabwe, because it seeks to connect the living and the dead. The Shona indigenous Church leadership knows the Shona rituals and their significance to the Shona, but they will not endorse them as they feel the rituals are incompatible with tenets of their Christian faith.

6.5.7 *Kurova gata*

Benyera (2014:341) sees:

> *Gata* as a form of spiritual autopsy that ensures that the cause of death is ascertained and that those responsible are notified so that the processes of reparation leading to reconciliation can commence.

To most Shona people death ought to have a cause. The *kurova gata* involves family members of the deceased going out to consult a *n'anga* or several *n'anga* to enquire on the causes of the death. This is a practice which is done in secret. It is only known to family members concerned. It is still quite prevalent among the Shona, as many feel failure to enquire on the cause of death tantamount to negligence and may be a punishable offence. It is thought that *kurova gata* would make the deceased's soul rest in peace, when the cause of his or her death is known. Mwandayi (2011:216) says that: "if a diviner confirms the suspicions of witchcraft he or she would normally advise on what precautions should be taken to root out this evil." However, from the responses received from the field, the results of *kurova gata* have not been largely worth the while. If a witch who killed the deceased is identified there are hardly any worthwhile and ethical lines of recourse available. What does one do to an identified witch? Calling someone a witch is a criminal offence in Zimbabwe. From what I have gathered, witches will not change or repent just because they have been identified. In fact, they become more vicious, offensive and ruthless, and will want to fight harder. The obvious result is animosity and rivalry. Getting contra medicine to revenge only worsens the situation with no tangible gain at all. Commenting on the Roman Catholic National Association of Diocesan Clergy (NADC) Nicholas Creary (2013:232) says: "The NADC held meetings in 1977 and 1978, and … rejected the role of the diviner (*n'anga*) in determining the cause of death (*gata*)…" This has been the trend for all denominational respondents interviewed. Their respective denominations do not want to have anything to do with *n'anga* establishing the cause of death.

6.5.8 *Rumuko*

Although the main aim of the *rumuko* ritual, performed on the first morning after burial, is to detect the activities of witches, prayers are also made at the grave-site during the ritual. The spirit of the deceased is saluted, and totems and praise names are rehearsed, and prayers are also made for and to the deceased. One Zezuru respondent reports that proceedings on the *rumuko* rituals he witnessed started with prayers for the deceased to rest in eternal peace and to be received into God's hands, before praying that the deceased may be received in the hands of senior ancestors, and before the recitation of the totem and praise names. This means the participants appealed to both Christian faith and the Shona tradition. Here reference is given to Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome (Mark 16:1-2) who went early in the morning to Jesus' tomb to attend to his body. But the objectives of the two visits seem to be different. The two Mary's wanted to anoint the body of Jesus. Some Church respondents claimed that this *rumuko* ritual is not necessary as the activities of witchcraft are primarily spiritual and not physical as to be detected through physical footprints. They also expressed negative sentiments on the prayers offered to the deceased and for the deceased. The Zimbabwean Church are finding it difficult to adapt this ritual into Christian worship because of its traditionalist tendency towards use of totems and praise names (which have strong links with ancestors), and its communication with the dead.

6.5.9 The bringing home (*kurova guva*) ceremonies, rituals of honour and rainmaking ceremonies - the apex of the Shona religious life

The bringing home (*kurova guva*) ceremonies, rituals of honour and rainmaking ceremonies characterize the Shona religious life. If the Zimbabwean Church does not adapt these, then the effect of the resultant inculturation will be very minimal, if not negligible. The Shona believe that their departed are still with the living after they have died. The Shona perform some rituals (*kurova guva*) to invite back home the spirit of the dead, so that it guides and protects the living on earth. The *kurova guva* rite also serves to ensure that the recently departed spirit is successfully inducted into the community of ancestors. It is after this ceremony that the eldest

son is able to inherit the father's estate. These days however, even the female offspring can also inherit her father's estate.

There is one thing the Shona have not told me. The bringing home ceremony (*kurova guva*) is for elderly people, who have children. The Shona are not clear as to what happens to those who do not have children or those who die young, say, forty-five years and below. With the HIV/AIDS pandemonium, majority of deaths are below forty years. To have a worldview that relegates all the young and the unmarried to extinction honestly leaves a lot to be desired. This may be reason why modern Shona people have not seriously considered this bringing home ritual. Five of the eleven Shona respondents affirmed that the prevalence of the *kurova guva* rituals is on the decline.

For the *kurova guv*a ceremony to be successful, there should be a lot of ritually prepared millet beer, notwithstanding the fact that the deceased may not have been a beer drinker. No ceremony will be done without the beer. A majority of the denominational respondents said their Church denominations will not allow drinking of alcohol. This makes it difficult for the practice to be adapted into Christian faith. Secondly, inviting the spirit of the deceased home is communicating with the dead. Nine out of ten Church respondents were against communicating with the dead. Their responses can be summarized by the following response from a church leader:

> The dead no longer have a portion among the living. There is no communication between the living and the dead. The dead had their time to be consulted while they were still alive on this earth. Because there is no communication between the living and the dead, there is no need to perform any rituals. Even the Bible forbids us to consult the dead. Isaiah 8:19 teaches us not to consult the dead on behalf of the living. People are exhorted to consult God. And in Leviticus 20:6 God says he will oppose this spiritual prostitution of those who consult mediums and spiritists.

There was however, a slightly different orientation, with some claiming that, at death the spirit awaits final judgment in Hades. And Christ Jesus claims to have the keys of Death and Hades (Revelations 1:18) so there is no human spirit which has the power to escape or to be called by the living from Hades. Their conclusion is that the so called ancestors are evil spirits that masquerade as spirits of the dead. There is no communication between the living and the dead. So, any spirit that purports to be an ancestor is an impostor and a demon.

While others, including one denominational representative from a large Mainline Church had a rather sympathetic response to the dead, summarized by the following assertion from the Mainline Church representative:

> Our dead (the saints) who are with God can intercede on behalf of the living, but no rituals should be held in their honour. Shona rituals evolved before the advent of Christianity, but now Jesus has instituted the one universal sacrifice of the liturgy of the Word and the Eucharist, which cancels and makes any other ritual unnecessary for salvation.

However, such a sympathetic approach may still not be enough to accommodate the spiritual needs of the Shona people. He went on to say the *kurova guva* is prohibited in their denomination because the departed "have a new home in heaven, not here on earth". This drives a heavy blow on the 'death nail' of the *kurova guva* ritual, where the indigenous Zimbabwean led Church is concerned.

The Roman Catholic Church prays to and through departed saints. Their representative claims that this is an act of veneration, not adoration and worship because adoration and worship are reserved only for God. Most other denominations will not communicate with the dead. However, other denominational representatives argue that praying to and through saints goes beyond mere veneration. One denominational head responds:

> We believe praying to or through saints is an act of adoration and worship, since saints are being made mediators between God and human beings. There is only one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Jesus. So, praying to or through the departed saints is elevating departed saints to the level of Jesus, and tantamount to idolatry. Prayers should be directed only to God through Jesus, according to John 14:6 and 16:23.

Regarding rituals of honour, seven of the nine Church respondents argued that the spirit of the deceased departs into the realm of the spirit, where God dwells according to Ecclesiastes (12:7). The body and brain are quickened by this spirit; the real person. People are being drawn into ancestor worship of the Eastern customs prophesied by Isaiah in chapter 2 verses 5 and 6. People need to do all their formalities and communal interface before a person dies, as was the case with Jacob who talked and blessed his sons before he died (Genesis 49), and Isaac who prophesied and blessed his sons before his death (Genesis 27). Family members paid respects to their father before his death and not after. Another Church leader defended the honour and remembrance

given to Jesus (1 Corinthians 11:25-26 … do this in remembrance of me…), on the grounds that, Jesus rose from the dead and that he is God; so, people who remember Jesus' death will be worshipping God. And only God must be honoured and worshipped. The Bible exhorts us to come out of the customs of Babylon – non-believers (Revelations 18:4).

Even the respondent from the Roman Catholic Church, which venerates departed saints, rejected conducting traditional rituals of honouring the dead. Therefore, the indigenous Church leadership in Zimbabwe knows well the needs of the Shona people, as far as honouring the dead is concerned, but they will not adapt the practices into their worship because they believe the practices are the bad elements of culture which must be killed.

We saw above that there are some communities that are being threatened by the non-cooperation of certain Christian members. One case is when a member of the Mugodhi Church claimed that rain comes from God, not from departed spirits, and he will not participate in their rain making ceremonies. In summary all respondents who represented Church denominations and Christian faith dissociate the falling of rains with human effort and the participation of the departed spirits.

The three issues discussed in this section constitute some of the most crucial and indispensable rites that the traditional Shona people must perform for them to have peaceable and happy lives. Any inculturation that excludes the bringing home ceremonies (*kurova guva*), the honouring of the departed spirits and the rainmaking ceremonies (*mukwerere*) falls short of addressing the most pressing needs of the Shona religious life, and will therefore be inadequate. Issues like translating liturgy into the Shona language are progressive but far from addressing the spiritual challenges of the Shona people, and are irrelevant to their taxing needs. The Shona wants to know how to deal with the demands of his or her departed ancestors, and how his or her livelihood can be improved in terms of health, protection and provision, here and now. The Zimbabwean Church seems to have failed to provide existential answers to the challenges confronting the Shona people, and exhorting the Shona people to come to Jesus for the salvation of their souls is good but may not be enough to meet their existential challenges.

6.5.10 Avenging spirits (*ngozi*)

Benyera (2015:6760) thinks the activities of the avenging spirits (*ngozi*) are one form of traditional method of transitional justice. To him the *ngozi* spirit is a transitional justice mechanism that cannot be ignored in spite of the presence of formal justice systems. He argues that:

> … *ngozi* is the prime traditional transitional justice mechanism mostly in the rural areas of Zimbabwe owing to its ability to deliver on key transitional justice deliverables such as accountability and compensation … local communities turn to traditional forms of transitional justice as the most viable alternative for them to get justice, compensation and most importantly reconciliation (Benyera 2015:6761).

A *ngozi* spirit is a spirit of a deceased adult, who dies an unnatural death and returns to the earthly realm as an avenging spirit. It will manifest by speaking through a medium or causing grave misfortunes like persistent deaths or illnesses in the family members of perpetrators, and will persist until corrective action is taken by the offenders. To the Shona then, vengeful spirits are a reality, and can be menacing and devastating. There is need to find a workable solution in the event of the spirits striking. But the Church indigenous leadership is saying it is not the spirit of the deceased that returns but "they are all machinations of the Devil who would have noticed the offence by the perpetrator, and moves to take advantage of the situation; as 'the accuser of brethren' (Revelations 12:10)."

Some Shona respondents argued that there are some positive effects of vengeful spirits, because they force people to observe socially acceptable standards of behaviour. People are made answerable to their actions, and peace and reconciliation can be achieved when the vengeful spirits are appeased. For a person to justify actions of avenging spirits, with its menacing characteristics, just baffles the mind. Invoking an avenging spirit may be tantamount to an act of witchcraft. The avenging family will be happy, while the offending family will be dying. That is witchcraft at its extreme. Benyera (2015:6767) contends that the *ngozi* phenomenon can pose a serious credibility dilemma as it can easily become "extortionist justice", where people seek to 'get rich quickly' through unreasonable demands for compensation. He thinks it is a spiritual phenomenon whose legal restriction may not be enforceable and binding. It is difficult to standardize penalties arising from some metaphysical phenomenon like *ngozi*. The problem

arises from the fact that the benefits of the restitution or penalty accrue to the living, breaking down the metaphysical emphasis. This is where disharmony with Christian faith arises. They argue that the dead no longer have the capacity to receive the penalties paid by the offender. The Shona, in this instance, blend physical and spiritual matters. All representatives of Church denominations who responded said the avenging spirits phenomenon was detestable to God and to people, that any Christian Church would want to have nothing to do with it, except cast the spirits out. The challenge is most Churches fail to cast the spirits away. Yet the spirits will be tormenting their church members, who may not be partakers to the offence, but are affected only because of they are members of the offender's extended family.

6.5.11 Inheritance - *Kudarika uta*, Sororate marriage (*Chimutsamapfihwa*)

The *kudarika uta* ritual has been one of the most contested rites legally, socially and religiously. It is a repressive process whereby the widow of the departed husband is required to jump over the late husband's male symbols like axes and spears, to prove her fidelity from the time of death to the distribution of inheritance of the deceased. If she had any sexual intercourse, she would refuse to jump over them. She would have sullied her late husband's property; which will then require ritual purification and she is heavily penalized. Legally, this is oppressive as it undermines human dignity. Socially this is a cause of unnecessary animosity and a deterrent to human freedom. Chimhanda (2002:152) argues that:

> It appears that the Shona patriarchal society empathizes more with the widower than with the widow… The agnates of the deceased, in accusing the adulterer of **kupisa guva** (burning the grave), claim heavy *damages.* Moreover in the ritual of *kudarika uta* (the widow being asked to 'jump over the deceased husband's knobkerries) it is the widow only who is asked in front of the public to pass the test of faithfulness or else face public embarrassment and wrath.

Zimbabwean Church leaders argued in the same lines as they see a similarity between the *kudarika uta* rite and the adulterous woman's case found in John 8:1-11, which has very serious patriarchal overtones. The leaders' argument is that the Jews wanted to stone only the adulterous woman as if she could commit adultery alone without a man. They wanted to spare the man involved with the woman, because they took the woman to be a second-class citizen. Jesus' response demonstrated forgiveness and human freedom. "This is what we as the Church in

Zimbabwe should practice - forgiveness, because people are all sinners saved by Jesus", says one respondent Church leader. Because the *kudarika uta* rite is opposed from all angles of life, this could be the reason why the practice is waning down. All Church respondents say, although they encourage faithfulness, they will not consider adapting *kudarika uta* in their faith system. Even the *kugara nhaka* rite, where the widow is coerced choose the inheritor for a husband, has no freedom of choice. Many Church elders argued that the Bible teaches that, "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free …You brothers were called to be free…" (Galatians 5:1, 3). They maintain that the Church encourages widows to determine the course their lives will take, either by choosing to remain single and fend for their children, or by choosing to start a new life altogether. Both decisions are not without a cost, but they are better than forced relationships.

Regarding the sororate marriages (*chimutsamapfihwa*), from the Shona thinking, the replacement of the hearthstones (*chimutsamapfihwa*), or simply the sororate marriage is solely based on the wishes of the deceased woman and her living family members. Tichaona Chidakwa (2015:48) observes that a sororate marriage:

> … involves emotional and physical duress on the part of the girl child who is obliged to protect the legacy of the family left upon by the dead sister through inheriting children and the husband to continue caring for the family. In short these concepts are … gross violation of the fundamental rights of children towards realisation of their human capabilities.

There are very few references to the wishes of the deceased's sister or niece who is to be given away. The dead is assumed to have acquired more power and overly respected to the extent of forgetting that the living woman has the right to determine which direction her life should take. However, some Shona respondents think that getting a niece or a young sister of the deceased woman will ensure safety of the children who would have been left by the deceased woman. Others argue that this is not always the case as, in some instances, blood line relatives have proven to be crueler than if the widower had married a stranger.

Mapuranga (2010:83) observes that the Shona traditional practice of sororate marriage is one of the causes of high prevalence of HIV and AIDS among the Ndau people of Chipinge. He argues

that young women are exposed to HIV and AIDS pandemic because of this traditional practice which violates the right to choice, and abuses the girl child. The girl child will be vulnerable to the virus because there are no attempts to go for HIV testing before the forced marriage, especially in the rural Shona areas. Linda Mtombeni[71] complains that this practice of sororate marriages on young women forcefully corrodes and pays no attention to, the self-esteem of young women who are given in marriages, without their consent, to partners who are not their choices. This makes the marriage a matter between the young woman's family and the husband who is happy with a youthful wife who will be gullible and easily manipulated. It is only the young woman who does not benefit in this transaction, as her self-worth is battered to a commercial commodity. Yet according to the Shona culture, she is not allowed to air her views in opposition to men and to elders.

From the foregoing, I can safely conclude, that sororate marriages are not legally, socially, academically and ecclesiastically acceptable. None of the Church respondents vouched for the practice. They say that such a practice is not adaptable into the Christian faith system, without adulterating the Christian faith.

6.5.12 The *mbira* instrument

I have chosen to include the *mbira* instrument as an object of inculturation because of the way the instrument is viewed by the Shona people. The controversy on the *mbira* instrument lies in its efficacy in attracting the ancestral and other spirits. There are hidden and salient spiritual realities that are attached to the *mbira* instrument. One Shona says "*zvine mweya wazvo*" (there are certain spirits attached to the playing of the instrument). Matiure (2013:9) has this to say about the instrument:

> … *mbira* is an instrument that has been ascribed to some supernatural powers which are drawn from its connectedness with the ancestral spirits who are the owners of the instrument.

The instrument on its own is neutral - neither good nor bad. But when it is placed in the hands of the Shona, considering his or her background, it invokes some spiritual responses. It is these

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[71] Mtombeni, Linda. *Human Rights Vs. Culture: The Plight of Young Women Concerning Sororate Marriage in Zimbabwe*. Bachelor of Laws Honours Degree Dissertation - Midlands State University. From http://ir.msu.ac.zw:8080/xmlui/handle/11408/2080 accessed 5/08/2018.

spiritual attachments that the Church detests. This is the case especially with people who once participated in the Shona traditional religion before they left to be members of the Christian community. I have witnessed one elderly pastor of a Pentecostal denomination, who refused to enter into a chapel in which a *mbira* instrument was being played, claiming "*ndezvemadhimoni*" ("it is demonic").

Matiure (2013:9) submits that:

> *Mbira dzaVadzimu* has been with the Shona since the time immemorial. The secular and sacred efficacy of this instrument attracted the attention of a good number of researchers... These authors reveal that *mbira dzaVadzimu* has the power to evoke spirits in spirit mediums.

Jones (1992:110) also thinks that the function of *mbira* in traditional ceremonies is "to provide a link between the world of the living and the world of the ancestral spirits." Rather, they mediate between the spirit realm and the living. Matiure (2013:10) further asserts:

> It is important to note that the bond that exists between *mbira dzaVadzimu* and the ancestral spirits has always been very strong. The relationship is made strong because the instrument has been with the Shona for a long time and has also been used for socialization and evoking spirits in spirit mediums.

