



JUXTAPOSITIONING OF CHRISTIANITY AND AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION: A
STUDY OF CHRISTIAN LEADERS AND 'SANGOMAHOOD'

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By

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DECLARATION

I, Joel Mokhoathi, declare that this thesis entitled: "Juxtapositioning of Christianity and African Traditional Religion: A Study of Christian Leaders and 'Sangomahood'" is my own independent work and that it has not been previously or in part submitted for any qualification at/in another institution.

Signature: 

Date: 14/01/2019

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GLOSSARY

IsiXhosa term(s)	Meaning(s)
<i>Ababomvu</i>	Red-blanketed people, who did not wear modern (western) attires. The term “red” in ‘red-blanketed’ is derived from the red colour of the ochre, which they used to smear or protect their skin.
<i>Amagqobhoka</i>	Enlightened and educated people who were perceived to be superior or better than the un-educated (<i>amaqaba</i>) because they were often Christianised by missionaries during the missionary epoch.
<i>Amaqaba</i>	The un-enlightened and non-educated people, who were perceived as lesser than the educated (<i>amagqobhoka</i>) because they were not Christianised by the missionaries.
<i>Amaxukazana okuvumisa</i>	A category of traditional healers or diviners who act with the assistance of clapping and assenting.
<i>Amaxukazana okuwombelela</i>	A category of traditional healers or diviners who act with the assistance of clapping and singing.
<i>Emqolombeni</i>	Caves, a term used to denote that there are diviners who draw their strength and power from, and function inside the caves.
<i>Exhantini</i>	A sacred pole often placed in the middle of the kraal, or the entrance of the

	cattle kraal, denoting the presence of the ancestors.
<i>Imanyano/umanyano/unyamezelo</i>	A prayer and service union of black women of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa.
<i>Imbeleko</i>	The public introduction or ritual inclusion of babies to the clan.
<i>Impepho</i>	Incense, an aromatic biotic material that is often burnt to connect one with ancestors or to dispel evil spirits.
<i>Imvuma kufa</i>	A submission ritual which announces the initiate's acceptance of the traditional call to healing or into ' <i>Sangomahood</i> '.
<i>Ingoduso</i>	The graduation ritual in which novices are celebrated for having completed their <i>Sangoma</i> training or initiation process.
<i>Ingoma yekhaya</i>	The sacred song of the clan.
<i>Inkomoyezihlewele</i>	A cow that is slaughtered for the ancestors.
<i>Inkenqe</i>	A Xhosa term denoting what happens when one is being channelled to the spiritual realm.
<i>Inkundla</i>	The exposed space near the main hut and the livestock kraal.
<i>Intaka-mpuku/ilulwane</i>	Bats, a term used to denote that someone has no sense of belonging but falls on either side. Bats are thought to be neither birds nor mice.
<i>Intlambuluko</i>	Cleansing, a term used for purity or ablution.

<i>Izihlewele zecawa</i>	Religious ancestors. The type of ancestors who approve of the incorporation, or use of Christian components in 'Sangomahood'.
<i>Iziwasho</i>	A term used by the followers of the Saint John's Apostolic Faith Mission, for Holy water, because it has been prayed for.
<i>Lobola</i>	The Xhosa term used for the customary practice of passing livestock or money from the bridegroom's family side to the bride's family side.
<i>Muti/iyeza</i>	Traditional medicines or natural healing plants.
<i>Mayezana</i>	Medicine-man, who is commonly known for specialising in natural remedial medicines.
<i>Oohili/ootikoloshe</i>	There is no direct translation of this term into English. But <i>oohili</i> may be described as dwarf-like creatures that are used by witches to peruse evil ends, or to cause harm against other people, including their enemies.
<i>Sangoma/igqhirha</i>	The most highly ranked or senior traditional healer, who diagnoses ailments and prescribes remedial interventions for the cure of illnesses in a cultural setting
<i>Ubulunga</i>	A sacred object that is made up of white, red or blue beads, which are often inserted with small portions of hair from the tail of a horse to the initiate's hair. It

	symbolises the presence of the ancestors.
<i>Ubuntu</i>	Humanity or humaneness, a term used to sympathise with other people.
<i>Ukudibanisa izihlwele necawa</i>	A traditional ceremony to unite the ancestors with the church. It is a traditional ceremony, which is mostly conducted by faith healers to unite their Christian call with guidance from the ancestors.
<i>Ukuhlahluba</i>	To assess and diagnose people using the Bible, while relying on the guidance of the ancestors.
<i>Ukuhlangula</i>	To save, redeem or rescue.
<i>Ukuthomba/intonjane</i>	A traditional or customary rite of passage to womanhood.
<i>Ukuthomalalisa</i>	To suppress, tame or keep under control.
<i>Ukuthwasa</i>	A Xhosa term, which denotes that one, has been called to be a diviner and must undergo the <i>Sangoma</i> training.
<i>Ukuthwetyulwa</i>	There is no direct translation for this term. However, <i>ukuthwetyulwa</i> may imply abduction through witchcraft to alien places, such as forests, rivers, deserts, or mountains, while members of one's family assume that they died.
<i>Ukuyolela</i>	To give out final instructions to family members before one's death.
<i>Ukungxengxeza</i>	To invoke the ancestors, to acknowledge their power, to thank, or praise the ancestors.

<i>Ukunqula</i>	To call on the ancestors by their names and to sing their praise. This is done to establish an intimate connection with ancestors.
<i>Umthandazeli/umthandazisi</i>	A faith healer, who may also be a prophet.
<i>Xhentsa</i>	A ritual dance accompanied by clapping of the hands, singing of special songs and beating of a drum. It is a special kind of stamping rhythmic movement with the emphasis on the vigorous pounding of the feet on the ground while slowly moving in a circle.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ABM	-	American Board of Missions
ATR	-	African Traditional Religion
ASTRS	-	Alice Small Town Regeneration Strategy
BMS	-	Berlin Missionary Society
EC	-	Eastern Cape
FS	-	Free State
GMS	-	Glasgow Missionary Society
IKS	-	Indigenous Knowledge Systems
LMS	-	London Missionary Society
MMS	-	Moravian Missionary Society
SACB	-	South African Catholic Bishops
UFH	-	University of Fort Hare
WMS	-	Wesleyan Missionary Society

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ABSTRACT

The developed realisation that Christianity, in Africa, is being juxtaposed with African Traditional Religion does not seem to sit well, and has tended to create some discomfort for both conservative Christians and rigorist African religionists. The fundamental consensus between these two religious traditions is that Christianity and African Traditional Religion are a paradox; therefore, they do not synthesise. However, this appears to contradict the nominalist view, which postulates that these two religious traditions – Christianity and African Traditional Religion, are compatible and are, in fact, two related systems of thought and practice. These varying perceptions therefore, appear to ground one's understanding and interpretation of the juxtapositioning of Christianity and African Traditional Religion. In most cases, such understandings and interpretations tend to be absolute and tend to undermine the inside perspective. This implies that both conservative Christians and rigorist African religionists often see a clear cut between Christianity and African Traditional Religion, but nominal Christians allude to a grey area, which is often not necessarily explored. This research study, therefore, was undertaken to explore this grey area. This study explored the emic perspectives of people who juxtapose Christianity and African traditional spirituality, and assumed dual roles as church leaders and *Sangomas*. A qualitative research approach, which was underpinned by phenomenology as the meta-theoretical foundations, was used for the study. The main purpose was to examine how participants find meaning and interpret their spirituality, given the fact that they assume dual roles within a space where such roles are perceived as opposing. The findings of the study revealed that the juxtapositioning of Christianity and African Traditional Religion served as an existential mechanism used by African Christians to avoid *anomie* and that there is no disparity between Church leadership and '*Sangomahood*', as both Christianity and African Traditional Religion are understood to be two related systems of thought and practice by most nominal Christians. Based on the findings of this research, this study proposed a new paradigmatic model in which to understand and interpret the lived experiences of the participants who juxtaposed Christianity and African Traditional Religion. This paradigmatic model rests on the notion of 'hybridity' rather than syncretism as a popular concept. Thus, this research study critically examined the lived experiences of

participants who juxtaposed Christianity and African Traditional Religion, and were church leaders and *Sangomas*.

Keywords: Juxtapositioning, Christianity, African Traditional Religion, Church Leader, 'Sangomahood', Hybridity, Syncretism

CHAPTER ONE

SYNOPSIS OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the elementary components of this research. As such, the preliminary aspects of this study are addressed. These include the operational components of the research such as the background to the study, the problem statement, the research questions, the objectives of the study, the purpose of the study, its significance, and the definition of key concepts as well as an outline of chapters, which follow the introductory section of this study.

1.2 Background

There is a developed awareness in African scholarship that Christianity, within the African context, has largely been syncretised with African traditional and cultural practices (Mndende 2009:1; Jebadu 2007:246; Onuzulike 2008:6). A number of research studies that were conducted in this field of study indicates that the embodiment of Christianity, as mostly practised by African Christians is dichotomous – it is the incorporation of Christianity and African tradition religious practices (Amanze 2003:43; Matobo *et al.*, 2009:105; Ntombana 2015:106). Historically, the consolidation of these two religious traditions tended to cause some discomfort for some people and religious institutions.

For instance, the Pastoral Statement of the Southern African Catholic Bishops – SACB (2006:1), expresses its concerns over Catholic members who search for healing from *Sangomas*. Scholars such as Ntombana (2015:105), further observed that there are professed Christians, who belong to Mainline/Mission Churches that tends to revert to African traditional customs or practices, and consult traditional healers¹ for healing.

¹ A *Sangoma*, according to Mokhoathi (2017b:5), is “the most senior of the traditional healers. She or he is a person who defines an illness (diagnostician) and also divines the circumstances of the illness within a cultural context”. *Sangomas* are generally called by different names. For instance, “they are known as

The falling back of African Christians to traditional customs and practices therefore appears to be a lasting feature of African Christianity, particularly within the South African context.

What makes this phenomenon appear to be unattractive or worrying for some religious institutions, is that there are Priests, Pastors or Church leaders who tend to become *Sangomas* while claiming to be *'bona fide'* Christians. Remaking to this situation, Mlisa (2009:8) contended that "it is no longer a shame to see a well-educated person or Christian in *igqirha's* regalia or wearing white beads both at church and at work". Thus, the acceptance of dual identities², though not convinced that this should be perceived as such, by one as a Christian and *Sangoma* has become a developed and concrete realism for African Christians, particularly in South Africa.

Some Christian scholars are in agreement that this goes against the very essence of Christianity (Hastings 1989:30-35; Bediako 1994:14). This is because Christianity is a faith that embraces monotheism and forbids pluralism. The traditional understanding of the essence of Christianity rests upon the Person of Christ, who is seen as the sole mediator between humanity and God (Hastings, 1976:50ff). The role of ancestors (or living-dead)³ is out-richtly rejected, as the process of mediation is believed to come through Christ and by Christ alone (Mackay 1953:97; Oshitelu 1998:98).

Igqirha in Xhosa, *Ngaka* in Northern Sotho, *Selaoli* in Southern Sotho, and *Mungome* in Venda and Tsonga. But most South Africans refer to them as *Sangomas* – from the Zulu word *Izangoma*" (Mokhoathi 2017b:5). Furthermore, traditional healers do not perform the same functions, nor do they fall into the same category but each traditional healer has a field of expertise, with their own methods of diagnosis and a particular set of knowledge in traditional healing and traditional medicines (cf. Ilse Truter 2007:57–58).

² There is an intimate link between religion and identity. Some ethnic groups such as the Amish, Hutterites, Mormons, and Jews perceive their religion as equalling their identity (Abramson 1980:869–875). Thus, a Jew or an Arab can be a Christian without being said they are assuming double identities. Some African ethnic groups take religion and identity that way. Their religions and cultures are intertwined, and cannot be easily isolated (Mokhoathi 2017b:6). For them, the juxtapositioning of Christianity and ATR does not produce double identities, but one identity, which characterises their new (distinct) way of life. For further discussions on the intimate link between religion and identity, see (cf. Mokhoathi 2017c:3–5; Padgett 1980:55–77; Stout 1975:204–224; Marty 1972:5–21)

³ The ancestors (or living-dead) are considered to be deceased senior males of the agnatic group or clan, who are the descendants of the common great-grandfather (Hammond-Tooke 1975:17-19). But in the *Mpondo* tradition, the concept of ancestors also includes all the deceased old people, and not just the deceased senior males (Hunter 1936:123).

Conservative Christians, in particular, strongly argue that apart from Christ, there is no form of reconciliation that may be obtained between humanity and God. Berkhof (1939:319) depicts the role of Jesus Christ, perceived as the only true mediator between humanity and God, in the following manner:

It was necessary that Christ should assume human nature, not only with all its essential properties, but also with all infirmities to which it is liable after the fall, and should thus descend to the depths of degradation to which man had fallen, Heb. 2:17, 18. At the same time, He had to be sinless man, for a man who was himself a sinner and who had forfeited his own life, certainly could not atone for others, Heb. 7:26. Only such a truly human Mediator, who had experimental knowledge of the woes of mankind and rose superior to all temptations, could enter sympathetically into all the experiences, the trials, and the temptations of man, Heb. 2:17,18; 4:15–5:2; Phil. 2:5–8; Heb.12:2–4; 1Pet. 2:21.

Hodge (1960:627) further notes that Jesus is “the *Salvator Hominum* (Saviour of Men); the Messiah predicted by the prophets; the prophet, priest, and king of his people; his sacrifice has been accepted as a satisfaction to divine justice, and his blood as a ransom for many”. Thus, within the Christian perspective, one is either a Christian⁴, who finds forgiveness with God through the righteousness of Christ, which is imputed on them or is still a sinner who is desperately in need of God’s offer of salvation (Borris 2003:6).

This offer is received by personal concession and acceptance of the Gospel by faith (Simuț 2003:119). Other than that, there is no alternative ground from which one may call on both Christ and ancestors, at once or interchangeably, for mediation. There is no provision that is granted to those who want to juxtapose Christianity with any other

⁴ The term ‘Christian’ in this study is used to refer to a person who has accepted the Christian faith and made a firm decision to become a follower of Jesus Christ (Mugambi 2002:516–517). In consequent, Christianity is regarded as an institute which affirms the Lordship of Jesus Christ, as the Son of God, who brings about the process of reconciliation between humanity and God (Mokhoathi 2017b:3; Barker 2005:2).

religion, such as the African Traditional Religion. For Christian proponents, such as Borris (2003:6), one is either a Christian or a sinner in need of Christ.

Within the African Religionist view, some form of variation exists. The rigorist African Religionists utterly reject the lived practice of syncretism, and advocate for the sanctity of African Traditional Religion⁵. In this rigorist view, one cannot go both ways; it is either one is an African Religionist or not (Mndende 2009:8). There is no third-way, in which one may be permitted to 'sit on the fence'. Thus, this rigorist position is also exclusive – one is either an African Religionist or none at all.

The aspect of variation only comes to effect with the view of nominal Religionists. Nominal African Religionists are more tolerant of, and acknowledge plurality. They are more lenient to other religions, and tend to incorporate certain elements of other religions into their African Traditional Religion (Mlisa 2009:116ff; Hirst 2005:4). This group often juxtaposes the ATR with other religious faiths like Christianity and Islam. Thus, even though conservative Christians and rigorist African Religionists advocate for the sanctity of their religions, they are often challenged by moderate African Religionists.

Therefore, no matter how separate these groups desire to be or each perceives itself to be; they are often joined together by nominal Christians. These are the people who, according to Mndende (2009:1), are "sitting on the fence". The Pastoral statement of the Southern African Catholic Bishops (2006:1) has attested to this. It states that there are Catholic priests who often act as *Sangomas* and call upon ancestors for healing (SACB 2006:1). In this regard, these priests strive to fulfil the dual roles of Christian clergies and *Sangomas*. However, the Pastoral Statement does not indicate

⁵ The term 'ATR' is used here in the singular. This stands against the popular perception that the term should be used in plural – as African religions (Mndende 2013:76–77). Mbiti (1990:1–5) initially followed this direction, as he referred to 'ATR' in plural (as African religions). But he later abandoned this usage in his second edition: "in the first edition I spoke about "African religions" in the plural to keep alive the diversity of African religiosity ... I now use the singular, "African religion," more than the plural expression" (Mbiti 1990:13). The word 'traditional' is included "to indicate that these religions emerged among traditional communities in specific regions before they came into contact with other world religions and cultures" (Crafford 2015:2). Thus, the use of 'ATR' in the singular is perceived to be more approving because it accounts for the common racial origin of Africans and the similarities of their culture and religious beliefs (Idowu 1973:103–104).

how they achieve this end. Probably because they are, at the moment, purely “acting” the part and are not actually practising *Sangomas* (SACB 2006:1).

Beyond the prevalence of Catholic priests, who strive to fulfil the binary roles of Christian clergies and *Sangomas* by merely “acting” the part, there are legitimate Christian pastors and Church leaders who do not only ‘act the part’, but are devotedly fulfilling the demands of both roles. These are Christian leaders who have responded to the Christian call to ministry and to ‘*Sangomahood*’⁶. Examples of such Christian leaders who are also *Sangomas* include personalities such as Nomfundo Lily-Rose Mlisa (2009:116f), and Nonkululeko Sheilla Sandlana (2014:543f).

Their fulfilment of binary roles as Christian leaders and *Sangomas* is something that is very distinctive, though not so rare in South Africa. More importantly, their realism has not been kept a secret but has been academically acknowledged. For instance, in her Doctoral Dissertation (PhD), which is titled “*Ukuthwasa, Initiation of Amagqirha: Identity Construction and the Training of Xhosa Women as Traditional Healers*”, Mlisa (2009:116f) draws upon her personal experiences, as a church leader, to uncover the realities of people who are *Sangomas*.

Although she does not specifically focus on the link between Christian leadership and ‘*Sangomahood*’, her religious background from which she started as a Sunday school child, to being a full member of the Women’s *Manyano*⁷ (Prayer and Service Union) in the Methodist Church, a preacher and finally a Pastor, is something worth to be considered (Mlisa 2009:xi). Her experiences, and so are those of people who have undergone the same route, are invaluable because she possesses a realism which no outsider can understand apart from the disclosure of the experiencer.

⁶ ‘*Sangomahood*’ here refers to different dimensions of *Sangoma* practices, categories and knowledge systems. Since each traditional healer has a field of expertise, with their own methods of diagnosis and a particular set of knowledge in traditional medicines, the term ‘*Sangomahood*’ tries to normalise the vast traditional practices and healing methods of *Sangomas*.

⁷ Women’s *Manyano* is a prayer and service union of Black Women of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa. It was instituted around December 1907 to supplement the Women’s Auxiliary service. This prayer and service union was initially called ‘*Unyamezelo*’ which meant perseverance, steadfastness, to be strong and faithful. But later, the term ‘*Manyano*’ was used to symbolise unity (cf. Attwell 1997:4; Myembezi 1988:23; Minutes of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa 1937:233).

In her point of view, the two religious systems – Christianity and African Traditional Religion, do not contradict each other. She maintains that they are “related systems of thought and practice” (Mlisa 2009:9), and thus can be put to practise together. Hirst (2005), an anthropologist who has conducted a number of research studies on the subject of divination and Xhosa diviners, appears to corroborate this assertion. Hirst (2005:4) also noted that for moderate African Religionists, Christianity and ATR are perceived as related systems of thought and practice:

From the healer’s perspective, Christianity and traditional religion are considered to be related systems of thought and practice. The terms of one system are transferable into the terms of the other and the ensuing transpositions used in a mutually reinforcing way.

Thus, the juxtapositioning of Christianity and ATR by nominal African Religionists is something not looked upon as impractical or contradictory. Rather, both systems appear to be coherent, as they are used in a mutually reinforcing way. In this sense, the terms of one system are transferred into the other to form a unit (single system) – not dualism or the production of double identities. This implies that these two seemingly different systems – Christianity and ATR, which often appear to contradict each other theoretically, can be expressed harmoniously at a practical level.

Some people, such as Mlisa (2009:116f), and Sandlana (2014:543ff), are able to execute the demands of both religions as Church leaders and *Sangomas*. In this manner, Christianity appears to overlap with the ATR. What brings about this process is the disposition of nominal African Religionists, who are both Church leaders and *Sangomas*. Against this background, one finds professing Christians who seem to derive some form of satisfaction from African traditional practices (Mbiti 1992:264). These are the Christians who often juxtapose Christianity with African traditional practices.

This phenomenon becomes evident when Christians revert back to the consultation of *Sangomas* for remedial and immediate interventions (Ntombana 2015:108). In this background, it becomes difficult for African Christians to openly choose between Christianity and their African traditional customs and practices. Both

systems mean something to them: “Christianity connects them to God, while African traditional practices provide a lasting bond with their ancestors” (Mokhoathi 2017b:9).

In such situations, African Christians tend to lack the aspiration to part ways with Christianity and to totally abandon the African Traditional Religion because they are somehow attached to their African traditional practices (Mokhoathi 2017b:9). According to Mbiti (1969:223), another reason why Africans cannot simply choose between Christianity and African Traditional Religion is that Christianity has been in existence for too long in Africa. It has predisposed the lives of Africans so much that “it can rightly be described as an indigenous, traditional and African religion” (Mbiti 1969:223). Due to its great influence, Christianity has been adopted and practised in unison with the ATR.

The juxtapositioning of Christianity and ATR has further produced a new form of Christianity. It is the type of Christianity that is commonly known as ‘African Christianity’ (Mndende 2013:79). But since its emergence, scholars like Maluleke (2010:370) have been very critical of this form of Christianity. He stated that “[t]he very notion of “African Christianity” appeared to depict something to be handled with caution and suspicion, if it was not to be rejected altogether” (Maluleke 2010:370). In his view, this is because the concept of ‘African Christianity’ lacks “the requisite history, culture and theological traditions for Christianity to take on a distinguishable African identity, and the suggestion that Christianity was universal and therefore did not need to be qualified as ‘African’ (Maluleke 2010:370).

This seems to imply that the very concept of ‘African Christianity’ was not suitable for African Christians, and therefore uncalled for, since it does not comprise of the necessary history, culture backing nor theological traditions in which to distinctively give it an ‘African’ identity. Moreover, as a universal religion, Christianity may not simply be reduced to an ‘African’ concept. In Maluleke’s view (2010:372), this may lower the ‘universal standards’ of Christianity and fit it with the local ‘African standards’. In addition, this process may not benefit neither African Christians nor the quintessence of Christian as a universal religion.

The notion of 'African Christianity' therefore remains an intensely debated concept in Africa. But with the current status of 'African Christianity', which appears to dilute the purity of both Christianity and African Traditional Religion, it is not known whether these debates are beneficial or not. Their outcomes are still to be realised. So far, as Maluleke (2010:372) contends, the notion of 'African Christianity' appears to be too wide and covers a great scope to be meaningfully examined. This is primarily because one cannot meaningfully explore the expression of Christianity within the African cultural and religious context without being confronted by the conventional argument of syncretism.

Adamo (2011:16), for instance, notes that many Christian theologians still consider the interchange between Christianity and ATR to be a move towards syncretism. He asserts that "the question of inculturation or Africanisation of Christianity is seen as a corruption of Christianity, because Christianity must be Christocentric. As a result, (the) Christian religion is absolutised". McGuire (2008:189) traced the hesitation of blending Christianity with other religions from the era of the Reformation.

She asserted that "[t]oward the end of the Long Reformation, theologians gave the term "syncretism" a pejorative connotation" (McGuire 2008:189), thereby adversely shifting the normal understanding of the term 'syncretism'. Thereafter, syncretism "came to mean the blending of foreign, non-Christian elements with (putatively "pure", "authentic") Christian beliefs and practices" (McGuire 2008:189). In that regard, the term 'syncretism' came to be regarded as the corruption of the Christian faith (Mokhoathi 2017:4).

On the contrary, anthropologist Stewart (1994:274) advocates for the move beyond 'syncretism' towards 'hybridity'. Shaw and Stewart (1994:26) further complicate the Reformation's understanding of "syncretism" by characterising it as "the process by which cultures constitute themselves at any given point". McGuire (2008:190) adds to this by stating that "[a]ll cultural traditions—including religious traditions—are based on this kind of inter-penetration and interaction with external influences".

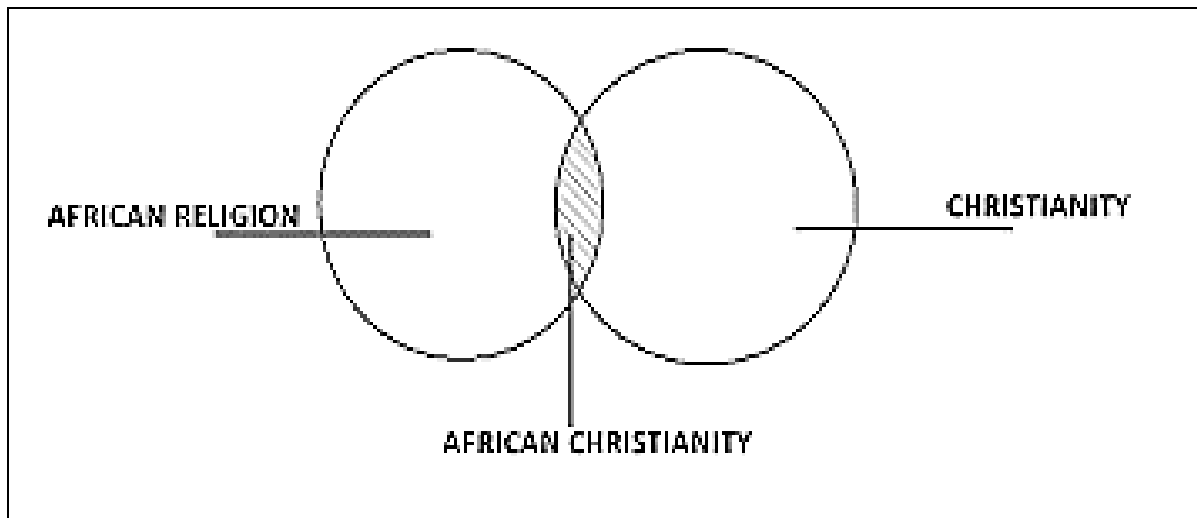
This seems to imply that "all religions are necessarily syncretic and (are) continually changing, as people try to make sense of their changing social worlds, including other cultures with which they come in contact" (McGuire 2008:192). With that

idea in mind, this should probably warrant the review of the referral of 'African Christianity', which is indeed the juxtapositioning of Christianity and ATR, as 'syncretism'.

Scholars such as Oden (2007:93) also notes that "Christianity meets the criterion of indigenous or traditional African religion, since it has twenty centuries of sustained presence in Africa". But again, this may raise some concerns with the aspect of assimilation. Since the African cultural heritage is intimately intertwined with the religious heritage, it may be difficult to identify those elements of the African cultural and religious heritage which may be incorporated into, or tolerated by the Christian system.

The African cultural heritage is imbedded within the African religious heritage. Nonetheless, in an effort to signify the temperament of Christianity when juxtaposed with the African Traditional Religion, Mndende (2013:79) used the following diagram:

Figure 1.1: The nature of African Christianity



Source: Mndende, 2013. Law and Religion in South Africa: An African Traditional Perspective.

Figure 1.1 shows the embodiment of 'African Christianity'. It is the consequence of the amalgamation of Christianity and ATR. In one sense, following the Reformative understanding, it is the product of syncretism (McGuire 2008:189), from which the ethico-spiritual principles of Christianity are practised in conjunction with those of the African Traditional Religion. Thus, considering an outsider's view, the juxtapositioning of Christianity and African Traditional Religion appears to dilute the purity of Christianity or

that of the African Traditional Religion, as both religions seem to lose their uniqueness when expressed together.

Due to this form of syncretism, one may easily conclude that the juxtapositioning of Christianity and ATR is the distortion of the originality of both systems, since there is currently no definite clarity on how both systems come or work together. But this form of syncretism cannot simply be written-off as distortion. It requires a closer look or scientific enquiry to be fully understood. This is more necessary because scholars often judge the juxtapositioning of Christianity and ATR from the outside, without listening to the voices of the experiencers – the people who are living out this realism. As such, scholars are divided in their understanding of this matter.

There are currently three interpretations, which serve as basic points of reference to the understandings of the juxtapositioning of Christianity and ATR. The first perspective is that of conservative Christians. Represented by scholars such as Jarvis (2009:43), conservative Christians maintain that the Christian system does not allow the inclusion of African cultural and religious beliefs, which conflict with the revelation of God, as found in the Bible. Consequently, African Christians are urged to renounce or break away from their cultural and religious beliefs.

In this perspective, African Christians are strongly admonished to cut ties with their traditional cultures⁸ and religious beliefs, particularly those that pertain to the “fear of evil spirits, evil spells, curses, or the anger or favour of spirits of ancestors” (Jarvis 2009:44)⁹. These traditional cultures and religious beliefs are said to stand against the revealed will of God – that is, the Bible. In this regard, Christianity is perceived to be

⁸ Michael Jarvis seems to be following on the footsteps of early missionaries on this point. Wallace Mills (1995:153–172), for instance, noted that early missionaries often rejected the practice of traditional rites and customs. For instance, traditional rites and customs such as circumcision (initiation rites), *lobola* (dowry, or bride-price), the drinking of traditional beer, etc. were largely opposed by missionaries among the Xhosas.

⁹ Simon Maimela (1985:71) seems to have addressed this issue when he noted that for many Africans the church seems not to be “interested in their daily misfortunes, illness, encounter with evil and witchcraft, bad luck, poverty, barrenness – in short, all their concrete social problems...” He argues that “most Africans often do not know what to do with their new, attractive Christian religion and yet one which dismally fails to meet their emotional and spiritual needs”. He further frames this as the strength of African Independent/Initiated Churches (AICs) because they give Africans “an open invitation” to bring their concrete social problems to the church leadership.

exclusive, putatively pure and authentic (McGuire 2008:189); therefore, it cannot be juxtaposed with other religions, such as the African Traditional Religion or Islam.

The second perspective is that of African rigorist religionists. This is the perspective, which seeks to preserve and promote the African cultural and religious heritage¹⁰ of indigenous people that was handed down to them by the forebears of the present generation (Mbiti 1975:12). In this standpoint, scholars like Mndende (2009:1) strongly argue that indigenous people must not juxtapose their African traditional and customs with foreign components coming from other religions, such as Christianity or Islam.

The juxtapositioning of ATR with other religions, whether it is Christianity or Islam, is perceived as the restriction of true African spirituality (Mndende 2009:1). In this regard, indigenous people are also strongly urged to preserve their traditional practices and customs and to uphold the sanctity of ATR by not juxtaposing it with foreign religious practices whether from Christianity or Islam. Those who juxtapose the ATR with Christian or Islamic components are said to be 'sitting on the fence' (Mndende 2009:1).

The third and last perspective is that which is held by moderate African religionists. This perspective assumes a middle ground. The proponents of this perspective argue that both Christianity and ATR may be juxtaposed or embraced together (Hirst 2005:4; Mlisa 2009:9). Mbiti (1992:264), for instance, is of the opinion that Christianity has strongly influenced Africans to an extent that they had to integrate Christian values into their cultural value systems. In this perspective therefore, Christianity is seen as the means by which African Christians get to relate to God, while African traditional practices and customs provide some form of socio-spiritual context in which to connect with ancestors (Mbiti 1992:264).

¹⁰ John Mbiti (1975:7ff) notes that the African heritage is composed of different facets, which may be divided into three. These are, namely: the historical, cultural and religious heritages. All these facets make-up a whole, from which the African cultural and religious heritage is derived.

The moderate African religionist view therefore, takes Christianity and African Traditional Religion as two related systems of thought and practice. The rationale for the positions taken by both conservative Christians, and African rigorist religionists appear to be reasonable. Both Christianity and African Traditional Religion seek to preserve some form of purity by waning off any signs of religious infiltration into their distinctive beliefs.

In this context, both the conservative Christian and African rigorist perspectives seem to assume a protective position. They both seeks to keep syncretism away from their distinctive faiths. However, the manner in which both Christianity and African Traditional Religion approaches this issue appears to be problematic. As suggested by Jarvis (2009:43), the only possible way in which Africans may fully become Christians is when they renounce their cultural and religious beliefs, which conflict with the revelation of God as found in the Bible.

In this regard, one cannot be a devout Christian while holding on to their traditional culture and religious beliefs. This argument seems to speak directly to the enquiry of this research. How are Africans to measure and extract those cultural and religious beliefs that stand against the word of God, when their cultural and religious elements are intertwined? Ultimately, does this not lead towards the abandonment of the entire African heritage? For that matter, how can Africans attain a sense of ignorance (or lack of fear) for the reality of evil spirits, evil spells, curses, or the anger or favour of spirits of ancestors, when that is an integral part of their lived experiences?¹¹

However, scholars like Mbiti (1975:130), and Leonard (1906:429) have shown that the total break away of Africans from their cultural roots and religious beliefs is almost an impossible mission. This is because the traditional culture and religious beliefs of Africans form part of their identity. Leonard (1906:429) expressed this sentiment in the following manner: “The religion of these natives (Africans) is their existence and their

¹¹ The reality of evil spirits, evil spells, curses, the anger or favour of ancestors, among others, is an integral part of the lived experiences of Africans. For further discussions, see (cf. Allan Anderson 2000:30–31).

existence is their religion... The entire organisation of their common life is so interwoven with it that they cannot get away from it..."

Some 69 years later, Mbiti (1975:13) observed a similar attitude regarding the total break away of Africans from their traditional culture and religious beliefs:

[W]hen Africans migrate in large numbers from one part of the continent to another, or from Africa to other continents, they take religion with them. They can only know how to live within their religious context. Even if they are converted to another religion like Christianity or Islam, they do not completely abandon their traditional religion immediately: it remains with them for several generations and sometimes centuries.

Therefore, it appears to be difficult for Africans to entirely abandon their traditional cultures and religious beliefs. Even when they do eventually abandon these, it is a process that takes several generations, and sometimes centuries. Their new Christian identity is often adopted in conjunction with the old African traditional and religious identity.

As Mbiti (1975:13) contended, this is because their African Traditional Religion is their way of life and "within that religious way of life, they know who they are, how to act in different situations, and how to solve their problems". Thus, the popular Western perception of alienating African converts from their traditional cultures and religious beliefs (Mills 1995:153–172), in order for them to be regarded as '*bona fide*' Christians, appears to be coming to an end. It appears to be a colossal demand for African Christians.

The African rigorist perspective, as well, appears to pose some problems. It seems to suggest that one cannot freely experience their 'true' African spirituality when they juxtapose the African Traditional Religion with other faiths like Christianity. The expression of 'true' African spirituality appears to come only when indigenous people continue to preserve their African cultural and religious heritage, which was handed down to them by the forebears of the present generation. In this manner, one cannot embrace the ATR together with other religions because this denotes that they are "sitting on the fence" (Mndende 2009:1).

The supposed contradiction of embracing the African Traditional Religion together with Christianity is remarked upon by Mndende (2009:8) as follows:

One wonders how one can officiate in a ritual professing ancestors as intermediaries between humanity and God, and at the same time go to church and preach that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life? Surely these two practices are based on mutually exclusive, irreconcilable tenets of faith; a contradiction in terms.

Thus, the African rigorist perspective argues that one cannot be an African religionist while a Christian at the same time.

This perspective however, seems to overlook the reality of people who amalgamate the two systems – Christianity and ATR, and hold that they are related systems of thought and practice. It is a known fact that there are Africans who regard themselves as Christians while they are also traditional healers, or continue to practice their traditional customs (Mlisa 2009:8; Hirst 2005:4). This African rigorist view seems to undermine the existence of such a reality. This view further seems to suggest that converting to Christianity, as Mbiti (1975:13) and Leonard (1906:429) argued, is almost impossible because Africans find it difficult to renounce their traditional cultures and religious beliefs.

Seemingly, Leonard (1906:429) endorsed this sentiment when he pointed out that Africans can only freely express themselves within their religious context: “[T]hey eat religiously, drink religiously, and sing religiously”. In this regard, the religion of Africans is said to be an overarching factor that is intimately interwoven to their cultural expressions, from which no other religion can replace. In this form of expression, Africans are said to “eat religiously, drink religiously and (even) sing religiously” (Leonard 1906:429). Even though this may possess some truth, it is not always the case. Jarvis (2009:34) notes that there are Africans who converted to Christianity, that have completely broken away from the influence of their cultures and religious beliefs – particularly from the influence of venerating ancestors.

The last perspective, which assumes the middle ground, seems to address the realism of Africans who live with the awareness of the influence of Christianity on the ATR, and also acknowledge the impact exerted by the ATR on Christianity. On the one hand, there are African religionists who argue that Christianity has strongly influenced Africans so much that they had to incorporate Christian values into their cultural systems (Mlisa 2009:9). On the other hand, there are Christians who argue that Christianity cannot be expressed or communicated outside a cultural medium; thus, the African cultural heritage must give context to the expression of Christianity (Mugambi 2002:519).

The separation of Christianity from the African culture, in this perspective, is said to have resulted in a life of double standards among African converts (Pityana 1999:137; Mtuze 2003:8). This view, therefore, maintains that Christianity must find an expression within the cultural context. In this backdrop, where the terms of one religion are expressed through the other, Mugambi (2002:518) notes that “[s]cholars are now predicting that in the twenty-first century Christianity will be riding on the cultures of Africa and Asia”. Therefore, this seems to suggest that the expression of Christianity within the African cultural context is the only realistic premise for African Christianity.

However, this perspective seems to raise a number of concerns. The first is that the practices of both Christianity and ATR appear to be contradictory. Mndende (2009:8), for instance, argues that one cannot simply officiate in a ritual that professes ancestors as mediators between humanity and God, and then turn to preach that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. Therefore, the practices of these two systems are “based on mutually exclusive, irreconcilable tenets of faith; a contradiction in terms” (Mndende 2009:8).

The second concern is that there are no definite boundaries between the plain elements of the African cultural and religious heritage (Mndende 2009:117). Both the elements of the African cultural heritage and religious heritage are seen as overlapping, and thus are often thought of as an item. In this overlap, there is no distinction between traditional customs and religious beliefs. Therefore, one cannot identify the cultural heritage from the religious life of Africans. Due to this limitation, the calling of traditional

healers is often perceived as part of the African cultural heritage, instead of being looked at, only, as the aspect of the African religious life¹².

As the integral part of the African cultural heritage, divination is principally accepted on the bases, and explained in terms of one's cultural lineage – in terms of Xhosa divination, Zulu divination, or any other African agnatic groups' system of divination (Hirst 2007:218–219). In this context, the connection of one with their clan is imperative; as the call to divination (*ukuthwasa*)¹³ is transmitted, or may be responded to wholly within one's agnatic group (Hirst 2005:3). This call is said to come from the ancestors (Mlisa 2009:xii). The ancestors are deceased senior males of the agnatic group or clan, who are the descendants of the common great-grandfather (Hammond-Tooke 1975:17–19)¹⁴.

However, in the *Mpondo* tradition, the concept of ancestors also includes all the deceased old people, and not just the deceased senior males (Hunter 1936:123). Ancestors play a significant role in African cosmology; thus, their status has often been overly elevated (Muzorewa 1985:12). Some Christians go so far as to equate Jesus Christ with ancestors (Nxumalo 1981:67)¹⁵. According to Nyamiti (1984:9), this is a paradigm which begins with “African ancestral beliefs and practices and tries to confront these with the Christian teaching on the saviour”.

African theologians such as Charles Wanamaker (1997:296) Kwame Bediako (1994:99), and Francois Kabasele (1991:46) seem to advocate for this Christology. However, scholars such as Jarvis (2009:25–27) have been very critical of the elevation of ancestors. He maintains that “it is God who should be held in awe, not the spirits of the ancestors, or any other spirit” (Jarvis 2009:43).

¹² Nokuzola Mndende (2013:78) exemplifies this intersection when she states that “rituals are special gatherings of the clans aimed at communal religious practices”. This means that some agnatic group rituals carry a religious significance, even though they are taken to be communal.

¹³ Nomfundo Mlisa (2009:x) asserts that ‘*Ukuthwasa*’ is a spiritual journey that is specifically designed by ancestors for those who are endowed with the gift of healing by their ancestors.

¹⁴ For further discussions (cf. Mayer & Mayer 1974:151; Wilson 1982:27).

¹⁵ Jabulani Nxumalo (1981:67) asserts the following: “In my view, there is a relationship between Christ and the ancestors, for the simple reason that Christ died too. He is therefore an *idlozi* (the living-dead) to us, since those who are dead are *amadlozi* (plural of *idlozi*) for us. Therefore, Christ and those who have died are united together. We call them together in Christ”.

Ancestors form part of the African cultural and religious heritage; so, their role and position within the African cultural setting, and Christian church (particularly the AICs) will always be an open-ended discussion – ancestors seem to connect Africans to their cultural and religious heritage. Therefore, due to the prevalence of these variant perspectives, the status of Christians who juxtapose Christianity with ATR remains a heated debate in Africa, particularly in South Africa.

As a result, many Africans have resolved to live by double standards, professing to be Christians in public, while reverting to the practice of ATR in private (Ntombana 2015:105). This is a phenomenon which scholars like Mbiti (1992:264) describe as “religious concubinage”. It is a phenomenon whereby believers acknowledge one religion in public while they practise another in private. Mathema (2007:5) contends that these are professed Christians who derive some form of satisfaction from African traditional practices.

What seems to be interesting in this matter is that there are few African Christians who have openly acknowledged their juxtaposing Christianity and African Traditional Religion. This has been the state of affairs, despite the well-known fact that some African Christians do find some form of satisfaction from African traditional practices (Jebadu 2007:246; Onuzulike 2008:6; Amanze 2003:43; Matobo *et al.* 2009:105). Most Christians, who juxtapose the two systems, tend to keep this matter a secret, even though they benefit from it.¹⁶

The few that have openly acknowledged their juxtaposing of Christianity and ATR have not taken the liberty to paint a clear picture of such a realism. Even though much is known about Christian leadership¹⁷ and ‘*Sangomahood*’ as separate entities, not much is known about the association of the two religious systems, and how they are

¹⁶ Nomfundo Mlisa (2009:x) notes that in the past, ‘*ukuthwasa*’ carried a stigma and no educated or Christian person would want to admit or show in public that they had an *ubizo* (a calling). Perhaps this stigma is still felt by those who receive *ubizo* (the calling), even though the practice of ‘*Sangomahood*’ has attracted a lot of attention lately.

