ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY

ISSUES OF AFRICAN TRADITIONAL CULTURAL BELIEFS AND PRACTICES ANDPSYCHO-SPIRITUAL HEALTH IN A CHRISTIAN SETTING

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ABSTRACT

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FACULTY OF ARTS, LAW AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE IN PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

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Are there vestiges or elements of African traditional cultural beliefs and practices that affect the psychological and spiritual well-being of African Christian students in Tangaza University College (TUC)? If there are, how best can pastoral carers work with the affected students to help them deal with the issues and regain congruence?

These questions, arising out of our practice in the Student Life Ministry in TUC, are the puzzles I set out this study to try to resolve. Our experience was that some of the students were presenting issues in counselling and spiritual direction emanating from unresolved conflict between their African backgrounds and the Christian faith. Observation was that the issues did not surface easily and when they did the carers were not sure how best to help the clients. I thus felt a need to find out what cultural issues affect the students, how the issues manifest in their lives and how best the pastoral care team could work with those affected to help the issues surface and be resolved.

This is an original research designed as an inductive case study and to collect data, a multi-dimensional approach including focus discussion groups with students and members of the SLM, depth interviews with SLM members, selection of some vignettes of counselling and spiritual direction and practitioner observation - were used. The main finding is that there indeed are elements of African beliefs and practices that impinge on the psychological and spiritual wellbeing of some of the African Christian students in TUC. However, not all the students experience such dissonance as some have developed a synthesis between their two world views. Those who have not are embarrassed about and reticent in disclosing the issues thus the need for the pastoral carers to help them to integrate their traditional culture with their Christian faith. Clinical experience has shown that by combining two counselling models – the Rogerian Person-centred and Albert Ellis's Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy, underpinned in a dialogical, theological paradigm, counsellors and spiritual guides can help the affected students not only to talk about the issues but also to work through them to re-gain equilibrium and enjoy greater fullness of life.

Key words: fullness/abundance of life, pastoral care, inculturation, synthesis, psychological and spiritual health.

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Introduction

At the onset of the Professional Doctoral programme in October 2008 as a candidate from Tangaza University College (TUC), it was not quite clear what aspect of my work I would be looking at. Since I combine several professional roles – lecturer, counsellor and spiritual guide, a number of possibilities appeared feasible. It was the reflective writing in the initial stages that helped me to zero in on an aspect of my work that I was somewhat aware of but which I had not given much serious prior thought to.

The gap in knowledge that appeared most significant and calling for attention emanated from my role as a counsellor and spiritual guide, reflecting on which it had dawned on me that some of the issues presented originated from a conflict between Christianity and some features of traditional African beliefs and practices. Casual conversations with colleagues had indicated that indeed a number of students had been mentioning such issues in both counselling and spiritual direction but that the colleagues were finding it difficult to help mainly because they did not fully understand either the genesis or nature of the issues. All that was becoming clear was the realization that some aspects of African traditional beliefs and practices seemed to impinge on the psycho-spiritual experiences of some of the students, causing tension and unhappiness that robbed the affected of the fullness of life that Christ wants his followers to experience (Jn 10:10). The situation involved both local and expatriate helpers.

It was against that background that I decided to conduct a study whose findings would, hopefully, help the carers better understand the phenomenon and, also propose a way forward, thus improving our pastoral care services. The actual research began in September 2010 and involved groups of students, some of the pastoral carers, one-to-one encounters in counselling and spiritual direction, enriched by personal observation and reflections as a practitioner-researcher.

Chapter one comprises the background and rationale for the research. Since the study is housed under the professional doctorate roof it is critical to explain my work context from which the gap in knowledge was identified. I have outlined the background and goals of TUC, the location of the study, as well as the composition and backgrounds of the students. Of great relevance is the Student Life Ministry (SLM) that manages the pastoral care programme and its functioning. It is in this context that the problem was identified. The issue gripped my interest to better understand it and even more importantly try to find a solution.

In an attempt to respond to the problem I reviewed the thoughts of others who have examined similar situations and made useful contributions in the field of pastoral care, pastoral and practical theology and briefly reviewed the strong inter-face between psychology and spirituality. Above all I constantly kept in mind the model established by Jesus, the Good Shepherd and pastoral carer *par excellence*, who came to confer life in all its fullness (Jn 10:10).

In chapter two I have discussed the conceptual framework which has been shaped by my personal experience as an African growing up in the continent and an understanding of the need for psychological and spiritual health for wholeness. People's culture is of crucial importance as it affects them at an unconscious level. I have thus discussed the major tenets of African culture and some of the alienating elements that have been playing out in the lives of Africans and their social-cultural structures in the last 150 years. Of particular significance was the onset of Christian missionary work in the continent, European colonisation, the introduction of Western education and medicine, urbanisation and the monetary economy. I will endeavour to show that the Africans have chosen to respond to these alienating forces variously.

Underpinning the study is a theological reflection on the relationship between culture and Christianity. Is a synthesis between African traditional cultural beliefs and practices at the personal level with Christianity feasible? The Catholic Church has issued many documents and guidelines supporting synthesis and how well this may work out in the lives of individual African Catholic Christians will be explored. The extent to which traditional African culture and Christianity can be synthesised has been examined, especially in light of theologians, Stephen Bevans and Richard Niebuhr.

The methods applied in designing the study, collecting data, analysing them, drawing up conclusions and proffering suggestions, are presented in chapter three. In the process I have explained the steps I took to meet the ethical requirements for a practitioner-researcher, especially in the sensitive fields of psychological counselling and spiritual direction. The main design of the study is case study whose components I will discuss and rationalise as being particularly suited for a study of people's lived experiences. Within the case study design, focus discussion groups will be identified as an excellent means of gathering data on a sensitive topic. I have undertaken to show how data from the focus groups was triangulated with information from in-depth interviews with some colleagues in the Student Life Ministry and vignettes of clinical material selected from personal counselling and spiritual direction encounters as well as my observation. The protocols followed in constituting the groups, recording the data and analysing them, are also be presented. Underpinning those procedures was the understanding that this is qualitative research as it deals with personal experiences communicated through the spoken language, and which requires to be captured in a descriptive format.

The purpose of chapter four was to analyse the accruing data which comprised transcribing the audio tapes of all relevant conversations, open, focused and axial coding as required in Grounded Theory. Finally I selected core themes from the existing ones and organised others around them. In addition I analysed some clinical material to triangulate the findings from focus groups and depth interviews.

Chapter five is predominantly analytical, an attempt to synthesise the outcomes of the research vis-à-vis the questions I had set out to answer. From the outset the questions of the study were: whether there are elements of traditional African cultural practices and beliefs that impinge on the psycho-spiritual well-being of Christian students in TUC; how they manifest; and then propose a method that the pastoral care team in the college can use to help the students who face such issues to find synthesis between their two world-views so that they can enjoy psycho-spiritual harmony. The study has pointed to a particular way of being with the clients in counselling and spiritual direction which can help them regain congruence. While the proposed stance is basically psychological I have shown that it has implications in

spiritual direction as well because it is basically a Christian way of working with troubled people.

At the close of the study I have, in chapter six, reiterated some of the major ideas that have been running through the study, for example, the need for pastoral carers to become aware of the possible incongruence in the lives of young African Christians arising from their backgrounds and the need to help them work through it. The need for a cognitive stance that touches the psychological and spiritual dimensions of the clients has been emphasised. My main recommendation has been for others working in similar contexts to carry out related studies, particularly quantitative ones, so as to help work out the numbers of those affected by the African traditional cultural issues instead of making statements about "many" or "most" without a shred of evidence.

Chapter 1: Background and Rationale for the Study

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the gap in knowledge that this study seeks to investigate, its context and genesis. To do so I have outlined the background and goals of Tangaza University College (TUC), the location of the study, as well as the composition and backgrounds of the students, the subject of the research. One of its main features that require unpacking is the SLM under whose umbrella the pastoral care programme functions. It is in this context that the problem of unease in the experiences of some of the students accruing from unhealthy interplay between their Christian faith and some elements of the traditional African cultural beliefs and practices was detected. That experience gripped my interest to better understand how these elements of traditional culture manifest in the lives of the students and how best the pastoral care givers could help the affected students to get in touch with their experiences and work through them.

Further reflection made it apparent that this study would involve examination of a range of literatures: a study of the conceptual underpinnings of the practice of pastoral care at Tangaza which concerns looking at the understanding of pastoral care generally and specifically in Roman Catholicism; the relationship between theological, spiritual and psychological traditions; a study of traditional African practices and beliefs and their place in contemporary Africa; and a study of different theological approaches to the relationship between Christianity and indigenous beliefs found amongst both students and carers. One of the major literatures thus surveyed reviews the main elements of traditional African culture, especially world-view. This is critical to this study because of the crucial role that culture plays in people's lives at an unconscious level, a task that will be elaborated on in chapter two. However, in this introductory chapter only literature on pastoral care, the arena in which the issue occurs and the study is underpinned, will be treated. The rest of the chapter will survey the college with a view to situating the study on a historical and functional platform.

Locating the study: TUC - history and nature

This study is located in Tangaza University College, a Roman Catholic institution of higher learning in Nairobi, Kenya. The college, a constituent of the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA), was founded twenty-seven years ago by a group of Roman Catholic male

religious congregations with a desire to pool resources in the training for ordination to ministerial priesthood. The original group of congregations set up a *Theological Centre of Religious* in 1986 and the college became a constituent of CUEA in 1997 (Tangaza College Student Handbook 2011-2012, p. 13). Currently the institution's consortium comprises twenty two religious corporate member congregations.

From the on-set the focus of the college was ministerial training as well as formation for religious life in preparation for service in the context of the Church in Africa (Tangaza College Student Handbook, 2011-2012, p. 7). The motto of the college, *Tangaza Fumbo la Imani*, Kiswahili for "Proclaim the mystery of faith," aptly captures its ethos and is the spirit underlying all programmes and activities. The Roman Catholic Church's option for the poor finds expression in the deliberate choice to locate a lot of the students' experiential work in the many slums in Nairobi and among other marginalised communities, especially in the dry parts of northern and north-eastern Kenya.

Over the years six institutes have either been affiliated or established as integrated institutes of the college, thus bringing into one campus women and men from different walks of life and training for different professional roles. These include education, African studies, social work, work with youth, media, spirituality and religious formation, leadership and management - all of them with a ministerial underpinning. The student body has thus changed dramatically to include religious and lay women and men, ranging in age from the early twenties to the late thirties, from several African countries, with a handful from Latin America, India, the Philippines and Eastern Europe. The majority, however, come from Kenya.

The vision of the college is to become a centre for learning and of "…holistic human formation directed towards the promotion of the Gospel values and academic excellence in a multi-cultural context" (Tangaza College Student Handbook 2011-2012, p. 16). As such, ministerial education is at the core of all courses as the college mission is to embrace the world by training and forming ministers who will provide exemplary service wherever they are missioned.

It is to meet the psychological and spiritual needs of these students, now numbering just over 1200 that the administration set up a Student Life Department under whose umbrella the Student Life Ministry operates. The services provided by the SLM, have evolved over the years and currently comprise psychological counselling, spiritual direction and a chaplaincy. For the purpose of this study I will refer to this service as pastoral care though there is no official blue-print naming it as such. The administration considers the pastoral service so essential that it has opened it to all the students at no extra cost to them. Identities of the carers are publicised throughout the college and any of the bona fide students who may require any of the services can access them by making arrangements with the concerned person. The actual number of providers is never constant but an effort is always made to ensure student needs are adequately met by adjusting the contractual hours of the pastoral carers.

In terms of backgrounds the providers are drawn from a wide variety that includes men and women, lay and religious brothers and sisters as well as priests. Several nationalities including Africans, Europeans, Americans, Asians and Australians comprise the pastoral team, all of them trained in either counselling, spiritual direction or in both. Since the backgrounds of the providers vary greatly, so do their work approaches: in counselling there are those who espouse a more pastoral, didactic approach while others have purely secular training. Variations also occur in their spiritual orientations although all of them are Roman Catholics. They thus bring to their work formation and training in some of the major spiritualities within the Church, such as the Benedictine, the Franciscan, the Carmelite, the Dominican, and the Ignatian traditions. These carers are contracted to provide a certain number of hours of service on a weekly basis the intention being to ensure that the students have access to any of the services whenever they need them during the working week, that is, between Monday and Saturday morning. Differences occur in relation to how they encounter the clients with some of the providers operating on the basis of an open-door policy while most prefer prior appointments. Encounters take place in well laid-out rooms discreetly located in one wing of the main college block.

Composition and backgrounds of the students

As mentioned above the bulk of the students in Tangaza College come from sub-Saharan African countries and the study was thus focused on that part of the continent. They comprise

religious women and men and a few ordained priests from over one hundred religious/missionary congregations (Tangaza College Handbook, 2012, p. 5), as well as a growing presence of lay students. While the majority are between the early twenties and late thirties, an increasing number of older men and women are enrolling with a view to acquiring university education that had eluded them before. The older students coming from a wide cross-section of careers and work situations bring a wealth of knowledge and experience from years of work in different capacities and fields. Most of the students are third or fourth generation Roman Catholics but the college is open to all or no religious affiliations. A few, however, may actually be first generation Christians. Tangaza College graduates are to be found in all parts of Africa and beyond where they minister as teachers, priests, social transformers, youth animators, media personnel and in religious houses where they serve as formators - according to the training and formation they have received.

Mention needs to be made of the fact that the religious men and women will, in addition to any courses taken at Tangaza College, have had several years of spiritual formation and training by their different congregations, ranging from a few years to over a decade in some cases. The formation is mainly comprised of courses in various aspects of the Christian faith as practised in the Roman Catholic Church, deepening of the understanding of scriptures, courses on the teachings of Church fathers and mothers, especially the founder(s) of the particular congregations, training in prayer, courses in human development - all meant to ground them as members of the congregations and as pastoral instruments. Some of them will have served in ministry for several years prior to college entry. Their congregations send them back to school to increase their knowledge in the different professional fields offered. According to the Formation Council that brings together formators from all the represented congregations, a major reason for sending the young people to TUC is to enhance their on-going formation as religious men and women (Informal conversations with some members on diverse dates).

Locating myself
It was into this context that I entered when I joined the college in 2002 after nearly twenty years of work in high school education. The main reason for the move was the possibility of practising counselling and spiritual direction ministries, which I had acquired training in a few years before and for which there was not much scope in secondary schools. Though

entering the field as a practising Roman Catholic, I had had a strong rooting in the tradition of the Scottish Presbyterian faith. This is an important point to make because my faith formation and cultural background had imbued me with a strong antipathy for many of the African cultural beliefs and practices. My background had ingrained in me an understanding that Christians did not acknowledge most of the elements of African traditional beliefs and practices which were viewed as contrary to Gospel values. One can thus appreciate the difficulty I faced when I began to suspect that some of the issues surfacing in counselling and in spiritual direction emanated from such beliefs and practices. Casual discussions with colleagues in the SLM confirmed my suspicions but did not help much because no one seemed to show much interest in this phenomenon or know how best to work with students presenting such issues.

With time it became clearer that some of our clients were affected by deeply embedded issues of African traditional culture that did not, however, easily surface. The question these encounters raised for me was how pastoral carers, that is, counsellors, spiritual guides and the chaplains - could learn to detect the existence of such tensions and help those affected get in touch with, reflect on and resolve them. A good number of the carers reported to never have encountered those problems, prompting me to suspect that probably the issues were mentioned only in situations that enhanced great freedom and safety to delve into what had largely remained an inadequately explored and sensitive territory. Thus the element of helpers' attitude began to appear as critical in the study. Of greater importance was the question of how the students should handle the issues once they became aware of them: how would they reconcile them with their Judeo-Christian faith? The need to explore the phenomenon to understand it better, that is, to establish what elements of African cultural practices caused tension, how they manifested and how best to overcome the tension, could not be wished away.

Review of literature

Identifying this pastoral need and how to respond to it has necessitated a review of a variety of literatures. In this chapter I have reviewed the relevant literatures in the field of pastoral care and practical and pastoral theology. There is a strong inter-face between psychology and spirituality in this study hence the works of seminal writers in that field will be examined in order to guide my own thoughts and experiences. Above all I have remained close to the

model established by Jesus, the Good Shepherd and pastoral carer *par excellence*, who came to confer life in all its fullness (Jn. 10: 10).

Definition of terms

Before discussing the pastoral care literature that the study is anchored on, I need to clarify a number of terms and show how they have been used.

Pastoral theology

Although in many circles, the terms practical and pastoral theology are interchangeable, the term practical theology is often not used in Roman Catholic circles, the common name being pastoral theology which denotes the practice of theology as happens in ministry. Of recent origin in Roman Catholic literature, the term pastoral theology in the pre-conciliar period used to refer to a seminary course which involved some of the issues the priest was likely to face. Hence the course tended to lean heavily on techniques for solving problems and the role of pastoral care was linked with teaching which involves preaching on Sundays; giving catechetical instructions; ministering the sacraments; shepherding which involves problem solving and guiding. Clerical training was supposed to prepare the priests for all these roles which have kept changing as society has evolved. Indeed according to Mullin, "…pastoral theology is a science, and its methods are continually changing to suit the conditions of the age" (1965, p. 41). It needs to be revised and re-written for every generation.

However, although the term may be relatively recent, the practice of pastoral theology has existed since the beginning of the Church and is rooted in scripture as seen in some of the instructions Jesus gave to his Apostles on how to care for people (Matt 10:6; Mk 6: 8; Lk 9:3; 10:4; 22:35). In his letters to Timothy and Titus, Paul instructed them on how to conduct their ministry. Down the ages such instructions were given by the Church fathers and mothers from St. Ignatius of Antioch (110 AD), St. Cyprian (248), St. Gregory the Great (590), St. Chrysostom (623), St. Isidore of Seville, St. Bernard, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Bonaventure, St. John of the Cross, St. Alphonsus Liguori (1759), Pope Benedict X1V and many others. In more recent times letters by various other popes have also sought to instruct on how to care for God's people. Tradition and the magisterium of the Church have been the other sources of pastoral practice down the centuries.

Pastoral theology is particularly explicit in the Gospels that portray Jesus as the good shepherd, modelling how to care for people. This view is invigorated by decrees of general councils, of provincial councils, diocesan synods and bishops' letters. Currently the role of priests, in addition, involves managing parishes and all that appertains to them, including the church, schools, organizations of lay people, caring for the youth, the sick and the old. Understood this way pastoral care was seen as mainly the role of ordained ministers. However, it is noteworthy that pastoral theology and ministry in Roman Catholicism are getting increasingly laicised especially in the Western world due to priest shortage. It has been accepted that no matter who carries it out, there is only one apostolate – the apostolate of the Church which comprises carrying on with the work of Christ. Indeed, as Schofield and Juliano put it, all Christians are called to ministry by virtue of their baptism (1987). Karl Rahner takes it even further when he asserts that Christians are apostles wherever they go and whatever they may be involved in (1966). He views pastoral theology as encompassing not only the work done by priests but all that is done in the name of the Church and its saving mission. His incarnational view is that whatever is done to advance human life according to divine plan is contributing to the work of the Church. As such, pastoral theology must be contextual and informed by the signs of the times, responding to "historical immediacy" (1966, p. 9). It is this understanding that has become the bedrock of local theologies like liberation theology, feminist theology, black theology, Asian theology and African theology (1966, p. 15).

According to Sweeney et al (2010), current Catholic pastoral theology is etched in the Second Vatican Council, especially Gaudium et Spes (Flannery, 1975). It implies a way of doing theology pastorally; a place where religious belief, tradition and practice meet contemporary issues and experiences and dialogue with them. It is the practice of theology that deals with living out the faith. It seeks to join theory with practice. The focus is to connect doctrine and morality with actual life in its context, whether the context is modernity or traditional cultures. In Lumen Gentium V (Flannery, 1975), the Church acknowledged a call to holiness for all peoples and in Pope John Paul II's understanding, the essence of pastoral care is precisely that – leading people to holiness. It is the application of all branches of theology to the ministry of caring for souls and for their salvation. Robert Schreiter puts it succinctly:

Pastoral theology is the site where the Church lives out its beliefs; it is the point where discipleship and following in the way of Christ is at its most evident and at its most urgent (In Sweeney et al, 2010, p. 64).

The above notwithstanding, Catholic pastoral theology is amorphous, including fields such as ministry, moral theology, spirituality, liturgy, catechesis among others.

The relevance of Catholic pastoral theology to this study is that the research is essentially a piece of pastoral theology. It examines particular aspects of the practice of pastoral care in a Roman Catholic institution, as it is exercised by a team of ordained, religious and lay people. It seeks to understand what it means to help Roman Catholic students living in the complex post-colonial environment of contemporary Kenya to live out their faith.

Practical theology

Protestant Scottish theologians, Swinton and Mowat (2006) define practical theology as critical theological reflection on human works and actions done on behalf of the Church in the world for the redemption of humanity. It embodies elements such as practices that are performed by Christians who take their human encounter with God seriously, that is, they see faith as expressed in actions as long as the actions adhere closely to the Gospel message as revealed by Jesus Christ, in doctrine or in the Traditions of the faith. They see practical theology as emanating from God and his revelation in Christ: it is a human response to that revelation.

However, as the message interacts with various cultures and periods, it becomes new. They state that practical theology emanates from and concerns itself with an intricate web of human experiences and inter-relationships. While conceding that human experience is not a source of revelation, they argue that practical theology seeks to examine the proposition that faith and the Gospel must be lived not merely believed. It acknowledges human experience as a "place" where the Gospel finds grounding, life and interpretation. In addition if we believe as scripture says that the Holy Spirit works among people then we acknowledge that it is possible to decipher the voice of God in human actions.

As such practical theology starts with reflection on human experience in particular contexts not in abstractions. It takes God's work among people seriously; it assumes Christian activities are meaningful and deserve honest enquiry for them to remain faithful to the message of revelation. The discipline is prepared to challenge accepted norms, that is, utilize human experience to raise questions of scripture and traditions of the Church in order to arrive at different and better understanding of scripture that leads to more faithful living of divine revelation. The discipline is basically theological despite appearances to the contrary, even when, as often happens, it utilizes other disciplines.

Swinton and Mowat (2006) argue that all of humanity lives in a world created by God and whether conscious of it or not, they all participate in the unfolding of God's story of creation. They see no ontological separation between the practices of the Church and those of the world as both occur within the world created by God and are both integral parts of his redemptive work.[1] Like the rest of the world, Christians often fail to meet God's expectations of them and thus are similar to and are united with the world. Having said that, however, the authors distinguish the Church from the world because the former recognizes the significance of the world as creation; recognizes the need for redemption; acknowledges Jesus and seeks to live out that recognition.

Seeking the truth is another important purpose of practical theology. While acknowledging sin and sinfulness in individuals and in the world, the practical theologian assumes that truth is available and strives to find it and understand how this can be lived out. He or she appraises a situation so as to reflect on it critically in light of scripture and subjects emerging practices and experiences to further exploration and critique. While showing the world as fragmented practical theology points to deep connections with the wider system of theological knowledge, thus creating conversation between itself and other theological disciplines.

In similar vein, the Baptist theologian, Paul Ballard, sees practical theology as beginning with real life situations in particular places and times in history which require reflecting on,

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[1] This is Swinton's and Mowat's view, but other traditions would see God being revealed in human experience, for example, Elaine Graham.

assessing and acting upon. It enables the practitioner to draw upon the practical life of the Church and theology in its different forms to bring to life in word and actions the Christian reality. He concludes that theology is "...essentially practical, at the service of the community" (2000, p. 29).

However, the English practical theologian, Stephen Pattison (2007) cautions against the temptation of using anachronistic ideas: Pastoral theologians need to keep in touch with developments in the various disciplines that they make use of. He also advises that they consult widely or confine themselves to a particular lens to ensure they remain true to their theological grounding and avoid going "native." He cautions them to use the human sciences carefully so that while gaining insights from them they do not compromise their identity. The locus of practical theology is not necessarily Church practices but more among Christians thus embraces the world. It examines the interplay between both sets of practices in a special way. Moreover, practical theology helps the practitioners to understand situations better as they engage people in a non-judgmental way, an absolute necessity if change is to occur. Thus one of its critical features is to invite practitioners to engage in theological reflection of their practices.

The relevance of the discussion of the nature of practical theology to this study is the framework it provides for paying detailed attention to the pastoral care offered at Tangaza and reflecting on it in the light of the theological tradition and other relevant disciplines. The importance of the dialogue between psychology and spirituality for understanding the practice of pastoral care at Tangaza will be outlined below; the questions raised by the practice of pastoral care for the understanding of inculturation will be discussed in chapter two.

Pastoral care

Pastoral care is an old concept but one that can be variously understood. The biblical connotation has always associated pastoral care with shepherding the flock, looking after the people of God, protecting, tending, strengthening, encouraging, refreshing, restoring, comforting, guiding, leading by example and such other activities that people need in their pursuit of holiness and wholeness (Ps. 78, 52, 23).

In Protestant circles a great deal has been written about pastoral care. Howard Clinebell – a key systematiser of types of pastoral care within the western tradition - identifies pastoral care with the work of Christian churches and some elements of problem solving (1984, pp. 25-26). However, he adds other dimensions like empowerment, growth, mutuality (not a giver and taker scenario), inclusivity and the fact that some care may be required at different points throughout life.

A broader definition that views pastoral care as the element of ministry of the Church that is concerned with the well-being of individual persons and of communities comes from the Scottish theologian, Alistair Campbell (1987). This definition encompasses all human needs and includes the wider society which certainly impacts individual well-being and resonates with my work in TUC.

Pattison (1988) gives pastoral care a different twist. He calls it "…that activity, undertaken especially by representative Christian persons directed towards the elimination and relief of sin and sorrow and the presentation of all people perfect in Christ to God." Clearly, this view is very heavily spiritual and may even be considered unclear in certain aspects as pointed out by the Ghanaian theologian, Emmanuel Lartey (1997 p. 3). How possible is the elimination of sin and what does it mean to present "…all people perfect in Christ…"?

In what he terms models of pastoral care, Lartey (2003) outlines some of the major functions undertaken by the carers. These include therapy/professional counselling that is undertaken in order to restore emotional/psychological health and either natural/human or supernatural means may be applied depending on the orientation of the recipient. Pastoral care is also viewed as a ministry in which the providers have been specifically trained and commissioned to operate on behalf of a body, mainly a church. They may be involved in proclaiming, teaching, performing acts of service, fellowship with those they serve and administration/management and worship. He identifies pastoral care as social action directed particularly to unjust political and social structures, seen as prophecy to them. Pastoral carers, like Jesus, particularly identify with the poor, the marginalized and the oppressed, and should be at the forefront in advocating for equitable distribution of resources. A very important element of pastoral care is empowerment, meaning that the carers strive to draw out and develop the resources that people and communities have for the good of all. They provoke the

marginalized and the oppressed to ask questions about their situation and by so doing, create an awareness of their plight and get them to begin thinking about what they could do to change things. In addition, Lartey (2003) sees pastoral care as personal interaction through which people are assisted to change negative thoughts, feelings and behaviours through either individual or group counselling.

Building on the work of Clebsch and Jaekle (1967), he singles out several functions of pastoral care all of which resonate with our work in TUC as follows: healing that entails spiritual, psychological and emotional restoration; guiding; liberating/freeing from unnecessary burdens; nurturing people to grow in all dimensions; reconciling.

In SLM at Tangaza, the pastoral care team is divided between spiritual direction, counselling and chaplaincy services. Each of these services is directed, however, towards the healing, guiding, liberating, nurturing and reconciling outcomes outlined here. Of particular importance to this study is the relationship between the spiritual and psychological.

Interface between spirituality and psychology

As indicated above pastoral care in TUC encompasses psychological and spiritual dimensions and for that reason it is necessary to outline the ways in which I view the two as intersecting. In my practice and that of others within the pastoral care service in the college, there is an assumption that psychology and spirituality can both be served through counselling and spiritual direction, and that these services are compatible for bringing wholeness.

The relationship between the human dimensions of spirituality and psychology is as old as human history and every generation has addressed it with different outcomes. The earliest connections between the two related to the understanding of the basic human emotions such as fear and anger emanating from threats posed by natural phenomena such as hostile weather conditions, death and wild animals. Competition for food, for sexual partners and anxiety over the need to protect the young are factors that have caused emotional stress since the beginning of the earliest human societies. The mental conditions produced by such experiences were initially linked to non-human forces – evil spirits as testified by early cave paintings, which display efforts by the dwellers to ward off or exorcise these malevolent forces. Consequently societies have myths and legends that attempt to explain the genesis of

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suffering which in ancient times was invariably given supernatural origins. The Greeks attributed mental illness to the colour of blood while in the middle ages in Europe, psychopathology was linked to possession either by demons or by divine spirits. Pain and suffering were seen as punishment from God or the gods. In traditional Africa all life, animate and inanimate, is interpreted from a spiritual perspective.

From a historical viewpoint, the nature of Christian pastoral care itself has been largely influenced by the prevailing political and scientific circumstances and thus definite trends are traceable in different periods. William Clebsch and Charles Jaekle (1967 pp. 13-31) have identified eight epochs with specific characteristics. In the primitive church the practice of pastoral care was mainly geared towards sustaining the faith of the early Christians in the face of the many odds they encountered. The rallying call was the imminent return of Jesus for which all should be prepared. The second phase was marked by persecution by the Romans which lasted until the end of the 4th century. The thrust of pastoral care was reconciling the people with God and the church. With the conversion of Emperor Constantine and the end of persecution, the main need was to help Christians to steer away from pagan beliefs and practices that were sneaking into the mainstream. During the Dark Ages when Christianity was assailed by pagan invaders the church saw its main role as teaching to ensure the faithful were not misled. Care in Medieval Christendom was characterised by stress on the sacraments to heal whatever assailed the Christians. Reconciliation became the mainstay of care during the periods of the Renaissance and the Reformation while the Enlightenment saw renewed effort to guide the Christians away from the many pitfalls that beset them. Pastoral care in the last two centuries has taken a broader form as Christianity increasingly became a world religion and stress was placed on values from personal conviction.

One of the major effects of the Scientific and Industrial Revolutions in Europe was the subjection of illness, including psychological stress, to scientific study that replaced magic and spirits in both diagnosis and treatment. According to Graham (1996) the middle of the 19th century also saw a trend towards diminishing clerical status and reduction in church attendance among the middle class. One of the strategies used to uplift the standing of the clerics in a changing society included trying to make their work appear scientific. Consequently attempts were made in both the USA and Britain to show the scientific basis of pastoral work. Thus by the end of the century the need for Christian pastors to become aware

of and respond to the prevailing social climate had been accepted. This search for empiricism particularly drove many to dialogue with the emergent psychological theories whose tenets were seen as generally not opposed to Christianity, thus ushering in a new phase in the relationship between spirituality and psychology.

However, it was not until the late 19th and early 20th centuries that systematic scientific study, diagnosis and treatment of psychological stress began to be widely used with the coming of Freudian psychotherapy. The new scientific understanding of the working of the human psyche posed a major challenge to the way Christianity explained human life and the way the church cared for its followers. Different responses ensued, one of which was to engage psychology in a dialogue, taking advantage of the new insights into the human psyche but remaining true to one's faith tradition and practices. Some of the pioneers of the psycho-spiritual dialogue include the American pastor, Washington Gladden, who as early as 1891, was urging colleagues to work with the medical profession. There were also psychologists who proposed cooperation with religion, thus an expansive arena involving many professionals was launched on both sides of the Atlantic. Out of this conversation emerged the concept of pastoral counselling that encompassed theological and psychological underpinnings of the human person.

The best known trailblazers of this development include Elwood Worcester who in 1906 established the Emmanuel Movement; Anton Boisen the first pastoral theologian to take students to a psychiatric ward for experience in Massachusetts in 1925, thus pioneering clinical pastoral training which has become commonplace. With his psychiatrist collaborator, Richard Cabot, they laid the foundation for the Clinical Pastoral Education movement (Graham, 1996). In the United Kingdom Leslie Weatherhead, in the 1930s and 40s, set the trend both in his practice as a pastor in Leeds and through the caring ministry he managed in London with others who shared his views of the connection between soul and mind (Clebsch and Jaekle, 1967). It is important to note that this relationship between psychology and spirituality was neither straightforward nor in total agreement: divergent views always prevailed, often coloured by the backgrounds of the proponents as well as the prevailing social situation.

The Rogerian client-centred counselling model (1951) easily resonated with the foundational Christian call for love of neighbour and was thus embraced by many pastoral carers in the 1950s and 1960s. Extreme views advocating less dialogue, however, prevailed in this period. Nevertheless, the desire to remain true to their faith endured and resulted in extensive writing that sought to critically examine the connection between psychology and spirituality. Whitehead used psychoanalysis to diagnose and Christian principles for treatment (Roger Hurding, 1985, p. 218). He considered humans as basically good but in need of forgiveness and release from their jealousies and resentments. He was opposed to the Christian teaching of Christ dying to atone for sin. For him the aim of pastoral counselling is to attain "personal integrity" or "individuation" which entails "…restoring the broken harmony which prevents personality, at any point of body, mind and spirit, from its perfect functioning in its relevant environment; the body in the material world; the mind in the realm of true ideas and the spirit in its relationship with God" (p. 219 citing Weatherhead, 1955). He suggests that mental health can only be attained by being right with God, with fellow humans and with the cosmos. "…God's love can often be made tangible through caring human contact" (p. 219). Others who followed in his footsteps include Bill Kyle who was scathingly critical of Freud's theory and founded the Westminster Pastoral Foundation in 1970. Though the centre continues to give sound courses in clinical work, the religious overtones envisaged by Kyle seem to have been eclipsed (Hurding, 1985, p. 226).Writing in 1983, Peter Liddel, director of pastoral counselling in the diocese of St Albans made a succinct comment:

> …the whole exciting tradition of psychoanalytic and humanistic thinking is available to the pastoral counsellor to accept, reject and refine. On the whole, from the 1920s through to the early 1970s there seems to have been more 'accepting' and 'rejecting' than 'refining' of secular insights by the Church. We have noted a strong tendency to 'accept' within the liberalism of many in the pastoral counselling movement (Cited in Hurding, 1985, p. 227).

Hurding (1985) reports that despite some sharp criticism from certain quarters, Boisen's Clinical Pastoral Education movement in the USA thrived and some of its students like Rollo May, Seward Hiltner, Russell Dicks, Wayne Oates researched and arrived at different understandings of pastoral counselling, i. e. the psychology of religion, the chaplaincy and education movement, and traditional pastoral counselling by the 1960s. As the secular psychologies were gaining popularity in the USA one of their main critics in the 1950s was Hobart Mowrer. He saw pastoral counselling as cheapening God's redemptive work and

diminishing the responsibility that individuals should bear for their wrong doing. Others like Thomas Szasz, Jay Adams, Paul Vitz and William Kilpatrick in the 1970s and 80s continued to critique the accommodation of faith and psychology. Kilpatrick in particular did a lot of work which has increased his antipathy for the use of psychology in pastoral counselling. He argued that the humanistic theories have led to self-worship, that eliminates the need for God, what Hurding (1985) refers to as "…God-denying man-centeredness…idolatrous narcissism…" in which God and fellow humans are of no account and suffering to be avoided at all cost (p. 230). Seeing psychology and Christianity as competing religions, Kilpatrick called for a return to true Christian faith which unlike the egoism advocated by humanistic psychology upholds a self-love based on divine love extended to neighbour in humble service. He and Vitz called for a return to Christian orthodoxy. While agreeing that moderation in building self esteem is called for, I hold a different view. True self-love is not proud but effacing as displayed by Mary, the mother of Jesus, who knew herself to be a lowly handmaid but on hearing Elizabeth's greeting, was not shy of proclaiming that because of what God had done for her, all generations would call her "blessed" (Lk 1: 48-49). That is healthy self-esteem.

In the 1980s some work was done to bridge the divide between psychology and Christianity as opposed to the polarizing attitudes of the earlier period as a lot of misunderstanding was seen as emanating from the lack of clarity in the terms used by both disciplines. Quite often the same terms were being used by both but with differing meanings. In addition psychology was criticized for its reductionism and Christianity for appearing to react from paranoia. That attitude was itself criticized for failing to recognize that both science and religion have unique domains in which each reigns supreme, though for Christians the bible is nevertheless pre-eminent. Gary Collins advanced the debate by attacking the main tools and exposing what he considered to be flaws of experimental and clinical psychology. His conclusion was that both disciplines could gain by coming closer and working together (Cited in Hurding, 1985, p. 237). One of the best known successes of such collaboration has found expression in the world-known therapeutic model followed by Alcoholics Anonymous whose success depends on a blending of psychological and deeply spiritual insights.

It thus becomes clear that despite hostility from some quarters to the dialogue between spirituality and psychology, some leading pastoral counsellors have always advocated the

synergies between the two disciplines. A good example is David Lyall who combines insights from theology and psychology, with reference especially to the works of Carl Gustav Jung (1995). I find him helpful because he articulates many viewpoints with which I concur from my experience in personal therapy and working with the students in TUC. As an ordained minister of the Church of Scotland, he brings a rich pastoral experience and valuable insights spanning over forty years in parish ministry, in hospital chaplaincy and in academe as a university lecturer in practical theology. In addition to his theological education he has had training in psychoanalysis and pastoral counselling, though he maintains he is "not a counsellor but rather a minister who uses counselling skills as part of his ministry" (Lyall, 2001, p. xiv).

Particularly useful are Lyall's (2001) insights into the main schools of psychotherapy which he mines to tease out those of their elements that may inform work in spirituality. He argues that Sigmund Freud, despite rejecting religion as an illusion, has made a major impact in the practice of pastoral care. He points out that while rejecting many of Freud's propositions, a number of leading pastoral carers like Oscar Pfizer, J. G. McKenzie, Leslie, D. Weatherhead and Harry Gunttrip benefitted by learning that advice-giving is not an effective counselling technique. Freudian psychoanalytic theory is based on the therapeutic effect from gaining insight into the root cause of pathology. Freud gave counsellors a better understanding of the human psyche and this new knowledge helped to improve their effectiveness. My experience closely resonates with this view. However, I do feel that while knowledge of psychodynamic theory can enrich pastoral counselling, psychoanalysis is not suitable for pastoral care mainly because of its focus on deep pathology, lengthy duration and the extensive training required for psychotherapists which most pastoral carers may not have. That renders it untenable for many, certainly not suitable for the practice in TUC.

Carl Gustav Jung (1933) is the other psychoanalyst whose tremendous contribution to counselling I find relevant to pastoral care generally and to this study in particular. Jung is more widely accepted in Christian, particularly Roman Catholic, circles. Of particular importance to our practice at Tangaza is his insight into the need for complete openness for effective therapy. Jung (1933) suggested that clients will not improve unless they are accepted without judgement, heralding the conclusions reached and popularized three decades later by Carl Rogers (1953). Jung stated that clients do not disclose their deeply-

seated problems unless they experience complete non-judgemental acceptance lack of which blocks therapy.

> …the patient does not feel himself accepted until the very worst of him is accepted too. No one can bring this about by mere words; it comes only through the doctor's sincerity and through his attitude towards himself and his own evil side (p. 239).

He adds that only a spiritual person will have that attitude borne out of the realization that God can and does work in all kinds of situations. Psychopathology, Jung continued, results from lacking in authenticity and healing comes from personal acceptance/integration modelled in the counselling relationship. "Neurosis is an inner cleavage – the state of being at war with oneself" (1933, p. 242).

The well-known Roman Catholic theologian, Henri Nouwen, concurs, adding that pastoral carers need to have such an experience themselves for their work to be effective.

> Only when you know yourself as unconditionally loved – that is fully received – by God can you give gratuitously. You cannot give yourself to others if you do not own yourself and you can only truly own yourself when you have been fully received in unconditional love…You will be a free person, free to love (1996, pp. 55-56).

As I will illustrate below from our practice, a counselee who has been empowered in this way may feel free enough to enter even what would have otherwise been a psychological and spiritual no-go zone due to shame, embarrassment and fear of rejection. Lyall (1995) sees a very central way in which spirituality and psychology intersect captured by the need to offer unconditional acceptance/love to disturbed minds. By so doing the counsellor conveys acceptance by the Transcendent and this brings peace/grace, an idea echoed by Nouwen. A life after death can only be thought of in terms of life before it, and nobody can dream of a new earth when there is no old earth to hold any promises (1996, p. 14). Human compassion should mirror divine compassion for it to be effective.

> …insofar as he is able to make the compassion of God with man – which is visible in Christ – credible in his own world (1996, pp. 40-41). Counsellors will only be able to do that if they have been touched…by Him whose heart is greater than ours (1996, p. 91).

Another very useful contribution to the debate comes from Carl Rogers' non-directive approach based on what he termed as "necessary and sufficient" conditions for successful counselling, namely counsellor genuineness or authenticity or congruence, unconditional positive regard and the ability to experience and communicate accurate empathy clearly (1995, pp. 13-17). The counsellor attributes closely resemble the Christian love for neighbour that forms the bedrock for pastoral counselling and are therefore essential for successful outcomes. Nouwen holds similar views and adds the need for total mutuality which enables the pastoral counsellor to stand on the platform of: "My strength is your strength…Your pain is my pain, your weakness my weakness, your sin is my sin" (1969, p. 29), without uttering any of those words, I add, and still remain separate. Only through fully experiencing their own pain and processing it can pastoral counsellors get to such a point; become fully empathic as "wounded healers" (Nouwen, 1979). Referring to his experience of a hospital stay, here marks how being treated with dignity and respect by total strangers gave him a deep sense of security and at-homeness, the kind that makes pastoral counselling effective (1998, pp. 147-8). My own involvement in pastoral care is borne out of a similar encounter of full and liberating acceptance that opened me to God's unconditional love, an experience that has shaped my entire pastoral approach.

In support of this view Rowan Williams, the recently retired Archbishop of Canterbury, states:

> God's grace makes people fully human…The gift of the spirit brings relationship with God and with fellow humans and where there are relationships, people are well. Flesh becomes a living, productive body, part of the Body of Christ. Where there are no relationships, however, there is emptiness, unspiritual, lifeless flesh or desert-like conditions exist which cannot produce or give life; there is no spark; there is death (Cited in Baxter, 2007, p. 4).

Williams argues that in the gospel narratives we read about Jesus healing by taking pain and infirmity away and always restoring relationships through "…bridging of a gulf between flesh and spirit" (Baxter, 2007, p. 6). As indicated above, Williams associates sickness with some element of alienation or estranged relationships so restoration is at the core of Christ's healing ministry (Baxter, 2007). Once the people Jesus encountered were healed they were inhabited by the Holy Spirit as indicated by their new-found love, gratitude, joy, community, service or discipleship.

That stance was questioned by Paul Tillich who argued that human beings are devious and that no counsellor could create adequate atmosphere for self-actualization (Lyall, 1995, p. 15). On the contrary, Rogers (1967, cited in Lyall, 1995, p. 15) contends that people have a basically positive direction. When they are sensitively understood and accepted as separate persons in their own right, they tend to move in particular directions, directions that are "…positive, constructive, moving toward self-actualization, growing toward maturity, growing toward socialization" (Lyall, 1995, pp. 26-27). Tillich did acquiesce that "…the acceptance experienced in a human relationship was a prelude to an awareness of being accepted within 'the dimension of the Ultimate'" (cited in Lyall, 1995, p.16), thus raising the value of human love an octave higher as proposed by Nouwen above. However, counsellors will be able to communicate such therapeutic acceptance only if they have had a deep experience of the same (Lyall,1995, p. 100). My personal experience alluded to above is testimony to that: a personal experience of complete acceptance opens one to the love by the Ultimate.

The theological underpinning of the Rogerian model is captured by the realization of the greatest command - love for God and for neighbour, summed up in unconditional positive regard which frees counselees to become their true selves. I see it as the "perfect love" that scripture says drives out fear (Jn. 4: 18[b]). It is this kind of love that is needed to free the students at TUC to delve into the psycho-spiritual world of traditional African beliefs and practices when the need arises. Of this kind of love, Hunsinger (2006) says it: "…create(s) a bridge of understanding…There is a divine drama hidden in each person's story that cries out to be heard" (p. 52). It is this conviction that we all need in our practice, a conviction that the ever-communicating God is saying something to the counselee through the doubts and confusion presented and that we can midwife a new growth. This is because, according to Watts, Nye and Savage (2002), when successfully used, the person-centred approach facilitates a real meeting of souls, allowing the counsellor's spirit to touch that of the counselee, "…and become part of something large, in which a remarkable energy for healing was present" (Citing Thorne, 1998, p. 191). This larger energy can be seen as the grace of God and though this may be debated, my experience supports that view. However, even if the pastoral counsellor's efforts were to fail, her/his stance leaves room for God's grace to act.

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The presentation by Lyall (1995) of the work of Freud, Jung and Rogers has clarified and confirmed my belief that a more articulated understanding of the relationship between spiritual and psychological life would lead to a more holistic and effective pastoral care practice for the students in TUC . It would enrich the practice in the following ways: it would enhance awareness among the counsellors and spiritual directors, especially the non-Africans, about the tensions emanating from traditional African practices and how they manifest. It would lead to more wholesome growth of the young people as African Christians as they become free to be fully in touch with themselves and their cultural inheritance and to name even those of their issues that would otherwise continue to be buried in the subconscious or unconscious mind due to shame and embarrassment. Greater integration of the lives of the students concerned would follow, leading to the development of more mature faith emanating from an honest encounter with beliefs that could rob them of the joy and fullness of life that Jesus came to bestow. In addition, it would greatly help to bridge the traditional African spirituality and Judeo-Christianity of which the students are a part. All our students are supposed to be trained and formed for ministry: encountering their "demons" in such a safe environment would give them the courage to help the people they will minister with to begin facing their own.

It is clear, therefore, that while the practice in TUC is to treat psychological counselling and spiritual direction as separate services the ministries hold a lot in common, a stance that this study has taken on board. Indeed, the opportunity to examine and articulate the relationship between the psychological and spiritual dimensions of our work has in itself been a positive benefit of this study.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the physical and demographic setting of TUC, and has set out the structure and ethos of pastoral care within the college with reference to the literatures of pastoral and practical theology. Definitions of pastoral care and of the relationship between psychological and spiritual dimensions of that care have been attempted in order to name the assumptions and approaches embedded in my work and in the work at Tangaza. Chapter two outlines my research assumptions and as a consequence, surveys the main African cultural beliefs and practices in Kenya/Africa in order to understand what and how these beliefs may be emerging in the pastoral care services at Tangaza.

Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework

Introduction

A number of key concepts are implicit in my practice and reflection upon it. One of the basic tasks of this study is to explore what being African and Christian implies for third and fourth generation, Western-style educated, technologically savvy, young adult Christians. Since Christianity is vital to their personhood it is important for them to reconcile it with traditional culture which is also vital and in which some of them are deeply rooted. In order to arrive at such synthesis, on-going dialogue between any traditional religion and Christianity so as to incarnate the Gospel in the new cultural milieu is called for.

As outlined in chapter one, this study arose out of my experience in TUC working as part of the pastoral care team whose purpose is to help the women and men being formed for ministry in various capacities become effective agents of evangelisation. My experience and that of colleagues in the pastoral care team had showed that some of the students underwent a lot of stress due to conflict between their embedded cultural beliefs and Christian praxis. Hence the need for the pastoral carers to understand the key elements of African culture today and how such tenets can affect the psycho-spiritual health of the young African Christian students was becoming increasingly clear. Underlying all this was the realisation that the sense of personhood experienced by the students, the majority of who are Roman Catholics, is coloured by the same agents of change that have influenced all other Africans in the last one hundred and fifty years (Isichei, 1995; Magesa, 2004).

A part of the call for pastoral carers, it was emerging, is to accompany the students in the task of redrawing psycho-spiritual contours that would help them experience a greater sense of *being*, especially of being the unconditionally loved and accepted *African* and Christian daughters and sons of their immanent Father/Mother. It is necessary for the carers to play the role of helping the young people root their faith in the God of Jesus Christ, the God who is present in all cultures and who makes everything including cultures new (Revelation 21: 5), and on whom alone one should anchor one's life (Hebrews 6: 19). Doing so would be rendering priceless service not only to the students but to the many whose lives they are

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bound to touch through the various ministries they are being trained and formed for. That task rests on several assumptions that form the conceptual framework of the study, namely:

Assumptions

i.   The notion that Christians are invited to an abundance /fullness of life (Jn. 10:10)

The pastoral care programme in TUC falls within the general understanding elaborated on in chapter one. My personal view of the theological rationale of the pastoral care programme is grounded on the desire of Jesus that his followers enjoy an abundance of life: "I came that they may have life and have it to the full" (John 10:10). Laurenti Magesa, the highly respected African Roman Catholic theologian, refers to the same concept as "abundant life" (1997). This is my understanding of what the counsellors, spiritual guides and chaplains hope to mediate with the students who seek out their services and it is the frame of mind with which I operate.

The abundant life Jesus is talking about is a product of his transforming grace received through baptism. All Christians are called to embrace it and it should bring joy, vitality and tranquillity even in the midst of pain, hardships and sorrow. That life will reach fullness in eschatology as Paul put it: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have any entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him" (1 Corinthians 2:9).

Meanwhile Christians are supposed to enjoy the Kingdom that is inherent in their lives though it has not been fully attained. In Jesus through whom all things were made is the fullness of life and being in him should confer deep joy and peace to all in all circumstances so as to give glory to God. As the 3rd century monk, Irenaeus, stated, a person fully alive gives honour and glory to God (D'Ambrossio, 2013). The abundance of life Jesus gives flows from knowing Him well so that one may appreciate His ways and values, as elaborated on in the beatitudes: "Blessed are the poor in spirit…" (Matthew 5: 1-12). It is true that while heaven begins on earth its fullness will be realized in eschatology. This is the abundance Jesus is referring to and any situation that deprives people of such fullness was and would be unacceptable to him. In traditional African life such an abundance of life is the product of being and living in sync with self, with others and with the cosmos (Magesa, 1997).