Most informants who responded on behalf of the Church denominations in Zimbabwe showed an ambivalent attitude towards the use of *mbira* instrument. While they thought it is just an instrument like any other instrument, they are also cognizant of its connection with the spirit world to which the Shona attach it. And being mainly indigenous, the Zimbabwean Church leaders are also aware of the impact the use of the instrument may make on their followers.

Consequently, many Church denominations have adopted use of many other instruments in their worship system, except the *mbira* instrument. In fact, all the Church denominations I visited do not have the *mbira* as one of their instruments. Yet use of other instruments like *hosho* (internal-seed rattle idiophone instrument, consisting of *maranka* (*mapudzi*) gourds with seeds placed inside), and *ngoma* (drums) are common in many denominations. Therefore, I can safely conclude that there is something in the *mbira* instrument that the Church in Zimbabwe detests, considering the fact that the *mbira* is a very well-known and popular instrument which is

"considered the national instrument of Zimbabwe"[72]. With this kind of suspicion, the Church in Zimbabwe seems to be finding it difficult to adapt the use of the *mbira* instrument. And the claim that the instrument belongs to the ancestors could be further exacerbating the possibility of its adaptation into the Christian faith. One pastor from a Pentecostal denomination had this to say:

> The issue of the *mbira* instrument is a very tricky one for the Christian faith. On its own the instrument is not bad. But we the Shona have always associated it with ancestral spirits. These things depend with the worldview that a person has. For instance, a white man born and raised in Zimbabwe is not affected by witchcraft as much as the Shona is, because of the white man's perception of witchcraft. Because of the ideology that the Shona has, which has always equated the instrument with ancestral spirits, the *mbira* instrument in his or her hand becomes unacceptable in Christian faith. Perception will always affect a person's faith.

With the *mbira* instrument being central to the Shona religious life, inculturation fails where the Zimbabwean Church is concerned; not because of the ignorance of the Church leaders, not because of the white missionaries who blended the Western culture with the Gospel, but because of its perceived incompatibility with the Christian faith in the minds of the Shona.

6.5.13 Spirit possession – mediums (*masvikiro*), alien spirits (*mashavi*), traditional healers (*n'anga),* witchcraft (*uroyi*) and Satanism

Joni[73] is a single parent aged thirty-eight years (although she looks fifty years old), with five children. Her first child is aged twenty-seven years. She must have had her first child at eleven years. She fell sick for a long time and went for almost four years eating only one meal of *maputi* (roasted dry maize), and water per day. She went to Johanne Masowe sect, an indigenous cult in Zimbabwe, to seek help and they prescribed several beads for her. The beads would satisfy the ancestral part of her problems, while they prayed for her, to satisfy the Christian part of her needs. When she acquired the beads, spirits started manifesting on her. These may be alien spirits as they are not related to her. She would not tell me how many spirits were manifesting on her but she said they were more than one. She advised me that if I wanted to know and to talk to the spirits, I could take a piece of grass break it and throw it at her then "*vana mbuya navana sekuru vacho vanobva vauya votaura nemi*" ("the ancestral/alien spirits will manifest and talk to you").

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[72] *The role of mbira in Shona culture*. From http://www.mbira.org/shonaculture.html accessed 12/08/2018

[73] Not her real name

Not sure of what would happen after that, I relented. She is currently working with an experienced *n'nga* (traditional healer) (who, she is expecting, would eventually fully induct her into the profession of a spirit medium), in Kanyemba which is on the north eastern border with Mozambique. She has heard about God, but her activities exclude God. She says she does not mention God, or (*Musikavanhu*), etc.; all she deals with are '*vana mbuya navana sekuru'* (the ancestral/alien spirits). She affirms that she makes no reference to God, neither does she mention any Supreme Being; only the possessing spirits are the central objects of her worship.

This is an example of a spirit medium, who is possessed by several alien spirits. She had torrid time each time she went to Church. She has tried going to Church in the past, but all she remembers is falling into a trance. The spirits would manifest and send her into a trance when she was prayed for. But no positive results were yielded by her Church membership. She eventually gave up going to Church. However, persistent sickness forced her to seek services of an indigenous sect, the Johanne Masowe. They were able to help her to some extent. They appeal to both traditional religion and to Christian faith. They seek to satisfy demands of both the ancestral spirits and their god.

Almost all Shona cultural practitioners work under the influence of spirits. These include mediums of the following spirits: family spirits (*midzimu*), guardian/clan spirits (*makombwe*), territorial spirits or spirits of deceased chiefs (*mhondoro*) and alien spirits (*mashavi*). *N'anga* and witches are also mediums of spirits. Some mediums do not necessarily speak when they are possessed; it may only be their actions that change. For example, those possessed with hunting spirits or fighting (*mangoromera*) spirits may not necessarily speak when possessed, but their abilities are enhanced beyond the normal. A medium with a fighting spirit can easily beat five strong men, or a small woman with the spirit can easily beat a giant strong man. The one with a hunting spirit can kill an animal in perculiar ways, and even in unexpected places; where other hunters find no animals. The Shona people cherish some of these talents as they are thought to be helpful. However, there are other spirits that are detested. Even the detested spirits like witchcraft are highly esteemed in some Shona circles. As Gelfand (1973:133) puts it, survival, among the Shona, is not practical without spirit possession.

287

Only one denominational respondent showed that they have a place for the dead in their worship system. But still they would not positively identify with the Shona traditional spirit possession. The rest of the denominational representatives think that the dead are gone and they have no portion among the living, while some indigenous cults like Johanne Masowe walk in both paths, as seen in the Joni case above. Mainline, Evangelical and Pentecostal Churches in Zimbabwe detest such practices which blend the Shona traditional religion and the Christian Gospel. As far as they are concerned the two faiths are not compatible. If the Zimbabwean Church despises spirit (ancestral, alien, avenging, etc.) possession, then herein lies the total collapse of inculturation, as this phenomenon is the nucleus of the Shona religion and the Shona way of life. There are several reasons that have been put forward for this failure. Let us analyze some of these spirit possessions to comprehend where the Church is coming from.

Witchcraft is a reality that is widespread among the Shona people. This has been exacerbated by the prevalence of Satanism. We have also seen in chapter 4 that the dividing line between Satanism and witchcraft is very thin. Although witchcraft is a secret profession, those possessed by the spirit of witchcraft sometimes really boast about it. It can be a rewarding profession and many make a living out of it. The witches and Satanists make use of 'children' (*zvikwambo*) in their nefarious acts which include making money. Joni says *zvikwambo* are a combination of some magic and the spirits of those dead people they were associated with when they were alive, or those who the witches would have killed.

A witch making a living through prostitution, for instance, may have several of these 'children', each serving a given purpose. One 'child' may specialize in touching and manipulating the brains of potential clients. This would identify the potential client; influence his brains so that he is heavily attracted to the prostitute/witch. Another may specialize in arousing bodily feelings of the potential client. Another may specialize in drawing attention to the lady witch's attraction. Another one may specialize in sex performance, so that the client gets maximum satisfaction during sexual intercourse. Yet another may specialize in money, where they influence payment. They catch the 'biggest fish' in terms of finances. If the client refuses to pay there are some 'children' who specialize in immediate illnesses or in other importunes like genitals becoming dysfunctional. This is how my informant (section 4.8), a confessed Satanist/witch/prostitute, is

able to work for up to three thousand United States dollars per day. The power to do all this is obtained from the spirits of the dead.

Now some of these people attend Church and they support the Church financially. Their 'children' help them attain high positions in Churches. My informant lady witch, who is articulate in speech and relatively 'moneyed' in her community, is a secretary of the women's department in her Church. She dictates the pace of what happens in the women's department. This has obvious repercussions for the entire Church assembly, considering that in most Churches in Zimbabwe over three quarters are women. Even if the Pastor and his wife are aware of it, the denomination uses the presbytery system where positions are filled by vote, and people always vote for her, because she is helped by her 'children' during the time of voting. These witches in Church expect spiritual, moral and social support in their day to day lives from the Church. They do not regret their nefarious acts, and some even boast about their profession. They want the Church to support them in their mode of spirit possession.

Even the African scholars, who defend the African traditional religion, deplore the activities of witches. Because of their nefarious acts, both Christians and non-Christians would not want witches to be in their midst, yet they are present in big numbers among the Shona. This has been worsened by the expansion of Satanism. Witches are easy targets to recruit and train in Satanism because the two professions have a lot of similarities. And wherever they are, they fight to acquire important and influential positions in industries, societies, etc. This they do, aided by the spirits which they host, and many Church denominations are not even aware of this phenomenon in their midst.

I used to think that the core business of witches and Satanists was to bewitch to cause sickness, misfortunes and to kill people. I am now reliably informed that control is one of their main motives in their nefarious activities. My respondents told me that witches and Satanists will seek to find or create a portal in individuals, and there are numerous ways in which they create these portals. They may get close to you to identify your weakness (e.g. bitterness) and then use that weakness as their entry point - each time you are bitter you cannot block them. They may give you artifacts in form of gifts, which become their portals. They may give you food to eat or send

289

a hornet, say, to sting you, in order to place things in your body, which will become their doorway, or they may insert their things on your body when you are involved in an accident. They may 'nicodemusly' make you perform their rituals to create a portal. They may have sexual intercourse with you to create or seal a bond or covenant. In rare occasions, some may use their magic to make a forced entry. Once they have secured a portal, they together with their 'children', can come in and out of a person, unrestricted. When they enter, they seek, among other things, to control the mind. From what I have picked in the field, witches have a larger chunk in the governance of the Shona families, extended families, clans, communities, even organizations, etc. They use occultism to play around with a person's brains.

My respondent gave an example of a family where a lady who is a witch, is married into a family, and remotely runs the entire family, by controlling the decision making of her husband, the head of the extended family and other relevant people. She controls who else is married into the family; by destroying love affairs of good ladies who may want to be married into the family, while promoting love affairs of witches to be married into the family. Witches can remotely control decision making by clan leaders, chiefs, etc. In the business sphere, they can control minds of company board members, magistrates, judges, Church members, to mention but a few. They will use occultism to keep their targeted people supporting things that will be self-destructive. A grand daughter who is being clandestinely trained into witchcraft by a grandmother, say, will be intimately attached to the grandmother, to the extent that she will always want to be with her. A mother who is being bewitched to destroy her own family may be made to be deeply attached and loyal to the witch, to the extent of sincerely loving and reporting to the witch everything that takes place in her family. This can only be avoided if these targeted people have their own powers, godly or otherwise, to counter the spirits of witchcraft and Satanism. One has to be a very committed Christian to be able to stop them from creating a portal and influencing one's mind, when one is targeted.

One informant tells me of a Bible College where during the opening week, it will be a hive of activity, as members of the dark world, led by some College officials, will be busy creating portals using occultism and food, on targeted newly recruited Bible School students. A number of 'children' will be assigned to each potential student, with each 'child' given a specific task

290

over the three year duration of the diploma study at the College. The task may be to cause illness, to control the brains or emotions, to cause misfortunes, etc. The aim, my informant says, is to recruit potential students into Satanism using coercion, intimidation and occultism. He estimated that by the end of the three year period over 75% would have been initiated into Satanism. If this is anything to go by, it is hard to imagine the effects of 75% of graduating students having been initiated and being recruited into the Church as pastors. The students, he says, with no gifts, no talents (e.g. oratory), the uneducated, and the old, are usually safe because the dark world does not need them.

One respondent narrated to me his experience involving a sister-in-law (brother's wife) who is a witch. Problems arose in the family concerning a rowdy child of the sister-in-law. The case was reported to the head of the family who was the father of the respondent. The respondent affirms that for all the time, he had known his father to be a very principled man. When the issue was reported to the father, he castigated the rowdy grandson and his mother for the misdemeanors. However, when time came to implement the solutions, the father made a drastic u-turn and supported the child and the mother-witch. The respondent could not understand why his father had become so unreliable and mean; a man he had known to be always principled. The puzzle, he says, was solved when he discovered that the sister-in-law was a witch and that she had influenced the father to take sides with her, using her occultism.

What does this translate to, for the Zimbabwean Church, in face of the rapid expansion of witchcraft and Satanism within its ranks? The witches are at the helm of control in many spheres of the Shona life. Many Shona interviewed believe this is how the 'dark world' governs and controls its environment. Earlier I referred to witches and Satanists being voted into offices in various Church denominations. They use the same techniques; employing occultism and their 'children', to positively influence the voting system to their favour. This is why most Church denominations, especially those which use the presbytery system of governance (where decisions are made by consensus through voting system), are not doing well. The denomination to which I belong is one of the latest victims. Unfortunately, many Church denominations in Zimbabwe have never come to this realization.

Another category of spirit possession that we need to discuss is one found in traditional healers (*n'anga*). A *n'anga* is indispensable in Shona traditional life. As mentioned in chapter 4 a *n'anga* may be required from birth to death and afterlife of the Shona. I have already discussed the similarities between the traditional healer (*n'anga*) and a witch in chapter 4. Here it will only suffice to mention in passing that while there are polarities between the operations of the witch and the traditional healer, there are also disturbing similarities. A *n'anga* (traditional healer) is a highly esteemed person in the Shona society. However, a closer look at the activities of a traditional healer leaves more questions than answers. I shall raise a few issues. A *n'anga* is seen by the Shona as a doctor per se. In their offices as doctors in sickness, or providers of magical charms, some are found prescribing medicines which requires human parts. There are powerful charms and medicines found in human body parts. If a *n'anga* is assisted by ancestral or alien spirits to secure these powers and charms, he or she will be in the same category as a hereditary witch. Many have been lured into killings and gruesome murders in order to secure these medicines, prescribed by *n'anga*: to get specialized talents, or to prosper in business, or to secure some other fortunes. Any such traditional healer who uses his or her knowledge for harm of others is a witch (Bourdillon 1977:201).

In their offices as detectors and preventers of crime, traditional healers have adopted some methods that are inhuman, like burning a thief's skin; where the thief will look discoloured - where some parts of the body or face will be very light while other parts will be very dark. I have witnessed a thief who was made insane because of traditional medicine prescribed by a traditional healer for stealing green mealies. Even the ethic of *runyoka* (fidelity charm - medicine used to harm an infidel spouse) is highly questionable and unacceptable. Some are involved in vengeance cases where the aggrieved seeks services of a traditional healer to destroy his or her enemy by lightning, say. These are only a few of the many cases that a traditional healer may be involved in. Through spirit possession, they are able to perform these nefarious acts, directly or indirectly. The relevant question is whether their activities are different from those of witches.

From the perspective of the Shona, the way they view a *n'anga* is kind of ambivalent and paradoxical. Twelve of my fifteen Shona respondents showed that they love whom they fear. A *n'anga* is an indispensable person in Shona life, but one who is potentially dangerous. Many

292

Shona today shun services of *n'anga,* if they can avoid them. Besides their potential to inflict harm on others, they have been a source of discord and animosity in many families and societies. The Shona are afraid of them although they need them. I refer again to one respondent who refused to perform the *kurova gata* rite; to enquire from a *n'anga* the cause of the death of his child, after being pushed by his father to do so. His argument was "if the *n'anga* says it is you, my father, who killed my child, what would I do next?" The *n'anga* themselves reject working with Christians, especially genuine Christians. I emphasize 'genuine Christians' because there are some Christians, even Church leaders who 'nicodemusly' and clandestinely seek services of *n'anga*. One *n'anga* respondent retorted "*vanasekuru havadyidzane nechi Kristu*" ("ancestors do not work hand in hand with Christianity").

Church denominations on the other hand have taken a solid position regarding the activities of *n'anga*: they will not work with them. One Pentecostal respondent retorted, referring to 2 Corinthians 6:15:

> 'What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?' We don't associate with the so called *n'anga* because they are hosts to evil spirits that impersonate our departed fathers.

Even the respondent from the 'liberal' Roman Catholic denomination rejected the services of *n'anga* for their followers. I can therefore safely conclude that the services of *n'anga* and other spirit mediums, despite how useful they may be in the Shona life, do not fit into the spectrum of the Christian Gospel, as far as the Zimbabwean Church is concerned. With the Church leadership having full knowledge of spirit mediums (general mediums, witches, *n'anga*, hunters, fighters etc), their services and usefulness to the Shona society, they still will not incorporate them into their worship systems. Once again, inculturation is failing not because of the white colonialists but because of contradictory belief systems, regardless of all the apologetics scholars may offer to defend the Shona religion.

Spirit possession is a phenomenon the Church in Zimbabwe has had to live with - traditional healers (*n'anga*), witches, Satanists and hosts (*masvikiro*) of many other spirits of the dead. From my observation, spirituality is involved in both Christianity and the Shona religion. However, from the forgoing, the 'spirits' are contradictory rather than complementary. The spirits

possessing Joni would make her collapse whenever she attended Church services. This shows that the spirits fight instead of working together. One Shona *n'anga* affirmed that the presence of a genuine Christian disturbs her operations. One medium talked of emission of heat by the Christians, which chases away the ancestors.

Chapter 7

The theological arguments, further findings, and conclusion

7.1 Whither inculturation - the theological arguments

We have seen the various responses by the Shona people and the indigenous leaders of the Zimbabwean Church, now I turn to the analysis and synthesis of the problems confronting the Zimbabwean Church and/or the Shona people. *I mentioned earlier that the systematic Christian theology will be a major methodology employed in this study.* This methodology will be critically applied to matters of concern, as I evaluate the concrete inculturation of the Shona views into the Christian Gospel by the Zimbabwean Church. I will now look at various theological arguments pertaining to inculturation of the Shona views on death and afterlife into the Christian faith. In this section, I employ theological arguments from previous literature, to identify gaps in knowledge, and I incorporate findings from fieldwork to close the gaps, while suggesting new ideas that can enrich systematic theology and African eschatology in the Zimbabwean context. This is besides the gaps that I have already identified, using findings from the research, and the recommendations I have already made, on the dialogue and inculturation concerning the various Shona rituals and beliefs on death and afterlife. The chapter will be rounded off with proposals on the way forward and concluding remarks.