¹⁷ Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus (1985:4) notes that there are more than 350 definitions of leadership in academic analysis. These differs from one academic to another. But for the sake of this research study, a “Christian leader” is regarded as “someone who is called by God to lead; Leads with and through Christlike character; and demonstrates the functional competencies that permit effective leadership to take place” (George Barna 1997:25).

being made to work together by those who assume dual roles as Church leaders and *Sangomas*.

What is presently known is that these two religious systems are considered to be related systems of thought and practice (Mlisa 2009:9; Hirst 2005:1–22). But, as to how these systems are expressed together, it remains something to be established. That is precisely why this study was undertaken. It sought to explore the juxtapositioning of Christianity and African Traditional Religion, particularly the link between Christian leadership and '*Sangomahood*'.

Those few Christians, who have pliantly acknowledged their juxtaposing of Christianity and African Traditional Religion, have not sufficiently addressed this issue. Mlisa (2009:116f), and Sandlana (2014:543), for instance, have tried to demonstrate how one can be a *Sangoma* while a Christian at once. But they do not specifically focus on how these two religious systems – Christianity and ATR, work together. However, one cannot discredit their studies, they are very informative. They provide a closer look into the lives of people who have responded to '*Sangomahood*', and yet remained Christians – in positions of leadership.

This, by itself, seems to suggest that their existential reality is unique, and cannot be understood objectively but mostly subjectively. This makes this realism worth exploring since it cannot be fully understood apart from the disclosure of the experiencers. In its enquiry, it would be productive to establish how the experiencers get to fulfil the dual roles of being church leaders and *Sangomas* at once, without compromising the principles of the other; or without losing their sense of identity in the process. Simply put, the point of enquiry here relates to how both Christianity and ATR are used to benefit or to reinforce the roles of church leadership and '*Sangomahood*'.

Again, this enquiry further probes into the conceptual aspect of this unison: Does the juxtapositioning of Christianity and African Traditional Religion not affect the essence of Christianity, or that of the African Traditional Religion itself? Can Christianity still be considered to be Christianity when juxtaposed with African traditional cultures and religious beliefs? And do African traditional practices and religious beliefs carry any value when juxtaposed with Christian elements or belief systems? The findings of this

enquiry may probably shed some light on the nebulous but pragmatic association of Christianity and ATR by Church leaders and *Sangomas*.

1.3 Problem statement

The problem of the study emanates from the fact that some professed Christians, from various denominational backgrounds, seem to be deriving some form of satisfaction from African traditional practices and yet the juxtapositioning of Christianity and ATR is still a nebulous subject. This is mainly because the juxtapositioning of the two traditions is rarely acknowledged and those who juxtapose the two systems prefer to keep it a secret. Hence there is little or no research elaborating how the two systems work together.

Furthermore, the available literature concerning the juxtapositioning of the two traditions does not clearly indicate how both systems are or have been used together. In particular is the case of those who fulfil the dual roles of being church leaders and *Sangomas*. The few that have openly acknowledged their juxtaposing Christianity with the ATR, and appear to be sufficiently fulfilling the binary roles of Church leadership and '*Sangomahood*' have not documented how they fulfil such demands without compromising the principles of the other system, or without losing their identity in the process.

Hence, this study was undertaken; and, it sought to explore how Christianity and ATR are being juxtaposed to benefit or reinforce the dual roles of Christian leadership and '*Sangomahood*'. It further enquired as to whether Christianity can still be regarded as Christianity when juxtaposed with African traditional practices; and as to whether African traditional practices do carry any significant value when juxtaposed with Christian belief systems.

1.4 Research questions

1.4.1 Main research question

What is the relationship between African Christian leadership and ‘*Sangomahood*’?

1.4.2 Sub-questions

- How is Christianity juxtaposed with African Traditional Religion?
- Does Christianity remain the same when juxtaposed with African traditional practices?
- Do African traditional practices yield any value when juxtaposed with Christian belief systems?
- How does Christian leadership relate with ‘*Sangomahood*’?
- What are the effects of juxtaposing Christianity and ATR to personal identity?

1.5 Research objectives

- To explore how Christian leadership correlations with ‘*Sangomahood*’.
- To assess whether Christianity remains the same when juxtaposed with African traditional practices.
- To inquire whether African traditional practices do carry some significant value when juxtaposed with Christian belief systems.
- To explore how Christian leadership relates to ‘*Sangomahood*’.
- To examine the effects of juxtaposing Christianity and ATR to personal identity.

1.6 The site of the study

During the empirical processes of this study, the researcher visited three geographical sites, from which the participants who participated in this study were purposely chosen. These geographical areas were located around the Eastern Cape (EC). Three major towns were considered. These included Alice, Fort Beaufort, and *Dutywa*. The rationale for choosing these geographical locations is that, *firstly*, the respondents who served as the case study for this research were located in these geographical areas.

Secondly, these locations were chosen because they hosted some well-known personalities, who were both Christians and *Sangomas*. And *lastly*, these locations hosted institutions that promote indigenous cultures and religious customs. Some correspondence was therefore established and maintained with these personalities or institutions in order for the researcher to gain entry into the sites to collect the necessary data for this study.

For the purpose of familiarising the reader with the geographical locations with which this research study took place, a brief historical background of each research site and a map showing its location has been provided.

1.6.1 The geographical location of Alice

Alice is a small town that is situated on the banks of the *Tyhume* and *Gagha* Rivers under the *Amathole* district of the Eastern Cape Province in Southern Africa (Alice Small Town Regeneration Strategy (ASTRS) 2011:1). Whereas the area has been populated for many centuries, the Alice Small Town Regeneration Strategy (2011:1) states that, “the town of Alice has its origins in the colonial period in the nineteenth century, having been formerly established in 1852 to serve as an administrative centre for the surrounding district.”

The ASTRS (2011:1) further details that the growth and development of Alice was influenced by the institutions for the training and education of Africans since the early 1800s. The University of Fort Hare (UFH), which is one of the world-renowned universities of South Africa, is situated within the Alice area. The University has a great history, which is not be addressed here because of the limitations of this study.

However, it is worth noting that the University of Fort Hare was founded in 1861, and since then, it has produced a significant number of African intellectuals and leaders who were, and still are, actively involved in the development of Africa, as a continent, and the world. In 2016, the University of Fort Hare celebrated its centenary year (100 years) since its inception (THE VOICE, June/July Issue, 2016:4)

In relation to the study, some of the participants that were included in the case study were purposively selected from Alice town (the University of Fort Hare), and the surrounding rural areas, such as *Gqumashe*, Upper *Ncera*, *Skweyiya*, *Dyamala*, *Ntselamanzi*, and Middle-drift (*Xesi*).

The researcher further approached and invited some participants from local organisations that promote the practice and development of indigenous systems, cultures, and heritage to partake in the study. Only those participants who said they were Christians and *Sangomas* were considered for this study.

Figure 1.2: The map of Alice



Source: Google maps – Map of Alice, *Nkonkobe* Municipality.

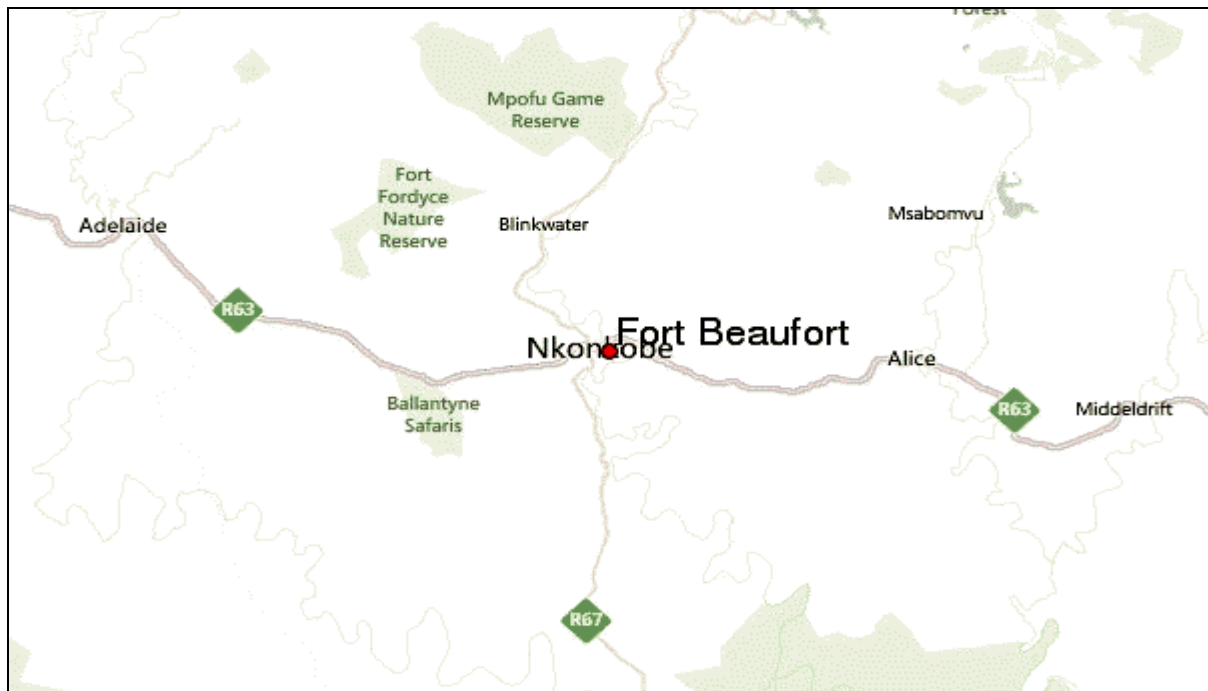
1.6.2 Geographical location of Fort Beaufort

Fort Beaufort is a town in the *Amathole* District in the Eastern Cape Province. This town was established in 1837 and became a municipality in 1883 (Eastern Cape Info 2016). The town started as a mission station that Reverend Joseph Williams of the London Missionary Society established in 1816 (Duncan 2013). In 1822, Colonel Maurice Scott

constructed a blockhouse as a military frontier post, and as a stronghold against the raids by the *Xhosas* under the chief, *Maqoma* (Duncan 2013).

The British named it 'Fort Beaufort' to honour the Duke of Beaufort, the father of Lord Charles Henry Somerset, first British governor of the Cape Colony (Easter Cape Info 2016). In 1840, Fort Beaufort became a town. In relation to this study, Fort Beaufort hosts some well-known personalities, who are both Christian and *Sangomas*, from which correspondence was established to request permission to collect the data that was necessary for this study.

Figure 1.3: The map of Fort Beaufort



Source: Google maps - Map of Fort Beaufort, Nkonkobe Municipality.

1.6.3 Geographical location of *Dutywa*

The town of *Dutywa*, which was formally known as '*Idutywa*', is a small geographical locality in the Eastern Cape Province. It is situated 35 km north of Butterworth, on the N2 road (Pinchuck *et al.* 2002:425). The town was named '*Dutywa*' as a tribute of the *Mbashe* River. One of the former Presidents of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, was born in this place. On the 16th of July 2004, the spelling of the place was officially changed by

the then Minister of Arts and Culture, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, from 'Idutywa' to 'Dutywa' (Government Gazette 2004).

In relation to the study, *Dutywa* hosts one of the well-known institutions that promote the African Traditional Religion – the '*Icamagu* Institute'. This institution is situated south of *Dutywa*, off the N2 highway in the Eastern Cape. The term '*Icamagu*' from which the Institute derives its name, is an utterance or a phrase used when one speaks with or invokes the ancestors (*Icamagu* Institute 2016). The Institute was founded in 2008 by an author of cultural and spiritual works, Dr. Nokuzola Mndende. Correspondence was established with participants who came from this institution in order for the researcher to collect the necessary data for this study.

Figure 1.4: The map of *Dutywa*



Source: Google maps – Map of *Idutywa*.

1.7 The purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to explore the juxtapositioning of Christianity and African Traditional Religion, particularly the link between the African Christian leadership and '*Sangomahood*', in order to establish how these two systems come or work together when juxtaposed.

1.8 The significance of the study

The significance of this study is optimised for the following social groups and processes:

(a) *Its value for intellectual community* – The research study is likely to generate some attention towards the juxtapositioning of Christianity and African Traditional Religion, more specifically on the assumption of dual roles by some Christians as church leaders and *Sangomas* (Traditional healers), and thereby fostering some scholarly debates on the matter.

(b) *Its value for practice* – The research study will contribute directly to the proper practice and expression of both Christianity and African Traditional Religion by Christian converts and African religionists. It does this by exploring how Christianity has been practised by African Christians when juxtaposed with African traditional practices, and by enquiring whether African traditional practices do yield any value when mixed with Christian belief systems.

(c) *Its value for the religious community* – There is anticipation that the research study will benefit both Christians and African Traditional religionists. It does this by drawing their attention to the limitations, which are imposed by Christian institutions on those who convert to Christianity from indigenous or traditional religions; and by rigorist African religionists on those who juxtapose the ATR with Christian elements or belief systems. It also provides some insights into why some professed Christians tend to revert to African traditional practices when confronted by illnesses, misfortunes or uncertainties; and as to why some moderate African religionists incorporate Christian belief systems into their traditional practices.

(d) *Its value for the general society* – The research study will benefit the society by identifying, contrasting and analysing the general roles of Christian leaders and *Sangomas* as members of the divine guardian order in societies. It further promotes the commitment of Christians and African religionists to the traditional form of religious orientation, unless a new space in which both Christianity and African Traditional Religion can co-exist amicably has been created.

1.9 The definition of key concepts

African: the term 'African', according to Kanu (2014:5), refers to the relation to, or characteristic of Africa, or its people, languages, culture, geography, race, etc. This includes all those who live in, were born or migrated to Africa. This broad definition therefore has been adopted and used as the working definition for the term 'African' in this study.

African (Traditional) Religion: The African Religion, according to Mbiti (1975:12), is the product of the thinking and experiences of Africans' forefathers. They formed religious ideas, they formulated religious beliefs, they observed religious ceremonies and rituals, they told proverbs and myths which carried religious meanings, and they evolved laws and customs which safeguarded the life of the individual and his community.

Dopamu (1991:21), citing Idowu, further states that the African Religion refers to the indigenous religion of the Africans:

It is the religion that has been handed down from generation to generation by the forebears to the present generation of Africans. It is not a fossil religion (a thing of the past) but a religion that Africans today have made theirs by living it and practicing it.

The researcher however, prefers Ekwunife's (1990) definition of the African Religion (Mokhoathi 2016:8). As cited by Kanu (2014:6), Ekwunife defined the African Religion as:

[...] those institutionalized beliefs and practices of indigenous religion of Africa which are the result of traditional Africans' responses to their believed revealing Superhuman Ultimate which are rooted from time immemorial in the past African religious culture, beliefs and practices that were transmitted to the present votaries by successive African forebears mainly through oral traditions (myths and folktales, songs and dances, liturgies, rituals, proverbs, pithy sayings, names and oaths), sacred specialists and persons, sacred space, objects and symbols, a religion which is slowly but constantly updated by each generation in

the light of new experiences through the dialectical process of continuities and discontinuities.

This definition of the African Religion, therefore, serves as the working definition of the African Religion in this study.

Ancestors: The ancestors or living-dead are the departed loved ones who are in a state of personal immortality in the spirit world, and their process of dying is not yet complete (Mbiti 1969:82). According to Mbiti (1969:82), ancestors are the closest links that humans have with the spirit world. This is because they are bilingual: they speak the language of men, with whom they lived until 'recently' (after they died); and they speak the language of the spirits and of God, to Whom they are drawing nearer ontologically.

Hammond-Tooke (1975:17–19) further states that ancestors are deceased senior males of the agnatic group or clan, who are the descendants of the common great-grandfather. But in the *Mpondo* tradition, according to Hunter (1936:123), the concept of ancestors also includes all the deceased old people, and not just the deceased senior males. These definitions are adopted jointly as a working definition for ancestors in this study.

Culture: The term 'Culture' according to Mayers (1987: xi), refers to everything that is part of one's everyday life experiences. It includes: (1). Tangibles such as food, shelter, clothing, literature, art, music, etc. (2). Intangibles such as hopes, dreams, values, rules, space, relationships, language, body movements, etc. Mugambi (2002:516) also defined culture in a similar context in his study on Christianity and the African Cultural Heritage. Therefore, this definition serves as the working definition of culture in this study.

Christian: A Christian, according to Mugambi (2002:516), is a person who has accepted the Christian faith and made a firm decision to become a follower of Jesus Christ. The term 'Christian' therefore has been used, in this study, to refer to anyone who has accepted the Christian faith and made a firm decision to become a follower of Jesus Christ.

Sangoma (Traditional healer): A *Sangoma* (Traditional healer), according to Truter (2007:56), is the most senior of traditional healers. *Sangomas* are the persons who define an illness (diagnosticians) and also divine (diviners) the circumstances of the illnesses within a cultural context. *Sangomas* undergo a training (*Ukuthwasa*), which symbolises a calling bestowed by ancestors, and this training can take from six months to 10 years (Truter 2007:56). This definition therefore has been adopted as a working definition of *Sangoma* in this study.

Traditional: The term ‘traditional’, according to Kanu (2014:5), has been resisted by scholars, since it is suggestive of that which is ancient, and thus no longer practised. However, Idowu (1973:104) explains that the word ‘traditional’, when applied within the context of the African Religion, means ‘native’ or ‘indigenous’:

[T]hat which is aboriginal or foundational, handed down from generation to generation, that which continues to be practiced by living men and women of today as religion of the forebears, not only as a heritage from the past, but also that which people of today have made theirs by living it and practicing it, that which for them connects the past with the present and upon which they base the connection between now and eternity with all that, spiritually, they hope or fear.

In this study, the term ‘traditional’ has been used “to indicate that these religions emerged among traditional communities in specific regions before they came into contact with other world religions and cultures” (Crafford 2015:2).

1.10 Summary

This section of the chapter highlighted some introductory components of this research study. As such, these following aspects were addressed: the background to the study, the research site, the statement of the problem, research questions, the objectives of the study, the purpose of the study, the significance of the study, and some key concepts were defined. The chapter closes with an outline and structure of the following chapters. The next chapter, as it will be indicated on the chapter outline, looks at the available literature dealing with the juxtaposition of Christianity and the African Religion,

particularly the combination of the Christian ministry and the African traditional calling. Lastly, this chapter mapped up the structure of the remaining chapters of the study.

1.11 Chapter outline

CHAPTER ONE: Chapter One highlights some introductory components of this research. As such, these following aspects are addressed: the background to the study, the research site, the statement of the problem, research questions, the objectives of the study, the purpose of the study, the significance of the study, and some key concepts are defined.

CHAPTER TWO: Chapter Two addresses the theoretical construct that underpins and guided the conceptual as well as the empirical processes of this study. The theoretical construct which informs this study was further used to give meaning to the lived experiences of the correspondents who participated in this study in the data analysis section of this research (Chapter VI).

CHAPTER THREE: Chapter Three reviews the already existing literature or material dealing with the juxtapositioning of Christianity and African Traditional Religion, paying more attention to the works that relate to the link between Christian leadership and '*Sangomahood*'.

CHAPTER FOUR: Chapter Four addresses the Methodological components of this study. As such, the following aspects are discussed: research methods, research approach, research paradigm, the population of the study, sample and sampling technique, the procedure for data collection, procedure for data analysis, the reliability, validity and transferability of the study, the limitations and delineations of the study, and some ethical considerations which are anticipated to occur in the process of this study.

CHAPTER FIVE: Chapter Five presents the data that was gathered for the purpose of this study. The presentation of this data follows the processes that are highlighted in the methodological section (Chapter Four), under the data analysis section.

CHAPTER SIX: Chapter Six deals with the discussions and interpretation of the presented data in order to put it into context and to establish the findings of the study. This is done following the main questions of the study.

CHAPTER SEVEN: Chapter Seven makes a summary of the findings of the study, draws some conclusions on the findings of the study, and makes some recommendations for future research studies in this field of study.

CHAPTER TWO

META-THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

2.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the practice of religious beliefs within the cultural context. It discusses Christianity and African Traditional Religion as expressed within a cultural medium. The section further highlights the theoretical premise that informed the philosophical basis, and discusses the meta-theoretical components which guided the empirical processes of this study. The theoretical concept and interrelated meta-theoretical components are discussed within the context of social research and are further applied to fit the purpose of this study.

2.2 Meta-theoretical components in social research

There are three philosophical components that are commonly associated with social research. These are, namely: meta-theory, theory, and a framework (model). These philosophical components are generally used to guide and direct the investigation of a social phenomenon (Smith 2014:1). Within the scope of this study, the investigated phenomenon pertained to the juxtapositioning of Christianity and African Traditional Religion. Specifically, the study explored the link between Christian leadership and '*Sangomahood*', by investigating the reality of people who assumed dual roles as Church leaders and *Sangomas*, or Pastors and diviners.

Therefore, as the process of social enquiry, the study investigated the premise of lived religions – the reality of people who juxtapose Christianity and African Traditional Religion, and put these two religious systems together, in practice, to fulfil the demands of religiosity, both as Church leaders and *Sangomas* (Traditional healers), or Pastors and diviners. To investigate this phenomenon, the study relied, comprehensively, on social research approaches and interrelated meta-theoretical components. These are briefly discussed below, and how they were used to serve the purpose of this study.

2.2.1 Meta-theory

According to Merriam Webster's Dictionary (accessed online, October 04, 2016), the term meta-theory refers to a theory that is concerned with the investigation, analysis, or the description of a theory itself. It regards the philosophy behind the theory and the essential ideas prescribing how a specific phenomenon, particularly of interest to the researcher, should be understood and researched.

Wallis (2010:117) corroborates this assertion by stating that “[a] metatheory is a coherent set of interlocking principles that both describe and prescribes what is meaningful and meaning-less, acceptable and unacceptable, central and peripheral, as theory – the means of conceptual exploration – and as method – the means of observational exploration.”

Within this context, a meta-theory is always aligned and used with a particular research method. This implies that a meta-theory is concerned with the development of logical ideas, put forth to explain a particular phenomenon through the use of a specific method in order to reveal its underlying assumptions. Paterson, Thorne, Canam and Jillings (2001:92) further make this idea explicit by stating that “Meta-theory is a critical exploration of the theoretical framework or lenses that have provided direction to research and to researchers, as well as the theory that has arisen from research in a particular field of study.”

Thus, a meta-theory involves the exploration of theoretical frameworks, which informs the empirical components of the research, and assists in the analysis of primary data with the aim of understanding the studied phenomenon or formulating a theory. Bates (2005:2) notes that a classical sequence which explains the progress of metatheory has been developed in Sciences. This sequence involves: ‘description’, ‘prediction’, and ‘explanation’ of a phenomenon (Bates 2005:2).

This means that the first step, when studying a new phenomenon, is to describe that phenomenon. Trying to predict or explain the nature of a phenomenon that one does not fully understand is difficult. Hence the process of describing has to precede that of prediction or explanation. Secondly, once one fully understands the nature of a

phenomenon, they can better predict the relationships, processes, or sequences associated with that phenomenon. Thirdly, based on tested predictions, one can better explain the characteristics of that phenomenon and thus, formulate a theory.

2.2.2 Theory

A theory, according to Sutherland (1976:9), is “an ordered set of assertions about a generic behavior or structure assumed to hold throughout a significantly broad range of specific instances.” Neuman (2014:56) further defines a theory as “an explanation of a specific social phenomenon that identifies a set of causally relevant factors or conditions.” This means that a theory provides an insight into the real meaning of a social phenomenon by offering a clear interpretation and by informing us “what it is about” (Neuman 2014:56). Within this perspective, the purpose of a theory is to develop an understanding and to provide an explanation of a particular phenomenon.

Wacker (1998:364) sums up this idea by stating that the primary goal of a theory is to answer the questions of how, when, and why a certain phenomenon occurs rather than merely describing such a phenomenon. In this sense, explanations offer ideas on how to make sense of things; informs us of what is to be perceived as essential; tells us why people do what they do; and provide some links on how certain events in the world fit together (Neuman 2014:56).

However, this is a process which involves both the deductive and inductive reasoning (Bhattacharjee 2012:15). The deductive reasoning refers to the process of drawing conclusions about a phenomenon or behaviour based on theoretical or logical reasons, and an initial set of premises, while inductive reasoning refers to the process of drawing conclusions about a phenomenon based on the facts or observed evidence (Bhattacharjee 2012:15).

Therefore, a theory, allows the researcher to establish the links between the abstract and the concrete, between the theoretical and the empirical, and between the thought statements and observational statements (Neuman 2014:56). In this regard, there is a two-way relationship between a theory and social enquiry.

A theory informs the philosophical premise of the research undertaken, while the empirical components of the research comprise the practical extrapolations that are associated with the studied phenomenon (Neuman 2014:56). This two-way process therefore, makes a philosophical premise the most important mechanism in which a theory interacts with empirical data.

2.3 Framework (model)

A framework or model, according to Crotty (1998:3), is the philosophical premise which informs the methodological components of a research. This means that a framework guides the decisions that are taken during the research process (Mertens 1998:3). Scholars such as De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2003:312) asserts that a framework can be seen as a model or pattern containing a set of legitimated assumptions and the methodological design for collecting and interpreting the collected data.

In this manner, a framework informs the methodological components of a research, and assists the researcher by guiding the collecting and analytic processes of empirical data. In Harrington's (2005:5) view, it rarely happens that a researcher's theoretical reflections entirely lack empirical content, or that a researcher's empirical observations entirely lack a theoretical construction.

This means that, in every actual instance of the research, the researcher's theoretical reflections are always guided towards finding out some piece of evidence about a studied experience, and the researcher's observations about this studied experience are always structured by his or her theoretical reflections (Harrington 2005:5).

In this sense, it can be said that a theoretical framework is always presupposed in social research. This is because "there are no observations that are not theory-laden" (Harrington 2005:5).

2.4 Implications of meta-theories for this study

The highlighted meta-theoretical components hold a great significance for this study. They assisted the researcher in developing an understanding of, and provided some explanations on the causality of the studied phenomenon. They enabled the researcher to answer the questions of how, when, and why the studied phenomenon occurred. Using these theoretical components as a foundation, the researcher used both deductive and inductive reasoning to uncover the studied phenomenon.

By deductive reasoning, the researcher drew conclusions about the studied phenomenon based on the premise of phenomenology; and by inductive reasoning, the researcher drew conclusions on the studied phenomenon based on the facts or gathered evidence from empirical studies.

Guided by phenomenology, as a theoretical framework (model) of this study, the researcher was able to establish the link between the abstract and concrete, the theoretical and empirical, and the thought statements and observational statements, which were communicated by participants. In this regard, the meta-theoretical components, as used in this study, provided a two-way relationship between the theoretical mechanisms and the empirical processes of this study.

The theoretical components informed the philosophical premise of this research, while the empirical data revealed the practical implications associated with the studied phenomenon. This makes the theoretical components discussed in this chapter the most significant tools of interaction, which linked the theoretical premise of the study and its research findings (empirical data).

2.5 Metatheories and related methodologies

According to Wallis (2010:74), researchers often make “a habit of building and testing theory without a specific methodology, essentially relying on subjective intuition”. In this context, researchers tend to lack “a solid metatheoretical perspective” (Wallis 2010:74), which closes up the gap between, and unites a theory and practice.

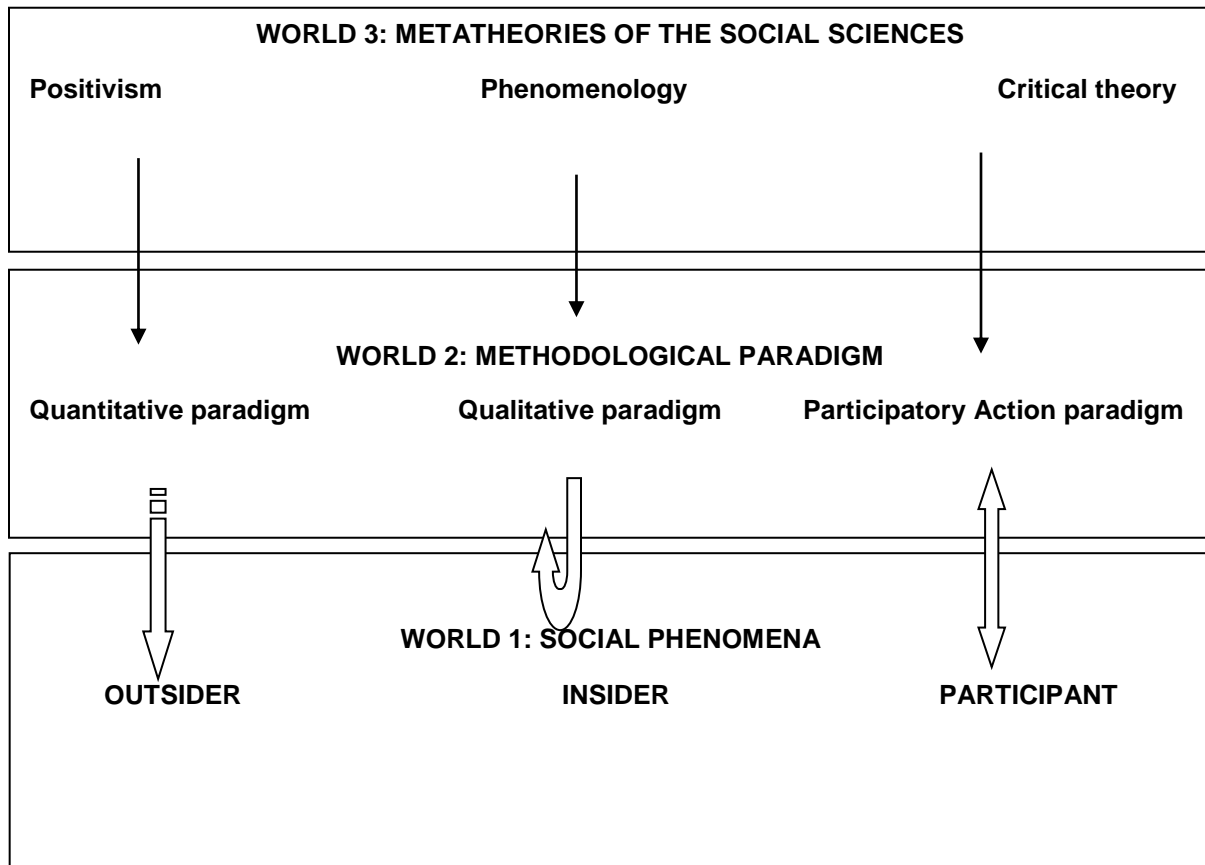
On the contrary, theory and practice are interrelated and should be united – “the science (research) cannot advance without both” (Wallis 2010:74). In relation to the concept, Bates (2005:2) notes that the concept of meta-theories has a lot of overlap with the term “paradigm”, which was given its modern understanding in science by Thomas Kuhn (1996). In other words, “Kuhn considered a paradigm to be the metatheory, the theory, the methodology, and the ethos, all combined, of a discipline or specialty” (Bates 2005:2).

In this sense, a ‘paradigm’ is an integral component of meta-theory, hence meta-theories are often defined as paradigms (Bates 2005:2). Bobbie and Mouton (2005:20) seem to have followed this usage. They refer to “paradigms” as “metatheories” (Bobbie and Mouton 2005:20). According to Bobbie and Mouton (2005:20), there are three primary meta-theories in social sciences. These are, namely: positivism, phenomenology, and the critical theory.

These are mainly used in relation to the purpose and aims of the study that is undertaken. For this enquiry, the researcher used phenomenology as a theoretical premise. This is because phenomenology, as Merleau-Ponty (1962:13) describes it, is a philosophy that tries to put essence back into existence. It “does not expect to arrive at an understanding of man (a person) and the world from any starting point other than that of their ‘facticity’” (Merleau-Ponty 1962:13).

In this sense, phenomenology enabled the researcher to arrive at an understanding of the lived experiences of the participants from any starting point other than their facticity. With regard to meta-theoretical components and their related methodologies, the functional relationship between positivism, phenomenology, and critical theory has been illustrated by Bobbie and Mouton (2005:48) as shown in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: Relationships between meta-theories and methodologies



Source: Babbie, E., & Mouton, J. 2005. *The Practice of Social Research*, p. 48.

2.6 Phenomenology

According to McPhail (1995:159), phenomenology is a philosophical movement that approaches the study of human beings and their culture differently from the logical positivist model used in the natural sciences and in special education. This is because phenomenology views the logical positivist model to the study of human beings as inappropriate because it does not address the uniqueness of human life (McPhail, 1995: 159). Therefore, phenomenology, as a theoretical premise, focuses on “that which appears” (Aspers 2009:1).

It “proceeds from the assumption that a scientific explanation must be grounded in the meaning structure of those studied” (Aspers 2009:1). Merleau-Ponty (1962:13) further contends that phenomenology is “a philosophy which puts essence back into existence, and does not expect to arrive at an understanding of man and the world from any starting point other than that of their ‘facticity’”.

This implies that a phenomenological enquiry does not rest upon the traditional metaphysical or scientific senses, which seek to establish the truth that is beyond existence, and to uncover observations by rational arguments or scientific proofs. A phenomenological enquiry is rather located within the locus of human experiences. It has no reality outside the experiences of the experiencer (Shields 1994:3).

Since this study explores the juxtapositioning of Christianity and African Traditional Religion, particularly the link between Christian leadership and ‘*Sangomahood*’, its essence of enquiry rests upon the locus of human experiences; especially of those participants who assume dual roles as Church leaders and *Sangomas*, or Pastors and diviners. In line with Merleau-Ponty (1962:13), the facticity of this realism cannot be merely understood or fully uncovered by rational argumentation and scientific proofs but through an in-depth exploration of experiences of the experiencer.

Thus, the lived realism of people who juxtapose Christianity and African Traditional Religion, particularly those who are Church leaders and *Sangomas* or Pastors and diviners, cannot be ascertained outside the experiences of the experiencers. That is why phenomenology, as a theoretical framework, was used to inform and guide the empirical processes of this study. Phenomenology enabled the researcher to explore the world and to get in touch with the experiences of the participants who are living this realism, rather than start the enquiry with a set of preconceived assumptions.

This is primarily because phenomenology views the study of consciousness as the only source of access to lived realities (McPhail 1995:161), and that entails the exploration of the meaning structures and practical outcomes of the projected actions of the participants. The central idea therefore, in employing the phenomenological theory, was to assist the researcher in grasping the meaning structures, and to explore the practical implications of juxtaposing Christianity and African Traditional Religion as the

two belief systems, which appear to be contradictory but made coherent at a practical level.

2.7 The cultural world and human meaning

Since phenomenology, as described by McPhail (1995:161), views the study of consciousness as the only access to the realities of the experiential world of human beings, it is therefore important to look at the two facets in which phenomenology makes its assumptions in relation to consciousness. The first maintains that the cultural world is created through the meaningful connections that each individual experiences in their contexts (Schütz 1976:141). The second maintains that cultural institutions are the creations that emerge out of life activities (McPhail 1995: 162).

Thus, a phenomenological study cannot do away with cultural systems in which an individual lives (McPhail 1995:162). With regards to the first facet of the phenomenological assumption, the culture world is not something which is constructed outside of the consciousness, and apart from the meaningful connections that an individual experiences in their immediate contexts (Schütz 1976:141). Therefore, in order to understand the person or persons that they are studying, the researcher must try to grasp what phenomenologists call “meaning structure” (Aspers 2009:3).

According to Aspers (2009:3), The concept of “meaning structures”, “refers to the web of meanings that are constituted by actors”. This can explicitly be described as follows:

Meaning, in other words, come in structures and (we) attain meaning in relation to other meanings. This process of meaning constitution, at the level of the individual, and meaning construction, at the social level, can be studied empirically by the researcher (Aspers 2009:3).

Meaning in this context, is not only individually constructed but it is also socially constructed.

Thus, the cultural world of actors is therefore constructed by the locus of lived experiences, both at an individual and social levels, hence Aspens (2009:3) maintains that meaning is attained in relation to other meanings. This implies that phenomenology sees culture as the product of active meaning-making systems (McPhail 1995:162), which operate both at an individual level and social level as people engage with others during their daily activities.

In this regard, one can argue that meaning structures are doubled layered: individuals constitute their relative meaning systems and those meaning systems are further defined (or explained) by social norms which enable social interactions (Aspens 2009:3). Because this form of meaning is lived out, Aspens (2009:3) attests that it can be empirically studied.

However, Schütz (1962:59) explains that a distinction must be drawn between the first-order meaning and second-order meaning constructs:

The thought objects constructed by the social scientist, in order to grasp this social reality, have to be founded upon the thought objects constructed by the common-sense thinking of men (persons), living their daily life within their social world. Thus, the constructs of the social sciences are, so-to-speak, constructs of the second degree, that is, constructs of the constructs made by the actors on the social scene.

This implies that the meanings the researcher brings into surface, are second-order constructs, which are based on the constructions of meaning of the actual actors (first-order constructs), as they live out their lives within their social world. In this sense, the researcher connects the “common sense world” with the scientific world of theories (Aspens 2009:3).

In relation to the second facet of the phenomenological assumptions, phenomenology maintains that cultural institutions are the creations that emerge out of the life activities of an individual and the immediate context (McPhail 1995:162). Within this assumption, phenomenology studies the meaningful actions of an individual rather than their behaviour. The distinction between the two, according to Schütz (1967:215),

rests upon the fact that meaningful actions are guided by a set of values and motivations while behaviour is not.

Schütz (1967:215) further explains this process in the following manner: “Action is a lived experience that is guided by a plan or project arising from the subject’s spontaneous activity and distinguished from all other lived experiences by a peculiar act of attention.” This means that behaviour cannot be observed outside the meaningful actions that an individual engages in, and those actions are guided by a set of values and motivations.

Within this context, the life activities of an individual give rise to a certain form of behaviour, which can be observed through a pattern of repeated actions. This pattern of repeated actions results in the development of cultural institutions, where certain actions become a norm and a common practice for certain people at an individual and group level. In that setting, the presence of cultural institutions provide an understanding in which meaningful actions are encouraged and sustained.

2.8 Religion and the cultural world

Taking into account the two facets of the phenomenological assumptions to human consciousness, which view the cultural world as a human creation that is composed of a meaning structure and a pattern of repeated actions that are guided by a set of values and motivation, the two religions under study – Christianity and African Traditional Religion – find a point of enquiry in this phenomenological premise. This is because both systems are commonly attached to the cultural world in terms of practices.

This means that both Christianity and ATR, as religious systems, do not fend off but harmonise themselves very well with cultural traditions. In this sense, the religious worlds of both systems are commonly associated with cultural elements. Culture, as Mayers (1987:xi) asserted, refers to everything that is part of one’s everyday life experiences. This includes both tangibles and intangible paraphernalia. Tangible elements may include things like food, shelter, clothing, literature, art, music, etc.

Intangible elements may refer to such things as hopes, dreams, values, rules, space, relationships, language, body movements, etc.

In this sense, the cultural world is generally constructed by repeated actions from one's everyday lived experiences. These influences their mutual value systems and motivations, and further contribute towards the development of processes that seek to unfold the meaning found in their social structures. Therefore, following this interpretation, it can be said that both religious systems – Christianity and African Traditional Religion – find context within a cultural medium. This substantiates McPhail's (1995:162) assertion that a phenomenological study involves the study of the cultural systems in which an individual lives.

2.8.1 Christianity and the cultural context

According to Mugambi (2002:516), the term 'culture' in its widest usage, denotes the totality of a people's way of life. In relation to Christianity, Mugambi (2002:516) notes that Christianity is not a culture, but that the Christian faith can only be expressed and communicated through a cultural medium. This implies that Christianity can use any cultural context as a form or medium of expression. To show how Christianity finds an expression with various cultural contexts, Mugambi (2002:517) notes that Christianity began with the Jewish culture.

When the Jewish culture could not sustain the Christian faith, it moved to the Greco-Roman culture¹⁸. During the modern missionary enterprise, Christianity came to Africa riding on the Western culture (Mugambi 2002:518). Thus, Christianity has the capability to float with, and to find a form of expression in different cultures. That is probably why Mugambi (2002:518) asserts that "[s]cholars are now predicting that in the twenty-first century Christianity will be riding on the cultures of Africa and Asia."

¹⁸ Jesse Mugambi (2002:517) further employs an analogy to epitomise how Christianity floats with different cultures: "One missionary scholar likened the Christian faith to a jockey who rides a racing horse as long as the horse is a faster runner. When the horse loses its racing ability, the jockey chooses another horse, and by so doing he remains on the racecourse".

The move from one cultural context to the other illustrates the potential of Christianity to find an expression in different cultural conditions. Reflecting on the phenomenological assumptions to human consciousness, it appears that the meaning structures and cultural institutions which emerge out of lived experiences serve as a viable medium from which some religions find a context of expression.

2.8.2 The African Religion and the cultural context

The African Traditional Religion, by definition, inherits a cultural context. According to Mbiti (1991:13–14), the African Traditional Religion is “the product of the thinking and experiences of our forefathers and mothers. That is, men, women, and children of former generations.” In this sense, the African Traditional Religion arose out of the meaning structures and lived experiences of the African people (former generations). When defined in this manner, it becomes difficult to draw a line of distinction between the common elements of the African culture and its religious practices, as both elements are combined together.

This connection is further strengthened by the fact that the former generations formed religious ideas, formulated religious beliefs, observed religious ceremonies and rituals, and told proverbs and myths, which safeguarded the life experiences of persons from an individual to a group level (Mbiti 1991:13–14). Perceived in this manner, the cultural elements of the Africa Traditional Religion align with the phenomenological assumption of consciousness in which the repeated actions of an individual are guided by a set of values and motivations.

These repeated actions result in the emergence of cultural traditions and institutions. The above definition of the African Traditional Religion therefore situates it within the context of culture, since its elements arose out of the thinking and experiences of men, women, and children of former generations. Against this backdrop,

the African Traditional Religion is closely imbedded within and tightly associated with the African cultural heritage, even though they are not the same thing¹⁹.