In the context of pastoral care in TUC, "full" or "abundant life" implies being free from the kind of fears, stress and despondence that accrue from feeling trapped by forces one neither welcomes, understands, nor is able to control. Jesus spent much of his public life working to free people from such forces that manifested through various kinds of diseases, demonic possessions, physical incapacities, legalistic and religious oppressions. He was moved by compassion for all manner of sufferings and un-freedoms which he sought to eliminate (Mk. 6:34; 8:2; Matt. 14:14; 15:32). By so doing he set to free the captives and declared freedom as he had said he would at the onset of his ministry (Lk. 4:18-21). My view of pastoral care is that it is aimed at alleviating psycho-spiritual distress as one way of following in the footsteps of Jesus. In my observation a major source of such stress is the lack of cultural synthesis between Christianity and African traditional culture and the attendant beliefs and practices among some of the students in TUC.

ii. *The stance that spiritual accompaniment fosters such abundant life*

The central purpose of spiritual direction is to foster spiritual growth which plays a major role in engendering general well-being. The term "spiritual direction" has different meanings for different people largely depending on their backgrounds and faith orientations. The model presented below is based on Roman Catholic traditions and generally underscores the practice in TUC.

In the Judeo- Christian tradition the root word, "spirit" is taken to denote the core of human life, a person's innermost being where one is authentically self because that is where one encounters the "Other", the Transcendent One, the living God. Christian spirituality thus implies the relationship one has with self, with others, with the cosmos and with a triune God – lived in a life of hope, faith and love. According to the New Dictionary of Theology, "It is also Trinitarian, Christological and ecclesial religious experience," (Komonchak; Collins and Lane, 1987, p. 982).

For Christians their relationship with God is the core of their lives and as such, psychological health, desirable as it is, leaves a gap that is only filled by a spiritual reality; a growing relationship with God. However, psychological health does prepare the ground on which spirituality may be nurtured. Spiritual growth occurs as people discover their true selves because they also discover God on whom they depend (Komonchak; Collins and Lane 1987).

A close interface between spiritual and psychological health has been identified by many, for instance, the Christian psychologist, Carl Jung, who attributed a lot of neurosis to loss of spiritual living. Of the many people who consulted with him from all over the world and who were aged over 35 years he observed:

> …there has not been one whose problem in the last resort was not that of finding a religious outlook in life. It is safe to say that every one of them fell ill because he had lost that which the living religions of every age have given to their followers, and none of them has been really healed who did not regain his religious outlook (1933, p. 234).

A similar view was articulated by the Roman Catholic theologian, Thomas Merton, who saw very close connection between the development of ego-consciousness and spiritual awakening:

> Since our inmost 'I' is the perfect image of God, then when that 'I' awakens, he finds within himself the Presence of Him Whose image he is. And, by a paradox, beyond all human expression, God and the soul seem to have but one single 'I'. They are (by divine grace) as though one single person. They breathe and live and act as one. 'Neither' of the 'two' is seen as object (Merton, nd, p. 16 cited in Finley, 1978, p. 88).

The American psychologist and theologian, Steven Sandage, claims that healthy spirituality is life-giving while a spirituality that drains life away is often associated with pathology (2006, p. 210).

Spiritual awakening entails consciously responding to God's constant communication and drawing or attraction, to individuals (and to communities) and ordering one's life according to that communication (Barry, 1991) To foster spiritual growth *cura animarum* (cure for souls), today referred to as spiritual guidance/direction, has been practised since the beginning of Christianity (Rossi, 1988). However, unlike other ministries allied to it like pastoral counselling, moral guidance and preaching, spiritual direction assists individuals directly in cultivating and developing their personal relationship with God. It is help given by one Christian to another to enable the directee pay attention to God's communication to him/her, respond to God, grow in her/his personal relationship with God and live according to the unfolding intimacy (Barry and Connolly 1982). This understanding of spiritual guidance is based on the directee's experience of God, what is termed "religious experience" as

manifestation of the growing personal relationship between God and the directee. According to Rossi (1988) religious experience enables a person to touch (be touched?) by the Transcendent and if one opens themselves to that touch, one's life is transformed – one begins to relate differently with both the Creator and with all of creation. Growth in spirituality encompasses all elements of the person – the body-spirit unity; personal transformation; personal experience and it affects the person's entire life. "…it attempts to embrace the totality of a person's existence, including one's relationship with others, with one's work, and with the material world" (Au, 1990, p. 18).

Such an understanding links spiritual growth with every aspect of human growth – psychological, intellectual and interpersonal – all of which are means to honour and glorify God. Wilkie Au (1990), a Jesuit priest and professional counsellor, also argues that grace builds on nature and thus healthy spiritual growth heavily depends on integral human development.

Healthy, sane personality development is the most fertile soil in which grace can take root and grow. Growth in religious life can best happen in the situation which best fosters personal human growth (Leo Rock, 1973 p. 4 cited in Au 1990, p. 20).

In addition nature is itself graced by God who is present in every place and situation, beckoning, encouraging, supporting and guiding. Human growth is thus both secular and sacred, involving both grace and nature. "God is redemptively present in the humanization process," (Au, 1990, p. 20). By availing both counselling and spiritual direction TUC hopes to provide for wholistic growth that undergirds fullness of life.

Spiritual growth has long been viewed as a journey, hence the need for a companion, a fellow traveller with whom the directee can share prayer and life experiences and together they discern, "read the spiritual map," to figure out where the Lord is leading the directee. Very importantly, however, the director and directee realize the real guide is the Holy Spirit who leads people to union with God. They also acknowledge that God works through nature and those committed to seeking union with Him can follow His leading through a human spiritual guide (Culligan, 1982). According to Gerald May the role of a spiritual director is "…a pointing of direction, a setting of environment, a sharing of oneself, and a deep attentiveness

(1997, p. 23 cited in Wallace, 1985). The human director is an instrument of the Master, the Holy Spirit. Understood that way spiritual direction can be viewed as "…the human effort to channel the movement of the Holy Spirit to bring about a deeper orientation of a person to the Father," since its destiny is union with God (Sheets, 1987) In the same way Samuel needed Eli to guide him on how to respond to God's call (1 Sam 3: 1-10) and Paul after his experience on the road to Damascus had God send Ananias to guide him in the new faith(Acts 9: 10-18)

Spiritual direction and psychological counselling have a lot in common and while administered separately in TUC, we recognise that they invariably synergize a great deal as they operate in the same persons. Au argues that spirituality and psychology are closely related and that *authentic religion* is psychologically healthy (my emphasis). "…there is a harmony between faith and reason, between grace and nature, that we recognise there is one author of both, and therefore there can be no contradiction between them" (1990, p.5).

Authentic religious practice does not cause fear and tension but dispels it: indeed it is a source of peace, the peace that Jesus so often wished for his followers.

iii. The belief that professional psychological counselling is appropriate to abundant life for Africans

Closely related though viewed as distinct from spiritual guidance in the pastoral practice in TUC, is the provision of psychological counselling. Couched in different classical Western-style approaches, the service is provided by several trained professionals, local and expatriate, male and female, lay, religious and clerical.

Professional psychological counselling is a relatively new concept in Kenya and Africa generally and therefore is often misunderstood and mistrusted, for example, by many who equate it with psychiatric treatment. As such it tends to be approached with suspicion. A major undertaking for the counsellors in the college is thus to attempt to de-mystify and de-stigmatize the service in the hope that the students will take full advantage availed them. Viewed favourably psychological counselling should be seen as a dynamic relationship that is entered between a trained or qualified person and an individual(s) seeking to gain greater self awareness, improved decision-making and behaviour change skills for problem-solving and

developmental growth. Emphasis is placed on the fact that the counsellor's work is to help the counselees understand or become aware of their issues/problem(s)/needs so that they can bring about the desired changes or make the required choices with the necessary support. The goal of counselling is to achieve better personal adjustment and growth in maturity by stimulating the counselees to exploit their potential and use more of their resources. One important factor we emphasize is that those seeking counselling are normal people who need help to cope with their personal issues/situations or who desire better self-understanding for greater growth and general well-being. Personal changes to be achieved consist mainly of deeper self-knowledge, change of attitude, modification of self perception and the perception of others. The students are assured of absolute confidentiality without which the service would be greatly compromised and would not function. We also find it necessary to disabuse some of the common misconceptions people have about counselling by underlining that it is not:

- A quick fix, instant or magic cure but an engagement in self-exploration.
- A "once-in-a-while" or "touch-and-go" encounter that one chances on. If its benefits are to be reaped, it must be accepted as a process which must be followed up consistently as agreed to by both parties.
- Advice giving.
- Necessarily for finding ready-made solutions to problems though sometimes that happens.

The counselling issues most frequently presented range in intensity from the simple rigour of academic work, relationship tensions, to deeply-seated developmental setbacks that have resulted in low self-esteem and lack of self-confidence, intense anger, wounds of childhood abuse (including sexual abuse), problems surrounding sexuality especially among the celibate men and women, difficulties with authority figures, inability to trust and so on. Some students seek help to cope with major losses including death as well as different kinds of addictions. For me the need for unconditional love and acceptance, empathy and a non-judgmental attitude are prerequisites for psychological and spiritual healing. The counsellors apply any one of the popular therapeutic models or a combination that appears suited to the presenting issue(s). We have also used group counselling successfully particularly in tackling issues of common interest, for example, in January-February 2008 when we found ourselves

at the helm of the healing and reconciliation process in the college necessitated by the inter-ethnic violence that had erupted in some parts of the country after the December 2007 disputed presidential election in Kenya.

The question of suitability or otherwise of Western psychotherapies for non-Westerners is central to this discussion. While some literature that dismisses them as outright inappropriate outside their context exists, a closer examination allows a different conclusion to be drawn. Claims of their irrelevance are hinged on the *assumption* that the African psyche is totally different from that of the Westerners for whom the therapeutic models were developed (Idemudia, 2003; Gichinga, 2007). I call the basis for such a postulation assumed on several grounds: firstly there is no existing empirical proof for it; secondly, as long as the cultural/spiritual values of the clients are respected and taken on board, the Western psychotherapies are reported as producing successful outcomes (Lartey, 1987; Kiriswa, 2002; Read 2007); thirdly as shown below comparative psychological studies are still very tentative and none so far has categorically shown the African psyche as being fundamentally different. What is unquestionably at variance is the context in which the therapy is being conducted and that must always be taken on board by counsellors, including Western psychotherapists working in the West, whatever the composition of their clients. The proposal for reverting to traditional psychotherapies when issues of identity surface, appears untenable mainly because such a past is more romanticised than real today. My clinical experience leads me to question the veracity of the Afrocentric counselling advocated by Idemudia (2003) and Gichinga (2007).

Idemudia (2003) cites the results of a study that has shown a higher dropout and early termination rates among people of African origin, suggesting the unsuitability of the models in personal counselling (citing Stanley Sue, 1992, p. 8. The study compared African-Americans, Americans, Asian-Americans and Hispanics). While attributing the high drop-out rate among the African-Americans to the lack of cultural sensitivity in the Western models, he fails to consider other important variables such as financial constraints and counsellor attitudes. He seeks to support his stance with another study by Sue, Fujino, Hu, Takeuchi and Zane who came to the conclusion that culture sensitive therapy was highly correlated to treatment duration as well as successful outcomes (1991, p.8). What these studies seem to underline is the central role played by the attitude of the counsellor towards the culture/social

environment of the clients, not necessarily the differences in the ethnic psyche, the basis of which their argument stands or falters.

A survey of a number of cross-cultural psychological studies further underscores the point that we should not dismiss Western psychotherapies as inappropriate. Bornstein (1994) showed child-rearing practices in the West as geared more towards development of autonomy while in rural Africa the emphasis is on social relationships (Cited by Berry et. al, 1992, p. 28). Their conclusion was that infants at birth start on fairly uniform ground but due to different experiences some psychological variations begin to occur. Sara Harkness (1992) reports the outcomes of several cross-cultural researches carried out in the recent past which have tested some major psychological theories and which have yielded telling results – they have shown universal as well as cultural variations in human development (pp. 111-115). Dasen (1975) examined Piaget's stages of development and showed that the cognitive "stage" of a child's development is ecologically dependent. The study by Edward (1982) on moral reason showed cultural structuring and Harkness (1987) came to the conclusion that post-partum depression is culture-bound. However, universal patterns were found on studies of infant response to their mothers' departure (Kagan, 1976) and intellectual development among 6 year olds (Super, 1991).

In a major departure, Ruth Monroe, Robert Monroe and Beatrice Whiting (1981) reported the results of a study of 7-13 year olds in North America, the UK and Guatemala to assess their developmental sequences. The results showed no significant differences. Citing Cluckhohn and Morgan they concluded:

> But the facts uncovered in my own field work and that of my collaborators have forced me to the conclusion that Freud and other psychoanalysts have depicted with astonishing correctness many central themes in motivational life which are universal. The style of expression of these themes and much of the manifest content are *culturally determined, but the underlying psychological drama transcends cultural difference* (Emphasis mine). This should not be too surprising…for many of the inescapable givens of human life are also universal (1976, p. 120, cited on p. 68).

Hence culture and history are crucial. Munroe, Munroe and Whiting emphasise the need to recognise "different pathways of development" which are value-free (1981, p. 482). Yet we need to heed Paul Pederson's warning: "Therapists who assume a universally understood and

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accepted notion of what constitutes mental health, illness, and adjustment are culturally insensitive" (1979, p. 82).

The argument that by demonizing the traditional therapeutic practices, the early missionaries unwittingly simply drove them underground from where they continued to apply (Gichinga, 2007) fails to acknowledge the ingenuity of the Africans in responding to the cultural onslaught and drawing new contours. While some traditional practices have resiliently refused to die out we need to acknowledge the adaptability of the people of all ages to the changing milieu. Undoubtedly many Christians especially among the mainline churches abhor many traditional rituals and practices which, perhaps incorrectly, they consider contrary to the Gospel. Others who are rejecting many traditional practices which they consider irrational and out of sync with modern technological reality epitomise a generation of Africans who have found a new sense of personhood outside the traditional mould. My sense is that the students at TUC belong with these groups. The challenge is for the pastoral carers to rise to the occasion by being constantly aware of the cultural communication/enculturation that has been taking place.

While the debate about the suitability of Western psychological practices in African setting continues, the need for cultural sensitivity by all practitioners cannot be over-emphasised. Great sensitivity to the circumstances and needs of individual clients is at the centre of the some of the recommendations I will be proposing later on in this study, whatever the nature of those issues.

After examining the role of spiritual direction in fostering spiritual growth and psychological counselling in mental health one can draw the conclusion that used efficiently the two ministries reinforce each other to help secure the wholeness desired by the pastoral care team in TUC.

iv. *The belief that Christianity needs to be properly inculturated for it to be psychologically healthy for Africans and that pastoral care can help to do that*

Culture has been defined as the collective or sum total of the way of life of a group of people, developed over a long period of time. It encompasses all human constructs such as language, religion, customs, traditions, rituals, history, values, and determines relationships.

Culture defines people's world views and unites them, thus it is crucial in the process of developing a sense of self-identity or personhood, spiritual and psychological health. Some sociologists have termed culture as "…our second body… a part of the human person…a person's way of being" (Shorter 1980, p. 21). Eugene Hillman defines it as:

> …a complex system of symbols, embodying, codifying and communicating humanly constructed and historically transmitted patterns of meanings, values, perceptions, ideas, attitudes, myths, judgements, aspirations, beliefs, commitments and actions through which the experience of reality is mediated, interpreted coherently and structured consistently (1993 p. 26).

No human being exists without a culture and it is difficult to engage people in a substituted/foreign culture because it is on the basis of their culture that all people develop a sense of psychological and spiritual well-being (Magesa, 1997; Shults and Sandage, 2006). Affirming that view, the Vatican announced: "Man (woman) comes to a true and full humanity only through culture, that is through the cultivation of the goods and values of nature" (Gaudium et spes, 1965: 53, Flannery, 1975). However, for the African people, their traditional culture has been assailed by many factors and the need to adapt to the changing landscape is pertinent to this study as I will show below.

In order to better appreciate the impact of this cultural erosion it is critical to examine some poignant features of African culture and highlight their relative importance in the psycho-spiritual lives of the people.

African culture

It is noteworthy that while there are hundreds of African ethnic communities each with its own language and traditions, certain scholarship has established many underlying threads that are common in all these cultural expressions to warrant thinking of sub-Saharan African culture in singular, though there is no universal agreement about it (Isichei, 1995; Magesa, 1997). The singular therefore will be used in this study.

In this section I will look specifically at the core of African culture which is encompassed in a world-view, vital life forces - particularly kinships, the ancestors and medicine, and underline their role in the psychological and spiritual development of the people.

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The African world view

One of the most basic features of any culture is its world-view, defined as the way people perceive the world and the way they know it to be. What people see is in part what is there; it is partly who they are; their idea of the universe; what shapes their customs and social structures; what gives meaning to life (Magesa, 1997; Shults and Sandage, 2006). It is the organization of ideas that answer the collective question: *Who am I and what are my relationships to other people, things or events?* It is the lens through which people view the world, both material and supernatural. A world view ties people together around their culture which defines the world view in the first place. It is like a window through which human beings look at reality and is inculcated from birth. The perspectives of our world view provide us with our understanding of both the personal and wider world around us. The differences and relationships between humans and supernatural beings, men and women, leaders and followers, among other crucial aspects of life, are all part of the African cosmology (Kenyatta, 1938; Magesa, 1997).

The traditional African world view is one unbroken moral universe which includes everything animate and inanimate, born and unborn, spirits or divinities, ancestral spirits, religious specialists, elders, parents, siblings, age-mates, livestock, food plants and fixed objects. It includes the Creator God who gives and is the source of all life. He holds everything together in its proper place. Life is given to the living community/lineage to safeguard and nurture and has three components:

i.   the spiritual component which is comprised of God, the ancestors and other spirits;
ii. the concrete/material world of rivers, mountains, forests and all that inhabit them, farms and crops and so on;
iii. enemies of life such as witches, witchcraft and death (the latter is also seen as a necessary rite of passage).

The unbroken reality applies to individual life as well. Traditional Africans value life, community and hospitality and have great respect for parents and that reverence is extended to all elders and to the ancestors. Of utmost importance in this world-view is spirituality (Kenyatta, 1938; Mbiti, 1969; Magesa, 1997).

Kinship and social ties

A very key element of African culture is kinship and social ties which are critical in safeguarding life and in defining the self. The deep sense of kinship ties that Africans have, with all it implies, has been one of the strongest cultural forces in religious, psychological and social life, the ties being reckoned through blood and marriage. The sense of kinship binds people together as family, lineage, clan and tribe and extends to cover animals, plants and non-living things. Like a vast network that stretches horizontally and vertically, regulating interactions, thinking and behaviour, it gives individuals a place in society and provides a pecking order. As a consequence, everyone has many parents, siblings, cousins, uncles, aunties and grandparents. Whenever strangers meet for the first time they begin by establishing the kind of kinship relationship that may exist between them since that will determine how they interact, including mundane things like the greetings they exchange. The kinship system extends vertically to include the departed and the unborn. It is because of the importance of the vertical axis that children are taught long genealogies of their ancestors like Mathew gives for Jesus at the beginning of his gospel (Mtt 1:1-16). According to Mbiti:

> Only in terms of other people does the individual become conscious of his (her) own being, his (her) own duties, his (her) privileges and responsibilities towards himself (herself) and towards other people" (1969, p. 108).

It is within this large, all-pervasive communal sense of belonging, that personhood is experienced. Mbiti's well-known phrase beautifully encapsulates it: "I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am" (1969, pp. 108-109). While I am not aware of empirically researched theory of personality development in Africa, observations seem to affirm the value of the communal sense in personality development. Kiminyo concludes:

> While one has a personal self, he/she also has a communal self. Communal self is particularly sensitive to rules governing behaviour, such as respect and group norms unlike in the West where abstract principles are the individual norm (2004, p. 25).

When that strong sense of kinship ties is eliminated or challenged those concerned are bound to experience emptiness or stress as the data shows later on unless they have found something to replace it.

Ancestral spirits

The presence of ancestral spirits is another significant feature of African cosmology. The spirits comprise the originators of the group – the pristine women and men who founded the tribe, the lineage and the clan and for who the people are named. The group includes elders who have died within living memory, the living-dead. They provide a vital chain that links with the living elders who exercise influence on the community. In African philosophy all creatures are connected with each other and each influences others for either good or bad. The older force dominates the younger hence all creation owes allegiance to God on account of the rank He holds as the first of all in existence. Indeed, all life, all existence flows from Him. The ancestral spirits are not separate from society but remain a part of it and in the same relationship. Though dead they remain present and influence life on earth. Their presence is expected and invoked when life is threatened with disaster. It is this reality that makes the ancestors' spirits the co-guardians of the community morality. Capriciousness from the ancestors, however, is not taken lightly; they are sometimes reprimanded (Magesa, 1997, p. 49) Despite this their patience is well known. The elders must remain in constant touch with the ancestors who, together with the unborn, are members of the community with the living. The ancestors are honoured because of their closeness to God and they too seek communion with the living – to be remembered and honoured.

The ancestors due to their age and closeness to God carry a life force that dominates the living. The ancestors are central and without them, no community can stand. "…it is the superhuman quality of their power, not its omnipotence, that makes it so voluble, sometimes so dreadful to their descendants" (Magesa, 1997, p. 48).

Ancestral spirits are an integral part of society, are always present and influence life on earth. They are honoured because of their closeness to God and they too seek communion with the living – to be remembered and honoured. They have no fixed abode but live everywhere, including in the breasts that nurture new life. The spirits communicate through visions, dreams, and unusual occurrences such as a fire or in animals.

Two other types of spiritual elements are recognised: human spirits or ghosts and non-human spirits. Ghosts are the spirits of those who are no longer remembered as well as the unborn

children. Both groups of spirits dwell on the earth and in the air. All spirits are often referred to as gods but never God.

What is the point of providing this amount of detail about African culture? The purpose is to prepare ground for some of the encounters presented by participants in the study and which form parts of the data in chapter four. Though the degree of cultural embeddedness varies, some of the young people subscribe to belief in spirits as attested by some of my informants (Appendix 6). The spirits are perceived in the same way as the living elders of society as far as kinship and communion are concerned: they constantly exchange gifts and favours with their descendants. They are the most important guides to true morality and as such, intervene to warn humans. As long as prayers and offerings are made they remain faithful to their kin. God, the greatest Ancestor, is assumed to be there as the ultimate foundation of life, solidarity and harmony. The living may turn to him if the ancestors refuse to listen and answer prayers. However, it is the culpability of human beings that disrupts moral order, not actions of ancestors. Hence, *dis-ease* such as illness, barrenness, poverty and other calamities, is a sign of moral disharmony in relationships. The opposite is also true – good health, prosperity and success are a sign of good rapport in the network of relationships. In such a situation it can be concluded: "The ancestors are happy, the vital force is strong and there is harmony in the land and in creation" (Magesa, 1997, p. 81). There is abundance or fullness of life.

The world ought to be harmonious, balanced and good. Misfortune which means imbalance in the universe - happens because there is an evil human or suprahuman. Such causes must be identified and counteracted by consulting with a diviner whose advice is strictly followed. It may require appeasing the ancestors. Harmony is a sign that people are upright and have followed the desired norms received from the founding ancestors. The ancestors observed them and hence, earned their exalted status. They thus stand as models, examples of ethical behaviour.

Belief in the existence and vitality of the various categories of spirits and supernatural forces will be shown to be of crucial importance in the study.

Witchcraft

In this cosmology there are a number of other vital forces one of which is witchcraft which is seen as the embodiment of all that is evil and all other wrongs and is thus dreaded by

everyone. Anti-life and the ultimate enemy of that is positive on earth, it constitutes the perversion of everything that is good and desirable. One of the chief roles of religious leaders is to counter intentions and actions of witchcraft, manifested in symbolism like sterility, barrenness, impotence, illness, hardships, all manner of suffering, bad reputation – unless their causes can be attributed to religious or natural factors. Convicted witches are either banished or killed. My investigations indicate that fear of witchcraft is alive and recognised by some Africans, Christians and the Western-style educated alike (Mbiti, 1969; Kiminyo, 1995; Magesa,, 1997; Kirwen, 2005; Gichinga, 2007).

The power of witchcraft resides in all human beings. In most people this power is dormant while in others, consciously or not, the power is active. In an active witch, the power operates psychically – it has no apparatus, requires no rites or words. All the witch or wizard needs to do is project it from his/her mind. The power is compulsive and cannot be resisted by an individual – she/he has to cause misfortune. The power can also be so strong as to affect the physical appearance of the witches causing them to look unusually old, strong, beautiful, ugly, deformed, successful, failure, very popular or unpopular. Active witchcraft is inherited or may be acquired. Witches perform their destructive activities in secrecy and they are usually loners and social perverts. They can change into animal bodies or inhabit the bodies of dead people (Magesa, 1997; Kirwen, 2005).

In African cosmology witchcraft and sorcery partly serve to explain disease and other afflictions; they respond to the question why bad things happen, things that upset the order of the universe as God and the ancestors intended it to be. The primary purpose of humanity is to promote life and anyone who goes against that by adopting antisocial behaviour by isolating self, treating others badly, causing pain and other calamities is considered to be deeply immoral. Such people deny the essential in maintaining the relationship between humans, the ancestors and God. It is a lifestyle that denies life and embraces death, the highest affliction (Magesa, 1997; Kirwen, 2005).

Fecundity

Fecundity is another prime element of the African world-view and hence, every adult is expected to marry, produce and raise many good children without whom the community would disintegrate. Marriage and family life are thus viewed not as possibilities one can take or leave but as sacred duties, of which failure to perform is considered unnatural and a great disservice to society, either the result of witchcraft or a curse to be cleansed. Africans greatly desire and value children who are considered a gift from God and a sign of approval by and blessings from him and from the ancestors (Kenyatta, 1938; Ayisi, 1972).

Children belong not only to their parents but to the community as well and raising them is viewed as a co-responsibility of all grown-ups. Adults in any given place consider all the children in the particular community their own and will play a parental role, for example, hosting and feeding whichever children come to their home. They have the right to censure and even punish misbehaviour by any of the children in the locality without any reference to their biological parents (Kenyatta, 1938; Ayisi, 1972).

It is clear therefore, that the African world-view is all-encompassing, touching on every aspect of people's lives and is embedded in all elements of culture. It is all-pervasive, is deeply spiritual and has psychological, social, historical and political connotations. This is the backdrop of the investigation I have set out to conduct. It is imperative, however, for me to make a few observations of some of the ways in which external factors particularly in the last one hundred and fifty years have been penetrating this world-view and the impact they have had on it.

Major forces of change

A number of foreign alienating elements have been playing out in the lives of Africans and their social-cultural structures in the last one and a half centuries as a result of which some major shifts have taken place. Of particular significance was the onset of Christian missionary work in the continent, European colonisation, the introduction of Western-style education, growing urbanisation, the coming of the monetary economy and the proliferation of modern technologies. For some commentators these powerful cultural and economic influences have had the overall effect of eroding the hold that traditional culture had on

people but others will argue that the changes are merely cosmetic or that they have produced dual personalities – that deep down many Africans still subscribe to the old world-view (Shorter, 1980; Magesa, 1997; Kirwen, 2005; Gichinga, 2005). While that debate is outside the scope of this research, I will be proposing that the degree of change varies considerably between people and that this variation has a direct bearing on my study.

Of all the agents of change the most potent has been a combination of Western-style education and Christianity. From the outset many of the missionaries who evangelised Africa subscribed to the notion of the need to open up the continent to what was termed the "civilising mission" (Njoroge, 1999). Thus from the beginning of modern African Christianity, the faith was identified with European and North American cultures. An important component of the missionary work was Western-style education and medicine both of which became integral to the evangelising thrust. Wherever they went the missionaries built churches, established schools and health clinics. Thus the Christian missionaries became collaborators in the project of eroding African culture because the early converts were expected to turn away from their former "heathen" ways as they embraced the new faith and literacy which went hand in hand (Bewes, 1953; Njoroge, 1999; Shorter, 1999). The African converts who had the additional advantage of literacy and a taste of scientific medicine would be the first group of local people to give up some of the cultural traditions and norms as they embraced new ones. An example comprises those who sided with the Church of Scotland-led onslaught against a number of traditional practices such as female clitoridectomy; ritual dances associated with male and female initiation; and the attempt to stop consumption of local brews during the 1920s in Central Kenya (Bewes, 1953; Anderson, 1997; Njoroge, 1999).

Of critical importance was the fact that the new system of education emphasised individual competition and achievement as opposed to the communitarian nature of the traditional society. Within a few years the new lifestyles of the so called "mission boys" became evident. They were, for example, able to enter the colonial administration and monetary economy as clerks, messengers and drivers, while others became catechists and teachers in their churches. The material benefits they began to enjoy - corrugated iron roofs on their rectangular rather than round thatch huts, mode of dressing, and the bicycles they now owned – all contributed to the popularity of the new type of education. The only catch was that one

had to accept Christianity to receive the education (Bewes, 1953; Njoroge, 1999). Hence a new sense of selfhood not necessarily emanating from the traditional culture and world view was beginning to emerge. Most of the other agents mentioned above have been greatly propelled by Western-style education particularly since it became more widely-available when the colonial administration began building and running schools as well.

The introduction of centralised administration and a modern economy by the colonial government led to the need to concentrate labour and resources in the emerging urban centres. The Africans (initially mainly men) who sought work in these commercial-cum-administrative hubs invariably began to lose touch with their traditional roots and as they aggregated with others from different cultural backgrounds, started to develop a new sense of personhood not rooted in their traditional cultural backgrounds. Depending on the depth of the newly-found identities their sense of well-being could be shaky and uncertain (Nxumalo, 1980).

As communication has undergone a revolution in the last fifty years, African countries have sought to become parts of the global community and have embraced new people and ideas. Subsequently changes have continued occurring in the people's self-understanding and in the ways they relate. Some elements of the traditional culture have changed – either because they have been abandoned, transformed or reinforced while others have become resilient. It is important to remark that there is nothing uniquely African in that process: culture as a human construct is dynamic and changes all the time. What is pertinent for this conversation is the realisation that changes have occurred and the result has direct bearing on my study as it affects people's psychological and spiritual realities.

African response

As indicated above the lives of the traditional African people revolved around very elaborate socio-cultural systems that met their psychological and spiritual needs. In the last one hundred and fifty years, however, the Africans have had to respond in some ways to the new influences spearheaded by Christianity and Western-style education. Among those who have accepted Christianity, Jabulani Nxumalo (1980) has identified three main types of response each of which will be briefly presented below.

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Firstly, there are those who have embraced Christianity with its "civilising" nuances and have sought as much as possible to embrace Western culture which for a long time was the main vehicle driving Christian missionary work. To do so has meant distancing themselves from their traditional roots as they seek new identities in their new faith and way of living. With the passing on of years the gap between this so called uprooted group and their original backgrounds has widened as members of the group have filled their psycho-spiritual lacunas with Christian-cum-Western/foreign values and customs. Many in this group know very little about their traditions and frown on some of them. As globalization, modern technology, Christianity and urbanization continue to grow the members of this group increases. Cutting across all ages and represented in all walks of life, they are a minority and are to be found mainly in the urban centres though some live in the rural villages. Among them there are heroic converts who serve and witness to their new faith with great conviction and vigour (Bewes, 1953; Njoroge, 1997).

A second strand, which Nxumalo (1980) calls transitional, seem to be the group other commentators, for instance, Magesa (1994), Kirwen (2005), (Gichinga 2007) and Nkoyoyo (2011) refer to as being dual-minded for having one leg in Christianity and the other in traditional culture. Also cutting across all shades of life, they are Christians as long as things go well but when confronted by major crises for which they are unable to find quick solutions, they resort to traditional ones: they will secretly seek out the services of a diviner or a witch, only hours after a church service. It is Christians of this description who are likely to mix up church rituals with traditional ones, for example, have a baby baptised and later on take her or him to the village for blessings by a local diviner. What this means is that they have not completely found an anchor for their sense of personhood, hence the oscillation between traditional culture and Christianity; between the modern and the traditional. Such people move easily between the two world views with little if any conscious reflection (Isichei, 1995). There is also the possibility that they feel anchored in a mixture of both, symbolising what Mtetwa terms "Transformative Syncretism" (1996).

There is a third group which Nxumalo (1980) and Magesa (1994) associate with the African Instituted Churches. These churches offer their adherents the Christian message on their own terms devoid of what they consider cultural baggage in the mission churches. Without the long theological training that clergy in the mainline churches undergo the leadership may be

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simpler and less inclined to dogmatic discourses. Their main attraction stems from the simple creeds they proclaim and the ingenious way they fuse the bible, especially the Old Testament, with many traditional practices and rituals. They frequently conduct healing, exorcism, deliverance and miracle services which appeal to a lot of people as they combine cultural and Christian traditions such as laying on of hands and communication with the ancestors. They meet the psycho-spiritual needs of their followers in a manner some of the mainline churches may not always succeed in doing (Nxumalo, 1980; Njoroge, 1999; Magesa, 2000).

The students in TUC, most of whom are Roman Catholics with a few affiliated to other Christians churches, largely fall within the first two groups and this realization is critical for the pastoral care givers. For those in the second and third categories the issues discussed above are very pertinent and it is the need to address the conflicts emanating from their apparent dualism that has generated this study. It is also absolutely necessary for the African care givers to reflect on their own position vis-á-vis these groupings so as to understand their attitude and approach in their work with the students. Such a reflection would, hopefully, lead to realisation of the need to receive the help-seekers from where they are, that is, to empathise with them and accept them completely unconditionally as Jesus did (Lk. 19:1-10; Jn. 4: 1-42). Only then will the carers be in a position to work successfully with the help-seekers as shown below.

This study supports inculturation of the Gospel as an effective means of creating psycho-spiritual well-being rather than taking opposing poles. Below I present my understanding of what that would entail.

vi. Inculturation/incarnation/cultural synthesis

A key assumption framing this research is the theological notion of inculturation/incarnating the Gospel into a culture, and its relationship to psychological notions of congruence. As indicated above some students in TUC present issues in counselling and spiritual direction which raise the question of the way in which traditional culture is understood to relate to Christianity – both in the minds of the students and of their pastoral carers. The latter would do well to realise this need by becoming increasingly aware of the interactions and exchanges on both sides that have been taking place between African and Western cultures and the impact they have had on the lives of the students in different ways as indicated above. There

is need for the carers to do some critical work to re-orient their own thoughts and attitudes towards African culture and its impact on some of their clients.

As shown above, a vital factor of traditional culture crucial to this study is its role in ensuring psycho-spiritual health. To appreciate how this is happens one needs to take into account the African world-view as discussed earlier on. By outlawing belief in, and many of the ceremonies and rituals associated with the ancestral spirits and divination, the missionaries and colonial administrators struck a major blow to a central cultural nerve and the psycho-spiritual wholeness associated with it, resulting in frequent confusion for those who have not found a new source of wholeness. As the Euro-American and African cultural interaction continues new generations appropriate the heritage that has been handed down and try to work out their personal identities in light of a fast-shifting landscape. One of the platforms that has been considered crucial in advancing this communication is enculturation which implies immersing Christ into the African spirituality and cosmology and thus removing the dichotomy that leads to dissonance and tension (Niebuhr, 1951). Carrie Doehring (2006) recognises that people's embedded theology may be at variance with their experience and thus requires reviewing so as to reconstruct new theologies congruent with the experienced reality. In the context of this study the exercise implies critical dialogue between Christianity and African culture and religion with the aim of drawing the best out of both traditions in order to enhance the faith of the African Christians because:

> …Christ…is not alien to any culture…Our culture is the medium of receiving, diffusing, tuning in and relaying the Gospel. Without culture we would not hear the Gospel, we would not believe the Gospel, and we would not inherit the promises of the Gospel (Mbiti, 1976, pp. 273-275).

Ongoing attempts to enculturate the Gospel are being made by the various churches and this needs to be appropriated at the individual level as well. As indicated earlier, there has been a major thrust for enculturation in the Roman Catholic Church since Vatican II though some of the efforts predate the council. One such example is Pope Pius XII's letter, *Evangelii Praecones* (1951), in which he emphasised the need for the Gospel to respect and preserve whatever is good in the land where it is preached. In a letter from the Vatican's Secretariat for Non-Christians (1964), those heading it, Cardinal Francis Arinze and M. L. Fitzgerald, gave

the following reasons why African spirituality should be engaged with by pastoral carers (Okure and Thiel, 1990):

- Most African Christians come from and live in the context of their traditional spirituality.
- Many African Christians resort to elements of traditional spirituality in critical moments of their lives.
- African spirituality is living and dynamic.
- The Church respects the religions and cultures of different people.
- By understanding African religion better the agents of evangelisation will be able to present Christianity in a manner suited to the Africans.
- Some aspects of African culture and spirituality can enrich Christianity.
- Vatican II urges better understanding of different cultural traditions so as to facilitate evangelisation.
- Dialogue with African spirituality can benefit both converts and those who do not accept Christianity.

Other similar calls abound especially since Vatican II. Of special significance is Pope Paul VI's inaugural address of the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar in Kampala, Uganda, in 1969, in which he underlined the desirability of an African church. We find the same theme echoed by Pope John Paul II in an address to Zairean bishops in May 1980 in which he called for Africanisation of the church in the continent. He was to make a similar call to the Mozambican bishops 1982 when he asked them to translate the Gospel message in a manner that fitted with the people's culture so as to help them understand and live it (Okure and Van Thiel, 1990). The Protestant churches too have made similar appeals, for example, by the World Council of Churches (WCC) 5th Assembly in 1975.

Of the many other factors that undergird the call for enculturation, I present a few. Firstly, and very fundamentally, is the recognition that the Word of the God is present among all peoples, empowering them to seek the Truth before evangelization. Bernard Lonergan affirms this view:

> But God's gift of his love is free. It is not conditioned by human knowledge; rather it is the cause that leads man to seek knowledge of God. It is not restricted to any stage or section of human

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culture but rather is the principle that introduces a dimension of other-worldliness into any culture (1972, p. 283).

"No people has been denied a revelation from God," wrote Roman Catholic theologian, John Henry Newman (1909, p. 17 cited in Shorter, 1994, p. 34). Efoe-Julien Penoukou, a Roman Catholic Benin theologian, writing about traditional culture states:

> …the proclamation of the Good News about Jesus Christ does not outmode these traditions, but gladly recognizes the truths they contain. The Christian conversion of culture is merely a further, yet definitive, step in espousing of particular cultures by God (1984, cited in Shorter, 1994, p. 35).

At the individual level enculturation for African Christians entails learning to accept cultural equality and the right to difference. It also implies recognition that as human constructions cultures contain invaluable wealth that should be embraced as well as elements that are contrary to the Gospel and thus must be rejected. The recipients of the Gospel, according to Arbuckle (1990), may require to die to their false attachments so that they can rise to new life. In addition, successful evangelisation should produce active not passive Christians who allow the word to become enfleshed/incarnated in their lives so that if need be, they can remould it to give it life and meaning. When that happens one is positioned to experience one's new identity in Christ as a true African; one can embrace abundant life.

According to Laurenti Magesa, African religiosity remains deeply rooted in African spirituality after conversion. This leads to dualism among African Christians who, he asserts, publicly profess the laws, rites and rituals of the new faith as the sources of their spiritual reality but continue to be guided by the traditional religion (2004, p. xiii). He argues that in many aspects of their lives, the attitudes and religious philosophy of many African Christians remain rooted in their traditional religiosity. "Traditional concepts still form the essential background of many African peoples…" (2004, p. 6). Thus Christianity in Africa can be said to be received and expressed by two thought processes, the official and the popular (Magesa, 2004). All this heightens the need for enculturation.

There is no doubt that inculturating the Christian message is critical for the psycho-spiritual well-being of many Africans because, as has been observed, connection with people's roots

provides purpose, comfort and security (Mbiti, 1969; K0bia, 2006; Beyers, 2010). It is a pre-requisite for congruence and fullness of life.

vii. Congruence

The concept of psychological congruence is central to this study and thus, also deserves some comment. While the term can be defined variously, it is used throughout this work in the Rogerian sense. Carl Rogers (1951) has defined congruence as a state of being in which one's experience is in tandem with who one truly is. According to him, there is a very strong relationship between self-concept and approval: children seek parental approval which if given, helps them to develop a positive self-image and concept. If their behaviour does not meet parental approval, the children experience tension/incongruence between their self-image and the ideal-self defined by the parents' expectation. Such a state leads to tension and decreased functioning and is thus not conducive to self-actualization or to enjoyment of the fullness of life. By the same token, when people experience conditions that are out of sync with their actualizing tendency/with who they really are, they develop an ideal-self that is unattainable. The gap between the two selves constitutes incongruence which leads them to experience negative feelings such as fear of discovery, shame or guilt for not measuring up to societal or parental expectations. Such people live untrue lives as they try to please in order to earn approval: they are on the defensive and cannot be open to all life experiences. This understanding is important because we encounter incidents of its manifestation in the lives of some of the Christian students in Tangaza vis-á-vis the practice of some of their African cultural beliefs and practices. Thus it is possible to see how poor enculturation can contribute to a lack of psychological congruence, poor functioning and even the development of neurosis.

Conclusion

In this chapter I set out to unravel the conceptual framework for the study which is anchored on the pastoral care programme in the college. In summary the framework revolves on the stance that inability to synthesise the Christian and traditional cultural practices can lead to psycho-spiritual incongruence and inability to enjoy the abundance of life among some of the Christian students in TUC. The ministries of counselling and spiritual direction could help the affected students resolve the conflicts. In the process I have highlighted the African culture which shapes the context; outlined some of the major forces that have been eroding that

culture; surveyed the major ways in which the Africans have responded to the forces of change especially from the West; and finally proposed the need for incarnating the Gospel into the people's world-view in order to make it more at home in the lives of the recipients. All this is relevant to pastoral care in TUC, calling for sensitive handling of the issues that present from the conflict of cultures. It is my contention that when this happens the individuals concerned are helped to experience increased congruence and thus become more (w)holistic persons and, hopefully, more efficient ministers of the Gospel. This understanding is at the core of this study.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the design of the study and rationalise the instruments used to collect and analyse data. It is what Prakasham calls "…the conceptual structure, within which the research is conducted…" (1990, p. 39). As such it forms the blue-print of the study - the questions I set out to find answers for, how data were collected and interpreted. In the process the chapter will explain the steps taken to meet the ethical requirements for a practitioner-researcher, especially in the sensitive fields of psychological counselling and spiritual direction.

The main design of the study is *case study* whose components will be discussed and argued for as being particularly suited for a study of people's lived experiences. Within the case study design, focus discussion groups are identified as an excellent means of gathering data on such a sensitive topic. The use of theoretical/purposive sampling for the focus discussion groups will be explained as well as how data were triangulated with information accruing from in-depth interviews with some colleagues in the SLM, vignettes of "thick" clinical cases selected from personal counselling encounters and my observation. Details of the protocol followed in constituting the groups, recording the data and analysing them, closely following the tenets of Grounded Theory will be presented. Underpinning those procedures is the understanding that my research is best regarded as inductive since it deals with personal experiences communicated through the spoken language, and which require to be captured in a descriptive format. All along details of the procedures will be provided to show how rigorous the study has been in all aspects. An additional source of data is my journal kept from the onset of the study and in which I recorded many experiences, reflections and questions that came my way.

Situating myself as a practitioner-researcher

According to Bill Gillham (2000) research is concerned with two main factors - evidence and interpretation of the same, that is, researchers use evidence either to create a theory, support an existing one or explain a phenomenon that has been observed. My study falls under the last category - it is an inductive research undertaken by a practitioner to investigate a

situation observed on the ground. ***The design is a case study in which various methods are employed to collect and analyse data, draw up conclusions and make recommendations.*** It thus fits Gillham's (2000) definition of case study as a primary method in which multiple data sources, sub-methods or triangulation such as focus discussion groups, depth-interviews, observation and document analysis are used (2000, p. 13). I will thus discuss the various components of the multi-methods applied – a case study design, its rationale and how it works; the use of focus discussion groups; qualitative data analysis; and the use of some elements of grounded theory for data collection. In theory, if data thus collected from different sources produces convergence the picture is likely to be true; if not, one needs to be careful – not that the data is wrong – simply that the picture may be more complicated than was apparent. All this will be undergirded by the realisation that people's stories are important sources of data, what Charles Gerkin calls human "living documents" (1984) which call for as much serious attention as other sources.

It is my intention to show that studying the case in its context raises the bar of validity due to the willingness inherent in the method to consider different interpretations. My data collecting and analysing protocols will be made explicit below. Above all this is practitioner-research which Shaw (2005) defines as comprising developmental evaluation that is grounded, local, small, and carried out by professionals investigating their own practice. As a practitioner-researcher therefore I was interested in the feedback I received which I carefully evaluated and used to make certain conclusions (in chapter five). Shaw (2005) views practitioner-researchers as insiders who know and understand the details of their practice and can use eclectic methods. All this should increase the validity, credibility and robustness of such a study.

In addition to trying to unravel a situation that was not very clear, my study as a typical practitioner-researcher in counselling was meant to explore a stance that would be helpful in dealing with the issue under review (John McLeod, nd). Finally in agreement with Hammersley and Atikinson, I was constantly reminded of the need to keep the design at the forefront. "…research design should be a reflexive process which operates throughout every stage of a project" (1995, p. 24).

Research design: case study

The research was designed as an inductive case study, comprising several data collecting methods. According to Colin Robson (1993) the case design is ideal for examining contemporary phenomena in their contexts and developing detailed, relevant knowledge. Ultimately the data generated outcomes that are grounded in the evidence (Trafford, 2002). The design allows for depth rather than breadth (Prakasham, 2000, p. 140). The core of the study was initially meant to be based on the analysis of several clinical cases from my practice in TUC but circumstances forced a change of tack as narrated below. The case(s) were to be chosen on the basis of utility, either retrospective or prospective. In addition a small group of 15-20 students was to be selected for a focus group interview on the basis of their willingness to participate and the varied experiences they would bring to the study. Observation both participant and non-participant was also to be applied. Focus discussion groups with my colleagues in the SLM to see what surfaces for them and test out their instincts regarding the best practice had been planned and two were run. Some of the SLM colleagues provided depth interviews as well. For ethical reasons I required and obtained written consent from the participating colleagues as well.

A number of factors underlay the choice of the design. Firstly, the study was conducted in TUC, the natural setting of the subject under review hence the subject was studied "in situ." This, according to Gillham (2000) allows the researcher to develop deep understanding of an on-going phenomenon, a human experience in the real world. The approach is in line with what Colin Robson says of case studies "… strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence" (1993, p. 52). The strategy has the advantage of enabling intensive and detailed knowledge of the case under review, in this case, TUC students. In addition the methodology is flexible enough to allow gathering of information through various methods as will be shown below. The data I ended up analysing had accrued from a multiplicity of sources as shown below, that is, from individual counselling and spiritual direction interviews, from focus discussion groups, from depth interviews, from participant-observation records and reflections and is undergirded by relevant literature. Robson (1993, p. 51) observes that case studies have been used for a long time and widely in disparate disciplines. Typically they seek to answer questions whose answers lie in the case setting and which require to be extracted and put together to provide answers (Gillham, 2000). However,

I was aware of the need to be very rigorous in the application of the approach. I needed to be meticulous in the design, data collection, analysis, interpretation, and reporting as I show below.

Case studies are particularly suited to research on human behaviour because they provide human stories, "living human documents" (Gerkin, 1984). These comprise narratives of human experiences or texts that make it possible for the researcher to analyse human behaviours as they unfold in particular historical, geographical and cultural contexts. The bulk of the materials that underpin my study are precisely that – documents comprising people's life stories in the context of TUC.

Another advantage in using the case study strategy was that it is fairly flexible according to Miles and Huberman thus availing the researcher some leeway as the study progresses (1994). I was, for instance, able to fairly easily shift tack from heavy dependence on clinical materials to relying more on focus discussion groups when collecting the former proved difficult due to logistical reasons. In the selection of the few clinical cases included in the study and participants for the focus discussion groups I used purposive, deliberate or judgement sampling, which is more adaptable than random or representative sampling. The clinical case(s) used were selected from my practice on the basis of depth and typicality. Prakasham affirms the use of deliberate sampling: "Judgement sampling is used quite frequently in qualitative research where the desire happens to be to develop a hypothesis rather than to generalise to larger populations" (2000, p.19).

Qualitative data analysis was applied because it is amenable to full description of context and allows interaction between enquirer and respondent(s). As the purpose of the study is to find out *whether, identify which* and show *how* residual elements of African traditional culture affect the psychological and spiritual health of African Christian students in TUC, qualitative analysis was the ideal tool to unravel the situation. Another advantage of qualitative data analysis is that there is a possibility of discussing interpretations with the respondent(s) so as to get better understanding of the phenomenon involved. (That is what I did in the depth interviews with selected colleagues following their group discussions but not with other groups due to time constraints.) Above all inductive data analysis renders idiographic interpretation possible, which was central to the study.

Case studies require a thrust of enquiry in order to set clear boundaries. In my study it was young African Christian students in TUC and how they are affected by African traditional cultural factors. An additional advantage of case studies is that they address the researchers as well in a manner that evokes responses. In the current study the proposals I have outlined in chapter five below are my response to the challenges that I was confronted with and which led to the research. One can thus conclude that case studies in the pastoral ministry push practitioner-researchers to seriously reflect on their work and remain in touch with the reality in which they operate.

According to McLeod another advantage of case studies conducted by practitioner-researchers in counselling is that the approach has the potential to contribute very relevant information to the counselling profession. "…the detailed analysis of individual cases yields information that is immediately applicable to the counselling relationships" (nd, p. 99). He adds: "…systematic case study research represents the best way of constructing a knowledge base that is a major priority within the field of psychotherapy" (nd, p. 101).