7.1.1   Divinities among the Shona

During the colonial era, the colonizers failed to colonize the consciousness of the indigenous Shona people, but as Ukpong (2013:533) puts it, the indigenous people put up "*a resistance movement involving a protest and an affirmation of people's identity and personhood in the religious context as a matter of their faith commitment*" (emphasis original), while at the same time rejecting Western Christianity. The missionaries did not engage into dialogue, but assumed that Africans did not have a religion and a historical religious past. Duncan (2014:2) cites Sugden who suggests:

> … that missionaries erred in the belief that in order to evangelise black people, they had to persuade them to reject their traditional heritage and religious culture and adopt a new identity in order to be remade as converts. However, black people could not simply give up all that had made them what and who they were. Hence, from 'the creative genius of the blacks there arose a synthesis of development that met their needs in their oppression…'

From this argument one can discern syncretistic tendencies, in the African's response to the missionary's evangelization. This had obvious effects of diluting the efficacy of the Gospel. Anyway, if missionaries failed in their dialogue with African cultures, how should the Church handle it today since the Church is now led by indigenous people? Ukpong (2013:531) propagates for an "*integrative inculturation theology*" - a process which ensures:

> *… that the Christian reality becomes appropriated from within the perspective of and within the resources of these cultures to challenge and transform society and bring about a re-interpretation of faith. It seeks to open up new understandings of faith and lead to recreating culture and society.* (Emphasis original)

Unfortunately, these 'resources of culture', especially as they involve death and afterlife among the Shona, have proven to be a misfit to the Christian faith, where the Zimbabwean Church is concerned. Ukpong does not tell us how the Christian faith may be re-interpreted. To come up with a new comprehension of Christian faith, may tantamount to redefining the faith after embellishing it with some cultural elements. There is a danger here of losing the essence of the faith. This is because, as Turaki (2000)[74] puts it, the traditional African religious thought believes in a mystical power, which has variously been called 'vital force', 'life essence', 'dynamism'; which affects the whole creation. It is this power that needs to be fitted into the spectrum of the Christian faith. These are the 'African resources of culture' that must be amalgamated with Christian faith so that the faith may be reinterpreted.

These mystical forces manifest themselves among the Shona as divinities. There are several divinities and each has a given sphere of influence and power, such as the mountains, rivers, forests, waters, rain, fertility, health, harvest, tribal, clan or family etc. The presence of several divinities leaves a leeway for religious tolerance and accommodation among the Shona, because the belief system is not solid, and it is possible to live double lives. This is why the Shona

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[74] Turaki, Yusufu. 2000. *Africa Traditional Religious System as Basis of Understanding Christian Spiritual Warfare.* From https://www.lausanne.org/content/west-african-case-study accessed 04/10/18

traditionalist is not worried by professing several faiths. Some claim to be Christians and traditionalists at the same time. This, to the Christian thought, is henotheism - a belief in one god while accepting the reality of other gods; which the Church in Zimbabwe says it does not accept. The Shona traditionalists venerate ancestors and the mystical powers, and never get to interact with the Supreme Being. Hence Turaki's (2000)[75] argument that: "Most Africans are in agreement that the traditional Africans do not actively worship this Supreme Being". Commenting on the Yoruba religion, Turaki (2000)[76] further maintains that:

> …the overwhelming facts do show that, even though Africans generally have an awareness and belief in the Supreme Being, the truth is, this Supreme Being is not known to have been exclusively worshipped by traditional Africans. Instead, the African divinities and the ancestors, who are the lesser beings, have been actively involved in the everyday religious life of the traditional Africans.

The notion of the mediatory role of ancestors between God and humanity is well-known amongst African theologians, including the Shona. This notion of mediation seems to be a derivative heavily influenced by Christianity and Muslim religion. It is therefore a very weak argument to call these divinities intermediaries. The Supreme Being who is higher than the less important divinities appears: "not to be intimately involved or concerned with man's world. Instead, men seek out the lesser powers to meet their desires" (Steyne 1990:35). Because it is the lesser powers that receive prayers and offerings, Kato (1975:114) is of the opinion that although:

> Some attributes of God can be observed in animism… It is not in religious practices that God is found… Animistic worship is no proof that man is trying to worship God. It, however, shows man's awareness of the existence of the Supreme Being and man's rebellion against that God. It also shows the deep search for the Reality in spite of the unconscious flight from Him. Only Jesus Christ can meet this thirst, not by filling up the measure of idolatry but by transformation.

This implies the Shona are aware of a Supreme Being who they rarely talk about, instead they appeal to the divinities. Some African theologians have tried to evade the word 'polytheism' in favour of 'divinities' or 'deities'. This does not change the situation on the ground that these entities are trusted for the Shona livelihoods, effectively making them their gods. That their sacrifices and prayers are directed ultimately to the Supreme Being, may be mere theologizing

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[75] Turaki, Yusufu. 2000. A*frica Traditional Religious System as Basis of Understanding Christian Spiritual Warfare.* From https://www.lausanne.org/content/west-african-case-study accessed 04/10/18
[76] Ibid.

and apologetical. Commenting on the mediatory capacity of the divinities, Nurnberger (2007:33) argues that:

> I am not sure that this view really captures the original spiritual experience of ancestry and the Supreme Being. Ancestors are not normally requested to carry the sacrifices, prayers or petitions of their offspring upwards to higher ancestral authorities, and finally to the Supreme Being. Nor do ancestors speak in the name of the Supreme Being when they make their intention or their displeasure known. In practical terms, they are themselves the authorities with whom one relates, the original authors of their messages, blessings and punishment and the final recipients of the original prayers.

The notion of mediation may thus be superficial. As noted in chapter 4, the Mutota medium of the Shona people claimed to have attributes of the Supreme Being and recognized no higher entity above him. Nurnberger (2007:274) cites Sundermeier who gave an illustration of the Ngoe people who, he says, never mention the Supreme Being at their central festivals, but only appeal to a string of ancestors up the hierarchy to the chief ancestor. So, he asserts that the notion that ancestors act in the mediatory capacity may be a result of "adaptations to Islam and Christianity" (Nurnberger 2007:274). I did not meet one practitioner who went further to *Musikavanhu* (Creator God) in their prayers. Neither did I hear any reference to the Supreme Being in the festivals I attended. It was all appeals to the ancestors and owners of forests and mountains. I only read about appeals to the Supreme Being during literature review.

Nurnberger (2007:110-111) claims that god is an entity that one trusts in. If one trusts in money, money becomes one's god, if one trusts in a saint, that saint becomes one's god, and this becomes an obstacle to one's faith in the true living God. The underlying factor is that ancestors exercise authority over their offspring. Ancestor veneration manifests the cultural identity of the Shona and so it cannot be something negligible. For some Shona people, it is not possible to separate religious and cultural spheres of life. Whether we use the term veneration or worship, in relation to ancestors, is beside the point, what matters is whether one has fully placed one's trust in one's ancestors. Once this has happened, Nurnberger (2007:111-112) argues the ancestors would:

> … have assumed power over your life. They have become your 'gods' or 'authorities', whether you call that 'worship' or 'veneration'… As soon as 'respect' turns into spiritual dependence or enslavement, the deceased have turned into 'gods'…

Where does this leave the Shona people, with regards to Christian faith? If this is anything to go by, we may conclude that the Shona traditionalist has multiple gods (divinities); a thing not accepted by the Zimbabwean Church. Basing on the responses received from the Zimbabwean Church, it is not possible to incorporate the Shona polytheistic elements into the Christian Gospel without adulterating the Christian faith.

7.1.2   Can the Shona religion have an independent existence within Christianity?

Commenting on the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, Gumo (2009:92) contends that:

> The available evidence shows that the Catholic Church's official teaching on inculturation is that all cultures have the right to an independence (independent - *sic*) existence within Christianity and that the introduction of Christian teachings in a new culture must involve an 'adoption' that preserves the essential integrity of culture, its values, institutions, and customs.

This is where the Zimbabwean Church is having challenges. As we have seen above, an adaptation that conserves the necessary integrity of the Shona culture and its traditions is not possible according to the Christian Church leadership in Zimbabwe, because most of the belief systems of the Christian faith and the Shona traditions regarding death and afterlife either run parallel or they are contradictory. The quest is not that the Shona cultural values and institutions must not exist independently, but that they cannot exist independently within Christianity because the Church in Zimbabwe feels that such syncretic tendencies will dilute the Christian Gospel. Hence Pope John Paul II's call for: "The intimate transformation of *authentic cultural values* through their integration in Christianity" (emphasis mine) (EA: 59). Not every cultural practice on death and afterlife can be incorporated into Christian worship, no matter how much the academics and African theology advocates are going to push for the African agenda. This is why "Inculturation is still a theoretical issue rather than a practical one" (Gumo 2009:90).

Kanu discusses the model adopted by the founders of the Christian faith. Jesus respected cultures of his audience. As a Jew, he observed Jewish rituals and observances, as someone who did not come to abolish the law and the prophets (Matthew 5:17). However, Jesus did not passively embrace every element of the Jewish culture, but he was quick to break it where it violated

God's spiritual laws. The way his contemporaries worshiped had to be purified. He defied culture where he had to, in order to spiritualize the Jewish religion. As he taught, the language and expressions he used were well known to his listeners. Paul chose to "become all things to all men" (1 Corinthians 9:22) that he may win some to faith. This is the blending of Christianity with the traditions of a community. Paul used their language and shared their beliefs, provided the beliefs did not violate God's principles. In Athens (Acts 17:16-33) he stooped to the level of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers, but only to castigate their polytheism and idol worship. The Jerusalem Council also rejected the Jewish culture of circumcision (Acts 15) to be forced on the Gentiles as a condition for salvation, although they themselves were circumcised. It was an unnecessary burden being laid on the Gentiles. Circumcision was a Jewish rite that sought to identify Jews as a people of God and Gentiles did not have to become Jewish before they were converted to Christian faith.

We have seen that Jesus and Paul expressed themselves in languages and expressions familiar to their audience. Language is fundamental to effective communication. The Shona people need to appreciate the good news of the Gospel in their vernacular languages. As already noted, a lot of strides have been made in this direction with regards to the Church in Zimbabwe. But language is not the crucial issue pertaining to the Shona traditional life, as far as death and afterlife is concerned. The pertinent issue is on the interaction between the Shona and their dead. How should the Shona deal with their dead?

Kanu (2012:238) contends that:

> … Africans have come of age, and can no longer be treated as footnotes in missiological activities in their home land. They have the right to reflect on Christianity in their own terms, and express their faith in a theology and religious life relevant to their cultural situation. The pursuit is for a theology that would value the cultural and religious experience of the African people.

This is the cry of most African theologians. They want to set the conditions on which they reflect on the Christian faith, which will be compatible to their cultures. They want an African theology that leaves their cultural values and religious experiences intact. They desire to live a religious life attuned to their cultural milieu. In this instance, inculturation offers rich soil for integrating the culture of a given community into the Church's life, to ensure that the Church's efforts

300

achieve the intended goal, but it is important here to note that the main goal of inculturation is for the Gospel to transform the culture, not to preserve it intact. Kanu says Africans must be accorded the opportunity to reflect on Christianity on their own terms. Which terms is he referring to, which should underlie the Shona reflection of the Christian faith? What religious life and expression of faith, in theological terms, will be relevant to the Shona traditional life, regarding the dead and afterlife, and at the same time are not syncretistic to the Church in Zimbabwe?

Kanu (2012:242) proposes the adaptation of the Christian religion to the Shona way of life in the:

> … area of liturgy: sacred music, dancing, drumming and the use of African art and local materials at worship. They have adapted the devotional prayers and hymns to suit the African mode of worship and needs.

In all earnestness, the Shona can be deprived of these and life still goes on, but if the traditional Shona is disconnected from his or her dead, life comes to a dead end. Without dealing with how the Shona should relate with their dead, inculturation is of no effect, no matter how many academics are going to write and theologize about it. Kanu (2012:242) picked it well in the Nigerian scenario:

> …it is sad that in this all-important task of making Christianity more meaningful to Africans, not much has been achieved. However, many of the suggestions made … rot away in the libraries or college archives. Nothing of their proposals has been tried out in practice.

It really is not an issue of failing to try out the proposals made by academics, but the truth of the matter is that what the scholars are proposing, to make "Christianity more meaningful to" the Shona, may not be acceptable to the Church. Commenting on the activities of African Initiated Churches which have adopted a more 'spiritual' or more traditional orientation, Kanu (2012:243) notes that:

> It should however be noted that the mainline churches cannot be said to be imitating the African Independent Churches since both denominations are drawing from the same pool, namely African culture. If this African culture is not evil, immoral or superstitious, and can help give more meaning to Christian beliefs, why should these not be incorporated.

This, to my mind, is a serious misrepresentation of facts, and an unnecessary generalization. Neither the Pentecostal, the Evangelical, the Mainline nor the African Initiated churches should

be drawing from the African culture. Instead, it should be the other way round: the African culture must be drawing from the Christian faith, failure of which the two traditions may need to run parallel, and one has to choose between the two. It is also too general to question the morality and superstition of the African culture. There are good elements of the African culture and there are evil, immoral and superstitious elements of the African culture and as attested by Pope Paul VI (NE 20) who exhorts that we cannot "avoid borrowing the elements of human culture or cultures" and cultures "have to be regenerated by an encounter with the Gospel". It is necessary to adapt the good elements into Christian faith and discard the bad elements. What is lacking in Christian faith for it to require a supplement of the African culture to make the faith more meaningful? The question is on the good elements of culture. Yet 'good' is a relative term. What the African theologian says is good, may not be good to the Zimbabwean Church leadership. This is why many proposals by African theologians are rotting "away in the libraries or college archives" (Kanu 2012:242) because they introduce a new religion which is apart from the unadulterated Christian faith. 'Outsiders' cannot define what is good for the Zimbabwean Church. Unfortunately, it seems to be the case with most advocates of African theology: they are outsiders because they profess Christian faith which they have not embraced and comprehended, and which they are not committed to.

7.1.3   Syncretism

Scholars like Luzbetak (1989:360) claim that Christianity is generally syncretistic; being a composition of Judaism, the teachings of Jesus and his disciples, elements of local cultures, and reformulations of belief systems over time. In spite of all this, it is important to ensure an equitable balance when choosing elements of the culture to slot into the Christian faith. Not every cultural element should be indiscriminately discarded; neither should every cultural element be integrated without being seriously examined. I am not sure how Luzbetak views syncretism. His definition may be too wide as to lose its meaning, as we shall see from the definitions below.

Nyuyki *et al* (2016:381) affirm that syncretism is one of the three styles used by Christianity in adapting culture to the Gospel. Nyuyki *et al* (2016:384-385) cite Sanneh who identifies three

styles used by Christianity to fit cultures into the Christian Gospel. The three models are: syncretistic - as discussed below; the "quarantine" - where the believers are always alert over their life and conduct, in so far as they are secluded from worldly things; and "reform and prophetic witness" - where believers carry the conviction that although they are in this world, they do not belong to it, and where compromises and potential compromises are countered by the prophetic word of God. They further contend that:

> … all attempts at inculturation struggle with the danger of syncretism and in the attempt to be "relevant" one may fall into syncretism, and in the effort to avoid syncretism one may become "irrelevant"… (Nyuyki *et al* 2016:382).

This is the challenge that confronts the Zimbabwean Church in the process of inculturation. There is always a tension involving inculturation and syncretism. Yet, since its inception, the Christian faith has constantly functioned in a given culture, starting with the Jewish culture, then the Greco-Roman cultures and so on. The dividing line between inculturation and syncretism has always been very subjectively thin, more so today with the rise of African theologians who seem to have an agenda to uphold the African identity at all costs.

The point is that culture cannot be the standard in inculturation. Pope Paul VI (EN: 63) proposes that any evangelization should consider the needs of the target people being addressed but one needs to be careful to ensure the essence of the Gospel is not contaminated in the pretext of transforming it. Christian faith is a universal reality. The unity of the Gospel should not be shattered in an effort to adjust a universal reality to a local culture. Culture must remain subservient to the Christian Gospel. However, the Gospel must be presented in a cultural milieu to help the Shona to comprehend its true nature. The Gospel must take the Shona as they are when it encounters them: the goal being to change their perceptions and behaviour "into the image of Christ" (Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18). Asamoah-Gyadu (2013:25) observes that:

> In the African context worship is also an engagement with the supernatural world of inanimate beings and ancestors. When the older African initiated churches emerged at the turn of the twentieth century, they were affirmed not only for their ability to incorporate charismatic renewal phenomena into their worship but also for engaging constructively with African ways of being religious.

It is in the engagement of the Shona religious ways that care must be taken to avoid syncretism. As we have seen the dividing line separating inculturation and syncretism is extremely fine.

A call for a contextual theology that caters for the needs and ambitions of the Shona people is necessary, but if honestly developed, it may not result in amalgamation of most of the Shona death and afterlife practices, and Christian faith. The major aspiration of the Shona people is to maintain peace with their departed through some specified rituals. Intermediaries (mediums, traditional healers, witches, etc.), families and communities conduct rituals of honour to appease the spirits that they host, for them to receive continual assistance in their lives. Now with the Church in Zimbabwe saying no to these rituals, how else can a theology be crafted that is "open to the aspiration of the people of Africa if it is to help Christianity to become incarnate in the life of the peoples of the African continent" (Gumo 2009:92)? This is a million-dollar question which may call for re-strategizing and re-theologizing before an appropriate answer is crafted. Gumo (2012:92) asks:

> … is the Catholic Church ready to recognize some valuable African traditional beliefs and practices so that a theology of inculturation is realized to make Christianity a Universal Church? … There should be correct judgments about African beliefs and practices and determine their value for Christian worship and catechesis.

Which practices is she specifically referring to? If they involve death and afterlife the Zimbabwean Church is saying they can do without them because they will profane their faith system, and those who wish to indulge in the practices, can do so without involving the Church. The correctness of a judgment is also a subjective matter and may not effectively be determined by interested parties, especially African theologians.

Numerous definitions of syncretism have been put forward. Syncretism may be described as the integration of rudiments of two religious systems resulting in one or both systems losing its essential identity (Ezenweke and Kanu, 2012:73). Two incompatible religious traditions are amalgamated to form a completely new tradition. The result will be a completely new religion which has elements of both religions; what Turner (1967:7, 14) terms "neo-pagan" religions - a mixture of both Christian and pagan elements resulting in a fresh assortment of a religion, which will be largely pagan. Kanu (2012:243) affirms this when he says that:

> Syncretism occurs when basic elements of the gospel are replaced by religious elements from the host culture. It often results from a tendency or attempt to

undermine the uniqueness of the gospel as found in the Scriptures or the incarnate Son of God.