Thus, both Christianity and ATR can therefore be studied within a cultural medium, since they find an expression within a cultural context. This is possible through the use of phenomenology as a theoretical premise. Phenomenology, thus, enabled the researcher to study the lived experiences of participants who juxtapose Christianity and ATR, and are church leaders and *Sangomas*, within their cultural context.

2.9 Summary

This chapter highlighted the theories that guided the philosophical basis of this study and reviewed the related meta-theoretical concepts which informed the empirical processes of this research. These meta-theoretical components were defined and discussed within the context of social research. They were also applied, in the study, to fit the purposes of this research, which was to examine the practice of religious belief within the cultural context. In that sense, the researcher used these meta-theoretical components to look at Christianity and African Traditional Religion as expressed within a cultural medium.

¹⁹ John Mbiti (1975:7ff), for instance, notes that the African heritage is composed of different facets, which may be divided into three. These are, namely: the historical, cultural and religious heritages. All these facets make-up a whole, from which the African cultural and religious heritages are derived.

CHAPTER THREE

RELIGIOUS HERITAGE AND INTERSECTIONALITY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the available literature dealing with the juxtapositioning of Christianity and African Traditional Religion (ATR). Various topics relating to the embodiment of Christianity in Africa south of the Sahara, particularly in South Africa, and the developments that characterised such a religious system are explored. The chapter further explores the embodiment and practice of the African Traditional Religion with reference to divination, taking Ntsikana, who was both a diviner and Xhosa Christian prophet, as a pioneer of religious hybridity in South Africa, particularly in the Eastern Cape. Thus, this chapter reviews the available literature dealing with the nebulous but pragmatic reality of people who juxtapose Christianity and African Traditional Religion, who assume the roles of Christian leadership and '*Sangomahood*'.

3.2 The juxtapositioning of Christianity and ATR

There is an accumulative comprehension that in Africa, particularly South Africa, a great number of people juxtapose Christianity with African traditional practices (Amanze 2003:43; Ntombana 2015:105). Some African Christians even go as far as combining the Christian leadership with '*Sangomahood*' – that is, the *Sangoma* practice (Mlisa 2009:8ff; Sandlana 2014:543ff). The assumption of dual roles, by one as Church leader and *Sangoma*, tends to be seen as contradictory, and therefore interpreted as the distortion of Christianity by non-experiencers (Hastings 1989:30).

The experiencers however, argue that these two roles – the roles of Christian leadership and '*Sangomahood*' – complement each other (Mlisa 2009:8). In that manner, both Christianity and African Traditional Religion are understood to be related systems of thought and practice (Mlisa 2009:8; Hirst 2005:4). As related systems of

thought and practice, both systems are taken to strive for the physical and spiritual well-being of individuals.

Those who critique the assumption of dual roles, by one as Church leader and *Sangoma*, argue that this realism implies syncretism (Bediako 1994:14). The syncretism of Christianity and African Traditional Religion is argued to distort the originality of both systems, since the elements of one religion are expressed through the other (Hastings 1989:30–35). Some conservative Christians, as well as rigorist African religionists share this sentiment (Jarvis 2009:43; Mndende 2009:1).

They contend for the separation of these two religious systems – Christianity and African Traditional Religion, and intensely argue that they should not be juxtaposed. However, what appears to be lacking in this debate is the evaluation of how Christianity made its way into Africa. According to Ferguson (2003:115), Bosch (1991:227) and Oduro, Pretorius, Nussbaum and Born (2008:37), Christianity came to Africa riding in the wings of colonisation and Western civilisation.

Therefore, subversion, potency and military strength were part of its crusade (Reill and Wilson 2004:294; McQueen 2007:21). Converting to Christianity often meant the denial of one's African cultural and religious heritage by African converts (Chingota 1998:147). At the same time, those who remained loyal to their African religious traditions were ridiculed and classified as savages or heathens (Carey 1792:93; Brown 1970:3).

Thus, African converts were never allowed to freely express their new Christian identity within their African cultural and religious context (Ray 2009:105). They were often forced to sever any ties they had with their African cultural and religious heritages. Vincent William (1950:4), former Bishop of Masasi in Tanzania (1926–1944), depicts this dilemma in the following manner:

The new Christian rises from the waters of the font and goes back to his home in the village with his fellow tribesmen, men of his own nation and race: what is to be the practical relation between the new life and the old? As a catechumen he has tried to face it, but now, white from the laver of regeneration, it comes home to him with a new urgency, how shall he walk worthy of the vocation wherewith

he is called? In grace he has come into a new society, his life has been raised to a new plane. But though no longer of the world, he is still in the world: he has to live out his faith in everyday life. Again and again situations will arise in which he may easily imperil his soul's new health. Custom will demand his participation with his relatives and kindred in much of which he may feel a real distrust, and yet, if he refuses to be associated with his fellow tribesmen in what are regarded as essential acts of citizenship and duties to the community, he begins to be in danger of cutting himself off completely, and at the end becoming an outcast. If his own tribe into which he was born no longer recognizes him, it is impossible for him to become a real member of any other tribe or people. He can indeed do his best to imitate the ways of another race, and another race may do their best to offer him comradeship and make him their associate to the utmost extent to which this is possible; but more than an associate he cannot become.

This denotes that converting to Christianity, for indigenous people, often resulted in the damning concern of social denunciation. Thus, no matter how hard indigenous people might have tried to live up to Christian principles or western precedence, but when judged against their social norms and expectations, they quickly inherited the status of outcasts.

As William (1950:4) notes, if they refused to be associated with their fellow tribesmen in what was regarded as essential acts of citizenship and duties to the community, they began to be in danger of cutting themselves off completely from their tribes, and at the end becoming outcasts. In such a predicament, William (1950:4–5) points out that there were two general things (options) that were involved:

[E]ither he will come to the missionary and ask for guidance, what he may do and what he may not do; or, if his conscience is only barely awakened or his faith has not led to a true conversion of heart, he will acquiesce too easily in the ways of the old life and lapse from religion, behaving at times as barely more than a baptized heathen, losing his sonship in slavery to the old life.

With regard to the first option, indigenous people would go to missionaries for guidance on the 'dos' and 'don'ts' of the Christian faith and its ethos. This involved the

verbal transmission of Christian teachings and ethical guidelines, by missionaries, to African converts (Ray 2009:5).

To demonstrate their commitment to this new faith, and to the missionary teachings and guidelines, they had to exchange their indigenous names for Christian ones. Christian names like 'John, Joseph and Timothy' were used to reflect their new Christian identity (Ntombana 2015:109). They were further expected to uphold the principles and values of western culture. They were kept under close scrutiny not to disobey the teachings and guidelines of the missionaries (Matobo, Makatsa and Obioha 2009:15).

According to Ray (2009:5) and Matobo, Makatsa and Obioha (2009:15), those who appeared to contravene the teachings and guidelines of the missionaries were suspended at Church. They were "only allowed back to the Church after undergoing the church ritual of repentance and cleansing, which included public confession and assurance that they would not do it again" (Ntombana 2015:109). Thus, converting to Christianity was synonymous to one's abandonment of his or her cultural roots.

African converts were forced to adopt the Western version of Christianity and to neglect their African cultural heritage. This led to many African converts choosing the second option – acquiescing too easily in the ways of the old life and lapsing from religion (Christianity), "behaving at times as barely more than a baptized heathen, losing his sonship in slavery to the old life" (William 1950:5). This so-called "lapsing from religion" was characterised by the secret practice of African traditional rites and customs.

In that sense, African converts mainly professed to be Christians in public, while reverting to the practice of African Traditional Religion in private (Mathema 2007:5; Mbiti 1992:264). Moreover, those who remained loyal to their traditional faiths such as the ATR were not able to escape the influence of Christianity. They were compelled to acknowledge it (Mbiti 1969:223; Mlisa 2009:9), primarily because Christian missionaries were out to destroy their cultural and religious heritage (Hoschele 2007:262).

Sanou (2013:7) states that the religious piety of Africans was viewed by missionaries, as “wholly erroneous, idolatrous, superstitious, and necromantic”. Nxumalo (1980:6) further notes that the missionaries denied that there is anything that is of God in non-Christian religions. In that perception, early missionary adopted a policy of ‘religious vandalism’ or a ‘smashing crusade’ against African local customs and belief systems (Chingota 1998:147).

Hoschele (2007:262) refers to this as the ‘*tabula rasa*’ policy because it aimed at ‘wiping out and replacing’ the African cultural and religious heritage with western values. Because of this policy, indigenous people were left with no other option but to fend for themselves. One way in which they could achieve this end, as Mlisa (2009:9) argued, was by incorporating Christian values into their cultural value systems.

Incidentally supporting this notion, Mndende (2009:1) notes that the only possible way, in which indigenous people could be allowed to express their spirituality, was by swearing allegiance to Ibramic faiths such as Christianity or Islam. Remarking on this error, which was committed by missionaries, Willoughby (1970:xviii–xix), citing Robertson Smith, argues that:

No positive religion that has moved men has been able to start with a *tabula rasa*, and express itself as if religion were beginning for the first time; in form, if not in substance, the new system must be in contact all along the line with the older ideas and practices which it finds in possession. A new scheme of faith can find a hearing only by appealing to religious instincts and susceptibilities that already exist in its audience, and it cannot reach these without taking account of the traditional forms in which all religious feeling is embodied, and without speaking a language which men accustomed to these old forms can understand.

From this statement, one cannot help but admit that this reasoning is logical. It reveals the magnitude of the problem, which missionaries sometimes tended to overlook. They should have at least tried to grasp or familiarise themselves with the traditional forms in which the religious sense of their converts would be embodied (Sanneh 1993:15; Schineller 1990:6).

To this, Willoughby (1970:xix) rightly argues that “[t]o cut a man completely away from the heritage that his ancestors left him, the mental and spiritual environment of his earlier years, would be to sever him from all that he has hitherto held sacred”. Therefore, fighting against this form of alienation, from their cultural and religious heritage, indigenous people resorted to the secret practice of their traditional rites and customs while professing to be Christians in public.

The assumption of double identities, for African converts, became a form of a copying mechanism against the treat of being classified as outcasts by their fellow tribesmen. Indeed, as William (1950:4) notes, “if his own tribe into which he was born no longer recognizes him, it is impossible for him to become a real member of any other tribe or people”. This reactive mechanism therefore brought a state of inconsistency into the Christian system.

Many converts, as Mndende (2009:1) courteously remarks, resolved to “sit on the fence”. They became Christians only “for the sake of social status and material gains”, but supporters of African Traditional Religion in private. They were “neither fish nor flesh” (Mndende 2009:8). This implies that they adopted the Christian value systems for the sake of acceptance by missionaries, and probably for material gains, while supporters of African Traditional Religion in private.

In this manner, indigenous peoples were pressured to incorporating Christian values into their cultural value systems. The pressure, which was exerted by Christianity, upon the structural functioning of society and the religious life of indigenous people, was too much to be simply ignored (Mlisa 2009:9). They had to react, and the most reasonable option for them was to juxtapose Christianity and African Traditional Religion – a realism which has largely been ignored (William 1950:5).

Instead of being ignored, this realism (the juxtapositioning of Christianity and African Traditional Religion) should be explored. It has become a common phenomenon in Africa, particularly in South Africa (Mlisa 2009:8).

3.3 Questioning the juxtaposition of Christianity and ATR

Initially, the realism of the juxtapositioning of Christianity and African Traditional Religion (ATR) appears to have grown out of the missionary error of not recognising the value of African traditional customs and religious systems (Willoughby 1970:xviii–xix). However, its endurance till this far, even after the missionary pressure has ended, seems to beg an enquiry. It makes one wonder how this phenomenon has moved beyond the stages of pretence (if it was ever used to garner social recognition, acceptance and material gains from missionaries), to a level where African Christians wilfully and purposely choose to assume dual roles as Church leaders and *Sangomas*; or as Christian ministers and diviners.

Could this be a new form of expression that African converts had been denied for so long, during the missionary epoch, which is now manifesting itself in the form of the juxtapositioning of Christianity and African Traditional Religion? Or is it the basic search for a true African identity, which is generated by not knowing how one can truly be an African Christian within their cultural context? If, indeed, it is a search for an Afri-Christian identity, then it is comprehensible.

African Christians must try to find ways in which they can fully express their Christianity within their cultural context. If this be by trial and error, it is sensible – as long as they will get to find themselves eventually (Mbiti 1990:260). But if this is a new form of expression, one must therefore enquire as to how this realism is lived, and how the practitioners or experiencers of this reality get to fulfil the demands of both systems – Christianity and African Traditional Religion.

Does the juxtapositioning of these two systems compel practitioners to live double lives (if there is such a thing), or assume double identities – by professing to be Christians while cohorts of African Traditional Religion at the same time? With regards to their vocation, how do they respond to the duties of '*Sangomahood*' while Church leaders, or vis-à-vis, at the same time?

These are, but a few, questions that one may ask concerning this realism. Of course, there are many more questions to ask. But adequate answers to these intricate questions appear to be relative. This is because no outsider (non-practitioner) can provide appropriate answers to these questions without the disclosure of the experiencers. Therefore, an insider's viewpoint is very imperative in this form of enquiry.

In order to fully understand this realism, one must listen to the voices of the practitioners, who are actively living out this reality; not merely the voices of non-practitioners, who simply critique things from the outside. Thus, the viewpoints of practitioners must be taken as extremely valuable when exploring this phenomenon.

As expected, there are those scholars who feel that the juxtapositioning of Christianity and African Traditional Religion is a form of hypocrisy, in which African people use Christianity and its symbols to revive their religious practices (de Gruchy 1990:46). However, Ray (1976:3) posits that this is an account of ignorance. African converts had no alternative means but to incorporating Christian values into their traditional belief systems (Mbiti 1969:223; Mlisa 2009:9).

As Mugambi (2002:519–520) argues: “On the one hand, they accepted the norms introduced by the missionaries who saw nothing valuable in African culture. On the other hand, the converts could not deny their own cultural identity”. Thus, African converts were often put in a position that forced them to choose between their denominational belonging and their cultural identity. Because this was a huge ask, “[t]hey could not substitute their denominational belonging for their cultural and religious heritage.

Yet they could not become Europeans or Americans merely by adopting some aspects of the missionaries' outward norms of conduct” (Mugambi 2002:519–520). The only reasonable solution, for this dilemma, was to embrace both systems – to become Christians by keeping the outward norms of conduct, which were taught by missionaries; but also to stay true to their African traditions, by not utterly denying their cultural and religious heritage.

This however, was not a smooth-sailing process. It required that African converts live double lives (Mugambi 2002:519). They had to keep the practice of traditional rituals and customs a secret (Ntombana 2015:110). This is because missionaries rejected the practice of these (Afeke and Verster 2004:50). As a result, those who were found to have disobeyed the regulations of missionaries were disciplined (Mills 1995:153ff). Ntombana (2015:110), for instance, notes that in 1881, the Wesleyan Methodist clergy, James Lwana and Abraham Mabula were disciplined for accepting *Lobola* (dowry) for their daughters.

Another Methodist clergy, Nehemiah Tile, was found guilty of contributing an ox for the circumcision of the Tembu paramount heir, Dalindyabo (Ntombana 2015:110). After this incident, Nehemiah Tile is said to have withdrawn from the Methodist Church (Mills, 1995:153ff). The missionary campaign was therefore hostile towards the African cultural and religious heritage.

It sought to replace traditional norms with Western cultural values (Jafta 2011:61). That is probably why scholars such as Prozesky (1991:39) notes that:

It is important for Christians to remember that in the experience of black people, the gospel arrived here in tandem with deeply destructive political and commercial forces which have succeeded in making two of South Africa's indigenous faiths, those of the Khoikhoi and the San, extinct within our borders, have destroyed all the once-independent polities of the pre-European period and massively exploited all their survivors, and have extensively eroded the ancestral faiths of the Bantu-speaking peoples.

When critiquing the juxtapositioning of Christianity and African Traditional Religion therefore, scholars ought to consider the historical context from which this realism was borne. It is the direct consequence of the supremacy of Christianity over indigenous religions in Africa. As Lado (2006:8) contends, Christianity was ethnocentric. It was characterised by the dominance of Westerners over African people and cultures.

This elevated the status of Christianity but at the expense of indigenous religions – such as the African Traditional Religion (Mokhoathi 2017a:2). Indigenous religions, such as those of the Khoikhoi and San, were undermined and ultimately extinguished

(Prozesky 1991:39); while indigenous people were seen as savages, barbarians and deplorable heathens (Carey 1792:93; Brown 1970:3; Bediako 1992:225).

Their conversion to Christianity was viewed as a form of “liberation from a state of absolute awfulness...” (Hastings 1967:60). Just as Ray (1976:3) contends, these early missionaries’ perceptions of African people were “based on inaccurate information and cultural prejudice”. Their indigenous religions were valuable and should not have been viewed as “a morass of bizarre beliefs and practices” (Ray 1976:3), from which no proper dialogue could be made (Lado 2006:8).

Instead, early missionaries should have attempted to understand the cultural and religious context of indigenous people. William (1926–1944) appears to have understood the importance of this compromise:

The evil of institutions “often lies on the surface while the good only becomes apparent as the result of prolonged and painstaking investigation”: but “the more a missionary knows his people, the more he finds to admire” and marvel at even in the lowliest forms of religion. It is impossible to regard the religious systems of savage and barbarous peoples as merely the work of the devil (William 1950:15).

This implies that early missionaries hastily judged the embodiment of African traditional cultures and religious systems without any proper, prolonged or painstaking investigations.

As a result, these early missionaries basically rejected a great number of African ideals and traditional customs. Contrary to this, Mugambi (2002:517) argues that Christianity cannot be fully expressed or adequately communicated without a cultural medium. This seems to suggest that instead of replacing African traditional practices with Christianity, which was dressed in Western apparel (Lado 2006:8), missionaries should have explored ways in which they could introduce Christianity without exterminating the traditional value systems of Africans.

In that manner, Christianity might have properly communicated with African traditional ideals. Due to this error, some intrinsic values and African ideals of conduct, were suppressed by Westerners during the proselytisation of Africa. African concepts like *Ubuntu*, which were suppressed by Western culture, are now resurfacing and are beginning to be perceived as valuable commodities to the ethical impasse of the post-apartheid South Africa.

Scholars are now advocating for a return to these African traditional ideologies (Shutte 2001:24; Ramose 1999:49ff). Moreover, scholars like Jarvis (2009:8) have gone to the extent of advocating for *Ubuntu* Christianity. Thus, the Western precondition of demanding that one forsake his or her cultural traditions and practices before becoming a Christian seems to be fading away. People want to be Christians within their cultural context.

3.4 The historiography of Christianity in Africa

Africa is a vast continent, which embraces a great number of faiths – both universal and traditional (localised). It is the home of Egyptians, Arabs, Christians, Hindus, Jews, indigenous people and non-religious people comparably. With regards to its geographical terrain, Africa is divided into five segments: North Africa (with six countries), West Africa (with 18 countries), East Africa (with 14 countries), Central Africa (with six countries) and the Southern part of Africa (with 10 countries). To view the map of the five regions of Africa, refer to diagram 2 in the Appendix II.

The term 'Africa', by definition, inherits a long but an interesting history. Oden (2007:81) sums up this long history in the following manner:

In ancient times the term Africa referred to the indigenous people of coastal Mediterranean Africa in modern north-eastern Tunisia...; During the first Christian millennium Africa was the provincial term designating all the lands from Tripolitania (now western Libya) all the way to the Atlantic (Morocco) – from Tripoli (Oea) to Tangiers (Tangis). In due course the whole continent of Africa would derive its name from a location and tribe of peninsular Tunisia.

The history of the term 'Africa' therefore seems to suggest that the African continent derived its name from the local 'Afri' peoples of Tunisia (Isichei 1995:34). During the course of time, the term 'Afri', was used to refer to the entire African continent (Oden 2007:81).

As a continent, Africa carries a profound history in terms of Christianity, particularly when one considers the history of Egypt, the Northern part of Africa (Oden 2007:78f). There is a great number of scholarly and historical works that documents the beginnings, development and influence of Christianity in Northern Africa (Hastings 1979:5f; Isichei 1995:13f). These include an extensive quantity of biographical works on early Christians, Church Fathers, and various synods that were held, which debated important doctrinal matters that helped advance the traditions of the modern-day Christian Church (Hastings 1994:66; Oden 2007:122).

These were synods in which renowned African writers whose works are regarded as monumental, particularly those from Carthage and Alexandria, were directly or indirectly involved in (Isichei 1995:23). The list of these African writers include the likes of Didymus the Blind, Minucius Felix, Arnobius, Lactantius, Tertullian, Origen, Augustine and many more (Oden 2007:121; Isichei 1995:21f). These African writers extended the influence of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire and beyond (Hastings 1994:65–66).

However, even though there is plenty of Christian history in Northern Africa, which in any account, is worth to be explored, this study focuses in Africa South of the Sahara. This is the sphere where Christianity meets the African Traditional Religion. The motivation for this delineation rests upon the objective of the study. The study sought to explore the juxtapositioning of Christianity and African Traditional Religion by focusing on Christian leaders who are also *Sangomas*.

This is a realism which is predominantly found in Africa South of the Sahara Desert. This implies that it is mainly in Africa South of the Sahara that one may easily find an African who juxtaposes Christianity and African Traditional Religion, and who may also be a Church leader and *Sangoma* (Traditional healer). This kind of realism therefore, is something that may not be easily found in Northern Africa because it is not

so popular in that region. There are however, some possibilities of its existence, though this may be in small quantities, in North Africa due to the migration of Africans from the Southern part of the Sahara to the Northern.

Generally, this is a realism which is found in Africa South of the Sahara. For that reason, the study deliberately focused on and explored the reality of people who assume the binary roles of being Church leaders and *Sangomas* in Africa South of the Sahara, particularly in South Africa – a country that is situated at the bottom tip of the African continent, in the Sub-Saharan region.

Moreover, for the fact that South Africa is a big country, with nine official provinces (the Eastern Cape, the Free State, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, the Northern Cape, North West and the Western Cape), the study further delineated its scope to one official province – the Eastern Cape.

Three primary geographical locations were chosen in the Eastern Cape, for the empirical studies of this research project, namely, Alice, Fort Beaufort and *Dutywa*. For a brief overview of these geographical locations, please refer to Chapter One: The site of the study. The participants of this research project were therefore selected, purposively, from these three geographical locations.

3.5 Towards the South – Africa South of the Sahara

The geographical region south of the Sahara was largely judged from the outside by European explorers (Hallett 1970:1). Unable to visit the region, many explorers and historians gathered second-hand information about the Sub-Saharan desert, which had a great share of errors and fables (Mokhtar 1981:513; Hallett 1970:1). Around that time, the great African desert was not even given a name. It was not until the Arabs came along in 6 BCE that the desert was termed the 'Sahara'. The term was used by Arabs to refer "to that vast region which was like an enormous basin" (Mokhtar 1981:513).

Thus, the geographical region beyond the Northern part of Africa seemed to possess a vague historiography and was therefore described by means of fables and

myths. Providing the historical narrative of the time, Mokhtar (1981:513) notes that this mystic region of the Saharan desert was described by explorers in the following manner:

The Greeks, and later on the Romans, spoke only of Inner Libya, a very vague geographical expression signifying what lay beyond the North African territories, or Inner Ethiopia, a zone still farther south which derived its name from the dark skins of its inhabitants.

Thus, the Sub-Saharan part of Africa possessed a vague historiography. This situation only changed with the arrival of Arabs in the territory around 6 BCE (Mokhtar 1981:513). Before the arrival of Arabs, the Sub-Saharan desert was a region which frightened many generations of explorers by its sheer mysteriousness; and yet captured the imagination of Europeans for many centuries due to its depiction as a region full of fabulous tails in which men and animals took upon the forms of absurd or terrifying monsters (Mokhtar 1981:513; Hallett 1970:1).

For the Portuguese of the Age of Discovery, this part of Africa was presented as “the land of white Moors and black Moors, of fabulous gold mines and of mysterious Christian monarch, the fabled Prester John of the Indies” (Hallett 1970:1). To the Europeans of the Age of Romanticism, the Saharan part of Africa carried the image of “parching deserts and lion-infested wilderness and barbarous monarchs disporting themselves with savage magnificence” (Hallett 1970:1).

Therefore, Africa South of the Sahara Desert remained a great mystery for the Western world until the era of imperialism around the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries (Lenin 1999:7). During this time (around the sixteenth century), the main contact of Europeans with the Sub-Saharan part of Africa was through the traffic of slaves for commercial gain in the ‘New World’ of imperialism (Pawliková-Vilhanová 2002:51). Around this time, the historiography of Africa was still vague.

It changed in the middle of the nineteenth century with the growth of humanitarian efforts (Pawliková-Vilhanová 2002:51), and as Christian missionaries and explorers began to present Africa in a different guise (Hallett 1970:1). The mysticism, which had entranced the imagination of Europeans for many centuries, was now being replaced by

the representation of Africa as the “theatre of the blackest ignorance and crime, where brutal slave traders and tyrannical chiefs held sway over the suffering millions of heathendom” (Hallett 1970:1).

Africa was now perceived to be the beneficent of white man, shouldering his burden as he brought the blessings of civilisation to the “new caught, sullen peoples” (Hallett 1970:1). According to Oduro, Pretorius, Nussbaum and Born (2008:37), this “burden” was characterised by three “Cs” – Christianity, Commerce and Civilisation. The idea behind these “Cs” was that all three should go together and promote each other: Christianity must prepare the way for commerce so that Western civilisation can replace the African culture. That is, the Africans’ “lack of civilization” (Oduro *et al.* 2008:37).

In that manner, the Sahara became the grand stage for Christianity, colonisation and Western civilisation as was initially intended by European powers in the nineteenth century (Oduro *et al.* 2008:37). Even though it became one of the major religions of Africa, Christianity had to contest for converts with other major faiths like Islam, the African Traditional Religion, Hinduism and Judaism. These are the foremost practised faiths in Africa (Mokhoathi 2017a:1).

As per the scope of this study, the other African faiths like Islam, Hinduism and Judaism, are not examined. This study only focused on two faiths, namely, Christianity and African Traditional Religion. These are extensively explored to determine how they are being juxtaposed by people who are both Church leaders and *Sangomas*. Thus, the study explored the juxtapositioning of Christianity and African Traditional Religion, focusing on Church leaders and ‘*Sangomahood*’.

3.6 The spread of Christianity in the Sahara

The earliest period of evangelisation in Africa south of the Sahara began with the influence of Diogo Gomez, a leader of an expedition which was sponsored by the Portuguese king in 1458 (Denis 2012:3). Diogo Gomez began the process of evangelism by converting the Gambian prince, Nomimansa, who was later baptised by the abbot of Soto de Casa, a Portuguese priest (Sundkler and Steed 2000:45; Denis

2012:3). This is the era which is commonly known as the '*padroádo*' period (1450-1790 CE).

It is referred to as the *padroádo* because it was either a period that was characterised by the influence of the Portuguese throne over missionary work, or activities in territories that were under the jurisdiction of Portugal (Kanu 2013:32). After the conversion of Nomimansa, Denis (2012:3) notes that Portuguese men started marrying indigenous women, and built villages that were modelled after European forms of architecture. In each of these villages, there was a Church (Sundkler and Steed 2000:45).

Portuguese missionaries or priests (which maintained a staff of twelve friars), from the Cape Verde Islands, often visited these village churches on a regular basis to ensure their sustainability (Sundkler and Steed 2000:45; Denis 2012:3). According to Sundkler and Steed (2000:45), a convent (monastery) was established at Cachau on the Rio Grande, which is about eighty miles south, around that same time (1450–1790 CE).

From there, the Portuguese missionaries duplicated what they did in Gambia and at Cachau on the Rio Grande (starting village churches and establishing monasteries), with small variations, in other parts of Africa (Sundkler and Steed 2000:45). Denis (2012:3) describes this process in the following manner:

The pattern was duplicated, with small variations, in the kingdom of Warri; a small enclave in the kingdom of Benin; the kingdom of Congo, the territory between Sofala and the island of Mozambique on the Indian Ocean coastline; along the Zambezi River in the kingdom of Monomotapa; Lamu, which is on the coast of present day Kenya and in Kilwa off the coast of the Comoros Islands.

Thus, Christianity spread to various African continents, including the ones mentioned above. But in Denis' view (2012:3), it was in the ancient kingdom of Congo that Portuguese missionary efforts proved to be most successful. Around the seventeenth century, an extensive network of missionary stations was established in

Congo (Denis 2012:3). These mission stations were run by Dominicans or Jesuit priests (Denis 2012:3).

Walston and Stevens (2002:143) further note that king Afonso I, further promoted the new Christian faith antagonistically. So, by 1619, the bishop of *São Salvador* could count on the support of eighty priests and canon chanted services, which followed European custom (Denis 2012:3). The Portuguese missionary efforts, at Congo, seemed to yield good returns, as Christianity became the most popular religion in the continent.

These missionary efforts however, were later undermined by the commercial interests of Portuguese merchants, who saw potential gain in slave trade (Kanu 2013:32). Walston and Stevens (2002:143) postulate that because of Portuguese merchants, the missionaries came to be despised, and looked upon with scorn, which was initially directed at the Portuguese merchants.

Thus, the missionaries, to some extent, inherited the dishonour and contempt with which the Portuguese merchants were looked with (Walston and Stevens 2002:143). At the dawn of the eighteenth century, two great forces combined to regenerate the process of evangelisation in Africa South of the Sahara (Kalu 2013:33), namely, abolitionism and evangelical revival. According to Kalu (2013:33), these two forces worked together to revive evangelism, and to end slave trade.

Through the social activist component of evangelism, missionaries proposed to end slave trade by involving the chiefs, who most probably controlled the supply side of the trade (Kalu 2013:33). From this, a number of legitimate trading arrangements were made, new administration policies enforced, and Christianity was used as a civilising agent, enabling the environment (Kalu 2013:33).

With this traction, humanitarian efforts began to grow, as missionary bodies, individuals, theologians, explorers and historians, with various modes of funding and training, flocked to Africa (Kanu 2013:35). Pawliková-Vilhanová (2007:250) asserts that this:

[P]hase of the expansion of the missionary movement in Africa, which continued throughout the nineteenth century up to the present day, may conveniently be dated from 1792 and the publication of William Carey's *Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to use means for the Conversion of the Heathens*, which was called a landmark in Christian history, "the first and still the greatest missionary treatise in the English language" (italics and inversion in original).

Subsequent to Carey's publication, the Baptist Missionary Society was formed (Hastings 1994:197), on the 2nd of October 1792, for reaching out to non-Western worlds (Pawliková-Vilhanová 2007:250). Soon after, many missionary bodies were established. For instance, in 1795, the Interdenominational London Missionary Society was formed. In 1799, the Evangelical Church Missionary Society, the Religious Tract Society, and many other missionary bodies were established (Pawliková-Vilhanová 2007:250).

The establishment of these various missionary bodies therefore, seemed to convey a central message, that the "task of leading Africans on the path of civilization by the expansion of moral and religious instruction and converting the pagans to the true religion fell on the newly established mission societies" (Pawliková-Vilhanová 2007:250). This is how Christianity spread throughout the African continent, particularly in Africa South of the Sahara – it was advanced by the efforts of various missionary bodies that engaged in evangelical activities in non-Western worlds.

3.7 Christianity in South Africa

The arrival and development of Christianity in South Africa is very argumentative. Kruger, Lubbe and Steyn (2012:12), for instance, trace it back to the late sixteenth century epoch. They argue that the development of Christianity occurred in various but successive phases. The first phase was marked by the arrival of the Dutch colonies around 1652 (Kruger *et al.* 2012:12). The second phase was characterised by the arrival of the French Huguenots, who had fled persecution in France, around 1688. The

last, was characterised by the arrival of the British settlers in 1820 (Kruger *et al.* 2012:12).

As these European settlers moved into the interior of the country, Kruger *et al.* (2012:12) asserts that “they took Christianity – a Christianity adapted to their needs in a new environment – with them.” Hastings (1994:197), on the other hand, traces the origins of Christianity in South Africa to the arrival of Georg Schmidt around 1737, a lone Moravian layman who was later ordained by post (Hastings 1994:197). At his arrival, Schmidt attempted for some few years to found a mission station at Baviaanskloop in order to begin his missionary work among the ‘Khoikhoi’ or ‘Hottentots’ as they were commonly called by Europeans (Isichei 1995:105).

Finding the Khoi language too difficult to learn, Schmidt resolved to teach the Khoi people the Dutch language (Isichei 1995:105). He read them Zinzendorf’s “*Berlin Discourses*”, and instructed them on the theology of Paul in the Epistle to the Romans (Hutton 1922:129). According to Hastings (1994:197), Schmidt “even baptized a few of the people who had listened to his teaching, in a nearby stream”. His performance of baptism over indigenous converts however spurred some arguments with his Dutch clergies (Isichei 1995:105).

His Dutch Predikants claimed that he had no authority and the permission to baptise indigenous converts because he was just a layman (Isichei 1995:105). However, they were later shocked to discover that “though he arrived at Cape Town a layman, he had since been ordained by post” (Hastings 1994:197). According to Hutton (1922:130), Schmidt died forty-one years later in Silesia, “with a prayer for South Africa on his lips”.

Georg Schmidt was followed by a Dutch tailor, a Moravian by denomination, who was in the company of Germans in 1792 (Hastings 1994:197). These Moravian missionaries arrived at Baviaanskloop, where Georg Schmidt had worked for few years, to begin mission among the native peoples of South Africa (Hastings 1994:197). Hastings (1994:198) states that the “Moravians of 1792 received more of a welcome and ongoing support in their missionary endeavour than had Schmidt.”

Isichei (1995:105) further states that “[w]hen more Moravians arrived in 1792, they met one of his converts, an eighty-year-old Khoi woman called Helena, with a cherished Dutch New Testament”. Thus, these are the two versions of the arrival and development of Christianity in South Africa. Both speak to a particular context in the history of Christianity in South Africa. One traces Christianity to the arrival of the Dutch colonies around 1652 (Kruger *et al.* 2012:12), while the other traces it to the arrival of Georg Schmidt in 1737 (Hastings 1994:197).

Schmidt was later followed by Johannes Van der Kemp in 1792 (Isichei 1995:105), but there were already Khoi converts like Helena around that time. Nevertheless, whether one perceives Kruger’s version, or that of Hastings, as the starting point of Christianity in South Africa, it is not important. What matters is how Christianity reached the natives, and became one of the major religions of South Africa.

As such, the move towards the interior of the country can be perceived as a factor that fast-tracked the work of missionaries, who spread the Christian gospel among the Khoikhoi or Hottentots, the San, and indigenous peoples. As Kruger *et al.* (2012:12) notes, missionaries often built communal facilities such as schools or colleges, hospitals, churches, and established mission stations. These facilities were used as a platform to evangelise while serving the natives.

By the end of the nineteenth century, Christianity had gained a strong footing among the indigenous peoples, and the African Traditional Religion was on the wane (Kruger *et al.* 2012:12). The African Traditional Religion, was being “outshone by the package of European religion (Christianity), culture (science) and political and military strength” (Kruger *et al.* 2012:12).

As the primary religion of indigenous peoples, the African Traditional Religion had existed long before the advent of Christianity (Kruger *et al.* 201:12), and other religions in Africa south of the Sahara (Onuzulike 2008:164). This implies that the African Traditional Religion is one of the earliest religions of Africa, particularly south of the Sahara. Thus, the development and spread of Christianity in South Africa was largely associated with missionary work, from various missionary societies, and the European colonial expansion (Kruger *et al.* 201:12).

3.8 Christianity among the AmaXhosa

Through missionary activities in the interior of the country, the gospel reached the Xhosas, who lived in the eastern frontier beyond the Colony (Hastings 1994:199). The Xhosas are a Bantu-speaking people, who largely settled in the coastal region of South Africa, east of the Sundays River in the early second millennium A.D. (Ehlers 1992:27). The earliest known name for the Xhosa tribe was “Abe-Nguni” (Soga 1931:6). The name “was derived from a progenitor in the royal line called Mnguni” (Soga 1931:6).

Unfortunately, nothing is known about Mnguni beyond his name. As a result, his name was overshadowed by that of his successor, Xhosa. According to Peires (1981:13), the name ‘Xhosa’ is derived from the Khoi word meaning ‘angry men’. Soga (1931:7) notes that Xhosa was the chief of the clan, but was later overthrown by his younger brother, Tshawe, around the 1600s, who reigned in his stead. Ehlers (1992:27) states that it is around this time, that the Xhosas were consolidated by Tshawe into a large polity.

As the territory under Tshawe’s control grew, Ehlers (1992:27) notes that the polity assumed the traits of a segmentary state in which Tshawe’s male heirs established smaller chiefdoms, but were still subordinate to the paramount chief. Tshawe’s many descendants, according to Peires (1981:19–21), spurred territorial expansion, as each new generation of leaders set out with their age-mates and followers to claim their own lands. By the end of the 1600s, Xhosa chiefdoms were established on both sides of the Kei River (Ehlers 1992:27).

Providing a brief overview of the Xhosas and their subdivisions, Pauw (1994:2–5) states that the Xhosas are characterised by the following groups: (a) Aba-Thembu, (b) Ama-Mbo (which are characterised by clans like Mpondo, Mpondomise, Xesibe, Qwathi, and Bomvana), (c) Ama-Xhosa (with clans like Ndlambe, Ngqika, Gqunukwebe, Dushane, Gasela, Qhayi, Hleke, Dange, Mbalu, Rharhabe, Gcaleka, etc), and (d) the later fugitives (Ama-Bhaca and Ama-Mfengu). All these Xhosa tribes can be found on both sides of the Kei River (Transkei and Ciskei), in the Eastern Cape and beyond.

Around the late seventeenth century, many missionary societies sent missionaries to South Africa (Hastings 1994:197). At their arrival at the Cape Colony, these missionaries would travel to various places for evangelism, and had to reach even the most distant of places for missions among the Khoikhoi or Hottentots, the Sans and indigenous peoples (Isichei 1995:100). These places included the eastern frontier, a geographical area now known as the Eastern Cape (Saule 1985:1).

Among the missionary societies that worked in the area, one can mention the London Missionary Society (LMS), the Glasgow Missionary Society (GMS), the Wesleyan Missionary Society (WMS), the Moravian Missionary Society (MMS), the Berlin Missionary Society (BMS), and the American Board of Missions (ABM) (Saule 1985:1). According to Saule (1985:1), it was the London and Glasgow Missionary Societies that played a far greater role than others in the Eastern Cape Province, particularly among the Xhosas.

Saule (1985:2) sums up the role and contribution of these two missionary societies in the following manner:

[A]lthough there is a lot that has been written on the missionaries and the Xhosas in the Eastern Cape, there is nothing that compares these two societies and the work they performed. I feel this is important because the impact of these two societies has had a ripple effect down the waters of the history of South Africa up to the present day. In other words, they have been in the forefront in the provision of education to the African people and their educational institutions have produced prominent leaders in all works of life in the African community. We have had men like Rev. Tiyo Soga, the first educated African minister in South Africa, professor D.D.T. Jabavu, Professor Z.K. Matthews, and more recently men like Nelson Mandela and Gatsha Buthelezi to mention a few. It is also noteworthy that a number of African leaders north of the Zambesi River are products of institutions like Lovedale and Fort Hare.

Thus, both the London Missionary Society and the Glasgow Missionary Society played a prominent role, not only in terms of the educational development, but also through the evangelisation of the Xhosas in the Eastern Cape. Among the missionaries that worked amid the Xhosas, in the eastern frontier of the Colony, were Johannes Van

der Kemp and James Read of the London Missionary Society (Hastings 1994:201); and Dr James Stewart and R. Shepherd of the Glasgow Missionary Society (Saule 1985:4).

Most significant, from these missionaries, is the influence and role of Van der Kemp, who lived amid the Gcaleka people in the eastern frontier (Ross 2015:2), and is said to have introduced the Christian gospel to Ntsikana – an “African prophet who tried to adopt the Christian religion to African culture, specifically the Xhosa culture” (Khumalo 2014:21).

In this way, Ntsikana is regarded as the symbol of syncretism. Khumalo (2014:21) asserts the following about Ntsikana,

He was the pioneer of acculturation because he believed that African Traditional Religion (ATR) could be merged with Christianity in order to produce a unique brand of Christianity which later came to be known as African Christianity. This is a Christianity that brings together the fundamental teachings of Christianity with the basic teachings, practices and symbols of African Traditional Religion.

From this assertion, one gets the impression that the juxtapositioning of Christianity and African Traditional Religion, in the Eastern Cape, is something that began with the religious encounter between Van der Kemp and Ntsikana, who was still a teenager in 1799 (Khumalo 2014:26).

Ross (2015:2) further states that “it may well have been van der Kemp who first inspired Ntsikana to give his poetry and teaching a Christian content as he travelled the country praising God and praying”. Although this may have been the case, Ross (2015:2) further proclaims that Ntsikana continued to live the traditional normal Xhosa life:

To all outward appearances he (Ntsikana) continued as a normal Xhosa lad, passing through circumcision to manhood and by c.1815 going quietly about his business as a respected but unremarkable homestead-head, enjoying what he had inherited of his father’s holdings and contently married to two wives.

As a person who was inspired by a missionary to give his poetry and teaching a Christian content; and as someone who went about the country praising God and

praying, why did Ntsikana remain a normal Xhosa lad, who engaged in Xhosa traditional practices, which were prohibited by missionaries, such as circumcision, divination and polygamy? This makes one wonder about the nature of Christianity which Ntsikana practised, and what the missionaries of his time taught of it? Was Ntsikana perceived as a Christian, even though he kept his Xhosa traditional practices?

Again, as a Xhosa man, who gave his poetry and teaching a Christian content, and often had to travel around about the country, praising God and praying, how did Ntsikana's native people perceive him to be? Was he still regarded as a traditional Xhosa person, since he kept some of his traditional practices, even though he preached the Christian message? Or did they see in him someone who brought forth a new form of reality, as Khumalo (2014:21) attests, that he became the pioneer of religious syncretism?

If that is the case, Ntsikana may have transcended the religious boundaries between Christianity and ATR and opened up a space for religious hybridity during his time. This would make Ntsikana's case, somehow, worthwhile exploring, considering that he is regarded as the 'pioneer' of the juxtapositioning of Christianity and African Traditional Religion within the Xhosa traditional understanding (Khumalo 2014:21).