The above advantages notwithstanding, I need to reiterate that no research method is completely devoid of possible pitfalls and I was fully aware of some shortcomings attendant to the case study method. Uppermost in my mind was the need for very rigorous study of the chosen material(s) with particular attention being paid to selection of subjects to avoid bias in design, data collection, analysis, interpretation and reporting (Robson, 1993 p. 51). He warns of a real danger of the study being carried out in a "sloppy, perfunctory, and incompetent manner and sometimes even in a corrupt, dishonest way" (1993, p. 56). Again this is a matter of being aware of the pitfalls and determining to observe the highest standards of performance and scholarship. Hence while some people may consider the method a soft option, I must state that I was fully aware of the required thoroughness and tried to comply as will be elaborated below, in the protocol for collection and analysis of data. Purposive selection renders itself to the danger of bias in the choice of case(s) and subjects but I believe I overcame the problem mainly because I did not hand-pick the participants and ended up with fairly representative groups. Nevertheless, purposive or conceptual sampling is supported by many writers, for example, Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 27); Robson (1993, p. 141). Purposive study specifically depends on "…the researcher's judgement of typicality or interest…" (Robson, 1993, p. 141). Of significance in validating the study were the two

seminars I conducted for faculty in the college which were very well received, the many informal discussions with colleagues in the SLM and feedback from them.

Finally it is my hope that the study has met McLeod's (nd) criteria for a good case study, that is, significance, completeness, consideration of alternative perspectives in interpretation and effective communication.

Data collection tools

As mentioned above I applied multi-method approach for data collection. The primary tool was what Batson and Ventis (1982) call quasi-experimental methods, namely, focus discussion groups with some students and a few colleagues in the SLM; depth interviews with selected colleagues in the SLM; analysis of some selected clinical materials; review of literature; and direct observation. In addition, I ran three student groups with a total of seventy five participants, and two SLM groups comprising six members. Furthermore, I conducted depth interviews with three colleagues. All together I collected some thirteen hours of audio-recording which I transcribed and present as appendices 1-9. Moreover I analysed some clinical verbatim from selected cases of counselling and spiritual direction (Appendices 10 and 11). As a practitioner-researcher many of my observations and reflections have been built into the study from my diary.

Clinical material

Having already analysed some clinical material from my previous practice whilst in Cambridge (Muraya, 2009), I had hoped to use such more case verbatims as the main tool for data gathering. Quite naturally, therefore, on return to TUC in January 2010, my plan was to re-integrate into the pastoral practice that I had been a part of for many years and which was the bedrock of my study. I would then hopefully have been in a position to receive some clients presenting the kind of issue this study had set out to investigate. According to my research plan some of the cases may have been thick enough to provide the data I was looking for. On the face of it that should have been easy but in reality not being allocated enough clinical work as I had expected rendered implementing the plan very challenging. After seven months had gone by without any progress in the right direction it became clear that I needed to change tack and make focus groups the primary source of data. It is true that

some good cases did materialise later in the year and analysing them provided evidence for triangulating what was coming through from the focus groups.

As good practice demands I have always kept fairly detailed notes of my clinical encounters. At the onset of this practice-research I began reflecting on them more than had been happening before. It was then it began dawning on me that some of the clients were dealing with issues that were relevant to the study. Once such awareness dawned, I would inform the clients of my interest in using their experience (Appendix 14) and obtain written consent to do so through signing the consent form (Appendix 15). The clients were assured that only pseudo names would appear in the verbatims and that all clinical material was kept under lock and key available to me only. They were, in addition, informed of their right to waive the consent at any stage and to have access to whatever analysis I made of their disclosures. In actual fact, none of them requested to do so.

Since focus groups were, in the end, the main source of my data it is imperative for me to explain and rationalise them.

Focus group interviews - background, rationale and functioning

Background: Robson (2000) defines focus discussion groups as groups of people who share some features, experiences or have some knowledge in common and come together for the purpose of discussing some aspects of their shared understandings. In my research, I used focus groups as a form of group interview that utilised communication between research subjects to generate data. The thrust of focus groups is to encourage the participants to speak with one another, share experiences, ideas and relate stories that touch on the topic of research. This was particularly relevant for my study because the subject under review is one people are usually reluctant to speak about. In order to keep the discussion focused on the relevant subject I always had some materials to help the conversation to stay on track and keep alive. Some of the commonly used materials include cards with words or statements written on them and which the group talk about. Interview guides or schedules that comprised a number of open-ended questions to guide the discussions and prevent them from wandering off course are also commonly used and that is the option I went for (Appendices 9 and 13). The interview guides also helped me to encourage the participants to explore the important ideas further and reflect on them in as a natural setting as possible. Participants were also

encouraged to generate their own questions and put them to one another in order to ensure their priorities were pursued. That, however, occurred very rarely. I had piloted the schedules I used and adjusted them accordingly. Although I had the option of actively participating in the discussions or keeping out, I chose the latter strategy, hoping to be able to observe more, capture the body language and the general mood.

Rationale: Focus discussion groups as a means of data collection have many advantages which include enabling researchers interact with people in their natural contexts and their particular way of communicating that includes their jokes, idioms, particular uses of language, peculiar/secret meanings and so on. Many people feel liberated by discussing in groups like those with peers in a set-up where there is hardly any censorship. The group dynamic works to encourage even otherwise reticent people to loosen up and speak. However, the same dynamic can operate to make people feel anonymous and refuse to take responsibility for their utterances. That was a constraint I experienced with a few students who preferred to speak of the third person rather than owning what they said. More commonly, however, the group factor liberates people and enables them to discuss even what otherwise might have been considered taboo subjects. Some normally shy persons may find it easy to express themselves in front of a small group of peers rather than in large gatherings. However, as pointed out by Anita Gibbs (1997), the fact that some participants may have felt intimidated by the majority and thus failed to express divergent points of view.

Sampling protocol: The focus groups were purposively sampled as I made it clear I was looking for participants with information to offer. The concept of purposive or conceptual sampling is supported by many writers, for example, Miles and Huberman (1984); Robson (1993). Purposive study depends on "…the researcher's judgement as typicality or interest…" (Robson, 1993, p. 141).

Ideas vary about group sizes. According to Anita Gibbs numbers may be as few as six to a maximum of fifteen (1997, citing MacIntosh, 1993; Goss and Leinbach, 1996), while others suggest as few as four (citing Kizinger, 1995). My groups fell within a range of twelve and twenty depending on the number of volunteers per class and seemed to work out satisfactorily particularly because the participants knew one another fairly well. If the groups are very small, introverted members may feel overly conspicuous and may be afraid to speak openly;

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beyond fifteen begin to become unmanageable. In addition the more homogenous a group is the better as this helps the researchers capitalise on shared experiences. It was for that reason that I decided to organise class-based groups rather than college-wide ones and all of them ranged within my ideal number. In any case the sheer variety of class schedules vetoed the possibility of any other arrangement. What I ended up with was homogeneity which may result in stilted groups. (Two of the groups – one from the School of Theology and the other from the Institute of Spirituality and Religious Formation had only religious men and women because lay people hardly ever take the courses the institutes offer. By the same token the School of Theology group comprised entirely of male students). With colleagues in the SLM, I ended up running two small groups (one comprising four the other two participants) due to the sheer difficulty of finding mutually appropriate times for all who were willing to participate.

In both student and staff encounters the participants interacted freely as they should in order to foster open discussion. Bearing in mind that the stipulated duration of sessions is two hours, a whole afternoon or run over several sessions, (McLeod, nd), I settled on two hours which was the only practical option. The School of Theology group did actually run over two, one-hour sessions because that was the only time available to the volunteers. Altogether I ran three student and two SLM discussion groups, each lasting about one and a half hours and totalling to some 81 participants. I conducted five interviews with SLM colleagues and ended up with some thirteen hours of audio-taped conversations.

Facilitation: One model (McLeod, nd) suggests that the researcher could take a back seat at the beginning to allow the group establish its own level as the researcher eavesdrops. However on account of time constraints that method was not appealing. I thus took control of the groups from the onset and kept them going to the end. After a brief review of the purpose of the gathering, getting the participants agree on some ground rules and signing the consent forms, I would go straight to the point. I actively kept the discussions going and on track through the questions on the interview schedules I had prepared in advance (Appendix 11) and which I found to be very useful.

Questions for the focus groups

As indicated in chapter one, the study was undertaken to help unravel a phenomenon that had been surfacing in spiritual direction and counselling hinting at incongruence between traditional African beliefs and practices vis-á-vis Christian ethos in the experiences of some African Christian students in TUC. The questions presented in the focus groups were not meant so much to elicit direct answers but more as openers to help begin and move discussions around these issues. The basic questions the study was designed to answer can be summarised as:

Interview guide for student focus groups (Appendix 9)

1. Are you aware of any elements of African cultural practices that cause tension in the lives of young African Christians like yourselves? Give examples.
2. How do such tensions manifest?
3. How do the persons involved deal with such tensions? Who do they discuss such issues with and why?
4. Do you have any personal experiences of such tensions yourselves?
5. How did you handle the tension? Did you take them to counselling or spiritual direction and with what results?
6. What did you find helpful/unhelpful in dealing with the issue(s)?
7. Which issues present most frequently?

Interview guide for counsellors and spiritual guides (Appendix 13)

1. Do you think there are elements of African cultural beliefs and practices that negatively affect the psychological and spiritual well-being of African Christian students in Tangaza College? If so what are they?
2. How does the tension manifest?
3. How do the affected students deal with them?
4. What is your attitude towards such tenets of African culture? What do you attribute it to?
5. In what ways have you tried to help the affected students work through such issues? With what results?
6. What do you think is the best way of working with such students?
7. Why do you think those cultural issues cause disquiet?

8. Does it surprise you that cultural issues cause disquiet in the lives of young fairly well-educated African Christians? Give reasons for your answer.

All the group discussions were tape-recorded and transcribed. I was assisted in the actual recording by a volunteer post-graduate student. All this material formed rich data that called for careful analysis in which I applied some elements of Grounded Theory.

With regard to the members of the SLM who number about eight, invitations were extended to all. The response was overwhelming, with the majority keen on participating but logistics proved difficult. I had hoped to run one session with them all but work schedules made that impossible. As a result it became mandatory to hold two - one and a half hours meetings to accommodate as many as possible. Varying shades of the team were eventually represented: there were three women and three men participants – one lay man, two religious women and three priests. Their backgrounds varied a lot with five coming from different parts of Africa while the sixth one was Australian. In terms of education, spiritual formation and experience, there was even greater variety, given that they all the religious people represented different religious congregations and espoused different spiritualities.

I followed a similar pattern in these meetings, that is, playing a leading facilitation role. The ethical protocol was observed as with the students but I did not think the faculty needed debriefs and so was able to go straight to the subject under discussion. The interview guide had been piloted and adjusted accordingly (Appendix 1). From the group discussion, I was able to pick out three who appeared to have a lot more information for depth interviews. These proved easier logistically and followed in the months after the group encounters. The three comprised one lay man and two religious women (Appendices 6, 7 and 8). One of the main purposes of running focus and depth interviews with faculty was to find out whether we shared similar experiences and views with regard to presenting African culture-related issues. I also wanted to triangulate the data that had accrued from the students. The encounters not only confirmed my intuition and the emerging picture but also shed new light in a number of cases as will become evident in chapter four. Of particular relevance is the interest shown in the study which was viewed as needed and timely (Appendix 6).

Journaling/practitioner-researcher observation

Since the onset of the study I have kept a journal in which I enter whatever strikes me in the course of my work. Keeping and using journals in research is controversial, with some schools finding them useful while others consider them too subjective to be useful. Berg (1989) laments the underutilisation of journals because the information and insights they contain may otherwise be lost to the researcher. Others find them useful in helping maintain transparency, that is, facilitate reflexivity particularly important in practitioner-research in counselling as a tool for helping relationships (Lyall, 1995). They see journals as forming a "…trail of gradually altering methodologies and reshaping analysis" (Ortlipp, 2008 p. 696). Journals provide insights into self-awareness – they help heighten consciousness of researchers as to what, why and how of their work.

Journaling during this study has not only sharpened my observation and reflection but has been a source of data as well. One of the greatest lessons from my reflection has been the realization that the counselling stance I am recommending at the end of the study is one that I had actually been using unaware that I was applying it or why. Logging into my journal and taking time to look over what I have written got me to realise the combination of strategies involved the reasons why it was bearing results. I have also jotted down many anecdotal comments from all kinds of people in the last few years and have later on found them pertinent to the study.

Ethics protocol

All research with human subjects involves an element of risk of harm to the participants. The potential for harm is more heightened in practitioner-research in counselling because of the intensity of counsellor-client relationship and as such ethical issues are particularly critical and demand very careful attention. In this study one of the main ethical issues centred round the need for confidentiality in handling personal materials accruing from counselling and spiritual direction. Secondly given my role as a researcher and the various others that I play in the college, that is, counsellor, lecturer and spiritual guide, the possibility of conflict and the problem of dual/triple roles was real. However I saw a window of opportunity by realising that well handled, these roles could synergise one another instead of conflicting and enrich the study. I needed to employ the principle of informed consent for materials from

focus group discussions and also for the clinical material from counselling and spiritual direction that I was going to use. In addition awareness that a client is being studied by the counsellor has the potential of altering the dynamic between them. I had no choice but inform the counselees whose counselling or spiritual guidance notes feature in the study.

With respect to ethical issues, McLeod suggests that practitioner-researchers would do well to keep a number of questions in mind. Of relevance to my study are the following (nd, p. 176):

i. *What harm might possibly occur to any of the participants in the study or to those excluded from it*? In my study I was aware that participants in the focus group discussions could possibly feel nervous, inhibited, judged or experience heightened self-consciousness. A sense of rejection might have been experienced by those excluded. To ameliorate this risk I tried to make the sessions as natural as possible and ensured no one was pressured to speak or to disclose more than they felt comfortable with. I did not reject any volunteers but some simply dropped out before the sessions had begun, mainly due to conflict of time schedules.

ii. *What procedures might be established to minimize harm and respond appropriately to distress or needs stimulated by participating in the study?* I ensured to provide debriefing before and after every session which I believed adequately took care of that risk. I was also on the lookout for any signs of distress and would have recommended personal counselling with some of my colleagues to any participant who may have appeared to need it.

iii. *How can confidentiality of information gathered during the study be safeguarded and respected?* Pseudo names were used for all the participants and all relevant materials were kept under lock and key. The tapes were destroyed after use.

iv. *What are the broader moral implications of the study in terms of the ways in which the results will be disseminated and used?* The fact that the data were used for academic purposes only and no individual students were identified by name was a good safeguard. With the clinical materials used I have changed a few personal details, in addition to names, to ensure complete anonymity.

In addition to everything indicated so far, it was mandatory to develop an ethics protocol that was approved by Anglia Ruskin University before the field work had begun (Appendix 14). The purpose of the protocol was to ensure that I had given enough thought to the possible risks, as indicated above, and was going to put adequate measures into place to minimise them as much as was humanly possible. A part of the protocol consisted of a consent form that all participants had to sign and which was accompanied by a page of information explaining the objectives of the study. The write-up also informed the participants of their right to have access to their material whenever they so desire, assured them of confidentiality and their right to withdraw at any stage. Above all I needed to assure them that I was going to do everything possible to protect them from harm and that I would be open and honest about my work.

Gaining informed consent worked at two levels: to the classes that I taught I explained, orally and in writing, the nature of the research I was involved in and asked for volunteers who thought they had relevant information and were willing to make a contribution. A similar message was conveyed to some other classes that I was not teaching, but which were taught by colleagues. Once volunteers had come forward they signed the consent forms and we agreed on a suitable time for the group meeting. I photocopied the forms, retained the originals and gave the copies back to the students (Appendix 15).

Furthermore, at the beginning of every group session, I made a quick overview of the purpose for the meeting and reminded the participants of the promises made earlier on – to observe confidentiality and respect their right to say as much or as little they felt comfortable with. I then handed them codes which would be used for the purpose of identifying them when recording the conversations. I would be the only person to listen to the tapes which would be destroyed once transcription was over as recommended by Robson (2007). One of our postgraduate students who had volunteered to provide assistance in recording was introduced and the rationale for audio recording explained. I always sought the consent of the participants to have the assistant in the room. The participants were assured of their right to read transcripts of the conversations they were involved in: none actually asked to do so. Above all they were reminded of their liberty to disclose only what they felt comfortable with and that they would not be coerced in any way. The need for them to respect the experiences

and opinions of others was emphasised. To protect myself from the danger of getting over-involved with the study or with the issues of any of the participants, I have had monthly supervision.

Qualitative/inductive research: rationalisation and possible pitfalls

Another significant feature of my study is that it is designed as an inductive research because the very nature of the study called for the analysis of narratives rather than numbers. It is what Miles and Huberman call an "…extended text" (1993, p. 9). As indicated in chapter one, the question I was seeking to answer relates to conditions, people's experiences and is best investigated by listening to the subjects. This was a study about people's thoughts and feelings and as John McLeod (nd.) has pointed out qualitative research is interested in negotiated meanings rather than in numbers, that is, it raises the questions *how* and *why* rather than *how many*, *how much* or *to what extent*? Renvie describes qualitative research as a "…distinctive human science" (1994, cited by McLeod, nd, pp. 97).

McLeod argues that one of the purposes of doing research in counselling is to develop new ideas and approaches since counselling and psychotherapy (and spiritual direction, I can add) are "emerging professions" and as such, will benefit from "…innovations in theory and technique" (nd, p. 2). He contends that much of the research in counselling is carried out and evaluated by practitioners in contrast to medicine where the reverse order prevails. Research leads to either the application of counselling in new areas or ways. In my study I hope the latter will be the case. Very significantly, personal and professional development as researchers helps practitioners find answers to their experiences. As stated in chapter one, I came to this study as a practitioner seeking better understanding of an emerging phenomenon and thus fully identified with research undertaken to answer practical questions. Moreover, counselling as a profession seeks to add to its knowledge base in keeping with all the other professions in the modern world, so as "…to offer a rational basis for their interventions through drawing on research-based body knowledge" (McLeod, nd., p.3). However, all the above notwithstanding, there is need to evaluate/check the innovations to ensure they are valid and do not cause harm to the subjects.

My study contained many of the features identified by McLeod (nd.) as characteristic of qualitative research. He argues that such studies are reality negotiated or based on real life

situations which, in my case, is the pastoral practice in TUC. Typical qualitative studies involve inductive analyses that allow conclusions to emerge. They also paint the image of active human subjects, the participants, who are viewed as purposefully involved in the research process. That stance inevitably means engaging a holistic perspective which emphasises inter-relationships between the researcher and the subjects. Significantly, qualitative data is essentially orally-transmitted in my study through one-on-one conversations and focus group discussions, and therefore is highly descriptive; it involves texts rather than numbers. Qualitative research data gathering is cyclical, involving reflective interpretation and assessment and affords the researcher constant personal contact with the study subjects; a relationship that is vital. Throughout the study I was fully conscious of the fact that as the researcher, I was the main instrument and needed to be constantly aware of the dynamic my presence introduced to the study. I have highlighted elsewhere, for instance, a question arising in my mind as to whether the students in the focus groups would have acted differently if I had not been present in the discussions. Above all my personal experience in the research must have played a role, either as a bias or as a source of insight and data. On the positive side there is no doubt it was on account of my clinical experience that I became aware of a deeper struggle in the case of Peter discussed in later chapters.

Inductive research is also process-oriented since the phenomena under scrutiny are dynamic. Every case is viewed as unique and its speciality demands respect. In addition, qualitative study requires deep contextual awareness by the researcher, meaning that the findings must be understood within a particular situation, social, cultural, historical and geographical. Qualitative study method is flexible enough to allow the researcher a lot of leeway in methods and procedures and these can be adjusted as need arises. It was for this reason that I was able to change thrust from pegging the study on clinical case materials to focus discussion groups without compromising the essence of the study. With regard to sampling, the method confers another big advantage on the choice of study subjects as these were determined by several practical considerations not merely the desire to get a representative sample. It was critical for the focus groups to get subjects who had experiences to share and were free enough to do so. The clinical materials used have also been selected purely because they were considered useful in advancing the cause of the study.

Another special feature of qualitative research that is crucial for the current one is that such studies are undertaken with the goal of empowering the subjects by using the outcomes to benefit the participants. This was just what was needed as will be shown below how the findings spurred the desire to formulate a counselling stance that I thought would improve the pastoral practice in the college and beyond and to the advantage of the participants, the help seekers. The qualitative approach to research is based on a constructionist view of knowledge, hinged on the argument that reality is socially constructed and thus the outcomes of research are seen as versions of the life-world constructed by the researchers and their subjects but not as unassailable facts. Thus the conclusions I came to as outlined below appertain to this study alone and may not necessarily hold true for other students, though I trust valuable lessons can be deduced by others working in similar situations.

Interpretive tools

One characteristic feature of case studies is that researchers have the leeway to use a number of tools for analysing their data as well as for collecting it. Consequently, the main tools used in this study are a combination as shown below.

Analysing qualitative data

The fact that I am a researcher-practitioner studying my own practice situates me in the actual context of the study, thus meeting one of the essential stages defined by McLeod (nd) as essential in qualitative designs. Totally immersed in the college pastoral practice I have had a vantage position to "read through" the data, including retrospectively, presented as the study developed, assimilating as much of it as possible. Without that degree of involvement it would have been difficult in the first place to identify the gap in the practice that required the practitioners to better understand and act upon.

McLeod's (nd) stage two involves classification/categorisation of the data by working through them systematically, categorising their various elements. Guided by the interview guides that I used in running the focus groups as well as the depth interviews, I was able to categorise the data accordingly, using cards. That was followed by the third stage which comprises phenomenological reduction. I interrogated the various categories to find out whether there are other ways of looking at the data and acted accordingly.

Triangulation, McLeod's (nd) third essential step, has occurred throughout the study as several data collection protocols were applied. While the core of the research was focus group discussions, I also conducted in-depth sessions with colleagues in the SLM and listened very attentively to informal conversations, all of which helped me determine which themes recurred and which ones were invalid or unimportant. One such theme was that of power structures in the religious houses and how that was influenced by the African traditional reverence for age and which some felt had been transferred to their houses of formation in an unhealthy manner. My personal observation has also been factored in. It was a result of that that I felt in a position to select who among the participating SLM colleagues I would request for in-depth interviewing.

Data interpretation in the qualitative design meant working through the narratives and conversations that I had collected through focus discussion groups as well as from individual encounters, both in my clinical work, in spiritual direction and in casual exchanges with colleagues to draw up conclusions and recommendations that would be trustworthy and dependable. (See chapter 5) Throughout that process I remained alert to the likelihood that some of the data comprised "…interpretations of interpretations…" (Miles and Huberman, 1993, p. 10) and therefore required to be handled with a lot of care.

In doing so as a researcher-practitioner, I had the possibility of venturing beyond the traditional role of a researcher, which views it as collecting and analysing data. As a researcher practitioner I have shared responsibility of the project with the subjects, promoted action-learning and hopefully the conclusions I have come up with will empower my colleagues in TUC and beyond. While the focus discussion groups and individual case materials cannot be replicated there is a lot of information from them that will be helpful to other practitioners. In another sense I see my study as different from other qualitative studies in counselling in the sense that I have not concentrated on processes alone but on outcomes as well. Indeed the study not only diagnosed a problem situation but went on to propose a counselling model that I believe will help relieve the problems arising from conflict between Christian practice and issues related to traditional African culture if and when they arise.

Charles Gerkin's metaphor (1984) referring to people's stories as "living human document," is pertinent to qualitative data and that provides an appropriate orientation for this study. He suggests that human narratives should be approached with the same care and attention given to written texts, an idea that resonates with Swinton's and Mowat's concept of "…narrative-as-knowledge" (2006, p.38). This attitude is central in my work that involves "reading" and "interpreting" such "documents" on a routine basis as I accompany people in counselling and in spiritual direction. The concept is pegged on the understanding that every person has a unique story that begins unfolding at birth (I think at conception) and that deserves to be treated with respect. Gerkin (1984) argues that in pastoral counselling or spiritual direction, the Christian faith calls for respect of that story without the listener/counsellor imposing self on it/the counselee. People going for counselling are looking for interpreters and guides to help them in understanding their personal stories, not for judges to label and categorise them.

While agreeing with his basic contention, it is imperative to point out that what comes to counselling is always that part or aspect of one's life that one is aware of however vaguely, and is incongruent with one's view of self; it is a snippet or perhaps a chapter of a longer story. However, even this clip needs to be respected because it is a part of the divinely created person and without such respect the person will not be understood. Journaling and regular supervision for pastoral carers can thus be seen to be vital. It is this thinking that lies at the core of this study whose genesis was reflection on nuances rather than well-articulated concerns (as indicated above).

The use of elements of Grounded Theory for data analysis

As I indicated in the introduction I applied a mixture of methods for data collection and analysis. In the analysis of the discussion transcripts another qualitative approach I used comprised some elements of Grounded Theory which can be understood as both a strategy for data collection and as a style of data analysis (Gordon-Finlay, 2010). It was with the second understanding that I used the theory in my study. One major advantage of Grounded Theory is that it is analytical, the analysis and reflection being based on the narrative data collected and informed by the researcher's theoretical sensitivity developed as a participant observer.

By its very nature, the application of Grounded Theory involves transcribing oral conversations into the printed form which is used as a source of data. I have been aware that however careful one is there is the danger of altering however subtly, some of the nuances, especially during transcribing. "The spoken word can very easily be mutilated when it is taken down in writing and transferred to the printed page" (Emerson, 1995, p. 389). Some substance must have been lost inadvertently through, for example, omission of pauses and repetitions, weight and balance upset, imposition of grammatical forms such as commas and full stops which are not a part of orality, and so on. To minimise the damage, I used the audio tapes alongside the transcripts throughout the data analysis process.

The following steps were observed in the application of some features of Grounded Theory:
Memo writing is considered "**...**the engine of grounded theory…" because interpretation begins to happen in memo-writing (Gordon-Finlay, 2010, p. 164). The process started from the very beginning of the research, for example, when reflecting on the experiences that guided the choice of the research problem, and continued to the end of the project. Gordon-Finlayson, calls memos and diagrams "…working and living documents" (2010, citing Corbin & Strauss, 2000, p. 117-118 on p. 165). Appearing in different forms, memos contain definitions of ideas; the process in the researcher's mind; may be used to define codes that one is developing or concepts fermenting; may be used to raise questions, make comparisons, record insights etc. It is, thus, crucial for the researcher to keep writing memos, sketching ideas, recording inspirations etc. I have followed the advice to have pen and pad always available so as to be able to jot down ideas as they come to mind to avoid losing them. "Memos are living documents that you come back to time and again, honing your ideas as you go" (Gordon-Finlay, 2010, p. 172).

The next step was *coding* which, though not as important as memo-writing, is necessary in order not to end up with an undeveloped or vague theory. Coding can be done on the computer but I did mine manually through index cards. The initial coding, called *open coding* began as soon as data collection was complete. It involved taking chunks of the data from the transcripts and labelling them, using either "in vivo" (actual words of the participants) or constructed ones. As I developed open codes some ideas began to be repeated. *Focused coding,* that is, choosing the most useful and relevant open codes and applying them to bigger pieces of data followed, finally leading to *axial coding*. Axial coding involved bringing

together the main concepts in focused coding to form the main conceptual categories. Mapping these categories greatly enhanced understanding of the inter-relationships. My final coding comprised *selective or theoretical coding* that involved choosing central or core themes from amongst the emerging ones, and organising the others around them.

In Grounded Theory, transcripts from oral sources must be seen as raw data like any others. Supporting the use of oral sources in history, Benson calls them "…autobiographical memoir(s) (Grele in Emerson, 1995, p. 42) which have already begun to go through the process of interpretation by the researcher. In my study, for example, though not participating in the conversations I was an active presence in the focus group discussions and in-depth interviews which I guided as well as "…listening with a third ear" (Kathryn & Dana, 1948 p. 165). My mere presence may have somewhat coloured what was said or not said. In addition the theory acknowledges the fact that the researcher is not entirely objective in relation to the phenomenon being studied. As a researcher I actually directly experienced the phenomenon under study through fieldwork, participant-observation and my own lived reality, within the context, as an African Christian. Like all researchers I did not come to the study entirely empty. As I stated in chapter one I am currently a Roman Catholic and deeply aware of my strong Presbyterian roots within which there has, for a long time, been strong antipathy for many of the African cultural beliefs and practices. While my task was to interpret only what the data revealed, there was thus a danger of "hearing" or "reading" what was not there. The elements of triangulation referred to earlier on this chapter have helped to increase objectivity.

An important consideration in analysing the oral sources adequately revolved around the social and psychological relationships between the respondents. All the student focus groups comprised volunteers from the same classes as mixing them proved logistically unworkable. While the familiarity between them was an advantage, it could also have inhibited openness in what may be considered a sensitive subject. I noticed in many cases how hesitant the students were to begin responding to my initial question but once the discussion got underway, it flowed easily. However, I was perturbed by the recurring tendency to de-personalise discussion by frequent reference to the third person rather than owning the views. No amount of coaxing would yield much fruit.

Of utmost importance and concomitance to all others, is what Perks calls "symptomatic reading" (Grele in Emerson, 1995, p. 45), resulting from listening to the conversations over and over so as to discover "…insights and oversights, for the combination of vision and non-vision, and especially for answers to questions which were never asked…" (Grele in Emerson, 1995, p. 45). Running the focus groups and transcribing the conversations was an onerous, time-consuming task but one which I needed to undertake for the discussions to yield the gems hidden in them. Emerson stresses: **"Caroline Heilburn urges biographers to search for the choices, the pain, the stories that lie beyond the 'constraints of acceptable discussion'"** (1995, p. 157, citing Heilburn, 1988, pp. 30-31). It is my hope that my interpretations have gleaned the hidden gems.

However, like all other tools, I was aware of the fact that the efficacy of these elements largely depended on the rigour with which they were applied in conjunction with all the other methods used in the study.

Conclusion

I set out to present the methods I applied in collecting data and analysing them. In the process I have explained the steps I took to meet the ethical requirements for a practitioner-researcher, especially in the sensitive fields of psychological counselling and spiritual direction. The main design of the study was case study which was discussed and rationalised as being particularly suited for a study of people's lived experiences. Within the case study approach focus discussion groups were identified as an excellent means of gathering data on a sensitive topic. Data from the focus groups was triangulated with information accruing from depth interviews and a couple of "thick" cases selected from personal counselling encounters. I detailed the protocol followed in constituting the focus groups, recording the data and analysing them closely following selected tenets of grounded theory. Underpinning those procedures was the understanding that my research was qualitative as it dealt with personal experiences communicated orally, and which required to be captured in a descriptive format. That need was underlined by the orality of the data collecting tools. All along I endeavoured to show how rigorously the research was carried out and given the detailed description of the processes interested parties should be able to design other similar, though not identical, studies. The research design proved appropriate for the study and helped me collect the data I needed despite the few pitfalls I have mentioned.

The next chapter describes the data collected.

Chapter 4: Data Presentation

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the data accruing from the research I have been carrying out since September 2010. The methods I applied to collect and analyse the data and the rationale behind them have been discussed in some detail in chapter three. What I now present are the outcomes of the focus discussion groups with students, focus discussion groups and depth interviews with colleagues in the SLM, vignettes from my clinical practice as well as my observations and reflections as a practitioner-researcher. The data are presented thematically in line with Grounded Theory practice of working with ideas or themes in data collection, what Gordon-Finlay (2010) calls "sensitive concepts," rather than detailing them according to questions or group types.

To reiterate the research interest arose from clinical experience in which it was becoming increasingly evident that some of the issues being presented in both counselling and spiritual direction by the students emanated from conflict with some elements of traditional cultural beliefs and practices. However, bearing in mind my life experience and the reality that the clients are third or fourth generation Christians living in the technological age, the picture was a bit puzzling. That the issues did not surface easily rendered the situation more intriguing. The emerging picture pointed to a gap in the pastoral practice I was involved in that was not quite clear to me and to my colleagues and which thus called for further scrutiny.

As I indicated in the research design (chapter three) this is a case study located in TUC and the participants were purposively sampled. While I have selected some vignettes of my clinical material for triangulation, the core of the data has been derived from focus discussion groups with both students and colleagues in the college SLM. The tools I have used for data analysis include some elements of Grounded Theory, analysis of people's experiences and review of relevant literature.

My initial plan had been to collect data mainly from my clinical practice in counselling and in spiritual direction. However, as a result of some logistical problems in re-inserting myself in TUC in January 2010 after being away for fifteen months during which I completed Stage One of the PrD programme, several months passed by without the possibility of any suitable

cases coming along and a certain momentum dissipated. Consequently, it became necessary to change tack. Instead of depending mainly on clinical material from personal encounters with students it became clear that an excellent way of getting around the problem would be to gather data through focus discussion groups and use any relevant presenting verbatim notes for triangulation. I subsequently ran two focus discussion groups and three in-depth interviews with members of the SLM, and four student focus discussion groups (See chapter three above). The data thereby generated forms the core of this presentation and is supplemented by excerpts from some of the cases I have dealt with. It is my hope that the multiple sources help to raise the level of reliability of the study. Moreover, I have been a keen observer and have kept a journal whose contents have enriched the findings from these other sources.

I encountered several constraints in running the discussion groups. Firstly it was very difficult to get the students to personalise their struggles with African traditional cultural practices. While many of them had willingly volunteered to participate, hardly any of them admitted to personally encountering such issues. The tendency for a number of them was to depersonalise the problems by referring to the experiences of "people" and no amount of persuasion seemed to change this situation (Appendices 3, 4, 5, 9). That tendency served to confirm one of my earlier observations that people are generally unwilling to admit having issues with traditional beliefs and practices. Magesa (1997) makes a similar observation. More pointed information, however, was obtained from the members of the SLM, spiritual guides and counsellors, information which corroborated my own encounters in one-to-one sessions which enjoy the sanctity of confidentiality and where, therefore, the students were more open. Secondly, I ran the discussion groups myself and wonder whether the students would have been more open if the encounters had been facilitated by someone else. Below are details of the most significant outcomes, grouped under the following headings:

i.   The main African tradition cultural issues involved and how they manifested
ii.   Who presented such issues at Tangaza
iii. The circumstances under which the issues emerged
iv.   Reasons given for there being a tension
v.   How students handled them

The main African traditional cultural issues involved and how they manifested

From clinical vignettes, focus discussion groups with students and with SLM members, it became evident that some residual African cultural beliefs and practices do affect the psycho-spiritual welfare of the young African Christians in TUC. Such a situation is attributable to the crucial role that traditional culture and spirituality play in the psycho-spiritual wellbeing of people as detailed in chapters one and two. It means that while they have embraced Christianity some of the students' world-views continue to be partially shaped by the traditional African reality.

According to the data collected from students and from SLM members the traditional beliefs and practices that cause disquiet are:

- witchcraft/black magic
- the "evil eye"
- the power of the diviner
- visits by spirits of dead relatives or by or djinnis
- the curse/the power of the negative spoken word
- bad omens; violation of taboos or oaths
- kinship ties and the attendant obligations
- the demand for fecundity among celibate men

Evidence from students

Though some of the students kept distancing themselves as individuals from some of the beliefs and practices, they confirmed their existence in the general population as well as in the student body.

Among them, witchcraft, considered the worst form of evil, is viewed as being real according to several informants. This is how one seminarian put it:

> .…witchcraft is real. So I think there is something that has not been addressed in the religious circles that is still affecting the people. We are religious, yes, but we still experience this conflict which my brother has talked about (Lines 284-250, Appendix 3, p. 6)

Fear that witchcraft had been performed on members of the family of a thirty year-old nun was the very first case of traditional African culture-related issues I had encountered in spiritual direction with students in TUC (Appendix 12); hence the conversation above went a long way in confirming some of my initial suspicions. Her concern was her mother's frequent bouts of illness for which no medical cause had been diagnosed despite repeated trips to the hospital and several episodes of hospitalisation. It was at that point that, fearing that her mother had been bewitched, she was contemplating visiting a diviner to seek diagnosis and treatment for the mother. However there was deep conflict in her mind that as a woman religious she would be counter-witnessing by visiting a diviner.

Also dreaded, according to other students, are people said to have an "evil eye" which is capable of causing untold harm to whomever it is directed (Lines 11-17; 20-23; 26-27; 36, Appendix 4, p. 1). "Bad spells" can be cast on unsuspecting persons by jealous neighbours with "bad eyes" in order to harm or cause the victims to decline, for example with students, in academic performance, according to another student informer (Appendix 1).

The negative spoken word, the curse, I found out, is another practice that causes despondence among the students but as one participant pointed out it only affects those who believe in its potency (Lines 182-196, Appendix 3, p. 5).

Just as real for some of the students (and causing either fear or trust - depending on which side one is in) - is the power attributed to diviners. The term diviner is loosely used to refer to various groups of mediums. Such persons are viewed as having the power to "sniff out" hidden sources of evil; can advise on corrective measures and also provide protective and curative "medicines, which may be herbal, spiritual or comprised of certain activities. Their help is frequently sought to heal in cases where conventional medicine is seen as failing. A student of theology talked of an experience in which he accompanied a religious woman who had been ill for a long time without getting any redress from conventional medicine and who had been cured by a diviner. This is the way he put it:

> For me I am somehow privileged to come from a society where divination is not a hidden thing and they (diviners) have licences to operate…I visited a shrine and I have seen it work somehow with my co-friar…Really for me this was an experience I will never forget. I saw

things greeting us, jumping all over and around us…I don't know what to call them, but things would come from outside, make some noise, (he claps his hands) rotate around you, and shake you…at the end the sister was cured and went home (Lines 253-267, Appendix 3, p. 6).

Another cause of internal turmoil came from kinship ties and attendant obligations as the cases I cite below clearly manifest. In chapter two, mention was made of the tremendous sense of respect accorded to parents and other older persons, bordering on worship. Inability to live up to certain traditional obligations and expectations of relatives, especially parents can cause untold turmoil and stress. Equally important is public opinion of the people in the students' home localities, perhaps because for the religious men, women and seminarians, their new statuses are considered higher/better than those of the lay people. As a result failure to comply with cultural obligations is viewed as a disgrace to their families as well and can generate a lot of shame and untold psychological strain (Xavier and Peter below exemplify this).

When students found themselves caught up in issues that cause conflict between the practice of Christianity and cultural norms the feelings they experience are often expressed as fear of some terrible consequence(s), shame or guilt. Fear that people or members of their families have been bewitched, cursed or subjected to the evil eye, for example, can lead to great suffering as people often do not know exactly who or what they are struggling with. The victims thus feel caught up in situations over which they have little or no control. All they know is that they lack joy, peace and zest for life (Appendices 10 and 11).

Evidence from SLM members

Many of the members of the SLM also talked about their encounters with issues emanating from African traditional cultural norms. According to one colleague a major source of disquiet among many students springs from their belief in the existence of spirits of dead relatives who, it is said, may visit their living kin any time. As indicated in chapter two, such visits may be to confer blessings on or to cause harm to the hosts if they have offended the dead in any way. Since the spirits do not communicate directly it is difficult to decipher their intentions, hence the great awe with which such visits are viewed (Lines 44; 59; 67-68; 182; 198-200, Appendix 1, pp. 1-5). The same counsellor also talked about witnessing a house

being stoned by unseen persons, causing great fear and panic (Lines 201-203, Appendix 5, p. 5), the work of evil spirits whom they sometimes identify as the djinnis (Lines 86-89, Appendix 1, pp. 2-3).

Several of the SLM members talked of encountering students who were terrified of having been bewitched and wondered how best to help them, meaning witchcraft is alive.

Traditional oaths form another medium of power that seems to have a big impact with some of the students. Indeed so potent are such oaths considered to be that some of the students have greater reverence for such rituals than they do for vows sworn on the bible. This was the observation made by one of the spiritual guides cum lecturer who talked of an experience in one of her classes. During a discussion on the implications of religious vows some of the young women religious had expressed greater dread of a traditional oath as compared to the vows they swear on the bible. This is how she put it:

> Related to that when…when we were looking at taking vows the students were telling me about a practice in Tanzania – that if you are taking the vows there, there is something like a pot that you crack and if you break any of the vows you would die. So I said, "Why don't you bring that here for final professions?" They said, "People would be committing suicide if we did that" (Lines 322-325, Appendix 1, p. 7).

That line of thinking was corroborated by the experience of a seminarian, reported by another spiritual guide, who would not take a traditional oath as he was challenged to when confronted by a girl who claimed he had impregnated her. He happily swore denial on the bible but would not repeat the same in the traditional format. The experience was summarised thus:

> We had a very serious case of a seminarian who had been accused of impregnating a girl and was called by the elders to settle the matter. When questioned, he said for sure, for sure, he was not responsible. "Can you swear on the bible?" He was asked. "Yes, yes," and quickly did so. Then when he was walking away, one of the elders said, "Can we try the cultural thing?" So he was called back. The girl was instructed to stand in front of the boy with her legs apart and he was told: "If you never did it pass through her legs." He took off very fast

(laughter)…because he believed if he did it something terrible would happen to him, but with the bible, it was very easy to swear (Appendix I).

It can thus be seen that respect for several elements of traditional African cultural beliefs and practices and the desire to comply with them is a reality for some of the young technology savvy African Christian students in TUC. One of the spiritual guides thought that these practices are so rampant that he queried the basis on which I had referred to them as "residual" in my introduction.

> I don't know why you, Phyllis, chose to use the term "residual" in your title because to me the way I understand it, residual means something small of the African culture but I think this is not the case - a lot remains, not just a residue (Lines 313- 320, Appendix 1, p. 7).

Another element of traditional beliefs and practices that elicits stress is the fact that those involved feel caught up in two world views which they find difficult to reconcile. Tradition expects them to behave in a particular way and if they do not comply, they experience guilt and/or shame emanating from a sense of failure. If they comply they will be condemned for not being good Christians. This observation points to an alternative way of interpreting the presenting problem. There is often a value judgement amongst counsellors that students are syncretic and a tendency to reinforce the Christian tradition by prescribing praying about the situation as an easy solution. The maxim, "…have you talked to Jesus about it?" has often been used but according to the affected students, it misses the mark (Appendix 12). Part of the reason why a call to prayer seems not to work is because, as shown below, by their very nature, issues of this sort need to be cognitively addressed before lasting settlements can be reached. The clients feel that the magnitude of the issue is masked, trivialised and side-stepped by the call to merely "pray about it" (Muraya2009). As seen above, a more neutral way that involves viewing the issue as cognitive dissonance, which is itself a part of the presenting problem (and perhaps the reason that these issues do emerge in counselling), may be more preferable. This is a discourse I will return to in greater detail in chapter five.

A case in point is one reported by a spiritual director and which involved a seminarian who for three years was under a lot of stress due to family pressure for him to leave religious life and get married as tradition expected of him. According to his spiritual director:

He was in a big dilemma because he was convinced of his call by God to a celibate priesthood, but his uncles were pressuring him into marriage.[2] What was he going to do? …The pressure on him was relentless, however, and caused him a lot of tension…the family pressure was sometimes overwhelming (Lines 62-63; 67-68; 71-72, Appendix 8, p. 2).

It took very patient and supportive accompaniment over a three-year period during which he was seeing my informant for the young man to resist the family pressure and go on to be ordained a priest. According to her, all she did was to create an accepting and supportive environment that enabled the student to examine his thoughts, motives and feelings and dialogue with them in light of the predicament. Without being aware of it, what the spiritual guide had actually been doing was akin to the combination the Rogerian and Ellis's methods to help the seminarian open up to the issue stressing him, think through it and gain enough clarity to make a choice that was in sync with his sense of self and of the purpose of his life. By the end of his three-year stay in the college, he had gained enough clarity of mind and strength from the spiritual direction encounters to be able to make a choice he felt was the right one for his life and which gave him peace and joy (Appendix 8).

Evidence from my own practice

This is something of which I have clinical experience that I will detail below. As indicated in chapter three, I had planned to use clinical evidence to triangulate the data accruing from the focus groups. Both sources, as shown in the case detailed here, seem to drive home the reality that the students present conflicts stemming from cultural beliefs and practices which are deeply embedded in their psyches and which cause psycho-spiritual stress. However, most of my colleagues in the SLM, according to the evidence I gathered through focus groups and depth interviews, have not been successful in helping such clients. Those who have applied the confrontational approach have reported premature closures (Appendices 6 and 7), while those who have been accepting and dialogical reported successful outcomes (for example Appendix 8). My experience concurs: it is reflection in the course of this study that has led me to the realization of what was working and why. It is against that background that I propose the need to begin by respecting the experience of the clients then engaging them intellectually for a harmonious state of mind to be reached. Without that, emphasis on a

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[2] His father had died when the young man was a young child and the fatherly role in his life had been played by his uncles for many years.

spiritual exercise alone does not seem to yield the desired results. My experience is that the students need to cognitively engage with the issues for them to work through, and get over them. I have provided the case of Peter below to illustrate my point and in chapter five I will tease out the reasons why this approach works.

The case of Peter (Appendix 11)

To bring to life the kind of issues I am referring to I will present in some detail snippets from a case I dealt with last year and which exemplifies tension between tenets of the Christian faith and those of African cultural beliefs and practices in the lives of some of the students in TUC.

Peter (a pseudonym) is a 30 year-old religious brother, a member of an international religious congregation which has a scholasticate in Nairobi. He is the oldest of four children, two sons and two daughters, with the two younger children still in school. His mother is a single parent who does clerical work with one of the tertiary institutions in Nairobi. When he came to see me, Peter was terribly stressed out because he could no longer provide material support to his mother as custom expects of the eldest son. In his own words, he was not sleeping, was not able to eat, could hardly concentrate on his school work and had begun to isolate himself from his peers. He was in a big dilemma because he was convinced of his vocation to a religious life in which he had embraced poverty. The contradiction between his chosen state of life as a Christian and the family expectation had produced unbearable tension. It was one of his superiors who had suggested to Peter to seek counselling as he appeared depressed and to have lost the zest for life always associated with him. The superior knew that the cause of Peter's problem was family-related but did not have much detail about it.

In the first few sessions Peter talked about his struggle to meet the medical bills for his mother who had been suffering from heart-related problems for some time. She had been moved to three different hospitals before satisfactory diagnosis had been made and proper treatment commenced. All this had stretched the family financial resources to the limit, a situation compounded by the fact that she was unable to work during this period and without tenure with her employer, was not earning a salary when on sick leave and neither was she entitled to any medical benefits. Peter had undertaken the responsibility of looking for the required finances to the extent of reluctantly selling a plot of land given to him by his

maternal grandfather. All along he had been driven by the conviction that as the oldest son in the family he was required by tradition to take care of his parent and siblings. At the time he began seeing me for counselling, he was at his wits' end - he had done all within his means as a religious man in the Roman Catholic Church where poverty is the chosen way of life. He had worked for several years before joining the congregation and had saved some money all of which had been swallowed up by his mother's medical bills. As the sessions progressed, I began to sense that the main source of Peter's depression was not so much the question of how to finance his mother's medical bills but the pressure he felt to fulfil the role tradition placed on him as the oldest son. It was failure to fulfil the cultural expectation that was weighing him down. He kept repeating the fact that before his death his maternal grandfather had in fact allocated him a plot of land as he did to his own sons, signifying his role as head of his mother's household.

On exploring Peter's situation further, my initial feeling was confirmed: it had become increasingly clear that the cause of stress was not so much the financial need but his perception that inability to meet such an important cultural expectation was tantamount to failure by him. "How could he fail her in the hour of her greatest need? What would people think of him?" Were some of the questions keeping him awake at night and robbing him of the fullness of life. This sense of failure was causing him tremendous shame and guilt. In the circumstances, my next task was to help him come to this realization so that we could, together, chart out the best course for him to follow without allowing himself to be over-burdened by a requirement he was not going to be able to meet. Peter's situation was very similar to the one mentioned above by one colleague in the SLM (Appendix 8).

From their encounters with many similar issues in their work with students, some of the participating SLM colleagues wondered how best to accompany their clients to greater peace, freedom and wholeness, a subject I will come back to in chapter five. I will propose combining two counselling approaches as I did successfully with Peter and with others to help them make choices they would be happy to live with, no matter what the decisions were. Such a resolution is best arrived at after understanding and interrogating their dilemmas. It is reflection on my work ***and the evidence from the focus groups*** that has led to the conclusions I propose.

Who presents with issues of African traditional cultural-related issues?

All my sources indicate that those involved cut across the entire student body irrespective of status, that is, the issues affect religious women, men, clerics as well as lay students. What all of them seem to have in common is grounding in their psyches of some of the tenets of traditional African culture that surface when the young people are unduly stressed – when the issues they are faced with cause excessive fear, shame or guilt and the involved persons are unable to cope on their own. Since culture is deeply embedded as pointed out above, it is like second nature and resorting to it in times of stress is very natural. Having said that, however, it is imperative to highlight the fact that not all the students subscribe to the traditional world view – indeed we do have some who are free from cultural carry-overs or have worked out a synthesis between the two world views. Either way they are at peace with their cultural backgrounds and also with their Christian identity. One spiritual guide who had observed the same commented:

> I would also say that there are students who are, by and large, free of some of this,…I have never asked them but it seems to me they have made some sort of transition…that they are at peace with their culture but they are also at peace with their Christian beliefs in some way and I don't know why that is (Lines 208-212, Appendix 1, p. 5).

How some of the students have attained synthesis is an intriguing field that might be explored in a different study.

The circumstances under which the cultural issues surface

People will resort to the cultural practices when the regular sources of power for them seem not to function adequately (Kirwen, 2005; Gichinga, 2007). My informants mentioned such situations as cases of frequent and inexplicable illness (Appendix 7), various kinds of misfortunes like barrenness (Appendix 7), frequent deaths in a family (Appendix 8) and so on – those concerned may want to find out the root of their troubles and ways of overcoming them. When such disasters strike, some will seek the counsel of their priests/pastors or counsellor while others may visit diviners to seek their guidance and protection or even blessings as happens during national elections. Students talked of colleagues who seek the

power of diviners in a bid to succeed in important ventures, for instance, to obtain favour with superiors, avoid getting into problems, obtain a cure for a sick relative or for themselves and so on for the religious men and women (Appendix 6). The point of departure for their psycho-spiritual health is the ensuing conflict between their professed Christian faith and practices that have generally been vilified by both missionary and African Christian leaders. The cases that I have dealt with and which have been cited in this study belong in this category. If the students feel adequately freed by being accepted unconditionally and their experiences affirmed rather than being judged they will discuss the issues with the helper either in counselling or in spiritual direction as happened with Xavier, Peter, Ciru (Appendices 10, 11, 12) and many others in my practice.