Nyuyki *et al* (2016:391) describe syncretism, from a Christian point of view, as the: "…indiscriminate or uncritical incorporation of religious and/or cultural practices into Christianity in order to make it relevant to the receiving cultural context". In such instances, syncretism and inculturation become opposites. Nyuyki *et al* (2016:393) conclude that if incorporation of elements of culture into Christian Gospel results in the Gospel being diluted, then such inculturation is naive and it results in syncretism; "but when the incorporation is such that the elements facilitate the understanding of the gospel then it is inculturation." This is the 'catch point' which the Zimbabwean Church must watch out for, in their endeavours to avoid being irrelevant to the Shona people.

This is the case in point with the *mbira* instrument discussed above. A *mbira* instrument, which is attached so much to the invocation of ancestral spirits by the Shona, yet on its own is not evil, may be demystified by its use in Churches. This would probably assist the Shona people to comprehend the Gospel and be able to own it, rather than seeing the Gospel as Western and foreign. However, using the instrument poses the danger of syncretism, especially for the traditional Shona people who have used the instrument in cultural celebrations before they were converted to Christian faith. This may be a necessary danger if it will result in the Shona understanding the Gospel better. In using the instrument, it is the Gospel that must be projected rather than the culture.

Hiebert (1994:88-89) identifies three phases in critical contextualization of the Gospel namely: "exegesis of culture" - where (using the example of the *mbira* instrument) the importance of the *mbira* instrument in Shona culture is examined; "exegesis of Scripture and the Hermeneutic bridge" - where all scriptures applicable to the use of instruments are studied to determine how they could be applied to the use of the *mbira* instrument; and "critical response" - where interested parties come together to critically appraise the previous meanings they assigned to the *mbira* instrument, in comparison to the new information that would have been acquired from the scriptural exegesis. This will form the basis of the decision whether to use the instrument or not. The owners of the culture will be involved in whether to reject or to incorporate their cultural

elements, through spiritual truths they would have learnt. The Zimbabwean Church will do well to take note of this.

Nurnberger (2007:98) talks of the need for "our critical support", when incorporating "African insights, worldviews and metaphors to express the biblical message in an African context". By critical support he means we must always be cognizant of the challenges that confront us in our inculturation endeavours; which includes "logical consistency and hidden syncretism" (Nurnberger 2007:98). Culture must not take precedence over the Gospel. This is why Paul calls his cultural heritage rubbish (Greek - *skubala*) (Philippians 3:8). Either culture maintains its value and dilutes Christian faith, or it becomes rubbish so that Christian faith may be strengthened, and Christians are able to live their lives in the freedom and power of Christ. The Shona traditionalists and the African theologians will need to take cognizance of this if Christian Gospel is going to be meaningful them.

Bolt (2013:248) makes some interesting comments relating syncretism that:

> A significant number of blacks resisted what they saw as the imposition of the missionaries' Christianity and interpreted their religious way of being with its roots in their African religious culture while taking over from Christianity what they could adapt to their religious preferences. This will be judged as syncretism but it was a legitimate way of deepening their understanding of their religion and of themselves… The blacks incorporated into their Christian understanding those elements of African cultural and religious heritage which existentially met their needs.

Here Bolt is studying phenomena covering the middle of the seventeenth century. In all earnest, I am not sure if his arguments are still valid if applied to the twenty first century, where there are negligible foreign missionaries and the Zimbabwean Church is run by the indigenous clergy, who are leading a Shona people who primarily have a 'modernity to postmodernity' worldview, because of effects of globalization. The Church in Zimbabwe says no to syncretism so they are not legitimating any form of syncretism at the expense of their faith. In what way can syncretism be "a legitimate way of deepening their understanding of" (Bolt 2013:248) the Shona religion? The problem lies in the fact that the Shona expend their efforts in religious practices that help them to satisfy their existential needs. Yet, Christianity is not primarily a religion of meeting needs but a religion of relationships, where needs are met because of the resultant relationship.

Ezigbo (2010:56) says Kato formulated a neo-missionary theology which seeks a 'give and take' between the missionary Christology and home-grown African cultures. Kato was worried of an emergency of an African theology that accommodated universalism (that all people will in the end be saved notwithstanding that they believed in Christ or not) and syncretism, which threatened the belief that Christ was the solitary route to salvation. Kato (1975:177-178), commenting on syncretism persuasively argues that:

> The evangelical also rejects veneration of African traditional religions. This is not due to lack of patriotism. It is only to safeguard the unique gospel of Christ, which alone provides the way of salvation. African culture as such is not all bad. But like any other culture it is tainted with sin. It needs to be redeemed. The redemption is a surgical process which hurts. Practices incompatible with the Bible will have to give way. This is not a lack of respect for one's culture. The good part of African culture which meets the Biblical standard will be preserved and promoted… Cultural heritage compatible with Christianity can be baptized into Christian enrichment. The gospel content, of course, needs no addition or modification. It is because of this irreducible, immutable message, that Christianity has produced the third race comprising men and women from all races.

According to Kato it is the unadulterated Gospel of Christ that offers the only route to salvation socially, psychologically, physically, spiritually and emotionally. The Shona culture needs to be redeemed from the effects of sin. Any observances that contradict the word of God must be set aside, with all due respect to the Shona culture, as the essence of the Gospel needs to be preserved. It is the unadulterated Gospel that is capable of producing "the third race comprising men and women from all races" (Kato 1975:178). If people do not consider their cultural heritages *skubala* (rubbish) (Philippians 3:8), they will fall short of being part of the 'third race', and their theologizing will bear no fruit. Kato (1975:155) further asserts that: "… Christ is the fulfilment of the Old Testament and of the deep spiritual need of the human hearts, *but He is not the fulfilment of African traditional religions or any other non-Christian religion*". Christ's purpose is not to be inserted into the Shona traditional religion to sanction or fulfil their cultural desires but he is the standard to which the Shona religious and cultural practices must conform.

7.1.4   Jesus compared to ancestors

307

Beyers *et al* (2009) say that the functions of ancestors, such as mediation between god and man, protection, advisory, guidance, intercessory, match the roles Jesus fulfils. Just as Jesus left our present world for a spiritual world, yet exerts power over the living, so are the departed ancestors still part of the living community they left behind, to wield power, guide and care for the living. They go on to assert that:

> The ancestors are expected to teach within the community about the correct way of living, the do's and don'ts that people have to know about concerning life. Similarly, Jesus taught the people of his time. He is still doing so even today but as an Ancestor, because He has departed from this world and He is teaching the Word of God, and the Word includes the good moral way of living. (Beyers *et al* 2009).[77]

However, they are quick to concede that equating Jesus with ancestors will leave a lot of unanswered questions. Firstly they ask why Jesus would take pre-eminence over other ancestors if they are the same. Ancestorship as understood by Africans, including the Shona, follows tribal lines. To which tribe does Jesus belong? This means some tribes would be left out. The African understanding of an ancestor contradicts the import of Jesus' salvific work and life as revealed in the Scriptures. African theologians claim that Africans do not worship ancestors but they venerate them. This is not compatible with Jesus who must be worshiped. Likening Jesus to an ancestor annuls his divinity because he cannot be God and ancestor at the same time. Beyers *et al* (2009)[78] ask if:

> …there is any place for maintaining a relationship with deceased family members when one converts to Christianity. There are many answers to this question, which range from an inclusiveness of ancestors similar to the veneration of saints in Catholic tradition… to a total denial of any value of maintaining the practice of ancestor veneration, as ancestors cannot come between us and Christ... No authority can take precedence above Christ.

They conclude that portraying Jesus as an ancestor is not tenable because Jesus cannot be equated to our deceased family members. Such portrayal is problematic as it raises more questions than answers. Nürnberger (2007:96) puts forward a number of arguments to refute the notion that Jesus is an ancestor. For instance, he says that the ancestral spirits are spirits of clans who care for clan members whereas the Spirit of Jesus is a Spirit that "liberates, motivates" and "transforms" the entire body of believers.

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[77] Beyers, Jaco and Mphahlele, Dora N. 2009. "Jesus Christ as Ancestor: an African Christian Understanding". In *Herv.teol.stud. vol.65 no.1.* http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0259-94222009000100007
[78] Ibid

Citing Ezeh, Ezigbo (2010:71) submits that:

> On the basis of the assumptions that the 'ancestral cult is the heart of the African tradition and culture' and that the 'ancestors stand as the middle point between the visible and the invisible worlds'… presenting Jesus Christ as an ancestor opens up 'a mutually enriching encounter for a dialogue between Christianity and the African Culture'.

Many African theologians today find the ancestor Christology an acceptable model in their African Christological discussions because the ancestor cult provides one of the best common grounds for dialogue between Christianity and traditional religions of Africa. But this is a common ground which the Church in Zimbabwe has shunned. The dialogue fails on the realization that ancestors are dead and gone, while Jesus died but rose from the dead and today, he lives, says the indigenous Church leadership in Zimbabwe. So, the presumed common ground does not promote the desired dialogue between the Church and the Shona tradition.

7.1.5 Effects of modernity

This section is heavily indebted to Klaus Nurnberger's work *The Living Dead and the Living God*. Nurnberger (2007:9) contends that traditionalism and Christianity both interact with two contemporary worldviews namely "modernity and postmodernity". By traditionalism he refers to a primal religion, which does not make a distinction "between religion, worldview and culture" (Nurnberger 2007:9); a religion that takes a slant towards the past, as opposed to modernity and postmodernity which have a future orientation. Modernity emphasizes on "human mastery" and rejects all authority (Nurnberger 2007:10). "Postmodernity is modernity taken to extremes" (Nurnberger 2007:11), where no restrictions or standards are observed whatsoever, as a person takes charge of his or her life, body and world; defying all traditional limitations, taboos and prohibitions, in search of enjoyment on the market place. Both modernity and postmodernity are driven by personal emancipation, liberty to make choices, pursuit for immediate pleasure, authority and control. Any spirituality may be acceptable, while everything that ceases to be fun is discarded (Nurnberger 2007:12).

In traditionalism the reality of ancestors does not arise because of their vitality, but because of their authority, since they are attributed more power than they had when they were living (Nurnberger 2007:14). While traditionalism upholds such powers, modernity seeks to break them into pieces. The question is not on the existence of ancestors but whether one gives self wholly to the ancestors (traditionalism) or not (modernity). Their effect depends on whether they are recognized and remembered by their progeny. Ashforth (2005:125) affirms that if one does not believe in the spirits, one is not led or bothered by them either.

Nurnberger (2007:234) thinks that any worship and veneration of ancestors reflects a traditionalist way of thinking while "modernity has come to dominate the world and threatens traditionalism". Postmodernity and modernity defy convictions of the traditional religion and the way the convictions are expressed. Taking Jesus as ancestor, to be an answer to the problems posed by postmodernity, is not an ample answer because it, all the same, takes for granted a traditionalist attitude which is out-dated.

The sudden rise in modernity and postmodernity may be attributable to advances in technology which has turned the world into a global village. Added to this, is the migration of many Zimbabweans who have settled outside their country in large numbers. Millions have settled in South Africa, Australia, United Kingdom, United States of America, to name but a few. This has resulted in a fusion of societies. In Zimbabwe, urbanization has taken its toll. There has been a massive movement of people from rural to urban areas. Cultural rituals and practices which are mainly family cantered are slowly diminishing because families are staying wide apart and family elders who are supposed to lead the rituals will be away in the cities. A few who have decided to perform the rituals in urban areas have limitation of space and most urban environments are not conducive, even in cases where there will be ample space. All these aforementioned issues are fertile ground for modernity. Coupled to this are the oppressive elements found in traditionalism, which the modern person feels are no longer tenable today. Doyle (2012:12) affirms the quandary faced by traditionalism:

> Globalization and the proliferation of social media raise the question as to how long or even whether there still exists distinct traditional cultures into which the Gospel can be incarnated. Cultural diversity still exists, but rather than traditional local cultures there are more and more varieties of glocalized or

hybrid communities. Some of these communities transcend geographical space. Virtually all contemporary communities are deeply influenced by a dominant world culture, even if only to be partially defined by being in opposition to it.

Whether the African theologian likes it or not, the real old time Shona culture and cultural rituals have been diluted by modernity, effectively diminishing the efficacy of the Shona cultural practices. As noted by Nurnberger, modernity and postmodernity worldviews are looking for emancipation and pleasure, and those with such a world view will accept and access any spirituality provided it meets their existential needs. This is not a positive notion for the Shona traditional religion; neither is it positive for the Christian Church. Modernity and postmodernity worldviews have immensely contributed to the influx of prophetic and deliverance ministries in Zimbabwe. These have limited controls and restrictions, provided one is prepared to support the ministry. Their main emphasis is not on holiness or relationship with God, but on giving, deliverance, exorcism and prophecy. Modernists have the chance to make choices and to control their lives with no one being authoritative on their lives, while promises for divine health, divine prosperity and freedom from evil forces bring sensational pleasure. Because of this, some of these prophetic/deliverance ministries have grown enormously big overnight. They have been able to offer services that the ancestors are offering, and even more. However, as we shall see below, some of these ministries have been heavily infiltrated by Satanism. For now, it will suffice to emphasize that modernity has effectively diluted the efficacy of the Shona traditional religion

7.1.6   Relationship between culture and religion

One of the major challenges I have noticed among the Shona is the failure to differentiate between religion and culture. Onuzulike (2008:164) thinks that separation of African culture from African traditional religion is not an easy task "… because religion is embedded in African culture", and "… religion permeates the ideal African from cradle to grave…" (Onuzulike 2008:168). A Shona person should be able to observe the Shona culture without observing the Shona religious practices. Saroglou and Cohen (2011:1309) note ways in which religion is related to culture: it "may be part of culture, constitute culture, include and transcend culture, be influenced by culture, shape culture, or interact with culture in influencing cognitions, emotions,

and actions". Cultural purposes of a particular religion can be satisfied by secular philosophies, making culture not necessarily based on religion. The question is wherein lies the dividing line between culture and religion? Beyers (2017),[79] focusing on the African scene argues that:

> Belonging to a particular religion implies belonging to a particular culture. From this position follows a crude generalisation that to belong to a particular culture implies belonging to a particular religion. It is clear that religion and culture cannot be separated… culture and religion must be viewed as relatives… The reciprocal interaction between culture and religion must be recognised: religion is determined by culture, but religion also influences culture. The fate of religion and culture is, thus, interwoven.

This may not be true of religions like Christianity and Islam. When all cultural elements are removed, there may be no religion left in some religions, but if we remove all cultural elements from Christianity, it will remain. We can conclude that elements of religion are weightier than those of culture, in their constant interaction. It will be difficult to understand a given religion apart from the cultural context in which it is practiced, although it is possible.

Kilp (2011:208) maintains that:

> … religion does not have to be involved in the construction of cultural identity at all. In contemporary pluralized societies, there are forms of religion… which do not have a significant positive or negative *defining* function regarding the political or minority culture.

So, religion is neither necessary nor sufficient in the shaping of a culture. There is a very close association between culture and religion, yet they are different. Hypotheses that seek to model a relationship between the two fail when one realizes that there are some cultures that have nothing to do with religion. Culture in a particular environment may, partially influence religion, especially where a religion has taken on meanings found in a particular culture. Kilp (2011:209) also argues that: "… there are no *universal* cultural functions of religion… religions are meaningful without cultural functions and cultures without religions". Religion is therefore not the same as culture and culture may not necessarily contain religion. The two are separate, but the human practices may to some extent overlap. And Sasaki (2011:413) observes that:

> For people at an American evangelical outreach and in a Korean mega-church, the roles of religion may indeed differ. However, people from both cultures may use religion in a way that ultimately affirms their culturally construed sense of self.

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[79] Beyers Jaco. 2017. "Religion and culture: Revisiting a close relative". In *Herv. teol. stud. vol.73 n.1*. From http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i1.3864 accessed 21/09/18

In religion, people conduct themselves in line with what they perceive as transcendent reality, while culture connotes "all psychological characteristics that distinguish natural (nonexperimental) groups" (Saroglou and Cohen 2011:1311). Religion focuses on the interaction between people and deities, while in culture, psychological developments are created in varied manners, in varying areas. Such spheres provide environments where religion may be put into practice. Culture is a body of value systems adopted by a people, arising from a protracted period of interaction in a given society, while religion is a belief system that focuses on a supreme deity. People within the same culture may not have the same religious beliefs. Culture is dynamic and evolves over time, while the rudiments of religion do not change. Yet religion may be employed to affirm a "culturally construed sense of self" (Sasaki et al 2011:413). However, Sasaki and Kim (2011:401) submit that:

> Just as religion has played a role in the development of cultures through traditions and ideologies… culture may act as a frame through which religion is made meaningful… it can be conceptualized as a specific form of culture… or a way to categorize distinct cultural practices… Yet religious beliefs and practices transpire within the context of national culture, and even the same religious teaching can manifest itself in different ways across these cultural contexts.

Lourens Minnema (2014:3) determines three phases of development necessary for one to comprehend culture. Firstly, he asserts the culture and cultural models, as portrayed by tradition and usual behaviour, are pre-given, especially in traditional cultures of small and simple communities; with people being mere carriers of the culture. Secondly, culture can be a major cause of conflict and innovation. Alternative cultures take centre stage as prevailing patterns lose the people's loyalty. Such people produce both culture and sub-cultures. Thirdly, culture is loaded with potential and the freedom to choose, because cultural models can be marketed, transferred, and their power can be negotiated. Those who belong to this category are primarily the consumers of culture, even though they can also produce culture. Advocates of this category of culture are multi-cultural societies or postmodern cultures subject to globalization. We can see here that Minnema is emphasizing that culture is constantly being produced and consumed. If religion is part of culture as an entity that has potential and freedom of choice, then it is a product that can be consumed for convenience. This is shrouded by the modernity/postmodernity worldview. However, if it is viewed as pre-given, say, then its integration is mandatory. This is

equivalent to the Shona traditionalist worldview, where a phenomenon has to be taken as it is. This means understanding the stage of cultural development of the Shona people is essential in inter cultural studies.