Indeed, Ntsikana's character, and how he came to be understood as the pioneer of syncretism – as someone who “believed that African Traditional Religion (ATR) could be merged with Christianity in order to produce a unique brand of Christianity which later came to be known as African Christianity” (Khumalo 2014:21) – offers something valuable for scholars to consider in attempting to understand this reality.

This is further intensified by the fact that Ntsikana was not merely a Xhosa man, who kept his traditional practices or preached the Christian gospel, but he was also a diviner (Peires 1981:67). Jordan (1973:113) also states that “Ntsikana, until his conversion, lived and enjoyed his pagan life as fully as any man of his social accomplishments. He was a great composer, singer and dancer, as well as a polygamist, adulterer, and diviner”.

Therefore, it is worth exploring whether Ntsikana utterly abandoned his Xhosa lifestyle after his conversion, or simply incorporated his Xhosa traditional way of life into the Christian system after his conversion. This backdrop encourages one to examine the form or nature of Christianity which Ntsikana practised.

3.9 Ntsikana, as a pioneer of religious hybridity

Ntsikana was the son of Gaba, from the Gcaleka²⁰ tribe and his mother was Nonabe, the second wife to Gaba (Bokwe 1914:4). Because Nonabe was better loved by Gaba, the first wife, Noyiki, became jealous and accused Nonabe of witchcraft. Noyiki consulted a diviner and succeed, as it was easy to do, in getting him to confirm the charge of witchcraft against Nonabe (Bokwe 1914:4). Nonabe was therefore “adjudged a witch, and had to flee for her life to her own kindred” (Bokwe 1914:4).

During this time, Nonabe was heavy with child and a few months later, Ntsikana was born (1780–1821). Thus, Ntsikana spent most of his infancy among his mothers’ people. At the age of twelve or thirteen, Bokwe (1914:4) states that Gaba sent for him, by laying “claim to the lad on account of the cattle that had been paid for the mother before marriage, and paid another beast for maintenance of the child from infancy”.

In that way, Ntsikana returned under his father’s custody. It was approximately seven years later (1799), when Ntsikana was almost nineteen years old, that Johannes Van der Kemp arrived at the Ngqikaland – often misspelt as Gaikaland (Read 2011:4). Bokwe (1914:5) describes his arrival in the following manner:

Ntsikana was at this cattle-herding age, when one day a strange, elderly, white man arrived in Gaikaland. After being cautiously welcomed by the chief, he was allowed to pitch his tent on the banks of the Keiskama River. The natives gave

²⁰ Simangaliso Khumalo (2014:25) notes that the Gcaleka clan was also known as the Ama-Ngqika because they were led by the king Ngqika. John Knox Bokwe (1914:1) further notes that the Ama-Ngqika clan was Anglicised by missionaries because they could not pronounce the name “Ngqika”. They referred to Ngqika as “Gaika”, and called Ama-Ngqika as the “Gaikas” for easier pronunciation.

the stranger a name peculiar to the circumstance of his arrival, as they have since done to every European who has come to dwell with them, sometimes descriptive of a blemish in his person, or a certain mannerism in his bearing. The name given to the new arrival was *Nyengana*, meaning one who had appeared sneakingly, as if by accident. His European name was Johannes Theodosius Vanderkemp.

At his arrival, Van der Kemp was carrying a Book (the Bible) in his hand, as the Ngqika tribe gathered to see and hear what his business was. He stood like a “brave soldier of the Cross, telling the Good Tidings for the first time to a congregation of wondering Gaikas!” (Bokwe 1914:5). Amidst the crowds, were young boys who attentively listened to the words of the strange white man. One of these boys was Ntsikana, who received the precious seed of the gospel.

Bokwe (1914:6) asserts that “[i]t lay in his heart as it were barren, but it was destined one day to take root, to spring up and bear abundant fruit, to the glory of its ever-careful Husband-man.” But before that seed could spring out and bear abundant fruit, Ntsikana lived a normal Xhosa life (Ross 2015:2). He went through the Xhosa initiation rite, like all the Xhosa boys of his days (Bokwe 1914:6; Ross 2015:2), he became a traditional healer or witchdoctor,²¹ as they were known by missionaries (Hodgson 1985:351), he got married, as a polygamist (Jordan 1973:113); and gained renown as a singer, dancer²² and orator in addition to becoming hereditary councillor to chief Ngqika (Read 2011:5).

As a traditional healer and counsellor to chief Ngqika, Ntsikana tapped into the spiritual and magical mysteries of indigenous beliefs. Peires (1979:54) notes that every traditional healer was “credited with the ability to ‘tie up’ the enemy and nullify his (their) weapon”. In that sense, diviners were admired by all people because they “were not

²¹ Other well-known traditional healers, who lived during Ntsikana’s time, were Nxele, the left handed warrior and Mlanjeni, who had disappeared for some time and claimed that he was under the sea to receive messages from God and the ancestors (Hodgson 1985:351).

²² The term ‘dancer’ does not do justice to the meaning of the Xhosa word ‘*Xhentsa*’. Bührmann (1981:188) notes that “*Xhentsa* is called ‘dancing’ for want of a better word”. It is a special kind of stamping rhythmic movement with the emphasis on the vigorous pounding of the feet on the ground while slowly moving in a circle. It is a ritual dance, accompanied by clapping of the hands, singing of special songs and beating of a drum. This is the basic pattern but there are variations in detail.

metaphysicians but technicians who understood the mechanics of the unseen world” (Peires 1979:55).

The influence of traditional healers, such as Ntsikana, was too inordinate in those days. Diviners were alleged to possess a great control and profound magical powers (Hodgson 1985:350); and, chiefs mostly revered them for their resourcefulness, and mystic aptitudes which proved to be useful in times of crises (Hodgson 1985:351). In that manner, the political leadership of Xhosa tribes passed from the hands of chiefs into the hands of prophet-figures (Peires 1979:54).

Among the well-known Xhosa traditional healers, were the likes of Mlanjeni, who followed Nxele in warning his people to do away with witchcraft, shedding of blood, and stealing. These were accredited with great exploits. Hodgson (1985:351), for instance, notes that Mlanjeni was known:

[T]o light his pipe from the sun, to wear his face on one cheek, to detect witches and cause their paralysis. He was also credited with being able “to heal the sick, to give sight to the blind, to make the dumb speak and the lame walk”. The chiefs and their followers came from far and wide to hear his “words” and to be purified; but he refused to accept any gifts.

Thus, traditional healers were seen as technicians who understood the mechanics of the unseen world (Peires 1979:55), and were much capable of detecting terms and strategies for inter-tribal wars, and against the colonial powers (Read 2011:3). They possessed great influence to either sway chiefs to war against their local (other tribes) enemies, and fight against colonial powers; or to encourage chiefs to seek peace and reconciliation against their local enemies and/or against colonial powers.

One antiphon was promulgated by the militant leader, Nxele; while another came through the ministry of Ntsikana²³ (Read 2011:3). Both of these diviners were very influential. Nxele was established as a councillor to Chief Ndlambe, and Ntsikana was

²³ As a dancer and song writer, Ntsikana probably belonged to the category of diviners which were known as *Amaxukazana okuwombelela* (those who act with the assistance of singing). These are diviners who start with a song, in which they may request the company of consultants by singing and the clapping of hands (*ukuwombelela*), or by assenting (*ukuvumisa*). See (John Soga 1914:160).

the esteemed councillor to Chief Ngqika (Read 2011:3). Because of their antagonistic positions, they came to be known as adversaries. Jordan (1973:113) explains this rivalry in the following manner:

Two commoners, both of them diviners ('witchdoctors'), had profound social influence among the Xhosa at this time – Ntsikana, a one-time adherent of Ndlambe, later of Ngqika and, ultimately, of Christ; and Makhanda or Nxele (the left handed warrior misnamed 'Makana'), an adherent of Ndlambe. There was rivalry between these two figures, and, since we know the story only from Ntsikana's disciples, Makhanda inevitably suffers (Jordan 1973:113).

Peires (1979:54) however, notes that it was not for immeasurable magical powers that Nxele and Ntsikana were revered:

The peculiar attraction which Nxele and Ntsikana had for the Xhosa stemmed not from any unfathomable magical powers but from their capacity to provide rational answers to pressing and very real questions: Who were these white people? What did they want? What should be done about them? (Peires 1979:54).

Thus, both diviners enjoyed an equal status within their respective communities, and had possessed great acumen to provide rational answers to pressing and very real questions concerning the presence of white people (missionaries) among the Xhosas.

This became the source of their rivalry because they were both equally esteemed and were very influential as councillors to their respective kings. They were both capable of providing critical and rational answers to various Xhosa clans or traditional communities about the presence of white settlers amidst the Xhosas, in what was perceived as the Xhosa-land. Nxele had encountered Europeans and their Christian faith as a young boy while living in the Cape Colony²⁴ (Wauchope 1908:34). It is there that he picked up Dutch and gained knowledge of Christianity (Peires 1979:56).

²⁴ Jeffrey Peires (1979:56) notes that Nxele grew up in the Cape Colony, son of a commoner who worked for a Boer farmer.

His conversations with James Read, the missionary, and Gottlieb van der Lingen, the military chaplain at Grahamstown, further grew Nxele's understanding of Christianity (Ross 2015:np). According to Peires (1979:56), it was this "knowledge of Christianity and European ways which enabled him to mediate between two cultures".

Ntsikana had also witnessed European presence and the arrival of Christianity among the Xhosas, in the form of Johannes Van der Kemp, while still a young lad. At his arrival among the Ngqikas, Van der Kemp was carrying the Bible, and preached the Gospel "for the first time to a congregation of wondering Gaikas!" (Bokwe 1914:5).

Ntsikana was present during this encounter²⁵. Even though he was still a young lad, probably about nineteen years old, Bokwe (1914:6) notes that Ntsikana received the precious seed of the gospel. His knowledge of Christianity improved when he became a Christian (around 1815)²⁶. After his conversion to Christianity, Ntsikana was further mentored by James Read and Joseph Williams. Ross (2015:npn), citing Holt, states that:

Somewhere beneath the Amathole Mountains, near the present town (Fort Beaufort), Read and Williams met Ntsikana, who shared with them what was on his heart. They listened keenly to what he said, offered words of encouragement and some further Scriptural teaching, before inviting him to travel with them back to Bethelsdorp when they returned. But such a journey was impossible, neither his chiefs nor the British authorities would allow him to travel into the colony, so

²⁵ John Ross (2015:np) also dates this event around 1799: "In 1799, during a time of great tension and open warfare on the border of the Cape Colony, Johannes van der Kemp, a missionary of the London Missionary Society, arrived among the western amaXhosa and was permitted to set up his camp near to Ngqika's Great Place".

²⁶ Jamie Read (2011:5–6) states that there were three incidents which combined to form what is accepted as Ntsikana's conversion experience. The first pertains to his vision of a ray of light which struck the side of *Hulushe*, his most prized Ox: "The first occurred as Ntsikana went out one day to inspect his cattle at day break. Standing in his kraal, a ray of light struck the side of *Hulushe*, his most prized ox, holding Ntsikana's gaze" (Read 2011:5). The second regards his attendance of a dance, during which Ntsikana's performance, he saw a violent gale arise: "He gives a start. Suddenly a violent gale arises. At first, no one heads it. It keeps on however, till at last the dancers stop for a little, and Ntsikana returns to his seat" (Bokwe 1914:11). This gale appeared twice to Ntsikana, but on the second time, the on-lookers also saw it (Read 2011:5). The last incident pertains to Ntsikana's washing-off, of his red ochre which had painted his body: "As they neared home, they came to a small river. Here Ntsikana threw aside his blanket, plunged himself into the water and washed off all the red ochre that painted his body (Bokwe 1914:11–12).

the missionaries advised him to remain where he was until Williams could return to establish the new mission station and offer him further instruction.

These two were therefore very capable, and could explain the presence of European settlers among the Xhosas. But as the antagonist of Ntsikana, Nxele was often regarded as a counterfeit by missionaries. Hodgson (1985:369), for instance, notes that Reverend John Brownlee perceived Nxele as a counterfeit to his people:

Brownlee describes the way Nxele turned his religious knowledge to “bad account”, seeing him as nothing but a charlatan in working on his people’s superstitions for his own gain, and as a trouble-maker in fomenting discord and challenging the authority of the whites.

Clearly, Nxele was understood as the symbol of militant resistance against white superiority and their Christian faith. Therefore, he was seen as a counterfeit, and deceptive to his people.

Ntsikana, on the other hand, was taken to be the symbol of peace and non-violence. He was well-respected and known for:

[H]is friendly acceptance of the missionaries (in 1816) and his regular attendance at Kat River station, his own services and observance of the Sabbath, his parting with his younger wife in compliance with the law of God, the composition of his hymn and its African theology, his last words, and the comparatively recent death of his Great Wife, who had been a diligent Christian for many years (Hodgson 1985:368).

Ntsikana, therefore, was perceived as an exemplary character, whose friendly welcome of the missionaries, his acceptance of white authority, and his parting ways with his younger wife, Nomanto, in compliance to the law of God, seemed to demonstrate his sincerity as a Christian (Bokwe 1914:27).

What is not apparent however, in this transition, is whether Ntsikana stopped being a diviner after his conversion. From Brownlee’s account, as cited by Hodgson (1985:368), Ntsikana discontinued his polygamous life. He parted ways with “his younger wife in compliance with the law of God” (Hodgson 1985:368). He further

observed the Sabbath, conducted prayer services, and had regular meetings with reverend John Browlee at the Kat River station (Hodgson 1985:368). In this backdrop therefore, it appears as if Ntsikana utterly parted ways with his old life after his conversion.

However, what is remarkable about this transition, is that Ntsikana appears to have substituted divination for prophecy. He moved from being a diviner into being a prophet. Certainly, one has to probe here: Was this just a pure coincidence, or were the same mystic divination forces still in effect? How is it that Ntsikana easily exchanged offices – from being a diviner to being a prophet – without any serious concerns from the missionaries? Surely, this must have been very strange. It does not often happen that a diviner may turn into a prophet.

Jordan (1973:116) further reveals the complexity of this transition. He (1973:116) states that Ntsikana remained a trusted councillor to chief Ngqika, and was unlike the other pagan councillors who misled the chief. By referring to other councillors as “pagan”, Jordan appears to have taken Ntsikana to be a “Christian”. In this sense, Ntsikana was already a Xhosa prophet, or a Christian councillor at this point because the other councillors were regarded as pagan. But if Ntsikana was already a Xhosa prophet, why did Jordan say that he still continued with his work of divination?

Jordan, for instance, notes how one of Ntsikana’s divination resulted to the death of chief Ngqika’s warriors in a war against Ndlambe:

For a long time after being ‘led away’ by his pagan councillors, however, Ngqika continued to have faith in Ntsikana and his strategy in war. It was an ill-fated military expedition against Ndlambe, in which Ntsikana’s divination took too long to foresee “the gnats swarming on the skulls” of Ngqika’s dead warriors, that decided the issue for the army commanders. And on their return, the latter clamoured that “these praying men” be killed. “How can we be defeated when they are praying?” they asked angrily.

Jordan’s usage of the term ‘divination’ instead of ‘prophecy’, seems to discredit Ntsikana’s role as a Xhosa prophet. A prophet is commonly known for prophesying, and not divination. It is rather a diviner that is known for divination. Therefore, by attesting

that Ntsikana's divination took too long to foresee the gnats swarming on the skulls of Ngqika's dead warriors, Jordan was revealing something about occupation of Ntsikana.

Ntsikana must have continued with his role of divination, as a councillor to chief Ngqika, even though he had become a Christian. This would explain the commanders' frustration with him – that 'these praying men' should be killed. They did not understand why they should be defeated when they were praying. Probably, because he was not solely relying on God, Ntsikana must mixed his divination with Christian practices, such as prayer services, scriptural readings, and sometimes, preaching.

Hence Khumalo (2014:21) makes the argument that he was the pioneer of 'acculturation'. In Khumalo's view (2014:21), Ntsikana:

[B]elieved that African Traditional Religion (ATR) could be merged with Christianity in order to produce a unique brand of Christianity which later came to be known as African Christianity. This is a Christianity that brings together the fundamental teachings of Christianity with the basic teachings, practices and symbols of African Traditional Religion.

Thus, against this background, Ntsikana's role as a councillor, which included divination, to chief Ngqika, and his position as a Xhosa Christian prophet, appears to parallel the eminence that Khumalo (2014:21) attributes to him. Khumalo (2014:21) seems to consider that Ntsikana was the pioneer of religious hybridity.

Pending the crises of man slaughter, resulting from Ntsikana's failed prophecies or rather divinations, he and his leading disciples fled for their lives. This was because Chief Ngqika's commanders wanted them dead for letting them go to war without the assurance of victory (Jordan 1973:116). According to Makhapela Noyi Balfour, one of Ntsikana's leading disciples, they went to reside at Tambo – where Ntsikana probably died and was buried (Jordan 1973:116-117).

Before his death, Ntsikana is said to have left instructions for his followers. These were as follows:

At last, addressing his children, he said. "I am going home to my Father. Do not, after I die, go back to Kafirdom (*ema-Xoseni*, meaning heathendom). I want you to go to Buluneli (Rev. John Brownlee's) at Gwali. Have nothing to do with heathen dances, but keep a firm hold of the word of God. Always stick together, and be as close to one another as particles of a ball of cement. Should a rope be thrown round your neck or a spear pierce your body, whatever persecution comes upon you, on account of the word of God don't give way, keep it, and stick to it and to each other. To my two sons I say, Kobe (the elder), you will be my back-bone (*ufundo lwam*), and Dukwana, you will be my walking-stick (*umsimelelo*). Don't allow my children to return to red clay and heathenism; take them to Gwali. I am going home to my Father, to my Master!" He was now exhausted, and, turning to the person on whom he was leaning, he said, "Lay me down"; so saying, he quietly passed away, and Ntsikana the son of Gaba was gone up higher (Bokwe 1914:30).

Following his death, Ntsikana's disciples fell under the care and guidance of white missionaries. As instructed by Ntsikana, they went to Reverend John Brownlee at Gwali. At that point, their understanding of Christianity and its teachings began to considerably change. They were accustomed to Ntsikana's teachings, which did not require any alienation with their cultural roots. But the new missionary teachings required that they forsake their cultural heritage.

The missionaries were supposedly giving them more training in the way of truth, which they hesitantly accepted. Part of the training or missionary instructions required that they break away with their past, including their Xhosa names. Their indigenous names were mostly changed after baptism. Jordan (1973:117), citing Makhaphela, recounts how this happened:

Some of these disciples of the son of Gaba were baptized by the first White missionaries and given more training in the Truth that they had accepted... Each person was given a new name by which he would be known as a Christian. So it was that Noyi (Makhaphela's own father) was renamed 'Balfour'. This became

the practice for us who had chosen this new road. Nonetheless it was strange, because we had never seen anything wrong with our own names. But so eagerly was this new teaching accepted that many a man, even while still a pagan, kept in mind some new name that he fancied, so that, in the event of his becoming a Christian, he should be known by that name.

Ntsikana's disciples were therefore very cautious with the teachings of the missionaries. They feared that what the missionaries were teaching them could clash with what Ntsikana had taught them (Jordan 1973:117). As a result, the teachings of the missionaries appeared to be very strange, and different from those that they received from Ntsikana. This seems to support Khumalo's argument that Ntsikana mixed Christianity with ATR. Scholars such as Peires (1979:60–61) appear to have also observed the same thing about Ntsikana.

Peires (1979:60–61) noted that Ntsikana's Christianity was "an adaptation within the traditional religious framework of innovation and experimentation rather than a radical break away from it". This seems to suggest that Ntsikana never utterly abandoned his traditional heritage but mixed his African heritage with Christianity or Christian components. With regard to his revelations (whether prophecies or divinations), it appears as if they were an alternative means, which were used to fuse the African religion with Christianity.

According to Peires (1979:60–61), this formulated 'a new world-view' that was capable of understanding the irruption that was caused by Europeans (Peires 1979:60–61). Against this narrative therefore, Ntsikana certainly appears as the preliminary representation acculturation. His juxtapositioning of Christianity and ATR appears to have served as the embryo of religious hybridity, as he was both a diviner (*Sangoma*) and church leader. His followers also seem to have embraced that form of Christianity.

3.10 Summary

This chapter explored the available literature dealing with the juxtapositioning of Christianity and African Traditional Religion (ATR). Various topics relating to the embodiment of Christianity and the developments that characterised such a religious system were explored. The chapter further explored the embodiment and practice of the African Traditional Religion with reference to divination, taking Ntsikana, who was both a diviner and Xhosa Christian prophet, as the pioneer of religious hybridity in South Africa, particularly in the Eastern Cape.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 Introduction

This section of the chapter discusses the methodological aspects and the research design that underpins the processes of this study. As a result, the following aspects are discussed: research methods, research paradigm, research design, population, sampling, research instruments, procedure for data collection, procedure for data analyses, and ethical considerations.

4.2 Research methods

According to Bryman (2001:4), the practice of social research does not exist in a bubble, where it is hermeneutically placed off from the social enquiry and the various intellectual allegiances that the practitioners hold. But it is situated right at the centre of social interactions, exploring the various intellectual allegiances and the realities that the practitioners hold. In such an exploration of social reality, two components are essential. The first relates to the use of social research methods and how such methods are used to study a social reality. The second relates with how research methods are used to connect with the wider social scientific enterprise (Bryman 2001:4).

This implies that the researcher has the responsibility of employing relevant research methods to explore the lived experiences of practitioners and to represent such a studied reality in a manner that does not deviate from the wider social scientific enterprise. In this form of enquiry however, research methods are not neutral but are an intentional tool that the researcher uses to reflect the ways in which social scientists envision the connection between the different viewpoints regarding the nature of social reality, and how such a social reality should be examined (Bryman 2001:4). In such an exploration, empirical data is invariably collected in relation to 'something', rather than everything.

That 'something', as Bryman (2001:4) asserts, may be a burning social issue or more usually a theory. Within the context of this study, that 'something' which is being explored is the juxtapositioning of Christianity and African Traditional Religion, particularly the link between Christian leadership and '*Sangomahood*'. This is a burning issue in Africa, particularly in South Africa. It is a burning issue because some Christian institutions have expressed some concerns over the juxtapositioning of Christianity and African Traditional Religion, especially the taking-on of double roles by some Christians as church leaders and *Sangomas* (the Pastoral Statement of the South African Catholic Bishops 2006:1).

African religionists further argue that Christian leaders must stop pretending as if they are experts of the African Traditional Religion, while they fall on both sides (Mndende 2009:1). With regard to the methods that are used in social research, social scientists often use the following: the qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods. These methods are used in relation to the nature of enquiry which is studied. Drawing a distinction between the qualitative and quantitative methods, Dabbs (1982:32) points out that the notion of 'quality' necessitates the study of the nature of things while 'quantity' looks at the measure or amount of something.

In this sense, quality refers to "the what, how, when, where, and why of a things – its essence and ambience" (Berg and Lune 2014:3); while quantity refers to "the measure of things" (Bryman 2001:61). The mixed method research is a combination of both the qualitative and quantitative methods (Creswell 2014:68). For the purpose of this study, the researcher used the qualitative research method.

4.3 The qualitative research method

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005:3), a qualitative research is "a situated activity that locates the observer in the world." The cited authors further states that a qualitative research "consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible" (Denzin and Lincoln 2005:3). This makes a qualitative research a suitable approach for studying "things in their natural settings, by attempting to make sense of, or interpret

phenomena in terms of the meanings that people bring to them” (Denzin and Lincoln 2005:3). In such an exploratory study of social reality, the qualitative research involves a variety of source materials.

These source materials according to Danzin and Lincoln (2005:3–4) include the following:

[...] the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials – case study; personal experience; introspection; life story; interview; artefacts; cultural texts and productions; observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts – that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals’ lives (Denzin and Lincoln 2005:3–4).

This implies that in a qualitative enquiry, the researcher is at liberty to employ various source materials such as case studies, personal experiences, introspection, life stories, interviews, artefacts, cultural texts and productions, and etc. to locate and interpret the lived experiences of the participants.

In this study, the researcher used the following source materials: case studies, life stories, interviews, and cultural texts and productions to explore the lived experiences of the participants. The motivation for using this method is that it allowed the researcher to locate the participants’ experiences from their natural settings, and to explore how they made sense of, or viewed their world in relation to the identity they assumed as Christian leaders and *Sangomas* (traditional healers). This research method is further in line with phenomenology from which the theoretical framework of this study was located (Mertens 2005:230–231).

4.4 Research paradigm

According to Mertens (2005:7), a research paradigm can be described as “a way of looking at the world.” It holds the philosophical assumption that guides and directs the thinking and actions of the researcher during the empirical processes of the research (Mertens 2005:7). Thus, the research paradigm contains a basic set of beliefs that guides the actions of the researcher during the empirical processes of the research. For

the purpose of this study, the researcher used narrative analysis as a paradigm that guided the actions of the researcher during the empirical processes of this research.

4.4.1 Narrative analysis as a paradigm

Social research has an extensive tradition of employing qualitative methods to gain insights into the lives of people and their lived experiences (Earthy and Cronin 2008:np; Connelly and Clandinin 1990:2). One way, in which social research has managed to explore the lives and lived experiences of people, is through the use of narrative analysis. This is because “humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives” (Connelly and Clandinin 1990:2). Narrative analysis therefore, is a paradigm that seeks to explore the various ways in which people experience the world.

However, narrative analysis is not only a method of enquiry but a phenomenon as well. This means that narrative analysis is “both phenomenon and method” (Connelly and Clandinin 1990:2). As a phenomenon, narrative analysis names the structured quality of experiences to be studied, and as a method of enquiry, it names the patterns of inquiry for its study (Connelly and Clandinin 1990:2–3). Thus, as a phenomenon, narrative analysis maintains that people, by nature, lead storied lives and tell stories of those lives; whereas, as a method of enquiry, narrative researchers describe such lives, collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of their lived experiences (Connelly and Clandinin 1990:3).

Emphasising the value of narrative analysis in social research, Connelly and Clandinin (1990:3) stated that:

Perhaps because it focuses on human experience, perhaps because it is a fundamental structure of human experience, and perhaps because it has a holistic quality, narrative (analysis) has an important place in other disciplines. Narrative (analysis) is a way of characterizing the phenomena of human experience and its study which is appropriate to many social science fields.

Because it fully explores and characterises the phenomena of human experiences, narrative analysis links very well with phenomenology and ethnography as the main two theoretical foundations of this study.

Phenomenology studies “that which appears” (Aspers 2009:1), while ethnography situates that enquiry within the cultural context of the experiencers (Spradley 1979:3). In this sense, both phenomenology and ethnographic begins when the researcher “abandons the idea of absolute objectivity or scientific neutrality and attempts to merge himself or herself into the culture being studied” (Ellen 1984:77). Merleau-Ponty (1962:13) further noted that phenomenology is “a philosophy which puts essence back into existence, and does not expect to arrive at an understanding of man and the world from any starting point other than that of their ‘facticity.’”

This implies that phenomenological enquiries do not rest upon the traditional metaphysical or scientific senses, which seek to establish the truth that is beyond existence and to uncover observations by rational arguments and scientific proofs. They rather focus on the locus of human experiences, from the practitioners’ point of view. They hold no reality outside the experiences of the experiencers (Shields 1994:3). Since this study explores the juxtapositioning of Christianity and African Traditional Religion, particularly the link between Christian leadership and ‘*Sangomahood*’, its point of enquiry rests upon the locus of human experiences.

These are the experiences of participants who juxtapose Christianity and African Traditional Religion. The participants who assume dual roles as Church leaders and *Sangomas*; who are both professed Christian and African traditionalists, and see no contradiction in combining these two religious systems. As Merleau-Ponty (1962:13) noted, the facticity of this phenomena therefore, cannot be fully understood or uncovered by the mere use of rational argumentation and scientific proof, but through the exploration of the experiences of the experiencers.

Thus, the reality of the juxtapositioning of Christianity and African Traditional Religion, particularly the link between Christian leadership and ‘*Sangomahood*’ cannot be explored outside the lived experiences of the experiencers, in this case, Church leaders and *Sangomas*. They hold a realism, which non-practitioners or outsiders

cannot eloquently express. That is why phenomenology and ethnography were used as theoretical frameworks to collaborate narrative analysis as a paradigm of this study to explore the juxtapositioning of Christianity and African Traditional Religion, particularly the link between Christian leadership and '*Sangomahood*'.

4.5 Research design

According to Nachmais and Nachmais (1992:77–78), a research design is a plan that “guides the investigator in the process of collecting, analysing, and interpreting observations.” Flick (2007:36) further elaborates that:

[A] Research design is a plan for collecting and analysing evidence that will make it possible for the investigator to answer whatever questions he or she has posed. The design of an investigation touches almost all aspects of the research, from the minute details of data collection to the selection of the techniques of data analysis (Flick 2007:36).

This implies that a research design serves as a blueprint or an overarching plan which the researcher employs to obtain answers to the questions that guide the research enquiry.

Babbie and Mouton (2005:75) further advise that it is useful to examine the different kinds of questions that the researcher asks so that they may, if possible, be categorised into general types. These general types are, namely: the empirical questions, and non-empirical questions. Empirical questions are concerned with a social problem – thus, a 'real-life' problem. Non empirical questions, on the other hand, are concerned with questions about entities – the meaning of scientific concepts, trends in scholarship or competing theories. In this research study, the researcher was concerned with empirical questions – thus, the exploration of real-life problem, and used a case study to explore such a real-life issue.

4.5.1 A case study

Gillham (2000:1) defines a case study as an investigation that seeks to answer specific research questions with a range of evidences from the case setting. Yin (2012:4) further asserts that a case study is “an empirical inquiry about a contemporary phenomenon, set within its real-world context – especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident”.

This means that a case study may be used to investigate a contemporary phenomenon, within its real-world context in order to establish the link between a phenomenon and the context from which it arises.

The motivation for using this design rests upon the nature of the research enquiry and the phenomenon under study. This study explored the juxtapositioning of Christianity and African Traditional Religion, particularly the link between Christian leadership and ‘*Sangomahood*’. Therefore, due to the nature of this realism, a case study was considered to be suitable since it strives to portray “what it is like” to be in a particular situation.

A case study further enabled the researcher to obtain a thick description of the participants’ lived experiences, as Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007:254) suggested that it is “[...] descriptive and detailed, with a narrow focus, combining subjective and objective data”. According to Cohen *et al.* (2007:254), there are various kinds of case studies. These are categorised in terms of their outcomes.

These different kinds of case studies are, namely: exploratory, descriptive and explanatory case studies. For the purpose of this study, the researcher used a descriptive case study. The motivation for employing this type of a case study rests with the nature of the research questions which this study sought to address (Yin 2012:4–5). It sought to answer empirical questions, which made enquiries into, and explored the realism of participants who assume a double role as Christian leaders and *Sangomas*.

4.6 Population

A research population, according to Levy and Lemeshow (1999:13), refers to the entire set of individuals to which the findings of the survey are to be extrapolated. Babbie and Mouton (2005) further define a research population as a group of people from which the researcher intends to draw conclusions. Thus, it refers to a group of people that the researcher intends to study in order to draw conclusions about a studied phenomenon. Bryman (2001:85), however, notes that a research population does not solely refer to a group of people, but to other units as well. These may include the universe of units such as nations, cities, regions, schools, firms, etc. (Bryman 2001:85).

But since this research explored a social realism, the population of this study referred to a group of people who were considered for this research, from which the findings of the study were extrapolated. In relation to the selection of the research population, Creswell (2013:158) notes that it is imperative for the researcher to identify the people and the place where the research population is to be drawn. The population of this study consisted of 10 participants who were heterogeneous in terms of their religious orientation, age, sex and educational background.

The population was drawn from three geographical areas in the Eastern Cape Province. These geographical areas are, namely: Alice, Fort Beaufort and *Dutywa*. The findings of this study were therefore extrapolated from this group of people or research population.

4.7 Sample and sampling

According to Bryman (2001:85) a sample is the segment of the population that is selected for an investigation. It is “a subset of the population” (Bryman 2001:85). The method of selecting a sample may be based on a probability or non-probability techniques depending on the aim of the research undertaken. The sample of this study consisted of 10 participants – six of the participants were females and four were males. The 10 participants that were selected for this study were deemed as sufficient, as

Groenewald (2004:46) maintains that 2–10 research subjects are suitable for a phenomenological study.

The religious orientation of these participants was as follows: six were both active church leaders and practicing *Sangomas*; two were practising *Sangomas* but not Christian; and the last two were active Church leaders but not *Sangomas*. The participants were selected based on the non-probability sampling technique.

According to Bernard (2013:130), the non-probability sampling technique is based on taking a given number of units of analysis from a list, called a sampling frame, which represents some population under study.

In this study, the researcher selected a list of six participants who represented both the practice of Christian leadership and '*Sangomahood*'; two participants who exclusively represented the practice of '*Sangomahood*'; and two participants who exclusively represented the practice of Christian leadership. The type of non-probability sampling that the researcher used to select these participants was a 'simple random sampling'.

The simple random sample, according to Bryman (2001:88), is the most basic form of non-probability sampling. This is because in a simple random sampling, each unit of the population has an equal chance of inclusion in the sample (Bryman 2001:88). Mertens (2005:314) further states that a simple random sample looks at a group of people in which every member of the population has a known, non-zero probability of being included in the sample.

For this study, the researcher considered and selected the participants who were well known practitioners or specialising *Sangomas* and active Church leaders; rigorist African religionists *Sangomas*; and conservative Christians. These were selected from various institutions that promote the practice of the African Traditional Religion and from conservative Christian Churches in three geographical areas – Alice, Fort Beaufort and *Dutywa*.

4.8 Research instruments

According to Seaman (1991:42), the research instruments refer to the devices that are used to collect data. In Martens' view (2005:247), there are three main instruments that are used by qualitative researchers to collect data and these include the following: participant observation, interviews, and document or records review.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher has used interviews and the document or record review. Interviews were conducted to obtain the indispensable empirical data for this study, and document reviews consisted of the re-examination of the related literature in the subject matter of this research study.

4.9 Procedure for data collection

As indicated in Section 4.8, the researcher used both the document review and conversational interviews to gather the indispensable empirical data for this research study.

4.9.1 Document analysis

Bailey (1994:194) describes the document review as the use of documents that contain information about a phenomenon that the researcher wishes to study. Payne and Payne (2004:615) further state that the document review is a technique that is used to categorise, investigate, interpret and identify the limitations of physical sources. This implies that the document review may be used by the researcher as a tool to categorise, investigate, interpret and identify the limitations of literary sources in the research area under study.

That is how the researcher employed the document review as a procedure for data collection in this study. The researcher used the document review to investigate, interpret and identify the limitations of literary sources available dealing with the

juxtapositioning of Christianity and African Traditional Religion, focusing more on the link between Christian leadership and '*Sangomahood*'.

In this sense, the use of document review as a procedure for data collection served as a supplement of the empirical data and assisted the researcher in contextualising or putting the findings of this study into context.

4.9.2 Interviews

According to Cohen *et al.* (2007:349), interviews are the means in which pure information transfer occurs. Bryman (2001:106) further states that the aim of an interview is to obtain from the interviewee or correspondent all manner of information. These may be the "interviewees' own behaviour or that of others, attitudes, norms, beliefs, and values" (Bryman 2001:106). This entails that the data that the researcher obtains from the correspondents emerge out of their lived experiences and is based on their realism of life.

Interviews were therefore used by the researcher to explore the lived experiences of participants who were both Church leaders and *Sangomas* in the process of data collection for this research study. The type of interviews that the researcher used was the semi-structured interviews. A semi-structured interview, according to Bryman (2001:110), refers to a context in which the interviewer has a series of questions that are in the general form of an interview schedule but is able to vary the sequence of questions.

Bryman expresses this sentiment in the following way:

The questions are frequently somewhat more general in their frame of reference from that typically found in a structured interview schedule. Also, the interviewer usually has some latitude to ask further questions in response to what are seen as significant replies (Bryman 2001:110).

This type of interview therefore enabled the researcher to locate the lived experiences and realism of the participants who juxtapose Christianity and the African Religion and assume a double role as Church leaders and *Sangomas*.

4.10 Procedure for data analysis

Babbie (2007:378) defines data analysis as the assessment and interpretation of observations, for the purpose of discovering underlying meanings and patterns of relationships. Cohen *et al.* (2007:461) further notes that a qualitative data analysis involves the organising, accounting for, and the explanations of the collected data. In this regard, the researcher strives to make sense of the collected data in terms of the participants' definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities.

The role of the researcher, in this context, is to assess and make interpretations of the gathered data in order to discover underlying meanings and patterns of relationships. This process involves the organising, accounting for, and explaining the data in a manner that reflects and make sense from the participants' point of view or realism of the described situation. The process of data analyses is further determined by the principle of fitness for purpose (Cohen *et al.* 2007:461).

This implies that the researcher must be clear about what the research data and its analysis intends to achieve as this determines the kind of analysis that the researcher undertakes. In line with the principle of fitness for purpose, Cohen *et al.* (2007:461) advises that the researcher should set out to do the following:

- To describe;
- To portray;
- To summarise;
- To interpret;
- To discover patterns;
- To generate themes;
- To understand individuals and idiographic features;
- To understand groups and nomothetic features;
- To raise issues;
- To provide or demonstrate;
- To explain and seek causality;
- To explore; and
- To discover commonalities, differences and similarities.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher set out to describe, portray, interpret, explore, and discover commonalities, differences and similarities in the juxtapositioning of Christianity and African Traditional Religion, particularly on the link between Christian leadership and '*Sangomahood*'.

This implies that the researcher established a pattern of comprehension of the meaning, the texts and lived experiences of the participants through the use of interpretation. In order to achieve this, the researcher used each sub-question in the research questions as a central theme, from which the data collected concerning the juxtapositioning of Christianity and African Traditional Religion, particularly the link between Christian leadership and '*Sangomahood*' was analysed and interpreted.

As Babbie and Mouton (200:502) noted, the data analysis phase of lived experiences begins by looking at the central themes of life. The researcher therefore analysed the collected data by taking each sub-research question as a central theme.

4.11 Credibility and trustworthiness

Rossouw (2003:428) states that credibility refers to the extent to which the results and inference techniques that are used to generate the findings of a research can be trusted. Mertens (2005:351) further asserts that the quality of the collected data can be determined by means of a dependability audit in which the change progress can be inspected to attest to the quality and appropriateness of the inquiry.

In that regard, Mertens (2005:358) advises that the following research strategies should be used to enhance the credibility of results:

- Prolonged and substantial engagement;
- Persistent observation;
- Peer debriefing;
- Negative case analysis;
- Progressive subjectivity;
- Member checks; and
- Triangulation.

In this study, credibility was maintained through the representation of the collected data. The researcher ensured that the correlation between the way the participants expressed their social realism and the manner in which that reality was represented reflected the viewpoint of the participants (Mertens 2005:358). Moreover, the researcher used peer debriefing, member check and triangulation methods to increase the level of credibility.

On the other hand, trustworthiness refers to the dependability of the research inquiry process (Mertens 2005:358). According to Cohen *et al.* (2007:141), this implies that the researcher cannot rely on a single source to draw conclusion about a whole. In this regard, triangulation becomes necessary for the reliability of findings.

According to Cohen *et al.* (2007:141), triangulation refers to the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of human behaviour. For this study, the researcher used the document view (literary sources), and conducted interviews (empirical sources) to obtain the necessary data for this research. Thus, the levels of trustworthiness in this study were achieved through the use of two source materials – the document review and empirical sources.

4.12 Transferability

According to Babbie and Mouton (2005:277), transferability refers to the extent to which the findings can be applied in other contexts or with. In qualitative research, as the researcher is not primarily interested in (statistical) generalisations, the observations of this study will be defined by a specific context in which they occur.

4.13 Delimitations and limitations

According to Creswell (2003:147), delimitations and limitations are the two parameters that establish the boundaries, expectations, reservations and qualifications inherent in any undertaken research study. The delineations and limitations of this study are as follows:

4.13.1 Delimitations

This study will confine itself to the interviewing of Church leaders who are also *Sangomas* from different areas around the Eastern Cape Province. These areas will include the following: Alice, Fort Beaufort, and *Dutywa*. The study will focus on the lived experiences of participants who have undergone the *Sangoma* initiation and are serving in Church leadership.

4.13.2 Limitations

Even though this study is multi-disciplinary, in that it considers both the practices of Christianity and the African Traditional Religion, its scope is limited to the lived experiences of people who juxtapose Christianity and the African Traditional Religion, particularly those who are both church leaders and *Sangomas*. Any generalisations should be made with reference to the realism of people who assume or fulfil these two religious roles, as Church leaders and *Sangomas*.

Beyond that, the findings of this study are considered to be relevant to Christian and African Traditional Religious institutions, or to benefit Christians and African

Traditional Religionists. Therefore, this study is not generalisable to other religious orientations besides the ones explored in this research project.

4.14 Ethical considerations

Mertens (2005:249) advises that before the researcher can collect any research data, appropriate procedures to gain entry from the gatekeepers must be followed. The gatekeepers are the organisations, institutions, communities or individuals that possess the power to grant the permission for the researcher to undertake an intended research (Creswell 2003:65).

In this study, the researcher consulted all the relevant authorities in order to gain entry first, from the host institution and secondly, from the participants who were involved in the process of this research. Furthermore, as this study involved people who served as respondents during the data collection, the researcher respected the participants' site of research and adhered to all the relevant ethical procedures. The following ethical issues were considered:

4.14.1 Avoidance of harm to participants

In relation to undertaken research study, the researcher did not expose, or put the participants at risk. The researcher treated all the participants with respect and avoid exposing the participants to physical, psychological, emotional, social, economic, or any other form of harm (Creswell 2003:64). Thus, even the stressful procedures that might have caused emotional discomfort to participants were avoided.

4.14.2 Informed consent

All the participants who participated in this study were informed about the nature of this research before they can participate and its probable impact on them so that they can reasonably expect what to anticipate in the research and be able to make informed

consent. The participants were made aware that participation in this study was voluntarily and were given the right to withdraw their consent from participating in the research study at any time they wish to do so.