Reasons why tension arises

Some SLM colleagues view the genesis of the problem as the tension between what some of the young people have been taught in the Christian faith and what sometimes lies deeply embedded in their experiences (Lines 204-205, Appendix 3, p. 5). One of the members attributed that dichotomy to poor evangelisation that denied people the opportunity to interrogate and synthesise some of their traditional beliefs in the light of the new faith. Consequently, according to a student informant, during initial faith training people preferred to suppress the traditional beliefs to the unconscious mind so as to appear "right" but these beliefs keep popping up whenever crises that seem to elicit no solution in Christianity are encountered. (Lines 208-223, Appendix 3, p. 5) The result is shallow or superficial conversion and people thus end up living double lives (Lines 273-277; 278-287, Appendix 3, p.7) - or being syncretic. Another participant, a woman religious, talked of her colleagues seeking the help of a diviner when conventional medicine seemed not to work (Lines 59-66; 68-73; 78-79, Appendix 5, p. 2). The essence of the phenomenon is that the Christian God sometimes appears far away and distant unlike the traditional view that placed God in the midst of people's daily encounters. This view was aptly captured by one of the student participants, a Roman Catholic priest, who had observed this attitude among his congregants. He remarked:

> …even now God is seen as a limited God who is locked up in the tabernacle whereas for us Africans we would take God wherever we go (Lines 238-248, Appendix 5, p. 5).

Peter's situation typifies the kind of tension experienced by some of the students and which is at the heart of this study. Conflict between Christian ethos and traditional cultural beliefs and practices manifests in tension at the root of which is one of the three basic negative emotions: fear, shame and guilt. Shame and guilt were at the core of Peter's problem as I will endeavour to show in chapter five.

Thus data from all the focus discussion groups – with students and with colleagues in the SLM - as well as depth encounters with colleagues, do confirm that indeed there exists a corpus of traditional African-related beliefs and practices that negatively affect the psycho-social-spiritual dimension of the young African Christians in TUC. Those elements deny the affected persons some of the fullness of life that Jesus came to restore to the world (Jn. 10:10). Commenting on the same, one of the spiritual guides gave the example of a young African priest who on return from Rome where he had spent some years pursuing further studies, was advised by his family to seek "protection" from a diviner as the rest of the family had done. He experienced a lot of conflict as he considered his Christian faith to be incompatible with that traditional practice. The fact that he eventually consented to comply with his family desire did not decrease the tension. Indeed it was at that time that he decided to speak to his spiritual guide about what had happened. Commenting on his experience with this priest, the spiritual guide observed:

> People seem to be left with a vacuum which makes them not to know where to get the strength, and for that, I am seeing people more and more falling back to their cultural beliefs so much so that some people feel very safe in this culture (Lines 20-22, Appendix 1, p. 1).

A counsellor concurred:

> ...most of our students are deeply rooted in their own African cultural beliefs. And as they come for counselling, many a time you realize that they tend to associate the issues that they are carrying with them to some of their beliefs, whatever is in the belief system – so much so that it is not easy to ignore the whole aspect of African belief system when you are counselling the African students. The fact that they bring the issues for counselling suggests to me that they are confused…not quite sure what is the right way to act (Lines 37- 41, Appendix 1, p. 1).

Excerpts from some of the counselling sessions with Peter (Appendix 12), for example, underscore the internal conflict accruing from the shame and guilt due to failure to fulfil what is considered an important traditional role:

Client 1: To tell you the truth, I feel terribly stressed (He actually looked it -) when I think of the steps I have taken yet am unable to meet all my mother's expectations.

Counsellor 1: You feel frustrated because you are unable to satisfy your mother's expectations.

Client 2: Yes, because as a first born son, it is my duty to take care of my mother, especially because she is a single parent as I mentioned before. I have even done something I should not have done – I have sold a plot of land given to me by my maternal grandfather. You see the reason why he gave it to me was in a sense to underline the fact that I was the man of my family; I am the head of my family, so to speak. I have a duty to take care of my mother, brother and sisters.

Counsellor 2: But you feel unable to do so…

Client 3: Yeees…and that's what makes it so frustrating……Now I have sold that plot of land and still cannot meet all the expectations.

Client 5: …My problem is that I cannot just close my eyes and see my family suffer when I am wearing well, eating well, sleeping in a comfortable bed, when I get sick I am well cared for. (Some silence…), yet my family there at home is suffering…I feel bad…(Voice trails off…)

Counsellor 5: You feel embarrassed…does all this appear like a big contradiction?

Client 6: I am very ashamed…and yes, it appears like a big contradiction with the life I have chosen for myself. I must say though that my formators have been very understanding. Every time I have wanted to go home they have allowed me, but my mother's expectations are really stressing me. She refuses to understand that I don't have the kind of money she needs.

Counsellor 6: How does that make you feel?

Client 7: It is bothering me a lot so that I cannot sleep well, I am unable to concentrate in class and sometimes even my friends have noticed I seem to be lost in my own world.

Counsellor 7: What is going on in your mind at such times?

Client 8: I am just thinking what I should do…whether she would be happy if I quit seminary. But even then I am not sure I would get a job…I feel a deep sense of failure although some people see me as successful for training with an international congregation…

In an attempt to explain the reason for this apparent need to be connected with the traditional cultural belief system, a spiritual guide proposed the theory that some people require what he called "personal experience" or a personal touch. However, Christianity may not always provide that kind of immediate and felt experience which an encounter with a diviner may

produce. People may also not know how to discern some of their spiritual experiences without guidance.

Not dissimilar to Peter's situation was the one that a young priest, Xavier (Appendix 10), one of my spiritual directees, recently found himself in. Again it was not until he had had several interviews and with some gentle encouragement that he opened up to what the real issue was. The initial line had been about de-motivation, ostensibly because the course he had been sent to pursue was not of his choice although it was in line with the work he had been doing and which he said he was happy to return to. This was a little puzzling and I guess it was that contradiction that drove me to wonder whether there was more than was being disclosed. A little probing led to the real cause of concern.

The first born son in a large family, Xavier had begun feeling the pressure to support his family financially after his father had been laid off work due to an injury a few years before. With the head of the family off work and thus unable to continue providing for the family, tradition dictates that the onus falls on the oldest son to take over. When Xavier was working in the field, he had somehow been able to put some resources together to meet the basic family needs but once he was sent to college to pursue a course of study the situation changed drastically. He could no longer afford to send any assistance home and this caused him intense anger, frustration and shame. What was he to do? This is how he visualised the situation:

> My life at the moment is in a mess…I am not sure what is happening… It is very tough on me…I am not eating, I am not doing my school work or any other work for that matter…What our expatriate leaders fail to understand is that as first-born sons in Africa we have an obligation to our families, and failure to fulfil them make us look very bad in the eyes of the people… When we go to table for a meal, (in the community he was living in) I find myself wondering how I can be eating when I don't know whether they have anything to eat at home. So I lose appetite…I have and…I am very angry with him (God)…(Appendix 10, lines 11; 29-3439-41;60).

It was evident Xavier felt shame and guilt for not being able to support his family as expected of first-born sons. He required a lot of empathic understanding and encouragement to get the courage to present his case to his superiors. According to rules he was well aware of, the

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congregation did not provide any support to families of members. That was a condition he had been informed about before joining the congregation, hence his reluctance to seek some reprieve. However, when he gathered the courage to do so he got very sympathetic listening and actually a little start-up capital was made available for the family to establish a small business. The temporary reprieve was welcome but even he could not help wondering what would happen in the future if there was a repeat. For the moment, however, he was sure the decision to continue with his religious life was best for him.

Stress also emanates from the desire to comply with traditional rituals according to societal expectations as was disclosed by one religious man. He felt constrained to undergo a rite of passage that involved providing two goats for a men-only feast in order to be admitted as a full grown man by his society (Lines 81-102; 108-109, Appendix 5, pp. 2-3). Failure to do so would have confined him to perpetual youth or immature status in the eyes of the community all his life as he experienced when he went home to participate in the marriage ceremony for his sister. A rude shock awaited him:

> As a religious man, I had not gone through the ritual of giving goats so when I went home I was not allowed to participate in the dowry ceremony. There were even some parts of the goat slaughtered for the event that I was not allowed to eat. Throughout the ceremony I was treated like a small boy and it would not have mattered how old one is – it would have applied even if one was a grandfather. You can see how embarrassing it was for me who considers himself respectable as a religious man and on that occasion I was pushed to cook and wait on the "real men" with the small boys (Lines 86-92, Appendix 5, p. 2).

Eventually he succumbed to what he considered an oppressive requirement and participated in the ritual so as to be promoted to full manhood to escape lifelong disgrace and shame (Lines 108-109, Appendix 5, p. 3). Social acceptance for him was critical, hence the decision.

In summary the first research result is that there indeed are some elements of traditional African beliefs and practices that impinge on the psycho-spiritual well-being of the young African Christians students in TUC. The issues are deeply embedded in their psyches and hence the students do not easily bring them into the open for fear of being stigmatised. One of the counsellors cum spiritual guides summed up the situation this way:

I am not sure…it may be that people, especially the religious are ashamed of being caught up in these cultural matters – but really I don't know. What I do know is that many people are really caught up in these beliefs about witchcraft and are really afraid (Lines 103-105, Appendix 7, p. 3).

It is important to underline the fact that the phenomenon affects lay students as well as the religious men and women, all of whom were represented in the focus discussion groups. According to the informant quoted above, some priests actually encourage the Christians who come to them for help with difficult issues to consult with traditional practitioners (Lines 116-122, Appendix 7, p. 3). To corroborate this, another spiritual director talked about her directee, a priest who was a student and who spoke about one of his parishioners as "seeing" all kinds of creatures "sent" to her. The priest believed that that was the work of the woman's enemies using witchcraft to unsettle her. When the spiritual guide challenged him about this attitude, he stood his ground and actually related another experience in which a polygamous family he had been ministering to had lost three children whose mother was the older wife in quick succession due to, according to him, black magic/witchcraft by the younger wife. The priest was so convinced of the potency of these spiritual powers that he was completely unwilling to think of a natural cause of the children's deaths. He was completely closed to the possibility of a medical explanation of the deaths despite the fact that no post-mortem examination had been performed on the bodies (Lines 39-50, Appendix 8, pp. 1-2).

How the students handle such issues when they arise

Having established that indeed some elements of African traditional culture affect the psycho-social-spiritual welfare of some of the students and cause fear, guilt and shame, all of which create tension, the next question for me to address was how the affected students deal with the issues. Evidence from student and carers focus groups indicates that some of the students will seek out someone to speak with who may be a member of the SLM or another trusted person. Some of the SLM informants said that at times despite initial consultation with a professional, the concerned students will visit either diviners or witchdoctors whom they consider more effective in providing solutions than counsellors or spiritual guides (Lines 21-22; 63-67; Appendix 7, pp. 1-2; Lines 57-93, Appendix 2, pp. 2-3).

It was also mentioned by my professional colleagues and some of the student informants that in addition, some of the students have found a way to synthesise some of their cultural beliefs and practices with their Christian faith in a manner that ensures them psycho-spiritual harmony. An example is one student who reported that he had had the audacity to desecrate a traditional sacrifice and the expected dire consequences did not befall him and as a result, thought that traditional beliefs are losing hold on the young. However, the same student did talk of someone else having suffered as a result of similar disrespectful behaviour (Lines 98-105, Appendix 4, p. 3). This renders credence to the thinking that what happens has a lot to do with people's mind sets. Certainly a growing number are convinced that the power of God is greater than that of any human mediums and therefore would not trust the latter at all. Challenged as to how he would react to a difficult situation like some of the ones referred to above, another theology student had this to say:

> …I believe they (traditional life forces) do exist because it is part of the mind, witchcraft and the like. That is why what is being preached today in most Pentecostal churches is about witchcraft and curses. These are things in the African mind, they will always be there. The pastors and the preachers are talking about the curse…I do know the strong part of my belief is that they can't affect me. Yea, I believe they do exist but I know they can't affect me…This is because I strongly believe in Jesus and in my mind I know whichever way…they are not more powerful than God. I am a charismatic member…(Lines 282-287; 289-292, Appendix 3, p. 7).

Some of the factors underlying successful synthesis include exposure to different cultures: talking of his own stand, one seminarian observed the influence of multicultural living in forming his take on cultural practice as well as deep grounding in the Christian faith. One student stated that there were many factors underpinning his synthesis:

> …one of them being that I was lucky to grow up with people from different backgrounds.…I think that kind of living with people from different backgrounds and all sorts of tribes has really helped me and shaped my thinking. In addition my Christian faith and my knowledge as a religious brother about the concept of good and of the neighbour have been a contributing factor (Lines 195-202, Appendix 4, p. 6).

Lack of exposure and deep entrenchment in the African traditional cultural tenets play a role. The above student later on added: "I think the way one is brought up will very much determine if one believes in these things we are talking about like witchcraft or not" (Line 209-210, Appendix 4, p. 6).

Attitudes towards African cultural beliefs and practices

Another group of findings concerned the varying attitudes that people have towards traditional African beliefs and practices and which is pertinent to the study as it affects people's responses to related matters. I will examine these attitudes as they apply to students and to the SLM members.

Attitudes among the students

That a number of students cling on to some of the African cultural beliefs and practices is evident. What initially caused some consternation among some members of the pastoral team is the fact that most of the students in the college are living religious lives, yet that does not seem to make much difference as regards the impact of traditional issues on their lives. One spiritual director-cum-counsellor spoke of a young nun who when consulting with him revealed that she was carrying some charms given to her by a diviner in order to neutralise the evil power of witchcraft apparently being used by a colleague. As a result of this she (the nun) was constantly getting into trouble with her superiors. The curious element was that she was completely convinced of the power of the charms, despite the conflict in her mind. The concerned spiritual director's conclusion from such encounters was that being religious did not insulate the members from the traditional beliefs and practices that are sometimes associated with a past era.

Another student, also religious, spoke with one of the college counsellors about her blood sister who had been unable to conceive and bear a child for many years and was, according to the nun, being sexually assaulted by djinnis, both factors attributed to witchcraft. When the troubled woman consulted with a medium, she got healed - she conceived and the sexual attacks ceased. According to the counsellor, "…her (the client's) family believed in the power of witchcraft and she (the student) went along with that belief" (Line 34-35, Appendix 7, p. 1). The diviner who actually visited the home of the nun was reported to have unearthed the "bad medicine" as well as an unidentified animal that had been planted there by their enemy and to which the family misfortunes were attributed.

> He then claimed to have detected some bad medicine planted at the entrance to the house and sure
> enough, when he dug up the soil, he unearthed some objects which he identified as bad medicine.

In addition he talked of a living creature that he chased through the house to the granary and finally brought it out inside a sack. Neither the nun nor other family members saw the creature as it was hidden inside a sack. The important thing as far as they were concerned was that divination worked because her sister got healed (Lines 53-59, Appendix 7, p. 2).

Yet, as far as that young nun was concerned, the diviner had succeeded where prayer and modern medicine had failed. Since then she wears a bark-cloth bracelet as do all members of her family for protection against the forces of evil. The counsellor continued:

The bracelets, she explained, are meant to provide protection against the evil powers which she said can be spread by people who are jealous or have a grudge against a person (Lines 66-67, Appendix 7, p. 2).

The same counsellor talked of a third nun who claimed that one of her religious sisters was using bad medicine (meaning witchcraft) against her and the client was terrified for her life. She was actually carrying a handkerchief in which she had wrapped up the offensive objects apparently placed outside her door by her enemy. The counsellor, who happened not to believe in such powers, wanted to throw them away but the client would not allow it. She needed the objects as material evidence as the matter was being investigated by their superiors. The significant element for our purpose is that the victim believed in the potency of the witchcraft and was very worried about it. This is how the counsellor captured her fear: "She said as a result of this she had begun experiencing convulsions" (Line 90, Appendix 7, p. 2). To counter the potency of the witchcraft she had had herself protected by the use of a bark-cloth bracelet given her by a diviner. She was equally convinced of the power of the bracelet. Yet one wonders why if things were so neatly in place she had consulted with the counsellor. Was there an element of doubt in the potencies of witchcraft and divination? Did she feel conflicted psychologically or spiritually by engaging in these traditional practices? These are some of the questions I will endeavour to address in chapter five.

In yet another case a young woman religious was reported by a spiritual guide as having been terrified by the frequent mention of death by her directee (she was undertaking a spiritual direction practicum as a part of a course in spiritual guidance). She traced her fear to a childhood experience in which she was forced to view the body of a dead relative. Of significance for this study is the fact that she had been warned against dreaming of the dead

person because doing so would lead to her own death. Since then, any mention of death would cause her real terror and distress. Her spiritual director made the following observation about this experience:

> This was surprising coming from a Catholic woman religious who had had a lot of faith formation which I thought should have made a difference. "What difference does your faith make? Have you talked to Jesus about it?"…(the spiritual guide hasd asked). After the discussion she expressed relief but I am not sure the issue went away… (Lines 19-24, Appendix 8, p. 1)

Attitudes and strategies of colleagues in the SLM

In the previous section I explored the attitudes of students towards some African traditional practices and beliefs and how they affect their psycho-spiritual lives. At this juncture I want to examine the attitudes that colleagues have towards traditional beliefs and practices and how that affects the strategies they have adopted with clients presenting with psycho-social-spiritual issues emanating from such practices and their relative effectiveness.

Attitudes towards African cultural beliefs and practices among members of the SLM are a bit ambivalent: some hold similar views to those of some of the students while others appear not to have strong traditional cultural carry-overs (Appendix 1). Despite their lack of strong traditional connections, the helpers empathise with the students who have them and are open to working with such clients. On the extreme pole are those who will not accommodate any discussion appertaining to these issues. They question the depth of the Christian faith of any students who present with such matters as they view belief in any elements of African culture as betrayal of the Christian faith and a counter-witness (Appendix 6, lines 21-29, p. 1).

From the focus discussion groups as well as the depth interviews with colleagues in the SLM, it is clear that a number of strategies have been applied, some with better results than others. Two of the carers felt that the clients need to have some experience with their senses and strive to provide such experience through the use of prayers and sacramentals like holy water sprinkled in a house where a client was experiencing visitations by the spirits of dead relatives, prayer before the Blessed Sacrament and fasting for healing.

> I want to propose that experience is the foundation of our faith…someone comes to you and he/she is sick and you tell him/her, "Let us pray in front of the blessed sacrament," and the person is healed…that experience has become the foundation of his/her faith. …There God has spoken

through those symbols and the person will never change that belief (Lines 110-111; 118-119; 121-123, Appendix 1, p. 3).

It is for that reason that another colleague would rather refer issues related to African cultural beliefs and practices to the chaplain who routinely prays with the concerned clients, proposes sacramental reconciliation if appropriate and blesses using holy water. She cited the case of a student frightened by unseen persons who were wrestling with her at night. The counsellor asked the chaplain to go to the house and celebrate the Eucharist with the client and sprinkle the house with holy water. That done the visitations ceased immediately (Lines 176-182, Appendix 1, pp. 4-5).

A second approach by some of the helpers is to confront the students' tradition-related issues vis-à-vis their Christian faith. One of the counsellors did, however, admit that once the clients are thus challenged, they discontinue the helping relationship and if they return, they avoid the subject all together. This is the way one of them put it:

> I would start by asking: "What do you believe in?" The reason is because even psychologists say that what you believe in you will come to act on it. (Lines 267-268, Appendix 2, p. 7) …sometimes it is important to confront them, for example, if I am convinced in my belief. If I find a weak Christian in counselling, I give them my pill then they get healed. Sometimes it is good to challenge that docility in them. It is just because I am sure of what I believe in (Lines 368-371, Appendix 2, p. 9).

He claimed that the clients get healed but had no evidence because in most cases, they discontinue the relationship once thus confronted. Another one made the following observation:

> My thrust would have been to challenge her faith in God – get her to reflect on who has greater power – the evil spirits/the devil or God. Where does she place her trust? As a woman religious she should consider very carefully the message she is giving to her family when she supports them in consulting a diviner…. Unfortunately she did not come back and this is very typical. I find people not continuing with counselling when they are challenged on such issues. In a few cases where they have persisted, the problems arising from the conflict between cultural practices and Christianity are swept aside and all my attempts to get back to them are brushed off (Lines 75-78; 96-99, Appendix 7, pp. 2-3).

While the counsellors do not know the reason for client reluctance to discuss the issues once challenged, they speculate that it has to do with the real or perceived negative Christian attitude towards many of the cultural practices that makes those adhering to them feel judged. As a result, people get embarrassed about presenting issues linked to aspects of African traditional cultural issues (Lines 96-98, Appendix 2, p. 3).

In addition to confrontation, another counsellor uses a bit of reasoning with the clients and tries to borrow what he considers helpful in the traditional cultures, psychology, social studies and Christianity, an approach that seems to bear positive results (Lines 308-313; 315-352, Appendix 2, pp. 8-9). He feels the need to integrate Christianity with some of the traditional practices but is not sure of the best way to achieve that end.

Other helpers spoke of their realization of the need to affirm the clients' experiences and patiently accompany them irrespective of the kind of issues presented. A couple of them reported successful resolutions of such conflicts, including those related to cultural issues, by adopting patient, supportive and non-threatening attitudes (Line 76-86, Appendix 8, p. 2; Appendices 7 and 8).

Above all, some of SLM members expressed the need to carry out a study that would establish the strategies that might work out well. This is how one of the colleagues put it:

> I think there is need to study more of the traditional practices, because I think there is that which they have that draws people to them…Yea, we need a project like that…This conversation can be the start (All laugh.…) Maybe it will become the outgrowth of your study, Phyllis… (Lines 395-396; 400; 402; 405, Appendix 2, p. 10).

Evidence from my clinical experience

To this end I reflected on, studied in detail and analysed some cases from my own clinical work in order to try to understand and articulate the interventions which were successful in helping resolve the tensions identified (E. G. the cases of Atieno and Ciru, Appendix 17).

My clinical experience strongly concurs with the above evidence from the student informants and colleagues in the SLM. According to the three cases referred to in this study, (Appendices 10, 11, 12), and "The Case of Martha" (Muraya, 2009, pp. 11-14), issues of

African cultural beliefs and practice do interfere with the well-being of some of the students in TUC. The issues do not surface easily and the clients require warm, non-threatening acceptance to be free enough to disclose and work with them. In the cases referred to, none of the clients presented the cultural issue at the onset: it was always something else upfront with the underlying problem only being hinted at. Work with every case avoided possible polarisation by framing the issues as either entirely psychological or spiritual. By walking a middle road that involved helping the students to dialogue with their situation guided by psychological and theological underpinnings, I helped them to not only get through the current issue but also be able to handle similar ones in the future. This was particularly poignant in the cases of Peter (Appendix 11) and that of Martha (Muraya, 2009) who expressed great joy at seeing the outcome of dialogue between some of their cultural practices and their Christian faith. For the helper the desired result is restoration of congruence that ensues from personal ability by the clients to meet the challenges of their lives in a manner that restores peace and joy to them, thus enabling them to embrace fullness of life, *irrespective of the choices they make.*

Conclusion

There were two purposes for carrying out this study: the first one was to find out whether or not some residual features of African traditional cultural practices do *actually* impinge the psycho-spiritual health of the young African Christian students in TUC. The second one was to subsequently propose a strategy that would be ideal in helping the issues surface and in guiding the students to work through them.

The evidence in relation to my first research question can be summarised as follows:

i. *Indeed, there are certain issues of African traditional culture that negatively impact the psycho-spiritual well-being of some of the young African Christian students in TUC.*

ii. The data also revealed that the issues could be more rampant than I had suspected - an element that could be further investigated.

iii. In addition, the findings confirmed my initial observation that the issues do not surface easily;

iv. mainly because the clients are embarrassed about being caught up in elements of a culture that has somewhat been viewed as retrogressive and incompatible with Christianity and with life in the technological age.

The evidence in relation to the second research question concerning the best strategies for working in counselling and spiritual direction with such issues arose in the focus groups and from my own clinical material. This can be summarised thus:

i. Practitioners feel in need of help in finding a way forward in this area.
ii. The best practices for resolving issues related to African traditional culture involve non-judgemental listening based on respect for the client's experience, allowing the conflict to surface.
iii. Successful work with students experiencing incongruence invites clients to make a cognitive shift that leads to the beginning of the process of transformation and growth.
iv. That process of transformation and growth may require a theological positioning that creates respect and dialogue, hopefully leading to appropriate synthesis between traditional African culture and Christianity.

I will now seek to understand these findings in the light of relevant literature and finally propose a model for working with students presenting such issues. The model accrues from the data and is grounded in the evidence.

Chapter 5: Data Interpretation and Discussion

Introduction

The purpose of carrying out this study was to find out whether some tenets of traditional African culture cause dissonance in the psycho-spiritual experiences of some of the students in TUC and how best the pastoral carers can help the students regain congruence. It has already been demonstrated that in certain circumstances tension results from conflict between the students' African traditional roots and their new identity as young Western-style educated Christians. In times of such crises there is a tendency for defensive resources to be thinly spread out causing stress and the need to reach out for help may be felt. In this chapter I intend to highlight and explain the main findings arising from the evidence presented in chapter four and summarised above in relation to literature. I will then propose a constructive model for working with the affected students, an approach that has proved to be successful in my practice dealing with such issues.

The main findings from the data

a. *The prevalence of some African beliefs and practices*

Not only did the research evidence the existence of African beliefs and practices in the lives of the students at TUC, but there was a dawning *realisation for me of how resilient and resistant to change some African traditional cultural beliefs and practices are despite the passing of time and the many forces that have assailed them* (Magesa, 1997; Kirwen, 2005; Gichinga, 2005). As I indicated in chapter two African traditional culture has been attacked by many forces of change in the last 150 years. Despite the many changes that have occurred as a result some of its tenets have survived, perhaps underground, while others have evolved. Gichinga writing about the resilience of traditional culture among the Abalogoli Quakers of Western Kenya states:

> African culture is not a thing of the past but is still very much alive in the contemporary spirituality…(African) Christianity and theology…have been enculturated…there may be the possibility that covertly, people's culture never goes away…it was suppressed for just a period of time only to come out when the right triggers are pulled. Some of it may be destroyed or it may appear in a modified form, but *the core of people's culture survives the vagaries of time* (My emphasis - 2005, pp.38-39).

I have quoted Gichinga in some length because her views bear a lot of significance for my study. She identifies the most resilient beliefs and practices as witchcraft; belief in the powers of diviners; the lineal family or kinship, including dead ancestors (2005, p. 73). She proposes two reasons for resilience: the onslaught by missionaries that led to many of the practices going underground and inadequately trained Quaker pastors, would apply in many other Christian settings according to evidence from some of my discussion groups (Appendix 3). This view is corroborated by a colleague, himself an African Roman Catholic missionary priest who spoke of the need for deeper evangelisation among the people in order to help them enter into their cultures and traditions and allow Christ to become Lord there as well. He pointed out the need for pastoral worker/catechists to be so well trained that they can immerse themselves into the people's world view, a world view that is unitary, in order to minister to them efficiently.

In all the focus discussion groups as well as in a few individual encounters, the subject of witchcraft came up several times, suggesting that it is one of the main African traditional cultural practices still alive and with which some of the students have to grapple (Appendices 1, 2, 3, 11, 12). Understood as perversion, witchcraft is easily used to explain many negative experiences which people are unable to understand. Evidence from my study shows that fear of witchcraft is alive and recognised by numbers of young Western-style educated African Christians who view some of their inexplicable difficulties as the result of witchcraft. Invariably they would have a suspect in mind (Appendix 3). My finding is corroborated by others like Mbiti (1969), Kiminyo (1995), Magesa (1997), Kirwen (2005) and Gichinga (2005). Due to what is perceived as the tremendous potency of witchcraft those who suspect it may have been used against them are likely to seek either to undo it or get protection against the evil from diviners and undertake whatever measures the latter may prescribe.

Another resilient belief that affects sections of the students, according to evidence from the focus groups, is that of visitation by spirits or djinnis. While discussing the African world-view in chapter two, recognition of the existence and veneration of ancestral spirits was identified as a central tenet of African culture. The spirits vary in their origins, functions and powers. We saw that in good times - when the cosmos is in balance, a cordial relationship pervades the interaction between human beings and spirits. The humans know and fulfil their obligations to the spirits and they in return protect the living and can also be benevolent.

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However, the same spirits can be malevolent and destructive if humans either fail in their duties towards them or violate some taboo. In such cases they will visit all kinds of harm including causing death. It is because ordinary humans have no way of communicating with them that the thought of people being visited by some spirits causes panic as reported by one of the pastoral carers. What would they be coming for – good or destruction? References were made to spirits causing havoc in people's homes (Appendix 6).

The strong emphasis laid on kinship and relatedness was identified as another crucial tenet that has survived the vagaries of time. Kinship ties are crucial in the African sense of personhood, hence the great premium given to the obligations that different people have towards others, especially children towards aging or sickly parents. Failure to meet one's obligations has always been frowned upon and no amount of individual success would count as long as the people concerned were not seen to be meeting their obligations towards their kin. Bearing that in mind one can understand why the demands of kinship in terms of resources (time and space as well) can sometimes become overwhelming, a situation compounded by the Christian attitude of individual responsibility, strongly reinforced by Western-style education, urbanisation and the monetary economy. The extent to which one bears responsibility for others, including family, can become overwhelming, as in the cases of Peter and Xavier in chapter four.

In the African cosmology, individual wellness or lack of it is not viewed merely as an individual matter but depends also on how one is getting on with others. That is the reason why people need to find out through others (diviners, or medicine men/women) what the cause(s) of is/are when misfortune strikes. The causes are likely to be punishment due to violation of some rule or taboo and an appropriate atonement is prescribed for healing. Failure to discover the cause means it is the action of God who, as the Supreme Being, is not questioned (Gichinga, 2007). She points to the tensions that sometimes arise between personal and communal desires and the need for pastoral carers to be aware of them.

Belief in the power of the curse is the other African cultural tenet that has defied the passing of time and which a number of students have had to deal with according to evidence from the focus discussion groups. This is a formidable form of punishment that works on the basis that if people are guilty, misfortune will befall them according to the words used in cursing them.

Most curses are within family circles, the principle being that only a person of a higher status can curse one of a lower status, not vice versa. The most dreaded curses are those by parents on younger members of the family, the worst being the ones made on parents' death bed. Curses can be revoked by those who pronounced them if the victims are repentant. If one is not guilty the curse does not function. Curses are dreaded and this fear helps to uphold morality. It also pushes many to try and honour kinship obligations. I wonder whether at unconscious or even conscious levels that fear underpinned the tensions manifested by Peter and Xavier.[3] Some of the students stated that curses affect only those who believed in them (Appendix 3).

Invariably referred to as diviners, mediums, healers or medicine-people this group is also very important in traditional African society. As we have seen suffering, disease, misfortune and accidents are all mystically "caused" and cured by them as far as many (some) people are concerned. To overcome the suffering, the cause must be found and either countered, uprooted or punished. It is at such times that the value of these traditional healers comes in. As they mediate between the human and spirit worlds, they can "sniff" out hidden sources of disorder and advise on appropriate procedures to correct the situation. Diviners also act as medical doctors: using spiritual powers to diagnose diseases, they dispense medicine made from herbs, roots, barks, seeds, fruits, minerals, powders, animals and insect products (Gichinga, 2007). As long as people see sickness and misfortune as having a spiritual origin, traditional healers will continue being considered vital. It is for that reason that some of the students in TUC may visit a diviner, either on their own or at the insistence of family (Appendix 7). Diviners may play a religious role as well, acting as mediators between the people and God. They are, therefore, consulted before all important undertakings, for example, setting off on a journey, beginning to construct a house, at the initial stages of marriage negotiations and so on, so that the people may know whether or not the outcome will be favourable. Belief in the powers of diviners becomes relevant for this study because sometimes the young people who have consulted with them may feel guilty or uneasy, wondering whether they have compromised their Christian faith. In other cases when it is the family or friends pressuring them to visit diviners the young people may feel confused, for example Ciru (Appendix 12) and seek help.

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[3] That was never articulated but looking back at these cases makes me just wonder!

All the above notwithstanding, however, it is critical to accept the reality that cultures are dynamic and that the psycho-spiritual needs of young people in the 21st century need to be met where they are at (and not in some romanticised past of which they are not a part) must never be lost sight of. Gary Read put this view succinctly: "…cultural identity is not a fixed entity: it is a dynamic re-creation by each generation, a complex and shifting set of accommodations, identifications, explicit resistances and re-workings" (2007, p. 221). He saw in the current South Africa an increasing synthesis of the traditional and the modern in the psychological and the spiritual levels as proved by the recourse to Western clinical counselling by more people and the interweaving of traditional and Christian practices and beliefs. From his observations he came to the following conclusions:

i.   A new sense of personhood is emerging in Africa that is different from both the Western sense and the traditional one because it is a merging of two worlds.

ii. An increasing number of South Africans are seeking professional counselling because they realise their emotional difficulties are not adequately met by the structures of traditional therapeutic procedures. They are seeking forms of treatment that are compatible with their new identities that place greater premium on their abilities to understand what their problems are, what Read has termed: "…internal individual solutions rather than external collective solutions" (2007, p. 223). He, however, also identified situations in which reference to traditional healing is the preferred option.

In agreement, Douglas Waruta and Hannah Kinoti claim that in urban centres in Kenya professional counselling services are actually in great demand due to the great strain to which the people are subjected (1994, p. 2).

b. Susceptibility to change depends a lot on people's cultural dispositions

The evidence of chapter four (and my own experience) suggested that not all students were assailed by problems of dissonance between their African heritage and their Christian faith. That susceptibility to change or not depends a lot on people's cultural predispositions is evidenced and to some degree explained by the literature. Several of my informants supported that view (Appendix 3). Individuals who are not strongly rooted in the African cultural beliefs and values are likely to easily find synthesis between Christianity and their

African roots.[4] Those deeply embedded in their traditional beliefs and value systems are less inclined to change as observed by Kwame Bediako (1992) and Carrie Doehring (2006). According to Bediako (1992) when people are faced with major psychological crises they resort to their embedded theology - the theology they have been taught and which they have internalised in the course of their history. Ignoring that reality as sometimes is done by evangelisers creates a psycho-spiritual lacuna in the new converts. It is on account of this that Doehring (2006) cautions modern therapists against relying on theoretical approaches alone and ignoring all the factors that shape a client's experience. Excessive focus on the scientific lenses alone means laying heavy emphasis on counselling theories at the expense of the care seeker's life perspectives. This reality came out strongly in my study in the discussions with two of my colleagues in the SLM who clearly stated that their stance in dealing with traditional culture-related issues is confrontational (Appendices 6 and 7). Since the counsellors do not subscribe to these issues they are blind to the experiences of others that differ from their own. Is it any wonder then that their clients either close prematurely or block any future discussions related to the issues? (Appendices 6 and 7).

c. Interpreting the problem of cultural interference as dissonance rather than syncretism, that is, as a psychological phenomenon rather than a theological one, is more effective in practice than reinforcing either traditional or explicitly Christian responses

The evidence of chapter four confirmed my initial observation that these issues do not surface easily and the main suggested reason was because the clients are embarrassed about being caught up in elements of a culture that has somewhat been viewed as retrogressive and incompatible with Christianity and with life in the digital age.

Several schools of African theology have spoken of Africans as being dual religious or syncretic – yes, they are very religious, but operating from two paradigms, each dominating at different times depending on circumstances (Kirwen, 2005; Gichinga, 2005). Those schools argue that the affected African Christians do not even know that that is their reality – that it is very easy to oscillate between Christianity and African traditional beliefs and practices without even realising it. The situation is explained variously – there are those who attribute it to shallow evangelisation that leaves a lacuna in the lives of some Christians once

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[4] As indicated in chapter one my own experience bears that view out.

they leave formal church settings, a void that becomes particularly acute in times of crisis which Christianity seems unable to resolve. Dualism or syncretism becomes a problem because it causes ambiguity, spiritual and psychological tension all of which rob people of a large measure of the fullness of life that God wants them to enjoy. It is such unhealthy tension that may be presented in counselling or spiritual direction as mentioned by several SLM colleagues (Appendix 1). Some clergy are greatly saddened by this dualism and would do anything to root it out. It is for that reason that some Catholic dioceses in Africa are insisting on a more stringent regimen for catechumens before baptism to ensure they are completely converted/truly evangelised. Mention was made of what is called "Catechism of Jesus the Liberator" that is operational in some parts of Cote d'Ivoire and which has been designed to get the new converts to turn back on the traditional healers and mediums as a condition for baptism. They have to recognise and accept Jesus as their overall healer and hence do not need to turn to others even in difficult times. It is instructive to note that this is being done mainly by local African clergy who are convinced it is the only way of getting their converts to become "truly Christian" (Conversation with a priest colleague who has been involved in the programme, on 7th May 2012 in TUC).

d. Successful work with students experiencing incongruence involves clients making a cognitive shift that leads to the beginning of the process of transformation and growth

As indicated in chapter four those members of the SLM who interpret tension due to cultural practices and values as dualism or syncretism are viewed as judgemental by the students and hence, do not achieve much success with the clients (Appendices 6 and 7). In fact, according to some student informants the root of the problem is the tension between what they were taught in catechism and what lies deeply embedded within them - what is an integral part of their experience and that this produces dissonance, resulting in fear, guilt or shame depending on the issue on hand (Appendices 3, 10 and 11). A response in counselling or spiritual direction which emphasises the need for more thorough-going conversion as a moral or theological matter operates to silence the dissonance that students are experiencing. Similarly, endorsing a more liberal theological perspective which would recommend that students go to traditional healers runs the risk of silencing or exacerbating this conflict.

From my clinical experience the attitude that bears fruit is the one that helps the students to understand the genesis and nature of their problem and use that understanding to work out a

satisfactory solution for themselves, a perspective that applies whether the issues arise in counselling or in spiritual direction. In this approach, the problem is not viewed through the lens of theology as a problem of dualism or syncretism, but through a psychological lens as a problem of conflict or dissonance. I realised that in practice I had been drawing on Albert Ellis's Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy because the approach produces an appreciative understanding of the cause of dissonance, confers on the clients the sense that they can work through their issues, leading to positive feelings and peace, prerequisites for fullness of life. It reduces tension, opening people up to growth and change. (See below at page pages 118-121). According to the Ellises and from my clinical experience, the theory"…help(s) as many people as possible to suffer less and enjoy life more" (2011, p. 17).

e. The best practices for resolving issues related to African traditional culture involve non-judgemental listening, allowing the conflict to surface

Throughout chapter four it became clear that *a therapeutic model that is based on the humanistic attitudes of respect, trust and unconditional acceptance of clients confers on them freedom to explore their issues and work through them*. Such a stance embodies the Rogerian unconditional positive regard. The chapter provided evidence that counselling approaches that consist of direct challenge are viewed as judgemental and are likely to be rejected by the clients and are, therefore, not very helpful. While confrontation has a place in counselling it is bound to be counter-productive if it comes very early on before a therapeutic relationship has been established. Such a relationship will develop only if the clients experience full acceptance as people and of the baggage they bring to therapy. Carl Rogers (1961) says that by accepting the other fully, a counsellor provides experience of what it feels like for clients to accept themselves entirely, warts and all, thus empowering them to own the dark and frequently rejected elements of their lives. They can thus begin to examine and hopefully better understand those aspects, as shown below.

f. The process of transformation and growth may require a theological positioning that creates respect and dialogue, hopefully leading to appropriate synthesis between traditional African culture and Christianity

A critique has already been presented of the attitude of counsellors and spiritual directors (and their clients) that embeddedness in traditional African cultural practices is shameful.

Similarly, advocating a re-embracing of traditional practices can be equally unhelpful. The evidence of chapter four indicated rather that *successful work* with students experiencing incongruence due to a clash between Christian mores and African traditional values and practices might *involve the clients making a cognitive shift that leads to the beginning of the process of transformation and growth*. Howard Clinebell (1984) has observed that growth is a process and the trigger through counselling or spiritual direction empowers the clients to face similar challenges in the future independently. Realizing the need to set the cognitive process in motion is paramount as happened in the two cases referred to below.

Moreover that process of transformation and growth may require *a theological positioning that creates respect and dialogue, hopefully leading to synthesis between traditional African culture and Christianity*. Over the centuries of evangelisation the question of how Christianity meets traditional cultures has been discussed and models proposed. As such, an underlying theme in this study is the relationship between Christianity and African traditional culture and this has been discussed in some detail in chapter two. While extreme views that suggest either complete incorporation or wholesale rejection of culture by Christianity exist, a middle road in which some synthesis or dialogue is sought appears to be the best course. My orientation supports dialogue between culture and Christianity as articulated by Niebuhr's *incarnational (1951)* and Bevans' *synthetic* (1955) paradigms. Both writers have explored the extreme possibilities on either pole, possibilities that have been adapted by Christianity to varying degrees in different periods of history. Examining all these possibilities leaves me convinced that the middle ground is the best route as captured in the two models, a view that some colleagues at TUC would concur with (Conversations on diverse dates).

While there are merits in other approaches, I hold the view that both culture and theology are dynamic and hence will benefit from on-going conversation. This dialogical stance is echoed in the scriptures where we read of Jesus affirming the faith of non-Jews, for example, the Roman Centurion (Lk 7: 9), the Syro-Phoenician woman (Mk. 7: 24-29) and so on. Before Jesus came into the world as a human being, God had promised Abraham and Sarah that he would bless *all* the people of the earth through him (Gen 12: 3[b]). Such a stance supports the view that there is a lot that is good and godly in all cultures. Many more such examples could be cited as Shorter indicates: "Christ is present in every human situation, in every community and every human tradition" (1980, p. 22). Such approaches are also in line with the Roman

Catholic Church recommendations as found, for example, in Gaudium et spes, No. 53 (Flannery, 1975). However, it is important for the care givers to keep in mind the reality that conversion is a process that needs to be constantly worked at.

Niebuhr (1943) and Mbiti (1972) capture the same concept when they write of conversion not being an instantaneous happening. It:

> …does not mean simply a clear, sudden forsaking of one's religious system and a simultaneous embracing of another – in a given moment of time. Conversion is a process both theological and psychological. For Christians in fact it means a blending of Christianity (or Islam) and traditional religion, in a creative way, in which Christianity makes sense only when it is seen, experienced, understood in the light of traditional religion (p. 57, cited by Bediako, 1992, p. 337).

As I will show below Niebuhr's (1951) and Bevans' (1955) propositions can become bedrocks for the Rogerian non-directive model of counselling in helping our students explore cultural issues that may be of a psycho-spiritual nature. By freeing the counselees to be in touch with that dimension of their lives, the counsellors would be recognising the holistic nature of persons and thus marshalling all the client's available resources for health and growth. The spiritual dimension is a crucial resource (Watts, Nye and Savage 2002).

This attitude is aptly articulated by both paradigms. Bevans' (1955) synthetic proposal is based on the following suppositions:

i.   That every culture has both unique and universal features.
ii. Some of its elements are neutral, some value-loaded either positively or negatively while others are ambivalent.
iii. Cultures remain alive only if they are dynamically involved with others.
iv. God is at work and reveals himself in all cultures.
v.   The users of the model have space to be creative.

Both approaches are hinged on the view that the Gospel, if allowed to dialogue with culture, can and does redeem elements of culture that may be sinful, a view I concur with. I hold it that God is at work in all cultures and his grace leads to many good outcomes and practices, despite the existing sinful elements as well in the human constructions. The old adage that grace works on nature comes alive here. It looks logical, therefore, to think in terms of the

Gospel message being incarnated, leading to what Bevans calls "…creative and dynamic relationship between the Christian message and culture or cultures" (1955 p. 83). A similar concept is captured by Niebuhr's (1951) proposal of cultural synthesis rather than rejection or embracing cultures entirely. Christ's incarnation points to God's desire to divinise humanity in totality through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

It is this theological stance which informs my willingness to suspend theological questions in the first instance, and treat students' conflicts over African cultural issues as psychologically neutral dissonances. In the exploration of the meaning of each conflict in an individual student's story, theological judgements should be made about appropriate courses of action.

In addition, it has become evident that some of the pastoral providers in TUC in their own lives operate from a similar mould vis-à-vis traditional cultural issues to that of their clients (Lines 67-68; 75-77; 78, p. 2; 252-254, p. 6, Appendix 1). There is another group, however, that has not personally experienced the kind of tension encountered by some of their clients. As a result some of them find it difficult to be empathetic with clients who present with such issues. One respondent attributes his stand and that of others like him to the quality of their early Christian formation. He was raised by very firm Catholic parents who themselves did not subscribe to many of the cultural beliefs and practices (Lines 256-260; 288-299, p. 7; 366-367, p. 9, Appendix 2). Despite his antipathy he reported of an incident in which some unseen persons, suspected to be djinnis, would hurl objects from place to place in his aunt's house, an occurrence he attributed to the woman's decline in her Christian faith. Prayers, fasting and sprinkling of the house with holy water drove the spirits away for some time. Several months later when according to the informant, her faith wavered again, the djinnis returned (Lines 85-99, pp. 2-3; 103-104, p. 3, Appendix 6).

The need for pastoral carers to take the context of their clients into account if they want to be successful in their ministry was emphasised by all the participating SLM members (Lines 146-150;, p. 4; 226-234, pp. 5-6, Appendix 1). The pastoral carers should be aware of the culture-related issues even if they do not subscribe to them and use any of the available tools in their work. These issues are very real to the concerned persons and need to be given serious and professionally informed attention (Lines 273-285; 300-313, pp. 7-8, Appendix 2).

Pastoral carers as messengers of the Good News of abundant life need to help the affected Christian students to overcome the fear, shame and guilt caused by some of the traditional practices so that can enjoy the fullness of life. One of my student informants spoke of the need to eradicate such fear fairly strongly:

> Unless this fear is rooted out, you may say what, it will be there and people will be sneaking backwards as they think that is the way out[5]. That is the problem I face in spiritual direction, and we face it here in Tangaza…As long as that fear is not cleared, spiritual direction based on Christian faith will remain empty (Lines 104-108, p. 3, Appendix 1).

It is thus critical for counsellors and spiritual guides to become well acquainted with the cultural contexts their clients are located in, (Lines 146-150, p. 4, Appendix 1) though being careful not to impose any pre-conceived ideas or stereotypes on the help seekers. The pastoral carers should also be open to the possibility of helping their clients to enculturate the bible as indicated above considering that some of the African cultural beliefs and practices do not conflict with Christian values (Lines 260-268, p. 6, Appendix 1)

Apart from enculturating the Gospel, some African theologians advocate for what they call making Christianity "touch" and "heal" the African psyche from some of the deep feelings that influence people's thoughts and through which they interpret their life experiences (oral conversations with a colleague in the SLM on diverse dates). Interrogating cultural beliefs this way is akin to the suggestion made by Carrie Doehring (2006). She proposed that in situations in which peoples' embedded theology is questioned by stressful experiences they need to engage in theological reflection that should help them to deconstruct their old theology and construct a new one which promotes psycho-social-spiritual congruence.

A suggested paradigm shift

In concluding this study, I will present a contextualised two-pronged approach for those involved in the pastoral care of people experiencing dissonance between their African and Christian heritages which is informed by psychology and theology. The model is particularly informed by the combination of two psychological theories – the *Client-Centred* theory of psychologists Carl Rogers (1961) and Gerald May (1982) and Albert Ellis's *Rational Emotive*

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[5] He was referring to the practice of Christians going to diviners or even witchdoctors for relief.

Behaviour Therapy (2011), undergirded by the synthetic theological stance of Bevans (1955). This approach allows that the answer is not straightforwardly in either pole but is hinged on the interface between spirituality and psychology as discussed in chapter one. From analysis of my work with students in TUC, I have found the approach to be efficacious because it firstly frees the clients enough to allow issues related to African cultural beliefs and practices to surface easily. Secondly, once the issues have surfaced, the model utilises the dynamic relation between psychology and spirituality to work through the issues to a conclusion that is satisfactory for the clients, no matter what choices that may involve. What is critical is for the clients to become adequately free to make choices that restore their psycho-spiritual congruence but not accepting any prescribed decisions. Without repeating what has been stated before I want to emphasise Gerald May's assertion that the purpose of counselling is to help the clients find meaning in their lives and therefore it touches on the spiritual reality of the persons (1982). Theologian Paul Tillich is certain that the relationship between psychology and theology is vital: "…it is a relationship of mutual interpretation" (1980, p. 125)

My clinical experience concurs with these views and helps explain why the approach works: according to Rogers (1961) when clients experience counsellor or spiritual director warmth, empathetic stance and non-judgemental acceptance, fear is removed, they feel safe and tension diffuses. They are thus freed to name and reflect on their experiences. The Rogerian attitude is akin to Gerkin's prescription − what he calls psychological or *divinational imaginative feelings*, a requirement for successful pastoral counselling. Such a stance is more than a cognitive activity − it is a grasping of one life by another (1984, p. 42), akin to Rogers's empathy (1961). As such it is contextual, emerging from particular situations, places and times. Rogers continues:

> I have come to feel that the more fully the individual is understood and accepted, the more he(she) tends to drop the false fronts with which he (she) has been meeting life, and the more he(she) tends to move in a direction which is forward… If I can provide a certain a certain type of relationship, the other person will discover within himself (herself) the capacity to use that relationship for growth, and change and personal development will occur (1961, p. 26-27; 33)

The characteristics he identifies as crucial to a therapeutic relationship are counsellor genuineness, warm acceptance of the counselees and empathetic understanding of their

feelings and thoughts *as they experience them*. Such a stance has to be completely value free to be effective. Rogers considers these conditions to be enough for growth to occur: when this happens, change "…will invariably occur…" in any relationship, he asserts (1967, p. 35).

On the opposite pole, the practice of "spiritual confrontation" where the helper challenges the clients to review the incongruence between their professed faith and their behaviour vis-à-vis traditional beliefs has been recommended (Richards and Bergin, 1997) and is actually used by some of my colleagues in the SLM. However, by their own admission the strategy does not work very well: their experience has been that once clients are challenged in such a manner, they tend to close the relationship prematurely or avoid the issue in future encounters completely (Appendix 6).