The Shona people have to delineate what they call culture and separate it from their traditional religion. Once this relationship between religion and culture has been well defined, identifying cultural elements to be adapted by the Christian faith will be easier. If the two are not distinguished, adaptations may easily be syncretistic, and this creates problems for the Church in Zimbabwe, in its endeavours to adapt the Shona cultural elements into the Christian Gospel.

7.1.7 Biblicism

De Gruchy and Chirongoma (2010:299) maintain that the course of inculturation is 'underlied' by "moulding the Bible and symbols [*culture*] of Christianity into a profoundly African expression of the church." In the moulding of the Bible into African expressions, the Bible must take pre-eminence and African theologians need to take cognizance of this fact. They will need to examine how "adequately or (inadequately) they have understood and interacted with their immediate contexts and the Christ-Event" as depicted in the Bible (Ezigbo 2010:55). Ezigbo (2010:54) argues that Christologies of a majority of African theologians have remained largely inadequate because they have "failed to engage appropriately with the dialectics that ought to characterize ontological Christology and functional Christology". Kato (1985:30) submits that:

> Some (African) church leaders today frown (at) the missionaries for declaring the unique headship of Christ as presented in Scriptures… African Christians who have found it necessary to burn every idol have followed precedents set in the scriptures (Acts 19). Christianity stands to judge every culture, destroying elements that are incompatible modes of expression for its advance, and bringing new life to its adherents…

Elsewhere, Kato, as cited by Ezigbo (2010:57), positioned the Bible at the centre of the Christian theology, which he took to be the "unique word of God, the ultimate source and authority" for expressing ourselves theologically to avoid a man-made gospel. In response Bediako (1992:386) says Kato is a Biblicist whose theology is entrenched in the custom of Western Christianity and represents a "reaction and rebuttal" of the development of African theology. Hesselgrave *et al*

314

(1989:96-112), on the other hand, think Kato offers an authentic biblical theology. The very interesting stance taken by Bediako seems to be bedrock of many African theological discourses. From inception Christian faith has always been founded on Scriptures. In Zimbabwe all Church leadership interviewed affirmed the primacy of the Bible, with only a few denominations also appealing to tradition. If the Bible is removed from Christianity, we would have removed the religion. There is no Christianity without the Bible. An African Christianity, that is being proposed by some African theologians; one that is not based on the Bible, would "isolate it from historical Christianity" (Kato 1975:182) and tantamount to a completely different pagan religion. To Kato, the Bible is "the word of God" and "the ultimate source of Christian theology that must judge every culture" (Ezigbo 2010:62). Kato (1975:16) insists that:

> It is not neo colonialism to plead the uniqueness and finality of Jesus Christ. It is not arrogance to herald the fact that all who are not "in Christ" are lost. It is merely articulating what *Scriptures* say. (Emphasis mine)

Nurnberger notes that African theologians - like Bediako (1997:256ff), are seeking for a new present-day African identity which also incorporates the African tradition in an innovative package. However, they need to be "aware of the inevitable pitfalls of contextualization and enculturation", which results in the Gospel being adulterated (Nurnberger 2007:7). This notion of 'biblicism' is, to my mind, cheap theologizing and is foreign to Christian faith, and the Church in Zimbabwe cannot set aside the teachings of the Bible in the name of adapting the Shona views into the Gospel.

7.1.8   An absent God

Chitakure (2017) maintains that there should not be a single religion that can claim domination and supremacy of God's revelation, because the great God cannot be incarcerated and held in one religious tradition while excluding other traditions. He argues that when missionaries came to Africa, they did not bring God because the providential God was already there. I am not sure what Chitakure wants to tell us in these statements. Each religious tradition professes its own unique God. A Hindu god may not be the same as the Christian God, but each religious tradition has to uphold its belief systems. If belief systems of religious traditions are incompatible then they must keep their separate ways. The term 'god' is a general term which has been applied to

many mystical entities and deities. It may not necessarily refer to the true living God of the Christian Bible.

Chitakure (2017:6) makes an interesting assertion:

> I believe most African Christians have a dual religious affiliation. Whenever I introduce myself as a member of two religious traditions - namely, African Traditional Religion and Christianity - most people are confused. Then, I explain to them that as an African, I already belong to a culture that is inseparable from its religious traditions. The way I was born and bred, my name, and the food I eat, the way I greet people and interact with them, the songs I listen to, and the house in which I live, and my philosophy are influenced by my African worldview. No one can run away from his identity, even if he tries. I sometimes partake in traditional rituals whether I like it or not. But I am a Christian and a Catholic, to be precise. Catholicism is a worldview that I inherited. I have two names, one English and the other Shona. I pray to God through Jesus. But if Jesus delays in answering my prayers, I do not hesitate to turn to my ancestors. When God is pleased to answer my prayers, I give credit to both ancestors and Jesus Christ.

This is typical of the African religious life, including the lives of the traditional Shona people of Zimbabwe. They live double half-hearted religious lives where, in effect, either one or both will be dysfunctional. Which deity would like to be worshiped on a 'trial and error' basis? The Christian God of the Bible will not share his glory with another. Chitakure has found a home in Catholicism. This is because Catholicism has been "supportive of ancestor veneration", a "strange inconsistency" which "certainly helped the Catholic Church to remain popular" (Nurnberger 2007:68). Onuzulike (2008:168) also attests to this double life phenomenon:

> Due to the fact that religion is embedded in African culture, it is difficult for Africans to be fully devoted to Christianity without partaking in some African Traditional Religion activities. Devoted African Christians oppose the integration of the two faiths because they believed that African Traditional Religion is a Satan driven faith.

A rather ambiguous statement! Christian devotion to God excludes other gods; otherwise it is not devotion at all. Those who are fully devoted to the Christian Gospel will not turn to other religions for help, for whatever reason. Concerning this double life phenomenon Nurnberger (2007:40) poses a question which needs a careful response:

> If Christ is indeed the 'Son of God', God's representative and plenipotentiary on earth, and if indeed he is the 'Saviour' and 'Redeemer' of humankind, who shares God's power and love, who has even given his life for us, as Christians believe, what could be the reason for Africans to turn to other helpers instead?... the Christ

316

they came to know through the message of missionaries, subsequent indigenous leaders, even their own reading of the Bible, does not seem to cover their most pressing spiritual needs. Where Christ is irrelevant, a serious vacuum can be expected to open up in the consciousness of Christians which is quite naturally filled with the authority, power and presence of the ancestors, who have always been around.

The relevance of Christ is being put to question here. Who is closer to the Shona Christian; the 'risen Christ' or 'the living dead'? Has Christ become irrelevant? If Christ is a genuine redeemer where is the need for an ancestor coming from when confronted by life challenges? Has the Church in Zimbabwe failed to "address the spiritual needs of traditionalist" Shona (Nurnberger 2007:19)? These questions cannot be answered by looking at one party only. Both the Zimbabwean Church and the Shona Christian have a part to play for the Shona Christian to attain his or her liberating freedom from life distresses. Have the Shona people chosen Christ as their absolute authority; an authority that is faithful and able to deal with the fundamental spiritual needs in every sphere of their lives that includes: providence, protection, health, reconciliation, forgiveness, governance, prosperity, etc. If Christ has not been made the absolute authority, then it will appear as if he is absent and he will not make a difference among the Shona. And that is not God's problem but theirs.

As an insider, a practicing minister of religion, I have noticed that many purported Christians pay lip service in their faith, whilst they have double minds. At the end they realize that nothing works and they assign blame to the ineffectiveness of Christian faith. James 1:7-8 warns his audience that a double minded person must not expect to "receive anything from the Lord" because he is "unstable in all what he does". Christian faith is primarily personal before it becomes a corporate venture. The Shona Christian will need to give self fully to Christ for one to experience divine intervention. One will also need to realize that Christian faith is not primarily this worldly, so full satisfaction may not be achievable in this present life. After all, even those professing their more proximate ancestors do not exhibit a blissful life. The presence of these professed proximate ancestors still has to be empirically proven, as the traditional Shona is equally suffering, if not more, at the hands of life distresses. Unlike the Christian faith which is anchored on the hope of eternal life in future, the goal of the Shona life is full satisfaction in the

present, which is anchored in the past. Such a goal is not achievable on this side of life; otherwise there would be no need for 'heaven'.

Nurnberger (2007:47) contends that relevance to Africans is "experienced as social authority and redemptive power. If Christ is not relevant in these two respects, one has to find one's way through life without him". The presence of Jesus in a community will orient the social authority of the community and indeed, if Jesus is taken seriously, his redemptive power will be manifest in their midst. There are arguments that a Jesus who is seated on the right hand of the Father is not reachable by ordinary people. God has no ordinary or extraordinary people. Everyone is accepted, provided one trusts in him fully. If the Gospel is allowed to be fully operational, God will dwell in our midst and his power will not be an outside force, but within, since it will be possible to fellowship with him. There is therefore need to seek Jesus' power and ability on this side of life, if the role of ancestors is to diminish. Christians must be conscious of the proximity of Jesus to them, just as he has promised: "I am with you always to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). The activities of the Church must focus on bringing Christ closer to the people. Otherwise as Nurnberger (2007:56) observes, "a Christ who is not present is not relevant; a Christ who is not relevant is not present… the gap left by an absent and irrelevant Christ is filled by the ancestors…"

The Bible, which is the main source of Christian faith, has this basic assumption that: "God is the ultimate Source and Destiny of reality" and that humanity is "meant to live in a close personal relationship with this God", and so:

> … the integrity of the relationship between God and humans is considered to be the fundamental prerequisite for the well being of the individual, community and the whole world…A disturbance of this relationship is the root of all human predicaments and only its restoration can restore comprehensive wellbeing… Human wellbeing is in jeopardy when humans fall out of the ultimate relationship with God… This is why the biblical faith does not tolerate acknowledgement of spiritual authorities other than God himself…They have no right to control human beings unless they are direct instruments of God's creative and redemptive purposes. (Nurnberger 2007:63).

Christianity is a religion of relationships, not acquisitions. A believer's relationship with God, and his Son Jesus Christ, is much more valuable in Christian faith, than divine health, divine

healing, divine protection, divine prosperity etc., and genuine Christians will not do anything that will destroy this relationship. This is in direct contrast to the Shona traditionalist thinking whose ultimate goal is 'this worldly'. Yet to one who faithfully maintains this relationship, according to God's precepts, the benefits of divine health, divine protection, divine prosperity etc. are guaranteed.

Superiors and elders of the Shona people, who include the dead and the living, must be respected. They wield communal authority and they are thought to be 'sources' of livelihood of their respective communities. Jesus is thought by Christians to wield more authority over humankind. Jesus' authority is a shared authority, which comes from God the Father, and he lavishly distributes it to believers. One is free to responsibly partake of this authority, unlike the authority of ancestors which requires compliance and deference. Yet it is submission and deference that a person with a modernity or postmodernity worldview will resist.

The Zimbabwean Church must also answer these questions. The Church seems to have taken the Bible and placed it in the hands of the Shona people to scout their way out. Duncan (2014:8) attests to this concerning the Yokuba and Akan:

> … people were driven to dispose of sacred artefacts, charms, amulets, sacrifices and rituals which protected them and were left solely with the Bible without sufficient guidance… on how to use and interpret it. Thus, indigenous peoples came to appropriate the Bible in their own way to ensure their well-being…

This is not going to work. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2:4 "My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power". The Church needs to move from hypothetical confessions and lead people into the liberating scheme of the Gospel. If the Gospel of Christ liberates, then let the Zimbabwean Church lead the way in showing how this may be experienced, rather than giving its members the Bible and expecting them to interpret it for themselves. The Church will therefore need to change its orientation in the way it presents the Gospel of Christ so that it may be existentially relevant to the lives of the Shona people.

The African worldview does not differentiate between the spiritual and the natural spheres, and nature is thought to be infused with powerful dynamistic forces which have the potential to cause

319

misfortunes like sickness, infertility, danger etc., which requires the assistance of traditional healers, if no other help can be found. A theology of the cross that emphasizes Christ dying for our sins, thereby focusing on the last judgment and the otherworldly is not relevant to the Shona people in their daily life predicaments. Paul and Martin Luther emphasize a God who is with us in our troubles, and so salvation must begin now. Nurnberger (2007:46) spells it well:

> If Christ is not in charge of the dynamistic forces that make up one's life-world, he cannot protect, he cannot heal, he cannot give direction, he cannot establish justice and peace. It is precisely his self giving, suffering love that could bring relief. It accepts the unacceptable, bears the implied burden, liberates from anger, jealousy and fear, transforms relationships and empowers communities.

If people do not find solutions to their life challenges in Church, they will look for the solutions from elsewhere. There is no need for the Church to bar syncretistic lives when it has not been helpful. Yet as an insider I can affirm that it is possible to lead people into freedom, but the Devil is not just going to let go without putting up a big fight. It is in the fight that the Church is found wanting. According to Paul, Christian life should be about fighting. In 1 Timothy 6:12 he says "fight the good fight of the faith" and in 2 Timothy 4:7 he says "I have fought the good fight". However, the Church of today it seems, does not want to fight and this may be its problem.

Commenting on syncretism, Nurnberger echoes the same sentiments. He observes that syncretism results in:

> … faith in more than one divine partner, for instance Yahweh and Baal. Absorption and incarnation, in contrast, meant that Yahweh integrated the functions of Baal as a god of fertility, while Baal himself was vehemently rejected as a possible God of Israel. (Nurnberger 2007:98)

This is what the Church in Zimbabwe must do. They must integrate the functions of ancestors among the Shona, by providing the solutions that the ancestors are thought to provide, while discarding the ancestors, so that the Shona lead peaceable lives. Now if the Church is only paying lip service to the challenges confronting the Shona, without providing them with tangible existential solutions, it would have failed in its mandate. These solutions are not farfetched or impossible. The Zimbabwean Church can help the Shona if they change the way they do their things and the way they tackle the Devil's machinations. This requires the Church to enforce God's spoken word, rather than empty faith confessions which do not move the Devil an inch. If Jesus is more powerful than demons let this be demonstrated rather than offering helpless

rhetoric. If the Church wants to reject what the ancestors are doing to the Shona people, then they must offer something better or equivalent to what the ancestors are offering. Herein lies a vacuum that the Church is creating that it needs to fill. What is pestering the Shona in his or her life endeavours will not be moved by the Church's ritual observances like Eucharist. It calls for an "effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man" (James 5:16), like the one offered by Elijah who prayed to stop rain for three years. Such righteousness is by faith, not by merit. So, the Church in Zimbabwe needs to learn to believe and practice what she is teaching.

There have been proposals to purify the syncretistic and superstitious elements of the Shona culture in order to make them adaptable to Christian faith. Nurnberger warns that "… the gospel can also be imprisoned in such a… culture and lose its liberative and transformative power. That is why we must be aware of the fundamentals of the Christian conviction" (Nurnberger 2007:157). How does one cleanse a spirit of a dead ancestor manifesting through an intermediary like a medium (*svikiro*) or a divine healer (*n'anga*), in order to adapt it to Christian faith? How can the Church cleanse the *kurova guva* ritual when the same Church says there should be no communication between the living and the dead? All these unanswered questions serve to tell us that the Shona traditional religion and the Christian tradition are separate religions which must run their own courses, and followers must choose between them. Choosing both will result in double lives and there may not be fulfilment on either side of life.

7.1.9   The Church must offer solutions

I continue with the motif of the Zimbabwean Church as the provider of solutions. Nurnberger (2007:8) submits that:

> … the gospel of Christ leads to spiritual and social emancipation and empowerment… People are suffering. If we are not able to formulate God's Word in response to people's needs, whether they are black or white, we are not only leaving them in a lurch, but also fail in our most fundamental task as theologians and pastors.

African Initiated Churches (AIC's) have been helpful in this instance. In Zimbabwe they have, to some degree, been able to offer solutions to the Shona existential problems. The challenge with AIC's, as noted earlier in chapters 4 and 6, is that most of them have largely been syncretistic.

Some AIC's are not Bible based, making their faith questionable. Christian faith is based on Scriptures and genuine Christians will not accept sub-standard and syncretistic solutions to their life challenges.

Pentecostals have also been able to come to the aid of the Shona people in their quest to fulfil their pressing spiritual needs. Duncan (2014:10) locates the solution in Pentecostalism where:

> … the role of the Holy Spirit in context of suffering and persecution is efficacious as it takes indigenous world views of mystical causality and evil seriously, expecting the defeat of evil and restoration of harmony individually and collectively.

He describes Pentecostalism as: "… a globalised form of faith expression, a transnational, worldwide form of Christianity. It offers a rich textured example of innovation (distinguished by prayer, prophecy and healing)" (Duncan 2014:7). He thinks Pentecostal Christianity pays attention to both the natural and the supernatural realms, and allows its members "to be assertive in societies where they have been excluded" (Duncan 2014:7). Because Pentecostalism recognizes the reality of the spiritual domain, where the supernatural is seen as commonplace, adapting it to African experiences is easier. The ease can also be attributed to the fact that their theology is still in the process of development. "Even historic churches are adapting their traditions to accommodate the charismatic renewal and had been for some time during the 20th century as the result of the threat of losing members and money" (Duncan 2014:7).

In Harare, Zimbabwe, I met a group of the Roman Catholic Church members who call themselves 'charismatics'. Besides attending their regular normal Church services, they also hold private prayer meetings, where they preach to each other, hold all night vigils, pray in tongues, heal the sick, cast out demons, etc. Duncan (2014:7) asserts that: "Pentecostalism is also a 'protest movement against [*western*] "man-made creeds". It is also a challenge to the "coldness" of traditional worship'…" Duncan (2014:7) thinks that in Pentecostalism people get:

> … solutions to all their problems and needs through prayer. Pentecostalism offers a radical new life - a place to be at home. Central to its innovative style is its ability to stand both inside and beyond traditional culture.

I am not sure what Duncan means when he says Pentecostalism is able 'to stand both inside and beyond traditional culture'. Duncan ranks effectiveness of African Christian spirituality ahead of

African traditional religion, although he sees a slump because of the harsh political and economic environments in Africa. He contends that:

> The values and beliefs of traditional religion are appropriated by Pentecostal faith and challenge the rationally-based faith of the historic churches. In particular, they provide means of challenging the evil powers which confront people regularly… Innovative Pentecostal faith in Africa acknowledges palpable forms of evil, (cf. Eph 6:11–12), which are no longer taken so seriously in the West as the result of the western *psyche* having 'become domesticated by modernity'… (Duncan 2014:7-8).