4.14.3 Right of privacy

The researcher also anticipated the possibility of harmful information being disclosed during the data collection process. The researcher therefore made sure that the participants' right of privacy were not violated. This means that any information about the participants that was acquired during the research study was treated as highly confidential and was not made available to others without the consent of the participant. Furthermore, the names of the participants were not disclosed, but the researcher obtained their consent to disclose their biographical information.

4.15 Summary

This section of the chapter addressed the methodological components of this research. As such, the following elements were discussed: research paradigm, research approach, research design, population, sampling, research instruments, procedure for data collection, procedure for data analyses, and ethical considerations.

CHAPTER FIVE

EMPERICAL DATA PRESENTATION

5.1 Introduction

The present chapter deals with, and presents the data that was collected for the purpose of this study in order to establish the link between Christian leadership and '*Sangomahood*'. The data was collected from 10 participants, both male and female, who came from three geographical areas in the Eastern Cape Province, namely, Alice, Fort Beaufort and *Dutywa*. The researcher conducted an in-depth one-on-one interviews with the participants to uncover the realism understudy – the juxtapositioning of Christianity and African Traditional Religion, particularly the link between Christian Leadership and '*Sangomahood*'.

5.2 Classification system

This study explored the lived experiences of participants who assume binary roles as Christian leaders and *Sangomas*, and consider themselves to be Christians while African religionists. To bring balance into this enquiry, the researcher also considered rigorist African religionists, who are not Christians; and conservative Christian leaders, who are not African religionists. The data gathered for this study has been presented by clustering common themes, reflections, tallying and by the ranking of responses to uncover the main issues that arose from the interviews and these established the findings of the study.

For identification purposes, the researcher classified the participants in the following way: The first male participant is classified as, Participant 1 Male – P1M; and the first female participant is classified as, Participant 1 Female – P1F. Participants who are both Church leaders and *Sangomas* are classified as, 'Church Leader *Sangoma*' – CLS. Those participants who are rigorist African religionists are classified as, 'Rigorist

African religionists' – RAR; and participants who are conservative Christian leaders are classified as, 'Conservative Christian Leaders' – CCL.

Thus, the first male participant, who is both a Church leader and *Sangoma* is classified as P1MCLS; and the first female participant, who is both a Church leader and *Sangoma* is classified as P1FCLS. The first male participant, who is a rigorist African religionist is classified as P1MRAR; and the first female participant, who is a rigorist African religionist is classified as P1FRAR. Furthermore, the first male participant, who is a conservative Church leader is classified as P1MCCL; whereas the first female participant, who is a conservative Church leader is classified as P1FCCL. These classification systems are used to identify the responses of the participants, and to keep their identity anonymous as their true names may not be used.

5.3 Background information




The first part of the chapter gives the background information of the participants. This background helped the researcher to find the basic information about the participants who were involved in the study. Thus, all the participants who were considered and interviewed for this study were considered as suitable respondents, who could provide a thick description, in-depth and reliable information on the phenomenon under study. The collective background information of all the participants has been presented in Table 5.1. The individual (one-on-one) interviews with the participants from all three geographical areas were taken at face-value, and as representing an inside view of the participants who are considered for this study.

The background information is condensed and drawn using various categories. These characterise the various components that were part of the interviews with the participants. These are, namely: the religion(s) of the participants (whether they were Christian, African religionist, or both); the age group of the participants; the gender of the participants; their educational level; the years in practice of their craft (as Christians, African religionists or both); and the geographical areas from which they came (Alice, Fort Beaufort or *Dutywa*).

Table 5.1: The participants' demographics

Participant No.	Religion (s)	Age	Gender	Educational level	Denomination	Years of church membership	Location of the participant
1	Both Christian & African religionist	51 years and older	Female	Masters – Doctorate	St. John's Apostolic Church (Church leader & <i>Sangoma</i>)	16 years and more	Alice
2	Both Christian & African religionist	30–40 years	Male	Degree – Honours	Zion Pentecostal Church (Church leader & <i>Sangoma</i>)	1–5 years	Fort Beaufort
3	Both Christian & African religionist	51 years and older	Female	Masters – Doctorate	Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (Church leader & <i>Sangoma</i>)	6–15 years	Fort Beaufort
4	Christian	30–40 years	Male	Degree – Honours	Duff Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (Church leader)	6–15 years	Dutywa
5	Christian	30–40 years	Male	Matric – Diploma	Trinity Baptist Church (Church leader)	1–5 years	Alice
6	Both Christian &	51 years	Female	Masters –	Methodist Church of	16 years and	Dutywa

	African religionist	and older		Doctorate	Southern Africa (Church leader & <i>Sangoma</i>)	more	
7	African religionist	30–40 years	Female	Matric – Diploma	African religionist (<i>Sangoma</i>)	6–15 years	Dutywa
8	Both Christian & African religionist	41–50 years	Female	Matric – Diploma	Roman Catholic Church (Church leader & <i>Sangoma</i>)	6–15 years	Fort Beaufort
9	African religionist	41–50 years	Female	Degree – Honours	African religionist (<i>Sangoma</i>)	16 years and more	Alice
10	Both Christian & African religionist	51 years and older	Female	Masters – Doctorate	Dikeni Presbyterian Church of Africa (Church leader & <i>Sangoma</i>)	16 years and more	Alice

 Alice
  Fort Beaufort
  *Dutywa*

5.3.1 Participants' background information

Table 5.1, gives the collective background information of all the participants who were approached for the one-on-one interviews. The information reveals that there were seven females and three males who were considered for the individual interviews in this study. This is in line with the South African demographics on gender statistics where there are more females than males in South Africa (Statistics South Africa 2013). Furthermore, there are more practising female Traditional healers (*Sangomas*) than male Traditional healers in South Africa (Truter 2011:57).

About four of the participants came from the vicinity of Alice, in the Eastern Cape (highlighted grey in the table). Another three came from the vicinity of Fort Beaufort (highlighted blue), and the other three came from the vicinity of *Dutywa* (highlighted orange), still in the Eastern Cape. The age groups of the participants ranged from 30–40 years; from 41–50 years; and from 51 years and older. Four participants ranged between the ages of 30–40 years, two ranged between the ages of 41–50, and four were 51 years and older.

In terms of their educational levels, three participants had already completed their Matric or Diplomas during the interviews, three had already completed their degrees or Honours, and four had already completed their Masters or Doctorate at the time of this research. The participants came from different religious orientations, belonged to different religious denominations and/or embraced the African traditional heritage.

About six of the participants had already been practising *Sangomas* and Churches leaders for a period of six years and more. Two of the participants had already been Christian leaders for a period of six years and more, and the other two had already been African religionists for a period of six years and more. This indicates that all the participants who were considered for this study had already gained an experience of six years and more before they were approached for the one-on-one interviews. This further indicates that all the participants who were involved in this study were capable of providing the necessary information relating to the phenomenon under study.

5.4 Unspoken connections between Christianity and ATR

The second part of this chapter provides the biographical information of the participants, in order to establish why and how the participants juxtaposed Christianity and African Traditional Religion. This is important because the study intended to understand rather than quantify the experiences of the participants, particularly of those who are Church leaders and *Sangomas*. Thus, the study set out to attain an in-depth knowledge of the phenomenon under study – the link between Christian leadership and ‘*Sangomahood*’; and to find an interpretive paradigm from which the lived experiences of the participants, as insiders, may be understood.

In this instance, the detailed biographical accounts of the participants assisted the researcher in unfolding the dynamics of this realism – accounting for the taking of dual roles by participants as church leaders and *Sangomas*, and how this realism has been socio-culturally expressed by its practitioners. Therefore, the biographical data of the participants included the description of their calling, both to the Christian ministry and ‘*Sangomahood*’; the influences which led to or surrounded their conversion, callings or religiosity; the place in which they were born; and the religious background of their parents, guardians or care-takers.

These provided an interpretive context (hermeneutical approach) from which the realism under study may be understood and cross-examined. But the starting point to this enquiry was listening to the voices of the participants, as experiencers of this reality, and locating their framework or point of view.

5.4.1 The participants’ biographical data

Participant 1 – P1FCLS

The first participant was a 51-year-old female from the vicinity of *Ntselamanzi* at Alice, in the Eastern Cape. She is a Church leader at St. John’s Apostolic Faith Mission, and has been a traditional healer (using both holy water and traditional medicines) for over 16 years. She was originally born at *Baziya*, Umtata, in the Eastern Cape. She moved to Alice in 1983 following her calling into the Christian ministry. The participant was raised by both her parents, and came from a religious family.

Both her father and mother were Christians. The father belonged to the Free Church in Southern Africa, and her mother was a member of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa. The participant grew up as a Christian, and was baptised in the Free Church in Southern Africa, where her father was a devoted member. She was often sick, and could not find healing from the church; as a result, her parents sent her to a traditional healer, who told her that she was not, in fact, sick but had a calling to be a faith healer – *Umthandazisi*²⁷.

The gift of *ukuthandazela* (faith healing) required that she rely heavily upon the active involvement of the ancestors, who would reveal the ailments of her clients, even though she used the Bible, prayer sessions, holy water, and other approaches for treatment. She then conducted a traditional ceremony to unite the ancestors with her Christian call of *Ukuthandazela*. As per the Xhosa custom, she had to go to *Exhantini*²⁸ with her elders to conciliate the ancestors and request their guidance on her Christian call.

Soon after the ceremony, the ancestors showed her how she would work, and which church to belong to – The St. John's Apostolic Faith Mission. At her arrival at the St. John's Apostolic Faith Mission, she was mentored by one of their prophets until she was self-assured of her spiritual gifts. There forth, she gained recognition and was well respected within the church.

In 1983, under the leadership of Father Petros Masango²⁹, she was dispensed to open the first St. John's Apostolic Faith Mission branch at Alice. She accepted the task and opened a new branch of the church at Alice. Since then, she has become the Bishop of the St. John's Apostolic Faith Mission at Alice. Thus, she has been a

²⁷ There are multiple types of traditional healers in South Africa. This includes *Sangomas* (diviners), *Inyangas* (herbalists), and *Umthandazisi* (faith healers). *Inyangas* and *Sangomas* are two types of healers that are generally seen as the same, with the exception that *Sangomas* have the power of communing with ancestral spirits, and consequently, *Sangomas* can receive additional training and are viewed as more powerful by some community members. *Umthandazisi* might be affiliated with one of the African Christian churches and use the Bible, prayer sessions, and other approaches for treatment (see Brian King 2012:3)

²⁸ *Ixhanti* is a special sacred pole in the kraal, in the case of village communities, but it is often placed within the yard in Suburban communities. This Pole is taken as the symbol of the presence of the ancestors for Xhosa traditional communities. It is where the elders of the family would gather, and speak to the ancestors. Each time the family slaughters an animal, for any traditional ceremony, the horns of that animal are often placed or hanged on that pole.

²⁹ Bishop Petros Masango rose to prominence at St. John's Apostolic Faith Mission and eventually became a leader of one of the splinter groups. This is after some long out court battles with the founder of St. John's Apostolic Faith Mission, Mme maChristinah Nku (see, Sibusiso Masondo 2015:231–246).

church leader at St. John's Apostolic Faith Mission for over 30 years, while also being a traditional healer.

Participant 2 – P2MCLS

The second participant was a 30 – 40-year-old male from the vicinity of Seymore at Fort Beaufort. He is both a *Sangoma* and church leader from the Zion Pentecostal Church. He was originally born at *eNgqeleni*, one of the rural areas of Alice, in the Eastern Cape, but later went on to settle at Fort Beaufort. He was raised by both of his parents and grew up within a Christian family. His parents were Christians and belonged to the Trinity Baptist Church at Alice. But since his father was not so kind to his traditional calling, he was forced to go live on his own far from home.

From an early age, the participant had experienced throbbing headaches, which were sometimes accompanied by strange dreams. In these dreams, he would see the underworld³⁰, and visited the people who lived beneath the sea. At various instances, he would get remedies (traditional medicines), and instructions from the underworld, which he must use and follow to heal people. But when he communicated these to his parents, they thought that he was being attacked by evil spirits.

He went through deliverance, and exorcism programmes at church, but he did not fully recover. He continued to suffer from terrible headaches, and had strange dreams. This continued until he could not finish his matric. During exams, he would lose sight and not be able to write. But when he was taken back home, everything would be normal. His parents were greatly concerned by this, but did not want to consult traditional healers. Over the festive season in 2010, while visiting his aunt for Christmas, he experienced the terrible headaches again.

His aunt, without the consent of his parents, decided to take him to consult a traditional healer. There, he was told that he is not sick but needed to accept his *Sangoma* calling. He was instructed by the traditional healer to conduct an *imvuma*

³⁰ The underworld is perceived to be the world of the ancestors (the departed), and is understood to be located beneath the physical world, or the land of the living.

*kufa*³¹ ritual, and all his illnesses would go away. But this was impossible because his parents were Christians, and wanted nothing to do with traditional customs and/or rituals.

His aunt³², however, took heart to speak with his mother, and to inform her of the dangers which might follow if the participant did not accept his calling. The mother, then, made a compromise and allowed the participant to undergo the *Sangoma* training. This was against the wishes of the participant's father. The participant's father had warned that no traditional customs and/or rituals would take place within his premises, and that it was only prayers that were allowed in his yard.

Due to the dire health condition of the participant, his mother arranged, with other elderly extended members of the family, for the *imvuma kufa* ritual to be conducted at her aunt's place. In that way, the participant acknowledged his calling, and went through the *Sangoma* initiation processes. Thus, even though his father remarkably criticised his traditional calling, the participant still enjoyed the support of his mother. However, it was not always observable. His mother indirectly supported him, and was financially responsible for necessary contributions towards his *Sangoma* initiation.

When the initiation period was complete, and all the necessary ceremonial obligations were done, such as *ukugoduswa* (the coming out or graduation ceremony), the participant went back home, leaving his aunt's place. While at home, however, he felt unwelcomed and received several criticisms. He did not receive any kind treatment, both from his father and from the members of the church which he had regarded as members of his home-church. Thus, he felt obliged to move away from his home.

In 2011, he settled at Seymore, one of the rural areas of Fort Beaufort. Due to the rejection he received from his home church, he utterly abandoned any affiliation with the Baptist Church, and preferred the Zion type of Churches when he arrived at Seymore. He strongly criticised salvation or born-again churches for their rigidity and non-flexibility.

³¹ The *imvuma kufa* is a submission ritual which announces the initiate's acceptance of the traditional healer calling and the readiness to learn from the wisdom of the ancestors.

³² The aunt, in this case, was the sister of the participant's father.

He thought that they tend to turn a blind eye to African spirituality and its various manifestations. In 2013, he was ordained as a minister in the Zion Pentecostal Church. The church allowed him to use both his traditional calling and Christian ministry to advance the welfare of members within the church, and to spread the mission the church. Thus, he has been a practising *Sangoma* and a church leader for five years.

Participant 3 – P3FCLS

The third participant was a 51-year-old female from Fort Beaufort (CBD), in the Eastern Cape. She is a Church leader at the United Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa, and has been a practising traditional healer for 6–15 years. She was born in North West but relocated to Fort Beaufort by marriage in 1987. She was born into a Christian family, and her parents were members of the Ethiopian Church of South Africa. After her marriage, she changed to the Uniting Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa. This change was due to marital reasons because her husband was a preacher in the United Presbyterian Church.

As the wife of a preacher, she was elected to lead the Women’s Union in 1989, and now she occupies the position of Deaconess in the United Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa. In 1999, however, she got sick and started having feets or seizures. These were diagnosed as of unknown origins by medical doctors. So, her husband decided to send her to a traditional healer.

During her consultation with the traditional healer, she was told that she needed to take on *ukuthwasa*³³, but her husband objected to this. He said that he would not allow her be a traditional spiritualist. His reasons were that the initiates (*amathwasa*) are often treated callously by their mentors, as some would be beaten or ill-treated. He also feared that the mentor may be an older male, who might force himself onto her wife or sexually abuse her. And she would be obliged to keep quiet because the person doing this is her mentor.

³³ *Ukuthwasa* is a Xhosa term which denotes that one has been called to be a diviner. It is thus a term that is strictly used for traditional calling from the ancestors for one to be a healer.

For such concerns, her husband refused to let her undergo the *ukuthwasa* initiation. Her husband obviously wanted her to recover and stop having seizures, but he was not enthralled by her sudden call to '*Sangomahood*'. He did not expect that these seizures were indicative signs of her traditional calling. So, he objected to this calling. It was until when she almost died, by falling next to the fire during a family gathering in 2001, that her husband allowed her to go through the *Sangoma* initiation.

Her husband, even though a preacher, complied with all the necessary protocols, and offered his support throughout the initiation process. Upon completion of her *Sangoma* training, she fully recovered, and did not experience any incidents of seizures. In 2002, she started her practice as *Sangoma*, and was later re-elected to the position of Deaconess at church. She has been serving in a leadership position, while a practicing *Sangoma*, for well over 15 years.

Participant 4 – P4MCCL

The fourth participant was a 30 – 40-year-old male from *Dutywa*. He is a conservative church leader from the United Presbyterian Church of *Dutywa* in South Africa. He has been a minister at the United Presbyterian Church for almost 10 years. He was originally born at *Tsomo*, one of the small villages next to *Dutywa* in the Eastern Cape. His father was a rigorist African religionist, while his mother was a committed Christian.

He grew up experiencing the complexities of both worlds, as he would be involved in traditional ceremonies at home, and being forced to go to church every Sunday by his mother. He experienced this dichotomy until he matriculated. After completing Matric, he found a job and worked as an administrative clerk for the Department of Education, far from home. This gave him an opportunity to choose his path, and to gain some form of independence.

He had to decide whether he wanted to be a rigorist African religionist, or a Christian. Or to continue following both traditions – ATR and Christianity, with the hope that they will eventually find some form of expression.

Prior to getting a job at the Department of Education, however, he had promised to work for God, if he provisioned him with a job he so desperately needed. This is because his mother was the sole provider at home, and his father was not working. It was his greatest wish to ease the burden and to assist his mother with financial responsibilities. So, he made a promise to work for God, if he provisioned him with a job.

After Matric, he got a job and was well paid. This allowed him to contribute at home and to ease the financial burden which her mother had borne for so long. However, even at that point, he felt a vacuum, as if something was missing. He was not even satisfied by the well-paying job he had gotten. Although he was not sure of what was missing in his life, he continued to work hard at his job. The problem began when he experienced some strange dreams, where he saw himself preaching in church.

He had dreams of himself as a Pastor, and was actually leading a church. These reminded him of a promise which he had once made to God – that he will work for God if he provided him with a job. He remembered that promise. The promise was so resounding and clear. But he suppressed it for the next six years. This continued until one day he realised that God had fulfilled all the demands of his promise, but he, himself, had done nothing in return to honour that promise.

He, then, resigned from his job at the Department of Education and took a part-time job at the South African Police Services as a police chaplain and counsellor. By so doing, he got a chance to register for theological studies with the University of Stellenbosch Theological School. He completed all the necessary procedures, and was ordained about four years later.

Soon after his ordination, he became a full-time Pastor at his church, and now he is the moderator (Bishop) of the Duff United Presbyterian Church in South Africa. He has been a leader in this church (Duff United Presbyterian Church in South Africa) for almost 10 years.

Participant 5 – P5MCCL

The fifth participant was a 30 – 40-year-old male from *eNgqeleni*, a rural area under the Amatole District, within the vicinity of Alice, in the Eastern Cape. He is a conservative church leader from the Trinity Baptist Church and has been a minister (Pastor) for five years. The participant was born into a Christian family, and was raised a Christian until his adulthood. Thus, he grew up within the church context, with both of his parents being born-again Christians.

His father was also a well-known preacher of the Baptist Church, and was highly regarded by the community. But following his father's passing in 2008, the Church Board resolved to send the participant to a Seminary, to train as a minister. He was accepted at the Cape Town Baptist Seminary in 2009.

There, he diligently studied Theology, returned home to fulfill the necessary requirements for ordination, and was ordained in 2013. He has been serving, at a leadership capacity, in the Trinity Baptist Church for five years.

Participant 6 – P6FCLS

The sixth participant was a 51-year-old female from *Dutywa*, in the Eastern Cape. She is a Church leader at the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, and has been a traditional healer, using both prayer and traditional medicines, for over 16 years. The participant was born into a religious family, and her parents were members of the Methodist Church.

At an early age, she attended Sunday school, later became a Guilder (junior *Manyano*³⁴), and went on to join the Women's *iManyano* of the Methodist Church. In 2000, she was ordained as a Pastor, and since then, she has been serving at a leadership position in the Methodist Church.

³⁴ *Manyano* is a prayer and service union of Black Women of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa. It was instituted around December 1907 to supplement the Women's Auxiliary service. This prayer and service union was initially called '*Unyamezelo*' which meant perseverance, steadfastness, to be strong and faithful. But later, the term '*Manyano*' was used to symbolize unity (cf. Attwell 1997:4; Myembezi 1988:23; Minutes of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa 1937:233).

In 2001, however, she started experiencing unusual and bizarre black-outs. These mostly occurred at evening. During the day-time, she would go about her business, and everything seemed to be fine. But at night fall, she would experience black-outs or momentary lapses of memory. When such incidents occurred, she would not recall anything. This included the non-remembrance of personal details about herself and her significant others, such as her name, where she lived, and who the members of her family were.

In some instances, this would be severe, as she would wake up inside the kraal, just next to *Ixhanti*³⁵. But she would not remember when and how she got there. This greatly bothered her and her parents. So, she consulted some medical professionals, and saw some psychological specialists. However, nothing tangible was identified as the root cause of these black-outs, except that some psychologists said that she had a sleep-walking problem.

Since this problem was persistent, and had no medical cure, together with her parents, she decided to consult a traditional healer. There, she was told that she had a special calling to be a faith healer (*umthandazeli*). However, this was not an ordinary calling because it required the active involvement and guidance of the ancestors; hence, during her black-outs, the participant often woke-up inside the kraal, next to *Ixhanti*.

Within the Xhosa culture, *Ixhanti* is regarded as a sacred pole that is often located inside or in the middle of the kraal, which symbolises the presence of the ancestors. It is the sacred place where the elders of the family gather to speak with the ancestors. And each time an animal is being slaughtered for a ceremony, the horns of that animal are usually placed or hanged on that pole.

Following this proclamation, of her imminent call to be a faith healer, the participant had to conduct a special ritual to unite the ancestors and the church (*ukudibanisa izihlwele necawa*)³⁶.

³⁵ See footnote number 2 for the meaning and usage of the term "*Ixhanti*" within the Xhosa cultural context.

³⁶ The ritual required that the participant weave her hair with white, red or blue beads and insert small portions of hair from the tail of a sacred animal (mostly a cow), commonly known as "*ubulunga*". This symbolises the presence of the ancestors in her life.

As the central purpose of this ritual, the participant was enabled to call upon the aid and guidance of the ancestors for healing, while she was also empowered to use Christian components, such as prayer, candles, holy water, and the Bible, as surplus methods of healing. On the one hand, the ancestors help to reveal the ailments, problems and needs of the people. On the other hand, these are diagnosed within the Christian context, using Christian components such as prayer, candles, holy water, and the Bible.

However, in some extreme cases, the participant resorts to traditional remedies and medicines. These are often shown to her by the ancestors. She has been a faith healer, while a church leader in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, for over 16 years.

Participant 7 – P7FRAR

The seventh participant was a 30 – 40-year-old female from *Dutywa*, in the Eastern Cape. She is a rigorist African religionist, and has been a *Sangoma* for almost 15 years. The participant was born into a Christian family and regularly went to church until she was 16 years old. At the age of 16, she started having strange dreams and would dream about traditional remedies and indigenous plants with healing properties.

The ancestors would tell her where to look for these remedies, for what purpose, and how they ought to be mixed as remedial portions. Since she was born into a Christian family, and her parents were members of the Assemblies of God Church, her special gift was firmly repressed.

This continued until, one day, she had an *Inkenqe*³⁷ while at church. At that instance, she was channelled into the other side, as she entered into a trance. She started shaking, making odd noises and was trampling with her feet as if she was

³⁷ *Inkenqe* is a Xhosa word for 'The Calling'. Unlike *ukuthwasa*, *inkenqe* is what one experiences when they are being channelled to the other side (spiritual realm). At that instance, their body, mind and spirit becomes one as they enter into a trance. There, they are enabled to communicate with the ancestors. Only the chosen ones may be channelled to the other side to communicate with the ancestors.

dancing into a song. The pastor, and other members of the church, thought that she was possessed, and needed deliverance.

Exorcism, also known as the casting out of demons, and prayers of deliverance were made, so that she could be liberated from the possession of demons. To her, these acts of deliverance were humiliating as she considered herself not to be possessed but called by the ancestors. Every time she went to church, the pastor arranged a deliverance session for her. She got tired of this humiliation and decided to stop going to church.

She later came to see the whole experience as a sign from the ancestors forbidding her from going to church. Mostly because she received the call – *inkenqe*, while at church. Thus, she stopped going to church at the age of 16. At the age of 18, she trained as a traditional healer (*ukuthwasa*), and, thereafter, she started healing people, following the dreams and instructions given to her by the ancestors. The ancestors are guiding her, as they show her where to look for her healing remedies, tell her how to use them, and for what purposes. Since 2003, she has been a healer and working as a *Sangoma*.

Participant 8 – P8FCLS

The eighth participant was a 41 – 50-year-old female from Fort Beaufort (CBD), in the Eastern Cape. She occupies the leadership position of an elder in the Roman Catholic Church, and has been a traditional healer for 15 years. She was born into a Christian family, and her parents were members of the Roman Catholic Church. She, however, grew up under the care of her grandparents.

Her grandmother was a well-known traditional doctor or herbalist³⁸. She possessed an extensive knowledge of traditional medicines and remedies. This is

³⁸ Traditional healers do not perform the same functions, nor do they fall into the same category but each traditional healer has a field of expertise, with their own methods of diagnosis and a particular set of knowledge in traditional medicines. The various types of traditional healers include the following: (a) the *Sangoma* or diviner, (b) *Inyanga*, traditional doctor or herbalist, (c) *Umthandazeli* or faith healer-prophet, and (d) Traditional midwife or birth attendant (see, Ilse Truter 2007:57–58).

the special knowledge, which she passed on to the participant. Thus, the participant never received any calling, nor underwent the *Sangoma* training – *ukuthwasa*.

However, she became a traditional healer by choice, since she inherited a vast knowledge of traditional medicines and remedies from her grandmother. Her approach and method of healing is vastly different from that which is mostly employed by *Sangomas*. She does not diagnose by reading bones, divination or entering into a trance. Her form of diagnosis requires the knowledge of symptoms and the patient's historical background. Thus, her method of intervention is naturally limited, curative and requires personal contact with patients.

Participant 9 – P9FRAR

The ninth participant was a 41 – 50-year-old female from Lower *Ncera* (*KwaSkhweyiya*), at Alice, in the Eastern Cape. She is a rigorist African religionist, and has been a *Sangoma* for over 16 years. The participant was born into a religious family. Her parents were both Christian and African religionists. Her father was known as *Mayezaza* (medicine man) because he always carried a small satchel of *muti* in his blazer pocket. Even though he was known as a medicine man, the participant's father was a member of the Bantu Presbyterian Church of South Africa.

He remained a Christian until his death bed. Before he passed away, he called all his children to instruct them (*eyolela*). He told them never to deny their Xhosa heritage and to uphold their culture. He told them that without the favour of the ancestors, they would not prosper in life, and that the Christian faith should not replace the devotion of ancestors. After his death, the family forgot his words and ignored the ancestor. No one, in the participant's family, was concerned about ancestral rites and customary rituals.

This continued until misfortune befall the family. Out of seven children of *Mayezana*, four died consecutively within a period of four years. There was death each year, within the period of 2001–2004, in the family. Following the death of the second child in 2002, Christian prayers and supplications were offered to God to stop the scourge of death in the family. However, two more deaths occurred in the

next two years (2003-2004). The elders of the family were perplexed, and needed an explanation for this misfortune.

They consulted a *Sangoma*, hoping to find a solution to this problem. The traditional healer told them that they were the cause of this misfortune, as they had not taken the words of *Mayezana* seriously, and had abandoned the ancestors. They were instructed to slaughter *inkomoyezihlwele*³⁹. This ceremonial slaughtering of a cow would remove the misfortune in the family and restore benevolence. The elders did as instructed by the *Sangoma* and conducted a customary ritual for the ancestors.

In the evening, of that very same day, the participant dreamt of her father and grandparents calling her into a cave – *Emqolombeni*. Inside the cave, there were many plants and remedies to cure the sick. In her ears, she heard the words ‘*thabatha unyang*’, which means ‘take and heal’. She hesitantly picked up the remedies, as instructed. Upon picking them up, she then heard voices of anguish and lamentation behind her. As she turned around, she saw a long line of sick people who were impatiently waiting for her cure. Out of shock, she dropped the remedies and woke up.

This dream occurred several time, but each time, she was woken up by the long line of multitudes, who appeared to be in anguish, waiting for her cure. After some months, the dream stopped, but another soon came. She was given a special dream about the place where she would undergo her *intwaso* training, and the person who would be her trainer. The next morning, she began her journey, following the instructions of the ancestors. She ended up at *Melani*⁴⁰, where she saw three rondavels that were identical to those she was shown in her dream, which belonged to her trainer.

There, she underwent the *Sangoma* initiation and completed her training. Her completion of the initiation process was marked by *ingoduso*, that is, the coming out or graduation ceremony. Thereafter, she started practising her craft as a *Sangoma*.

³⁹ *Inkomoyezihlwele* is a cow that is slaughtered for the ancestors, whether to gain back their favour or to show gratitude.

⁴⁰ *Melani* is one of the rural areas of Alice that is located within the *Amathole* District, in the Eastern Cape.

Under the persuasion of ancestors, she had learnt that Christianity does not mix well with traditional customs. As Christ and ancestors primarily fulfil the same function.

However, she alleged that the ancestors are much closer, in proximity, because they were once part of the living, and can better sympathise with the sufferings of the clan. But Christ is a foreigner, who lived in a distant past, and has no relations with the *Khwalos* (a Xhosa clan she belongs to). Thus, she regards herself as a rigorist African religionist, and has been a *Sangoma* for over 16 years.

Participant 10 – P10FCLS

The tenth participant was a 51-year-old female from Alice (CBD), in the Eastern Cape. She is a Church leader at *Dikeni* Presbyterian Church of Africa, and has been a traditional healer (using both prayer and traditional medicines) for over 16 years. She was originally born at *Eziflaweni*⁴¹, a village in King William's Town, in the Eastern Cape. Both her parents were Christians. Her father was a preacher in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, but died when she was still at the tender age of three, leaving her mother to raise her, with the help of relatives.

At her village, there were more red-blanketed people⁴², and her mother was the only one who had studied until Standard Six, which is Grade Eight nowadays. Since she was a Christian and did not wear her usual traditional attire, but wore dresses, her mother was called *uNolokwe* in the village. In her upbringing, the participant does not recall seeing or hearing of a traditional healer in the family. The members of her family were Christian, and did not conduct traditional customs.

Even traditional rituals like *Ukuthomba*⁴³ were not performed by her family. But she was instructed, in a dream by the ancestors, to perform the ritual of *Ukuthomba*. No-one, in her family, had ever gone through the ritual of *Ukuthomba*, but the

⁴¹ The place was called '*Ezifloweni*' (from the flower girls) because of her mother, who had had the first white wedding in the village.

⁴² These were traditional Xhosa people who did not wear the modern western attire or clothing. They generally preferred to wear their traditional or customary clothing, which mostly covered their private areas and did not cover the entire body. The term, 'red' in the phrase 'red-blanketed people', is derived from the 'red' colour of the ochre which they used to smear or protect their skin.

⁴³ *Ukuthomba* is the traditional or customary rite of passage to womanhood.

ancestors demanded that of her. For disclosing this information, she was secluded, locked in a room for few days, and was not allowed to interact with other people.

It is during this time that she realised that she had a very special calling. She would see things that others would not see, and predict things that would happen. Furthermore, she would have dreams, sometimes about strangers, who would come seeking refuge or shelter at her place. And these dreams would later come true. When these strangers eventually arrived, seeking shelter, her family would build rondavel houses for them, and consider them to be part of the family.

But since she was young, her special gift was suppressed until she was old enough to stand on her own. She then compliantly listened to the voices of the ancestors – *imvuma kufa*, and underwent the *Sangoma* training – *ukuthwasa*. Upon the completion of her *Sangoma* training, she began practising as a traditional healer. Two years later, she was ordained as a minister at the *Dikeni* Presbyterian Church of Africa.

Thus, she has been a Church leader at the *Dikeni* Presbyterian Church of Africa for over 15 years, and has been a traditional healer, using both the Christian components of healing, such as prayer, holy water, candle lighting and the Bible; and traditional medicines and plants as well, for over 16 years.

5.5 Christianity versus the African traditional setting

The third and last part of this chapter outlines the views of the participants regarding the juxtapositioning of Christianity and African Traditional Religion, particularly the link between Christian leadership and '*Sangomahood*'.

The views of the participants are categorised, condensed and presented under the following sub-research questions: (a) Does Christianity remain the same when juxtaposed with traditional practices? (b) Do African traditional practices yield any value when juxtaposed with Christian belief systems? (c) How does Christian leadership relate to '*Sangomahood*'? (d) What are the effects of juxtaposing Christianity and African Traditional Religion to personal identity?

Each of these sub-research questions served as main subjects or themes, from which the views of the participants were presented. In the process of presenting the views of the participant, data reduction was employed.

Data reduction, according to Edwards (1998:61), is “the process whereby a large and cumbersome body of data is organized into a manageable form both for the researcher to work with and for presentation”⁴⁴. This entailed the summarising and clustering of interview materials into sequential narratives.

The researcher used semi-structured questionnaires to interview the participants. This enabled the researcher to create a conversational atmosphere where participants could freely express themselves, while being guided by the overarching aims of the study. The interviews with participants were recorded, and these recordings were transcribed.

To verify the accuracy of the transcripts, two language specialists, one with Masters in Xhosa, from the University of Fort Hare (IsiXhosa National Lexicography Unit); and the other with a PhD in English, from the University of the Free State (Department of English – majored in Linguistics), were used to check the transcripts against the recordings.

This was necessary because the questionnaires were presented in both English and Xhosa languages. The participants, therefore, were at liberty to express themselves in both languages, although the research was conducted, predominantly, within the Xhosa speaking areas – Alice, Fort Beaufort and *Dutywa*, of the Eastern Cape.

5.6 The nature of Christianity when fused with traditional practices

Under this sub-research question, the participants were further asked five extended questions, which sought to establish whether Christianity remained the same when juxtaposed with traditional practices.

⁴⁴ For further reading on ‘Data reduction’ (See, David Edwards 1998. Types of Case Study Work: A Conceptual Framework for Case-based Research. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 38(3):36–70).

The following were the questions that were asked: (a) In your opinion, what links Christianity and African Traditional Religion? (b) In what way is Christianity compatible with the African Traditional Religion? (c) Does Christianity change when juxtaposed with traditional practices? (d) What value does ‘Sangomahood’ (practice of *Sangomas*) add to Christianity? (e) In your opinion, can one be a Christian and African religionist at the same time?

There were varying answers to these questions. The participants seemed to be divided, or fell into different categories. There were those who were pro to, and those that were against the juxtapositioning of Christianity and ATR. With regards to the first and second questions, which enquired about the link and compatibility between Christianity and African Traditional Religion, the participants expressed their variant views as presented in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2: Christianity and ATR as God-centred religions

Participant	Religion	Coding	Responses
P1F	Both	P1FCLS	<i>“In my view, both religions are linked by the belief in one God. But because there are not known records which discuss the understanding of God in ATR, people tend to assume that the Christian God is different from the African religionist God. My view, however, is that they are the same.”</i>
P2M	Both	P2MCLS	<i>“The two religions worship the same God, who is present everywhere. But it is how people worship this God that makes a difference. Some Christians believe that we must go to God through Christ alone, but I also believe we need our ancestors.”</i>
P3F	Both	P3FCLS	<i>“Religion, in general, is about uniting people with God, and that is what Christianity and the ATR do. In that way, they have the same purpose, even though there are also differences between them.”</i>
P6F	Both	P6FCLS	<i>“Mmh... I would say that both religions are concerned with God and how he wants his people to worship him. The only difference is that Christians believe that God reveals himself and continues to speak through the bible; whereas</i>

			<i>there is no bible in African religion. We largely get to see our wrongdoing through calamity or bad luck. Then, we know that God or the ancestors are displeased with our actions.</i>
P8F	Both	P8FCLS	<i>“Well, I cannot say whether they link or not. But I know that it is possible to use prayer and traditional medicines together. Sometimes I pray for the medicines that I use so that God may heal my clients.”</i>
P10F	Both	P10FCLS	<i>“There is a link. I am a Christian and Sangoma. Therefore, I embrace both faiths. I do not see any contradiction, and my life is balanced.”</i>

The participants who juxtaposed Christianity and ATR, and were both Christian leaders and *Sangomas* said that Christianity and ART are compatible. They said that both religions are brought together by their mono-theistic belief in God and their centeredness to God. Participant 10 (P1FCLS), for instance, stated that there is no contradiction between the two religions, but that she embraces both religions to attain a sense of balance in life.

Even though all the participants who juxtaposed Christianity and ATR seemed to concur, Participant 8 (P8FCLS), as a herbalist, did not clearly indicate whether the two religions do link or not. But this appears to have been implied, especially when she stated that she sometimes uses Christian elements, such as prayer, together with traditional remedies, to heal her clients. These two religions (Christianity and ATR) therefore, appear to be understood as connecting, in a mutually reinforcing way, by the noted participants.

On the other hand, there were conservative Christians and rigorist African religionists who did not see any connections or compatibility between Christianity and ATR. They regarded the two religions as a paradox – in other words, a contradiction. They expressed their views in the following manner:

Table 5.3: Christianity and ATR as a paradox

Participant	Religion	Coding	Responses
P1F	Both	P1FCLS	<i>"I was raised by Christian parents, and I grew up attending church. I was never exposed to both traditions until I was called to faith healing."</i>
P4M	Christian	P4MCCL	<i>"I was raised by parents who embraced both religions. My father was an African religionist and my mother was a Christian. On Sunday, we would go to church but even then, my father insisted that we must always wear our fetish (amulets) to stay under the protection of the ancestors. I did not see any contradiction in this, until I gave my life to Christ. Then, I realised that the two do not mix, it is either one worships God or the ancestors."</i>
P5M	Christian	P5MCCL	<i>"There is no link between Christianity and ATR. These two religions oppose each other. A Christian goes to God through Christ, and by Christ alone. But in ATR, the understanding is that God is approached through the ancestors."</i>
P7F	African religionist	P7FRAR	<i>"I do not think that there is a link between Christianity and African religion. You see, the African religion is an indigenous religion, but Christianity is a foreign religion. It came with the whites, which we have no relations with. But the African religion, on the contrary, was given to us by our forefathers. So, we should embrace the African religion because it is ours, and not Christianity."</i>
P9F	African religionist	P9FRAR	<i>"There is no association between the two. You cannot mix the Church and ancestors. The African religion is distinct</i>

			<i>because of the ancestors.</i>
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Thus, conservative Christians, and rigorist African religionist saw the two faiths as a paradox. Participant 9 (P9FRAR) was particularly adamant of this position. She explicitly stated that one “cannot mix the church with ancestors”. Participant 5 (P5MCCL) corroborated this by stating that both religions use different means to approach God. He stated that within the Christian context, Christ is the only way to God, but for African religionists, the ancestors play a prominent role. Therefore, the two religions are seen as incompatible, as they do not mix together, but as a contradiction.

With regards to the third question, which enquired about the nature of Christianity (whether it changes or not) when juxtaposed with traditional practices, the participants expressed their views in the following way:

Table 5.4: Christianity amidst traditional practices

Participant	Religion	Coding	Responses
P1F	Both	P1FCLS	<i>“Well, I can say Christianity remains the same whether it is mixed with traditional practices or not. This is because Christianity is about following Jesus Christ. Therefore, people follow Christ within their cultural context. This means that an African remains an African, and cannot be a Jew, like Jesus was, to be a Christian. So, being a Christian means that we must embrace Christianity together with our own heritage.”</i>
P2M	Both	P2MCLS	<i>“Err! You know? We were raised taught to abandon our traditional practices and cultures. But this should not be true. Since I became a Zionist, I have come to realise that we do not have to abandon our cultures but practice Christianity within our culture. We were deceived into abandoning our roots, and that is not the message of the Bible. The Bible only says we must not eat food sacrificed to idols, eat blood, dead animals, and avoid sexual immorality (Acts</i>

			<i>21:25). As a Zionist, we do not do these things but practice purity. Purity (intlambuluko) is very important to us. And we do not see our traditional practices as impure or practices that go against the will of God.”</i>
P3F	Both	P3FCLS	<i>“No. I do not think that Christianity changes when mixed with traditional practices. In fact, as an African, there is no way I can be proudly African without my traditional practices.”</i>
P4M	Christian	P4MCCL	<i>“Well, it depends on the kind of traditional practices that one is referring to. Not all traditional practices are bad, but those that involve the worship of ancestors are unacceptable. They are a distortion to Christianity. But practices such as hospitality, respect for the elderly, caring for humanity (Ubuntu) and the like, do not change or distort Christianity.”</i>
P5M	Christian	P5MCCL	<i>“I would say the answer is yes and no. Yes, because when we do not measure our traditional practices against the standard set by the Word of God, we tend to fall back into idolatry. But if we let the Word surf-out the negative aspects of our traditional practices, then the answer is no. Christianity does not change in that context.”</i>
P6F	Both	P6FCLS	<i>“In some ways, it does. Our traditional practices sometimes challenge our dependency on God. I remember when I was sick. Because we could not find a cure for my illness, even though we prayed, I ended up consulting Sangomas. I was always afraid to consult Sangomas because it appeared as if I did not trust God enough. But I was sick and needed healing. In time, however, I learnt to accept and reconcile the two.”</i>
P8F	Both	P8FCLS	<i>“No, it does not change. Christianity embraces a variety of cultures, and people</i>

			<i>become Christians with their cultures. Their traditional practices do not become an interference but helps them to live for Christ in their traditional setting.”</i>
P10F	Both	P10FCLS	<i>“Christianity is a way of life, which is modelled after Christ. And Christ embraced his traditional practices, such as being presented in the temple while young, which is paramount to imbeleko in Xhosa tradition, and was initiated (circumcised) when he was 8 years old. This means that there is a strong connection between religion and culture.”</i>

The majority of the participants therefore, seemed to think that Christianity does not change when juxtaposed with African traditional practices. Their central message was that African traditional practices, directly or indirectly, informs their identity, and that they are a lasting part of their Africanness. As such, traditional practices like hospitality, respect (whether for the elders, for creation or sacred divinities), caring for humanity (commonly understood as *Ubuntu*) and the like, were largely interpreted as intrinsic aspects of the African culture.