As can be seen from the foregoing, Rogers (1961) and Gerkin (1984) have laid great emphasis on helper attitude as being fundamental to the outcome of the therapeutic relationship. A positive attitude helps the clients move out from behind the façade they have been hiding, become more self-aware and accepting, more open and free to grow and become more truly who they want to be. Rogers (1961) stated that when clients came to him he tried to create an environment that was safe, empathetic, fully accepting and freeing so that they could move their thoughts and feelings in whichever direction they chose. Experience had showed him that people choose to move in the direction that makes them increasingly free. They drop the masks they have been wearing as they feel free to experience their deepest feelings so that they can discover more their real selves. In a safe and freeing environment the need for defensiveness is replaced by openness to reality: one is willing to experience what one has actually been suppressing. It is this kind of attitude I suggest that as helpers we need to adopt in order to free our clients to face the realities of their situations without feeling the need to hide behind the masks of being Christian, religious or clerical. Rogers added:

> This openness of awareness to whatever exists *at this moment* in oneself and in the *situation* is, I believe, an important element of the description of the person who emerges from therapy (1961, p. 116).

This stance is supported by the experience of some of his clients who have observed of the therapist:

> Here was a sane, intelligent person wholeheartedly accepting this behaviour that seemed so shameful to me. I can remember an organic feeling of relaxation. I did not have to keep up the

struggle to cover up and hide this shameful person…what I felt was warm acceptance…what I needed to work through my difficulties (1961, pp. 38-39).

The stance, according to Rogers (1961), works because in the person-centred helper, the clients find what he calls a genuine "alter ego" who accepts their confusions, ambivalences, perceptions completely and expresses them accurately without being emotionally entangled. This helps the clients see themselves objectively and paves the way for them to accept themselves with all their issues which are now more clearly viewed. It confers on the clients new insights and creates what Rogers call "a therapeutic space" (1961, p. 74). Others like the psychologist Carl Jung (1993) and the Roman Catholic theologian, Henri Nouwen (1996) concur.

My experience has been that adopting the Rogerian stance helps clients dealing with cultural issues to begin dropping their façade, get in touch with their deep feelings and embrace the need for change but I feel that the model does not provide adequate tools for the requisite growth. The clients also need a systematic theoretical approach to help them rationalize the feelings associated with their experiences and work through them. It is to serve that purpose that I propose incorporating Albert Ellis's Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) to create an effective tool as I will show below.

The essence of REBT is the use of cognitive and behavioural techniques to help people modify their feelings and behaviour by changing their negative thinking. Albert Ellis, the American psychologist who developed the theory in 1955, stated that it is not the events or experiences that cause emotional response but rather the beliefs, thoughts, views, evaluations and attitudes that people have towards the occurrences. His view of human nature was that it was capable of rational and irrational thoughts and actions; self-actualization as well as self-destructiveness (Ellis et al, 1987).

Ellis identified two types of beliefs that cause feelings: the first type, comprises wishes and preferences that are adaptable, reasonable, positive and attainable and drive individuals to accept themselves despite their weaknesses. The second type consists of absolute and rigid attitudes such as "musts," "shoulds," "have to" and so on that place a heavy burden on the individuals, other people and the world (Ellis et al, 1997, p. 189). If the underlying

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expectations are not met, terrible consequences are expected. Such beliefs are illogical yet cause untold emotional stress and can block healthy development. However, by altering the perception towards the events through engaging in disputing self-dialogue, one can change one's attitude and the subsequent feelings and behaviours in relation to the same events/experiences. In what has been termed as the "ABC (OR ABCDE) Theory," (Ellis and Ellis, 2011, pp. 23-24) viewed the various components as interacting as shown in the diagram below:

A (activating events or adversities) ←**B** (belief or belief system) →**C** (emotional and behavioural consequences)

↑

D (disputing interventions) →**E** (effect) →**F** (new feeling)
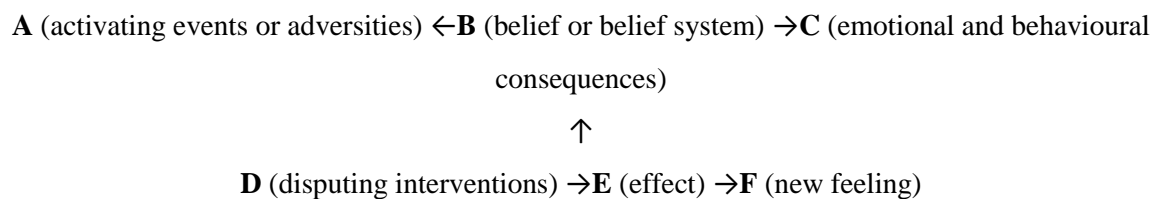
(Adapted from Corey, 2005, p. 274)

In this strategy counsellors act as trainers, teaching the counselees techniques and strategies that can help them overcome their problems. They help the clients to identify and dispute their illogical or irrational beliefs, attitudes and thoughts and replace them with rational ones, what the Ellises call "effective new philosophies" (2011, p. 25), hence altering the subsequent emotions and behaviours. Counselling thus becomes "an educational process" (Corey, 2005, p. 272) in which the destructive thoughts, perceptions and actions are debunked and replaced with healthy ones. The model involves helping the clients to change absolutistic thinking, what the Ellises call "tyranny of the musts" (2011, p. 40) conveyed in words like should, have to, ought to, is expected to, and so on. It essentially involves altering the client's internal dialogue in order to change the associated feelings and thus heal or remove the associated problems. This therapeutic model is recommended for treating psychological problems like anxiety, phobias, shame, guilt and depression (Corey 2005; Ellis and Ellis 2011). It is, thus, very appropriate in dealing with the psycho-spiritual issues and subsequent feelings relating to African traditional cultural beliefs and practices with students in TUC and elsewhere.

Combining the Rogerian and Ellis's approaches with Bevans' theological proposition for cultural synthesis (discussed in chapter two) has yielded happy resolutions with many of my clients as I will demonstrate. Such a combination is akin to the strategy adopted by Jesus in

dealing with people's difficult personal issues, for example, the Samaritan woman (Jn. 4: 1-26) and Zacchaeus (Lk. 19: 2-8). Jesus would meet people wherever they were at, love and accept them unconditionally and patiently dialogue with them as he led them to deeper self-understanding, better comprehension of the oppressing issue and eventually to greater freedom and more abundant or fullness of life. It was his total and loving acceptance of the person as well as the ensuing interrogation of the status quo that became the bases for their growth to greater integration and wholeness. This is the thrust I want to propose as therapeutic in working with issues emanating from African cultural beliefs and practices. I must have been using this combination of strategies for years without being very explicit about what I was doing and why it was working (Muraya, 2009). It is the reflexivity that is inherent in this study that has led me to analyse my approach and articulate it more clearly, thus bringing about that awareness.

To illustrate how REBT works, I want to return to the case of Peter presented in chapter four (Appendix 11).

It took several sessions before I felt confident enough to suggest what I had begun to sense as the crux of his problem. In the intervening period, we developed a rapport, a therapeutic relationship based on my total acceptance of him and a non-judgemental attitude towards his problem and its origin. This gave me confidence to broach my intuition and freed him adequately to become willing to examine his situation with an open mind. Getting to understand his predicament better had convinced me that the REBT was the ideal tool to help him out of his dilemma. I thus set about explaining the main tenets of the theory to him as follows:

Counsellor 9: It is clear you are facing a huge demand which is causing you a lot of stress but I wonder where the real pressure is coming from – is it coming from yourself or from your family?

Client 10*:* It must be from both. (Silence, head bowed down, nestled between his open hands. He then raised his head and had a faraway look as he continued to talk…) I cannot escape the role I am supposed to play as an African first born son, especially because my mother is a single parent. She has done so much for us, so I cannot just say goodbye and pretend that because I have become a religious man, she does not exist. This sickness of hers is what has

made things so difficult because treatment has cost a lot of money and she is unable to work at the moment. How I wish she would understand!

Counsellor 10: You wish your mother would understand that you are not earning a salary and are thus unable to continue meeting her financial needs. I wonder whether you yourself have internalised that reality…in other words, have you fully accepted your new status as a religious man who has embraced poverty? I ask this because I see your own take on the matter as being fundamental in how you respond to your mother's requests.

Client 11: You have exactly touched on the real issue. Yes, I am a religious man without an income, but I am also an African man who has some obligations according to our culture.

Counsellor 11: What I am hearing is that you find yourself caught up between your Christian calling and a traditional expectation and are wondering how to reconcile the two.

Client 12: Exactly…

Counsellor 12: If you are open to it, we could look at some ways in which you could work through this within yourself first then you might be able to come to some sort of understanding with your mother. We could make that the focus of our next meeting.

Client 13: That sounds like a great idea.

I spent the best part of the following couple of sessions explaining to Peter the basic concepts underlying the REBT and how these would apply in his situation. He was very receptive and eager to work through his own thought process to examine the reality of his religious life and its implication vis-à-vis the cultural expectation of him by his family and the larger society. The realization that his stress and general unhappiness emanated more from his perception of his situation and less from the actual financial need and his inability to meet it was a startling discovery. Other clients like Martha have been equally amazed to discover the role their thoughts were playing in producing the emotions they were experiencing (Muraya, 2009). The essence of REBT is thus to empower clients to alter their feelings by changing their thought process. Thus freed, the clients are in a position to make decisions that are congruent with whom they are *no matter what choices they make..*

A few sessions were required to help Peter gain enough insight into the predicament of his decision to live as a religious man vowed to a life of poverty and what that choice implied *vis-à-vis the role tradition expected of him*. This was his deliberate choice and he wanted to

freely embrace it. What he needed was help to work towards that end. We agreed that he would adopt the following statement and keep repeating to himself: "I know as a religious man, I will not be able to meet the financial needs of my family, now and in the future." Below are some reflections from Peter in a later session.

Client 1: (Appears more relaxed than ever before.) The positive self talk you suggested has really been helpful. I feel more at ease with this whole issue than ever before.

Counsellor 1: Tell me more about it…

Client 2: You suggested, if I remember correctly, that I keep repeating to myself the reality of my situation as a religious man – that I will not be able to fulfil the traditional role of looking after my mother and siblings. Doing so seems to have eased my tension substantially although at times, I have found myself going back to my old frame of mind and wondering where the money will come from and even asking myself how I, a first born son, could abandon my mother when she seems to need me so much. (As he says this visible tension appears on his countenance.)

Counsellor 2*:* So what have you done with your mantra?

Client 5: As I said last time the concept is fascinating, but I must say I have, at times, had to battle with my attitude. I am convinced I need to and can change it and that doing so is critical for me because new financial needs will keep arising and I will not be in a position to meet them. I know that is a fact which I need to accept as a part of my life. I also realize that how I deal with such demands will depend a lot on my frame of mind – I am convinced and determined to get my mother to accept that reality. I know she will resist it initially but I have to remind her of what I told her before I joined the congregation. Do you know what she said? She told me she was a good Catholic and knew she would get neither money nor grandchildren from me. She said she was prepared for the sacrifice, but what has she been doing? The opposite as far as money is concerned. I even asked her one day whether she wanted me to give up religious life and she said under no circumstances was I to think of doing so on her account. What I have learnt is a very important lesson that will remain with me all my life.

Counsellor 5: (Surprised by the dramatic change of attitude.) Where are all these thoughts leading to?

Client 6*:* They are leading me to a very serious talk that I need to have with my mother when she gets better and I have ample time at home. Maybe I will do that during the Christmas break.

Counsellor 7: How about the traditional expectation and what people will say - how do you feel about it now?

Client 8*:* To tell you the truth that has been the easier part to deal with. Since I have come to terms with the reality of my religious vocation many cultural requirements must go through the window…and even having said that I know the concern for the needs of my family will keep coming up but now I can face it better without allowing the expectations of others to weigh me down. I continue praying about it and am convinced I have found a solution, a weapon to use to face the challenge…

I want to propose that combining the Rogerian conditions of worth with the REBT holds the solution to the question of how best to work with those students who present with issues relating to cultural beliefs and practices. The main reason for the efficacy of the approach is that it engages the clients cognitively and helps them to appraise their situation and shift from what the Ellises call "awfulising"(2011 p. 70) of their circumstances to a rational stance. One would also hope that the strategy is useful because once internalised, it equips the clients with a powerful tool to use in many other similar situations. It is thus empowering. Besides the case of Peter, I have used the same model with others in both counselling and spiritual direction with equally happy outcomes. In addition, though not calling her approach by its official name, I have indicated the success one of the other members of the SLM team who employs the same techniques has had in her spiritual direction encounters (Lines 59-94, p. 2, Appendix 8).

Essentially, the reason why this combination of strategies works is because it frees and empowers the clients to make decisions that are consonant with whom they are and what they want out of life, thus restoring them to congruence. Even if after interrogating their situations Peter and Xavier had opted to leave religious life, the approach would still have been successful as it would have helped them, firstly to make that decision and secondly, to embrace their new realities without feeling unduly pressured by the expectations of others.

Ma Mpolo and Kalu have emphasised a similar line of thinking, though writing from a medical point of view. This is how they put it:

> As a starting point, the therapist should accept as valid the experience of the patient. The therapeutic encounter lowers the distance separating the patient and the therapist. By accepting

the diagnosis of the patient, his/her world view is at the disposal of the therapist who, with analytical mind, can explore it in depth (eds., 1985, p. 5).

That is what the traditional healers do. The diviners, for example, chat up their clients then use various objects to listen to the spirits who direct them to the desired diagnosis. They then take time to explain to the clients what the outcome is. Olu Makinde concurs stating that the traditional Nigerian *babalawo* (diviner) employs similar tactics as these underpinning the Rogerian approach. According to him, they are thus very popular and solve 75% (no evidence offered!) of the problems. He recommends adapting those techniques rather than throwing them away (Cited by Gichinga, 2005).

The suggestion closely resembles Ellis's REBT discussed above as it has everything to do with changing mind-sets. Failure to do so may lead to either duality or a vacuum, two situations that cause undue stress to the concerned Christians as they try to operate from two opposing milieu or fill the lacunas. One of the SLM members summarised the predicament thus:

> When we talk about the psyche or the mind, what is it? These are the deep beliefs that actually influence our thinking, which we use to interpret our experiences and generate our behaviours and inform our relationships. So unless they are healthy,... Sometimes some of them (Christians) are going to Tanga, some are going to Suba Wanga and so they are trying to get some ground to stand on because they had not been given anything they can rely on (Lines 373-375; 382-385, pp. 8-9, Appendix 1).

The emphasis here is that many Africans need some psycho-spiritual experience as provided by African traditional culture and religion. Another colleague put it this way:

> I want to propose the answer that experience is the foundation of our faith…That is probably why so many people go to the Pentecostal churches because they do want an experience. And you see we in our catechesis, we are not providing that kind of experience, whichever way. The aim of the catechism of the Good Shepherd is to enable the child to fall in love with God. Now you see until you have that kind of experience, you cannot trust. Whom are you trusting in? It isn't somebody that you know and you know loves you intimately. So it has to be on that basis ultimately, whatever way it is going to happen (Lines 100-111; 124-129, p. 3, Appendix 1).

Due mainly to the unfavourable attitude of Christianity and Western-style education towards traditional African culture and related practices many of the students in TUC are embarrassed about admitting to having issues arising from aspects of the traditional beliefs. Unless a non-threatening and supportive approach is applied the clients tend to steer away from such issues (Lines 96-98, p. 3, Appendix 2; 103-104, p. 3, Appendix 7). This is a part of what renders dealing with these conflicts difficult because the affected are reluctant to disclose the root cause of their troubles, according to a SLM member.

> This is perhaps why we don't speak about it openly because people fear that they are going to be immediately condemned or judged. "How come…"…So it's like we are not going to air out the beliefs that are seen as negative and the beliefs that don't build us and we are not going to propagate this…So this is a conflict which is very hard to deal with because again this is a conflict that we don't talk about openly (Lines 112-115; 123-124, p. 3, Appendix 2).

Sometimes they may not even be aware of what actually lies at the bottom of the emotions as was the case with Peter but when they get to understand and realise they can overcome it, they are overjoyed (The case of Peter, Appendix 9; the case of Ciru, Appendix 11; the case of Martha, Muraya, 2009).

Crucially, as Lartey (2006) points out, counsellors and spiritual guides in multi-cultural set-ups need to modify their Western-based training to suit it to different contexts. Western pastoral care is based on individualistic, highly rationalistic, affective-expressive mode and is aimed at promoting the development and satisfaction of the self (p. 50). Bearing in mind the centrality of community and relatedness in an African context calls for an intercultural pastoral care model that celebrates difference while upholding the common elements among all human beings. *Such an approach attends to what is universal in all people while respecting cultural and individual differences*.

Conclusion

The chapter opened by making reference to the factual conclusions of the study and some discourse about them in relation to relevant literature which revealed a set of conceptual conclusions. I then proposed and explained the working of a combination of therapeutic attitudes and strategies that I have found to be efficacious in mitigating the needs of the students presenting with such issues as evidenced by vignettes from my clinical experience.

The Rogerian and REBT approaches grounded on a Bevans' synthetic approach to enculturation (as discussed in chapter two), are effective in both spirituality and in psychological counselling. While the study is not replicable, some of these findings can be applied in similar situations and hence have value beyond TUC. This is an example of a dialogical approach to conversion as an on-going process which Africa needs for its psychological and spiritual health.

In the final chapter I intend to review my conclusions and highlight areas for further work.

Chapter 6: Conclusion, Recommendations and the Way Forward

Introduction

This research is an outgrowth of my practice as a member of the pastoral team that is engaged with counselling and spiritual direction with students in TUC. The need to carry out the study arose out of a felt desire to find out whether there are issues of traditional African cultural mores that impinge on the psycho-spiritual well-being of young African Christian students in the college and the most efficacious way(s) of working with such students. All the research participants − students and colleagues in the SLM and my own clinical experience − pointed to the existence of such practices that cause stress and general unhappiness to the affected students. In addition, experience and research findings clearly showed that the issues did not surface easily and even when they did, the helpers were not always sure of the best approaches to adopt in working with the affected students. The research therefore sought to try to better understand the situation and find out whether there was anything the helpers could do to encourage the issues surface and help the affected students work through them successfully. In the following sections I will summarise my findings; reiterate the methods used to collect data and extract meaning from them and the conclusions reached; show how the study makes some contribution to knowledge; reflect on my journey and critique the study; make final recommendations.

Factual and interpretive conclusions

The study was carried out for two main purposes: firstly it was to find out whether or not some residual features of African traditional cultural practices do *actually* negatively affect the psycho-spiritual health of the young African Christian students in TUC. The second one was to, thereafter, propose a strategy that would be effective in helping the issues surface and in guiding the students to work through them to attain congruence.

The clinical vignettes and the focus groups have generated outcomes grounded in the evidence: a*s outlined above,* the data support the *hunch I had begun with - that indeed there are several issues of African traditional cultural beliefs and practice that negatively impact the psycho-spiritual well-being of some of the young African Christian students in TUC.* The data have also revealed that the issues were more rampant than I had thought. This is an

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element that could be further investigated through a quantitative study to establish the extent of the phenomenon. In addition, the findings confirmed my initial observation that the issues do not surface easily mainly because the clients are embarrassed about being caught up in elements of a culture that has somewhat been viewed as retrogressive and incompatible with Christianity, Western-style education and life in the technological age. According to my findings the issues that affect the students are rooted in an all-encompassing world view and comprise belief in the potency of such life forces as witchcraft, ancestral and other spirits, kinship ties and attendant obligations, the power of bad omens, the evil eye, the curse, diviners and the obligation for all adults to bear and raise children.

Related literatures and conversations with groups of students and some colleagues in the SLM indicated that the issues do indeed exist and sometimes, may be presented in either counselling or spiritual direction. The beliefs create fear, shame, anger and guilt, resulting in tension/stress that lasts until the clients manage to successfully work through the issues. In addition some of the participating members of the SLM indicated their loss as to what the best approach is in working with students thus affected. As such, they welcomed this study which they hoped would go a long way in proposing a strategy of helping clients presenting with such issues.

In response to that need, I have reflected on my clinical experience which has pointed to a way of engaging the clients that not only frees and empowers them to explore their African cultural practices-related problems but also work through them to achieve better psycho-spiritual health. That strategy combines the Rogerian Person-Centred approach with Albert Ellis's Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT). Evidence from my work with students facing such issues has shown that combining these two counselling models works whether the problem is presented in counselling or in spiritual direction. The reason for this is that in both situations, the stance helps the concerned students to interrogate their feelings and arrive at cognitive appreciation of the genesis of the problems: by altering their thinking, they can change their feelings and attain congruence. From a spiritual perspective what the approach does is to help the students synthesise their African roots with their Christian faith without feeling the need to discard one for the other. It helps them to realize they can remain rooted in their cultures and also embrace their new identity as Christians. In order to establish the

general usefulness of such an approach beyond my own clinical practice, further study would be needed. Its place in this study is generative.

Such a synthetic approach as that I am proposing resonates with those suggested by Stephen Bevans's synthetic stance (1955) which models contextual theology and resonates especially with the post conciliar Vatican II documents that call for the enculturation of the Gospel in the traditional cultures in which it is planted (Sweeney et al, 2010).

The call for enculturating the Gospel is a response to the reality of the resistance to change and resilience of some cultural beliefs and practices, despite the passing of time and the many forces of change that have assailed them. As indicated in chapter two, cultures, like second natures, are deeply ingrained in people's psyches and eradicating them can be difficult if not outright futile. Moreover, some cultural practices are not necessarily contrary to Gospel values – indeed, in some cases, they could actually enhance the latter. That notwithstanding, it is of special significance for this study, bearing in mind the large number of religious women and men students in the college, to recognise that vowed religious life in Africa is counter-cultural in many aspects (Bujo, 1992). Bujo (1992) and others have fairly successfully called for inculturation of religious life that might take on board some of the important cultural elements. While that has been achieved in certain aspects, the religious orders remain adamant in others. Indeed I have been reliably informed that what a number of the congregations are doing is to circumvent rather than address a number of the issues, for example, by being very reluctant to take on first born sons as candidates.[6] In a continent where vocations to religious life are booming, the congregations are currently in a position to have it their way.

Another significant interpretive conclusion is the realization that susceptibility to change depends on people's cultural dispositions: those not deeply embedded in the traditional culture more easily embrace the Western cultural trappings that often accompany Christianity while the opposite is also true. This is supported by both student participants and members of the SLM all of who indicated varying degrees of attachment to traditional practices and the

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[6] Conversations on diverse dates in Nairobi with several formators from different congregations who have students in TUC.

subsequent impact that has had on their attitudes towards traditional beliefs and practices. Added to this is the realization that helping methods that directly challenge the students' belief system are viewed as judgemental and are therefore less likely to produce the desired outcomes. This closely resonates with the conclusion that interpreting the problem of cultural interference psychologically as dissonance rather than syncretism, that is, initially suspending moral judgement, is more effective than seeking to explore it theologically from the onset. The reason for that is because the Rogerian approach, recommended in the study, confers safety and freedom on the clients to identify and explore the problem so as to work out a conclusion that they can own. Combining the Rogerian stance with Ellis's REBT generates an appreciative understanding of the cause(s) of problem(s) and, in addition, empowers the clients to deal with similar situations in the future.

Conceptual conclusions

Conceptually a number of conclusions are feasible. Firstly, it has become evident that in practice *inculturation involves admitting and working through cultural dissonance*. This calls for a theological shift in (the attitude of) the care giver (and hopefully the students as well) that conversion is a long and on-going process that in such situations involves synthesising the Gospel and culture as proposed by Niebuhr's contextual (1951) and Bevans' synthetic (1955) models.

The call for inculturation is grounded on the reality that God is present and at work in all cultures and that for Christianity to make a full impact it needs to be incarnated into the local contexts. As indicated in chapter two, it is this reality that undergirds all calls for inculturation.

Secondly, with students experiencing dissonance due to culture-related issues, the study has shown that *transformation, conversion and growth is dependent upon the ability to make cognitive shifts vis-à-vis the issue(s)*. This is supported by the three cases cited from my practice and similar ones mentioned by colleagues: invariably, once the clients had successfully worked through the presenting problem, they talked of feeling liberated and empowered to face similar situations in the future. In Peter's case, for example, he was planning to have a long talk with his mother in which he was going to explain his new

understanding of his situation as a male religious in relation to the cultural expectation (Appendix 11).

Through the study, it has become clear that *sound spirituality highly correlates with a healthy psychological state.* Shults and Sandage, affirming this stand, state that "Healthy spirituality is life-giving…" because spirituality involves all the human dimensions (2006, p. 210). In my practice this reality has been manifested many times. A good number of the students whom I have accompanied in spiritual direction have experienced and talked of problems relating to cultural practices that were interfering with their relationship with God. Peter is a case in point. In his own words, his inability to fulfil a cultural norm was blocking his communication with God and was preventing him from enjoying the fullness of life he knew he ought to. However, when he began to work through the issue and became less troubled, his prayer life improved and a zest for life began to return (Appendix 11).

Furthermore, the study has demonstrated that *transformation and growth involve cognitive changes as well as spiritual and emotional ones.* That realisation is grounded on the understanding that the three human dimensions are interrelated and what affects one of them touches all the others. As shown in chapter five, for students experiencing problems due to culture-related issues to feel better, they need not only to understand the cognitive genesis of their problem but also to synthesise the cultural norm in question in light of the Gospel. Gaining intellectual insights positively affects their emotions and that impacts their spiritual well-being.

My journey through the study

The research which was triggered by a hunch, an intuition, has been a journey of reflection, growth and discovery and has ended with better self-understanding as a practitioner and of my practice. It has led me to a greater appreciation of the need for more openness and empathy towards experiences that I may not identify with in order to become a more effective pastoral carer.

The hunch at the core of the study was borne from counselling and spiritual direction encounters in which the matters being presented pointed to a clash between Christian beliefs and some elements of traditional African cultural beliefs and practices. With my kind of

background the discovery was unexpected and very surprising. It, however, pointed to a need to interrogate the phenomenon so as to understand it better for the purpose of improving the pastoral care in which I was engaged. That the affected students were finding it difficult to articulate their issue(s) pointed to the need for great empathy and desire to understand where they were coming from. Becoming engaged in practitioner-research compelled me to reflect more on what I was doing and its effects than would otherwise have happened. It was that exercise that led to teasing out, understanding and articulating a counselling model I had been using without thinking very much about its theoretical underpinnings. Reflexivity, greater self-awareness and openness have thus become important components of my practice.

Further reflection has helped me realize that a part of the reason why empathetic listening has been a hallmark of my practice is anchored in an earlier personal experience that had made an indelible mark. The experience had occurred some twenty years earlier when facing a faith crisis and needing someone to accompany me in the struggle. After several false starts, the person who eventually became a helpful guide was a spiritual director whose orientation was basically Rogerian. He was remarkable in his capacity and willingness to listen with openness, respect and empathy - to what was often disjointed and unclear discourse where others had failed by either trivialising my experience, judging or jumping to quick fixes that did not meet my deepest yearnings. In a relationship that has spanned over two decades, the consistent stance of this spiritual guide has freed and empowered me to reflect and make choices that I am content and happy to live out. He helped me to regain congruence, peace and joy in life. That is what pastoral carers should hope to help the cared for attain without which the clients would not be poised to receive the abundant life that Christ wants his followers to enjoy. The relationship had begun long before I trained for and became involved with pastoral work and when I eventually did, it was very natural that my experience would strongly influence my practice. Without that background my pastoral orientation might have been very different and so too would the course of this study which is underpinned by my practice. Furthermore the study might have been focused on a different aspect, for example, a search for numbers/quantities. A different research question such as: *How many* or *what proportion of the student body is affected by issues of traditional African cultural practices*? – would have been feasible and would have led to a totally different study. Moreover the research could have been conceived to include a wider context beyond TUC and possibly to

encompass a broader population. Such an enquiry would have required a different design and approach.

Analysing the data accruing form the conversations has been an onerous task that has involved reading and re-reading the transcripts and sometimes, going back to the audio tapes to listen again to the conversations. Trying to make sense of such masses of data has made it necessary to relate and inter-relate various disciplines, including spirituality, psychology, anthropology - and draw meaning out of that interface. It has thus been a time-consuming exercise but one that has given me the advantage of becoming very familiar with the data not just the big picture but the details, the nuances which are critical in conversation among Africans.

Throughout the study, I have deliberately remained in touch with my initial negative attitude towards many of the African cultural beliefs and practices some of which I was working with. While my task was to interpret only what the data revealed, I was sharply aware of the danger of *hearing* or *reading* what was not there and hence the need to double check. The study has thus been a growth experience through which I have become more reflexive and increasingly sharply aware of myself in practice.

Recommendations

This is practitioner-research and thus does not offer generalizations. It is insider research that combines "knowledge-in-use" with "reflections-on-practice" (Trafford, 2002, p. 197). Nevertheless, the outcomes enable me to make propositions that are available to others to test as hypotheses or advance the research. These comprise the contributions to knowledge that I feel the study has made.

i.   There is need for more studies to be carried out in this area, especially quantitative ones, to establish the extent to which/numbers of African Christians are affected by traditional cultural beliefs and practices. Vague statements like "some", "many" or "most" have been made but without back up. If so many African Christians are struggling with issues of culture and traditions it goes without saying that practical theologians and pastoral carers have a duty to try to understand the phenomenon better in order to become more effective

in their caring role. Further studies might be carried out to test the broad applicability of the Rogers-Ellis approach.

ii. The study has highlighted the need for individuals to attain a measure of synthesis between the embedded traditional theology and Christianity for a happy resolution. However, how that actually happens is beyond the scope of the current study but would be a useful lead to follow as such an understanding would help to improve pastoral care.

iii. Above all, the research has significant implications for persons engaged in pastoral care, especially in multi-cultural contexts, who need to be cognisant of the following:

- The need for their practice to make deliberate efforts to understand, as much as possible, the contexts in which they work.

- Irrespective of their understanding of local culture(s), awareness among the pastoral carers of the possibility of cultural carry-overs is essential. As such they need to develop an empathetic attitude that would help the care seekers to feel safe and free to allow the issues to surface and be worked through. Without such a stance the care seekers tend to feel judged on account of their experiences and thus tend to suppress them.

- Institutions training for the pastoral ministry need to sensitise their students on the possibility of cultural issues among the Christians because with the world becoming a global village most of the ministers will inevitably serve multi-ethnic communities, even in their own coutries.

- Beyond the multicultural arena the study has ramifications as, for example, it highlights the interface between psychology and spirituality – that cognition affects spirituality – a reality that needs to be recognised and embraced by pastoral carers for successful outcomes.

Statement of contribution to knowledge

The study has made some modest contribution to knowledge in a number of significant ways.

Firstly, it has explained and brought to light what a number of pastoral providers in TUC had sensed was an underlying problem affecting some of the students but none of them had articulated the issues, understood them very well or knew how best to help the affected

clients. By engaging them through the focus groups and depth interviews, the study has begun a conversation that has ignited interest in what has been known to be an underlying problem but one which no one had paid much attention to.

Secondly, by examining the way in which in my own practice I have combined two well-known counselling approaches - the Rogerian Person-centred and Ellis's REBT and adding on to them the dialogical approach to theology as proposed by Richard Niebuhr's incarnational (1951) and Stephen Bevans' synthetic (1955) models - the study has provided a practical way of working with the clients to help them explore and work through issue(s) relating to cultural beliefs and practices for Christians. This exposure should provide an answer to an expressed need by some of the SLM members. It works in spiritual direction as well and in psychological counselling.

Thirdly, the study has shed some light on the question of what happens when indigenous Africans embrace Christianity. By exploring the different ways in which people respond to Christianity and its cultural package, the study has helped to remove the veil of extremities encountered in certain literatures. These findings should be of interest to all people who are engaged in evangelisation in Africa.

Conclusion

Finally, as I come to the close of this work, I cannot but marvel at how a hunch, an intuition - has led to a full-scale research which has caught the interest of colleagues and others in pastoral care.

Many have expressed anticipation of a study such as this that seeks to understand what has clearly been a problem in pastoral practice but which had not been investigated. The study has shown that indeed tenets of African traditional beliefs system do impinge on the psycho-spiritual health of young, Western-style educated, technologically savvy African Christian students and that it is possible to work with those affected to help them regain congruence. The research has proposed that by combining the Rogerian Person-centred and Ellis's REBT counselling models and synthesising Christian and traditional elements as proposed by

Niebuhr (1951) and Bevans (1955), the helpers could work with those affected to assist them work through their issues.

A by-product of my research has confirmed the reality that the therapeutic approach recommended for counselling works in spiritual direction as well. That realisation is a wake-up call for the often overlooked interface between spirituality and psychology, a reality that is of utmost significance for pastoral carers because their work straddles the two dimensions. More work could be done in this area, especially to try and unravel the process involved in developing synthesis between different world views and value systems, not only in the African context, but in any cross-cultural community.

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1   **APPENDIX 1: Focus Group Meeting with Tangaza College Counsellors and Spiritual**
2   **Guides**

3   **(18/10/2010)**

4   **Mrs. Muraya:** Let me begin by thanking you all for accepting to become a part of this group
5   process which is one of the methods I am employing to collect data for my study. To reiterate
6   the information I have already circulated, the focus of the study is an examination of ways in
7   which some residual African traditional beliefs and practices may be presenting problems in
8   the psychological and spiritual welfare of young African Christians and how best counsellors
9   and spiritual guides can respond to that need. The study arose out of my own experience
10   working with students in both counselling and spiritual direction here in TC. I trust that by
11   sharing your experience, you will enrich mine and also help in building a practice that meets
12   the needs of the students in this respect.

13   To start us off I want to pose the question: "Do you think that African cultural beliefs and
14   practices play a significant role in the lives of modern African Christian students? Do you
15   have evidence/examples of this?
16
17   **FQ……..:** To respond to that I would say that African cultural beliefs and practices play a
18   significant role in the lives of modern African Christians. Somehow somewhere I don't know
19   what happened because that strength that used to make people believe seems actually to have
20   faded away. People seem to be left with a vacuum which makes them not to know where to
21   get the strength, and for that, I am seeing people more and more falling back to their cultural
22   beliefs so much so that some people feel very safe in this culture. I remember one priest who
23   had come from Rome and he was approached by his parents, as he was the only one in their
24   family who was not culturally "protected" as per their belief: the rest of the people in the
25   family, they were "protected." So he was supposed to go to a diviner to seek some form of
26   "protection. As a priest he experienced conflict between his Christian faith and the beliefs of
27   his family and as such he knew he should have said "no", but he went.
28
29   **Mrs. Muraya**: When you say he went, do you mean he went to a diviner to seek protection?

30   **FQ……..:** Yes, he went to a diviner seek protection. What I have realised with most of the
31   people is that they want to believe in what touches them instantly. It also seems that there is a
32   tendency of greater belief in the efficacy of a traditional practitioner than in me who is a
33   priest and geared more on the spiritual aspects of his life and not connecting to the
34   psychological aspect of the young person. This may not be appealing to their beliefs as the
35   traditionalist does. So those are the things I would say may cause people to fall back to their
36   cultural beliefs.

37   **SJ……..:** Thank you, father, for your insights. I think for me, as a counsellor, what I have
38   come to realise is that most of our students are deeply rooted in their own African cultural
39   beliefs. And as they come for counselling, many a time you realize that they tend to associate
40   the issues that they are carrying with them to some of their beliefs, whatever is in the belief
41   system - so much so that it is not easy to ignore the whole aspect of African belief system
42   when you are counselling the African students. I have for, instance, issues that come up
43   mostly have to do with evil spirits - some have an experience of someone chasing them at

44   night or they keep on hearing voices and sometimes these voices are from people who are
45   known to them, mostly their uncles or their parents who are already dead. So for me, when I
46   work with students, I always think it is very important for them to try to look at where some
47   of these issues are coming from and their relation to their traditional beliefs. You do not just
48   ignore them; and perhaps if I don't have the expertise to deal with the issues I would refer
49   them to the relevant people and see the way forward. But truly my experience is that a
50   number of them are real issues with their culture. And sometimes you cannot rule out the
51   value of some of these beliefs: you cannot rule them out completely. Sometimes it takes you
52   to get to understand their meaning and then help the students really to appreciate whatever is
53   happening to them and then we see the way forward for them.

54   **SL……..:** This is quite different for me. I am coming form a different background. From my
55   experience, I don't have an alternative to choose from, except being an atheist. In my
56   experience, I have been brought up in a Christian background where it was all Christianity
57   and there was no other culture. This is different: what I am hearing is that students have a
58   choice and when you have a choice, you are not going to let it go. This is a situation whereby
59   we have a culture that is very permanent and penetrating while shaping their lives against a
60   Christian culture that is being introduced to our life. What I am hearing a little bit from you,
61   Fr. Quirine, and what I am hearing from Jacinta is the experience of fear, fear that is
62   characterized by the terrifying aspects of culture.

63   **Mrs. Muraya:** That is interesting. From what you are saying, Loretta, I have particularly
64   picked up two elements: one is that you come from a background that is purely Christian and
65   therefore there is not much of an alternative from Christianity. How do you, from that
66   background, help the students who experience issues related to their cultural backgrounds?

67   **SL……..:** As a spiritual director, I have not had many issues of this kind, probably because I
68   am not an African. But nevertheless, I had this issue that this person would not outrightly talk
69   about openly. To me I could see there is something that is terrifying and that she had a strong
70   belief that it is very difficult to trust in another power. So that is what is basically the problem
71   – fear and you cannot rationalize it.

72   **SJ……..:** I have realized that these beliefs are very alive. From my experience of the village,
73   there is the fear that something will happen if I don't do ABC…and in some instances it has
74   been experienced that someone did not do this or that and something terrible happened. We
75   had a family which believed in traditional beliefs, irrespective of their Christian faith. What
76   happened is that if one fails to do something, ABC...will happen. So as they embrace
77   Christianity, there is that fear that out of their experience, something happened to whoever
78   defied traditions and so they cannot say these powers are not there. But because it is already
79   in my belief system and I have seen certain things really happen to particular people then I
80   kind of remain with that fear and say, ok, what do I have to do? The struggle remains.
81
82   **Mrs. Muraya:** The struggle remains…even for you?

83   **SJ……..:** Yes, even for me.

84   **Mrs. Muraya:** Thank you very much. That is very insightful.

85   **FQ……..:** The challenge which I face as a spiritual director or as a counsellor is to help this
86   individual person to build that confidence that there is another power that is stronger than the

87 power in which they are believing. I look at something that happened in my clan just at the
88 beginning of this year. There was wrangling over a piece of land and the paramount chief
89 who was supposed to sort out the situation came up and imposed a kind of curse to the
90 people…he used some cultural, let me call it threat. He told them, "You are cursed if you are
91 the one who was on the wrong and you will die." Unfortunately, within two weeks, the man
92 died. So people…he died of high blood pressure,…(laughter and some inaudible noises of
93 people wanting to speak all together).

94 **SL……..:** Why did he die then not six months later? But go on…

95 **FQ……..:** Now since they were two families that were antagonizing themselves there, it was
96 said that the family that was at the centre is to be set aside from the rest of the community.
97 My brother who is a catechist - told the people that the curse does not bind him. The other
98 members of the community do not go to that family, and they do not do anything that is likely
99 to connect them with the family. And it is believed that anybody who would go to that family
100 would be affected even to the point of dying like the paramount chief who had died. And yet
101 my brother goes there, works with them, associates with them. For him he believes that as a
102 Christian, the curse does not affect him. Now, here is somebody who has gone beyond that
103 kind of fear. Hence the task a spiritual director would have to do is to empower this person
104 (who comes for help) with that kind of conviction that, yes, there is that power that is greater
105 than the power of a curse and that higher power is in Christ. How to bring this kind of faith to
106 people is the challenge. The fact is that some people do not have yet strong enough faith to
107 enable them overcome that kind of fear, especially today where we have many young men
108 and women who have not yet grown deep in their faith. They are still believing in that
109 spiritual power found in elements of ATR. Unless this fear is rooted out, you may say what, it
110 will be there and people will be sneaking backward as they think that is the way out. That is
111 the problem in spiritual direction I face, and we face it here in Tangaza. My brother here also
112 has been in the same area of counselling our young people. As long as that fear is not cleared,
113 spiritual direction based on Christian faith will remain empty.

114 **FI:** Related to what he has said, the question I would ask is - what is the foundation of that
115 faith? What is the Christian faith all about? I want to propose the answer that experience is
116 the foundation of our faith. Let us take an example that we are moving on a safari and a fox
117 crosses your way: that is considered a bad omen. That is the mysterious aspect of our African
118 traditional beliefs.

119 **Mrs. Muraya:** So what would do you do to help such students?

120 **FI……..:** For the Kikuyus they told me it is the squirrel. For the Luhyas, it is a black cat, but
121 one day a black cat crossed my way and that day I was very lucky - I got a lot of money. So
122 you find that the fear is based on experience. But suppose nothing happened… like I am in
123 the charismatic renewal…you see people…someone comes to you and he is sick and you tell
124 him/her, "Let us pray in front of the blessed sacrament," and the person is healed. From that
125 day onwards the sick person's faith will change…he will have strong faith and will never
126 visit the diviner but will keep coming to the blessed sacrament. So that experience has
127 become the foundation of his/her faith. The conversion has already taken place. There God
128 has spoken through those symbols and the person will never change that belief.

129 **SL……..:** That is probably why so many people do go to the Pentecostal churches because
130 they do want an experience. And you see we in our catechesis, we are not providing that kind
131 of experience, in whichever way. The aim of the Catechism of the Good Shepherd is to

132 enable the child to fall in love with God. Now you see until you have that kind of experience,
133 you cannot trust. For whom are you trusting in? It isn't somebody that you know and you
134 know loves you intimately. So it has to be on that basis ultimately, whatever way it is going
135 to happen.

136 **FI……..:** For me I look at St. Thomas in the bible as the patron of the faith of the youth. He
137 was told by the others," Oh we saw the Lord and we ate with him." "Fine", he said "unless I
138 see and touch, I cannot believe." So the faith of our young people today is based on
139 experience. They want to experience. They even say to Jesus, "Perform a miracle then I shall
140 believe".

141 **Mrs. Muraya:** Would you say that is the situation with our students here in Tangaza?

142 **FI……..:** Very much so. The other day, some sisters said to me, "Father, many people have
143 died in Tangaza - students, priests, lecturers. Come and celebrate a mass for healing the
144 family tree." This was because I had taken them through a course about the family tree during
145 which they gave a lot of witness about the power of cleansing masses and that they believed
146 in that power. This means that now they believe that the power of God can neutralise the
147 power of evil. So they called the office and they told them, "Please, let father organize a mass
148 to heal the family tree of Tangaza because these things are not natural." (…Laughter)

149 **SJ……..:** What was that which was not natural…many deaths in Tangaza?

150 **FI……:** The many deaths, yes.

151 **SJ……..**: In Tangaza?

152 **FI……..:** Yes, in Tangaza.

153 **FQ……..:** The way I look at it also questions our approach to spiritual direction. We learn
154 the art of spiritual direction in class; we get it from the way theologians have presented it -
155 kind of bookish way of looking at it. But look at the way the Pentecostals are doing it and it
156 has also gotten in our charismatic renewal! People will believe in this one who is an exorcist
157 and would go to that person rather than to the one who is a refined, formed and systematized
158 spiritual director.

159 **FI……..:** Do you know what happened the other day in our house in Kiserian? I work in
160 Kiserian with the young boys…since I go out to Utawala, Embakasi and Donholm, they
161 usually see me in these places. Some of them who have joined form one now….they have
162 seen me there conducting mass and preaching in the charismatic renewal gatherings. Now on
163 Friday, the reading was, "Whatever you do in dark will be revealed and whatever you say in
164 the dark will be proclaimed on the housetops." So I told them, "Gentlemen, it has been
165 realized that here we have drug takers, "miraa" eaters and thieves. So I give you between
166 today and Sunday….come and tell me…if you tell me whatever you have been doing I will
167 not penalize you. I will call someone to come and help you to reform." Immediately after
168 mass, a boy came running and confessed because they knew I used to conduct these things
169 (exorcisms). A line followed in the evening up to Saturday. Yesterday, I told them, "Don't
170 come now until today" (i.e. Monday, the day the focus group was meeting.) They are telling
171 me what they have been doing. They tell me, "Father, pray for me. I will not do it again." The
172 things which the formatars of the seminary do not know about - they take place there!
173 "Where do you pass?" I ask. They tell you they pass here…the *panya* route. "And when do
174 you go out?" At times at night time, or during recreation. My fellow formators themselves are

175 surprised because the boys have come to believe that prayer will work and they will be
176 caught if they don't come forward. This is because I've been telling them: "I am praying one
177 day I will catch you." So I told them, "Today is the day you are going to bring the radios and
178 mobile phones you have kept all this time, just bring them." By the end of the day I had four
179 radios and three mobile phones which had never been seen before. So now they have belief in
180 the efficacy of prayer.
181
182 **Mrs. Muraya:** Thank you for sharing that experience. However, I do want to keep zeroing in
183 on our students in Tangaza because that is really my focus. Do you have experiences in
184 similar situations with students here?
185
186 **SJ…….:** Maybe I just want to talk of an experience that is close to the experience that Fr.
187 Inyaiti and Sr. Loretta were mentioning earlier on that would be very key to our students here
188 in Tangaza. I was once working with a student who is an orphan and she has really been
189 struggling a lot also to support her younger sister who is HIV/Aids positive. The two of them
190 have been living somewhere near Hardy and really struggling to make ends meet. One
191 afternoon the student walked in to the office and told me, "Sister, I am having sleepless
192 nights because somebody is wrestling with me at night and I really I don't know what to do. I
193 am so fearful that I don't think I want to go to sleep in that house tonight." So we explored
194 the whole story and eventually we agreed that may be I contact the campus minister, Fr.
195 Nicholas, on that very day and ask him if he would go with her to the house to pray together
196 and maybe sprinkle some holy water in the house. And it was like this was what she was
197 waiting to hear. She was expecting some kind of an experience to take place in her house to
198 restore some equilibrium. So I called father and they actually went to the house. I couldn't
199 make it myself. But later on when the student came back to me, she told me, "Sister, I am
200 very much at peace now. Do you know those people who used to follow me at night I don't
201 see them any more?" Yea, she has since graduated but occasionally she comes to my office
202 but not for counselling: we just talk over it and she tells me she is doing very well, eh, and
203 she would like to have another mass celebrated in her house very soon.
204
205 **Mr. Muraya:** Do you think she got the kind of experience father was talking about and she
206 would like a repeat of the same? Would you then say that some people need that kind of
207 experience to build their faith?
208
209 **FI……..:** That experience seems to have been provided for her by mass, prayers and
210 sprinkling of holy water. I had a similar experience with a student who has now graduated. At
211 that time she was a nun. She was experiencing kind of people coming to her house at night or
212 whatever. We just went to some place and prayed. I then instructed her on what to do and that
213 thing disappeared. But at the same time there was somebody else whose home was being
214 stoned by the *jinis* – …stoned...things were happening…I accepted to go there and we prayed
215 with the whole family and sprinkled holy water and the thing disappeared. But then after
216 about six months, it came back again…now it came back again……All it means is that faith
217 is built on experience; conversion takes place on experience.
218
219 **SL……..:** I would also say that there are students who are, by and large, free of some of this,
220 going by some of the comments some of the maturer sisters in the Institute of Spirituality and
221 Religious Formation make. I have never actually asked them but it seems to me they have
222 made some sort of transition…they are at peace with their culture but they are also at peace
223 with their Christian beliefs in some way and I don't know why that is. I just think that is also
224 something else …if they can't decide…

225

226 **FI……..:** If you follow back their families you find that the family is stable in the faith. Like
227 the parents are prayerful and charismatic…whenever there is a problem they call up the
228 children and they pray together……

229

230 **Mrs. Muraya:** What I am hearing is that the background as Jacinta was saying is important.
231 The experiences people have had as they are growing up determine their stand vis-a-vi
232 traditional beliefs and practices. Loretta you seem to have confirmed this when you talked
233 about your background being entirely Christian - so for you there is nothing else. But here are
234 people who have grown in kind of two worlds and are ale to bring the two worlds together.
235 Would you say that's an accurate picture?

236

237 **FI……..:** What is important here is the community because we inherit the faith of the
238 community…that is what I can say as my conclusion. The family in which the person grew
239 up is like a seedbed of faith…like at first here in Tangaza we were assigned groups as
240 students to accompany. In the first group I was given there were boys who wore *rastas* and
241 some would ask me: "Why should I come to tell you my problems?" In most of their
242 backgrounds, they had nothing like faith…But eventually, they changed and began to follow
243 me saying: "Father, you are my counsellor, my spiritual formator." So the family background
244 matters a lot. In fact today I would actually say: "Let's us not waste time doing other
245 apostolates: let's go back to the family apostolate."

246

247 **Mrs. Muraya:** What would you say was the catalyst in changing the attitude of those young
248 people?

249

250 **FI……..:** Yea…the environment also matters a lot…the community…the kind of faith
251 community here I would say was the reason. We have quite a number of religious
252 congregations who put a lot of emphasis on the faith.

253

254 **SJ……..:** However, for me my struggle really is that I don't know if I am the only one who
255 sees it like that but when I go back to the family, my experience, at least from where I come
256 from is that when we go to the village, sometimes I just listen; I don't participate in the talk. I
257 just hear the way they talk. Even the people that I think are deeply rooted in the Christian
258 faith sometimes you listen to what they say and you ask yourself, "Do they truly believe what
259 they say?" I usually struggle with that and that is why I keep on asking myself, "As much as I
260 try to help these students see a different way, what happens when they go back to the
261 environments they come from?" I know of very good Christians in my village, the good ones
262 I see in church, the ones participating actively at the sanctuary up there, but when you come
263 back at home and you hear some of the things they say and do, you just get surprised. Where
264 do some of these thoughts come from? We have our feet, one on this side and the other on the
265 other side. But we have never gotten a neutral ground where can say we are here now. So that
266 is my struggle.

267

268 **SL……..:** That is very, very right and I think that was the problem with the woman I saw. I
269 think she was okay when she was here with her religious community but…it was all the
270 pressure building up and the fear in the family that is just primary: the family is primary. So it
271 really is terrible.