Pentecostalism is so adaptable to be able to incorporate itself into African "forms and expressions" because it depends on the action of the Holy Spirit in ministering "healing and deliverance" from evil forces; thereby meeting people's aspirations, "through the irruption of the sacred into the secular" (Duncan 2014:8). This is a positive for the Shona people, but as we shall see later, Pentecostalism is also marred by some problems, including infiltration by the 'dark world'.

7.1.10 Ancestral authoritarianism is backward looking

Generally, as scholars like Mbiti (1969:15ff, 24) argue, traditional religion does not look into the future, but into the past and the present, and it is anchored on authority instead of being time bound. The "authority structure… translates into orientation into the past" (Nurnbeger 2007:39). When the deceased is inducted into the ancestral realm, he or she is, in fact, being ushered into the past and this past has potential to affect the present. When Jesus rose from the dead, he was ushered into God's future and this future also wields power over the present. The two are diametrically opposed, although they seem to offer the same solutions, and the Church in Zimbabwe seems to have difficulties in reconciling them. Hence Nurnberger's (2007:96) conclusion that: "… it is difficult to find a place for ancestor veneration in the biblical scheme of things". Decision making in traditionalism is based on what has always been done, derived from the collective traditions that have been passed down from forebears to their offspring, not the future repercussions of the decisions. Communicating with the dead perpetuates and empowers the past while obstructing people's paths into the future. Granted that the departed lived worthwhile exemplary lives, which were full of wisdom, from which people can learn,

dominating people's lives is something detestable to the Church in Zimbabwe. This is unlike the risen Christ who ushers:

> "… us into the future, opening up new vistas, challenges and opportunities. Faith in Christ explores possibilities and reaches out to what God may have in store for us. *Ancestral authority maintains or restores the situation it has inherited from the past generations*. (Nurnberger 2007:156).

This is why modernists and postmodernists are running away from traditionalism because it is not liberating. Yet even those who subject themselves to the authority of ancestors are unconditionally allowed into the fellowship of God through the faith they exercised during their lifetime. In order to be a saint, one must have been a believer. Those who consciously choose not to partake of God's redemptive project, by not believing in him, effectively define themselves out of God's fellowship.

Nurnberger (2007:52) contends that:

> Ancestor veneration looks upward towards authority, but it is authority of the lineage. So upward orientation in practical effect means past orientation. To a large extent, Christianity has also anchored its faith in the past. Mainline churches, by and large, have been traditionalist… they were geared to the Christ of the past, who soon became the Christ situated in the peak of institutional hierarchy.

Authoritarian structures have been passed down in Churches without being critically evaluated, while fresh ideas have been opposed; clinging to inherited eternal truths, resulting on the Gospel failing to achieve its intended goal. Because of its traditionalist orientation, the Church in Zimbabwe has failed to meet the spiritual needs of the modernist and postmodernist, let alone the traditionalist, because they are offering standard solutions, based on the past, instead of contextualizing the Gospel. Jesus never employed standard solutions; to Bartimaeus he spoke sight (Mark 10:52), while to the man born blind, he applied mud and saliva and asked the blind person to go and "wash in the pool of Siloam" (John 9:6-7). Yet the result was the same; both the blind went home having received their sight. The Zimbabwean Church should not be backward looking, like the Shona ancestral religion, but must be forward looking in order for it to be able to offer existential solutions to life challenges of the Shona people.

7.1.11 Veneration of ancestors and consulting the dead

In Deuteronomy 6:4ff (*Sh'ma*) Israel is exhorted to have special commitment to God alone, to obey God's law and to accept no other authorities. To be a spirit medium or to consult the dead were practices that were detestable to God (Deuteronomy 18:9), as they would result in divided loyalty to God. Anything that is compatible with the "God's redemptive intentions" (Nurnberger 2007:84), as found in the Gospel may be adapted in Christian faith. One then has to choose, between alternatives. To all Church respondents that I met in the field, ancestor veneration/worship is not a good element of Shona spirituality which can be integrated into Christianity. Of course, there are good Shona cultural elements like family solidarity, *ubuntu*, respect of elders, etc. which are compatible with "God's redemptive intentions" (ibid).

Christian faith and modernity do not accept ancestral domination. Abraham, Isaac, Moses, to name but a few, did not exercise their own authority over their offspring. Although parents were honoured in the Old Testament, they were not intermediaries of God and the deceased parents were never venerated. They did not communicate with the dead. The unique case where the prophet Samuel was conjured by Saul (1 Samuel 28) was a typical issue of defiance and dishonesty. Nurnberger asserts (2007:61) that in the New Testament, the religious importance attached to the progression between ancestors and descendants completely vanished, with people like Paul and Jesus having no children, no wives, hence disqualified from being ancestors according to the Shona standards. The only outstanding father that must be worshiped was God. Abraham's fatherhood was important in so far as he was the father of faith (Romans 4:16). Nurnberger (2007:62) concludes that:

> As far as the authority of the deceased is concerned, therefore, the messages of the Old Testament and the New Testament leave no room for doubt: nothing, absolutely nothing, should assume authority over God's people, or to be given space to stand between God and his people.

Just as Yahweh's covenant with Israel was exclusive (Deut. 5:6f)), the Lordship of Jesus is not open to sharing. In the Old Testament tradition, faith in God was exclusive, resulting in the elimination of ancestor veneration, divination and oracles. In Christian faith, authority is shared as saints partake in the creative authority of God. We are co-workers and co-creators with Christ (John 14:12-13; 1 Corinthians 3:9) when we believe. Authoritarian domination by ancestors is not seen by the Zimbabwean Church as something justifiable in our age, and the majority of the

indigenous Church leadership contend that veneration of dead ancestors is still detestable to God as it was during the time of the Israelites.

7.1.12 Bringing home ceremony versus resurrection

Christians believe in resurrection from the dead, whereby the deceased's body may be restored back to life after passing away. They also believe in resurrection at the end of time, which is believed to be God's creative miracle, where people will receive new immortal bodies. The Shona religion has no eschatology so to speak. Nurnberger (2007:96) confirms this:

> Resurrection is an eschatological concept. African traditions have no eschatology in the biblical sense of the word… This explains why ancestors suck us back into the past, while Christ lures us into the future of God. The power of ancestors lies in the power of memory. The power of Christ lies in the power of anticipation.

Beyers *et al* (2009) say that becoming an ancestor is a privilege of a few. They give two conditions: progression through every phase of life to reach adulthood, confirmed by having children; and dying a good natural death: not arising from accidents, complications during childbirth, suicide or unclean diseases. This disqualifies a lot of people from becoming ancestors. The Shona will call back their dead who qualify, to be part of the living family. But this is only done for those who were married, with children, lived worthy lives and died good natural deaths. The Shona do not give us a picture of what happens to children, those who die young, the unmarried, those who did not die natural death, the wicked, etc. In our day, these are dying in larger numbers as we have seen above. Because resurrection is an eschatological transformation of people and their life worlds, and not a restoration of the dead to structures of authority, it cannot be equated to the Shona bringing home (*kurova guva*) ceremony, which seeks to reintegrate the dead into the patriarchal hierarchy.

> Yet when ancestors 'appear', say in a dream, they appear in the bodily form that they possessed when alive. It is the concrete person that exercises authority beyond death, not some purely spiritual entity without shape and character. Human reality is bodily reality. To exercise authority the ancestors have to be remembered as the bodily concrete persons that they had when alive. (Nurnberger 2007:91).

For the Christian faith, resurrection involves transformed eschatological spiritual bodies that usher believers into a new blissful future life. These two fundamental phenomena cannot be reconciled, making adaption of the *kurova guva* rite into Christian faith impossible.

7.1.13 Traditional healers

Beyers *et al* (2009)[80] cite Mbiti who says "Even holy functionaries like witchdoctors operate through the mediation of ancestors… As mediators between God and humankind, ancestors do not possess the power to mediate salvation." Indeed, traditional healers are not inspired by the Spirit of God but they are hosts to the spirits of their ancestors and/or to alien spirits. The claim that the traditional healers are being used by the Spirit of God may be farfetched. All the traditional healers interviewed acknowledged either their ancestral spirits or water spirits as the sources of their power. They knew no other source; neither did they acknowledge any input from a Supreme Being. Turaki (2000)[81] classifies ancestral spirits as mystical and mysterious powers:

> The manifestation and the use of the impersonal powers are related to the practices of medicine men and women, diviners and seers who use natural objects, plants and animals for medicine, magic, charms and amulets.

The mystical powers that are hosted by traditional healers and witches can be used to do both good and evil. The traditional Shona is at the mercy of the kind or evil hosts of these impersonal powers. The traditional Shona is preoccupied in traditional practices that seek to ward off the evil powers, while attracting the good powers.

Defending the traditional healers Mwandayi (2011:276), an apologist of the Shona traditional religion, argues that:

> Though some have healing spirits as aides, they believe that the ultimate source of healing is God and that the first ancestor in that particular family to have a healing spirit received the gift from God, the source of everything that is good.

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[80] Beyers, Jaco and Mphahlele, Dora N. 2009. "Jesus Christ as Ancestor: an African Christian Understanding". In *Herv.teol.stud. vol.65 no.1.* From http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0259-94222009000100007 accessed 10/09/18

[81] Turaki, Yusufu. 2000. A*frica Traditional Religious System as Basis of Understanding Christian Spiritual Warfare.* From https://www.lausanne.org/content/west-african-case-study accessed 04/10/18

He thinks healing ancestral spirits only come in as aides to traditional healers. Basing on the responses of many Shona traditional practitioners, including the n'anga themselves, the ancestral spirits cannot be aides, but they are the 'playmakers' in the activities of traditional healers. Traditional healers are who they are, and they do what they do, not because of their wisdom and talents, but because of the possessing spirits they host. And respondents confirmed the fact that, in their operations, they don't make any reference to God or to some other Superior Being.

Faith is faith in an object. For the Christian, the object of faith is God and his Son Jesus. An object of faith is central in people's worship. Faith talks of its object more often than not. *N'anga* cannot claim they have faith in God when God is not the object of their faith. They do not talk about God in their operations. So Mwanadayi may need to re-define what he means by 'Christian'. All the traditional healers interviewed attributed their powers to the spirits they host, not to some Supreme Being. To establish a connection with a Supreme Being may be superficial cheap apologetics, which both the Church in Zimbabwe and the traditional healers themselves deny. And there is no genuine traditional healer that does not operate under the influence of some spirit. So, it is not some, but all, traditional healers are controlled by ancestral and/or alien spirits in their activities; not the Spirit of God.

Mwandayi may be misguided on the claim that all healing comes from God. Not all healings or miracles emanate from God. The Devil can inflict sickness and remove it. He can cause death and restore life. If I see a dead person raised from the dead, my first question is who raised the person from the dead, because both God and the Devil can. The Devil can perform miracles, and can heal. I have encountered witnesses from members of the dark world, who told me that a junior Satanist can inflict pain which a senior Satanist can easily remove and cause healing without involvement of God. However, a junior Satanist cannot remove sickness that was induced by his or her senior. The point is, not all healing is from God. Some healings are gimmicks of the Devil. Mwandayi (2011:275) further proposes that: "there is need for them (traditional healers) to seek the help of God since he is the ultimate source of all healing." We have already established that God is not the source of all healing. And, I am not sure which 'God' Mwandayi is referring to. As already mentioned, all *n'anga* (traditional healers) interviewed do not want to get close to genuine Christians and their God.

We have also established in chapter 4 the very strong correlation between *n'anga* and witches, Satanists and sorcerers. It is not accurate to claim that Shona witches do not become ancestors. To the Shona, *afa anaka* (the departed/dead is now good). Very few, if any at all, ever go to enquire whether their parents, who would have just passed on, were witches. I as a Shona still have to witness such an incident. Instead, the pressure will be on the surviving children to conduct a bringing home (*kurova guva*) ceremony to avert any possible punishment that might be meted on them for negligence. To many Shona that I have met, the bringing home ceremony is not a celebration that is enviable, but a fearsome mandatory duty one has to perform 'to the book' to avoid danger. If this is true, then there should be many ancestral spirits of witches that have been 'brought home'. There are some activities of traditional healers which tantamount to witchcraft and this is why traditional healers are both respected and dreaded among the Shona people. The point I am making here is that, although the traditional healer occupies a very critical position in the Shona tradition, her or his activities may be very dubious and sometimes satanic that it is practically impossible to incorporate them into Christian faith. So, if Mwandayi's (2011:276) call for the Church in Zimbabwe to incorporate traditional healers into its faith system is heeded, then the Christian Church in Zimbabwe will cease to be part of the universal Church of God.

Yet Mwandayi (2011:255) argues "Time has come, I think, when the Church should pull off the mask of prejudice and embrace the traditional healer as a colleague in the healing field". Mwandayi (2011:256) further observes that: "…neither the priest nor the traditional healer can claim to be the jack of all trades"; meaning they need to network and cooperate for the betterment of the community. The field responses I received are that, in Zimbabwe, neither the Church clergy nor the traditional healer wants to work together. This may be because they are aware that their sources of power are at variance. I have spoken to the leadership in Mainline Churches, Evangelical Churches, Pentecostal Churches and some African Initiated Churches and they all categorically rejected working with traditional healers. The Church in Zimbabwe is saying the traditional healer is not using his own power, neither is he or she using God's power, but is inspired by the spirits of the deceased, which they do not accept. I am not sure if Mwandayi appreciates the disparity between the two sources of power. If they are brought

together, one will be down; like what happened at Ashdod when the Ark of the Lord was captured by the Philistines and taken into Dagon's temple - Dagon fell face down (1 Samuel 5:1-3). The challenge is Mwandayi may be looking at the end not the means. In Christian faith the means is just as important as the end, if not more important. If the means are a profanity then the end is undesirable.

To answer Mwandayi's quest for co-operation between the Church clergy and the traditional healers, we refer to Nurnberger (2007:130) who contends that we should:

> … note the difference between proclamation of the gospel and divination practiced by traditional diviners. A diviner tries to 'smell out' the causes of a malady. These may include envy, grudges against family members, hostility of enemies, witchcraft and sorcery, or wrath of ancestors… It is not wrong to look for causes and try to neutralize them. Yet, searching for causes means looking back. The gospel turns our attention from the past to the future, from what *has become* to what *ought to become.*

The activities of a traditional healer and that of a Church clergy are not complementary. Instead they run parallel, and at most times they are contradictory. Hence the Church in Zimbabwe will not adapt the practices of traditional diviners into Christian faith, as the resultant product will not be Christianity but something pagan.

Yes, these Shona traditional practices are producing results for the inmates of the religion. If it is truly working why would there be any fuss? It is not easy to empirically verify whether the practices are working or not. However, given that they are working, Turaki (2000) asks why the practices should be seen as evil:

> When a belief in the potency of mystical and mysterious powers and forces are condemned as demonic, man in traditional Africa needs to know why such things are demonic. They seem to work and he sees and experiences their power, potency and efficacy. A mere reference to a Bible verse may not be enough to dissuade and convince him to do and believe otherwise.

This is partly answered by Kato (1975:38) who asserts that:

> The beliefs of African traditional religions only locate the problem; the practices point away from the solution; the Incarnate risen Christ alone is the answer. Christianity is a radical faith and it must transform sinners radically.

If a solution to any problem diverts people's attention from the incarnate risen Jesus, who is the object of the Christian faith, then it ceases to be godly, according to Zimbabwean Christian standards. Radical transformation is not easy, neither is it comfortable. It calls for concrete decisions, rather than having a double mind. The fact that a practice is meeting some existential needs does not make it Christian. The Church in Zimbabwe does not detest use of the mystical powers by traditionalists, but they detest application of the powers in the worship life of the Church. In that instance the traditionalists must either keep to their traditional religion or they should believe differently.

Mwandayi (2011:276) comes to the conclusion that:

> They (traditional healers) too love Jesus and are actually continuing the work of God among his people. If the Church is still complaining that traditional healers are evil it is because she is not helping ZINATHA to root out rogue elements…

I am not sure what made Mwandayi to come to such a conclusion, which I failed to empirically prove among the Shona. As I said earlier on, most traditional healers do not want to have anything to do with the Jesus of Christians. Many attest to the fact that his presence distorts lines of communication with the spirits they host. Of course, there may be some traditional healers who visit Churches, but going to Church does not confirm someone's faith in Jesus Christ and in God. We also have witches who are active members of some Church denominations. As we discovered earlier, some even hold positions of authority in the Churches; because of their disposition, social status and outspokenness.

The Church in Zimbabwe is not complaining that traditional healers are evil on their individual capacities, but they are against the spirits that they host; the spirits which are sources of their power, the power that can be wantonly used for good or for bad, at the discretion of the healer. This includes powers to heal, to protect, to bring fortunes etc. and also to kill, to cause misfortunes, cause mental illness, to bring lightning that destroys people's lives, etc. The point I am making here is that the traditional healer, though seen as a pillar in the Shona traditional life, falls far short of the demands of Christian life. He belongs to a different religion than Christianity and must be left to enjoy his or her religion without interfering with Christian faith.

331

Why should a *n'anga* belong to two religions? And those who would want services of a *n'anga* are free to seek such services and they must be respected for doing so, as this is their right.

But to move back and forth from the Shona traditional religion to Christian faith, is not worth their while, as they are likely to fail to experience the benefits of Christian faith. This is why to some Shona people the Christian Gospel has failed to rescue them from shackles of their existential needs. The Christian God does not work as a second alternative. He is a jealousy God who will not share his glory with another. No matter how much African scholars are going to theologize on these cultural issues, if this fact is ignored, "many of the suggestions" will "rot away in the libraries or college archives" and "nothing of their proposals" will be "tried out in practice." (Kanu 2012:242). In this instance it may be safe to conclude that the Church has not failed in its mandate of making the Christian Gospel understandable and acceptable to the Shona people.