The possible change, in the nature of Christianity, was said to come with the practice of traditional practices that involve the worship of ancestors. Participant 4 (P4MCCL), in particular, noted that “[n]ot all traditional practices are bad, but those that involve the worship of ancestors are unacceptable. They are a distortion to Christianity”. Participant 5 (P5MCCL) further stated that, if not measured against the Word of God, traditional practices may lead Africans back to idolatry.

In essence, there appears to be consensus among the participants that Christianity does not change when juxtaposed with African traditional practices. But these practices must not involve the worship of ancestors and must be thoroughly assessed in light of the Word of God, so it can surf-out the negative aspects of those traditional practices. Apart from that, the participants feel the need to express their Christianity within their cultural context.

With regards to the fourth question, which enquired about the value that ‘Sangomahood’ adds to the Christian faith, the participants expressed their views in the following way:

Table 5.5: The value of ‘Sangomahood’ to Christianity

Participant	Religion	Coding	Responses
P1F	Both	P1FCLS	<i>“You see, ‘Sangomahood’ is very special. It adds value in a very unique way. As a leader, I do not only feed the people the Word of God, but I also provide traditional remedies for their needs, whether physical or spiritual. I am able to sense their problems and to help them, especially on matters that do not require prayer alone, such as witchcraft, infertility problems and others.”</i>
P2M	Both	P2MCLS	<i>“Err! The added value is that people can also consult us beyond the church premises. Furthermore, they do not have to hide because they know that we are also Christians. So, as Sangomas, we are able to provide solutions to their difficult problems.”</i>
P3F	Both	P3FCLS	<i>“I do not think that ‘Sangomahood’ adds value to Christianity per se, but to the people who need our services. Therefore, it is an advantage to those Christians.”</i>
P6F	Both	P6FCLS	<i>“I do not see it as an added value to Christianity, but ‘Sangomahood’ does provide an opportunity for members of the church to look for solutions outside the church.”</i>
P10F	Both	P10FCLS	<i>“Some people are not purely Christian but also rely on the ancestors. For such people, Sangomas add value. They do not have to consult us at night.”</i>

When asked if ‘Sangomahood’ added any value to Christianity, the participants said that, in one way or another, their practice is an advantage to Christians, not necessarily to Christianity. They noted that, on the one hand, it assists them to sense

the problems of the congregants – as diviners, and suggest solutions for them, which are sometimes found beyond the scope of the church – in traditional remedies; and on the other hand, it allows those Christians, who are not purely Christian, to consult them without creeping by night. Thus, they viewed their practice as an additional tool to advance human flourishing within the context of the church.

The last question, which was asked to the participants sought to enquire whether one can be a Christian and African religionist at the same time. This question was largely answered by the first and second questions, as the participants seemed to be divided into two categories. The participants, who were church leaders and *Sangomas* said that it is possible to unite the two religions.

But the conservative Christians, and rigorist African religionists said that Christianity and ATR are a contradiction, therefore cannot be practised in unison. This seems to indicate that there are varying views and perceptions regarding the juxtapositioning of Christianity and African Traditional Religion.

5.7 The fusion of ‘Sangomahood’ with Christian components

Under this sub-research question, the participants were also asked five extended questions, which sought to establish the value of traditional practices when juxtaposed with Christian belief systems.

The following questions were asked: (a) Does ‘*Sangomahood*’ have any room for Christian belief systems? (b) Does the inclusion of Christian beliefs not nullify the value of traditional practices? (c) Can ancestors be invoked or communicated to in the presence of Christian symbols? (d) Are there any traditional rituals that forbid the use of Christian elements? (e) How may the role of Christ and ancestors be explained in the process of mediation?

With regards to the first question, which enquired whether ‘Sangomahood’ has any room for Christian belief systems, the participants expressed their views in the following manner:

Table 5.6: The use of Christian elements in ‘Sangomahood’

Participant	Religion	Coding	Responses
P1F	Both	P1FCLS	<i>“As my work dictates, I am a faith healer. So, I do use Christian elements. I usually use isiwasho (holy water), light candles, and offer prayers. Sometimes, I recommend that these components be used together with traditional medicines.”</i>
P2M	Both	P2MCLS	<i>“Yes. Sangomas do use Christian components such as prayer, candles, incense (impepho), or the Bible in their diagnosis.”</i>
P3F	Both	P3FCLS	<i>“There are religious ancestors (izihlwele zecawa), who allow Christian components to be used. Probably because, they themselves, were Christians at once, or because they are not against things like prayer or any other Christian symbols.”</i>
P6F	Both	P6FCLS	<i>“I do think that Sangomas can include Christian elements to their healing practices. It makes no difference whether one uses Christian or non-Christian components, it depend on the ability to use them and the intended purpose behind them.”</i>
P10F	Both	P10FCLS	<i>“Yes, ‘Sangomahood’ does permit the inclusion of Christian components. For example, here in my office, I have a bible that I use, and I also have candles that I light for my students. There are students that come to my office with problems. Sometimes, I would do divination, or just give them a bible to open randomly, and see what is written, then interpret it. Most of the time, it is relevant to that person’s situation.”</i>

It appears that all the church leaders who were also Sangomas believed that ‘Sangomahood’ does permit the use of Christian components, such as prayer, the bible, candles, holy water, and other Christian components.

With regards to the second question, which enquired whether the inclusion of Christian beliefs or components into ‘Sangomahood’ does not nullify the value of traditional practices, the participants expressed their views in the following manner:

Table 5.7: The nullity of ‘Sangomahood’ by Christian components

Participant	Religion	Coding	Responses
P1F	Both	P1FCLS	<i>“I usually use holy water, light candles, and offer prayers, and these also work together with traditional medicines. So, I think they do not nullify ‘Sangomahood.’”</i>
P2M	Both	P2MCLS	<i>“No. Christian components do not nullify ‘Sangomahood’. As I have said, I use Christian components in my practice and they work.”</i>
P3F	Both	P3FCLS	<i>“Christian components do work with traditional remedies. They do not nullify anything.”</i>
P6F	Both	P6FCLS	<i>“To me, it makes no difference whether one uses Christian or non-Christian components, it depends on the discretion of the ancestors and the purpose of using such components.”</i>
P10F	Both	P10FCLS	<i>“‘Sangomahood’ is dependent on the guidance and discretion of the ancestors. So, they tell us of the things they do not want. As for me, I have been using Christian components for many years, and the ancestors continue to heal and reveal things through those components.”</i>

The participants seemed to think that the inclusion of Christian components into ‘Sangomahood’ does not nullify its value, nor the traditional practices that are associated with it. They said that Christian components such as prayer, work well with traditional remedies, as both can be used in unison. They also noted, however, that ‘Sangomahood’ – meaning the practice itself, is highly dependent upon the

guidance and discretion of the ancestors. Therefore, the ancestors give indications as to what is acceptable or not.

With regard to the third questions, which enquired whether the ancestors can be invoked or communicated to in the presence of Christian symbols, the participants expressed their views in the following manner:

Table 5.8: Ancestral contact amidst Christian symbols

Participant	Religion	Coding	Responses
P1F	Both	P1FCLS	<i>“The ancestors communicate at any time they want to convey something. This happens whether one is at church, in public places or alone in private. They are not restricted by anything, including Christian symbols.”</i>
P2M	Both	P2MCLS	<i>“Yes, the ancestors speak at any time and at any place. Sometimes, they speak while I am at church, but they can be suppressed (ukuthomalaliswa) until I can get to a suitable place to fully listen to them.”</i>
P3F	Both	P3FCLS	<i>“In all earnestness, ancestors speak at any time, and anywhere. It does not matter where you are at that time. When they want to speak, they just speak. But this does not mean that they are not pleaded with in order to hold back for some time.”</i>
P6F	Both	P6FCLS	<i>“Yes, they do speak even when I am at church. In most cases, that is how I get to see the challenges that the members are facing. The ancestors reveal these challenges.”</i>
P10F	Both	P10FCLS	<i>“They do not need a special place. To me, they communicate even at church in various ways. But at church, it will mostly be about seeing problems, seeing the problems of the church members. It is like predicting or prophesying to church members.”</i>

The participants seemed to share the same sentiments regarding the communication with ancestors. They said that the ancestors can speak or be communicated to at any time and any place, even in the presence of Christian symbols. They said that the ancestors communicate at any time, especially when

they have to convey something. This happens whether one is at church, in public places or alone in private. And, as Christian leaders, it is sometimes difficult for them to immediately respond the ancestors when they speaking.

Mostly, because the occasion would not allow them to listen properly, or place is not suitable for them to listen and obey. In that case, they said that the ancestors can be beseeched to subside for some time, until they can get into a space where they can properly listen and communicate with them. Thus, even though the ancestors are persuasive and can communicate at any time, they are also reasonable. In the sense that they can be beseeched to subside, until one finds a suitable space to listen and obey.

With regards to the fourth question, which enquired whether there are any traditional rituals that forbid the use of Christian elements, the participants responded in the following manner:

Table 5.9: Rituals that forbid Christian components

Participant	Religion	Coding	Responses
P1F	Both	P1FCLS	<i>“In my view, there is no ritual that forbids the use of Christian components. I mean, even during the Sangoma initiation process (ukuthwasa), initiates sometimes pray, light candles and burn incense.”</i>
P2M	Both	P2MCLS	<i>“I do not think so, because even when we are going to appease (ukungxengxeza) the ancestors, we leave inkundla (the space between the house and the kraal) with a prayer and song. Our family hymn is “unabantu bakho thixo ngamaxesha onke (you are with your people God, at all times).”</i>
P3F	Both	P3FCLS	<i>“I do not know. I have never heard that there are rituals that forbid Christian components, especially things like prayer and the lighting up of candles for goodwill (ukukhanyisa).”</i>
P10F	Both	P10FCLS	<i>“I do not know of any. My mentor was a Christian and we used to pray with other initiates while undergoing the Sangoma training.”</i>

The participants seemed to concur in attesting that there are not traditional rituals, which they know, that forbids the use of Christian components. They said that Christian components such as prayer, the lighting of candles, and the burning of incense, were sometimes an integral part of their *Sangoma* training. This is because some of their mentors were also Christians, while being *Sangomas*. This seems to suggest that ‘*Sangomahood*’ does not forbid the inclusion of Christian components.

Regarding the last question, which enquired how the role of Christ and ancestors may be explained in the process of mediation, the participants responded as follows:

Table 5.10: The role of Christ and ancestors in mediation

Participant	Religion	Coding	Responses
P1F	Both	P1FCLS	<i>“The roles of Jesus and ancestors are different. The ancestors stand on behalf of the sufferings of the people but Jesus mediates in behalf of the sins of the world. Again, the ancestors come from our lineage and can relate better with our experiences, but Jesus repairs the fault found in human conditioning, their sinfulness.”</i>
P2M	Both	P2MCLS	<i>“The ancestors are deceased members of the family, so they are closer to those who remain on earth as they now live in the spiritual realm. Since they understand the sufferings of the people, they are good representatives to God. But their role is not to redeem people (<i>ukuhlangula</i>). It is Jesus who mediates and also redeems at the same time.”</i>
P3F	Both	P3FCLS	<i>“Jesus is mediator because he brings people back to God. He is therefore, the channel to God. The ancestors, on the other hand, play a pleading role with God to end suffering, to bestow goodwill, and to reduce his anger against his people in time of crises.”</i>
P6F	Both	P6FCLS	<i>“The ancestors unite us with God. They are</i>

			<i>our representatives because they are closer to God. But they do not play the same function that Jesus plays. Jesus saves people from sin, and he is also God. So, he does not just represent, but also saves humanity.”</i>
P10F	Both	P10FCLS	<i>“Well, I cannot compare the role that Jesus plays with that of the ancestors. Jesus mediates on behalf on the world but the ancestors look after their clans. They speak to God on behalf of the living, so that God may look with favour on them.”</i>

When asked how the role of Christ and ancestors may be explained in the process of mediation, the participants said that Jesus’ role is different from that of the ancestors. They said that Jesus is different in the sense that he is both mediator and redeemer. As mediator, Jesus stands on behalf of humanity and not just the clans. And as redeemer, Jesus’ task is to end the dominion of sin, and to do away with the fallen human nature.

The ancestors, on the other hand, were described as concerned with the welfare of their clans, to mitigate their sufferings, bring them goodwill, and to intercede on their behalf before God for their requests to be heard. They explicitly stated that the ancestors do not assume the role of a Saviour, it is Jesus who takes that role.

The ancestors operate at a different level than that of Jesus. They do not claim to save their clans nor reform the human capacity to sin, but are guardians who desire goodwill for their descendants. The participants, therefore, seemed to suggest that they do not equate Jesus with ancestors, nor do they think of ancestors as replacing Jesus. But both Jesus and ancestors have different roles, as mediators, on behalf of humanity.

5.8 Parallelism between Christian leadership and ‘Sangomahood’

Under this sub-research question, the participants were also asked five extended questions, which sought to establish the link between Christian leadership and ‘Sangomahood’.

The following questions were asked: (a) What is your position at church? (b) How did you become a Church leader? (c) In your opinion, would you say Christian leadership is a calling? (d) How would you compare the Christian call to ministry and *Sangoma* calling? (e) In your case, which calling did you respond to first – Christian leadership or ‘Sangomahood’?

The first two questions and the last, which enquired about the positions of the participants at church; how they became Church leaders; and as to which calling they responded to first, were integrated and sufficiently addressed on the biographical data of the participants (see, 5.4.1.). Only two extended questions (c and d) are addressed at this point.

With regards to the third question, which enquired as whether the participants viewed Christian leadership as a calling, they responded in the following manner:

Table 5.11: Christian leadership as calling

Participant	Religion	Coding	Responses
P1F	Both	P1FCLS	<i>“Yes, Christian leadership is a calling. Christian leaders must be called into the ministry, and cannot simply choose to be ministers.”</i>
P2M	Both	P2MCLS	<i>“Yes, one cannot be a leader unless they are called by God. So, God chooses his servants.”</i>
P3F	Both	P3FCLS	<i>“I think so. Because one does not choose to participate in the ministry. They have to be called. It is God who gives them the desire to serve Him.”</i>
P6F	Both	P6FCLS	<i>“Any form of leadership is ordained by God. Those who serve in positions of power are chosen by God. Otherwise, they would not be able to be in such positions.”</i>
P8F	Both	P8FCLS	<i>“I strongly believe that I am called by God into this position. So, I think that Christian leadership</i>

			<i>is a calling.</i> "
P10F	Both	P10FC LS	<i>"Well, I think Christian leadership is a calling. I cannot imagine anything else except that I have been called by God into this ministry."</i>

The participants seemed to think that Christian leadership is a calling, and that any persons in positions of power are ordained by God, otherwise they would not be in such positions of power. In that sense, they all seem to concur that Christian leaders are chosen and ordained by God to lead his people and to partake in the ministry.

Regarding the fourth question, which enquired how the participants viewed the Christian call into ministry as compared to *Sangoma* calling, they responded in the following manner:

Table 5.12: Christian ministry contrasted with *Sangoma* calling

Participant	Religion	Coding	Responses
P1F	Both	P1FCLS	<i>"I think the Christian call into the ministry is the same as the one Sangomas receive. We are all called by God. For instance, I learnt of my calling through a traditional healer, who told me I was called to be a faith healer. He could see this because he was also called."</i>
P2M	Both	P2MCLS	<i>"The Christian and Sangoma callings are two different things, but they can be combined. This is because they do not come at the same time, one follows the other. Hence, it is possible for someone who runs away from the Sangoma calling may end up in church."</i>
P3F	Both	P3FCLS	<i>"I think that they are related. One can substitute the one with the other or respond to both callings."</i>
P6F	Both	P6FCLS	<i>"These callings are different but they do not repel each other. One can be called into Christian ministry, and later be a Sangoma. Either way, one can be a Sangoma but later be a Christian"</i>

			<i>leader.”</i>
P10F	Both	P10FCLS	<i>“I think both callings are related. Christians are called by God and Sangomas are also called by God. The difference is that Sangomas receive their calling through the ancestor but Christians believe in divine election.”</i>

When asked how the Christian ministry can be comparable to the *Sangoma* calling, the participants noted that both callings are different but also related. This means that the two callings do not repel each other, but can be used together. They are different in the sense that the Christian call comes through divine election, which cannot be disputed; and the *Sangoma* calling comes through the involvement of the ancestors.

But, both callings are said to come from God, through different agents. The one comes by divine election, although human effort is necessary (particularly evangelism, witnessing, and/or preaching); and the other comes by the visitation of the ancestors. Similar to the Christian call, the *Sangoma* calling cannot also be disputed or refuted. There are serious implications for those who try to evade the calling.

These two callings are related; therefore, the participants said that one may elude the demands of one calling for the other. For instance, the participants noted that one may evade the Christian call to ministry by becoming a *Sangoma*. And yet again, a person may evade the *Sangoma* calling by becoming church leader. In some extreme cases, however, other people are obliged to accept both callings, and this was the case for the participants.

Thus, both the Christian and *Sangoma* callings are compatible. The tractability between the two callings permits an interchange, as one calling may be exchanged for the other; or even be embraced together. Because they relate, Participant 1 (P1FCLS), for instance, noted that she learnt of her Christian calling from a traditional healer. This seems to suggest that the Christian call is permeable to ‘*Sangomahood*’. As both callings seem to mutually reinforce each other in a constructive manner.

5.9 The effects of merging Christianity and ATR on identity

Under this last sub-research question, the participants were also asked five extended questions, which sought to establish the effects of combining Christian leadership and ‘Sangomahood’ to personal identity.

The following questions were asked: (a) In your opinion, does embracing two religious systems not confound one’s sense of identity? (b) Would you say that people who are Christian leaders and *Sangomas* assume double identities? (c) How does one meet the demands of Christian leadership without neglecting ‘Sangomahood’ or vice versa? (d) What are some of the challenges of being a Church leader and *Sangoma* at the same time? (e) Is there anything else you would like to comment on?

With regards to the first question, which enquired whether embracing two religious systems does not confound one’s sense of identity, the participants responded in the following manner:

Table 5.13: Pluralism and identity crises

Participant	Religion	Coding	Responses
P1F	Both	P1FCLS	<i>“For me, it does not. The two faiths supplement each other. There are things that Christianity does not explain, but the African religion does. Things like witchcraft, oohili (ootikoloshe)⁴⁵, or ukuthwetyulwa⁴⁶ are undermined in Christianity, but we take them seriously in African religion. The combination of both therefore, does not confuse but re-enforces one’s sense of identity. They become exposed to both worldviews.”</i>
P2M	Both	P2MCLS	<i>“No. It does not cause confusion. Rather, it helps one to centre themselves, as they are aware of both worlds – being Christian and</i>

⁴⁵ There is no direct translation of this term into English, but *uhili (tikoloshe)* may be explained as “a dwarf-like creature that is used by witches to peruse evil, or to cause harm against their enemies”.

⁴⁶ There is no direct translation of this term into English, but *ukuthwetyulwa* may be interpreted as “being taken away through witchcraft to an alien place (forest, river, desert, or mountain), while one is assumed to be dead by the members of his/her family”.

			<i>African.”</i>
P3F	Both	P3FCLS	<i>“No. There is no confusion. Identity is always shifting. It does not remain the same. We sometimes lose ourselves, then rediscover and later redefine ourselves through the experiences we encounter. So, I cannot lose myself or my identity by embracing two religions.”</i>
P6F	Both	P6FCLS	<i>“No. the two religions form a unit. There is no confusion. They open your eyes to both sides.”</i>
P8F	Both	P8FCLS	<i>“I strongly believe that they build, rather than confound identity. The African religion is part of who we are, and Christianity helps us relate to God in our way. One would be confused if they are just Christians, and have left their heritage behind.”</i>
P10F	Both	P10FCLS	<i>“Well, I think there is no confusion. For me, it is a way of life. I do not see myself as falling on both sides, but I have a holistic worldview, which combines the two religions.”</i>

The participants seemed to concur that embracing two religions at once does not confound one’s sense of identity, but it rather reinforces it. For instance, some participants said that embracing two religions broadened up their worldviews, and enabled them to tap into the reality of both worlds. Others further said that the combination of two religions – in this case Christianity and ATR, creates a new realism or a way of life that is holistic.

This realism is not orientated on Christianity nor on the African Traditional religion, but it is the combination of both religions. Thus, this realism is not readily categorised or defined. It falls outside the norm, and popular categories. It is a grey area, which remains unexplained by popular perceptions. And it bears no meaning outside the existential experiences of the practitioners. The coming together of these two religions – Christianity and ATR, is therefore something out of the ordinary, and demands to be treated as such.

With regard to the second question, which enquired whether people who are both Christian leaders and *Sangomas* assume double identities, the participants responded in the following manner:

Table 5.14: Religious duality and double identity

Participant	Religion	Coding	Responses
P1F	Both	P1FCLS	<i>"No, I do not consider myself as assuming double identities. I have one identity but I fulfil double roles."</i>
P2M	Both	P2MCLS	<i>"No, my identity is intact. I do not have double identities. I do not substitute Christianity with the African religion. They are both in me, and they are not divided but one."</i>
P3F	Both	P3FCLS	<i>"Someone who is a church leader and Sangoma does not assume a double identity. They have one identity, even though they serve on both sides."</i>
P6F	Both	P6FCLS	<i>"No, church leaders and Sangomas do not have double identities. They are just given many responsibilities, which they have to fulfil."</i>
P8F	Both	P8FCLS	<i>"I do not have double identities. But I am gifted in many ways. I am just one person who is capable of doing many things."</i>
P10F	Both	P10FCLS	<i>"I do not think that the idea of double identities is valid. Particularly for people like me. If that were the case, someone who is African and also Christian would be assuming such an identity. Being African is an identity and being Christian is also an identity. We have people who are African and Christian, but they do not talk about double identities."</i>

When asked whether people who are Christian leaders and *Sangomas* at the same time assume double identities, the participants said that they do not. They said that the acceptance or combination of two religions does not alter one's identity but reinforces it. They all seemed to think that embracing two religions at once is an advantage rather than a challenge. They attested that it broadens up their perspective and gives them the opportunity to maintain balance in their lives.

Regarding the third question, which enquired how one meets the demands of Christian leadership without overlooking ‘Sangomahood’, or vice versa, the participants responded in the following manner:

Table 5.15: The dual practice of Christian leadership and ‘Sangomahood’

Participant	Religion	Coding	Responses
P1F	Both	P1FCLS	<i>“For me, it is easy because I am always guided by the ancestors. As I mentioned earlier, I combined my ancestors with my Christian ministry.”</i>
P2M	Both	P2MCLS	<i>“Balance is very important. I do my Sangoma practice during the week, but on Sunday I am at church. I always try to keep things balanced.”</i>
P3F	Both	P3FCLS	<i>“I use both of my gifts at church, and outside the church. So, I cannot really say one suffers, or I use one gift more than the other.”</i>
P6F	Both	P6FCLS	<i>“I am mostly available for consultations during the week but on Saturday and Sunday I attend to my leadership duties. So I do not think that there is a gift that suffers.”</i>
P8F	Both	P8FCLS	<i>“It is not difficult to find a balance between the two. I work with herbs during the week and execute my leadership duties on Sunday, or sometimes late in the evenings.”</i>
P10F	Both	P10FCLS	<i>“I use both of my gifts everywhere. Whether I am at work, at church or at home. No gift suffers.”</i>

When asked how one meets the demands of both callings and gets to fulfil the duties of Christian leadership without overlooking ‘Sangomahood’, or vice versa, the participants said that it is not a difficult task to do. They insisted that maintain balance is an important aspect of this task.

They said that they usually fulfil their *Sangoma* duties during the week (within working hours), and turn to their Christian responsibilities on the weekends (Saturday and Sunday). Some mentioned that when necessary, they execute their

Christian responsibilities late in the evenings. These duties include home-cells, bible study sessions, night vigils or other related duties.

Regarding the fourth question which asked “what are some of the challenges of being a Church leader and *Sangoma* at the same time?” the participants responded as follows:

Table 5.16: Challenges involved in religious pluralism

Participant	Religion	Coding	Responses
P1F	Both	P1FCLS	<i>“To me, I would say the most challenging thing is being misunderstood. Sometimes people assume that I am not Christian enough because I find guidance from the ancestors. They think I do not trust or depend on God like they do, but I do trust and depend on God.”</i>
P2M	Both	P2MCLS	<i>“The biggest challenge for me is that we are commonly misjudged and not accepted by other Christians. Because I was raised a Baptist, some Christians, including other members of my family, think that I am lost and have abandoned the truth.”</i>
P3F	Both	P3FCLS	<i>“I would say it is being misunderstood. Some people refer to us as <i>intaka-mpuku</i> (bats). They say we are neither birds nor mice, but we fall on both sides.”</i>
P6F	Both	P6FCLS	<i>“In many cases I have been accused of being a witch. But the people who make such accusations would end up coming to me, in need of my services.”</i>
P10F	Both	P10FCLS	<i>“Most of the time rejected, unless you are in the Zionist churches. In Zionist churches, one is permitted to use candles and to also pray for water. But at my church, some people see me as a witch when I do that. So, we face discrimination.”</i>

When asked about the challenges that they are faced with as Church leaders and *Sangomas*, the participants alluded to a number of issues. They said that they are often misunderstood, misjudged, and accused of witchcraft by other Christians. These challenges were not an integral part of their duties, but the socio-religious perceptions and expectations of other people on their profession.

They clearly stated that it is not a challenge to execute the duties of both callings – being church leaders and *Sangomas*, but the problem lies with the perceptions of outsiders, who do not understand their realism. Therefore, it appears as if the participants are prematurely misjudged without being understood. This includes their rejection by some Christians and Christian institutions as lingerers – denoting that they do not belong to either side but assume a neutral status.

With regards to the last extended question, which asked “Is there anything else you would like to comment on?” the participants’ responses appeared to be similar to those they gave regarding the challenges that they faced in being Church leaders and *Sangomas* at once.

5.10 Summary

This chapter dealt with the presentation of the data that was collected for the purpose of this study, in order to establish the link between Christian leadership and ‘*Sangomahood*’. The data was presented following the guidelines that were outlined on the Methodological section (Chapter IV). The researcher presented the in-depth one-on-one interviews of the participants in order to uncover the realism which was understudy, and that is the juxtapositioning of Christianity and African Traditional Religion, particularly the link between Christian Leadership and ‘*Sangomahood*’.

CHAPTER SIX

THE POLYTHETIC NATURE OF RELIGION

6.1 Introduction

This chapter engages with the empirical data which was collected for the purpose of this study. It consists of the interpretation and analysis of the data collected (both literary and empirical) in order to put into context. The analytic process is highly guided and informed by the theoretical premise from which this study was based. In the theoretical section (Chapter Two), phenomenology was identified as the theoretical framework which underpins the processes of this study. In a similar manner, phenomenology has been applied to guide and inform the interpretive and analytical processes of this study.

6.2 Engaging theory with empirical data

As the theoretical premise of this enquiry, phenomenology served the purpose of locating the lived experiences of the practitioners, as insiders, and to reproduce their unique interpretation of the realism that was understudy. This is because phenomenology finds no reality outside the experiences of the experiencer and basically rests upon the views of the practitioners, as experiencers, rather than those of outsiders, as observers.

Phenomenology was thus used to get in touch with the lived experiences of the participants, and to provide the researcher with an interpretive context from which the views of the participants may be engaged. This was done following the six outlined phenomenological stages: (1) performing an *epoché*, (2) empathetic interpolation, (3) describing the phenomena, (4) naming the phenomena, (5) describing inter-relationships and processes, and (6) constructing a paradigmatic model. There are several phenomenological stages, but the researcher employed only six stages for this study⁴⁷.

⁴⁷ These stages, on the phenomenological method, are adopted from James Cox (1998:4–10). For a comprehensive summary of the stages in the Phenomenological method, see James Cox (1998).

6.2.1 Performing an *epoché*

The first phenomenological stage involves the bracketing of predetermined assumptions, by the researcher, towards the phenomenon under study. Phenomenologists refer to this as performing an *epoché* (Cox 1998:4). Derived from the German philosopher, Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), the term *epoché* was used by phenomenologists to suspend all judgements associated with what Husserl called the natural attitude (Cox 2012:25). Edmund Husserl regarded the suspension of one's judgement from the scientific enquiry as "bracketing", or putting one's judgements "into brackets" (Husserl 1931:111).

"Bracketing" is a term which Edmund Husserl borrowed from Mathematics (Husserl 1931:111). James Cox (2012:26), for instance, notes that when solving an algebraic equation:

[T]he mathematician places the various components of the formula into brackets and works on solving each problem placed in brackets one at a time so that, at the conclusion, each limited solution can be applied to resolving the problem of the entire equation. In a similar way, although Husserl did not use the *epoché* to doubt the existence of the external world, he suspended judgements about it so that, like a mathematician, attention could be focused on another part of the equation, in this case, on an analysis of the phenomena of perception as they appear in the individual's consciousness (Cox 2012:26).

By putting 'into brackets' any preconceived assumptions about the investigated phenomena, the researcher "allows pure phenomena to speak for themselves" (Cox 2012:26). This implies that the suspension of personal beliefs, and withholding of judgements permits the pure transfer of data which is to be analysed from the view of the practitioners, as insiders. Following Husserl, prominent historians and philosophers of religion, such as Gerardus van der Leeuw (1890–1950), and William Brede Kristensen (1867–1953), upheld the performance of an *epoché* in scientific inquiry (James 1995:144).

The primary reason for this was that the performance of an *epoché* required that the researcher suspend their assumptions, without denying them, but bracketing them out, for a time, in order to keep an open-mind towards the religious phenomena

understudy (Daniel 2012:133). Thus, the 'bracketing out' of one's preconceived ideas in scientific enquiry gives the researcher an opportunity to meaningfully grasp the reality of the participants' understudy, as insiders, and enables the researcher to take the particular views of the participants at face value, as providing an inside view.

The performance of an *epoché* is therefore exceptionally essential in the exploration of indigenous religions, particularly the study of African Traditional Religion (Daniel 2012:133). The ATR is something of a sensible analogue rather than a conventional pragmatism that is contained somewhere in an inscribed source. It is not something which may readily be retrieved or accessed in order to be engaged. Nor can it be found in literary sources that intend to provide clarity on how different sets of belief systems and religious practices come or work together.

It does not pride itself with ancient historical or sacred texts that seek to unfold the existential experiences, interpretations, or insights of the African people when uncovering the meaning gained from their varied and relative activities. Rather, it is a system that has traditionally been conveyed through the word of mouth, by symbols, and particular actions that are modelled after the ancient traditions and customs of the African forefathers. Thus, the various expressions of the ATR are not something that may readily be retrieved, nor meaningfully grasped, outside the disclosure of the experiencers.

In principle, this implies that indigenous religions, such as the ATR, are relative rather than conventional in nature. They follow the oral⁴⁸ rather than the textual tradition (Cox 1996:83–95). Their non-textuality, however, has made them appear "as if standing intrinsically at a hopeless disadvantage" (Oden 2007:26). This is because the comparison between orality and textuality is mostly tilted and tends to

⁴⁸ William Moss and Peter Mazikana (1986:2) define "oral tradition" as those recollections of the past, orally transmitted and recounted, that arise naturally within and from the dynamics of a culture. They are shared widely throughout the culture by word of mouth even though they may be entrusted to particular people for safekeeping, transmittal, recitation, and narration. They are organic expressions of the identity, purpose, functions, customs, and generational continuity of the culture in which they occur. They happen spontaneously as phenomena of cultural expression. They would exist, and indeed they have existed in the absence of written notes or other more sophisticated recording devices. They are not direct experiences of the narrators, and they must be transmitted by word of mouth to qualify as oral tradition.

be one-sided (Oden 2007:27), as it favours those traditions that have written sources more than those that are transmitted orally.

In such comparisons, the orality of the ATR seems to make it appear less valuable, while other religions with textual traditions, such as Christianity, appear to be more authoritative. To this, Oden (2007:27) notes that the religio-cultural and intellectual richness of narrative Africans is often wrongly thought to be largely primitive⁴⁹, because it is not documented. And for this perception, European travellers, including missionaries, undermined the socio-religious context of Africans, and tried to change so many facets of the African heritage (Mills 1995:153).

Their systems of enquiry were informed by absolutism rather than relativism, hence they did not perform an *epoché* – by bracketing out their preconceived assumptions, but allowed biases to influence their enquiries. As such, their accounts, as Ray (1976:2) contended, have “little use to the serious student”. This, however, does not mean that the accounts that are produced by Europeans and missionaries are not valuable. They remain “significant in revealing the cultural bias of the authors who wrote them and of the public for which they were written” (Ray 1976:2–3).

In such instances, Elphick (2012:65) notes that the Europeans and missionaries never considered or tried to understand the context of the Africans, but tried to change the Africans’ “cosmology, ethics, marriage, gender relations, agriculture, state structure, legal systems, folk-ways, ceremonies, rites of passage, clothing, forms of speech – that one might conclude, but mistakenly, that they rejected African culture in its entirety”. Thus, the indigenous Africans and their socio-cultural and religious heritage were often prematurely judged and taken out of context.

European explorers such as Sir Samuel Baker perceived Africans as people who had no belief in a Supreme Being, nor any form of worship but were in darkness without any form of enlightenment or ray of superstition (Ray 1976:3). The

⁴⁹ James Cox (1998:21) makes a similar argument. He argues that the primacy of the oral in religions does not represent an early, preliterate phase in the development of the universal religions. This is because most world religions give priority to the spoken over the written word. He says this is true for religions like Islam, which emphasises the revelation as it is recorded in written form: “the written form, however, represents what Muhammad heard and was ordered to ‘recite’. Faithful Muslims ever since have put the words of the Qur’an to memory so they can speak the holy word” (Cox 1998:21).

disconsolate reality of this account is that Sir Samuel Baker knew nothing of the people he so confidently described. He did not know their language, so he may have obtained the intricate details of their socio-cultural and religious context, or stayed with them for too long, in order to observe their practices (Ray 1976:3). But, somehow, he concluded that the darkness of their minds were not even enlightened by a ray of superstition (Ray 1976:3).

This illustrates the weakness that is posed by absolutist approaches towards the study of socio-cultural and religious phenomena. Absolutism permits the inclusion of preconceived assumptions towards the observed phenomena and uses one religion as a normative measure from which all other religions are judged. On the contrary, relativism commends that every socio-cultural and religious context is unique, and must be treated as such. And for that reason, performing an *epoché* is imperative, as it permits phenomena to speak for themselves.

Accentuating the limitations of this approach (the application of absolutism rather than relativism), and the inability of Europeans to perform an *epoché* in the study of indigenous religious phenomena, Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki (1989:150) noted that: “[a]bsolutizing one religion such that it becomes normative for all others, is a dynamic with clear parallels to sexism, whereby one gender is established as the norm for human existence. Therefore, the critique of gender can be extended as a critique of religious imperialism.”

In this citation, Suchocki (1989:150) seems to equate absolutism with sexism and religious imperialism – a process whereby one gender or religion is taken as the established norm from which all other human and religious realisms are judged. In the case of sexism, prejudice, stereotyping or discrimination is often leveled against women, while males are understood to be superior to the other. They are perceived as superior; therefore, males must dominate the most important areas of the political, economic, religious, cultural and intellectual space.

With regards to religious imperialism, one religion is elevated, so high that it becomes the normative standard from which all other religions are intuitively judged (Suchocki 1989:150). The Europeans and missionaries employed this approach towards the exploration of indigenous religions. The researcher, therefore, avoided this absolutist approach. As a Christian himself, the researcher was not immune to

preconceived assumptions, but these were bracketed through the performance of an *epoché*.

This allowed the researcher to reproduce and interpret the experiences of the participants from their point of view, as experiencers of the realism under study; and to let the phenomenon under study to speak for itself. Because it eliminated potential biases, *epoché* enabled the researcher to get in touch with the subjective experiences of the participants, and to understand the meaning derived from the juxtapositioning of Christianity and ATR, by participants who are church leaders and *Sangomas*.

6.2.2 Empathetic interpolation

Empathetic interpolation refers to the process whereby “observers [or researcher] seek to enter empathetically into the religious experiences of the adherents they are studying” (Cox 1998:5). This begins by cultivating a feeling of empathy for what is studied or happening, no matter how strange, bizarre or alien it is, in the lives of the practitioners. Empathy, in this context, “requires that observers endeavor to understand what it would be to experience the world the way the religious practitioners do” (Cox 1998:5).

In other words, researcher begin a process whereby they insert themselves within the context of the practitioners in order to obtain an outlook consistent with their worldview. Only then can the researcher empathise with the feelings of the experiencers as they begin to see things the way the experiencers of a studied phenomenon do. Davies (1991:5) conveys this idea in the following manner:

[T]he meaning of things is not inherent in objects, but is actually located in the individual’s inner life [...]. The researcher’s task is to understand reality as it is, actively and consciously created by subjects, not as a pure entity that exists ‘out there’.

This implies that some ‘things’ are not simply things, but rather become ‘things’ in the act of perception and naming (Davies 1991:5). This basic naming is always being further shaped and distorted by all kinds of cultural and religious influences on the knowing subject or experiencer (Willis 2001:3). In this context, the

phenomenological agenda is to attempt to understand and describe phenomena exactly as they appear in the individual's consciousness (Willis 2001:3).

In the process of empathetic interpolation therefore, *epoché* and empathy are meticulously aligned. The 'bracketing' of preconceived assumptions is performed in order that an empathic attitude may be employed (Cox 1998:5). However, empathy can never be achieved completely if one is not actually a believer or practitioner of the phenomenon under study; therefore, interpolation is required (Cox 1998:5).

According to Cox (1998:5), interpolation implies "that what seems strange or foreign needs to be inserted or fit into one's own experience in order to achieve understanding of it". In this instance, the researcher employs an existential realism and inserts it to the strange or foreign phenomena under study in order to understand it. For example, the Christian ideal of spirit possession may be inserted into the strange or foreign experience of ancestral possession for *Sangomas*, as a framework which may provide an understanding of the phenomena of ancestral calling for the researcher.

If such a link may be drawn, then the process of interpolation, which enables the researcher to recognise "a framework of intension" among believers, has begun (van der Leeuw 1938:675). According to James Cox (2012:27), intentionality, does not only require the active involvement of the researcher but also includes the acts of a believing community – what it intends by its myths, rituals and symbols, which must be understood by the researcher if genuine understanding is to be achieved.

The recognition of the prerequisite for this method permits the researcher to apply an empathetic interpolation. This is because interpolation allows the researcher to understand the strange or foreign phenomena under study through the framework of another experience. Thus, the purpose of performing an *epoché* and empathetic interpolation is "to provide researchers with a clear method for entering into the religious experience of those they are seeking to understand" (Cox 1998:6).

In order to enter into the religious experiences of the participants which the study sought to understand, the researcher performed an *epoché* and applied an empathetic interpolation. This enabled the researcher to listen to, and to achieve an insider's view, which without the studied phenomena would largely reflect an outside

view. The researcher therefore, 'bracketed' his preconceived assumptions in order that an empathic attitude may be employed (Cox 1998:5).

6.2.3 Describing the phenomena

Description is the essential task of classical phenomenology (Willis 2001:7). It pertains to the process that the researcher undertakes to depict "what is occurring from the inside and which help those who are on the outside to understand" (Cox 1998:7). Seamus Heaney (1990:89) refers to description as "revelation" because it literally implies the removing of the veil which may obscure or disguise the realities of the world. Thus, the description of a phenomena presents the reader with a clear picture of what has been observed, what is actually happening, and the terminology that is used to explicate that phenomena.

In other words, phenomenological descriptions are "overloaded with details which in themselves portray what is happening without distorting the phenomena from the believer's point of view" (Cox 1998:7). However, this process, is not simplistic but poses some difficulties. Crotty (1996:280) sums up these difficulties in the following manner:

The difficulty does not lie merely in seeing "what lies before our eyes" (which Husserl saw as a "hard demand"), or knowing "precisely what we see" (Merleau-Ponty said there was nothing more difficult to know than that). Additionally, we will also experience great difficulty in actually describing what we have succeeded in seeing and knowing. When we attempt to describe what we have never had to describe before, language fails us. We find our descriptions incoherent, fragmentary, and not a little "mysterious". We find ourselves lost for words, forced to invent words and bend existing words to bear the meanings we need them to carry for us. This has always been characteristic of phenomenological description. We may have to be quite inventive and creative in this respect.

In this citation, two components resurface regarding the description of phenomena. The first regards the challenge of reproducing an adequate, or perhaps better put, of painting a clear picture of the realism understudy. The second relates to the limits of language in portraying the phenomena understudy. Both these

components are imperative in the description of indigenous religions, particularly the ATR. This is because the ATR is based on oral tradition and does not have a universal pattern from which its several forms of expression may be categorised.

Unlike Christianity, which relies upon the ethical reading of scripture in order to determine and identify those elements which fall within or outside the will of God, the ATR does not have such prescriptive guides. Its ethical guides are communicated through symbols (including taboos) and ritual practices. These often take various forms and are not prescriptive but relative – each symbol carries a particular message (e.g. a snake may symbolise the visitation of ancestors if found inside the house), and each ritual is conducted to fulfil a specific purpose (e.g. purification rituals, birth rituals, etc.).

Furthermore, as a religion that is largely conveyed through the word of mouth⁵⁰, its practices are commonly relative – depending on the cultural context of that particular society. With relativity however, comes the subject of variance and transactionality. In relation to variance, one finds the same category of divination classified into various groupings, such as Xhosa systems of divination, Zulu systems of divination or other ethnic systems of divination. With regard to transactionality, one finds the same practices or ritualistic components involved in all these various groups, including the use of language.