272

273 **FI……..:** Today we are talking about enculturation. You see, enculturation is about
274 reorganizing the culture…it is about transforming these core values, a stage we have not

275 reached. That is why we have crises - people going back to their roots because they say these
276 beliefs have worked; they have worked for generations and generations. To tell them to throw
277 them away today does not work after all those thousands of years. So the Pope talks about the
278 core values which are inherited and people use them to interpret their experience as they
279 generate their behaviour. To change that is not easy. Unless, as we say, God reveals himself
280 in an event like sickness or you pray through the blessed sacrament and someone gets healed.
281 From that day onwards they will say, "To hell with this culture." That experience would
282 become a point of conversion.

284 **FQ……..:** I see also many other factors that influence faith. Today there is economic
285 pressure on the people...Let us take for example, many children - they are left all by
286 themselves. Their parents perhaps go with them for mass on Sundays and the rest of the time,
287 the children are on their own. Their parents are struggling to make ends meet. There is
288 nothing really going on in as far as their relationship with their young ones is concerned.
289 Sometimes they are deeply rooted Christians but they do not have the time to impart their
290 faith to their children. All they are interested in is to ensure that the children are going to be
291 successful in their studies and so on. For them they are on their toes to make ends meet and
292 so the inculcation of the Christian faith is not there. The catechists who are supposed to
293 inculcate this Christianity into the young ones also do their work as professionals who are
294 only there to do this and that, and the children are left to themselves. Peer pressure is also
295 there and many other factors which are not really enhancing the growth of their Christian
296 faith. At the end of the day people are lost. So you find if you are to help them in their
297 journey of faith or whatever journey they are going to encounter, you find that their passage
298 started from zero. Sometimes you find that there is a great gap between a spiritual director
299 who has himself/herself grown in faith through all the stages John of the Cross and Teresa of
300 Avila have gone through. But the person you are handling is not even a starter. You find you
301 want to help the person but you are almost not meeting at all. This is the problem we have in
302 Tangaza... Take, for example, this a nun who was saying she has been bewitched by another
303 one. We had to talk and talk before we found a way forward. We had to talk and talk and talk
304 on that issue of witchcraft….her belief that somebody was sending it to her was, to me,
305 contradictory to her belief in an all-powerful God.

307 **FI……..:** Do you remember, father, in the dailies ten years ago, it was reported that a
308 Catholic nun from the Archdiocese of Nairobi claimed that she was bewitched to become
309 pregnant?

311 **FQ……..:** So you find sometimes even a person who has embraced this life (religious life in
312 the Roman Catholic Church) and not grown strong enough in faith so as to overcome can go
313 back.

315 **SL……..:** I think that probably they don't know they believe it. You see, I think that culture
316 operates in such a manner that you don't know that it is operating. You are like the fish in the
317 sea – you're swimming in your culture….I remember one formator came to me really
318 distressed because, at the dinner table, one of the postulants had said the money she had been
319 given to travel to see her parents had been stolen by a woman. The other sister said that that
320 woman had bewitched the postulant. The formator thought that her whole world had just
321 collapsed because she wanted to have a discussion on the subject of being responsible, not
322 believing everything somebody tells you because the woman had said: "Give me the money
323 dear, I will carry it for you." The reaction of the other postulants was that she had been
324 bewitched and they believed it. I said to her: "Did they actually believe it?" Yet they

325 probably didn't even know they did believe in witchcraft until the issue came up. So it is not
326 as easy to say they don't have faith or something like that….I know in my life I have said
327 things that some people and I too, have wondered where they come from.
328
329 **Mrs. Muraya:** Would you say it is that they don't see the contradiction between what they
330 are saying and the faith they profess?
331
332 **FI……..:** We had a very serious case of a very senior seminarian who had been accused of
333 impregnating a girl and was called by the elders to settle the matter. When questioned, he said
334 for sure, for sure, he was not the one responsible. "Can you swear on the bible?" He was
335 asked. "Yes, yes," and quickly did so. Then when he was walking out, one of the elders said,
336 "Can we try the cultural thing?" So he was called back. The girl was instructed to stand in
337 front of the boy with her legs apart and he was told, "If you never did it pass through her
338 legs" He took off very fast (laughter)… because he believed if he did it something terrible
339 would happen to him, but with the bible, it was very easy to swear.
340
341 **SL……..:** Related to that when…when we were looking at taking vows the students were
342 telling me about a practice in Tanzania - that if you are to take the vows there, there is
343 something like a pot that you crack and if you break any of the vows you would die. So I
344 said, "Why don't you bring that here for final professions?" They said, "People would be
345 committing suicide if we did that". But I told them, "You are not being honest; you are not
346 being honest truly because what you are doing is as serious as that and your culture is right. It
347 is right in saying you have taken a serious vow now and everybody has witnessed it. You do
348 that in public when you make final vows or when you are ordained. And you tell me you
349 don't want us to use your culture?"
350
351 **FI……..:** They can't allow that. As regards the Catholic University of Eastern Africa, the
352 first rector came to us when we were novices in the seminary and said: "These old men are
353 breaking the vows. Let's now take the vows the African way like the Karamajong. They
354 slaughter a cow and all of you drink the blood together like this" (demonstrates). People said,
355 "We shall die." It is much easier to swear before God on the bible than to take (an oath) the
356 African way because they know they will die if they offend.
357
358 **SL……..:** It means Christianity isn't serious.
359
360 **Mrs. Muraya:** Would you say it is generally superficial?
361
362 **FI……..:** In my talk in the conference (a conference on African spirituality held in South
363 Africa in the summer of 2008) in South Africa, I said the African spirituality is resilient
364 whether you become a Christian, a Muslim or a bishop: it is still there and continues to
365 evolve. This is the point that we have not evangelised; we have to evangelise about culture
366 wrongly understood…for we know culture has got layers, behaviours, artefacts but then there
367 is the level of knowledge which we have not touched. It is still intact: when Christ wavers,
368 you go back into cultural practices.
369
370 **Mrs. Muraya:** In as much as I hear what you are saying, I wonder whether it affects all our
371 students. Do we have some of them who have been radically uprooted from their cultures so
372 some of the things we are talking about do not affect them at all?
373
374 **SL…….:** We certainly do…

375
376 **FI……..:** When things are okay, sister, they are fine, but when there are moments of life
377 crisis…you have gone to the church, you have been prayed over, you have seen the doctor
378 and he tells you that this sickness is from home. What next? As a last resort, you see even
379 strong Christians…for example there was a story of a man who had been married for ten
380 years without getting a child. They were prayed over and nothing happened. The
381 gynaecologist said they were both okay. Then somebody remembered and asked, "By the
382 way, did you give a gift to the aunt of your wife?" He remembered that culture says you must
383 give a gift to your wife's aunt. "You know your aunt is very powerful." So he went and asked
384 the aunt, "What do you want?" "I was not given my twenty shillings." "What? Two
385 thousands or twenty?" "Twenty." "Can I give it to you in shilling coins now?" "Yes." He
386 counted the coins for her and after two weeks the wife conceived.

387
388 **SL……..:** That is why we said there are unconscious levels which we don't' know about.
389 There are unconscious levels that are functioning here and have not been brought into our
390 consciousness and they are preventing – I could imagine something like that preventing a
391 birth – that the wife doesn't know and the husband doesn't know that there is something
392 wrong. I don't know enough about these things…

393
394 **FI……..:** There was a Loreto sister who asked me to facilitate a seminar on the healing of the
395 African psyche. When we talk about the psyche or the mind, what is it? These are the deep
396 beliefs that actually influence our thinking, which we use to interpret our experiences and
397 generate our behaviours and inform our relationships. So unless they are healthy,…

398
399 **FQ……..:** There is another thing I see coming up here. There are those Africans who know
400 their cultures and they believe so strongly in them. There are also some Africans who are
401 deeply rooted in their Christianity but there are those Africans who are floating. Let us say
402 the Africans who live in the city. Now these ones are left hanging there and yet each one of
403 them needs some power to which they can refer. A person who is rooted in Christianity will
404 go to Christianity and get support. A person who is rooted in her/his culture will get support
405 from the culture and *majini.* Sometimes some of them go to get these paraphernalia from
406 different places: they are running everywhere. Some are going to Tanga, some are going to
407 Suba Wanga and so they are trying to get some ground to stand because they had not been
408 given anything they can rely on.

409
410 Something I found very interesting in our place at this time is that younger boys are the ones
411 going to the diviners and their parents are wondering what is happening. They come to
412 Kampala and they are far away from their parents and when they go home they are the ones
413 telling their parents about these traditional powers. They have grown in urban centres and did
414 not have time to come in touch with their traditional beliefs but they have also not grown in
415 Christianity. Now here what they are going to do is they are going to look for their cultural
416 heritage from their ethnic groups. They are looking for anything they can cling on to. This is
417 a challenge also.

418
419 **Mrs. Muraya:** Our time has very quickly come to an end**.** I wonder whether there are any
420 other relevant points anyone would like to make before we bring the discussion to a close.
421 (Some silence and unspoken contrary indication…people looking at their watches etc.). In
422 that case, accept my very sincere gratitude to you all, once again, for your valuable time as
423 well and for sharing your insights and experiences very lucidly. I owe every one of you a
424 deep debt of gratitude.

APPENDIX 2: Counsellors and Spiritual Guides' Second Focus Group Meeting

(06/12/2010)

Mrs. Muraya: Let me formally thank you for coming and welcome you to this session. Like I mentioned before, the purpose of our discussion is an attempt to find out how traditional practices and beliefs affect the psychological and spiritual lives of our students here in Tangaza College. We need to focus on the experience we have had in the college because I am working on a professional doctorate that is located in my work experience. Hence, this is a discussion of our experiences. I have a few questions that will guide the discussion though I want this to be a conversation rather than a question and answer session. The first one that I will pose will, hopefully, act as our guide to kick the discussion off and the others will follow as we go along. My first question then is - Do you think that African traditional cultural beliefs and practices play a significant role in the lives of modern African Christians? If yes do you have any examples you would like to give?

MB…….: My answer would be yes - that traditional African beliefs play a significant role in our lives. This is what I have gathered from discussions classes in my classes and some of the cases I come across in my work as chaplain. They all show that African beliefs and practices play a significant role. For example, students sometimes ask me: "Do you believe in witchcraft or do you believe that diviners foresee the future?" So they ask me whether I believe it or not, and the way they ask me is very serious. For them they want to hear what I have to say. In fact, I had to send some students to observe what the African diviner does and this was just here in Nairobi. The report which they brought was very surprising. For example, in the case of one diviner they had to wait for long in the queue to talk to him. They observed that the people who were in the line, I would say are "modern people." Hence when I think of that, I feel like the more we get westernised, educated and Christianized, the more we haven't solved our problems. So I have to conclude that most of us African modern Christians are still in a very fundamental way ruled by the traditional African beliefs and practices.

Mrs. Muraya: Thank you very much for sharing those insights. I want to take you back to something you mentioned early on in your contribution - that the students were asking you very seriously and were keen to know whether you believe in witchcraft, for example. Two questions arise here: One where do you think those questions are coming from? Secondly have you come across any experiences, whether in spiritual direction or in counselling even without separating the spiritual and psychological, that someone is having fear of being bewitched or a family member has been bewitched or something like that?

MB…….: Yes, I have had several experiences where I have seen a student has fear of being bewitched. Like there is one case where a religious sister was carrying charms around her waist to protect herself from another sister who she was told had an "evil eye." That revelation was given to her by a diviner whom she had visited. The diviner told her it is the other sister who looks at her with a "bad eye," hence all her problems.

Mrs. Muraya: Did the sister who had consulted with you have a conflict in herself? Did she experience a conflict in visiting a diviner as she is at the same time a Christian or was she at peace with herself?

47 **MB…….**: (laughing out loud) Now for me it's hard to tell but she appeared to be comfortable
48 …yet I wonder why she came to me at all. I think what I can say also from my work
49 experience most of those who will take the African witchcraft seriously have to get along
50 with it: they want to believe entirely in the Christian message and the western civilization
51 because when we talk about civilization, it is also like Christianity…I really think they
52 haven't worked out a synthesis with their cultural practices. Hence there may be some
53 conflict.

54 **Mrs. Muraya:** As a counsellor/spiritual guide how would you help someone in such a
55 conflictual situation?

56 **MB…….:** That is a difficult question to answer now.

57 **Mrs. Muraya:** You appear to want to say something about that, Sr. Magdalene.

58 **SMM……..:** Yes, as I listen to him…it is like the more we think we are westernised, the
59 more African we are. We kind of go back, especially in terms of sickness, for example,
60 somebody is sick and he has been treated and treated to an extent that things don't work out
61 well…they kind of think of going back home. I have had an experience with a student who is
62 a religious brother who had been sick for quite some time and the doctors were not able to
63 diagnose the cause of his sickness. So he came and asked me: "Sister, what should I do since
64 the doctor has not diagnosed my sickness?" So I asked him: "What do you think you are
65 going to do?" You know he was initially hesitant to answer me because, as it transpired later,
66 his mother had called him and told him to go home so that she would to take him to a doctor
67 who would check what was wrong. Then I said to him: "What is wrong, go home and your
68 mother will take you to a doctor." And it's like he took sometime to say that he wasn't going
69 home to see a conventional doctor… it would be a traditional doctor that the mother would
70 take him to see. You can see the kind of confusion in him, because he was talking about how
71 he believes in God and the healing power of God, and how he would go home for his mother
72 to take him to a traditional doctor. On the other had he is the one who is a religious person in
73 the family, and he is the one who used to tell them not to go to the witchdoctors and diviners.
74 How could he reconcile those two world views? So it is very difficult, especially when one is
75 in a fix. So these practices are there and you will find them being practiced in a very hidden
76 way. So as religious people they (students) practice them individually but they don't come
77 out to discuss them openly. And when they talk about it, it's like they want only the
78 Christianity to come out in a way that I am a religious but on the other had these are issues in
79 us which do not come out easily. I have handled that one case and my experience was that it
80 is difficult to reconcile the conflict between the two worlds - the world of African traditional
81 beliefs and that of Christianity. What I did in this case for the student to talk about it was to
82 normalise it, by saying: "You have gone to hospital and you have been treated for this long
83 and you didn't get well. It's normal for you to think otherwise and find out what could be
84 happening." But I could have also gone ahead and said: "Hey you are a brother, how could
85 you even think about this." Since I knew that I should not attack him as a counsellor, the best
86 thing was to validate him and to say to him: "This is your experience." And when I said that
87 it is normal, his face kind of brightened, really… yeah, he felt that his story was not the only
88 one; that it's like others have had similar experiences. So it was easier for him to talk about it
89 but now the reaction after sometime is like he started to withdraw from me. I don't know
90 why…I saw him in the college during the semester but he had stopped coming for his
91 sessions. So when the semester was over I didn't see him again though I would have expected
92 he would come back to share what had happened. But after this encounter, whenever I saw
93 him by chance I could detect shyness on his face and I said to myself: "Let me give him time,

94   probably he will come back before he finishes his course in May. That would give me a
95   chance to talk with him." Although I gave him time and space he hasn't come back to tell me
96   about his experience back at home.

97   **Mrs. Muraya**: So you have not closed the contract with him in any way…why do you think
98   he stopped coming for his sessions?

99   **SMM……..**: Well, all I can guess is that from the shyness on his face he felt embarrassed
100   about mixing his Christian faith and religious life with cultural practices and beliefs. He
101   probably feared that I was judging him…

102   **MB…….**: To respond to the question you asked me earlier on about what I would
103   recommend as a way forward for someone in this kind of dilemma, what I have tried to do is
104   to see whether we can try to separate the positive elements of the African culture and
105   incorporate them with the Christian faith without fear and then isolate what is evil and do
106   away with it because I believe each culture has both good and bad practices and that can help
107   us achieve an integrated African Christian culture. Some of the positive elements are like the
108   power of the spoken word, i. e. the blessing and the curse, then also belief in a supreme God,
109   the fact that evil cannot overpower God. Also in the African sense, there are the good spirits
110   and the evil spirits and in Christianity too we have saints and devils. So you can integrate the
111   positive aspects of the African traditional practices in the Christian belief to have an
112   integrated African Christian belief.

113   **SMM……..:** I like that approach better than the one that Christianity had taken initially
114   which was an approach of condemning all traditional practices – that was wrong. That's the
115   reason why when you hear mention of these beliefs from a religious person you are almost
116   like, "Oh my God…!" That is perhaps why we don't speak about it openly because people
117   fear that they are going to be immediately condemned or judged: "How come…" So it's like
118   we are not going to air out the beliefs that are seen as negative and the beliefs that don't build
119   us and we are not going to propagate this. But as a counsellor, I think it is very important and
120   also crucial to validate the experience of a person because people will come to us and share
121   their own religious experiences and some of them can be very weird. It is our work to bring
122   into realisation that there is the dark side of their experience and there is the bright side of
123   their experience, because going back to those experiences there is de-affirmation and
124   reaffirmation, and unless we validate their experiences, then it will be very hard to expose
125   those experiences to come up to that conclusion for them…to kind of see really that this
126   conclusion that is a de-affirmation because if I go to the witchdoctor at the end of the day I
127   get more frustrated than the joy and the hope in my heart that I had while on the other hand
128   there would be a lasting joy in believing in Christ. So this is a conflict which is very hard to
129   deal with because again this is a conflict that we don't talk about openly.

130   **Mrs. Muraya:** What I hear from you, Magdalen, is that the attitude of the counsellor or
131   spiritual guide is very important because it is that attitude that will either make one open up
132   or not.

133   **SMM……..**: I would go with the attitude, the relationship at the beginning and the
134   confidence I have – all this is very critical when I meet the person seeking help.

135   **MB…….**: Yeah, the attitude and the confidence are important. Actually as we all know,
136   Christianity started with colonization, which did not accept our culture for a period of about
137   60 years. The more I analyse this issue, the more I see that what happened during our
138   evangelisation is that most of the African beliefs did not go anywhere. When the missionaries

139 came and condemned our cultural practices, we swept most of them under the carpet…but
140 these beliefs and practices did not go away. We are now realising they are very much in us.
141 So maybe the way forward is to accept to bring them from under the carpet and sort them out
142 openly.

143 **Mrs. Muraya**: Sort out what is helpful from what is not….

144 **SMM……..**: I feel bad because the first African Synod did not work very deeply .Our job as
145 evangelisers is to really look deeply into our culture and see how the gospel has to evangelise
146 the culture and the conversion of the culture. At the same time the culture needs to be
147 confronted by the Word of God, permeated by the Word of God so that we are able to
148 separate what is really good from what is not good. If we don't bring that kind of acceptance
149 and validation to our work, it is very difficult for the student to tell us their experience.

150 In one case I encountered it took long for this student to come out clean – it was almost at the
151 end of the semester when I came to realise what was happening. And all along it was, you
152 know, complaints like, "I am not able to eat, you know, I am not able to sleep…" He would
153 finish almost three days without eating and he would wake up and go to school, so at the end
154 of the week, he would collapse and be rushed to the hospital. The first thing to be done to him
155 was to have an IV tube inserted because he was emaciated and dehydrated because, as he had
156 said, he could not even drink water. It took very long for him to feel he was fully accepted
157 and so he was open to share his experience. So I think the positive attitude we (counsellors
158 and spiritual guides) have will help bring out these experiences.

159 **MB…….**: I don't know why you, Phyllis, chose to use the term "residual" in your title
160 because to me the way I understand it, residual means some small remnants of the African
161 culture but I think it is not the case – a lot remains, not just a residue.

162 **SMM……..**: To me I see cultural practices and beliefs as a component of what we are. It is in
163 us. You know like when you go home, you hear stories…so and so was sick….you are told
164 the story and told the story and told the story and just because you are a sister or a priest or a
165 brother, they don't come out clean. In December last year my mother lost twenty thousand
166 shillings. It was at that time when my mother came our clear: she called me crying and said,
167 "Sister, I am going to a diviner; I must know who stole my money." And I said to her: "Mum,
168 how much are you going to spend on going to the diviner?" She told me, "It's only two
169 thousand shillings." I responded that he might tell her to bring him a cow, bring him what…
170 it would end up to be more than the twenty thousand shillings she had lost. She responded to
171 me: "But no, I have to go". It is like it is part of us. When we get into a fix and we can't do it,
172 you can't help me, and whoever I think is helpful to me does not…then affirmation… that
173 thing comes out.

174 **MB…….**: That is because culture is very basic; it is in our foundation. Because you live the
175 western lifestyle does not necessarily remove you from your roots.

176 **SMM……..**: You are comfortable while all is well…

177 **MB…….**: But the moment you are challenged and you can't get a quick fix or solution like
178 the case of your mother, the best answer would come from a…

179 **SMM……..**: A diviner (all laugh).

180 **MB…….**: That means it is really on the ground in us basically.

181 **Mrs. Muraya**: I like the fact that from your experience, you are able to challenge my concept
182 of these practices being residual and……...

183 **SMM……..**: And also I think it's more fundamental than a residue because it is really in us.
184 They only thing we need to do is to make people speak about it. I had another experience
185 with another student who told me one of the sisters had *majini*. She had *majini* because she
186 had a lot of money, she is never caught up in trouble…you know how people in formation
187 have troubles.

188 **MB…….**: Also me I have an experience of a friend who shared with me about *majini*. I have
189 not seen them myself but this friend I trust has experienced *majini* moving things from one
190 position to another.

191 **Mrs. Muraya**: But you say you have not experienced them yourself…

192 **MB…….**: No…but the person who told me about them is a person I can't doubt. It is just like
193 the way I relate with you. I trust you and when you tell me such a thing I can not doubt you
194 and I believe you are not insane or hallucinating. I know before you tell me anything you
195 have really integrated it. The *majini* would move things like a phone from here to there. All
196 of us who are there would see the movement. That one has happened and I have heard about
197 its happening.

198 **SMM……..**: You have reminded me of a former student who with her family had difficult
199 moments. There is a young man who was a seminarian in Christ the King Seminary - I don't
200 know if you have heard of him - called Fidelis. He comes from my village and in fact from
201 my parish. He was told to stop practicing these cultural practices like healing and taking out
202 *majini*. Now this sister, one of our former students, wanted me to take her to this man. I don't
203 know what to call him because he uses both the good and the bad practices.

204 **MB.......**: A diviner?

205 **SMM……..**: Because he uses the bible in his process of healing….I once attended his
206 sessions, because I was very curious to know what he does. In fact, at some point I had
207 advised him not to continue with these practices because some priests and the bishop were
208 apposed to it. Eventually he was expelled from the seminary but he is still practicing them
209 and now he has a big following.

210 **MB…….**: All these diviners are integrated and they use the bible and African culture. They
211 use modernity, anything else that will get to you (the clients). That which serves their purpose
212 to heal they will not leave out. Even when you are a Muslim, they will use a Quran.

213 **SMM……..**: Now this sister came to me and asked me to take her to this former seminarian.
214 The diocese had stopped him from clerical training because it was very difficult to put the
215 two together, what he was and is still doing and priesthood. After doing what he does, at the
216 end of it – after exorcising the *majini* and witchcraft and all that - a priest comes in and
217 celebrates mass to neutralise all that and blesses the home because there are priests who co-
218 operate with him. So sister wanted me to take her to this man so that he could heal her. But I
219 would not go because the whole village would know I was there. How can I explain that I am
220 not supporting what he is doing? The sister wanted me to take her there so that she could
221 invite the man to go and heal her family and remove the *majini*. I was scared because, oh my
222 God, this is my village. If I took her there everybody in the village would know I was there.

223 **MB…….**: So you would also be stigmatised.

224 **SMM……..**: So like a sister, I could not go. So she said to me, "Tell your brother to take
225 me." I said "No" to that suggestion also because if I told my brother to take her then I would
226 be showing my brother that I was supporting the practice. So I told her, "Sister, I can draw a
227 map for you to go by yourself." Do you know at the end she went!

228 **Mrs. Muraya**: That is after you drew a map for her.

229 **SMM……..**: I made a map for her to go. She went and she was told what her problem was
230 and then they carried that man to her family and those things were removed and now she was
231 telling me after that the things (majini) were crying. (All laugh).

232 **Mrs. Muraya**: What were those things that were removed?

233 **SMM……..**: I asked her if she saw them crying.

234 **MB…….**: Now what was he using - Africa culture or the Christian faith or both?

235 **SMM……..**: This is somebody I know. In his family there is a history. His grandmother was
236 a diviner. The story goes like he inherited the spirits from the grandmother but then went to
237 the seminary…According to me, the way I think, I am not clear and would not like to judge
238 but he seems to be using both because he uses the bible. Afterwards he also brings a priest to
239 celebrate mass and then he uses the "power of the spirits." And really it is confusing because
240 as for me I saw him removing those things…..

241 **MB…….**: But now this revolves around the same point we are talking about. You see we are
242 not ready, even as Christian counsellors, to study such a kind of phenomenon because
243 immediately, we suspect there is something evil and mind you I don't know if there is
244 something evil going on…

245 **SMM……..**: I really can't say that there is something evil.

246 **MB**: So why are you scared? Why are you afraid? Why was he sent away from the seminary?
247 It is because we associate African belief with some evil and yet we are not sure whether he is
248 driven by the evil spirit or the good spirit (he laughs).

249 **SMM………**: If you go to my village, for instance, and there is mass in the local station and
250 Fidelis is expected, there will be nobody in the church.

251 **Mrs. Muraya**: Where would the people go?

252 **SMM……..**: All the people, including my mother, would go where Fidelis is. Where he is
253 everybody goes there because they know they will be healed. They have little faith in mass -
254 that mass can heal them (all laugh). If the priest is celebrating mass in the church and Fidelis
255 is in the local market, they will all go to the market first and then come to the mass later.

256 **MB…….**: That is a challenge of pastoral counsellors in that we are healers and we have a lot
257 of tools. We have the history of the early Church that shows we have the power to heal. So
258 especially here in Africa, we need to ask ourselves what we can use from our African
259 traditions.

260 **SMM……..**: How can we use some of those skills, for example, from my experience, when
261 you are counselling somebody and you touch, it has such a big impact than when we just talk
262 and talk…

263 **MB…….**: The western style is very intellectual while the African model is emotional and
264 that is why they use a lot of rituals and symbolism and a lot of paraphernalia which actually
265 adds to the sacramental appeal of the person. Even if you use the skills of the two worlds you
266 would be appealing to the people more than a counsellor who is purely of the western world.

267 **SMM……..**: It is a little bit complicated when you have both. For me, I know witchcraft is
268 there and *majini* are there, in a theoretical way. I have never had an experience from which I
269 can tell whether these things really happen. I always hear about it from other people. So I
270 kind of have difficulty deep in my heart in believing they are there. I am like you, Phyllis…I
271 have only heard…what I know is from the experience of others.

272 **MB…….**: Even if you have no experience, the question is, does my lack of personal
273 experience at one time hinder those things to be there?

274 **Mrs. Muraya**: So you haven't had a personal experience, M……….?

275 **SMM……..**: No!

276 **MB…….**: So what is the explanation for this? One of the approaches I would give for them
277 is that there are many people out there who believe in it and also the way you are socialized
278 matters. I would start by asking: "What do you believe in?" The reason is because even
279 psychologists say what you believe in you will come to act on it. So when we approach it
280 with a perspective of African culture and beliefs, they will definitely have a hold on us and
281 will affect us. If you have not encountered them in your experience, they will not affect you.
282 That is my thesis and my understanding and that is how we can appreciate and understand
283 those people who believe in them.

284 **SMM……..**: The fact that I don't have personal experience does not mean that those things
285 do not exist: they do exist. And the way it happens in counselling you have to trust in the
286 story, but in reality it becomes very difficult. So I trust their story but with a little bit of
287 curiosity. I am like I haven't been so much into that world but at the same time I know there
288 are people who are really into it. And to heal them you have to get a style that almost replaces
289 the traditional practices. Look at the charismatic way of healing - some of them you will see
290 touching which is very much used, and the number of rituals, sometimes they would tell you
291 to lie down, sometimes they would touch specific parts of the body, so again Christianity is
292 also coming up with other styles that are in the traditional mindset to kind of reach out to the
293 people. Because I have seen people who have those strong beliefs, they tend to be very much
294 at home with the charismatics. Many people who have been converted coz of the charismatic
295 movement will tell stories of how Jesus saved them from such experiences and how they
296 came out from curses, that is from the traditional bondage. It is through praying and tithing
297 that they are delivered.

298 **Mrs. Muraya**: But about these beliefs - where do they come from before you encounter them
299 in other people? What is your personal stand on them?

300 **MB…….**: My stand is rather straight forward. I have been brought up in a very strict
301 Catholic family. But in the village where I was brought up there was a lot of talk about the
302 evil eye with children getting sick and a diviner being involved to cure them. None of my

303 brothers was affected by those things but other villagers were affected. Even up to now my
304 brothers' children have grown up in that village without being affected, but all the other
305 neighbours' children have suffered from them. That is why I think what you believe in will
306 eventually affect you. Like for instance, most of the Pentecostal preachers, they come and tell
307 you it's like you have a curse, and when you look at the people's history you see a lot of
308 upsets. And then when you translate that into a curse actually it becomes very real. Actually
309 they call it a generational curse. For instance, a disease like Alcoholism will be traced in the
310 family from one of the great grandparents. So they would say it's a generational curse, and
311 for me I look at it and say this is not a curse, it's a genetic disease.

312 **SMM……..**: Yes they look at it as a curse and we look at it as a disease.

313 **MB…….**: By injecting more information and also re-adjusting the beliefs….

314 **SMM……..**: Do you mean working on the psyches of the people?

315 **MB…….**: Not only the psyches but also on the spiritual part as well. I have come to realize
316 that as a counsellor you have to be convinced of what you are saying. If you are not
317 convinced, you are not going to convince anybody.

318 **SMM……..**: As a counsellor you need to see what you have in common to be able to talk in
319 common with the one you are counselling. You really have to be firm.

320 **MB…….**: I have an example which is real and will work for the person I am counselling. To
321 conclude, what I might integrate in this approach may involve three things: I must borrow all
322 good things from psychology and social studies; we must employ fully the Christian teaching,
323 theology and spirituality in counselling; we must take into full account the culture and beliefs
324 of the people and use them all to bring out an integrated approach for counselling. That is for
325 me the way forward.

326 **Mrs. Muraya**: Do you use this approach in your work here in the college and with what
327 results?

328 **MB…….**: Yes I have been applying it here in Tangaza with the students and really it works
329 in when applied.

330 **SMM…….**: When we try to integrate the cultural beliefs that people have and our Christian
331 faith, there has to be a way to control the situation because I believe there are very genuine
332 Christians who live the Christian faith very strongly. But at the same time, we religious have
333 our families - you know they come to you and they tell you their stories, and you are like,
334 "Oh my God!" There are times I tell people, "Follow your conscience…" and I would be
335 kind of asking them: "What do you want to do". In some cases they come out with their
336 solutions. And now they would see how practicable they are. For example, if you go home
337 they will kill a goat today and drink the blood. What if the animal is sick? If you pose that
338 question they will begin to see the danger that they might also get sick. So actually they bring
339 out things some of which they themselves realise that they will bring more disadvantages
340 than advantages. So I like to present people with a question: "If you are asked to choose
341 among these, what would you choose? Sometimes I am like I wish I was able to tell them
342 what to choose but I can't tell him because I want it to come from them; I am inviting the
343 people to discover for themselves and come up with a solution so that when it comes to the
344 consequences, they are accountable because they have made the choice themselves.

345 **MB……..**: But also for some people you have to know what they believe, first of all, and
346 then, I direct them because also some of these decisions people take they are willing to die for
347 them. So if you decide on this way you are prepared to stand for it even up to death. Like if
348 you believe in God I will trust in God no matter what, and if I die it's okay. If I believe in
349 diviners I stick there. If it doesn't work out… but you find that some people when they are
350 weak in the Christian side they are tempted to believe on the other side.

351 **SMM……..**: But something I found out with some of the students is at the back of their
352 minds they know what works. Like I was talking about this student who had problems and he
353 started thinking that the witchdoctor could not diagnose him. He really started thinking the
354 scientific way. And at the end of the day I was almost sure that the brother had chronic
355 depression. When he is depressed eating is a problem, communication is a problem and then
356 on the other hand, he does not want to grow big so he might be having anorexia. So you kind
357 of analyse a few cases here and there and I am almost sure it's depression. I gave him the
358 questionnaire for depression and it actually showed he had chronic depression.

359 **MB……..**: That was a good diagnosis. That depression prevents the healing part the doctor
360 performs and can be handled by a diviner, because the diviner will assure him that he has
361 been bewitched and now when he believes that he has been bewitched the diviner heals him.
362 About the cases where people go to hospital and they are not diagnosed with any disease in a
363 certain region, let us say Western Kenya, it does not mean that when the person is tested at
364 the Agha Khan Hospital or Nairobi Hospital or the Mater Hospital where there are competent
365 doctors they will not be diagnosed.

366 **SMM……..**: But also we have a weakness in the medical field because some doctors tell
367 their patients that the sickness is traditional. "Go home and sort out the problem," some
368 doctors say. Personally I have had problems with doctors telling their patients: "Tell me what
369 is wrong with you…," when they know they can't do anything in their laboratory…

370 **MB……..**: Some of them have told their patients to go home and solve the problem
371 traditionally.

372 **Mrs. Muraya**: What I am hearing is that the quality of medical care people get varies
373 depending on where they are located in the country, unlike in Europe where every hospital is
374 almost as good as any other. So the majority here who can't access good health facilities
375 remain undiagnosed and may end up turning to the traditional ways.

376 **SMM……..**: Yes, so that even when they come to counselling they definitely know it has to
377 do with traditional healing (all laugh).

378 **MB……..**: That is the other side of it.

379 **SMM……..**: Personally I get challenged because I don't want it to stick in my own thinking
380 and it's like sometimes I want to say, "Hey wake up!"

381 **MB……..**: Let me interject at that: sometimes it is important to confront them, for example,
382 if I am convinced in my belief. If I find a weak Christian in counselling, I give them my pill
383 then they get healed. Sometimes it is good to challenge that docility in them. It is just because
384 I am sure of what I believe in.

385 **SMM……..**: But you need to be careful of people's fragility.

386 **MB…….**: But at a certain moment you need to be confrontational and see whether they can
387 grow up. And when they see that you are convinced of it they also believe. They will go with
388 your faith and practice it well and you will have healed them.

389 **Mrs. Muraya**: Are you saying that you have to propagate the power of positive thinking vis-
390 á-vis what you consider to be their negative thinking?

391 **SMM……..**: I think you can see how people are empowered by the power of the word…the
392 results of positive thinking…

393 **MB…….**: It's like you actually arouse the resources within. They start feeling themselves
394 with a new life.

395 **SMM……..**: And by the way, by the time they come to us most of them are very clear on
396 what they want. They just want our affirmation.

397 **Mrs. Muraya**: Is that kind of affirmation important?

398 **MB…….**: And actually they feel they can do it and when they realise it, they start afresh.

399 **SMM……..**: They realise they have the power.

400 **Mrs. Muraya**: Our time is running out fast. What are your concluding remarks, Magdalene?

401 **SMM……..**: I am really touched by something Barasa said about the need for integrating
402 Christianity with our traditional culture. I think I really need to look at what we can borrow
403 from our own traditional culture to upgrade our model of counselling.

404 **MB…….**: Also we can borrow much from what other scholars have researched on like
405 Kiriswa who is in the USA now but before he went he wrote a book, *Counselling in an*
406 *African context…* Also it would be of importance for people who are in this field to come
407 together and try to study such realities.

408 **SMM……..**: I think there is need to study more of the traditional practices, because I think
409 there is that which they have that draws people to them even to the extent of accepting to lose
410 their own parents, sometimes children. People have accepted to sacrifice their own children.
411 You know, that power inside them that makes them able to sacrifice their own which is so
412 dear to them is amazing. We could look at some of those tricks and see what to borrow.

413 **MB…….**: Yeah we need to start a project like that.

414 **SMM……..**: What can we do then?

415 **MB……**: This can be the start of it. (All laugh)

416 **Mrs. Muraya**: Well, that would be highly recommended for people like us who work in the
417 same field.

418 **SMM……..:** May be it will become an outgrowth of your study, Phyllis.

419 **Mrs. Muraya**: That would be a wonderful development. In concluding this discussion, let me
420 thank you again both for your time and the contributions you have made this morning. I

421   personally feel enriched by what you have shared today. Thank you. I and greatly appreciate
422   your time and contributing.

APPENDIX 3: Theology Students Focus Group 1

(17/02/2011)

Mrs. Muraya: I would like to welcome you to this forum and introduce Nicholas who is a Master's degree student in Social Ministry, and is assisting me to record the data I get from our discussion with the aid of the modern technological devices. So he will not be part of our conversation. I also believe you got the write up that I dispatched through Raphael so that you could have a rough idea of the kind of data am looking for. I also hope that you have completed your consent forms because the university is very keen for the participants to fill in the forms, indicating consent. I will make copies of the forms and give them to you for your own records. So I trust all of you have your copies with you.
(Responding together) No/Yes

(Quite a number hadn't brought them along and I had to follow them up with the concerned students.)

Mrs. Muraya: So let me thank you again for consenting to become part of this study. It is my hope that as a result of it we shall improve the pastoral services that we are offering to the students of Tangaza in the coming days. I will begin by posing the first question and because this is a discussion, people will come in and respond as they feel inclined. We are not going by any order. Just speak when you feel there is something you would like to contribute.

My first question is: Are you aware of any elements of African culture that cause tension or some unhappiness in the minds of young African Christians….any elements of African culture cause any kind of tension in the minds and hearts of young African Christians like yourselves?

Bro. R……: Where I have come from, the aspect of confrontation of the elders can be an issue. You see, as African, many of us students are afraid of confronting our elders when it comes to some issues and this has affected many of us in our studies. Sometimes we can not approach our lecturers because they are older than us and this is something which is from our backgrounds. For instance, if one of my family members who is older than me goes wrong or my father himself, at no time can I confront him because it is something that is not done in our cultures. In my culture particularly, (he is a Nigerian) you don't speak to an elder directly. If a need arises, you would rather look for somebody else to speak to him on your behalf. This carry-over affects us in school as well. You see when a lecturer is older than me, even if the lecturer is going wrong, many a times we decide to suspend or suppress that aspect of his because you cannot confront that person in a way like saying: "Teacher, whatever you are telling us is not appropriate, would you put it a different way." That is one aspect I would like to highlight in response to this question.

Mrs. Muraya: And does that cause undue tension…is that the kind of thing that you would feel like, "I think I want to say something about…" but you feel constrained not to?

Bro. R……: Yeah! I think if I give you a personal example, you can see this causes a lot of tension. I remember when I was in primary school - sometimes you would come late to school or you do something and the lecturer would call you and start whipping you, even without listening to you, because you cannot even speak to him because he is older, what he has concluded you have to accept. So sometimes it causes some kind of bad reminiscences as

45 you grow older. That unpleasant memory comes back into your mind. Some of us carry such
46 memories in our minds such that when we come around them (lecturers), we rate them as
47 people who are very rooted in their cultures. As such there is that tension, even in Tangaza.
48 Sometimes I want to confront some lecturers because maybe I didn't agree with their
49 approach but because they are older than me, I think of my culture and I say "no". I think
50 there is that kind of tension.

51 **Bro. P……:** Yeah, one thing I have to mention is the way we have been brought up, the set-
52 up of our brain, we find out that we have different practices and when these practices come
53 together, you would encounter some kind of tension. Like I have my own values, Sam has his
54 own values and because of the way I have been brought up, I have to stick to my values and
55 the other person has to stick to his/her own values. Hence, to merge these values together
56 brings a problem as you think to lose your own values which somehow are at the back of
57 your unconscious mind, you are also thinking: "I am not supposed to lose the values of the
58 culture I belong to. This is my particular culture." Again we have a dichotomy among the
59 youth today - the dichotomy of trying to lose the essence of their culture vis-a-vis the western
60 culture which they are somehow forcing us to adopt. As a result, most of the time you find
61 that you are in a situation whereby you want to adopt something and to do so you have to lose
62 something. In that kind of dichotomy, you find yourself in a kind of conflict of interest - the
63 desire of adopting, and the thought of losing something valuable. Hence, you find that you
64 are in a situation, as a young African person, in a situation of "Shall I get this and loose this?"

65 And that also has effects in terms of, for instance, when we are trying to adapt to a particular
66 pattern of education. Because you are in an environment whereby the education which is
67 given is Western-oriented and considering the Africans had some values, it looks like African
68 values are pitted against the Western values. That brings a kind of confusion in the minds of
69 the young African Christians as they try to judge which values to adopt. This causes them to
70 lose their identity for the sake of adopting the particular environment prevalent in the schools.

71 **Mrs. Muraya:** Thank you for those observations. I am wondering whether you can give us a
72 specific example like Raphael gave us an example of the attitude toward the elders, the kind
73 of respect that changes the way people behave toward particular issues. I wonder if there is a
74 particular issue that come to your mind.

75 **Bro. K……:** Yeah at the moment there is this talk of the issue of dressing code here in
76 Tangaza. You know imposing a dressing code it is trying to see that we are bringing moral
77 values to life of the students. However, looked at differently, to some other extent, a
78 particular student may want to enjoy the life of the student, by adopting style like wearing
79 earrings, dressing in tight jeans and other items that are in fashion which the elders, as
80 Raphael said, the older persons will say "No" to because the older persons are trying to put
81 some sense of moral values in the young persons but the latter are not in touch with such
82 notions. They view such restrictions as the older generation subjecting them to something
83 which is not part of themselves. For themselves they are moving on with fashions but for the
84 elders are seen as going back trying to look at how we used to dress in the olden days. So it's
85 like we are imposing some things which the young find difficult to adopt because they are
86 moving with time.

87 **Bro. G…..:** In my interactions with people from other parts of Africa, I have noticed that
88 young African boys and girls are brought up - we are brought up in an environment which is
89 separates them. Boys are brought up in a particular way and they are told in clear terms that

90   men don't cry, men don't show any fear but if you are a girl, this, this and that is expected of
91   you. When eventually they reach the university level there is no way you will not be
92   associating with the opposite sex. I think that it is for this reason that at the university level
93   these young Africans have problems with the people who they had not been trusting since
94   childhood - the opposite sex, and all that.

95   **Bro. S……:** There is also an aspect of morality in which there is a conflict between
96   behaviour and expectation. The way I am socialized, the way I was socialized in my culture
97   and the values that I inherited and internalised form the basis on which I was supposed to
98   express myself as a member of a community and as a way of living with others. Now when I
99   find myself in a situation like this one (of being in an international institution) or I interact
100 with people from other parts of the world, I find that sometimes the encounter is intimidating.
101 A case in point is an incident when there was a funeral in my own community. In that context
102 I found social interaction very difficult: sometimes I would greet people and they would not
103 even respond. So I was forced to ask myself whether there was something wrong with the
104 way I was relating with the people. At other times I try to reach out to a person and the
105 person is busy and begins to walk away. So that one brings a kind of awareness that there is
106 conflict of morality, so to speak. This particular way of behaving in my community does not
107 correspond to the way of behaving in another society which to a certain extent is influenced
108 by the western culture.

109 **Mrs. Muraya:** And does that cause tension, would that kind of example you are giving really
110 cause you tension and if that were to happen how would you deal with it?

111 **Bro. S…….:** To some extent it does raise questions to me as an individual. But now being in
112 the position of somehow belonging to these two systems of morality, I am able to pause and
113 see and understand this part of society which thinks this way while my background thinks
114 differently. So we should try to abstain from applying our values indiscriminately and try to
115 learn from the other person which is another process to come to understand the way people
116 perceive things.

117 **Bro. D….:** For me due to my traditional culture, I find a problem in communication. In my
118 culture, we were taught there is a hierarchy if I want to communicate something. I should
119 pass to the young, then the mother to transmit whatever I want to communicate to the family
120 and the society. And those who did the communication were suppressing the idea of eye
121 contact, the use of symbols and body language as a way of communication but particularly
122 discouraged was the use of eye contact. On reaching the university, members of our
123 community live in a culture that is different. In this larger community we experience conflict
124 because we are taught that eye contact is the way of communication. When you are having a
125 dialogue and you maintain eye to eye contact, we are told it is a way of taking him/ her as an
126 equal with me which is a bad thing from where I come from. So when I come to a university,
127 I find it very difficult to associate with lecturers may be in terms of asking questions or
128 interacting with my fellow brothers in class because I always have in my mind that I should
129 not look into the eyes of the lectures for it is considered lack of respect.

130 **Bro. P……:** Mine is the question of hospitality. Allow me to say it has led to very many
131 forms of misinterpretations, like I meet you and I invite you for a cup of coffee. If you are a
132 woman or a lady, the co-friars in the community will interpret it differently, not like a gesture
133 of hospitality. But back at home, if a female or anybody visits you there is always that space
134 for me to offer some refreshment to him or her. Then the other form is experienced in our

135 religious communities where we are living in now - you can't invite somebody whom you
136 know without prior arrangement. There should be an invitation letter! Without this invitation
137 letter even if it is a feast day in the community that person will not be allowed to go though
138 the gate: he/she will be viewed as a gate crashers. For me I have always found myself caught
139 up in between that understanding and traditional hospitality. How do I understand this
140 hospitality when I live with these guys in this community and there is a celebration to which I
141 can't extend an invitation to friends? My co-friars with whom I study will be very selective,
142 in as who are you inviting, who are you allowing and what is your relationship with them and
143 how ling will they stay here? You see that kind of attitude causes a bit of conflict because it is
144 terribly un-African.

145 **Bro. L…:** I would like to share something and I must say I have little experience in relation
146 to life in Africa, not having been much exposed to life outside my experience of a seminary
147 set of life. My observation is that I don't see any problem with the traditional African cultures
148 affecting students or youth today. The only tension I see arises from students with their
149 cultural values trying to meet the demands of modern/Western life. For example, here in
150 Africa, when students both boys and girls are adults, they are given a lot of freedom to stand
151 by themselves a practice which I don't see back home in India. We take time to be free. And
152 yet that freedom is very good but when it encompasses modern influence it is creating
153 conflict. There is a kind of tension - you know there is difficulty in bringing balance in life.

154 **Mrs. Muraya:** I want to take this discussion to a different level. Some of my colleagues here,
155 spiritual directors and counsellors have been encountering situations in which students, for
156 example, are concerned that somebody has bewitched them, or bewitched a relative or
157 colleague. Another issue is that a curse has been pronounced perhaps by a grandfather or
158 great grandmother, and three or four generation down, they feel that the curse that was
159 pronounced years back is still affecting them or close members of their family. So is there
160 any one of you who has experiences of that kind that you would like to chip in about?

161 **Bro. K……:** Yes! I want to start by answering your question from the point of view of we
162 ourselves as Africans. I don't want to rule out that in our African understanding or our
163 African aspect of culture that such kind of things like curses don't occur. I have a personal
164 experience of a person who was cursed. Depending on the family background, wherever he
165 goes when that person is challenged, at the back of the mind there is that belief that any kind
166 of misfortune that occurs is a part of that particular utterance that was made by so and so.
167 And that becomes a problem in the life of the person to move on because every particular
168 challenge that comes to him/her will be attributed to the curse. So as an African person I do
169 believe that those things do happen, and they are there and we should not rule them out.
170 Because I am brought up in the society in which those kinds of things are real. So if I say as
171 we say we believe, so I believe that though the understanding of curses, things can change
172 with the mentality, because sometimes also that curse goes with psychological understanding
173 of how hard such kind of an utterance affected you. There is a possibility of being liberated
174 from the kind of slavery or the kind of confinement to some sort of ideology that can be
175 changed with time. But I believe those things are there and we should not take them for
176 granted.

177 **Bro. K……:** I have not had an experience of being cursed, but having come from an African
178 set- up, especially in my culture, there is a belief that if something has happened to you, it
179 does not just happen by chance. There must be something, and especially in my culture, when
180 somebody is dying, the kind of information or communication given out is taken with a lot of

181 care and seriousness. That is if someone dying tells you not to do something in the future, if
182 you end up doing it and you get a consequence, or something bad happens, you will surely
183 relate it with what was said. Therefore, it is something which is very serious in my culture
184 about the curse, especially when it comes from somebody who is dying.

185 **Mrs. Muraya:** So you are saying that one, you have not had a personal experience, and two,
186 in case one of your grandparents said "xyz" should not be done, you believe that you would
187 think twice before doing that which they have forbidden you.

188 **Bro. K……:** Yes, I have not been cursed and if my father before dying told me not to do
189 something, I will look at it, yes, I will not just do it.

190 **Mrs. Muraya:** So you believe in the power of the curse?

191 **Bro. K……:** I believe in the power of the curse.

192 **Bro. Patrick:** Mine is just to make the acknowledgement that this thing (the curse) is there
193 and we have lived in these communities in which we have been brought up and also some of
194 our family members have gone through this. Sometimes we are caught up in a dilemma
195 whereby we are well placed in the society being in Church, we know the bible, we can pray
196 for ourselves and for others. Some of them even would say something like, "Uncle said a bad
197 thing for me," and am going to say this as an example, "would you pray for me to counteract
198 it." But the dilemma they are in am in it too because I grew up in the same context. When
199 something bad happens to me and I think, no, the bible is not helping me, spiritual direction is
200 not helping me, I go to myself, and if I go to the books of psychology, they are not helping
201 me. Naturally there is that fall back when we hit a wall. You see that there is something more
202 than that, more than religious beliefs or illusions of mind, concept of God. There is something
203 greater than a religion. I give an example, even among those who are ordained in the Catholic
204 Church to the priesthood, even religious sisters when they go home they are faced with this
205 dilemma. When you come back to your work place there is a different expectation of the
206 people you are living with. You will have to behave lukewarm. But inside yourself you know
207 that what these people are saying back at home makes sense.

208 In my experience, it has happened to several families…and it also happened in my family
209 where my uncle passed away when he was angry. He pronounced a curse to my aunt and as a
210 result, my aunt's children never complete school. They go to school and they just drop out.
211 They make an effort but they never succeed in life. Where do they direct the source of their
212 misfortune? It is to the uncle who died angry. You see that kind of a thing does happen.