7.2 Has the Church in Zimbabwe failed?

In this section I assess why the expectations of the Shona traditionalist and the African theologian may not have been met, even by the indigenous led Zimbabwean Church. Yes, the early missionaries made their mistakes, but there are some basic Christian faith principles which must be upheld, whether the Church is led by white missionaries or the indigenous black clergy. These principles will largely define the success or failure of the Church in Zimbabwe in its inculturation endeavours. The Shona may need to go back to the drawing board if they are to find help from the Church, while the Church will also need to make their presence known among the Shona.

7.2.1   Is the indigenous Shona religion a fully-fledged religion?

African theologians propagating for the Shona traditional religious agenda will need to come out clear on the identity and status of the indigenous religion. All those who call for a link between the Christian religion and the Shona religion, I submit, have not yet made a decision as to which religion they want to be affiliated to. They also have not yet defined the identities of the two

religions. Many see them as religions which must be amalgamated into one. West (2016:237) notes that:

> The African trajectory that considers African culture (and/or religion) as "a preparation for the Gospel" owes its impetus to John Mbiti… Mbiti has been at the forefront of discussion about continuities and discontinuities between African Religion … and Christian Faith.

Why is the African religion taken to be preparation of the Christian Gospel? The Shona religion is supposed to be a religion on its own right and to make it a forerunner to another religion is making it no religion at all. Such a notion fails to recognize the Shona religion as a faith system to reckon with. Commenting on the notion of African religion as a 'preparation for the Gospel' Nurnberger (2007:70) says: "this idea degrades other convictions. Other religions have a rationale of their own; they uphold their own sets of assumptions; they must be taken seriously in their own right". Mbiti thinks the African Religion attracted Africans towards Christianity by creating "religious values, insights, practices and vocabulary" which underlies the Gospel and on which the Gospel is thriving (Mbiti 1987:311). Indeed, Mbiti must have realized this, as he is cited by West (2016:237) thus: "Mbiti acknowledges the integrity of African Religion in its own right, but stresses its preparatory role …" However, to my mind, this is self-contradictory; one cannot 'acknowledge the integrity' of the Shona religion 'in its own right' while at the same time emphasizing on its function as a forerunner of another religion. Even if the implied continuity between the Shona traditional religion and the Christian Gospel is true, the Shona still have to come to Christ on their individual capacities, if they are going to be part of the Christian faith. The unadulterated Gospel of Jesus Christ needs no additives; it does not need the Shona religion. It is when the Shona theologians come to grips with this thinking that they may start separating the two as different religions, in which one may have to choose between one or the other. Living double lives is a result of people believing 'through their circumstances'. By that I mean their life circumstances force them to move from one religious tradition to another in search of the present life's existential solutions. This implies that the aim of such a believer is not to develop a relationship with a deity or with God, but to satisfy the ills of this world. Yet Christian faith, as mentioned earlier on, is a religion of relationships, and the thrust is more on a blissful future life than on meeting today's existential needs. This marks a big difference between Christian faith and the Shona traditional religion. If theologians ignore this they will theologize in vain.

From the foregoing, inculturation has not failed in Zimbabwe. Most of the Shona cultural elements that can be adapted into the Christian Gospel have been incorporated, most of what remains will give syncretistic results which will pollute the Gospel. The Zimbabwean Church, the Shona people and the African theologians will need to start recognizing the Shona religion as a religion with its own identity, which can stand on its own. After all, serious Shona traditionalists like spirit mediums and traditional healers (*n'anga*) do not want to associate with serious Christians. Mbiti (1987:311) himself affirms the difference between the two religious traditions when he says: "African Religion could not produce that which the Gospel now offers to African peoples, it tutored them so that they could find genuine fulfilment in the Gospel". To Mbiti the Gospel offers something that the traditional religion cannot offer and genuine fulfilment is found in the Gospel. If this is anything to go by, it shows that the Shona religion and the Christian faith are two separate religions which offer different things to the Shona people, of which the Shona people have to choose the better offers, which in Mbiti's thinking, are found in the Gospel.

So, the Shona must start thinking of allowing the two religious traditions to run parallel; not for the Shona to run double lives where they are Christians by day and traditionalists by night. They must make a deliberate choice whether to follow the Shona religious tradition or the Christian tradition. An attempt to follow both traditions; which seems to be the norm with some Shona people, as in the case of Chitakure (2017) above, will be self-defeating. This is because such Christian faith, which exhibits double mindedness, is not genuine and will not be beneficial to the adherent, as we discovered above. God will not be arm twisted by 'fake faith' into sanctioning syncretistic manoeuvres. Many such people will want to assign blame to an absent God and to the Church, which they claim, would have failed to help them, when in fact it will be them who would have failed to abide by the rules of the game. Christian faith has its own precepts which may not be customized to an individual or group of people, and in every case it: "must remain the side judge to determine the adequacy of their indigenous cultures and traditions" (Ezigbo (2010:55). So the Church in Zimbabwe has not failed in its inculturation mandate, the Shona religion must stand on its feet and fight for its identity or the Shona people must reject their religion in favour of Christianity.

7.2.2 Conflicts between religions are normal

Of course, the presence of two religious traditions within a given community is bound to cause conflict to some extent. This is where religious tolerance is called for. The Shona traditionalist must be allowed to freely practice his or her religion without being undermined and so must the Christian follower be free to practice Christian faith without hindrances. There will of course be some conflicts as rituals performed by one faith may have a negative impact on the other tradition. Onuzulike (2008:164) affirms that: "wherever two or three cultures meet, there is potential conflict. Spiritual conflicts exist between African Traditional Religion and Christianity". This is bound to happen, but if people are conscientized of the need to co-exist in multiple religious communities, life should be manageable without going to the extremes. Religious conflicts are not new. Okeke *et al* (2017)[82] also affirms the potential conflict that can arise because of the presence of two religious systems in one society. He reminds us of the serious disagreements that occurred between Jesus and the Jewish religious leaders, who could not adapt to new ideologies, which were not compatible with the Law of Moses or with tradition. The conflicts degenerated to the point of crucifying him and killing his followers.

The Shona people are not an exception. Conflicts arise when those converted to Christianity feel they are not bound anymore by the rules of the Shona religion. They then violate taboos and blasphemy sacred places and species like animals, snakes etc. One cannot be expected to observe religious practices of one religion when one belongs to another religion. These conflicts can be managed to enable the Shona people to live peaceable lives in their respective faiths. Inter-religious conflicts are normal, so the Church in Zimbabwe has not failed in its inculturation endeavours.

7.2.3 Irreconcilable eschatological differences

It is also imperative to take cognizance of the reality that there are fundamental eschatological differences between the Shona traditional religion and Christianity. As mentioned earlier,

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[82] Okeke Chukwuma, O, Ibenwa Christopher N, and Okeke Gloria Tochukwu. 2017. *Conflicts Between African Traditional Religion and Christianity in Eastern Nigeria: The Igbo Example*. From http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2158244017709322 accessed 11/08/18

Christian faith is forward looking, while the Shona traditional religion is oriented to the past. This is a variance that cannot be reconciled between the two religions. For the Shona, the golden age is in the past, as Mbiti (1969:24) puts it, and there is no Messianic hope of the destruction of the world (Mbiti 1969:23) and of a new heaven and a new earth, and no eternal torment or blissful life at eschaton.

> To live here and now is the most important concern of African religious activities and beliefs. . . . Even life in the hereafter is conceived in materialistic and physical terms. There is neither paradise to be hoped for nor hell to be feared in the hereafter. (Mbiti 1969:4–5).

Mugambi (2002:83) also thinks that the present reality is the only reality that matters for an African, and so the notion of last judgment at eschaton is non-existent. Even the notion of sin is at variance. To the Shona sin is against the community, while in the Christian tradition sin is against God. This strongly influences perception on the consequences of sin. To the Christian, the problem of sin has already been solved by the salvific work of Jesus and this is appropriated on individuals through faith in Jesus. He or she who refuses to believe is condemned eternally. For the Shona tradition, because the present reality is the only one that exists:

> Transgressions are sorted out here and now, within the community, and under the auspices of the ancestors. There is no guilt and no reconciliation outside the social relationship in which one is embedded. (Nurnberger 2007:78).

Nurnberger (2007:96) claims that: "becoming an ancestor is a passage into the past", and "consulting the deceased perpetuates and empowers the past" (2007:82). "African traditions have no eschatology in the biblical sense of the word … This explains why ancestors suck us back into the past … The power of ancestors lies in the power of memory" Nurnberger (2007:96). The Shona have no eschatology and the goal of their worship is for the here and now; they worship for their livelihood today.

Christian faith on the other hand has, an eschatology, and a hope for a future blissful life, which takes pre-eminence over the present life. It runs parallel to the Shona traditional religion because of its orientation to the future. From its inception, Christian faith was founded on the resurrection of Jesus. If Jesus had not risen from the dead there would be no Christianity. Nurnberger (2007:96) says "resurrection is an eschatological concept" and "the resurrection of Christ is a passage into the future of God, even though this future can gain power over the present". It is

only after the resurrection of Jesus that his followers started revisiting the past incidents and reorienting their lives into the future. They no longer perceived Jesus as he was in the flesh (2 Corinthians 5:16-17), but saw him as a new creation, who has been ushered, through resurrection, into the eschatological future of God the Father. He now lives a new life in which all who believe are honoured to take part. Christians are looking forward to that: "qualitative life that begins at the moment of conversion and culminates eternally with imminent return of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ezigbo 2010:55, citing Kato). Nurnberger (2007:83) concludes:

> While the historical records show them who Jesus was, they believe in the risen Christ, the Christ who is to come, the Christ that liberates and empowers us rather than enslaving us, the Christ that opens up the future for us, rather than throwing us into the prison of the past.

Because of these irreconcilable eschatological differences, it may not be prudent to conclude that the indigenous led Zimbabwean Church has failed in its inculturation mandate.

7.2.4 Centrality of the Bible in Christian faith

Although we have varying interpretations of the Scriptures, those who believe in Jesus will always try to follow the biblical teaching. Mofokeng (1997:42) notes that: "As part of ideological falsification of the truth, the bible and theology were widely used and proved usable." This implies that people can easily twist Scriptures to suit their ambitions. Simon Benjamin (2008:189) asserts that: "Through interpretation, the Bible is made to justify war, hatred, dispossession and other traditionally conceived social ills like homosexuality". Those who have done hermeneutics will tell you that there is no correct interpretation, neither is there timeless interpretation. The text speaks anew in varying life situations. Nevertheless, in spite of all these challenges that are encountered in interpreting the Bible, one thing is certain among Christian believers - the Bible remains the standard code of conduct for Christian faith.

Claims by a number of African theologians (e.g. Bediako 1992:386) that some writers are Biblicists, because they stick to what the Scriptures say without compromise, baffle the mind. If we remove the teachings of the Bible from the Christian faith then Christianity becomes a

nullity. Christian faith has always been founded on the Bible. Yet some African Theologians find the Bible grossly unable to address their existential needs. Punt *et al* (2017:126) say:

> The inadequacy of the bible to the Shona people's experience is expressed well by Canaan Banana, a Zimbabwean theologian, who argues not only for a translation from the original languages, but even for a rewriting of the Bible.

Banana proposed the re-writing of the Bible. To my mind such proposals are made by theological scholars who are 'strangers' to Christian faith, who merely want to theologize in pursuit of the African agenda, when they have no understanding of the basic principles of Christian faith. If the Shona want to write their own Bible, they are free to do so but they would have defined themselves out of Christian history (Kato 1975:182). If we remove the Jewish cultural elements, Christianity will persist, if we remove Shona cultural elements, Christianity will persist, but if we remove the Bible Christianity will cease to be.

Therefore, any successful inculturation will recognize the centrality of the Bible in Christian faith. In their spiritual endeavours, the Shona must take cognizance of this non-negotiable fact, of the significance of the Bible to the Christian faith. Christianity cannot be made more meaningful to the Shona populace by redefining it in Shona cultural terms. Banana wrote a paper, *The Case for a New Bible,* where he persuasively argues for the rewriting of the Bible for it to be applicable and authoritative to postcolonial people. He notes some passages in the Bible which have been applied to legitimatize subjugation of other people. He proposes for the removal of such passages and for the addition of the religious experiences of extra-biblical figures. Banana (1993:81) argues that: "This would include revision and editing to what is already there, but would also involve adding that which is not included…" like the voices of *Mbuya Nehanda* and *Sekuru Chaminuka*, etc. - some of the Shona's major spirit mediums. To his thinking this would result in a Bible that: "is more universal, embracing the rich plurality of human experience in response to God, would be a more authentic and relevant document in today's world" (Banana 1993:81). Banana (1993:18, 21) further argues that:

> The material contained in the Bible is but a small part of the whole gamut of God's revelation to humankind …The voices of the people of the 'third' world are voices of God's revelation, inspired by God's Spirit. Why are they not reflected in the Bible, directly testifying to God's presence in their lives, in their time?

Banana declares: "To me theology is a science, a philosophy that tries to interpret society's understanding of God with or without the Bible" (Banana 1991b:42). Notwithstanding how powerful Banana was in Zimbabwean society, in academia and in his Church denomination, his proposals have fallen by the way side and are rotting in libraries. Commenting on the same issue Gunda (2012:28) rightly acknowledges that:

> The exclusive claims of Judaism, Christianity and Islam are so fundamental to their existence that it is close to impossible to "rewrite" a universally valid Bible, not only because of clear cultural differences but also because each religious tradition has a set of non negotiables.

Indeed, Scriptures are God breathed; the knowledge employed by the authors came from God, making Scriptures the backbone of Christian faith. The African theologian and the Shona traditionalist must therefore know that the Bible has a reserved place in Christian faith, which cannot be occupied by anything else, without Christianity losing its essence. Human experiences, which Banana wants to accord a prime place in Christianity, are highly subjective and unpredictable. The message to the advocates of African and Shona theology is that the Bible is the nucleus of Christianity from its inception, and it may not be prudent to rewrite it to suit the Shona traditional religion. The Shona must make a choice between the two religions. The Church in Zimbabwe, to my mind, is doing the right thing to centre its faith on the precepts of the Bible - the word of God. The Church has not failed.

7.2.5   The Church in Zimbabwe must demonstrate a Jesus who is more proximate than ancestors

The Church in Zimbabwe will need to work hard to show Jesus for who he is. Time has come that the works of Jesus; which he promised we would do greater (John 14:12), are made manifest in the life of the Church. God has become an absent God partly because the Church in Zimbabwe has not shown its followers that Jesus is more proximate than the ancestors. God does not reside in people's Bibles or in Church liturgies or in Church ordinances like the Eucharist. People can observe all these and still fail to find God. It is that link with the divine that the Church will need to facilitate for its members. Empty rhetoric is a waste of time because people want answers to their existential questions. Only Jesus has the answers, but he rewards only those that diligently seek him and those who know that the Christian walk is a perpetual fight of faith. Evangelical

and Mainline Churches will need to wake up from their slumber. It is not time to preach a popular Gospel that people will want to hear, that will draw masses, if it does not deliver the people from the powers of darkness. Nurnberger (2007:68) has this observation:

> … individual and communal spirituality find expression in countless local cults, usually in the form of veneration of 'saints'. In contrast to the reforms of Josiah, the Catholic Church sanctioned and encouraged the spirituality of the simple people. In Europe legendary heroes and mythical figures became saints. In Latin America, West African cults thrive under cover of the veneration of saints. In Africa the Catholic Church seems to be battling whether it should be supportive of ancestor veneration. This strange inconsistency certainly helped the Catholic Church to remain popular with grass roots masses.

Such popularity is not worth the while to both the Church and its followers. The Church will be leaving its people in a lurch and would have failed to fulfil its God given mandate to give people the good news (Gospel) that, through faith in Jesus they can be free; with signs following those that believe, which include driving out demons (Mark 16:15-18; Matthew 28:18-20). Many have resorted to living double lives in pursuit of solutions to their existential problems.

Duncan finds solace in Pentecostalism in this instance. As we have seen above, he thinks that Pentecostals have been useful to indigenous people because they have been able to respond to the existential needs of its followers. Indeed, Pentecostalism is a force to reckon with in the fight against the forces of the kingdom of darkness. Powered by the activity of the Holy Spirit, ministering healing and exorcising evil forces are their daily activities. The supernatural have become commonplace, with signs and wonders following, backed by prophetic utterances; making Pentecostalism home to many Shona who have chosen it.

However, it goes without saying, that wherever there is something good the enemy will always fight to destroy it. As we saw in section 4.9 Churches have been infiltrated by Satanism. Many professed 'prophets', 'miracle workers', 'men of God', 'bishops', etc., have turned out to be members of the Devil's secret society - Satanism. Satanists can heal the sick, exorcise demons, usher people into prosperity, etc., using powers of the Devil. Now because some Shona people are only looking for existential solutions to their life challenges, they are falling prey to these 'vultures'. We also saw in section 4.8 that the dark world is hierarchical. If a member lower down the hierarchy induces some sickness or misfortune in an individual, a person up the ladder

can easily remove that sickness or misfortune. This is how an evil person is able to heal the sick, to usher people into prosperity, etc. The opposite is not true. And most of the Shona woes are spiritually induced. So, some of the professed 'mighty men or women of God' perform wonders, because they will be high up in the Devil's hierarchy and are able to remove ills that junior devils would have inflicted. This is why in genuine Christian faith it is not about the end, but about the means to the end - a relationship with God through Jesus. Only the genuine Church, with authentic leaders is able to rescue the Shona people from its predicament, and to know who is who, calls for serious spirit discernment, as emphasized by Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:10 and Philippians 1:9-10. The Church in Zimbabwe will need to expose and root out Satanism from its midst, and to show Jesus for who he is, otherwise in terms of inculturation it has performed very well.

7.3 Concluding remarks

The crux of the matter is whether the Shona Christians should be allowed to interact with their dead, within Christian faith; regardless of whether one calls it veneration or worship. It may be helpful to briefly explore how the early Christians related to Jesus after his death. Jesus died and only appeared after three days. The New Testament does not tell us much about how the apostles behaved after Jesus' death, save for the shock and fear (John 20:19) of the unknown future in face of the death of the man they thought was going to deliver Israel from foreign domination (Luke 24:19 – 21). Any appearance of Jesus after his death would rationally be seen as ghostly (Luke 24:37).