⁵⁰ Jan Vansina (1965) is said to offer a comprehensive classification of oral traditions by Moss and Mazikana (1986:27). This is because Vansina categorises oral traditions into five major groups: The first group consists of formulae - stereotyped phrases used in special circumstances. This includes titles describing a person's status; slogans describing the character of a group of people; didactic formulae such as proverbs, riddles, sayings, and epigrams; and ritual formulae used in religious ceremonies or rites of magic. The second category is comprised of poetry. This is seen as a tradition in fixed form, which form is considered along with the content as artistic by the society in which it exists and is transmitted. Poems are further divided into official and private poems. Official poetry includes songs and poems providing historical accounts, panegyric poetry for praise, and religious poetry for prayer, hymns, and dogmatic texts. Personal poetry is composed to give free expression to feelings. The third category is lists of place names, such as sites passed through during a period of migration, and lists of personal names. Genealogies are included in this category. Tales, the fourth group, consist of testimonies in prose with free form text. They are varied in nature and include general, local, and family history; myths or didactic tales intended for instruction or explanation of the world, the culture, and society; and artistic tales meant to please the listener. The final category consists of commentaries which include legal precedents supplying directives for solving legal problems and thereby creating law; explanatory commentaries recited at the same time as the historical traditions to which they are attached; and occasional commentaries made only in answer to a question but nevertheless existing primarily as a record of historical facts and not merely in order to provide explanations (see also, Monica King, 2006:42–45).

Thus, many aspects of the religious experience of '*Sangomahood*' are both relative and also transactional. These naturally overflow into the socio-cultural heritage of Africans, so that there is no dichotomy between the religious and cultural life. Rather, life becomes a unit. This implies that the African religious heritage incorporates into its system a number of traditional beliefs, customs, and socio-cultural practices, which may be characterised as neutral, rather than purely religious or cultural.

In this context, one cannot clearly separate the religious aspects of the ATR from the purely African cultural aspects. Indeed, African scholars such as John Mbiti (1975:7ff) noted that the African traditional heritage is composed of three dissimilar facets – namely: the historical, cultural and religious heritages, but all these three facets are closely intertwined and cannot be comprehensively detached from the other.

Underlining the intersectionality of the cultural and socio-religious aspects within the African traditional community, and how they are learnt, Fafunwa (1974:48) notes that:

Culture, in traditional society, is not taught; it is caught. The child observes, imbibes and mimics the action of his elders and siblings. He watches the naming ceremonies, religious services, marriage rituals, funeral obsequies. He witnesses the coronation of a king or chief, the annual yam festival, the annual dance and acrobatic displays of guilds and age groups or his relations in the activities. The child in a traditional society cannot escape his cultural and physical environments.

This implies that the religious components of indigenous religions, such as the ATR, are likely to be infused with the cultural undertakings and expressions of that particular society. In this background, the infusion of religious and cultural components become the totality of a people's way of life. This totality is characterised by the way people live, behave or act, and this includes their physical as well as their intellectual achievements (Mbiti 1975:7).

According to John Mbiti (1975:7–8), this can be regarded or referred to as culture⁵¹. This form of culture embodies itself in the following manner:

[I]n art and literature, dance, music and drama, in the styles of building houses and of people's clothing, in social organization and political systems, in religion, ethics, morals and philosophy, in the customs and institutions of the people, in their values and laws, and in their economic life (Mbiti 1975:7–8).

Since the ATR has no clear parameters on what constitutes, or does not constitute a purely religious phenomenon, the realism under study also falls within the premise of culture, involving the Xhosa systems of divination, and thereby necessitating to be investigated within the Xhosa cultural setting. For this reason, one finds the Xhosa systems of divination juxtaposed with Christian leadership, hence this study explored the realism of Christian leaders who are in '*Sangomahood*'.

This makes the realism under study a rare phenomenon, whose essence and conveyance sometimes fall outside, or beyond the popular description, and/or generally known vocabulary. Therefore, its embodiment requires that it be described and interpreted within the socio-religious context of the practitioners, as experiencers of this realism. With this in mind, the researcher undertook to depict "what is occurring from the inside" in order to enable those who are on the outside to understand or see the realism under study as the practitioners do (Cox 1998:7).

Thus, the description provided in this section presents a clear picture of what has been observed, or what is actually happening in the world of the practitioners, as participants, and how they view this realism in their own terms. The descriptions of the realism under study were therefore portrayed in a manner that sought to reflect what is happening but without distorting the phenomena from the believer's point of view (Cox 1998:7).

⁵¹ Mayers (1987:xi) also refers to culture as everything that is part of one's everyday life experiences. This includes the following: (1) Tangibles - such as food, shelter, clothing, literature, art, music, etc. (2) Intangibles - such as hopes, dreams, values, rules, space, relationships, language, body movements, etc.

6.2.4 Naming the phenomena

Naming the phenomena is the next step towards the understanding of the world of the participants, which comes after the description of a phenomena. Thus, after describing, in details, what has been observed, the researcher then aims to provide names for the studied experiences and activities of the participants. These names, according to Cox (1998:7), are “given in order to facilitate communication and to help build understandings of various types of phenomena”.

This process is similar to what is known as labeling, except that labeling (or the theory of labeling) pertains to the study of deviance or deviant behaviours in sociology (Becker 1991:78). Naming the phenomena, therefore, encompasses the putting of labels to the experiences and activities of the participants, so that they may be classified or categorised. However, this task is not easy. James Cox (1998:7) notes that “[s]electing the names [...] can be risky since what we label an activity might distort what actually is happening or how it is experienced from a believer’s perspective”.

This is true in the case of indigenous religions, particularly the ATR, since the naming process may sometimes distort what is actually happening, or fail to adequately describe the experienced realism from the view of the participants. This means that there is a greater need for accurate descriptions, and the naming of African religious phenomena because they have been marginalised, and in the shadow of Christianity for a long time (Daniel 2012:133).

Naming the phenomena therefore grants the students of religion an opportunity to explore the ‘inner’ descriptions of a religious phenomenon, and how it has been named or referenced by the experiencers of such a phenomenon. In this instance, phenomenology provides a suitable context from which the students of religions may begin to rediscover and accurately name the various African religious phenomena and their features⁵².

⁵² Kasomo Daniel (2012:135) notes that “[w]hile considerable material on local (indigenous) religions has been uncovered, much more remains unearthed”. Therefore, the application of phenomenological principles to African Traditional Religion holds an even greater promise to the radically plural religious climate. He further argued that researchers have tended to concentrate more on dominant religions such as Christianity and Islam, and paid much lesser attention to religions like the Baha’i Faith, Hinduism, or Judaism. It is to these lesser studied religions, that he thinks that the phenomenology of religion, can make a significant contribution (Daniel 2012:135).

To this, James Cox (1998:7) notes that “the words used to name or to group the phenomena of religion should be chosen carefully to avoid prejudicial language so as not to impede the observer’s capacity to apprehend the phenomena as they are”. The researcher therefore chose and used the names that were referenced by the participants, as experiencers of the realism understudy, in order to facilitate communication and to help build an understanding of the various features of the studied phenomena.

6.2.5 Describing inter-relationships and processes

The describing of inter-relationships and processes regards the description of common systems which the phenomenon undergoes due to historical developments, intellectual developments, social changes, and other dynamic factors that govern the people’s environment (Cox 1998:8). To this, Scheler (1973:520) notes that:

[N]ot only does everyone discover himself against a background of, and at the same time as a “member” of, a totality of interconnections of experience which have somehow become concentrated, and which are called in their temporal extension history, in their simultaneous extension social unity; but as a moral subject in this whole, everyone is also given as a “person acting with others,” as a “man with others,” and as “coresponsible” for everything morally relevant in this totality.

This means that the totality of human life is experienced, not only as experiencing-for-oneself, but also for a collective, as experiencing-with-others or with-something, such as the environment in which one exists (Schutz 1964:251). Thus, the ‘totality of interactions’, which emanates out of co-dependence with others, and of living within a particular environment informs the experiences that the practitioners encounter. Hence Schutz (1964:251) notes that:

The subjective meaning the group has for its members consists in their knowledge of a common situation, and with it a common system of typifications and relevances [...]. The system of typifications and relevances

shared with other members of the group defines the social roles, positions and statuses of each.

For this awareness, the researcher must take into account the common systems which inform the experiences of the participants. And in this process, Schutz (1964:92) suggests that the researcher should consider the “cultural pattern of group life”:

Following the customary terminology, we use the term “cultural pattern of group life” for designating all the peculiar valuations, institutions, and systems of orientation and guidance (such as the folkways, mores, laws, habits, customs, etiquette, fashions) which, in the common opinion of sociologists of our time characterise – if not constitute – any social group at a given moment in its history.

Providing a context from which this impression may be understood, Cox (1998:8) offers the following description, as an example of this ultimate:

What an observer describes, moreover, will always be linked to historical processes and to current social circumstances. For example, when I interviewed the medium who had become possessed during the *mutoro* ritual [...], I learned that part of her message related to the traditional role of chiefs in Zimbabwe and how that had been gradually eroding as decision-making had been transferred to Village Councils frequently comprised of political appointees. These changes had occurred since Independence in 1980 resulting in some cases in an erosion of traditional sources of authority. The medium I interviewed believed that the consequences of such changes meant that the ancestors guarding the land had not been honoured sufficiently nor consulted on important matters. The failure to honour and consult the ancestors had produced the drought. It would be impossible to comprehend such an interpretation of current circumstances without understanding how religious beliefs and practices interact dynamically with historical, social, political, and economic processes.

Cox (1998:8), in this citation, shows that what the researchers aim to describe the studied phenomena is always linked or connected to historical processes and current social circumstances. In this narrative, we see the shifting role of the medium, and the unique interpretation which is offered by the medium to explicate the outcomes of that shift. In the first instance, the medium was actively involved in

the decision-making processes of the country (in this case Zimbabwe), as the representative of the ancestor, through the means of traditional leadership (the chiefs).

With the rise of Village Councils, a political process which replaced traditional leadership, the medium believed that the land had not been sufficiently honoured because she was withdrawn from the decision-making processes, as the representative of the ancestors. The shifting of powers, from traditional governance through the rulership of chiefs, to political processes through the leadership of Village Councils, appears to be interpreted as implying the abandonment of ancestors by the medium, since the ancestors are not consulted for political decisions.

On the second instance, the medium interpreted the immediate occurrence of draught as the consequence or penalty of excluding the representation of the ancestors in the decision-making processes in the country. In this case, there appears to be an inter-relationship between the political processes (the replacement of traditional leadership by Village Councils), and the immediate social circumstances (the occurrence of drought as the result of change of powers, from which the representation of ancestors was withdrawn).

For any other person, except the medium referred to in this example, there appears to be no inter-relationships between the change of powers and the immediate social circumstances of drought. The occurrence of drought may have been perceived as a spontaneous phenomenon, which had nothing to do with political processes in the country. Thus, the medium saw inter-relationships between the change of power and the occurrence of drought.

The describing of inter-relationships and processes therefore, takes into account the description of common systems, which the phenomenon undergoes due to historical developments, intellectual developments, social changes, and other dynamic factors that may be governing the people's environment (Cox 1998:8). For this study, the researcher considered these, and took the following factors into account: the historical developments, intellectual developments, social changes and any other dynamic factors that govern the environment of the participants.

6.2.6 Constructing a paradigmatic model

Constructing a paradigmatic model regards the building of “a model which can be used to analyse any religious tradition”, including the religious tradition of the participants (Cox 1998:8). This paradigmatic model permits the researcher to make contrasts between various religious traditions in order to demonstrate how such comparisons elucidate the phenomenon under study. Even though this is a strenuous and not exhaustive process, it however, provides a framework from which the various facets of the phenomenon under study may be integrated into a whole for comprehension.

Cox (1998:9), for instance, states that “[t]he paradigmatic model provides, therefore, a common framework for the study of any one particular religion or aspects of it and for the comparison of religions or aspects of them”. In this regard, the researcher is able to relate various aspects, or any one aspect of a particular religion with the aspects of the phenomenon under study. In this paradigmatic model, the researcher gets to evaluate the various components of one or more religious traditions against the religion(s) under study.

This is applicable in the exploration of the juxtapositioning of Christianity and ATR. This is because the coming together of these two religious traditions is often thought of as syncretism and the very notion of syncretism is understood to imply adulteration and not the pure essence of religious expression. Therefore, in light of this cognisance, the researcher recommended a new paradigm, from which the phenomenon under study may be understood. This is the paradigmatic model which is based on the notion of “hybridity” rather than syncretism.

6.3 The polythetic nature of religion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the realism of participants who juxtaposed Christianity and African Traditional Religion, and were also church leaders and practising *Sangomas* (*‘Sangomahood’*). The overarching research question to this systematic and qualitative enquiry was: “What is the relationship between Christian leadership and *‘Sangomahood’*?” In order to sufficiently respond

to this question, the researcher further asked the participants five more sub-questions.

The first and second sub-question are, however, dealt with at the same time, as they relate to the same phenomenon – how Christianity is juxtaposed with ATR. The rest of the sub-questions are dealt with separately. These were the sub-questions (1) how is Christianity juxtaposed with ATR? (2) Do African traditional practices yield any value when juxtaposed with Christian belief system? (3) How does Christian leadership relate with ‘*Sangomahood*’? (4) What are the effects of juxtaposing Christianity and African Traditional Religion to personal identity? These sub-questions therefore, served as themes for the analytic process of the data which was provided by the participants.

6.3.1 How Christianity is juxtaposed with ATR

There were different sentiments regarding the juxtapositioning of Christianity and ATR among the participants. Some of the participants traced the coming together of these two religions to both the universal belief in one God; and their socio-cultural upbringing, which acknowledged both traditions – the synthesis of Christianity and ATR. The other participants saw the juxtapositioning of these two religions – Christianity and ATR, as a paradox, which cannot be reconciled.

With regards to the former, the participants noted that both Christianity and ATR are underpinned by a strong mono-theistic belief in God, and this is central to both religions whether one is a Christian or African religionists. This God is said to be the same in all religions, but reveals Himself in various ways. In this perception, it is argued that one cannot comprehensively prove whether the Christian God is distinctly unique from other gods, or is the same as the African religionist God.

God is incomprehensible, and what is known of God has been revealed – through nature, scriptures or other forms, and is learnt from external and personal experiences rather than through scientific enquiries and comparative studies. In this regard, it is argued that there are no conclusive analogies between gods (or the comparative analysis of deities) in order to convey which god (s) precedes the

others, or who differs from others, and in what fashion, so that they may be acclaimed as autonomously higher than other gods.

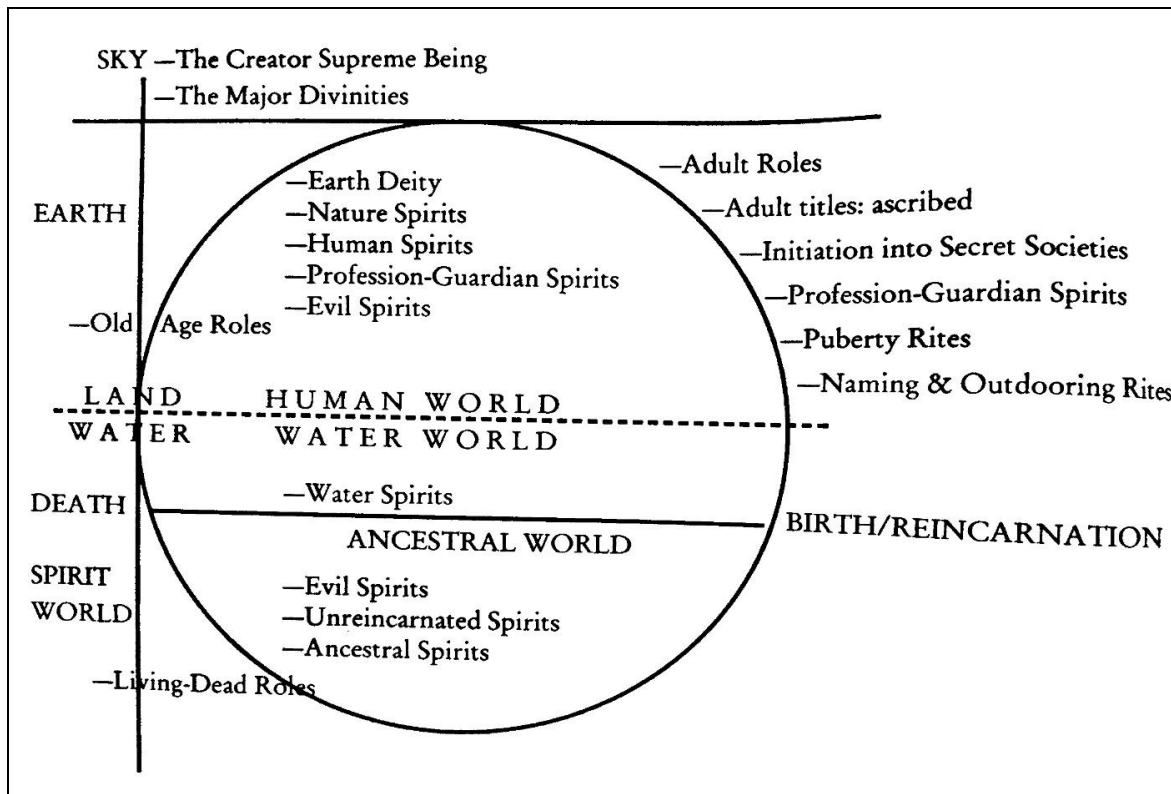
Rather, what is generally known are the characteristics or attributes of God (s), such as God is eternal, God is love, God is immutable, or God is merciful. These play a prominent role in the perception of God in various religious traditions. The attributes of God are always aligned to the revelations of God, or with how worshippers experience, understand and relate with God. In some impressions, such as in the ATR, worshippers perceive of their God as having retired from the undertakings of this physical world (*deus otiosus*), as being transcendent (*deus absconditus*), and as distant (*deus remoteus*).⁵³

Because He is not involved, it is argued that God left the affairs of this world to major divinities and the ancestors (Crafford 2015:8). Major divinities are said to reside in the sky, closer to the Creator or Supreme Being, while the ancestors are thought to live underneath the earth in a spiritual form (Olupona 2011:56). Since they exist in a spiritual form, the ancestors are said to “act as friends at court to intervene between man and the Supreme Being and to get prayers and petitions answered more quickly and effectively” (Opoku 1978:37).

Expounding upon the African worldview, and how Africans operate with a three-dimensional perception of space – the sky, the earth (land and water), and ancestral or spirit world, which is located underneath the earth, Olupona (2011:56) used the following diagram:

⁵³ Emeffie Ikenga Metuh (1991:7) in particular, citing Westerman, notes that God in Africa is perceived as *dues incertus* (the uncertain God, particularly in the agnostic sense) and as *dues remoteus* (distant or far away God).

Figure 6.1: African worldview



Source: Jacob Olupona 2011. African Spirituality: Forms, meanings and expressions.

Figure 6.1 depicts the African worldview. In this diagram, Olupona (2011:56) maintains that the Africans operate with a three-dimensional perception of space – that is, the sky, the earth (land and water), and the ancestral or spirit world, which is located underneath the earth. With these various dimensions in mind, it is argued that “ancestral spirits loom very large because these spirits not only dominate the spirit world but operate pervasively in the human world to the extent that, in some communities, they monopolize cultic devotion” (Olupona 2011:57).

Ancestral beliefs therefore act as a form of social control by which the conduct of individuals is regulated. They represent a powerful source of moral sanctions and affirm the values upon which society is based (Opoku 1978:39). However, in other impressions such as in Christianity, God is understood to be immanent (intimately involved in the material world), as passible (expressive of emotions) and has become much closer to humanity by taking human nature (through incarnation).

These attributes therefore, seem to expound upon the impressions, understanding and perceptions of God within the various religious perspectives or traditions. For this reason, the participants tended to assume that the Christian God and African religionist God is the same. They believed that both religions are brought together by their mono-theistic belief and centeredness towards God.

Moreover, since they supposed that the Christian God is the same as the African religionist God, the participants maintained that they worship one God and therefore, insisted that Christianity and ATR are compatible. They argued that these two religions do not clash with each other, but reinforce one another in a mutually benefiting way. Participant 10 (P10FCLS), for instance, said that “[t]here is a link. I am a Christian and *Sangoma*. Therefore, I embrace both faiths. I do not see any contradiction, and my life is balanced.”

Manton Hirst (2005), an anthropologist who has conducted extensive research on Xhosa systems of divination, seems to corroborate this presupposition. Hirst (2005:4) noted that to most traditional healers, Christianity and traditional religion are considered to be related systems of thought and practice. Hirst (2005) conveyed this observation in the following manner:

Most healers are nominal, if not practising, Christians. From the healers’ perspective, Christianity and traditional religion are considered to be related systems of thought and practice. The terms of one system are translatable into the terms of the other and the ensuing transpositions used in a mutually reinforcing way.

This implies that traditional healers do not inevitably perceive any contradictions between the two religions, nor do they regard themselves as assuming two different religious traditions. But they see themselves as holding a unified worldview, which is composed of two religious traditions. This unified view brings consonance and balance in their lives. Because it incorporates two religious traditions, this worldview is not linear. It is not simply characterised with “a mind-body dualism consonant with Western biomedicine and consumer culture” (Hirst 2005:4).

But it is “a complex dialectical process in which old and new [religious forms] are integrated, synthesized and increasingly supplement each other” (Hirst 2005:4). The ATR, as an old religious form, is systematically integrated with Christianity, the

new religious form, and both religions increasingly continue to supplement each other as practitioners consistently try to adjust to the socio-religious realities of life. Thus, the *amaXhosa* traditional healers maintain a unified worldview, and not a dichotomous worldview, based on duality as embodied in Western philosophy.

Hence, Participant 2 (P2MCLS) noted that “[s]ome Christians believe that we must go to God through Christ alone, but I also believe we need our ancestors”. In this impression, there appears to exist a unified worldview, which acknowledges both Christ, as the Saviour of the world; and ancestors, as custodians of indigenous traditions or customs. In their view, Christ and ancestors do not contradict each other, as they each fulfil a specific task or purpose within the respective religious traditions.

Because of this intersection, some participants noted that they were raised-up within families that embraced both traditions, where their parents were both Christians while African religionists. In this scenery, the participants were expected to uphold both traditions. For instance, participant 4 (P4MCCL), asserted that:

“I was raised by parents who embraced both religions. My father was an African religionist and my mother was a Christian. On Sunday, we would go to church but even then, my father insisted that we must always wear our fetish (amulets) to stay under the protection of the ancestors. I did not see any contradiction in this, until I gave my life to Christ. Then, I realised that the two do not mix, it is either one worships God or the ancestors”.

Thus, during the participants’ upbringing, embracing two religious traditions was not really a problem, they were surrounded by people who mixed the two traditions. Juxtaposing Christianity and ATR was, therefore, a normal part of their upbringing. This only changed in adulthood, after their conversion, when they began to notice some disparities between the two religions. Then, like Participant 4, decided to choose one religious system for the other.

According to Meredith McGuire (2002:51ff), this process is regarded as the “shaping and maintaining of worldviews”. McGuire (2002:51–96) postulates that there are various processes which may alter the individual’s worldview, and these include the following: (a) the social forces shaping and maintaining the individual’s

worldview, (b) conversion by which the individual changes the existing worldview, and (c) the commitment to the group of fellow believers⁵⁴.

Of most significance to this study, is the process of conversion, as it relates to the radical change of worldviews to the individuals who convert. In this case, conversion means the “transformation of one’s self concurrent with a transformation of one’s basic meaning system” (McGuire 2002:73). This implies that personal and situational factors may predispose people to convert by making them aware of the extent to which their prior meaning systems appear insufficient to explain or give meaning to current experiences and events (McGuire 2002:80).

In this process, the meaning system may be said to be in crises, and thereby requiring some adjustments. This is known as ‘*anomie*’ (or anomy). The term ‘*anomie*’, according to McGuire (2002:80), was first used by Durkheim to typify a situation where a meaning system was utterly disrupted, and the individual or community found it difficult, or even impossible to maintain their moral order without question. This is because the term ‘*anomie*’ literally means to be “without order” (McGuire 2002:35). Therefore, in order to bring order into their meaning system, individuals or communities often resort to syncretism.

McGuire (2002:35) attests to this by stating that “[p]robably the most common new basis of meaning is syncretism – the intertwining of new meanings with the older meaning system”. This appears to have been the case for African traditional communities, who were overwhelmed by the influence of Christian during the missionary epoch. When their old system of meaning was in crisis, they adjusted by incorporating the newly found Christian beliefs into the older system to maintain order, and thus, practised syncretism.

There is no surprise therefore, as to why Christianity was juxtaposed with African Traditional Religion. The individuals or African traditional communities were trying to avoid ‘*anomie*’ by bringing back the moral order into their meaning system, and thereby opening doors to syncretism. Thus the historical and intellectual developments, the socio-religious changes, and other dynamic factors, which governed their environment necessitated the intertwining of both religious traditions

⁵⁴ For more elaborate discussions on these various processes, see (Meredith McGuire 2005:51–96. Religion: The Social Context. Belmont, USA: Wadsworth Thomson Learning).

(Cox 1998:8). And the participants were therefore, raised under such circumstances until they were capable of determining which religion they preferred to follow.

With regard to the latter impression, some participants argued that Christianity and ATR cannot be juxtaposed together because they are contradictory. They saw the two religious traditions as a paradox, which cannot be reconciled. Participant 5 (P5MCCL), for instance, asserted that “[t]here is no link between Christianity and ATR. These two religions oppose each other. A Christian goes to God through Christ, and by Christ alone. But in ATR, the understanding is that God is approached through the ancestors”.

Corroborating this understanding, Participant 9 (P9FRAR) further stated that “[t]here is no association between the two. You cannot mix the Church and ancestors. The African religion is distinct because of the ancestors”. Thus, both participants, even though coming from different religious persuasions – one a conservative Christian and the other an African religionist, agreed upon the basis that Christianity cannot be mixed, let alone reconciled, with African Traditional Religion or *vice versa*.

This is the same sentiment which is shared by prominent scholars such as Jarvis (2009), and Mndende (2009) respectively. Providing a conservative view, Jarvis (2009:44) argued that Christianity does not permit the inclusion of African cultural and religious beliefs into its system because this conflicts with the revealed will of God as found in the Bible. Therefore, African Christians must renounce, and break away from their socio-cultural and religious beliefs in order to uphold the sanctity of Christianity.

Mndende (2009:8), providing an African religionist view, further argued that there is no reconciling these two religious traditions because both religions are based on irreconcilable tenets of faith – the one is centered on Christ, as the sole mediator between humanity and God; while the other centers on the ancestors, as intermediaries for respective clans or ethnic groups before God.

Christ and ancestors are therefore argued to be the two centers of power, which may not be reconciled. Mndende (2009:8) signifies this opposition in the following manner:

One wonders how one can officiate in a ritual professing ancestors as intermediaries between humanity and God, and at the same time go to church and preach that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life? Surely these two practices are based on mutually exclusive, irreconcilable tenets of faith; a contradiction in terms.

It appears that both conservative Christians and African rigorist religionists share the same sentiments, that Christianity cannot be fused with the African Traditional Religion. This stands against the nominalist view, which maintains that both Christianity and ATR can be juxtaposed together in order to produce a unique reality or worldview that is essentially characterised by the acceptance of various components from both religious traditions. As a church leader and *Sangoma*, Mlisa (2009:9) appears to be positioned within this framework.

Mlisa (2009:9), with other prominent scholars, such as Mbiti (1975) and Hirst (2005), argued that even if Africans are converted to another religion, like Christianity, they do not completely abandon their traditional religion. It remains with them for several generations and sometimes for centuries (Mbiti 1975:13). And because of this lasting effect, Hirst (2005:4) maintained that “[m]ost healers are nominal, if not practising, Christians”.

This is because “[f]rom the healers’ perspective, Christianity and traditional religion are considered to be related systems of thought and practice” (Hirst 2005:4). That is probably why the participants implicitly stated that Christianity does not change when juxtaposed with African traditional practices. Rather, it provides a unique viewpoint in the perception of life. Participant 8 (P8FCLS), for instance, noted that “Christianity embraces a variety of cultures, and people become Christians with their cultures. Their traditional practices do not become an interference but helps them to live for Christ in their traditional setting.”

This entails that Christianity and ATR are juxtaposed together in order to bring consonance and moral order to a fragmented meaning system. In this context, the African converts, who convert to Christianity, tend to run away from the dualistic philosophy of extricating religion from culture, or vice versa, by incorporating traditional customs into their Christian system. According to the participants, this

helps the converts to experience Christianity and to live for Christ within their cultural setting.

Moreover, because they are capable to drawing inferences from African cosmology and can tap into the dynamics of African spirituality, the participants insisted that they add value to the Christian system, as church leaders and *Sangomas*. They said that, in one way or another, their *Sangoma* practice serves as an advantage to Christians, but not necessarily to Christianity. They noted that, on the one hand, it assists them as church leaders to sense the problems of the congregants, and to help them without having to go outside the scope of the church for solutions.

On the other hand, it allows those Christians, who are not purely Christian but mix Christianity with African traditional practices, to consult them without creeping by nights. This makes their services more convenient and accessible, so that people may not have to hide the fact that they sometimes rely upon the help of *Sangomas* for certain remedial interventions, or still continue to require the services of *Sangomas* for certain interventions even though they are professed Christians. Thus, the participants viewed their *Sangoma* practice as an additional tool for the advancement of human flourishing within the church context, as they are church leaders and *Sangomas*.

6.3.2 The value of traditional practices amidst Christian systems

All the participants who were church leaders and *Sangomas* seemed to think that their traditional practices do not become any less valuable when juxtaposed with Christian belief systems or components. They said that their *Sangoma* practice is accommodative of Christian belief systems and components. They insisted that Christian components do not nullify '*Sangomahood*', rather they use Christian components like holy water, candle lighting, and offering of prayers, along with traditional remedies, to diagnose their clients.

The foresight to using Christian components however, was said to depend entirely upon the needs of the clients. These client-centered needs are said to be revealed by the ancestors, and the use of Christian components also determined by,

and permitted under the guidance and discretion of the ancestors. Elaborating on this point, Participant 10 (P10FCLS) said that:

'Sangomahood' is dependent on the guidance and discretion of the ancestors. So, they tell us of the things they do not want. As for me, I have been using Christian components for many years, and the ancestors continue to heal and reveal things through those components.

Supporting this assertion, Participant 6 (P6FCLS) stated that “[t]o me, it makes no difference whether one uses Christian or non-Christian components, it depends on the discretion of the ancestors and the purpose of using such components”. This implies that the use or non-use of Christian components largely depends upon the guidance and discretion of the ancestors. They determine which components are to be used and for what purpose.

The ancestors are at liberty to do this because they communicate at any given time whenever they wish to convey a message. They are not limited or restricted by anything. Therefore, they can communicate at any time and whenever they wish to communicate. This happens even when one is still at church. Participant 1 (P1FCLS) explained this in the following way: “The ancestors communicate at any time they want to convey something. This happens whether one is at church, in public places or alone in private. They are not restricted by anything, including Christian symbols”.

This however, does not mean that the ancestors dominate one’s character and their lives by overriding their will beyond limits, until they feel helpless or without control. Undoubtedly, the ancestors are perceived as very powerful, and may possess great control over *Sangomas*. But the participants noted that even under such circumstances, the ancestors may still be pleaded with or repressed until one finds a suitable place to reciprocate the communication.

Participant 2 (P2MCLS), for instance, noted that the ancestors may be suppressed or asked to remain calm, particularly when the occasion is not suitable for *Sangomas* to listen and obey to their directives. This is even more so for *Sangomas* who are guided by ancestors that are religious. These ancestors are said to be more equitable, and may be listened to even when one is within the church context. Their manifestation is understood to be gentle and not intrusive, whereas non-religious ancestors may be both intrusive and restrictive - restricting one’s

freedom of movement so that they do not go to certain places, or attend some functions.

Because religious ancestors are mostly equitable and non-intrusive, they permit the use of Christian symbols or Christian components such as prayer, candle lighting, the burning of incense, or the reading of the Bible within the *Sangoma* practice. Participant 3 (P3FCLS) assumes that these ancestors accept Christian symbols and Christian components because they were once Christians themselves while living in the physical world:

There are religious ancestors (*izihlwele zecawa*), who allow Christian components to be used. Probably because, they themselves, were Christians at once, or because they are not against things like prayer or any other Christian symbols.

This seemed to be the case for Participant 1 (P1FCLS). As a faith healer, she said that she united her ancestors with the church (*ukudibanisa izihlwele necawa*). This allowed her to unleash her spiritual gift as a faith healer (*umthandazeli*). This gift of *ukuthandazela* (faith healing) requires that she heavily rely upon the active involvement of the ancestors, who reveal the ailments of her clients. And as a faith healer, part of her diagnosis requires that she use the Bible, prayer sessions, and holy water.

These are sometimes used in conjunction with other traditional approaches of treatment. This may entail the supplementation of prayers with *muti/amayeza* or the cleansing of an individual by holy water, which is accompanied by protective charms. This was not a unique case. Participant 10 (P10FCLS) also stated that she employs the same method of healing. She asserted that:

[H]ere in my office, I have a bible that I use, and I also have candles that I light for my students. There are students that come to my office with problems. Sometimes, I would do divination, or just give them a bible to open randomly, and see what is written, then interpret it. Most of the time, it is relevant to that person's situation (P10FCLS).

These accounts seem to suggest that there are religious ancestors, or at last, ancestors that approve of Christian belief systems and Christian components. They permit and recommend the use of Christian symbols, in some cases, within the

context of 'Sangomahood'. These Christian components are said to supplement traditional remedies rather than nullify them. This happens even in the case of performing clanic rituals. Participant 2 (P2MCLS), for instance, noted that they usually begin their ritual ceremonies with prayers and by singing church hymns.

He said that these prayers and hymns invoke the unity of the family, including the lineage of their ancestors, and therefore, must be made before going to appease the ancestors at the kraal. He said that "[...] when we are going to appease (*ukungxengxeza*) the ancestors, we leave *inkundla* (the space between the house and the kraal) with a prayer and song. Our family hymn is "*unabantu bakho thixo ngamaxesha onke* (you are with your people God, at all times)".

This seems to suggest that Christian belief systems do not contradict traditional practices as African Christians appear to easily combine these two religious traditions to supplement each other. This is the same case with the understanding of Christ and ancestors. The participants seemed to think that Christ and ancestors do not oppose each other because they have different functions. On the one hand, they said that Jesus Christ is a savior and redeemer, from which the ancestors do not hold a claim.

On the other hand, they said that the ancestors are benefactors of clanic groups or ethnic communities, and do not claim to save or mediate on behalf of the rest of humanity. Participant 10 (P10FCLS) expressed this sentiment in the following way: "Well, I cannot compare the role that Jesus plays with that of the ancestors. Jesus mediates on behalf on the world but the ancestors look after their clans. They speak to God on behalf of the living, so that God may look with favour on them".

Thus, the participants seemed to argue that Jesus' role is universal and entails the facilitation of reconciliation between God and the rest of humanity; while the ancestors look after the welfare of their clans or communities. That is probably why Opoku (1978:37) contends that the ancestors "act as friends at court to intervene between man and the Supreme Being and to get prayers and petitions answered more quickly and effectively".

This means that the ancestors do not substitute Christ, but provide additional support in supplicating on behalf of the living to God in order for Him to respond with favour towards their pleas. In that sense, they argued that the ancestors do not

replace or take over the role of Christ but supplement it. Hence, the role of Christ was said not to be comparable with that of the ancestors.

Eventually, this line of thought seems to discredit the notion that Christianity and ATR do not mix (Mndende 2009:8), or the argument that maintains that one has to abandon their African traditional belief systems in order to be considered a '*bona fide*' Christian (Jarvis 2009:44). For the experiencers of this realism – those who juxtapose Christianity and ATR, and assume dual roles as church leaders and Sangomas – the two religious traditions gel very well together, and complement, rather than contradict each other. Thus, Hirst's (2005:4) observation that both Christianity and ATR are thought to be related systems of thought and practice, by nominal Christians, is accurate.

6.4 How Christian leadership relates to '*Sangomahood*'

Since the participants, who were considered for this study, were predominantly church leaders and *Sangomas*, the researcher intended to find out how Christian leadership related to '*Sangomahood*'. The participants responded by noting that both Christian leadership and '*Sangomahood*' are callings, but these two callings come in different ways. On the one hand, Christian leadership is said to come from God through the aid of scriptures. '*Sangomahood*', on the other hand, is also said to come from God but through the involvement of the ancestors.

These two are often perceived as different forms of callings and are mostly kept that way. But in some cases, these two callings tend to overlap. In such cases, one receives one form of calling, but generally operates in both dimensions – as church leader and *Sangoma*. In other cases, one responds to both callings at different instances – it is believed that these two callings do not come at once, or at the same time but one form of calling often precedes the other in sequence.

This appears to have been the case with the well-known clinical psychologist, church leader and *Sangoma*, Dr. Nomfundo Lilly-Rose Mlisa (2009). Mlisa (2009:121) noted that while she was undergoing her faith-healing initiation process at St. John's Apostolic Faith Mission, she was subjected to an assessment by the Bishop of the Church, Tat' uMtini, whose headquarters are in Dimbaza Township, in

the Eastern Cape Province. This form of assessment and initiation was compulsory, and was a requirement for all those who professed or claimed to be called by God into the Christian ministry.

During the period of that assessment, and her initiation process, Mlisa (2009:121) reports that:

He [Tat' uMtini] prophesied that I was a prophet by birth and that my ancestors were giving me a church that I had to found and lead. The church was going to have a huge membership. Later on, I was trained in how to use the Bible for *ukuhlaluba* (assessment and diagnosis) and how to carry out different types of treatments such as bathing, vomiting, giving enemas, massages and laying on of hands. Furthermore, I was taught to conduct different services and liturgy for specific services and other routine measures. Instead of using the roots and bark of trees, as *amagqirha* would do, I was taught how to prepare *iziwasho* – as the medicinal mixtures used by *abathandazeli* (plural of *umthandazeli*) are called [...]. However, the methods of treatment are almost the same as those used by *amagqirha*: vomiting, enemas, bathing (cleansing through body wash) burning incense (*imphepho*) and other similar methods (Mlisa 2009:121).

Against this citation, it appears as if these two religious callings – Christian leadership and '*Sangomahood*' are related or tend to overlap in the eyes of nominal Christians. Mlisa (2009:121), for instance, appears to have been initially called into being a prophet and a church leader, but it was her ancestors that would give her the church which she should lead. In that case, her Christian call into the ministry automatically required that she involve her ancestors.

Thus, within the Christian context, she occupied the office of a prophet, but within the African religionist context, she depended upon the guidance and aid of her ancestors to draw and retain a great number of following from her congregants. Moreover, even though she operated as a faith healer (*umthandazeli*), she said that she also used the methods of treatment which were mostly similar to those used by *amagqirha*, such as vomiting, enemas, bathing (cleansing through body wash) burning incense (*imphepho*) and other similar methods (Mlisa 2009:121).

These were the same modes of treatment which the participants said that they were using. This included the use of the Bible as an assessment tool, and as a form diagnosis (*ukuhlahluba*). However, to a large extent, Mlisa (2009:121) seems to have employed various methods of treatment which were very similar to those that are used by *Sangomas*. In this backdrop, it appears as if the two religious traditions intersect – the Christian call to ministry, somehow, relates to ‘*Sangomahood*’.

Participant 1 (P1FCLS) appeared to corroborate this assertion when she stated that: “I think the Christian call into the ministry is the same as the one *Sangomas* receive. We are all called by God. For instance, I learnt of my calling through a traditional healer, who told me I was called to be a faith healer. He could see this because he was also called”. The participant even noted that she learnt of her Christian call into the ministry through a *Sangoma* (P1FCLS).

This seems to suggest that these two callings are somehow regarded as coming together because they both come from the same source, who is God, by *Sangomas*. Although they manifest themselves in different forms, these two callings seem to communicate with each other. In some instances, because these two callings do not come at once, but often precede each other, they are every so often combined together. The mere fact that there are church leaders and *Sangomas* implies that these two callings are permeable and can be combined together.

The major difference lies in the sequence in which both callings are accepted. In some instances, other people respond to the Christian call to ministry before becoming *Sangomas*. At other occasions, they become *Sangomas* before they can respond to the Christian call into the ministry. Yet again, other people prefer to run away from ‘*Sangomahood*’ by becoming church leaders, or *vice versa*.

This is the view which Participant 2 (P2MCLS) communicated. He said that “[t]he Christian and *Sangoma* callings are two different things, but they can be combined. This is because they do not come at the same time, one follows the other. Hence, it is possible for someone who runs away from the *Sangoma* calling may end up in church” (P2MCLS). Due of this interchange, Participant 3 (P3FCLS) also stated that “I think that they are related. One can substitute the one with the other or respond to both callings.”

Thus, even though these two callings are different, they do not appear to repel each other. The participants argued that these two callings may be combined together. Due to the fact that they are perceived as related, the participants said that one may elude the demands of one calling for another. For instance, the participants noted that one may evade the Christian call to ministry by becoming a *Sangoma*. And yet again, a person may evade the *Sangoma* calling by becoming church leader.

In extreme cases however, some people appear to be obliged to accept both callings, and cannot evade the demands of one calling for another. This is a unique case, in which some people become church leaders while *Sangomas*. The participants that were considered for this study appeared to fall in this category. The Christian call into the ministry was deemed necessary and seen as permeable to '*Sangomahood*', as both callings seemed to mutually reinforce each other in a constructive manner.

6.5 Effects of blending Christianity and ATR to identity

The last sub-research question looked into the crisis which may emerge out of the juxtapositioning of Christianity and African Traditional Religion. It sought to establish whether the people who juxtapose Christianity and ATR do have, or do not have any identity crisis, or can be said to assume dual identities. This is important because scholars such as Oosthuizen (2011:279) observed that "[t]aking on Christianity has often led to a crisis of identity", and this is true for Christians who belong to the so called Mainline or Reformed churches.