213 **Mrs. Muraya:** What do you think yourself - do you associate their problem with the curse
214 pronounced by their uncle?

215 **Bro. P……:** Now there are two realities for me because talking like a seminarian the truth is
216 what I have been made to think here but inside me there is something valuable, there is a
217 connection.

218 **Mrs. Muraya:** So there is a conflict between what you are being taught in the seminary and
219 what you believe in?

220 **Bro. P……:** Yes, and you know the origin of that? The origin of that is the way people have
221 been catechised or even evangelised, so to speak. In the process of learning catechism, you
222 share your experience in the catechism class. "Ah!" They will shout you down, that is an evil

223 thing; the catechist will even suspend your baptism classes, if it is a serious thing. And what
224 would a child with such an experience do? He/she will just coil inside and hide and this will
225 come up when he is a priest or a bishop. As a result there are people living double lives. From
226 my experience when I was in South Africa for pastoral experience it was a big deal. The
227 provincial of the Marian Healers was caught up in all these issues. His take was that he got a
228 call to be a traditional healer. He was in charge of the congregation, but when he was
229 conducting this, the call from the ancestors came and, he couldn't have hidden it. How does
230 he respond to this reality, there is a calling of the Church here on one hand and the calling of
231 the ancestors on the other. So what did he do? Most of the time he would go to perform the
232 traditional healing, but this could have been viewed as the sacramental healing of the Church.
233 But no - he would say the powers that were being used there were from the calling he had
234 received from the ancestors. There was a confrontation with Church leadership until the
235 Cardinal issued a pastoral letter to the whole Archdiocese saying that Jesus is the centre of
236 our worship and thus discrediting the priest.

237 **Mrs. Muraya:** He issued the letter to counteract the traditional healing practice?

238 **Bro. P……:** Yes to counteract that. But the priest would call a workshop and people would
239 come. If you went inside you would see some spirit is at work.

240 **Bro Ka….:** I also come from a community that believes that once a curse is pronounced, it
241 takes effect, unless something is done to undo it. I have some examples where it happened
242 that a parish priest in my place had problems with Christians concerning money and this
243 sister went ahead and paid some people to attack and punish this parish priest or even kill
244 him. So this priest went on and did a kind of ritual in the church and said that he was cursing
245 the people who were involved in that plan. Sure enough after some time, this sister ran mad
246 and she was deported back to her country. Everybody else who was involved in this intrigue
247 came to ask for forgiveness and the priest did a mass vested in black and left. Every thing
248 was left in chaos, and it is just recently that the bishop went there to cleanse that place and
249 revoke the curse. Now things are calm. I think there is a kind of psychological effect that is
250 attached to all this.

251 Recently in my own family something happened. A young child came and stole chicken that
252 belonged to my uncle. This man kept on asking whoever had taken the chicken to go and tell
253 him. Nobody came forward and as a result, he made a pronouncement: "If nobody comes out
254 I will do this and this and this." As a matter of fact nobody came out.

255 **Mrs. Muraya:** What did he say he would do?

256 **Bro Ka….:** Well, because he said he would cast a spell that would finish the family. So what
257 he did, in fact he went ahead with permission from the government, and did what he had said
258 although he did it privately but now this family has been complaining that since then, they
259 have buried eight people from the same family, and they believe it is because of this spell.
260 They have tried to appease this man and he has refused.

261 **Mrs. Muraya:** So what do you think he used – the power of witchcraft or what?

262 **Bro Kasolo:** I think that is exactly what he did…witchcraft is real. So I think there is
263 something that has not been addressed in the religious circles that is still affecting the people.
264 We are religious, yes, but we still experience this conflict which my brother has talked about.

265   Something has not been addressed and when you go to our call you just go in, but there is
266   something inside me that is not resolved.

267   **Bro. K……:** For me I am somehow privileged to come from a society where witchcraft is
268   not a hidden thing and they (witchdoctors) have licences to operate. Personally I would say I
269   believe in them and I believe they have power because I have a personal experience where I
270   have visited a shrine and I have seen it work somehow with my co-friar. When we were on
271   holiday, we visited a parish were there was this sister who was very sick and she had tried all
272   sorts of treatment in many hospitals but she was not improving. So her people come and told
273   us they were taking her to a medicine man. I got the chance to go with them. So we went into
274   a small shrine and when we entered, we found it dark. The medicine man said, "I can see
275   some of you are afraid and so he opened the curtains. He used some instruments and things
276   began moving. Really for me this was an experience I will never forget. I saw things greeting
277   us, jumping all over and around us…

278   **Mrs. Muraya:** Things moving and jumping…what do you mean by "things"?

279   **Bro. K……**: I don't know what to call them, but things would come from outside, make
280   some noise (he claps his hands) rotate around you and shake us. So the medicine man
281   interceded and he told them that he had a sick person there. So they communicated with each
282   other, and at the end, the sister was cured and then went home. But now when I am alone and
283   think of that experience, I believe that they work and the way the things came over me and
284   also my co-friar and we were not going to be attended to, ai!

285   Mrs. Muraya: Thank you very much for sharing that experience. Now as you sit here as a
286   student of theology and as a Christian, do you feel like a person living in two words or do you
287   feel any tension?

288   **Bro. K……:** To be sincere with you, from that experience, I have created a separate box in
289   my mind where I put them. When I need them I go and pick them (all laugh), because I have
290   some reference, even if I die, I have someone who could tell the same story in the same
291   community. And also remember they were not working for us - we were merely on an
292   adventure, so I believe in those things myself.

293   **Bro. R……:** When it comes to me to respond to your question, I can't say it does not affect
294   me at all, because tomorrow we are going to become priests, men of God. What I think
295   personally, I come from Nigeria, thank God in my family we are Christians, but in the
296   extended family, one of my uncles is a witchdoctor, so I don't need to go into details into
297   that. It happens that at a point I believe in them and at another point I didn't. So actually if
298   you ask me as per this moment I believe they do exist because it is part of the mind,
299   witchcraft and the like. That is why what is being preached today in most Pentecostal
300   Churches is about witchcraft and curses. These are things in the African mind, they will
301   always be there. The pastors and the preachers are talking about the curse. For me I believe in
302   them! I do know the strong part of my belief is that they can't affect me. Yeah I believe, they
303   do exist but I know they can't affect me.

304   **Mrs. Muraya:** How do you know that they can't affect you and what makes you immune?

305   **Bro. R……:** This is because I strongly believe in Jesus and in my mind I know whichever
306   way… you know there is the way you fire your prayers that you counteract these things
307   because they are not more powerful than God. I am a charismatic member and I would call up

308 other members to go around and we would pray. So my brothers I invite you and encourage
309 you to pray with me this Saturday (They laugh).

310 **Bro. S…..:** As pertains to curses, in India there is such a thing in that there is certain utensil
311 of silver and gold that is put on the ground and a certain ritual is done. But this doesn't extend
312 to the children it only affects the immediate people who remove the thing from the ground.
313 And so those who remove it know they will get it. If you remove it as a group it will affect
314 you and not your children and your family members. Also there are places in the houses
315 where they have kept the statues and you are not supposed to step there. But in some cases
316 like me I have stepped there without knowledge and nothing has happened. I don't think it
317 affects me but they way they explain it is that it will affect the person who was involved and
318 does not go the children or grandchildren.

319 **Mrs. Muraya:** I am afraid we have to bring this to an end at this point, but as agreed earlier
320 on, we will meet again at the same time in two weeks. Thank you all, once again for your
321 presence and participation.

APPENDIX 4: Theology Students Focus Group (2)

3 **(17/03/2011)**

5 **Mrs. Muraya**: Thank you very much for sparing your time to come back. As I had said before I
6 am grateful and appreciate your participation. I think what we do is try to go back to where we
7 stopped. We were discussing cultural practices and how they impact our lives as young African
8 Christians from our own experience or from the experiences of colleagues in the college. We will
9 pick up the conversation from there…so if you have some personal experience you would like to
10 share you are most welcome to do that.

12 **Br. K……**: I have an experience that I don't know if I would call it personal or not, but back in
13 my village, there is a woman who is labeled as a woman with an "evil eye," so that when she
14 looks at you something bad will happen to you, or when she comments on something an
15 unwanted consequence would follow. It happened one time when she was passing by a cow that
16 was about to deliver, she said something about it…commented on the fact that it had neared its
17 days (was about to deliver). Fortunately or unfortunately, the cow died in the process of delivery.
18 That is only one instance… everyone in the village knows that woman to have an "evil eye."

19 **Mrs. Muraya**: What was your interpretation of that occurrence…that she said something about
20 the cow and it died?

21 **Br. K……**: Yeah, the owner of the cow said it is because the woman had talked about
22 it…remember, I am saying that is not the only incident…she is known all over the village. So the
23 villagers have the perception that she might actually be a witch. But normally she is not branded
24 as a witch - they use that phrase of "evil eye".

25 **Mrs. Muraya**: Thank you. What is your own take on that situation, you now as an individual,
26 how do interpret the incident?

27 **Br. K……**: Yeah, even myself I happen to be one of the villagers and I believe that she is having
28 the "evil eye" she is accused of.

29 **Mrs. Muraya**: So if you encountered her on your way and she said something to you, you
30 would take caution.

31 **Br. K……**: Yeah, I would take caution.

32 **Mrs. Muraya:** What kind of caution would you take?

33 **Br. K……:** My first line of defense would be to try and avoid meeting with her face to face. If
34 that becomes unavoidable, I would ask my parents what can be done to counter the effects of the
35 "evil eye". If they say divination is necessary, so be it.

36 **Mrs. Muraya**: Thank you for that. I wonder how that would sit with your Christian beliefs…

37 **Br. K……**: I am not sure…I haven't given it much thought…yea, I see a contradiction but that
38 thing is real…

39 **Br. Ka….**: I also have an experience of my very own grandmother - she has passed on - she used
40 to believe in bad omens and to her meeting with a woman very early in the morning as the first
41 person - that was a bad omen. So every plan that she had that particular day would have to be
42 cancelled. So for instance, when she was to visit someone or go somewhere, she would wake up
43 very early in the morning, even as early as 3 am, to start her journey expecting that she would
44 not meet a woman on her way. If she knocked at the door where she had gone to see a particular
45 person and a woman came out first, she would just go back, because that was already a bad
46 omen. Nothing would go well on that day.

47 **Mrs. Muraya**: Did she tell you about particular experiences… practical incidents during which
48 she met a woman and she didn't succeed in her mission?

49 **Br. Ka….**: Yeah, sometimes she would begin her journey, and she would come back
50 complaining bitterly and that day she would be tough with us; she would cane us for the slightest
51 mistakes.

52 **Mrs. Muraya**: She would come back in a bad mood as a result of encountering another woman?

53 **Br. Ka….**: Yeah, she would be in a bad mood and would quarrel the whole day. That day
54 everything would be tough for us. So we were brought up in that kind of environment and I
55 remember when I used to walk to school, there is a particular man, who when we would meet,
56 everybody would pretend we were picking tooth brush for him to pass. The reason was that we
57 believed if you encountered that person your day would be ruined. People had been complaining
58 that they had been beaten in school because of meeting with him in the morning.

59 **Mrs. Muraya**: But now, thinking of that experience, where do you stand - supposing someone
60 was to come to you telling you that if you meet this particular man/woman your day would be
61 terrible. What would be your response to that?

62 **Br. Ka….**: Well it used to work at that time because I believed in it, but today things have
63 changed somewhat…though we do believe that if you wake up in the morning and you step on
64 the feces of a chicken, already your things are done. Most of the time I don't know whether it
65 works or not but I know that people do believe in such things very strongly and when somebody
66 believes in something, it is not easy looking for ways of negotiating with the person.

67   **Mrs. Muraya**: When you say "you step on chicken feces of a chicken and your things are
68 done…" do you mean you will have problems?

69 **Br. Ka….**: You will have problems that day. Yes.

70 **Mrs. Muraya**: I have never heard of that. Do you believe it?

71 **Br. Ka….**: I think I do to some extent. It is not easy to step out of what one has grown with all
72 the years…

73 **Br. G…..**: I don't have a direct experience of witchcraft and bad omens, but where I come from,
74 there are particular people who are qualified and are given particular titles, and these people once
75 they cast a spell on you or pronounce a curse it is going to happen. Therefore since they are

76 elders, you don't provoke them; you don't get on their wrong side. When they say something
77 their word has weight. It is like when the priest consecrates the bread and wine to become the
78 body and blood of Christ - he uses a particular formula and we believe that word has power. So
79 also in my society we believe that the word of particular individual elders has power.

80 **Mrs. Muraya**: Does that happen when they are old?

81 **Br. G.....**: Yes when they are elders or maybe they are born as twins, something of that sort, there
82 are particular powers which are associated with them. So those people are respected and one
83 would not like to cross their line.

84 **Mrs. Muraya**: Do you see that as a carry over - you remember last month we were talking about
85 the traditional respect for older persons. Some of you said that there is a carry over to your
86 lecturers, in that some of them are older you feel obliged to give them the kind of respect you
87 give your elders in the community. So even if you thought you would want to confront them, you
88 would hesitate. Do you think there is a carry-over of fear for you?

89 **Br. G…..**: Yes to certain extent there is a carry, but also I think the fear comes from the
90 experience of the community generally. Because in the community you find out a young man,
91 middle aged person who is poor and you ask the rich contemporaries, "what went wrong"? And
92 you will hear that he went against particular directives that he was given by the elders, that is
93 why he is that way.

94 **Mrs. Muraya**: Thank you.

95 **Br. R……**: I have several experiences but in this context I will share two of them. The first one
96 is that there is something we call *ebo* in my community which means sacrifice. And normally
97 this sacrifice if you are offering it you have to do it in a place called *oritameta*. *Oritameta* is a
98 point where roads meet-it is like a crossroads where roads from different direction meet. So this
99 sacrifice normally is placed at the *oritameta* and people offer these sacrifices when they are in
100 difficult situations. And what we were told, normally when we were going to school and we see
101 it, we were meant to do a certain sign three times (flipping your fingers while your hand is lifted
102 up). So when you do that it means that what is being sacrificed won't get you.

103 But at some point as we were growing older I came to realize that these sacrifices they offer
104 good things, sometimes you can see nice food and even sometimes they can put money on the
105 sacrifice. And people are afraid of taking the money but some of us who were Christians and did
106 not believe in these sacrifices have taken the money and nothing has happened to us. But there is
107 a cousin of mine who was a good footballer and stepped on the sacrifice and his leg was
108 paralyzed. He woke up the following day to play football and he could not. The interpretation
109 was that the sacrifice was made for him and that there was somebody who was after him. And
110 immediately after he had stepped on the sacrifice he never was the same. So I wondered how that
111 was possible as we lived in the same compound. That sacrifice affected him.

112 The second one was when I finished my secondary school and went to work in a different town.
113 In that place I used work, we used to see a particular mad man and it after sometime that we
114 discovered that he was not mad but in the afternoon he pretends to be a mad man, but in the night
115 he is very active. Where he used to stay there was a very big cave, so this man used to kidnap

116 people, kill them and put them in that particular place and start selling particular parts of their
117 body. So it was discovered and the man was arrested. At least for me I used to wonder why this
118 man's business was prospering. He used to sell human parts and truly you would see long
119 queues during the day in which people were waiting to be served. So this man used to sell parts
120 of human beings. And people used to flock to his business premise to buy them. So as I said last
121 week these things work, it depends on one's state of mind.

122 **Mrs. Muraya**: Thank you for sharing that. Would you dare take anything of the sacrifice now?

123 **Br. R……**: As I said before I once picked some money and even today I would pick it.

124 **Mrs. Muraya**: And nothing happened to you!

125 **Br. R……**: Nothing happened to me.

126 **Mrs. Muraya**: Why do you think nothing happened to you?

127 **Br. R……**: As I said last week, my God I believe in is very powerful. As long as I need that
128 money, I stop, I talk to my God that the money I need is here, and I pick the money. And more so
129 these people who believe in witchcraft are more superstitious. And if also you afraid you might
130 be affected. And also the unit of a family is very important. If you are coming from a family
131 whereby witchcraft is very strong, even when you don't participate in that witchcraft, the
132 opponent will be afraid of you, because they don't know what you usually do. Besides those
133 people who are brought up in the village, normally if you are born in the village, they try to bluff
134 you, to give you a kind of protection, that if anybody tries to attack you, the person won't
135 succeed. You see that one is there. For instance they will put some kind of marks in your body as
136 a sign of protection. Like my father has those marks and I try to ask him if they are important to
137 him but even if he doesn't believe in them they act as protection for those who believe in them
138 and would intend to harm him. But for me I would say I don't need them as I am a Christian.

139 **Mrs. Muraya**: So your Christian God protects you?

140 **Br. R……**: Yes that is one thing. But the problem of our Christian God is the moment we talk
141 about the commandments we forget about the experience we have at a personal level. For those
142 who believe in these sacrifices, their faith proceeds from the altar and moves with them in all
143 things they do. So for us Christians we leave our faith in the church as we carry on our lives in
144 other activities in our life.

145 **Mrs. Muraya**: Thank you so much for your sharing.

146 **Bro. N…..**: I don't have any personal experience but as a matter of fact I believe to a certain
147 extent in special powers present in the secular world. One of the stories experienced by one of
148 my friends shared to me is that he was once invited in his grandparent's home. At one point he
149 saw one of his grandmothers as someone who had some power to perform some magic. Like she
150 would make things disappear, like money and other things. This made him uncomfortable so that
151 he did not want to stay long in that home. So I too believe the kind of belief people has effects on
152 the life of people. Back home, there is no real experience but there are many stories in the village
153 people who are called traditional doctors. Most of them are known for the negative things they

154 wish on others like making people to die and those kinds of things. The stories I have heard I
155 believe they have some impact on the lives of the people.

156 **Mrs. Muraya**: The story or rather experience you shared with us did it happen here in Kenya, or
157 was it from a Kenyan friend?

158 **Bro. N…..**: Yes the experience was from a Kenyan friend

159 **Mrs. Muraya**: But the other stories are from back home…

160 **Bro. N…..**: Yes, they are from back home in India where I have seen people die and the talk has
161 been it was due to the work of the village witchdoctors. Like for example there is on instance
162 where a person came from the playing ground and all over sudden he fell sick in the evening and
163 in two days he died. And many other such instances where somebody is sick they associate it
164 with magic or witchcraft. These instances are very much present in the village and I believe they
165 are real.

166 **Mrs. Muraya:** Thank you so much.

167 **Br. S……**: I also have some experience. Sometimes when we go home, I visit my neighbours
168 and the people I grew up with. When I go to my grandparents they caution/ restrict me on
169 visiting some particular homes. When I ask them why? Then they say that this family does not
170 want to see me prosper. When I ask them to give me a reason why, they give me an example of a
171 certain person who visited them and their life was spoiled. The same applies to my young
172 brothers and sisters - when they come home during the holidays from boarding schools which are
173 far away from home, they are also prohibited to visit some homes. There is an understanding
174 that in such families they do not want to see other people succeed. In fact they don't call it
175 witchcraft but they believe that the people from these families don't want to see other people
176 prosper.

177 **Mrs. Muraya**: So your parents fear that jealous neighbours can cause some damage to you?

178 **Br. S……**: Yeah, something of that sort

179 **Mrs. Muraya**: …and have forbidden you to visit some homes? Do you respect that…how have
180 you responded to the restriction?

181 **Br. S……**: Ok, it is not that I don't respect them - I do respect them despite their belief. What I
182 do, however, is that I do not follow what they believe. In fact they have told me not to visit this
183 or that family because I understand they believe that these families do not want to see me
184 prosper. I do tell them "it's ok, I will not go." Nevertheless I go contrary to that advice without
185 telling them directly on their faces. I find my own ways of going about it…an approach to visit
186 the home I need to visit and I don't tell my parents that I have visited this family or that one. I
187 have a very open attitude towards all people. From what I have heard in this discussion some
188 people have been convinced of these beliefs from their childhood through their fore parents,
189 grandparents and the wider environment so the effect is bound to be strong. Now the tension is
190 for us who are young and growing up in this modern age, the information age - and we are not
191 confined to a particular environment. As a result we do not have much attachment to one

192 environment. Nevertheless there is a tension - I think for us the challenge is to see the way we
193 can balance between what we learn at school and what we have learned back at home. Gradually
194 these beliefs are dying out but still for the generation before us the beliefs are strongly held, even
195 if there is nothing that has practically happened, it is feared that something will happen.

196 **Mrs. Muraya**: What I am hearing is that you have managed to come out of that kind of fear -
197 that you have managed to work out of that fear and gone ahead to visit the forbidden families and
198 nothing has happened to you.

199 **Br. S…....**: Nothing has happened to me though I don't disagree that the belief is there. For us
200 who are able to overcome that kind of challenge, it doesn't have any impact on our lives: it is just
201 a belief. But practically I cannot say this happened because someone visited any one of those
202 targeted families.

203 **Mrs. Muraya**: And what is it that makes you come over that kind of a belief - what factors have
204 helped you?

205 **Br. S……**: There are many factors one of them being that I was able to grow up with people
206 from different environments. I went to secondary school in a place far away from my home and
207 my people. After my secondary education, I joined religious life where I met people with the
208 understanding that the measure is "the good." I think that kind of living with people from
209 different backgrounds and all sorts of tribes has really helped me and shaped my thinking. In
210 addition my Christian faith and my knowledge as a religious brother about the concept of good
211 and of the neighbour have been a contributing factor. So I am able to guide people and tell them
212 that there are some things that will not help us so we should try to discard them as they have
213 been overtaken by time and events.

214 **Mrs. Muraya**: Thank you. You have talked about your exposure in school in different
215 environments as well as the tenets of your Christian faith as important factors in overcoming
216 some of the fears engendered in some of the cultural practices

217 **Br. S……**: That's right..

218 **Mrs. Muraya**: Would anyone else like to share some experiences, particularly your own
219 experiences?

220 **Br. K……**: Let me share something – the need to find synthesis is what I am hearing people talk
221 about. I think that the way someone is brought up will very much determine if one believes in
222 these things we are talking about of witchcraft or not. Now suppose that I am brought up in a
223 place where people believe in the power of witchcraft - it will become a part of me. Even when I
224 am 'exposed' in the subconscious I will be having some elements of it so that when something
225 goes wrong, the belief will be clicking in my mind, just because I was brought up in a place
226 where people believe in the power of witchcraft. And also I would like not to base my argument
227 on the concept that witchcraft is something barbaric, something backward and primitive. I say
228 this because I have seen reports, like last week in the papers, someone who very well educated
229 claiming that a white serpent had been sent by his dead wife. Therefore, even in the
230 contemporary society, the one that we say is post-modern we still see some elements of beliefs in
231 witchcraft or some evil, mysterious power.

232 **Br. Ka….**: I come from a place where people believe a lot in witchcraft and continue practicing
233 it to the present day. I once happened to be going to visit my friend who was herding their cattle
234 and on my way I found a group of people gathered at a place adjacent the house of one person
235 who was suspected to be a witch. On the road there was a piece of meat believed to have been
236 placed there by a witch targeting a person. There was a discussion to the effect that this piece of
237 meat was particularly pork and it resembled another piece found at the same point that had
238 caused a neighbour's cow to die when it stepped on it. I had a good look at it and it was truly a
239 piece of pork. Pork is believed to be used by witches to carry out their missions. That is why
240 most of the witches are believed not to consume it. So the argument was that the owner of that
241 home was targeting someone by placing the piece of flesh there and that was seen as witchcraft.

242 **Mrs. Muraya**: So what was your take on it - did you believe that it was witchcraft?

243 **Br. Ka….**: At that time I did for it was my first time to see such kind of thing. I had not seen
244 anything of that kind of practice before. But now I do not believe in such things. When I
245 continued to my friend's home I found his mother who told me very bad things about my family.
246 She told me that my family had people who are witches. My great grandparent was a witch and
247 we are bad people. She refused to tell me where her son was grazing because I would cause him
248 to fail in his coming exam. She believed that I used to do better in the examination than her son
249 because we used charms in our family. What confused me was the connection of my visit and
250 exam - that really surprised me. I did not see any connection.

251 **Mrs. Muraya**: So you are connecting the aspect of living in a community that believes in
252 witchcraft as a factor of being influenced in thinking and believing on issues appertaining to
253 witchcraft. Did you actually try to see your friend?

254 **Br. Ka….**: Yes I did. There is another incident recently where I found a woman hurling all kinds
255 of abuses and harsh words to my mother. I had gone to the "shamba" earlier on and at this time I
256 was coming back home when I found the woman at the gate. I confronted her and told her never
257 to come to my home to abuse my mother again. I told her it would be her last day if she dared do
258 that again. From that moment, she has never stepped at our home and she fears me. When we
259 meet I just greet her and go my way. She fears me a lot.

260 **Br. G…..**: For me I believe in witchcraft…that it exists because I come from South Africa and
261 from what I am hearing we share similar stories all over. Even here in Kenya I have heard
262 similar stories to the one bout pork at the cross roads. I do believe it does exist and these stories
263 cannot be a concoction of people's imaginations or people making them up. How does one
264 explain how people in Nigeria having similar stories with people of South Africa or Kenya? How
265 would they have similar stories like that and common experiences? For me I believe in such
266 things like witchcraft.

267 **Mrs. Muraya**: How does that belief affect your life? Are there any things or situations you
268 would avoid because you are afraid of witchcraft?

269 **Br. G…..**: Yes there are certain things I would avoid for fear of witchcraft.

270 **Mrs. Muraya**: Such as…

271   **Br. G…..**: I would avoid getting into trouble with particular people who are associated with
272   certain powers…

273   **Mrs. Muraya**: So you would avoid particular families…some paces?

274   **Br. G…..**: Yes, I would avoid people who have particular titles like those who have gone
275   through particular rituals and those associated with special powers like twins and others who are
276   known in the society to possess special powers.

277   **Mrs. Muraya**: Suppose you inevitably got into trouble with one of them for whatever reason -
278   what would you do about it?

279   **Br. G…..**: In my culture there are certain rituals that are followed for appeasing; a traditional
280   way of reconciling with those people. For example, one is supposed to slaughter a goat or a
281   chicken for them or bring it to them for reconciliation.

282   **Mrs. Muraya**: So you would look for a traditional way to solve the problem and do whatever is
283   prescribed?

284   **Br. G…..**: Yes…

285   **Br. Ka….**: I would like to share another experience. My grandmother used to tell me not to
286   associate with a certain friend of mine who happened to have come from a family that was
287   associated with thieves. As it happened my mother also was very particular on who we
288   associated with, both my brother and me. However one thing which was funny is that my sister
289   got married in that family. One incident happened when my maternal uncle lost a chicken and
290   the one who had stolen it was caught after some time. It was just because my sister was married
291   in that family that my uncle spared the family. He said he would have wiped out the entire lot. So
292   it is true that there are people who must be feared for the powers they possess.

293   **Mrs. Muraya**: Thank you very much for your participation. All I would remind you is to hand
294   back your copies of the consent forms indicating your consent to participate in the discussion. If
295   you don't have them with you, you can give them to Raphael for easy collection because he is
296   my contact person. *Asanteni sana*. (Kiswahili for thank you all very much.)

APPENDIX 5: Focus Group Discussion with ISRF Students

(22/03/11)

Mrs. Muraya: I want to begin by thanking all of you for consenting to participate in this study. Like I mentioned to you in class what I am doing is to try and find out in what ways some of our African cultural practices and beliefs impact the Christian life and psychological well-being of students here in the college. I would prefer you to speak about your own experience, but if you don't have any, you can speak of another person's experience that you know about. As you speak I would remind you to lift your identity tag so that we are able to identify the person speaking. My first question is: Are you aware of any African cultural practices amongst the students that impact their well being as Christian young educated people either spiritually or psychologically?

Br. V…..: One of the common cultural practices in my home area is the practice of pouring libation. It has not been auguring well with the young generation like my age where some of us have decided not to partake in it because of our Christian background and what this has caused is a division between various denominations. The last time I was home was during harvest time where before they start harvesting we are supposed to appease the ancestors through libation. I wanted to be part of it and I remember some of my colleagues did not partake and the elders were really angry.

Mrs. Muraya: What does the practice of libation mean and what does it involve?

Br. V…..: It involves pouring of wine on the ground before the feast of harvest starts, the idea being to unite us with the ancestors.

Mrs. Muraya: Are you saying that as a young Christian you feel that that practice is not compatible with your Faith?

Br. V…..: Yes, that is the idea….

Sr. T…..: In our place there is a particular practice called masquerading. This practice has it that at a particular time all the women are expected to cook and take the food somewhere near the shrines because women do not go to the shrine itself. If one does not participate, one should be prepared for punishment. My mother did not participate in this practice because she considered it not compatible with Christian beliefs. At one time our property was taken away to punish her for not participating in the ritual. At that time this cultural practice was very oppressive but as time went on, dialogue was initiated and things are a bit better now.

Mrs. Muraya: So this is an experience that you went through yourself?

Sr. T…..: Yes when I was small.

44 **Mrs. Muraya:** Reflecting on it now, how does it make you feel? Supposing you went back to
45 the village, how would you respond to that requirement?
46
47 **Sr. T…..:** I would handle it in a better way based on the understanding and awareness that as a
48 person I have the freedom to follow the beliefs I uphold and it is wrong to be forced to partake in
49 rituals that I don't believe in.
50
51 **Mrs. Muraya:** Are you saying then that this practice is not compatible with Christianity?
52
53 **Sr. T…..:** Yes, because it is very secretive that the women never get to know what they are
54 doing and they reveal it is only to men who fully understand it. When those masqueraders are
55 passing by during the festive time and they find you (a woman) on the way, even on a Sunday,
56 they will beat the hell out of your head because a woman is not supposed to see a masquerade.
57 So as a woman you cannot go to church during this time.
58
59 **Sr. M…..**: The experience which I can say causes tension with Christianity and which I can say
60 in my place is very strong even now indicates that even if a lot of people have embraced
61 Christianity, some of them are not clear in their faith in that they are in church and do everything
62 required but then there are some occurrences which have no explanation in my culture. For
63 example when a person gets sick and is taken to the hospital and he/she does not get well, the
64 family simply consults the traditional diviner secretly. For me I find that this one is affecting
65 even the young African religious. For example, I was once in Songea in southern Tanzania and it
66 happened that a brother (a religious brother) was on his way to the community and a bee entered
67 the car, got between his spectacles and the eye and stung him, causing the car to roll down.
68 Instead of people looking at it as a natural occurrence, they saw it as caused by witchcraft and
69 they started to consult diviners to find out who was behind it. So for me I find some of the
70 traditional beliefs and practices have an impact even on men and women religious.
71
72 I can give another example from the same part of Tanzania. There was a sister (a religious sister)
73 who was in charge of finances in her community. One day, as she was taking money to the bank,
74 someone approached her and told her that if she put the money at a certain place on the ground it
75 would double. So she did just that, and was asked to close her eyes as the charlatan doubled the
76 money. The moment she opened her eyes she found out that the magician had disappeared with
77 the money. For me she had faith that the magician would increase the money. So I think that
78 even if we are Christians, some of the cultural beliefs have a big impact on us.
79
80 **Mrs. Muraya:** Let me ask you, what is your personal stand vis-a-vis what other people have
81 done according to some of the examples you have given?
82
83 **Sr. M…..**: I personally do not practice it but I believe that witchcraft is there because I see things
84 that I cannot explain.
85
86 **Br. J…:** For me, there is a practice I see in my community which I think is not that bad. There
87 are these goats which men used to feast on in the open in the old times. Before one was
88 recognized as a man who could be trusted to represent the community, one had to give three

89 goats (maximum) for the other men to feast on. These goats were and still are eaten in the bush
90 by men, but women and girls are not supposed to be present. Circumcised boys can appear and
91 watch the event from far but they will not participate in the feast. One time it happened that
92 while I was leading a religious life, my sister's parents-in-law came home to bring dowry. As a
93 religious man, I had not gone through the ritual of giving goats so when I went home I was not
94 allowed to participate in the dowry ceremony. There were even some parts of the goat
95 slaughtered for the event that I was not allowed to eat. Throughout the ceremony I was treated
96 like a small boy and it would not have mattered how old one is – it would have applied even if
97 one was a grandfather. You can see how embarrassing it was for me who considers himself
98 respectable as a religious man and on that occasion I was pushed to cook and wait on the "real
99 men" with the small boys. What happened was that I decided to go and sleep to escape the
100 embarrassment. This forced me to give in to the demand for the goats at once to avoid future
101 embarrassment. The need to do so was particularly pertinent because the same year I was to have
102 my final profession (vows) which my family considers as my marriage. According to the custom,
103 a man cannot get married before giving the goats so I had to go through the ritual as a part of the
104 preparation for final vows. If I had not done so, my family would not have attended the
105 ceremony of my final vows, according to the custom. For me this practice is good because it
106 brings the community together but when it comes to the religious men, I think they should give
107 us exemption somehow. Fulfilling the ritual may be complicated for someone who may be
108 working in a foreign country and they need to attend a function or even if they come from the
109 same ethnic group they may belong to a different clan.
110
111 **Mrs. Muraya:** So you gave in to the ritual in order to avoid future embarrassment. Did you
112 experience any tension between this practice and your Christian faith?
113
114 **Br. J…:** This practice is not against Christianity - I see it as creating a bond of unity among the
115 members of the community and making people accountable. It is not evil but the attitude of the
116 community is that one has to follow rules – I find that somehow oppressive.
117
118 **Mrs. Muraya**: How did your religious community respond to your decision to give in and
119 participate in ritual of the goat feasting?
120
121 **Br. J…**: Members of my religious community were invited to the ritual but those who declined
122 were excused since they do not all come from my tribe.
123
124 **Fr. T….:** There is tension between the Catholic Church and our "*sokonkwo"* traditional
125 initiation for both females and males. As a result the practice has been that people who are
126 involved in the traditional initiation are excluded from the church services. That is they can't
127 receive the recourse lest they come and serve the penitential service for being there. As a result
128 you find that men stay at home and the church is becoming a woman's only place. The challenge
129 is that Christianity cannot explain what it does not like in the traditional culture and also the
130 traditional culture does not explain itself fully to the Christians. So it looks like Christianity
131 wants to abolish all rituals other than theirs claiming that they are against human law. So there is
132 tension.
133

134   **Mrs. Muraya**: Thank you for sharing that very interesting observation. How do you as a young,
135   educated African Christian and priest reconcile the two?
136
137   **Fr. T….:** The reconciliation would be that the Church should learn how to contain different
138   cultures and …….. back the traditional initiation. As an elder of the Church and society I know
139   there is a need to reconcile the two.
140
141   **Mrs. Muraya:** How does this tension impact your day to day life as a young African Christian
142   and as a minister of the Gospel?
143
144   **Fr. T….**: When I go to celebrate mass in the village I find that there are a lot of people but only a
145   few participate in the Church service. I go to administer the sacrament of the sick and I find out
146   that the person has been out of the Church for thirty years or he/she last went to church when
147   getting married because their parents convinced them to sanctify their marriage in Church but
148   never had the intention to participate in Christianity.
149
150   **Mrs. Muraya**: So despite baptism and a Church marriage, the person is not really converted to
151   Christianity?
152
153   **Fr. T….**: Exactly.
154
155   **Sr. F…….:** What I have observed in my own community is that we have family gatherings that
156   are organized annually and to which all members are invited. During these gatherings, there is
157   playing of drums, singing of traditional songs and calling of the family spirits to join them in
158   some way. Some of the members are affected as they are men and women in church leadership
159   positions. So they sing, dance and the spirits come and the first thing they ask for is water. They
160   say that where they come from is very dry. Then they say whenever they discuss family issues
161   they discuss with the member there, it is the woman possessed by men. She is really taken up by
162   the spirit of the men, she behaves like the men then after that they travel into the spirit world and
163   these are people in church. Even my very own uncles forced me to participate in these
164   ceremonies before I joined religious life but my father who I respect very much said that though
165   they have done this ritual for a very long time, he wanted me to make my own choice. I rejected
166   it. I believe that when these people come and say where they come from is very dry and they ask
167   for blood and water, this is very extreme.
168
169   **Mrs. Muraya**: In view of some of the practices you have just mentioned, supposing you were
170   experiencing tension, for example, between witchcraft and Christianity – say something has
171   happened that you cannot explain and you are wondering whether you might have been
172   bewitched and yet as a Christian you believe that you are protected by the power of God - as an
173   individual how do you go about resolving it?
174
175   **Sr. F…….**: For me, I can give an example from my family members. Where I come from if a
176   person is said to have been bewitched and cannot be cured through the hospital, the person is
177   taken to the diviner or some of the protestant churches where s/he is prayed for and gets well.
178   For me personally it has happened once in my family that something occurred which was

179 attributed to witchcraft. I told my mother we didn't want to lose membership of the church so we
180 decided to take the person to a different church outside the Catholic Church and she did this
181 secretly. I forbid her to say that I am the one who encouraged her because it would scandalize me
182 as a religious woman. For me if I see death coming I can go anywhere. As for visiting a witch
183 doctor I find that frightening but if I go to the hospitals and nothing happens then I can visit other
184 churches.
185
186 **Mrs. Muraya:** So for you the solution will be to seek for prayers in another church?
187
188 **Sr. F…….:** Yes as long as I remain alive by doing so.
189
190 **Br. J…:** For me I would seek for help from the traditional doctors and from the church also. I
191 say this because I understand that whatever does not contradict God's commandments is okay.
192 And we are already using many things which are traditional. If also I believe the church can add
193 value with its prayers then I would seek help from the church as well. The thing I think that
194 would be bad is when the rituals they are using are for killing. That would be bad and
195 contradicting God's commandments.
196
197 **Mrs. Muraya**: But have you had an experience or need to use traditional healing?
198
199 **Br. J…**: I still think I would combine church and culture. I have seen this in the place where I
200 am living. You find that there are issues that the family looks for solutions about but they are not
201 successful. I have seen a family which had a problem with their child and they tried for solutions
202 from the hospitals and even consulted the church. They were advised even by many people
203 including the priest to consult their grandparents for a solution. So I would still consult
204 traditions.
205
206 **Mrs. Muraya**: Was it the grandparents who advised on this problem?
207
208 **Br. J…:** Yes. The mother to the child was a young single parent and the problem with the child
209 was that of crying all the time. However, the moment the name was changed according to the
210 grandparents' advice, the problem was solved. So I could say still some of the traditions work.
211
212 **Sr. Mo…..:** What I do is to stand by my values and try to convince others to understand where I
213 am coming from. Whereas I am not so much directed to these traditional practices, I really
214 explain and behave to make people in the society understand who I am and the reasons of what I
215 am practicing. I try to catechize them on
216 what it means to be a Christian.
217
218 **Mrs. Muraya:** Are you saying that your Christian faith convinces you that you don't need to
219 practice any of the traditional cultural practices?
220
221 **Sr. Mo…..:** Yes. My Christian faith and values are not in a position to be compromised in a
222 negative aspect.
223

224   **Mrs. Muraya**: Which are some of the practices would you consider to be negative?
225

226   **Sr. Mo…..**: I will take an example from sister's case on witchcraft. In the place where I come
227   from there is this belief that there are some diseases which are incurable and that something is
228   happening as brother feared and unless one consults the ancestors or diviners there is no cure.
229   For me I would only seek a solution in prayers so that the community can understand that such
230   cases can have solutions within our faith and beliefs without any compromise.
231

232   **Sr. T…..:** I just want to say that in discussing these traditional practices, it depends on which
233   ones we are talking about because there are some practices which are not against the teachings of
234   the church. As an example I want to mention the respect for elders. In my extended family, my
235   uncle told my cousin's wife that she could not have a female child unless he approved of it. Now
236   she had five boys and she had to go and beg him to please allow her to get a female child. In my
237   father's family there were two males and the rest were females, so in this case, they did not want
238   to get female children. In this kind of situation even though we are Christians and we believe in
239   God as the one giving us a child, what my uncle said ad a lot of weight because he was an elder
240   and although he was not a Christian, his words came true. My cousin's wife had to beg him
241   pleading, "Please, I have done very well and given you five sons so at least let me have one or
242   two girls." I don't know if it's psychological but that is all that happened. It all depends on what
243   we are saying and on the "power of the spoken word" because if we do take this seriously it will
244   affect us, and even sometimes when we go to prayer in the church, they can tell us that for this
245   ….we have to go and do something, that this particular person has said something or a curse has
246   been spoken and if you go to that person and ask for peace you will get it. So we have to weigh
247   the two - what are we saying and how is this thing affecting us.
248

249   **Mrs. Muraya:** What is coming out is that some traditional cultural practices are quite powerful
250   even for young Christians like you - in this case it was the power of the word spoken by an elder.
251

252   **Sr. T…..:** Yes, some are real and they apply and whose explanation we cannot find even in
253   books like the one I just gave. The important thing for me is that I saw it happen - she had to go
254   and beg on her knees: "Please let me get a female child," and he said "ok" and so the next child
255   was female. It is thus difficult not to believe that something unusual happened on account of my
256   uncle's words…that words spoken by an older person have power.
257

258   **Fr. T….:** What I see is that Christianity as taught by the missionaries was delivered through a
259   certain culture and they made it to be grasped in that culture. As African Christians we were
260   supposed to behave like them - we embraced their culture and we too wanted to dress like those
261   missionaries, we wanted to live like them, sleep and sing like them. So we chased away our
262   African way of singing, our African God and African way of living to the extent that even now
263   God is a limited God who is locked up in the tabernacle, whereas for us Africans we would take
264   God wherever we go. Things like these show us that we are Christians locked in the chapel. How
265   can we be free to practice religion as we please? So for many Africans we practice the Christian
266   religion and we have our own traditional religion. This leads to a problem of incompatibility -
267   like you find a priest who goes to see this traditional someone so that he may become a bishop.
268   He goes to this traditional someone to make the bishop silent and the Christians silent. So this

269 shows us that there is still a long way to go and a lot to be done to truly root Christianity in
270 Africa.
271
272 **Sr. M……**: I feel that this is what inculturation is all about in that the faith we sit in …and
273 pretend to have killed all that the African religion had…even if it was not evil and even that
274 which is inclined to Christianity…for example if there is a diviner who can treat a person who is
275 sick and he does not cause any harm to the family and society, for me I find that that is a value
276 which can be integrated into Christianity as it is a life giving value and should not be considered
277 as something bad . I think that the African Christians need to revisit their cultural practices, see
278 what is valuable in them and how it was carried out and then see if it can be integrated into
279 Christianity.
280
281 **Br. J…**: I also think that Christianity and cultural traditions can co-exist. Again I have an
282 example of a priest who beat his father. The family was experiencing a land dispute and the
283 mother of the priest incited him to the extent that he (the priest) beat his father. As a result the
284 father pronounced a curse the priest. This did not happen a long time ago and when the curse
285 started working, the priest was advised by the clan to give a goat for cleansing according to the
286 requirement of the community. Only then did the misfortunes end. So I would say that some
287 things will have to co-exist especially those that are not opposed to Christian beliefs and will not
288 stop one from practicing Christianity. I strongly think we cannot do away with all our traditional
289 cultural practices as long as they are not opposed to our Christian faith.
290
291 **Sr. T…..**: For me I just wanted to comment on what was said about the tabernacle. In my culture
292 that would not be a problem because we have shrines everywhere where we go to worship. So if
293 there is a shrine and there are those hopes and we say that we go there to worship and sacrifice,
294 we believe God is there. So if we look at it from that context the tabernacle in Christianity is
295 there and the Blessed Sacrament is there and we go there to worship believing that God is there.
296 If we look at it from the traditional cultural practices view-point it is not contradicting because
297 they used to believe that God is in the shrine. One year before my grandfather died we used to
298 throw half of our food into the shrine every time before we ate because the shrine was close to
299 our house where we had to worship every time, so I don't see a contradiction with our
300 Christianity moving out from that belief that there is a God in the shrine who protects them to
301 Christ who is now present in the Eucharist.
302
303 **Br. C……**: There are some things that are not new if we can bring the proper framework in the
304 Gospel and in many cultures together. There have been many attempts to bring some traditional
305 cultural practices together with the Gospel. I think that now that we have begun doing that, it will
306 be a continuous process so that all of us will understand that in our cultures there are good values
307 and although the gospel came here giving us the culture of the Jews, even our culture is
308 important. So we need to take all those things from our culture and try to inculturate them.
309 Enculturation is nothing more than the dialogue between the culture and the gospel and the
310 culture enriching the gospel. So all these things - the rituals and the symbols - we need to bring
311 them to the gospel otherwise the gospel is not embracing or touching the culture.
312

313   **Mrs. Muraya**: So as far as you are concerned there is no contradiction between cultural
314   practices and Christianity?
315

316   **Br. C……:** There are some elements that need to be talked about, for example, some of the
317   rituals connected with initiation and there is also another one like when you see a man marrying
318   many wives. Those ones are but a few but there are many others that have been suppressed and
319   which the church now recognizes as important elements and capable of enriching the gospel.
320

321   **Mrs. Muraya**: Thank you all for sharing your thoughts, experiences and insights. As our time is
322   has come to an end, we have to bring the discussion to a close.
323

APPENDIX 6: In-Depth Interview with P. B. in Tangaza College

3   **(26/06/2011)**

4

5   **P. Muraya:** Following on the focus group discussion we had some time back, I got the sense
6   that you had more experience of the ways in which African traditional beliefs and practices
7   affect our students here in Tanagaza College (TC) than you had time to share in the group, hence
8   this meeting. I would be grateful if you would share with me any such experiences that you have
9   encountered in your work as college chaplain.

10   **PB…….**: I have encountered such issues with students on several occasions but I must confess I
11   haven't dealt with them in a counselling relationship. Some of the experiences I most vividly
12   remember involved witchcraft and the evil eye and according to the person involved, they were
13   causing illness, bad luck and deaths. Apparently the one possessing the powers had acquired
14   them from a witchdoctor. The victim, a Roman Catholic nun, was afraid that a fellow nun had
15   been visiting witchdoctors so as to get powers to "finish me," she said. She was seeking my
16   advice as to what she should do about it.

17   In addition from the questions and examples that I get in my pastoral counselling classes in the
18   School of Theology I would say the fear of witchcraft is very common among the students.
19   When an individual approaches me like the nun I mentioned earlier on, I try to reason with them
20   basing my argument on the Christian teachings and beliefs to show them how irrational their
21   fears are. Initially I did not know how to help them but gradually I have developed a technique
22   that essentially involves challenging them to choose where to place their trust. "Do these things
23   exist or not?" I ask them. One needs to choose between relying on the God of Jesus Christ or on
24   the power of witchcraft. If one chooses the latter one will be negatively affected. If one chooses
25   the God of Jesus Christ one will experience victory over the powers of darkness which witchcraft
26   is a manifestation of. I suggest to them to commit the issue to prayer but I know that some of
27   them go for exorcism.

28   Going back to the example of the nun I spoke about earlier on – she was carrying some charms
29   to protect herself with against the evil intentions of her fellow sister although she didn't show
30   them to me. She was nevertheless experiencing a lot of conflict. The charms had been given to
31   her by a diviner and her dilemma was whether to keep them or throw them away. She felt
32   divided between her faith in the God of Christ and her fear of possible harm being caused by the
33   *majinis*. (She came from the Coast where *majinis* are said to be very powerful.) I challenged her
34   to quit Christianity and religious life and go back to the African Traditional Religion fully but I
35   don't know how she resolved the problem because she didn't come back. I know many religious
36   men and women who visit diviners frequently to seek favours such as promotions, appointments
37   to what are seen as prestigious positions etc. It is clear that many men and women religious have
38   not given their lives entirely to God and I think they joined the religious congregations so as to
39   get financial security, education and subsequently be able to climb up socially. Commitment to
40   Christianity seems to be irrelevant to them: all they seem to be interested in is education, money
41   etc. They join community prayer, for example, simply because it is expected of them. Some

42 threaten the lives of colleagues and can actually hire thugs to attack and harm their competitors.
43 Such men and women do not have faith in God despite living religious lives: they obey the
44 regulations so as not to be discontinued and in order to enjoy the social prestige associated with
45 their lives such as big cars, appointments to leadership positions, running projects, the possibility
46 of stealing Church money to maintain their clandestine families etc. (for some of the priests). As
47 such they will go to any length to ensure their own advantage and to remove all obstacles in their
48 way by using evil powers. When confronted with Christian principles, they make the challenger
49 appear irrelevant. I think about 50% of our men religious are like that: the committed ones
50 number about 10% while the rest are merely floating. In a way this may explain why we have
51 such widespread corruption and other evil practices are rife in Kenya despite the fact that our
52 population is about 75% Christian. Why doesn't Christianity challenge this? Why aren't we
53 converted or changed? What went wrong with our evangelisation? It looks to me that we are
54 experiencing the results of very shallow faith or none at all despite our claim to be Christians.

55 **PM:** Surely our students are not like that…

56 **PB:** I assure you our students here in Tangaza are not any different. They are struggling with the
57 same problems. You may find a few who are truly radical Christians but many are floaters.

58 **PM:** Do you have evidence to support these allegations?

59 **PB:** Yes. Remember I have lived that life myself for many years and have personal experience.
60 In addition I still have many friends in different congregations and keep hearing these things.

61 **PM:** What is your personal attitude towards some of these cultural beliefs and practices?

62 **PB:** I personally don't believe in the power of witchcraft. I grew up in an area where the practice
63 is rife but my family never participated in those things and yet, we have never been affected by
64 them. My conviction is that it is all in the mind: if one does not believe in those powers they
65 won't affect him/her. "What happens to the souls of those who are convinced of those powers
66 when they die?' This is one of the questions I raise with the students when the issue comes up in
67 class. When students are confronted with the question of their faith in this way, they seem to be
68 convinced of the futility of believing in witchcraft.