What may have been the agenda of the women who followed Joseph of Arimathea to the tomb (Luke 23:55-24:1)? What were the women going to do to a body which had been dead for over three days? We need to investigate the prevailing custom and whether what the women did was a traditional practice. Dunn (1985:66) observes that:

> ... at the time of Jesus it had become customary to return to the tomb where a loved one had been laid, after a sufficient period had lapsed (a year), to gather up the bones and put them in a bone box (ossuary) ... so that in the resurrection God could use them to (re)construct the body for resurrection.

Collection of the bones of the deceased was only done after a year. After three days the body still had flesh, so the bones could not be gathered. Neither could the body be preserved with spices because it would already have decayed.

We do not hear of Jesus' tomb ever being venerated, yet it was a customary practice in Judaism as implied by Jesus' comments (Mathew 23:29/Luke 11:47) on tomb veneration. It was quite a regularly practised custom at Jesus' time for devotees to gather for worship, at their dead prophet's tomb, but we do not find trace of any interest by the earliest Christians, in the tomb where Jesus was buried. So, we may safely conclude that earliest Christianity never practiced veneration of the tomb of Jesus, neither did they venerate the dead Jesus. According to Eusebius (Via Constantini 3.25-32) Jesus' empty tomb was not venerated until the 4th century.

To the Roman Catholic Church, praying to, and veneration of saints is not worshiping them. They think there is a difference between worshiping saints and revering them. Dave Armstrong[83] asserts that they honour the saints because the saints have acquired the portrait (*eikon* or 'image') of God (2 Corinthians 3:18). They see a reflection of God's glory in them. God is honoured when the saints are honoured because the same are God's workmanship. Armstrong argues that such employment of imagery is not in the class of idolatry. Christians have always been forbidden to worship idols. Paul applies the term 'image' to Jesus and to believers in four places in the Bible (2 Corinthians 4:4 (twice), Colossians 1:15, Romans 8:29). Armstrong appeals to these passages and concludes that the incarnation of Jesus made images acceptable; provided the images are a representation of Jesus who in turn is "the image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15). To him, images of Mary and all others are mere representations of Jesus, for the sake of honour or veneration, and this needs to be distinguished from adoration and worship, which must be reserved for God alone. He goes further to support the worshiping of a statue of Jesus or Mary as a more real and concrete visual representation of Jesus or Mary, while God remains the object of worship. I am not sure whether these arguments are representative of the entire Roman Catholic Church.

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[83]Armstrong, Dave. *Exposition on the Christian veneration of Images*. From
http://www.philvaz.com/apologetics/a121.htm accessed 13/03/15

Armstrong's argument is that Christianity is a dynamic religion which is incessantly going through development. He cites as examples of Paul's writings, which were rarely cited as scripture although they were available generally up to 160AD; and of Acts which was barely quoted, while Hebrews, James, 1, 2 Peter; 1, 2, 3 John, Jude and Revelation were yet to be canonised. Yet the final New Testament cannon of 397AD were a variation of the earliest Christian beliefs. Brown (1973:7-8) echoes the same sentiments that;

> ... the church's grasp of the truth changes and develops … The Scriptures reflect the limited views current in specific periods of human history, and this historical context must be taken into account in interpreting the weight and import of their inspired message … doctrinal formulation capture an aspect of the revealed truth but do not exhaust it … formulations represent the limited insight of one period of Church history which can be modified in another period as Christians approach the truth from a different direction or with new tools of investigation.

It is this notion, that the Bible does not exhaust all divine revelation that has been used and abused by some scholars. Jesus is God's final revelation for all time. So, care will need to be taken to ensure that modifications of traditional doctrinal formulations do not portray a different Jesus.

However, in Zimbabwe, Protestant and Pentecostal faith has not been that dynamic. To them Scripture does not encourage joining together with the dead in prayer. They appeal to Deuteronomy 18:10-12 which discourages Israel from consulting the dead. This practice was abominable to God, and because God does not change, even today's Christian should know that it is still detestable to God, despite dynamics of doctrinal formulations. Aulen Gustaf (2002:386-387) contends that:

> The Christian faith knows of no relation to the dead except in and through God. This viewpoint is decisive for all affirmations of faith relative to the relationship between the living and the dead ... Spiritualistic attempts to effect an external connection with the dead are foreign to Christian faith... These who are united with God are united with one another, and this union is indestructible because it is rooted and perdures in the eternal God.

In 1 Timothy 2:5 Paul stresses "one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus". A closer look at, for example, the "Hail Mary" prayer shows it is directed to and petitions Mary to pray for the believer "…Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now

and at the hour or at our death. Amen." Such a prayer seems to contradict even the Catholic New Catechism's assertion that:

> 57 Christ is the only way to the Father (cf. Jn 14:4-11), and the ultimate example to whom the disciples must conform his own conduct (cf. Jn 13:15) …. The Church has always taught this and nothing in pastoral activity should obscure this doctrine.[84]

In defence, Catholics hold that Deuteronomy 18:10-12 is not talking about entities in heaven as there was no one in heaven because Jesus had not subjugated death yet. There is no place for ghosts and the wicked in heaven, and talking to the wicked who are not in heaven would be detestable to God. To the Catholics, saints are alive in heaven; so, they do not fall under the auspices of Deuteronomy 18:10-12.

Although the Roman Catholic Church is arguably the largest mainline Church, they nevertheless constitute only a small percentage of the Christian population in Zimbabwe. However, their teachings distort the voice of the Church in Zimbabwe. Because of their syncretistic tendencies, they are seemingly ahead of other denominations in terms of inculturation. Although they advocate the doctrine of veneration of dead saints, they are still sceptical to allow full communication with the dead. Initiatives to allow the bringing home (*kurova guva*) ceremony for instance, have failed at implementation level as many of their clergy detest it. Therefore authentic inculturation will require transformation of Shona cultural elements and transformation of the Shona people, not transformation of the Gospel essentials. This is Njoroge (2013:243) thinking that:

> Inculturation allows transformation of a culture and the people involved anew …
> it is an unending dialogical process that balances culture in the anthropological
> sense of the term and the divine presence of the Holy Spirit.

This is an honest assertion that every serious theologian will need to consider if we are to make sense of inculturation. Cultures and people must be transformed by the Gospel, for the cultures to be adapted into the Christian faith.

Therefore, calling for the rewriting of the Bible does not take the Christian religion seriously. If Christianity is to adapt anything, it cannot do it by adjusting the Scriptures to suit another

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[84] Marialis Cultus, Apostolic Exhortation of Paul V1, February, 1974

religion. When we talk of Christianity incorporating host cultures, we need to be sure what must change what? Yes, Christianity has some embellishments of the Jewish culture and other Western cultures that colonizers forced into the Gospel. I would want to believe that after all the cultural elements are rid of, Christianity will remain. The core essence of the Christian faith cannot be changed to suit a local religion. So, in all inculturation initiatives it must be the Gospel that must judge culture, not the other way round.

Many arguments have been put forward, with regards to what Shona cultural elements must be incorporated into the Christian Gospel. The choices of the elements tend to be very subjective. This has resulted in very different conclusions on what can be considered syncretistic or not. The problem is that many advocates to inculturation may not be committed to Christian faith. Such people become 'outsiders' to Christianity, and they then, cannot define rules of the game for 'insiders'. Any inculturation not carefully crafted will become syncretism.

Other African scholars like Mwandayi have even advocated for pluralism in Christian faith, by proposing to merge practices of both the Shona tradition and the Christian tradition; arguing that they do not see anything wrong with it. They do not advocate for pluralism in terms of co-existence and respect of different religions, but in terms of allowing the Shona traditional religion to be practiced within the Christian faith, because they see no difference between the two religious traditions and their God(s).

Njorege observes that:

> The inculturation process starts when a community starts functioning as an indigenous or local church. To be local means that the church has taken roots in a given place with all its cultural, natural, social, and any other characteristic that constitutes the life, values and thoughts of the people involved.

We have seen that it is not be possible for the Church in Zimbabwe to be rooted in all "cultural, natural, social" traits that concern "the life, values and thoughts" of the Shona people, without adulterating its faith, since we discovered that many of the Shona practices and belief systems on death and afterlife are incompatible with Christian faith. Whether scholars like it or not, there are some non-negotiable tenets in Christian faith which will not respond to any theological or philosophical arguments. From the foregoing, I can safely conclude that there are some Shona

religious and cultural elements (beliefs and cultural practices pertaining to death and afterlife), which are incompatible with the Christian Gospel, making any attempts to reconcile Christian theology and Shona religion an insurmountable task.

Ramadan (2010:6) rightly observes that the dealings between religious traditions do not concern "relativising one's own convictions and seeking universal neutral principles, it is rather about acceptance and respect of pluralism, diversity and the belief of the Other". Therefore, if inculturation initiatives, pertaining to Shona worldview on death and afterlife, which have been put in place by the Church in Zimbabwe, are not adequate for the Shona people, then they must choose to maintain and adhere to the Shona traditional religion. The Christian and Shona traditions are two autonomous religions which must be allowed to maintain their own identities, values and characteristics. Why should an individual develop interest in two religious traditions? My observation is that those who are doing so are only looking for existential solutions to their life challenges today; without any serious commitment to either of the religions. To me that is looking for easy solutions from a complex phenomenon like faith, and the solutions may not be forthcoming. This has resulted in the Shona Christian living double lives; oscillating between the Shona traditional religion and Christian faith.

After the Church in Zimbabwe has adapted what they can into the Christian worship, let the Shona make a choice as to which religion they want to follow, instead of trying to change the Christian faith to suit traditionalists, or to change the Shona religion to fit into the Christian Gospel. The "African project's" agenda should be to positively portray and uphold the Shona traditional religion, develop and maintain its identity, and have full confidence in its efficacy, rather than seeking to merge it with other religions on their own terms. However, this does not absolve the Zimbabwean indigenous led church from continually researching on possible adoptions of the Shona cultural rites. However, the future of inculturation lies in striking a balance between what adaptations are possible and what are not possible, for both Christianity and the Shona traditional religion, so that each religion maintains its essence.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Questionnaire 1 (for use in interviews)

Introduction

This is a Doctor of Theology research, with the University of South Africa, which seeks to investigate the dialogue between Shona beliefs on Death and afterlife, and the Christian Gospel. It seeks to interrogate how far the Christian Church denominations have adapted the Shona eschatological beliefs on death and afterlife in their Christian faith and teaching. It also seeks to probe if there is more that can be done, and how the Shona Christian may be assisted in his or her religious endeavours. How can the Shona Christian be made to feel at home in their faith and culture?

Personal Information
Name
………………………………………………………………………………………………………
Marital status
………………………………………………………………………………………………………
Organization (if representing an organization like a Church)
………………………………………………………………………………………………………
Position held
………………………………………………………………………………………………………
(eg. spirit medium, n'anga, headman, chief or ordinary Shona, lay church member, church leader – denomination secretary, head of denomination etc.)

Ethnic group (if applicable)

Karanga	☐	Zezuru	☐
Manyika	☐	Korekore	☐
Ndau	☐	Other (specify)	☐

NB. Should the space be inadequate, please turn over the page, put the number and continue writing.
Questions relevant to chiefs, headmen, *n'anga*, spirit mediums and other Shona people

1. Which areas do you think you can work together with the Christian believers for improvement of the Shona life and which areas do you think Christianity negatively interferes with your traditional operations?

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2. From your personal experience, what areas do practitioners of African traditional religion share in common with believers of Christian faith?

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3. What is your response to the proposal that traditional healers and spirit mediums should work together with the Church clergy in helping the Shona people?

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4. When you are having the bringing home ceremony (*kuchenura or kurova guva*) or the rain making ceremony (*mukwerera*) would you welcome your fellow Shona Christians to join you in prayers and Christian songs?

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5. What should be done to a member of your society who refuses to observe communal rituals like contributing to rain making ceremony, observing *chisi (*a non working holiday in honour of area *mhondoro)* etc., because of his or her religious beliefs?

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6. What are the important rituals done for the dead

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7. In the Shona beliefs, is there any anticipation of resurrection of the dead, where the soul and the body will be reunited? Does the bringing home ceremony have anything to do with resurrection of the dead?

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8. Why do most Shona people insist on burial of their dead in their traditional rural homes?

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9. What is your response, to the argument that the modern Shona in urban and peri-urban areas have slowed down on ancestor veneration, and why?

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10 During ancestor veneration, what is the connection between you the Shona, the ancestors and the Supreme Being? When is the Supreme Being mentioned during the ceremony?

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11 Can someone be a n'anga (traditional healer) just by instruction?

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12 What is your view of a n'anga who performs atrocious acts; like providing medicine for killing other people, or medicines to make other people mentally ill, or medicine to cause lightning?

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13 When did you last attend a national or regional *bira* (traditional ceremony)? What was the main business? Do you or your people sometimes visit the Matonjeni or any of the other Matopos shrines?

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14 What, in your opinion, is a goblin and what is it made from?

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15 In Shona culture is there an instance when women are allowed to overrule men?

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16 Is there a time where someone becomes of age that there will be no need to consult his superiors, or where authority and submission are not factors?

Appendix 2

Questionnaire 2 (for use in interviews)

Introduction

This is a Doctor of Theology research, with the University of South Africa, which seeks to investigate the dialogue between Shona beliefs on Death and afterlife, and the Christian Gospel. It seeks to interrogate how far the Christian Church denominations have adapted the Shona eschatological beliefs on death and afterlife in their Christian faith and teaching. It also seeks to probe if there is more that can be done, and how the Shona Christian may be assisted in his or her religious endeavours. How can the Shona Christian be made to feel at home in their faith and culture?

Personal Information

Name

………………………………………………………………………………………………

Marital status

………………………………………………………………………………………………

Organization (if representing an organization like a Church)

………………………………………………………………………………………………

Position held

………………………………………………………………………………………………

(eg. spirit medium, n'anga, headman, chief or ordinary Shona, lay church member, church leader - denomination secretary, head of denomination etc.)

Ethnic group (if applicable)

Karanga		Zezuru	
Manyika		Korekore	
Ndau		Other (specify)	

NB. Should the space be inadequate, please turn over the page, put the number and continue writing.

Church related questions

1. What does your organization believe happens to the dead?

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2. What is the relationship between the earthly body and the resurrection body?

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3. Is there conscious existence of the departed soul after death?

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4. Are there any specific aspects of the Shona beliefs on the death and after life that your organization agreed to incorporate into the Shona Christian worship and liturgy? Are there any written documents to that effect and are they available for inspection?

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5. In the Shona traditional religion, the dead communicate with the living and the living must perform some rituals of, for example, appeasement and honor of the dead, if they are to live a peaceful life. What is your Church's position with regard to this?

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………
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6. What is your Denomination's teaching on consulting the dead?

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………
………

7. What is your organization's stance on the relationship between the dead and the living? Has your Church taken a position on performing any of the following rituals? If yes briefly explain:
   a. The bringing home (*kurova guva*) ceremony: YES   NO

………
………

   b. *Nyaradzo:* YES   NO

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....

     c. Rain making ceremony: YES   NO

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....

     d. *Chisi*, - a non working holiday in honour of the area *mhondoro*: YES   NO

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     e. Burial of the dead in their rural homes: YES   NO

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8.   . Is praying to or through saints a human veneration or an adoration and worship?

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9. What are the priest's/pastor's duties at a *nyaradzo* service?

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10. Are your Church members allowed to perform the Shona traditional burial and 'after burial' rituals?

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11. The Church exorcises evil spirits. Traditional healers are also known to exorcise evil spirits in the Shona tradition. What would your organization say regarding the two working together in exorcizing evil spirits from the Shona people?

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12. To what extent have your Shona Christians been affected by forces like goblin spirits (*zvikwambo*), witchcraft (*uroyi*), misfortunes (*minyama*), and what form of assistance have you offered to them?

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13. How should your Church members deal with the white shadow (*kumira bvuri/mumvuri*) - a symbol of the deceased's displeasure?

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14. What is your Church's teaching on *mombe yenheedzo* (a beast that is slaughtered at funerals) considering there are some traditional rituals performed when it is slaughtered?

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15. How would you help a member who has a spirit of witchcraft which he or she no longer wants or a member who no longer wants to be a spirit medium?

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16. Avenging spirits can menace the extended family. How would you help a Church member who is experiencing successive deaths in the family, serious endless quarrels, devastating misfortunes, poverty or disintegration of the united family?

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17. All households should be represented at territorial festivals or observances, for example, *mukwerera* (rain making ceremony) or should observe *chisi (*a non-working holiday in honour of area *mhondoro)*, as this is thought to foster unity and togetherness. What advice does the Church give to its members concerning this?

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18. How do you react to a Church member's persistent illness where modern doctors have failed to diagnose and treat the disease?

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……

19. What is your denomination's primary authority, the Bible or the Holy Spirit? What is your Church's relationship to the African Initiated Churches which do not use the Bible but are guided by the spirit?

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Appendix 3

Information Letter

Title of Project: Christianity under Indigenous Leadership in Zimbabwe: Whither the
Church's Inculturation of the Shona Views on Death and Afterlife?

Researcher: Benny Hwata
University of South Africa, Department of Systematic Theology
Cell   ---
Email: ---

You are being asked to take part in a research study that concerns dialogue between the Shona beliefs in death and afterlife, and the Christian Gospel. As a participant in this study, you will be asked questions in which you will be presented with various Shona scenarios. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information.

Participation in this study is voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part in this study. If you decide to take part in this study, you will be asked to sign a consent form. However you are still free to withdraw anytime; without giving a reason and there will be no penalty. You may decline to answer any questions presented during the study if you so wish.

By volunteering to participate in this study, you will learn about fundamental issues that affect the Shaona Christian, the significance the Shona spirituality, and efforts the Church in Zimbabwe has made to facilitate authentic dialogue between the Gospel and the Shona culture. In addition, you will receive a detailed feedback sheet about the study. There are no personal benefits to participation.

All information you provide is considered completely confidential; your name will not be included in, or in any other way associated with, the data collected in the study. To achieve this code names/numbers will be assigned to participants so that no actual names appear in notes and documents. Notes, interview transcriptions and any other information that may identify participants will be kept in locked file cabinet. Participant data will be kept confidential except where the researcher is legally obliged to report specific incidents like suicide risk. There are no known or anticipated risks associated with your participation in this study.

Thank you for your assistance in this project

Appendix 4

Consent Form

I have read and I understand the provided information and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and without cost. I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

Participant's signature _____ Date _____

Investigator's signature _____ Date _____

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