In this debate, Oosthuizen (2011:279) argues that "[i]n the mainline churches the crisis of identity lies in the fact that many of their members wish to receive the benefits of traditional religion, such as their spontaneity in liturgy and their healing procedures." But they do not get these within their mainline churches. Rather, it is the African Independent/Initiated Churches (AICs) that have incorporated these components in their liturgy and are not afraid to publicly acknowledge that fact. Even in this study, the participants who belonged to mainline churches, such as the United Presbyterian Church; the Free Church, and the Methodist Church of Southern African, seemed to suffer from incidents of criticise discrimination.

Therefore, they characterised their churches as rigid and non-accommodative. They said that they are often misunderstood, misjudged or accused of witchcraft by members of their churches. Participant 3 (P3FCLS), for instance, stated that “[s]ome people refer to us as *intaka-mpuku* (bats). They say we are neither birds nor mice, but we fall on both sides.” These appear to be the same remarks, which Mndende (2009:8) made in the perception of people who juxtapose Christianity and African religion. She regarded them as people who are “neither fish nor flash” (Mndende 2009:8).

In other words, the people who juxtapose Christianity and ATR are often negatively labelled or referred to by derogatory names, such as bats – in this case implying that one is neither a bird nor mice, or as neither fish nor flesh (Mndende 2009:8). Since they are thought to be “sitting on the fence” (Mndende 2009:8), these people are highly judged and criticised. In most occasions, they feel rejected by their respective churches.

Participant 10 (P10FCLS), for instance, stated that she regularly feels rejected at her church, unless she is visiting the Zionist churches. This is because “[i]n Zionist churches, one is permitted to use candles, and to also pray for water. But at my church, some people see me as a witch when I do that. So, we face discrimination”, said Participant 10 (P10FCLS). Participant 6 (P6FCLS) also corroborated this sentiment. She said that “[i]n many cases I have been accused of being a witch. But the people who make such accusations would end up coming to me, in need of my services” (P6FCLS).

This means that the people who juxtapose Christianity and ATR are often judged without any prior considerations – as to what their perceptions are in relation to identity and self-awareness. Nonetheless, these perceptions did not seem to question the identity of the participants nor had any lasting negative effects on their personalities. Rather, they interpreted these forms of criticism as just the socio-religious perceptions and remarks of other people on their professions as church leaders and *Sangomas*.

The central issue was that they never questioned their identity nor doubted the importance of the services which they provide to their respective communities. They, instead, argued that the juxtapositioning of Christianity and ATR does not, in any,

distort or misconstrue their identity. Rather, “[i]t helps one to centre themselves, as they are aware of both worlds – being Christian and African” (P2MCLS).

Participant 1 (P1FCLS) stated that the coming together of these two faiths does not distort her identity, but supplement each other to reinforce a unified worldview. She argued that there are things that Christianity does not explain, but the African religion does. For example, she said “[t]hings like witchcraft, *oohili (ootikoloshe)*, or *ukuthwetyulwa* are undermined in Christianity, but we take them seriously in African religion.”

Therefore, in this case, one may speak of the consolidation of identity rather than identity crisis. The participants appeared to consolidate, rather than alter their identities by embracing two religious traditions – juxtaposing Christianity and African Traditional Religion. Identity, as McGuire (2002:52) contends, refers “to each person’s biographical arrangement of meanings and interpretations that form a somewhat coherent sense of ‘who am I?’”. This is the general understanding of identity in this study.

Therefore, because identity is consolidated through various intersections, McGuire (2002:52) notes that “a woman might describe herself as a mother, a wife, a Catholic, a Polish-American, a member of the town volunteer ambulance squad, in the church choir, and vice president of the PTA.” These various roles are deemed to represent not merely her formal memberships, but more importantly, the social locations of her identity; and religion, pervades all such social roles in relatively undifferentiated societal levels (McGuire 2002:52).

This implies that a single person may have various roles, such as the women portrayed in the above citation, but without losing his or her identity or having to be regarded as someone assuming dual or multiple identities. Rather, all these various roles collectively work to consolidate a unified sense of being, from which the social locations of his or her identity is retrieved. This is the same with religion. One, for instance, may be a Jew by birth, a Christian by conversion, and a Protestant by orientation, yet have a single and consolidated identity.

The various components – being a Jew, a Christian and Protestant – may be seen as consolidating a single rather than altering one’s sense of identity, seeing that they are all separate locations of identity. That is why the researcher strongly

suggest a new paradigmatic model in which to view and understand the experiences of the participants, as experiencers of the realism under study. This paradigmatic model is based on the notion of 'hybridity' rather than syncretism. This is because hybridity regards the consolidation of identity instead of dichotomisation.

6.6 Religious hybridity as a paradigmatic model

The concept of religious 'hybridity' is an ingenious metaphor in which to describe the African religious discourse. This is because the concept of hybridity denotes the socio-cultural exchange of various traditions from one group to the other (Bohata 2004:129). Scholars such as Spielmann (2006:1) noted that "[h]ybridity has become a term commonly used in cultural studies to describe conditions in contact zones where different cultures connect, merge, intersect and eventually transform."

Hybridisation therefore denotes "the two-way process of borrowing and blending between cultures, where new, incoherent and heterogeneous forms of cultural practice emerge in translocating places – so-called third spaces" (Spielmann 2006:1). Cieslik and Verkuyten (2006:78) further note that hybridity is "predominantly used to describe cultural phenomena and identities", and this was relevant to the contexts of the participants who were considered for this study.

Contrary to Cieslik and Verkuyten (2006:78), who argued that hybridity refers "to the different lifestyles, behaviours, practices and orientations that result in multiple identities", the researcher prefers to define hybridity as "a term [that is] commonly used in cultural studies to describe conditions in contact zones where different cultures connect, merge, intersect and eventually transform" (Spielmann 2006:1).

This is because the coming together of various cultural traditions does not automatically imply the assumption of multiple identities, as Cieslik and Verkuyten (2006:78) suggest. But, it can denote the consolidation of one's identity by incorporating or supplementing certain elements of culture by external components, which do not fully find adequate expression within the immediate cultural tradition. For instance, the participants noted that things like witchcraft, *oohili*, or

ukuthwetyulwa, are often undermined by Christianity, whereas they are taken seriously in African religion.

These phenomena therefore, do not find an interpretive paradigm within the Christian context, hence it is often difficult for Christians to understand the dynamics of African spirituality and mysticism. They often have to tap into African worldviews, which exist outside the scope of Christianity, in order to understand these phenomena. Thus, some traditional components of African cosmology are essential and necessary for African Christians to supplement the expression of Christianity within the African context.

As Oosthuizen (2011:279) noted, the taking on of Christianity may lead to identity crisis. And this may entail the dichotomisation of Christianity and African cultural and religious heritage. Depicting the problematic dynamics of this situation, William (1950:4) asserts that:

The new Christian rises from the waters of the font and goes back to his home in the village with his fellow tribesmen, men of his own nation and race: what is to be the practical relation between the new life and the old? As a catechumen he has tried to face it, but now, white from the laver of regeneration, it comes home to him with a new urgency, how shall he walk worthy of the vocation wherewith he is called? In grace he has come into a new society, his life has been raised to a new plane. But though no longer of the world, he is still in the world: he has to live out his faith in everyday life. Again and again situations will arise in which he may easily imperil his soul's new health. Custom will demand his participation with his relatives and kindred in much of which he may feel a real distrust, and yet, if he refuses to be associated with his fellow tribesmen in what are regarded as essential acts of citizenship and duties to the community, he begins to be in danger of cutting himself off completely, and at the end becoming an outcast. If his own tribe into which he was born no longer recognizes him, it is impossible for him to become a real member of any other tribe or people. He can indeed do his best to imitate the ways of another race, and another race may do their best to offer him comradeship and make him their associate to the utmost extent to which this is possible; but more than an associate he cannot become.

This explicitly denotes the crisis which emerges out of converting to Christianity for African people. It is often a task which entails the denunciation of one's cultural

and religious heritage (Jafta 2011:61). As William (1950:4) notes, those who convert to Christianity are often forced into repudiating to associate with their tribesmen in what is regarded as essential acts of citizenship and one's duties to the community. They often prefer to alienate themselves, thus placing themselves in a position where they are cut-off from their clans or tribal bonds.

Citing Pauw, Ntombana (2015:109) notes that the newly converted African Christians "became a group or a community among the African people [or among themselves] without reference to their traditional kinship-based social structures who were under missionary authority". This means that when one became a Christian, it normally was expected that they should isolate themselves from their traditional kinship-base, and begin to live among other Christians under the authority of missionaries, probably at, or near the mission station.

But this was not always the answer to the dilemma of identity crisis. Mugambi (2002:519), for instance, noted that they could still not deny their African cultural and religious heritage. He asserts that:

On the one hand, they accepted the norms introduced by the missionaries who saw nothing valuable in African culture. On the other hand, the converts could not deny their own cultural identity. They could not substitute their denominational belonging for their cultural and religious heritage (Mugambi 2002:519–520).

This implies that even though African Christians largely accepted the norms and teachings of the missionaries, they never utterly abandoned their cultural identities. They could not basically substitute their denominational belonging for their cultural and religious heritage (Mugambi 2002:519–520). Against this background, it appears as if African converts to Christianity were often obliged or had no other means of evading the emergence of identity crisis. This is because the teachings of the missionaries had created two separate communities, in which Christian converts were obliged to subscribe.

According to Ntombana (2015:109), the one community, was composed of *amaqaba* or *ababomvu* (red-blanketed people, unconverted and uneducated), while the other comprised *amagqobhoka* (educated and Christianised) communities. After conversion therefore, converted members were obliged to choose the second

community, which was composed of *amagqobhoka* or the people who were regarded as educated and Christianised. Within this community, “[t]he Western lifestyle was defined as enlightened or “better life”, which implied that the un-educated were living in darkness or were backward” (Ntombana 2015:109).

With the end of the missionary epoch however, African Christians began to show great discomfort with the manner in which the African cultural and religious heritage was undermined, distorted and misrepresented by Western scholars (Mugambi 2002:517). This included the presentation of Christianity in Africa, by missionaries, in Western apparel (Lado 2006:8). Fasholé-Luke *et al.* (1978:366), for instance, noted that African theologians then began to set about demonstrating “that the African religious experience and heritage were not illusory, and that they should have formed the vehicle for conveying the Gospel verities to Africa”.

Thus, as Fasholé-Luke *et al.* (1978:366) contended, African theologians began to argue that it is the rehabilitation of the African cultural and religious heritage that may gain back the self-respect of Africans. However, in this process of reconstruction, the researcher strongly suggests that African Christians should rethink things, and move away from the classification of the juxtapositioning of Christianity and ATR as syncretism. This is because many Christian theologians still consider the dialogue between Christianity and ATR as a step towards syncretism (Adamo 2011:16).

In this perception, the consideration of inculturation or Africanisation of Christianity is seen as the corruption of Christianity (Müller 2008:1). As a result, Christianity is absolutised (Adamo 2011:16). On the contrary, the notion of hybridity seems “to evoke an unapologetic sense of blending, whereby two different traditions contribute in roughly equal measure to a new cultural/religious product” (Müller 2008:1). This is the area in which constructive discussions are needed and should be directed with regards to the juxtapositioning of Christianity and ATR.

African Christians should be empowered to find ways in which they can authentically express and experience their Christian identity within their African context. However, this does not imply that the researcher is modelling the realism understudy as the actual embodiment of hybridity, which is recommended. But this realism does serve a particular purpose. Its intended purpose is in showing that

religious dichotomy can be evaded by the juxtapositioning of two religious traditions, in this case, Christianity and ATR.

Even though this realism may not be an ideal example of hybridity, African Christians may find an example in which they can bring some form of balance between their Christian and African cultural contexts. They should evoke an unapologetic sense of blending, whereby two different traditions – Christianity and ATR, contribute in roughly equal measure to a new socio-cultural and religious product (Müller 2008:1). This is the seamless model of hybridity, which the researcher recommends as a paradigmatic model for Africans, whether conservative or nominal Christians.

6.7 Summary

This chapter systematically engaged with the empirical data which was collected for the purpose of this study. It consisted of the interpretations and analysis of the data that was collected (both literary and empirical) in order to put into context. The analytic process was extensively guided and informed by the theoretical premise from which this study was located. Phenomenology was identified as the theoretical premise which underpinned the interpretive and analytic processes of this study. The chapter culminated with the proposal of a paradigmatic model in which to view and understand the experiences of the participants.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DEDUCTIONS AND RECOMMANDATIONS

7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the findings of this study, makes some deductions into the findings of this study, and makes some recommendations for future research in this field of study. The presentation of the summary of the findings of this study was tuned to follow the main objectives of this study, which were outlined in the introductory chapter (Chapter One). These main research objectives, therefore, guided the presentation process of the summary of the findings of this study.

7.2 Summary of the findings

This research study intended to investigate the juxtapositioning of Christianity and African Traditional Religion by exploring the realism of participants who assumed dual roles as church leaders and *Sangomas*. These participants were purposively selected from three geographical areas in the Eastern Cape Province. These geographical areas are, namely, Alice, Fort Beaufort, and *Dutywa*.

The main research objectives of this study were outlined, in Chapter One, as intending to achieve the following:

- To explore how Christian leadership correlated with '*Sangomahood*';
- To assess whether Christianity still remained the same when juxtaposed with African traditional practices;
- To inquire whether African traditional practices do possess some value when juxtaposed with Christian belief systems;
- To explore how Christian leadership relates to '*Sangomahood*'; and
- To examine the effects of the juxtapositioning of Christianity and African Traditional Religion to personal identity.

These research objectives of this study were achieved, as the findings of this study were established in Chapter Five (the Empirical Data Presentation chapter). This chapter therefore, simply provides a summary of the findings of this study. This summary is presented under the scope of each main research objective in order to systematically deal with each key area in the findings of this study. This was done in order to highlight the views and interpretations of the participants, as experiencers and insider informants of the realism which was understudy.

7.2.1 The correlation of church leadership and ‘Sangomahood’

With regards to the correlation between church leadership and ‘Sangomahood’, the study found out that to nominal Christians – those Christians who juxtapose Christianity and African Traditional Religion, and are church leaders and *Sangomas*, or may be professed Christians while African religionists – the two religious offices are compatible and can be embraced together.

This is because the two religious offices – church leadership and ‘Sangomahood’, are said to be permeable, as each office may fully operate at another’s religious dimension. This implies that it is possible for one to fully assume a church leadership position, while a *Sangoma* but without betraying the essence of *Sangoma* practice. Yet again, it appears to be possible for one to be a professed Christian, but without utterly abandoning their African socio-cultural and religious heritage.

Therefore, this correlation appears to permit the interchange between the two religious traditions. In one of the research studies that was conducted by Hirst (2005), on the Xhosa systems of divination, the same findings were established. Hirst (2005:4) concluded that most Xhosa traditional healers are nominal, if not practising, Christians. He noted that for these Xhosa traditional healers, “Christianity and traditional religion are considered to be related systems of thought and practice” (Hirst 2005:4).

In that context, “the terms of one system are transferable into the terms of the other and the ensuing transpositions used in a mutually reinforcing way” (Hirst 2005:4). Thus, unlike the popular exoteric view, which maintains that the two

religious traditions – Christianity and African Traditional Religion, or Christian leadership and ‘*Sangomahood*’, are contradictory; the esoteric view, which is mostly held by nominal Christians, maintains that these two religious systems are interrelated.

In this framework, one may therefore argue that nominal Christians uphold a unique perspective on the juxtapositioning of Christianity and African Traditional Religion, and/or of the correlation between church leadership and ‘*Sangomahood*’. They see the two religious systems as coming together or at least, adding mutual value to one another.

7.2.2 Christianity among African traditional practices

The participants seemed to think that Christianity does not change when juxtaposed with African traditional practices. They argued that Christianity must be able to communicate with their cultural setting, so that they may get to experience Christianity within their African cultural context. This seemed to be the key area in which most African Christians struggle to find some form of balance.

They tend to exchange their cultural identity for their denominational belonging, and thereby end up living double lives – professing to be ‘*bona fide*’ Christians in public, while consulting traditional healers by night. This dichotomy is largely a result of the inability African Christians to strike some form of balance between their cultural heritage and religious orientation.

As scholars like Mugambi (2002:519) noted, African converts were often obliged to choose between their African cultural heritage and Christianity. In this case, “[t]hey could not substitute their denominational belonging for their cultural and religious heritage” (Mugambi 2002:519–520). This meant that they were obliged to appear as Christians in public, to keep face for the sake of missionaries and to painfully honour their Christian vows.

According to some scholars (Ray 2009:5; Matobo, Makatsa and Obioha 2009:15), those who appeared to contravene the teachings and guidelines of the missionaries were often suspended at church. They were allowed back to the church until they had done the church ritual of repentance and cleansing, which included

public confessions and assurance that they would not do the same acts again (Ntombana 2015:109).

At the same time, they could not deny their African identity, and had to secretly practice their traditional rites and customs. According to William (1950:5), this led to many African converts choosing to abandon Christianity – “acquiescing too easily in the ways of the old life and lapsing from religion [Christianity]”.

When such incidents occurred, William (1950:5) notes that African converts behaved more like “baptized heathen[s]” and lost their sonship to Christ through slavery to their old life. The notion of “baptized heathens” here referred to the Africans’ juxtapositioning of Christianity and African Traditional Religion, which was seen as impertinent by missionaries.

They regarded the coming together of these two religious systems as a distortion, particularly the distortion of Christianity (William 1950:4–5). But in general, this juxtapositioning of Christianity and African Traditional Religion developed as a reaction to the dichotomisation of religion, in this case Christianity, and the African cultural heritage.

Currently, one observes a situation whereby these two religious systems are made to communicate and appear to be reinforcing each other mutually. Reflecting on this situation, the participants who were considered for this study strongly argued that the juxtapositioning of Christianity with African traditional practices neither changes, nor distorts the embodiment of Christianity in any way. Instead, they contended that the coming together of these two religious systems permits them to practice Christianity within their cultural context.

7.2.3 The value of traditional practices among Christian belief systems

Due to the fact that most nominal Christians still uphold and conduct their traditional practices, it was necessary to enquire whether these African traditional practices do yield or possess some value when juxtaposed with Christian belief systems. Responding to this point of enquiry, the participants stated that Christian belief systems do not have a negative impact on African traditional practices.

The participants outlined two reasons for this. The first was that there are religious ancestors (*izihlwele zecawa*) who permit or sometimes recommend the use of Christian components in traditional healing, depending on the needs of the clients. And the second was that there are no specific traditional practices that forbid the incorporation of Christian belief systems.

Thus, the participants stated that they incorporate Christian belief systems into their *Sangoma* practice. They do this by praying, lighting up candles for goodwill, the burning of incense, and by using holy water to heal their clients. These Christian components are often recommended and used together with traditional remedies or medicines (*muti*).

They also noted that their clanic rituals or customary rites are often preceded with prayers and the singing of family hymns to bond and evoke the presence of the ancestors. This happens before they leave the main house, to *inkundla* (the space between the main house and the cattle kraal), and then to *exhantini* (cattle kraal entrance or the sacred pole erected at the centre of the cattle kraal) where they begin to communicate with their ancestors.

The commencement of clanic rituals or customary rites with prayers and the singing of family hymns, which are sometimes church hymns, seems to show that Christian belief systems do not nullify the value of African traditional practices when juxtaposed together. That is probably why the participants insisted that Christian belief systems do not lessen the value of African traditional practices.

7.2.4 How Christian leadership relates to ‘Sangomahood’

The participants stated that Christian leadership is related to ‘Sangomahood’ in that both religious offices come from God but through different mechanisms; and that these callings are transferable or may be exchanged for the other. As divine callings, the participants noted that both callings come from the same source, God, but Christian leadership comes through the aid of scriptures, while ‘Sangomahood’ comes through the involvement of the ancestors.

Even though mostly thought to be different, the participants stated that these two religious callings tend to overlap. In such cases, one may receive one form of a

calling, but operate in both dimensions. This means that it is easier for a *Sangoma* to become a church leader while keeping their *Sangoma* practice. At the same time, it is also possible for a church leader to be called into '*Sangomahood*', without betraying their Christian conviction.

In extreme cases however, it is believed that one may respond to both religious callings without compromising the other, but this occurs in different stages. This is because the participants believed that these two religious callings do not come at once, but tend to precede one another. In this case, one may initially respond to the Christian call to the ministry, but later receive another call to '*Sangomahood*'. This may also occur *vice versa*.

Scholars such as Nomfundo Lily-Rose Mlisa (2009:116f), and Nonkululeko Sheilla Sandlana (2014:543) seem to have undergone this route. Like the participants who were understudy, they responded to both callings. They are also church leaders and *Sangomas* (Mlisa 2009:9; Sandlana 2014:543). Their view is that these two religious offices are interconnected, as they are related systems of thought and practice.

Similarly, the participants also believed that Christian leadership and '*Sangomahood*' are interconnected callings, therefore, two related systems of thought and practice. This is how they portrayed the relationship between these two religious callings – Christian leadership and '*Sangomahood*'.

7.2.5 The juxtaposing of Christianity and ATR to personal identity

Participants stated that the coming together of Christianity and African Traditional Religion does not impact negatively upon, nor distort their identity. Instead, they argued that the juxtapositioning of Christianity and African Traditional Religion supplements or reinforce the limitations of the other religion. This means that both religions are used together to supplement each other in order establish a unique, complete and unified worldview.

This is because the participants argued that there are things which Christianity cannot explain, but are explainable within the context of the African Traditional Religion. For example, one of the participants noted that things like witchcraft, *oohili*

(or *ootikoloshe*), or *ukuthwetyulwa* are often undermined in Christianity, but these are taken seriously by the African Traditional Religion. The coming together of these two religious traditions therefore, seems to suggest the consolidation of identity rather than an identity crisis.

Because of this realisation, the researcher suggested a new paradigmatic model which views and understands the experiences of the participants. This paradigmatic model is based on the notion of hybridity rather than syncretism as a popular concept. This is because the participants appeared to be consolidating, rather than altering their identities by embracing these two religious traditions – Christianity and African Traditional Religion.

The researcher felt like the concept of religious ‘hybridity’ is an ingenious metaphor in which to describe the African religious discourse. This is because the concept of hybridity denotes the socio-cultural exchange of various traditions from one group to the other (Bohata 2004:129). Scholars such as Spielmann (2006:1) further argue that “[h]ybridity has become a term commonly used in cultural studies to describe conditions in contact zones where different cultures connect, merge, intersect and eventually transform.”

Hybridity therefore seems to suggest that the process of juxtaposing traditions, whether cultural or religious, brings transformation to the immediate cultural or religious tradition in question. This transformation comes through contact with other traditions, sometimes through merger, or by cultural intersections. In this case, it came through the merger between Christianity and African Traditional Religion.

These were therefore the findings of this research study of the juxtapositioning of Christianity and African Traditional Religion, specifically referring to people who were church leaders and *Sangomas*.

7.3 Recommendations for future research

In light of the findings of this study, which were established from the participants who juxtaposed Christianity and African Traditional Religion, and assumed dual roles as church leaders and *Sangomas*, the researcher makes the following

recommendations, which may be considered for future research studies in this discipline:

- There should be more academic research conducted on the various forms of African religiosity and spirituality, particularly focusing on the descriptive nature of the ATR, its institutionalisation and the use of sacred spaces and their connections to ancestral presence and healing mechanisms.
- There should be more research studies focusing on the preservation of the African cultural and religious heritage and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS).
- There should be more research studies dedicated to the exploration of the African heritage and its various facets – historical, cultural and religious.
- There should be more research studies focusing on the method and theory in the study of indigenous religions, including the African Traditional Religion.

7.4 Concluding remarks

This chapter presented a summary of the findings of this study. It drew some inferences on the findings of this study, and made some recommendations for future studies in this field of research. The presentation of the summary of the findings of this research followed the main objectives of this study, which were fully outlined in the introductory chapter. These research objectives served as topical guides for the presentation of the summary of the findings of this study.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Ethical consideration

A. Letter requesting research participation

To Whom It May Concern

I am conducting a PhD research with the University of the Free State, in the Department of Religion Studies regarding the “Juxtapositioning of Christianity and African Traditional Religion: A Study of Christian leaders and ‘*Sangomahood*’. The study intends to explore the reality of people who juxtapose Christianity and African Traditional Religion. These are the people who are both Christian and African religionists, Pastors and Sangomas or Church leaders and Traditional healers. Their reality has often been misunderstood and judged from outside; hence the undertaking of this research study. It seeks to obtain the first-hand information regarding this realism and to understand how these two religious systems – Christianity and African Traditional Religion, are juxtaposed together and practiced in unison.

I therefore request your participation in this study. Please understand that you are not being forced to take part in this study. The choice whether to participate or not is solely yours and yours alone. However, I would really appreciate it if you could share your thoughts and experiences in this subject. If you choose not to take part in this study, you will not be affected in any way. If you agree to participate, please be aware that you reserve the right to stop me at any time you feel that you do not want to continue with the interviews. Where you decide to withdraw, please know that there will be no penalties, and you will not be prejudiced in any way.

Confidentiality will professionally be observed. I will not disclose your identity anywhere on the information you provide, unless it is by consent from you. In that manner, no one will link you to the information you provide. Only the researcher will know your identity and have access to the unlinked information. The information you provide will be used for research purposes and may be published in a book, academic journals or articles. But even in such cases, your identity will remain concealed, unless you choose and give consent to make it known. I will be asking you some questions in the form of an interview and I request that you answer these questions as openly and as honestly as you can. The interview will take about 15 to 20 minutes. Some of the questions I will ask may be of a personal or sensitive nature. Some may be questions that you may have not considered before, and some may require that you think about the past or think of the future.

I am aware that you may not be absolutely certain about all the answers you will provide but I ask that you try to answer each question at the best of your abilities. If possible, my organisation will like to come back to this area, once the study has been completed, to inform you and your community of what the results are and to discuss our findings and proposals around the research and what this means for people in this area.

B. CONSENT FORM

I hereby agree to participate in this research study regarding the “Juxtapositioning of Christianity and African Traditional Religion: A Study of Christian leaders and ‘Sangomahood’.

I understand that I am participating freely and without being forced in any way. I also understand that I can stop this interview at any point should I choose not to continue and that this decision will not in any way affect me negatively.

I understand that this is a research project whose purpose is not necessarily to benefit me, personally. I have received the telephone number of a person that I can contact should I need to speak about any issues, which may arise in the interviews.

I understand that this consent form will not be linked to the questionnaire, and that my identity will remain confidential. I understand that if at all possible, feedback will be given to my community on the results of the completed research.

.....

.....

Participants’ Signature

Date

I hereby agree to the tape recording of my participation in the study

.....

.....

Participants’ Signature

Date

C. Questionnaire Guide

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PARTICIPANTS

My name is Joel Mokhoathi and I am currently doing my PhD in Religion Studies at the University of the Free State in Bloemfontein, in the Faculty of Theology and Religion. As required by the programme, I am conducting a research study on the “Juxtapositioning of Christianity and African Traditional Religion: A Study of Christian leaders and ‘Sangomahood’”.

You are requested to assist me with the necessary information for this study, and I will be grateful if you could spare me at least fifteen to twenty minutes of your time to conduct an interview. I guarantee that any information you reveal about your identity will be confidential, and will not be disclosed to anyone else, unless you so choose to make it known.

As part of the interview, you are kindly requested to answer the following questions, as honestly as you can, as your responses will assist in providing the needed information regarding the juxtapositioning of Christianity and African Traditional Religion, particularly on the link between Christian leadership and ‘Sangomahood’.

PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. Religion of participant : Christian African Religion Both
2. Age group of participant : 30 to 40 yrs 41 to 50 yrs 51 yrs and older
3. Gender of participant : Female Male
4. Educational level : Non Educ. Dip/Matric Degree/Post-Grad.
5. Period in Practice? : 1 to 5 yrs 6 to 15 yrs 16 yrs and more
6. Location of participant : Alice Dutywa Fort Beaufort

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How is Christianity juxtaposed with African Traditional Religion? *Ingaba ubuKristu budityaniswa njani nenkolo yakwantu?*

- Please tell me, where were you born?
Ndicela undichazele, wazalelwa phi?
- Who raised you?
Wakhuliswa ngubani?
- Which religion did your guardians belong to?
Yeyiphi inkolo yabantu abakukhulisayo?
- How did you become a Christian?
Kwathini ukuze ubengumKristu?
- How did you become a Sangoma?
Kwathini ukuze ubesiSangoma?

2. Does Christianity remain the same when juxtaposed with traditional practices? *Ingaba ubuKristu buhlala bunjalo xa budityaniswe nezithethe zakwantu?*

- In your opinion, what links Christianity and African Traditional Religion?
Ngokwezimvo zakho, ingaba yintoni edibanisa ubuKristu nenkolo yeSintu?
- In what way is Christianity compatible with the African Traditional Religion?
Ingaba yeyiphi indlela apho inkolo yobuKristu ihambelana khona nenkolo yakwantu?
- Does Christianity change when juxtaposed with traditional practices? Please motivate your answer.
Ingaba ibanawuphi umehluko inkolo yobukristu xa idityaniswe nezithethe zakwantu? Ndicela uxhase impendulo yakho.
- What value does 'Sangomahood' (practice of Sangomas) add to Christianity?
Ingaba leliphi igalelo eliziswa yintsebenzo yobungoma kwinkolo yobuKristu?
- In your opinion, can one be a Christian and an African religionist at the same time?
Ngokwezimvo zakho, ingaba umntu uyakwazi ukuba ngumKristu ekwa kwinkolo yakwantu?

3. Do African traditional practices yield any value when juxtaposed with Christian belief systems?

Ingaba izithethe zakwantu zibanalo ixabiso xa zidityaniswe neenkolelo zobuKristu?

- Does 'Sangomahood' have any room for Christian belief systems (such as prayer, Bible reading, candle lighting, etc)?
Ingaba iintsebenzo zobungoma ziyazamkela inkolelo zobuKristu (ezifana nomthandazo, ukufundwa kwe bhayibhile, ukukhanyiswa kwezibani, nezinye)?
- Does the inclusion of Christian beliefs not nullify the value of traditional practices?
Ingaba ukufakwa kwenkolelo zobuKristu kwinkqubo zesintu akusengeli phantsi ukuxabiseka kwezithethe zakwantu?
- Can ancestors be invoked or communicated to in the presence of Christian symbols (the cross, the bible, at church, etc)?
Ingaba amothongo angangxengxezwa okanye acamagushelwe apho kukho imifanekiso yenkolo yobuKristu?
- Are there any traditional rituals that forbid the use of Christian elements? Please mention a few.
Ingaba akhona amasiko anxamnye neentsebenzo zobuKristu? Ndicela ucalule ambalwa kwilihlu laloo masiko.
- How may the role of Christ and ancestors be explained in the process of mediation?
Ingaba indima ka Krestu namathongo ingachazwa njani kwinxaxheba yomanyaniso?

4. How does Christian leadership relate with 'Sangomahood'?

Ubukhokheli bobuKristu buhambelana njani nobungoma?

- What is your position at church?
Siyintoni isikhundla sakho ecaweni?
- How did you become a Church leader?
Kwenzeka njani ukuze ube yinkokheli enkonzweni?
- In your opinion, would you say Christian leadership is a calling? Please motivate your answer.
Ngokwezimvo zakho, ungatsho ukuba ubukhokheli bobuKristu lubizo? Ndicela uxhase impendulo yakho.
- How would you compare the Christian call to ministry and Sangoma calling?
Ungalufanisa njani ubizo lobukhokheli kwinkolo yobuKristu nobizo lobungoma?

- In your case, which calling did you respond to first – Christian leadership or Sangomahood?
Njengoko kwenzeka kuwe, wasabela oluphi ubizo kuqala – ubukhokheli bobuKristu okanye ubungoma?

5. What are the effects of juxtaposing Christianity and African Traditional Religion to personal identity?
Ingaba yeyiphi imiphumela yokudibanisa inkolo yobuKristu nenkolo yakwantu, malunga nokuziqonda komntu?

- In your opinion, does embracing two religious systems not confound one's sense of identity? Please motivate your answer.
Ngokwezimvo zakho, ingaba ukwamkela iinkolo ezimbini akukuphixanisi ukuziqonda komntu? Ndicela uxhase impendulo yakho.
- Would you say that people who are Christian leaders and Sangomas assume double identities? Please motivate your answer.
Ungatsho ukuthi abantu abazinkokheli zobuKristu bekwaziZangoma, ngaxesha nye, baziqonda kubini? Ndicela uxhase impendulo yakho.
- How does one meet the demands of Christian leadership without neglecting 'Sangomahood' or vice versa?
Ingaba umntu uzifezekisa njani imfanelo zobukhokheli bobuKristu ngaphandle kokunyhasha amathongo, kananjalo ngaphandle kokunyhasha ubukhokheli bobuKristu?
- What are some of the challenges of being a Church leader and Sangoma at the same time?
Ingaba yeyiphi imicelimngeni yokuba yinkokheli enkonzweni uphinde ubesisangoma?
- Is there anything else you would like to comment on?
Ingaba zikhona ezinye izimvo ofuna ukuziveza?

D. Ethical clearance



13-Jul-2017

Dear **Mr Joel Mokhoathi**

Ethics Clearance: **Juxtapositioning of Christianity and African Traditional Religion: A Study of Christian leaders and 'Sangomahood'**

Principal Investigator: **Mr Joel Mokhoathi**

Department: **Biblical and Religious Studie (Bloemfontein Campus)**

APPLICATION APPROVED

With reference to your application for ethical clearance with the Faculty of Theology. I am pleased to inform you on behalf of the Ethics Board of the faculty that you have been granted ethical clearance for your research.

Your ethical clearance number, to be used in all correspondence is: **UFS-HSD2017/0022**

This ethical clearance number is valid for research conducted for two years from issuance. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension.

We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your research project be submitted to the ethics office to ensure we are kept up to date with your progress and any ethical implications that may arise.

Thank you for submitting this proposal for ethical clearance and we wish you every success with your research.

Yours faithfully

Dr. Juanita Meyer
Chairperson: Ethics Committee

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E. Editors' certificate



Editing Certificate

This is to confirm that the thesis titled "Juxtapositioning of Christianity and African Traditional Religion: A study of Christian Leaders and 'Sangomahood'" by Joel Mokhoathi, has been edited and proofread. I have ensured consistency throughout the document, and corrected grammar and language use.

Dr Pamela Makati (D Litt et Phil - English)

Academic Editor (*PEG, SATI*)

Email: pmmakati@gmail.com

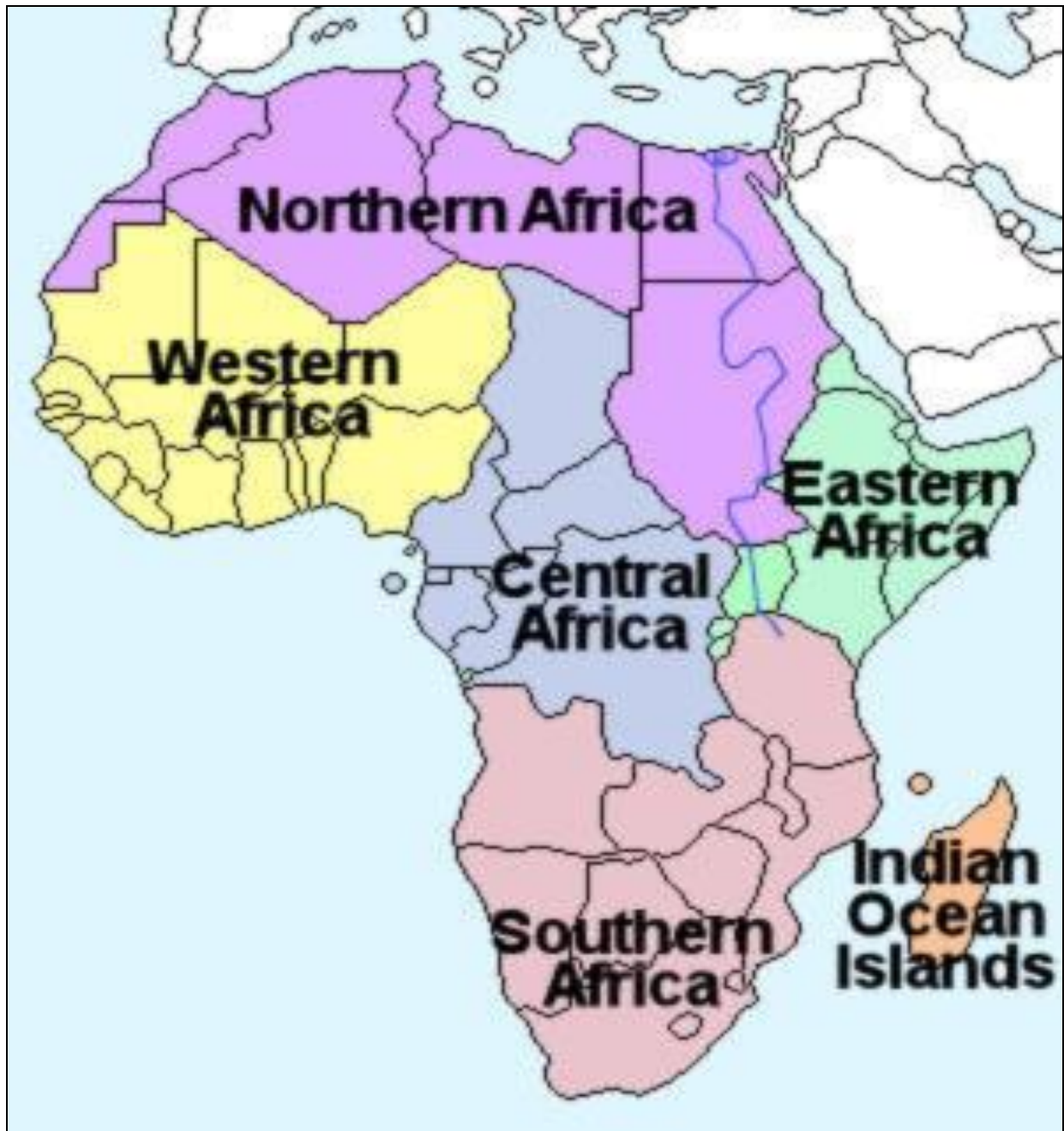
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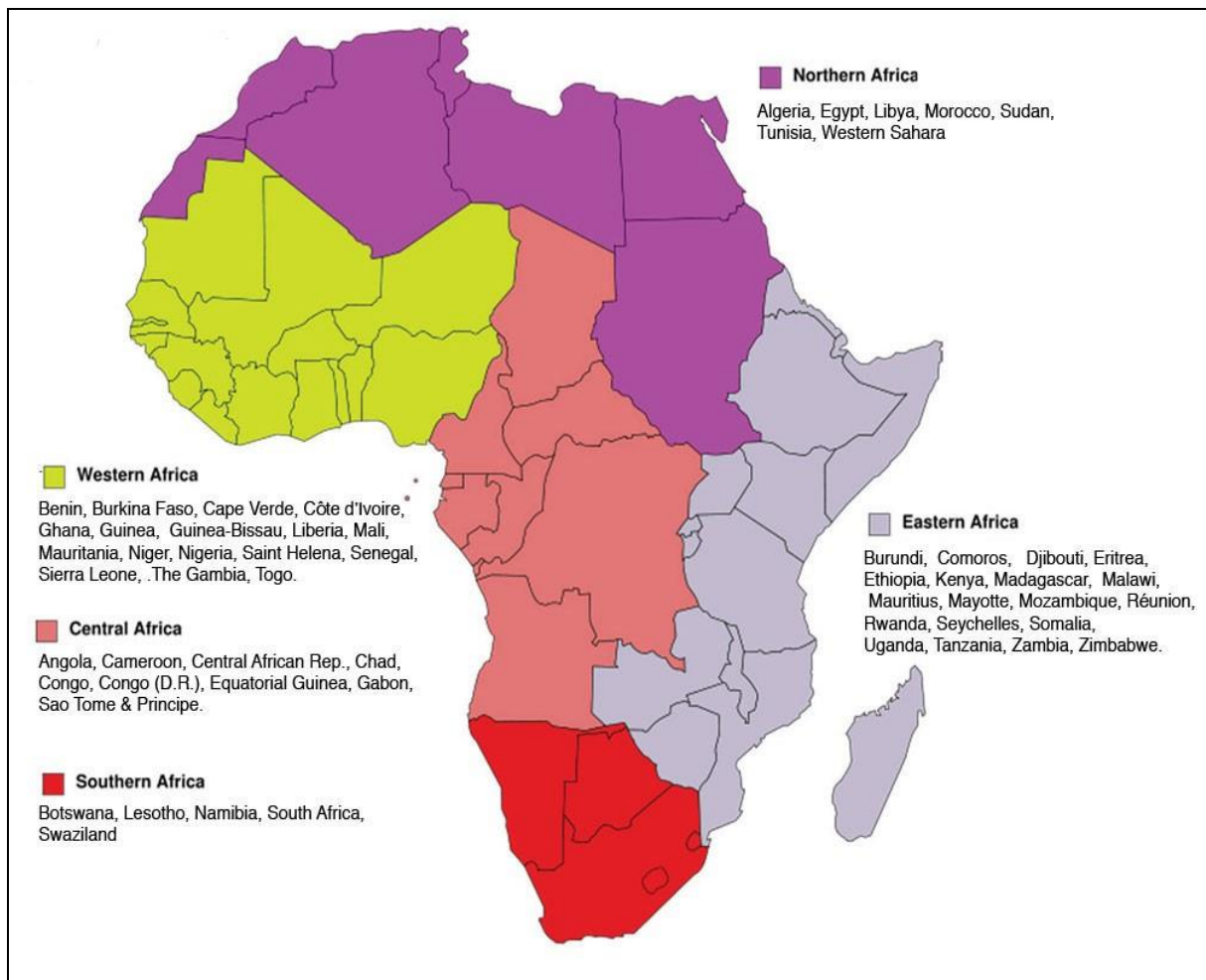
Appendix II: Map of Africa

F. Diagram 1: Africa



Source: Natural History on the Net. www.naturalhistoryonthenet.com

G. Diagram 2: Five regions of Africa



Source: African Travel Association. www.africa-ata.org/images