69 When I was growing up it was common for people who hadn't gone to school to indulge in many
70 of these cultural practices. But as I grew older and did some study on my own I came to realise
71 that psychology and spirituality are very close. Witchcraft can affect those who have opened
72 their systems, psychological and spiritual, to it. Those who enter into witchcraft without deep
73 Christian faith become completely taken in by the evil powers or the devil, as Christianity calls
74 it. It is interesting to note that witchcraft is condemned in African cultures because it is
75 associated with evil. Those who open themselves to it can be affected but those who don't
76 believe in it will not be affected. I remember my aunt who is in her seventies and whose faith
77 declined at some stage. She then began experiencing *majini* (spirits) visiting her. She would be in
78 her house and a *sufuria* (saucepan) would jump from one room to another. She would put some
79 money in a wallet and it would disappear. My father went to her house for prayers and as soon as
80 he arrived stones began falling from nowhere. As soon as they started praying it was all calm.
81 However, once the prayers were over, things began to happen – the commotion came back. This

82 occurred over several months. When diviners were consulted she was told that her divorced
83 daughter-in-law was sending the *majinis* that were responsible for causing the havoc. She was
84 advised to go to Mombasa to consult more powerful mediums to counteract those of her in-law.
85 She didn't go to Mombasa for financial reasons though she continued consulting local mediums.
86 Meanwhile prayers and fasting by members of her extended family continued and it looked like
87 eventually the power of evil was defeated and the problem ended. I believe she had opened
88 herself to the evil powers spiritually and psychologically and that's why she was affected. I am
89 also convinced it was the power of God that restored her, not the diviners she had visited.

90 **PM**: How can you be so sure?

91 **PB:** As I said before, I don't believe in those diviners. She herself was eventually convinced that
92 God had prevailed over the power of evil.

93 I hope you know about "spiritual technology," the type that is used by cobras to kill their victims
94 by gazing at and hypnotising them. I first heard about this when I was a seminarian and the late
95 Archbishop of Nyeri, Nocodemus Kirima, talked to us at Christ the King Cathedral in Nakuru
96 about it. According to this understanding one may be driving and sees a beautiful lady who gets
97 knocked down by a motorcar but subsequently, the body is not found. What it means is that some
98 people have learnt to manipulate the spiritual world using deep concentration as, for instance,
99 happens in yoga. Such deep concentration can lead to spiritual technology. In the history of
100 Christian spirituality we have similar experiences, for example, with Francis of Asisi, who used
101 to levitate on air due to deep concentration on the Spirit of God which can take over. The same
102 technology is used to manipulate the spirit by the so called witches. I think this is the explanation
103 behind miracles. So this technology can be used for either positive or negative purposes
104 depending on the spirit influencing the person. Witches know how to conjure up evil spirits and
105 as long as one opens oneself to it, one can be victimised. Waruta in his book, ***Caring and***
106 ***Sharing,*** asserts that African traditions comprise evil and good spirits and an all-powerful and
107 good God. Hence evil can be defeated by tapping into the Spirit of God.

108 I want to give you three case scenarios of sick people all of who had had tests done in several
109 local hospitals without proper diagnosis. So some people concluded that witchcraft was causing
110 their illnesses. However, when eventually they came to Nairobi more sophisticated technology
111 and personnel were able to provide the correct diagnosis. In many cases people might conclude
112 that one had been bewitched when it looks like the cause of illness cannot be discovered but it
113 may be simply a matter of not having the right equipment and personnel. The dilemma as to
114 whether or not witchcraft is involved in such situations is huge but it can be resolved depending
115 on the strength and maturity of the Christian concerned. Once one is so convinced of one's faith
116 that one is ready to die for it, the devil becomes aware of it and leaves such a person alone. The
117 evil spirit uses the threat of destroying life or causing death and succeeds in causing fear to those
118 whose faith in the Almighty God isn't very strong.

119 Some western Mill Hill missionaries in Western Kenya were denying the existence of evil spirits
120 until they were directly affected and became sick. It took a diviner to intervene for them to get
121 healed. A couple of expatriate priests have openly admitted to me the power of African
122 witchcraft and are very awed by it. You see our mindsets are mixed up – what affects the mind
123 influences people's lives.

124 When I taught an under graduate course at The Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA) on
125 African religion I disagreed with a colleague who kept saying how syncretic African Christians
126 are. However, I have now shifted position because of my personal experience. I realize I have
127 been talking about myself, living in my own cocoon while many African Christians are deeply
128 embedded in African tradtional beliefs. That is the reason why you should not be talking of
129 "residual…" in your study – these beliefs are alive and well. We don't have real Christians as
130 syncretism seems to be very rife. In my village a few families are truly radical but the majority,
131 also Christians, routinely go to diviners. I can assure you that in the last general elections in
132 Kenya 80% of the contenders consulted with diviners for victory and protection. My friend from
133 Musoma in Tanzania told me about the many limousines seen there and which belonged to
134 Kenyan leaders who had gone to consult with diviners. So this practice is alive and well with
135 Western educated young and old Kenyan Christians. My students in the School of Theology
136 carried out some research and found out that all kinds of people visit diviners from time to time.
137 So this practice cuts across social, economic and faith statuses.

138 **PM:** What do you see as the way forward? What is the best way of helping our students who feel
139 conflicted between the Christian faith they profess and African traditional practices?

140 **PB:** The way forward lies in deepening the faith of those who claim to be followers of Jesus
141 Christ. As I have said before, I challenge the faith of our students who bring issues of tension
142 between African culture and Christianity. It is up to them to decide which side they are on.
143 Unfortunately once they are challenged this way, they often do not follow up on their sessions. It
144 is thus difficult to tell how they get to resolve the conflicts.

145 **PM:** Thank you very much, Paul, for your time and for sharing your experience.

(15/08/2011)

Mrs. Muraya: Thank you very much, M……., for availing yourself or the second time to provide data for my study. You remember that I am researching on ways in which African traditional beliefs and associated cultural practices impact the psychological and spiritual welfare of our students in Tangaza College. During the focus group meeting of counsellors and spiritual guides that you participated in, I got the impression that you have dealt with some clients experiencing tension on account of conflict between their Christian faith and cultural beliefs and practices. I would be very grateful if you would share some such experiences with me, of course, ensuring we do not breach confidentiality.

SMM…………: I do have some experience of the type you are talking about. I remember this religious sister (nun) who once came to me for counselling. It became clear that her issue revolved around a situation her own blood sister was going thorough. Unusual as this may sound, the client told me that her sister was having marital problems because she was unable to conceive and was apparently being sexually assaulted by unseen males, "majinis" (the equivalent of ghosts, usually associated with the coastal region of Kenya) problems the sister and her family attributed to witchcraft. She informed me that they had been looking for a diviner to help out for quite some time and that they have finally heard of one who was reputed to be good. Further discussion revealed that the diviner she was talking about was a young man, an ex-seminarian who had been attracting large numbers on account of his apparent powers. I must say that all this was making me very uncomfortable because, on account of her protestant background, my mother had actively discouraged us to believe in such practices as witchcraft and divination, so this discussion was not to my taste. Yet I knew as a counsellor this was not about me but about the client, so I needed to push back my antipathy and work with what the client was bringing. I enquired what her own take was on the matter and all she did was shrug her shoulders, saying that she believed what her family was saying.

Several sessions later I felt I could challenge her stand vis-à-vis her Christian faith. What message did her being religious and going along with this kind of thinking convey? Did it make any difference that she was a woman religious? Again the response was very much as before: her family believe in the power of witchcraft and she went along with that belief.

Mrs. Muraya: Why did you feel he need to challenge her stand?

SMM: I guess it is because I don't believe in those things myself. I don't know whether it is my background in psychology or what but I don't believe in them at all and I am actually surprised to find some young people including religious men and women involved in witchcraft, divination etc.

Mrs. Muraya: I am also interested in finding out what actually happened – did the affected woman consult with the young diviner?

SMM…………..: Yes, she did and according to the client she was healed and conceived soon after.

50
51 **Mrs. Muraya:** Did your client tell you how that came about?

52
53 **SMM…………..:** Apparently the diviner uses the bible, Christian prayers and some other
54 things that seem secretive to heal. He reads and quotes from scripture, prescribes Christian
55 prayers but there seem to be other things that he does that I find difficult to understand. In the
56 case I've been talking about, the family invited him home and he offered prayers for them.
57 He then claimed to have detected some bad medicine planted at the entrance to the house and
58 sure enough when he dug up the soil, he unearthed some objects which he identified as bad
59 medicine. In addition he talked of a living creature that he chased through the house to the
60 granary and finally brought it out inside a sack. Neither the nun nor other family members
61 saw the creature as it was captured inside a sack. The important thing as far as they were
62 concerned was that divination worked because her sister got healed.

63
64 **Mrs. Muraya**: What did the nun and her family attribute the powers of the young diviner to?

65
66 **SMM…………..:** The client told that his grandmother had been a diviner and it looks like
67 the young man inherited the same powers from her. The nun reiterated that she believes in the
68 power of evil and showed me a bark cloth bracelet she wears on her wrist and so does every
69 member of her family. The bracelets, she explained, are meant to provide protection against
70 the evil powers which she said can be spread by people who are jealous or have a grudge
71 against a person. What is interesting about then young diviner is that many priests believe
72 him but there are just as many who do not. Very often after his exorcisms, he asks some
73 priests to celebrate the Eucharist for the participants.

74
75 **Mrs. Muraya:** If the client had not been sure about what she was going to do how would you
76 have proceeded to help her?

77
78 **SMM…………..:** My thrust would have been to challenge her faith in God - get her to reflect
79 on who has greater power – the evil spirits/the devil or God. Where does she place her trust?
80 As a woman religious she should consider very carefully the message she is giving to her
81 family when she supports them in consulting a diviner. This is the line I took with another
82 religious sister who came to see me because one of her own religious sisters had bewitched
83 her and she was scared for her life.

84
85 **Mrs. Muraya:** How did she know that she had been bewitched?

86
87 **SMM…………..:** She said the sister had dropped a handkerchief in which were wrapped
88 some shiny stones and some seeds. Indeed she took me to her car where she had placed the
89 objects which she dared not touch.

90
91 **Mrs. Muraya**: Was she affected by the omen?

92
93 **SMM…………..:** She said as a result of this she had begun experiencing convulsions.

94
95 **Mrs. Muraya:** How did she discover what had happened?
96 **SMM……………:** Apparently another member of the community had discovered the
97 handkerchief and showed it to her. I unwrapped the handkerchief and would have thrown the
98 objects away but she restrained me, saying that the matter was being investigated by their

99 superior and she needed the materials for evidence. Unfortunately she did not come back and
100 this is very typical. I find people not continuing with counselling when such issues are
101 concerned. In the few cases where they have persisted, the problems arising from the conflict
102 between cultural practices and Christianity are swept aside and all my attempts to get back to
103 them are brushed off.
104
105 **Mrs. Muraya:** What do you think is the reason for that?
106
107 **SMM…………..:** I am not sure…it may be that people, especially the religious, are ashamed
108 of being caught up in these cultural matters – but really I don't know. What I do know is that
109 many people are really caught up in these beliefs about witchcraft and are really afraid. I ask
110 myself why I should be afraid while I receive Jesus in the Eucharist daily: why should I be
111 afraid of the devil/evil one? For me God's power is greater than the power of evil. Some of
112 my friends have told me I think that way because I have not faced any major problems and
113 that if I do I will feel the need to consult with diviners. I do not know whether that will
114 happen but at the moment, I do not trust them and see no reason for consulting with them.
115
116 **Mr. Muraya:** So the way you see things is that many Christians, our students in TC included,
117 are bogged down by cultural practices and beliefs and find it difficult to reconcile the two
118 world views, yet they aren't very keen on talking about them?
119
120 **SMM…………..:** Exactly. What makes the situation worse as far as I am concerned is that
121 some priests also believe in diviners and witchdoctors. With regard to the young man I have
122 been talking about – there are many priests from my area who even encourage their
123 Christians to go to him if they have been praying about a situation and find no solution. They
124 encourage them to visit him and do what he recommends. So I ask myself "what is the use of
125 the priest being ordained if he keeps sending the Christians to a seminary drop-out?" And
126 those same priests are very happy to be invited to celebrate mass for the people after the
127 young man has done whatever he does with them.
128
129 **Mrs. Muraya:** I must thank you very much for your valuable time and experience. Are there
130 any other relevant experience you would like to share with me?
131
132 **SMM:…………..** Nothing else comes to mind.
133
134 **Mrs. Muraya:** Goodbye and have a pleasant evening.
1

APPENDIX 8: In-Depth Interview with LB, a Spiritual Guide at TUC

(05/09/ 2011)

Phyllis Muraya: Thank you for availing yourself once again to provide information for my study. As I mentioned earlier on, I had gotten a distinct impression during our group focus meeting that you had encountered some of the issues I am investigating in your work with students, either in spiritual direction or in counselling. I would be delighted if you would talk to me about some of those experiences – what were the issues and how did you help the affected students?

LB…………..: My first experience was in supervision of the Prayer Guidance Practicum when the student I was supervising kept mentioning a postulant whom she had been accompanying and her distress at the frequent mention of graves and the dead. It occurred to me that the issue was really with my supervisee and stemmed from her fear of death. Further exploration with her revealed some cultural hang-up because when she was a child, a relative had died and she had been forced to view the body. She remembered being terrified about it and apparently the fear had not vanished. Indeed it had been made worse by warning she had received against dreaming about the dead person as that would certainly bring some disaster to her or to the family. This had caused her fear of going to sleep in case she dreamt of the dead woman. The fear nevertheless remained…and keeps coming up whenever there is a family death. This was surprising coming from a Catholic woman religious who had had a lot of faith formation which I thought should have made a difference. "What difference does your faith make? Have you talked to Jesus about it?" I asked her. Somehow I felt that the issue was not central to the student but rather peripheral in her order of concerns: she was removed rather than being in the middle of it. After the discussion she expressed relief but I am not sure where it went…You see she had readily opened up about it when challenged about her concern with the postulant who constantly talked about cemeteries. So I am not sure whether her relief came from having discussed the issue with me…or whatever she may have done…I feel confident she seemed whole and complete when she finished and didn't need to following up. I feel that with such issues opening up…opening up about cultural issues and bringing Jesus into the issue helps. I suspect the encounter I had with her brought about the required relief. Thinking about the experience now I feel it would be interesting to go back to her now…What I think is that the people know at the intellectual level that these traditional beliefs are crazy but at the emotional level, the issues need to be brought to the table…to be looked at…I don't remember a lot of the details. It is a pity when one is dealing with these issues, one has no idea that one would be asked about them later on.

Another one that I can talk to you about concerned a priest directee whom I had when I was still very new to the culture…I think I had been in Kenya for about two years and was very new to the culture at the time and I was not sure what to do. Now I realise I did not allow him to dialogue…He had talked of working with a woman who was seeing all kinds of animals – I think there was a cat, a hen and some others I can't remember…He said the appearances were strange…but he was told by her neighbours that everyone knew that was a sign of evil being sent to her. I asked him: "What did you…I can't…Why? Do you believe …?" "I do," he answered."

To support his standing on the matter, he told me of the story of a family in Mombasa whose three children he had buried one after the other…he had to perform the burials for them. The

50 children belonged to the older of two wives and it was believed the second wife had caused
51 their deaths. "Yes, these things do happen," he concluded. Asked whether the police had been
52 involved, whether any post-mortem examinations had been done to determine causes of
53 death, he answered in the negative. "Do you believe it was the co-wife who brought about the
54 children's deaths?" I asked him. "I do," he answered. I did not challenge this stance because I
55 was very new in the country and did not have sufficient ground to do so. I regret not having
56 invited him to review his stand in light of his faith but you see I hadn't had a similar
57 encounter before and so was out of depth in the matter…Looking back I now realize that he
58 must have been deeply embedded in his culture and didn't see a way out. The deaths of three
59 siblings within a short period of time were evidence that must have shaken him…He didn't
60 question the belief…He must have been afraid… He appeared utterly convinced and there
61 seemed to be no room for further exploration of the matter.
62
63 I have had another experience that involved a theology student. As the youngest son in the
64 family he was required by his cultural tradition to build his house adjacent to that of his
65 parents (a widowed mother in his case) so that he would be well placed to look after them in
66 their old age. He was in a big dilemma because he was convinced of his call by God to a
67 celibate priesthood, but his uncles were pressuring him into marriage. What was he going to
68 do? While his father had died several years before and his mother supported his desire to
69 become a priest, the rest of the family – his uncles, brothers and sisters - were totally opposed
70 to it and kept pressuring him to leave the seminary, marry and take his expected place in the
71 family. He agreed to go home and build a house as expected but he wasn't going to live in it
72 – he returned to the seminary. The pressure on him was relentless, however, and caused him a
73 lot of tension. At one stage, one of the uncles came to visit him and informed him he had
74 secured a place for him to train as an officer in the army and all he needed to do was to take it
75 up. He kept procrastinating and putting it off. He was a fine young man and pretty sure of
76 what he wanted to do, but the family pressure was sometime overwhelming.
77
78 **Phyllis Muraya:** Did you get to know whether he was sharing this with his formators?
79
80 **LB………….:** I am not sure about that…what I do remember is that he was being
81 encouraged and supported in his resolve by his mother. With his house completed they kept
82 calling him home and pressuring him to stay and get married but to their utter dismay, he
83 decided to stay in the seminary. He came to me for spiritual direction for the three years he
84 was studying theology and I know the pressure was kept on through phone calls and quarrels
85 whenever they visited but he withstood it all, though he didn't find it easy. He was eventually
86 ordained and invited me to the occasion at which I met his mother and sisters but I don't
87 remember being introduced to an uncle or a brother. I have no idea whether the brothers and
88 uncles attended. The sisters seem to have been reconciled to the idea of his being a priest but
89 apparently not his brothers and uncles. What is remarkable is that he had found the strength
90 to overcome the intense cultural pressure and found peace and joy in his decisions.
91
92 **Phyllis Muraya:** Where do you think his strength came from?
93
94 **LB…………..:** His belief in God's call, the support from his formators and the on-going
95 relationship that I had with him as well as his honesty and the safety he must have felt to be
96 so open with me about the situation – all this must have helped him to overcome. By facing
97 his issue honestly and trying to understand it...In the end, his sisters were reconciled with him
98 and with the situation…Unfortunately, I don't remember many of the details…

99
100 **Phyllis Muraya:** Thank you, once again, for your valuable time and for sharing some of your
101 experiences and insights with me. I believe this will go a long way in shedding light in the
102 subject of my study. Have a pleasant day.

APPENDIX 9: Interview Guide for Student Focus Groups

1. Are you aware of any elements of African cultural beliefs and practices that cause tension in the lives of young African Christians like yourselves? Give examples.

2. How do such tensions manifest?

3. How do the persons involved deal with such tensions? Who do they discuss such issues with and why?

4. Do you have any personal experiences of such tensions yourselves?

5. How did you handle the tension? Did you take them to counselling or spiritual direction and with what results?

6. What did you find helpful/unhelpful in dealing with the issue(s)?

7. Which issues present most frequently?

8. Does it surprise you that cultural issues cause disquiet in the lives of young fairly well-educated African Christians? Give reasons for your answer.

9. Why do you think such cultural issues cause disquiet?

APPENDIX 10: An Extract of Spiritual Direction
(X stands for the directee, SD for the Spiritual Director)

(19/10/2011)

Some background information:

X is a 32 years old young Ugandan, a member of an international religious congregation. He's been a member for the last ten years and is due for final profession next year. He has, however, asked for extension for reasons that will become clear as the following direction verbatim reveals. He began studying for a diploma in Social Ministry in Mission (ISMM) in Tangaza University College in January 2010.

X 1: My life at the moment is in a mess…I am not sure what's happening.

SD 1: You seem to be experiencing deep confusion. Do you want to talk about it?

X 2: Yes…you see it all has to do with my family. As I told you before my father used to work for the town council as a plumber. He retired in 2005 and for some time, all was well. I had suggested to him to put up a business but he said he thought he could do better getting jobs on his own. He was doing quite well until the last two years when things started going badly for him and the family. At that time I was working in SA and used to get some money which I would send to supplement what he was making. In addition he was getting a monthly payment from his pension scheme. However from 2009 he developed a back problem that makes it difficult for him to do hard work and for some reason, they say they are reorganising the budget, the pension payments stopped. Soon after that I was sent here to study. Before coming here we had planned to help him put up some rental houses on our plot which would give him regular income. Now, our congregation has a programme whereby they help a person to put up one house at home. But when I presented the budget to the leadership team I was given only 16,000 shillings. Now what can one with that amount? Perhaps buy a few bricks only…I have tried to talk to some of them individually, but the response I get is that they too have families at home but they do not support them. (Silence as he breaks down and cries for some time…)

SD 2: This must be very difficult for you…

X 3: It is very tough on me…I am not eating, I am not doing my school work or any other work for that matter. In fact some members of my community have noticed it and are asking me what's happening but you can't discuss personal matters with everyone…What our expatriate leaders fail to understand is that as first-born sons in Africa we have an obligation to our families…and some of the Africans in the leadership, we have two, are enjoying their positions and don't care for the rest of us.

SD 3: So you feel sort of alone in your struggle…

X 4: Totally alone…I don't share my struggles with any people…there is one of my brothers in my community who I know has been facing a similar situation and I have talked with him about my issue, otherwise, I am all by myself. Last week when we had the break I had hoped to do a lot of work but I can tell you I did nothing but sleep. When we go to table for a meal, I find myself wondering how I be eating when I don't know whether they have anything to eat at home. So I lose appetite. That's why I have hesitated to apply for final vows…the application is supposed a detailed document and should be in by next Wednesday but I don't have the energy to write it. I am wondering whether I should not ask to be out of the community for a couple of years to work because I can teach, but even then, when I calculate the figures, it would be difficult to save enough money for the project at home….so I don't know what is best.

50   **SD 4:** So there is a possibility of leaving the congregation for a couple of years. What other
51   options are there?
52   **X 5:** We are going to have Br. _____, I think you know him - as our dean of students
53   next year and from past experience, I know he is very understanding. ..but that won't happen
54   until January. How are they going to manage till then?
55   **SD 5:** So you think you might get a more sympathetic response from him?
56   **X 6:** Yes. (Some silence.)You know I had stopped drinking due to these financial difficulties.
57   I have been saving practically all my allowance and sending it home. Last Friday, however, I
58   was in the house doing nothing when someone suggested we go for a drink. I went out with
59   him and after a couple of hours he decided to return home. I stayed in the pub until 3 a. m.
60   drinking but it was like I wasn't there. I wasn't thinking or feeling anything…I was in a daze
61   of a kind. The following day, I thought about it and realized that by drinking I wasn't solving
62   the problem but was actually making it worse. I decided not to do that again.
63   **SD 6:** All this must be very hard for you. Have you talked to the Lord about it?
64   **X 7:** I have and…I am very angry with him. I am already angry before I go to prayer and I
65   quarrel with him. When will he answer me? My problem is that the issue affects my
66   communal prayer as well…I don't think I should be heard complaining all the time, yet I am
67   unable to pretend… (Prolonged silence)
68   **SD 7:** (I am wondering whether he might be able to secure some financial assistance through
69   the college administration.) I am wondering whether there is anyone else you might speak
70   with…someone outside your congregation…because as you say you aren't doing any school
71   work and the effects of that will begin to show (Silence) How about Fr. ---------------------(He
72   is the former director of the institute where X is a student and currently is functioning as the
73   assistant director of the institute.) What do you think about speaking with him?
74   **X 8:** I would have no problem with that…my only concern is whether he would keep the
75   information confidential.
76   **SD 8:** Clearly if you choose to speak with him it would be understood that the conversation is
77   completely confidential.
78   **X 9:** (Brightening up substantially.) I had not thought about that…I will explore that
79   possibility…

APPENDIX 11: Summary of a Counselling Case
(With Peter)

Peter is a 28 years old religious man, a member of an international religious congregation. He is a Mluhya by tribe, currently in his third year of studies in philosophy at the Consolata School of Philosophy in Nairobi. He is the oldest of three children, two sons and a daughter, both of are in school. His mother is a single woman who works in Nairobi's industrial area. It was his formator who suggested to Peter to seek counselling as he appeared stressed out, isolating himself and seems to have lost he joy always associated with him. The formator knew that the cause of the problem was family-related but did not have much detail about it.

Initially Peter talked about his struggle to meet the medical need of his mother who had been suffering from kidney failure for some time. She had been moved to three different hospitals before satisfactory diagnosis had been made proper treatment commenced. All this had caused the family a lot of expense, made worse by the fact that she was unable to work during this period and hence she wasn't bringing any income home. Peter had undertaken the responsibility of looking for the required money to the extent of reluctantly selling a plot of land given to him by his maternal grandfather. All along he had been driven by the conviction that as the oldest son in the family culture dictated that he had an obligation to take of his parents and sibling. At the time he began seeing me for counselling, he was at his wit's end: he had done all within his means as seminarian in the Roman Catholic Church where poverty is the chosen way of life. He had worked for several years before joining the seminary and had saved some all of which had been swallowed up by his mother's medical bills.

Below are some excerpts from some of the counselling sessions with P.

SESSION 3
DATE:
CLIENT 1: To tell you the truth, I feel terribly stressed (He actually looked it.) when I think of the steps I have taken yet am unable to meet all my mother's expectations.
COUNSELLOR 1: You feel frustrated because you are unable to satisfy your mother's expectations.
CLIENT 2: Yes, because as a first born son, it is my duty to take care of my mother, especially because she is a single parent as I mentioned before. I have even done something I should not have done – I have sold a plot of land given to me by my maternal grandfather. You see the reason why he gave it to me was in a sense to underline the fact that I was the man of my family; I am the head of my family, so to speak. I have a duty to take care of my mother, brother and sister…
COUNSELLOR 2: But you feel unable to do so…
CLIENT 3: Yeees…and that's what makes it so frustrating…You see before entering the seminary, I had worked for close to five years and although I was not earning very much, I had saved a little money and invested some of it in a business. During that time, my mother was in the habit of asking for money all the time and if I didn't give to her, she would be very angry and would make a lot of noise. So to avoid all that, I would give her whatever she asked for. What has complicated the matter now is her kidney illness because we have spent a lot when she was in hospital and now she has to go for dialysis every two weeks. That plus the medicine she is taking every day costs a lot. Okay, I am happy she did not have to be operated on as the first doctor had suggested but she is unable to at the moment and thinks she can depend on me. Now with me in the seminary, I have done whatever I can but she doesn't seem to understand.

47 COUNSELLOR 3: She doesn't seem to understand that you don't have a regular source of
48 income.
49 CLIENT 4: You see when she sees me well dressed, she assumes I have a lot of money but she
50 doesn't bother to find out where it could be coming from.
51 COUNSLLOR 4: Yet she knows you aren't earning a salary any more.
52 CLIENT 5: (Smiling) That she knows too well…This is the problem of dealing with people who
53 are…I can say ignorant…they see the reality but refuse to understand. (Becoming very tense
54 again). My problem is that I cannot just close my eyes and see my family suffer when I am
55 wearing well, eating well, sleeping in a comfortable bed, when I get sick I am well cared for.
56 (Some silence…), yet my family there at home is suffering…(Voice trails off…)
57 COUNSELLOR 5: Does all this appear like a big contradiction?
58 CLIENT 6: It appears like a big contradiction with the life I have chosen for myself. I must say
59 though that my formators have been very understanding. Every time I have wanted to go home
60 they have allowed me, but my mother's expectations are really stressing me. She refuses to
61 understand that I don't have the kind of money she needs.
62 COUNSELLOR 6: How does that make you feel?
63 CLIENT 7: It is bothering me a lot so that I cannot sleep well, I am unable to concentrate in class
64 and sometimes even my friends have noticed I seem to be lost in my own world.
65 COUNSELLOR 7: What is going on in your mind at such times?
66 CLIENT 8: I am just thinking what I should do…whether she would be happy if I quit seminary.
67 But even then I am not sure I would get a job.
68 COUNSELLOR 8: Has the thought of quitting seminary occurred to you?
69 CLIENT 9: Not really. From what I have discerned and continue to discern, being in the seminary
70 is really what I want. My problem is what to do about playing mu role as the first born son in my
71 family. The burden this places on my shoulders is too heavy for me and that is what is so stressful.
72 COUNSELLOR 9: It is clear you are facing a huge dilemma but I wonder where the real pressure
73 is coming from – is it coming from yourself or from your family?
74 CLIENT 10: It must be from both. (Silence, head bowed down and held between his open hands.
75 He then raises his head and has a faraway look as he continues to talk…) I cannot escape the role I
76 am supposed to play as an African first born son, especially because my mother is a single parent.
77 She has done so much for us, so I cannot just say goodbye and pretend that because I am in the
78 seminary, she does not exist. This sickness of hers is what has made things so difficult because it
79 has cost a lot of money and she is unable to work at the moment. How I wish she would
80 understand!
81 COUNSELLOR 10: You wish your mother would understand that you are not earning a salary
82 and are thus unable to continue meeting her financial needs. I wonder whether you yourself have
83 internalised that reality…in other words, have you full accepted your new status as a religious
84 who has embraced poverty? I ask this because I see your own take on the matter as being
85 fundamental in how you respond to your mother's requests.
86 CLIENT 11: You have exactly touched on the real issue. Yes, I am a religious man without an
87 income, but I am also an African man who has some obligations according to our culture. Before
88 joining the seminary I was, in addition to the job I mentioned before, also running a taxi business.
89 I left it in the hands of a friend. It brings in some income but most of that money goes to the
90 repayment of the loan o the car. What remains is not enough to meet the current needs of the
91 family, particularly because of my mother's illness. At that time she was almost the one
92 controlling my finances…the other day she was mentioning items like rent but I told her not to go
93 there. But I hear what you are suggesting – I need to come to terms first with my situation before I
94 can convince my mother about it. The question is – how do I do that? How do I reconcile my life
95 of poverty with the requirement for me to take of my family?

96   COUNSELLOR 11: What I am hearing is that you find yourself caught up between your Christian
97   calling and a cultural expectation and are wondering how to reconcile the two?
98   CLIENT 12: Exactly.
99   COUNSELLOR 12: If you would like us to we could look at some ways in which you can work
100 through this within yourself first we could make that the focus of our next meeting.
101 CLIENT 13: That sounds like a great idea.
102
103 DATE:
104 SESSION 5
105 CLIENT 1: (Appears more relaxed that he did the previous time.) The positive self talk you
106 suggested has really been helpful. I feel more at ease wit this whole issue than ever before.
107 COUNSELLOR 1: Tell me more about it.
108 CLIENT 2: You suggested, if I remember correctly that I keep repeating to myself the reality of
109 my situation as a religious man – that I will not be able to fulfil the traditional role of looking after
110 my mother and siblings. Doing so seems to have eased my tension substantially although at times,
111 I have found myself going back to my old frame of mind and wondering where the money will
112 come from. How can I, a first born son, abandon my mother when she seems to need me so much?
113 (As he says this visible tension occurs on his countenance.)
114 COUNSELLOR 2: What about prayer – has that been helpful?
115 CLIENT 3: Surely it has been. (Brightens up as he speaks…) I can tell you God has answered my
116 prayers directly. Last week mother called again this time asking for 12,000 shillings for her
117 medicine for the next two weeks. I tell you I did not have any money but a good friend bought the
118 medicine which I took to her the same evening…She was very happy particularly because I had
119 told earlier on that I did not have any money, so she wasn't expecting anything.
120 COUNSELLOR 3: You too must have been very happy about that turn of events.
121 CLIENT 4: Yes, and what's more she doesn't need dialysis any longer. Surely God is answering
122 my prayers.
123 COUNSELLOR 4: Indeed he is and I share your joy. However, the larger issue remains, doesn't
124 it? As I suggested before your attitude towards the traditional demand will continue to affect the
125 way you feel every time a demand you are unable to meet is made. I hope you still remember
126 what I explained last time regarding Ellis's concepts about the relationship between
127 thoughts/attitudes and emotions. (I had spent the best part of the previous session explaining
128 Ellis's ABCD&E theory on emotions.)
129 CLIENT 5: As I said last time the concept is fascinating, but I must say I have still been battling
130 with my attitude. I am convinced I need to and can change it and that doing so is critical for me
131 because new financial needs will keep arising which I will not be in a position to meet. I know
132 that is a fact which I need to accept as a part of my life. I also realize that how I deal with such
133 demands will depend a lot on my frame of mind – I am convinced and determined to get my
134 mother to accept that reality. I know she will resist it but I have to remind her of what I told her
135 before I joined the seminary. Do you know what she said? She told me she was a good Catholic
136 and knew she would get neither money nor grandchildren from me. She said she was prepared for
137 the sacrifice, but what has she been doing? The opposite as far as money is concerned. I even
138 asked her one day whether she wanted me to leave the seminary and she said under no
139 circumstances was I to think of doing so on her account. What I have learnt is a very important
140 lesson that will remain with me all my life.
141 COUNSELLOR 5: (Surprised by the dramatic change of attitude.) Where are all these thoughts
142 leading to?
143 CLIENT 6: They are leading me to a very serious talk that I need to have with my mother when
144 she gets better and I have ample time at home. Maybe I will do that during the Christams break.

145 COUNSELLOR 6: Are you going to have a few days at home during the Christmas holiday? Your
146 idea to have a good talk with your mother when you have an opportune moment and when she is
147 feeling better sounds excellent.
148 CLIENT 7: Yes, we have about two weeks between Christmas and school opening. I know mom
149 will refuse to understand but I am determined to push through with it.
150 COUNSELLOR 7: How about the cultural expectation – how do you feel about it now?
151 CLIENT 8: T o tell you the truth that has been the easier par to deal with. Since I have to terms
152 with the reality of my religious vocation many cultural requirements must go through the
153 window…and even having said that I know the concern for the needs of my family will keep
154 coming up but now I can face them better without allowing the expectations of others to weigh me
155 down. I continue praying about it and am convinced I have found a solution, a weapon to use to
156 face the challenge.

APPENDIX 12: The Case of Ciru

Ciru, a Roman Catholic religious sister in the late twenties had been seeing me for spiritual direction for some time when I brought to her attention the fact that she had frequently mentioned in passing her mother's recurrent but seemingly unexplainable bouts of illness. From what I was hearing, Ciru's concern was not so much the state of her mother's health but its cause. This had not been raised as a main issue but was frequently mentioned as a passing thought which she would mention caused her fear. After some time, however, it occurred to me that there was some underlying concern that needed exploring, so I invited her to do so. Clearly relieved by this recognition, Ciru talked about her suspicion that her family may have been bewitched by some jealous neighbours and her mother would have been the victim of the witchcraft.

She explained that her family was an island of "progress" in a rather remote part of Western Kenya. Both her parents, qualified primary school teachers, were unlike many of the neighbours, better Western-educated and indeed her father was the head of the local primary school. The family thus enjoyed many of the trappings of a money economy that included a stone house. In many ways, however, they were well integrated into the community and did not deliberately isolate themselves. To compound matters, however, she, the eldest in the family, had completed high school before joining religious life when most of her peers had dropped out years before. As a part of a hate campaign there had been wild talk that she too would not complete school and indeed she had been linked to some young men. She said the hostility was so deep it was palpable. In her mind there was no doubt witchcraft was responsible for her mother's poor state of health. Ciru experienced *intense fear* for the welfare of her family, not knowing what else their enemies might try. She had talked about this with her Italian formators and superiors on several occasions and every time the response seemed to have been rehearsed – pray about it - which she did, but the problem and attendant fear persisted. She had begun to doubt the power of prayer and had thus decided to seek the intervention of a diviner but wondered whether this would not amount to betrayal of her faith. Would consulting with a diviner by a Christian and a religious person at that not be counter-witnessing? She had become more ***confused*** as a few of her close friends, all of them Christians as well, were supporting the idea of divination and were willing to assist her.

Ciru's case is typical of issues relating to traditional cultural beliefs and practices that some students in the college present in counselling and spiritual direction. Such issues have raised practical questions of process for me and for others members of the Student Life Ministry in the college and hence, form the backdrop of this study.

APPENDIX 13: Interview Guide for Counsellors and Spiritual Guides

1. Do you think there are elements of African cultural beliefs and practices that negatively affect the psychological and spiritual well-being of African Christian students in Tangaza College? If so what are they?

2. How does the tension manifest?

3. How do the affected students deal with them?

4. What is your attitude towards such tenets of African culture? What do you attribute it to?

5. In what ways have you tried to help the affected students work through such issues? With what results?

6. What do you think is the best way of working with such students?

7. Why do you think those cultural issues cause disquiet?

SECTION A

The Research Project: *Effects of residual elements of traditional African culture on the psychological and spiritual health of African Christian college students in Tangaza College, Nairobi, Kenya.*

Thank you kindly for your interest and taking time to read this.

Background

 For some time now some counsellors and spiritual guides in Tangaza College have noticed that some of the issues that cause distress to students are related to residual elements of traditional African culture. While this realization has puzzled some of the concerned counsellors and spiritual guides, others think that this is a very common experience with many African Christians of all walks of life and therefore it should not raise eyebrows. A third group claims never to have had such experience and wonder whether they are missing something. It is in order to get a clearer picture of the situation that this study is being undertaken.

Aims

This study aims to investigate the role played by elements of beliefs and practices of traditional African culture in the lives of young, Western-style educated Christian college students in Kenya in the 21st century. The main focus is to find out whether some of the basic tenets of traditional culture like prohibitions, witchcraft, curses, kinship ties and ancestors affect the psychological and spiritual health of the subjects and how the effects manifest.

Who is undertaking the research?

This research is being organised by Mrs. Phyllis Muraya of Tangaza College (The Catholic University of Eastern Africa), Nairobi and Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge.

The data collected from you will be coded so that your name will not appear on any of the information sheets which contain your personal data. Individual data will be combined into group data and only these group results will be presented in the final report. A summary of the findings alongside any resulting publications will be made available to all those who participate in the study.

This research is not externally funded so participants will not be paid for their participation.

Do you need further information or have any questions?

If you have any further questions regarding this research please contact me via email: pnm-counsellor@tangaza.org or phyllis.muraya@student.anglia.ac.uk or on Tel: 0722736252

Section B: Your Participation in the Research Project

You have been invited to take part in this research because you have experience that is relevant to the study. You are free to refuse to take part in this research at any point. You are also free to withdraw from the research at any time before during or after it has commenced. If you wish to withdraw after the research has been completed you should contact the researcher and your results will be removed from analysis.

Who should not participate?
Any student of Tangaza College can take part in the study.

What happens if I agree to take part?
If you agree to take part in this research either your clinical notes will be used for analysis or you may be asked to respond to a number of questions in a focus group relating to your experience with traditional African culture. Those responding to questions will do so either as individuals or within a group set-up.

Are there any risks?
There are no particular risks involved when taking part in this research to you or to the researchers running it. Agreement to participate in this research should not compromise your legal rights should something go wrong. There are no special precautions to take before or during the research.

What happens to the data?
Any information collected from you will be allocated a number that is specific for you and this is to ensure your anonymity throughout the study. All files will be kept in a secure cabinet available only to the researcher. All clinical notes recorded during or after counselling sessions will remain completely confidential. Only group results will be made available and all participants will be given the opportunity to read their own clinical material as well as the final report at the end of the study.

If you would like to take part:
Please complete the following form attached and return it to me as soon as possible.
If you have any queries then, please do not hesitate to contact me.

APPENDIX 15: Participant Consent Form (Template)

THIS FORM MUST BE ON ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY HEADED NOTEPAPER WITH FULL CONTACT DETAILS

SUGGESTED FORMAT FOR A PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

NAME OF PARTICIPANT:...

Title of the project: .***Issues of African traditional cultural beliefs and practices and psycho-spiritual health in a Christian setting***.

Main investigator and contact details: Mrs. Phyllis Muraya

                P. O. Box 51159 - 00200

                NAIROBI

Members of the research team: None

1.   I agree to take part in the above research. I have read the Participant Information Sheet which is attached to this form. I understand what my role will be in this research, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

2.   I understand that I am free to withdraw from the research at any time, for any reason and without prejudice.

3.   I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded.

4.   I am free to ask any questions at any time before and during the study.

5.   I have been provided with a copy of this form and the Participant Information Sheet.

Data Protection: I agree to the University[7] processing personal data which I have supplied. I agree to the processing of such data for any purposes connected with the Research Project as outlined to me*

*__Note to researchers: please amend or add to this clause as necessary to ensure that it conforms with the relevant data protection legislation in your country__

Name of participant (print)………………………..Signed……………..…..Date………………

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS FORM TO KEEP

If you wish to withdraw from the research, please complete the form below and return to the main investigator named above.

Title of Project: ***Issues of African traditional cultural beliefs and practices and psycho-spiritual health in a Christian setting***.

I WISH TO WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY

Signed: _____   Date: _____

STUDENT ID. NO.   0817792/1

STAGE 1 UNIT 1

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PSYCHOLOGY AND THEOLOGICAL TRADITIONS IN PASTORAL COUNSELLING WORK

(context, practice and gaps)

May 2009

Phyllis Njoki Muraya

Table of Contents

Abstract

My context is Tangaza College, a Roman Catholic institution of higher learning in Kenya that prepares young women and men for various ministries in the Church and beyond. As a part of their (w)holistic growth, the students, all young adults, have the possibility of counselling and spiritual direction in situ. The students' psycho-spiritual reality in the 21st century is mediated by traditional values, beliefs and practices, by current thought patterns and modern technology and by the Judeo-Christian world view which has been part of Africa since the middle of the 19th century. This cacophony of voices at times becomes unintelligible, thus, sometimes, causing unease (disease?).

Involvement in this pastoral caring ministry since 2002 as a member of the Campus Life Minstry has put me in touch with this kind of unease which is often not picked up by the counsellor due to either its ambiguity or the depth of the arena in which it is played out. Yet it continues to rob the concerned individuals of the joy and fullness of life that the Good News of Jesus is all about. This observation has led me to pose several questions: how best can we help our students to get in touch with the issues of Traditional African Religions that they find incongruent with their current reality? What can counsellors and spiritual guides do to become better attuned to such issues when they are not readily articulated by the care-seekers? Most importantly, in what ways can the helpers support the cared for to resolve the issues and attain a measure of congruence? Is there a counselling stance that can help the counselees to open up more in this sensitive area of their lives? If we agree with Howard Clinebell (1984) that for the church to remain relevant it must meet the needs of persons by addressing their doubts, pains, desires, important relationships etc., pastoral care then will be seen as the ideal locus for this task of presenting Christ's message in a manner that addresses people's real needs.

It is in an attempt to respond to these questions that this study was conceived. To tackle the pertinent issues adequately, three types of literature need to be engaged with - one dealing with the relationship between Christianity and culture in general; then between Christianity and African culture; finally between Christianity and psychology. Due to the constraints of space and time, only the first and last will be addressed to some depth in this paper. The cultural discussion will be guided by the works of Stephen B. Bevans (1999) and Richard H. Niebuhr (1951) while David Lyall (1995) will lead the dialogue between Christianity and psychology. I will also propose a counselling stance that I believe best suited in tackling these issues and to illustrate the efficacy of the proposed counselling model will cite a case study.

Literature Review

Introduction

This paper is borne out of a concern arising from work with African college students in counselling and spiritual direction in the last few years. Some of our clients are affected by deeply embedded issues of Traditional African Religions that do not, however, easily surface. The question I have been grappling with is how pastoral counsellors (and spiritual guides) can learn to detect the existence of such tension and help the counsellees get in touch with and resolve them. Allied to that is the issue of counsellor (or spiritual director) sensitivity and attitude that would free the counsellees to delve into what largely remains an inadequately explored and sensitive territory. Of greater importance is the question of how the students handle the issues once they become aware of them: how do they reconcile them with their Judeo-Christian faith? It looks like the basic task is to tease out the overlaps between psychology and theological traditions and how that relationship can be mediated especially in light of the tension between Judeo-Christianity and Traditional African Religions, generally demonized by the pioneer Christian missionaries.

The practical need for examining the interface between psychology and theological traditions in the ministry of pastoral care, therefore, becomes clear. I am a member of a team of counsellors and spiritual guides who provide pastoral care to young adults at Tangaza College in Nairobi. The institution now a constituent college of the Catholic University of Eastern Africa, was founded 25 years ago by a group of religious congregations as a Catholic school of theology for religious men training for ordination into ministerial priesthood. Over the years other institutes have developed thus bringing into one campus women and men from varied walks of life and training them for different roles that include education, social work, work with youth, media, spirituality and religious formation, all of them with a ministerial bent. The student body has changed dramatically to include religious and lay women and men, ranging in age from the early twenties to the middle thirties, from several African countries. It is to meet the psychological and spiritual needs of these students, now numbering about 1200 that the administration has set up a Student Life Department under whose umbrella pastoral care comprising psychological counselling, spiritual direction and a chaplaincy service, is provided.

In order to discuss the issues raised by reflecting on the pastoral care services offered in the college, three related literatures need consideration as outlined in the paper. These are:

Christianity and culture, Christianity and African culture and the relationship between psychology and theological traditions. Due to the constraints of the paper only the first and third literatures will be considered in some detail. Pertinent to the latter quest is a survey of the ways psychology and theological traditions have intersected over the years, a search that will be informed largely by David Lyall's (1995) voice. The first discussion will be guided by the works of Stephen Bevans (1992) and Richard Niebuhr (2001).

Christianity and culture

To cover this aspect adequately first, the relationship between Christianity and culture in general, and between Christianity and African cultures in particular needs examination. In this paper, there is not the scope to explore historically how the particular religious traditions became inculturated into Kenya/Africa in the 19th century and how attitudes have changed since. It is important at this stage, however, to locate my own sense of an appropriate relationship between Christianity and any culture which I will do using the works of Stephen Bevans and Richard Niebuhr. I will present a case for inculturating the Christian message to produce what Bevans (op cit.) terms "…a theology that makes sense at a certain place in a certain time" i. e. contextual hence relevant theology (p. 5). Secondly I will review literature regarding a particular counselling orientation which I think would provide the sensitivity required to pick up cues when the core of the problem touches on spirituality, specifically, conflict between Christianity and Traditional African Religions. If the spiritual issues relate to Judeo-Christian practices, they are likely to be easily picked up by the largely western-trained practitioners. In addition, two strands of comments by several of my European colleagues confirm the urgency of this study: while some lament that they do not know how to handle issues relating to traditional African spirituality, others own that they never encounter such difficulties. In either case, the need for better understanding of possible underlying conflicts and the search for a counselling stance that would help them surface becomes evident. My argument will be illustrated with a case study, one of many such encounters from our practice.

While extreme views that suggest either complete incorporation or wholesale rejection of culture by Christianity exist, a middle road in which some synthesis or dialogue is sought appears to be the best course to follow. My orientation supports dialogue between culture and Christianity as articulated by Bevans' "*synthetic*" and Niehbur's "*Christ above culture*"

paradigms. Both writers have explored the extreme possibilities on either side, possibilities that have been adopted by Christianity to varying degrees in different periods of history. Examining all these possibilities leaves me convinced that the middle ground is the best route as captured in the two models, a view that my colleagues at Tangaza College would concur with. While there are merits in other approaches, I hold the view that both cultures and theology are dynamic and hence will benefit from on-going conversation. This dialogical stance is echoed in the scriptures where we read of Jesus affirming the faith of non-Jews, for example, the Roman Centurion (Lk 7: 9, the Syro-Phoenician woman (Mk. 7: 24-29) etc. Before Jesus came, God had promised Abraham and Sarah that he would bless *all* the people of the earth through him (Gen 12: 3[b]): many more such examples could be cited. "Christ is present in every human situation, in every community and every human tradition" (Shorter 1980, p. 22).

This attitude is aptly captured by both paradigms. Bevans' synthetic proposal is based on the suppositions that every culture has both unique and universal features; some of its elements are neutral while, some value-loaded either positively or negatively while others are ambivalent; cultures remain alive only if they are dynamically involved with others; God is at work and reveals himself in all cultures; the users of the model have space to be creative. The approach embodies the same concepts with the cultural synthesis proposed by Niebuhr, based on the view that Christ, being higher than culture, can and does redeem its elements that may be sinful. The two models amply capture my views on the relationship between Christianity and culture. I hold it that God is at work in all cultures and his grace leads to many good outcomes and practices, but there exist sinful elements as well in the human constructions. The old adage that grace works on nature comes alive here. It looks logical, therefore, to think in terms of the Gospel message being inculturated, leading to a "…creative and dynamic relationship between the Christian message and culture or cultures" (Aylward Shorter, 1980, *Towards a Theology of Inculturation,* cited by Bevans, p. 83).The same concept is captured by Niebuhr's proposal of cultural synthesis rather than rejection or embracing cultures entirely. I see Christ's incarnation as pointing to God's desire to divinise humanity in totality through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

An underlying theme in this paper is the relationship between Christianity and Traditional African Religions. As pointed out by Bevans (1999) in the synthetic model of pastoral theology, a happy resolution, as demonstrated in the case study below, can be reached if the

clashing cultures are held in tension and allowed to dialogue without one being dismissed offhandedly as inconsequential.

Niebuhr's and Bevans' approaches would work well with the Rogerian non-directive model of counselling in helping our students explore cultural issues that may be of a psycho-spiritual nature. By encouraging the counsellees to be in touch with that dimension of their lives as well, the counsellors would be recognising the (w)holistic nature of persons and thus marshalling all the available resources for health and growth; the spiritual dimension is a crucial resource (Watts, Nye and Savage 2002).

The case cited below shows how Christianity and cultural practices can be held in dialogue in person-centred counselling as a result of which some synthesis that is congruent with the counselee emerges.

The use of western psychological methods within African culture

The second literature which is relevant to this paper concerns the use of western psychology within African cultures. At Tangaza College the practice of the pastoral care team assumes that this is appropriate and my own experience endorses the appropriateness in particular of Carl Roger's non-directive approach. In fact, what I want to propose towards the end of this paper is that the need for thorough empirical research of the issues of African cultures that could become problematic for 3rd and 4th generation young African Christians is urgent. Further investigation of the literatures in relation to the use of western counselling techniques within African settings is relevant to this study but is not the main focus of this paper.[8]

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[8] Such literatures include:

Gichinga, Emmy, 2007. *Counselling in the African context*. Nairobi: GEM Counselling Services.

Lartey, Emmanuel, 1997. *In living colour: an intercultural approach to pastoral care and counselling*. London: Cassell.

Magesa, Laurenti, 2004. *Anatomy of inculturation: transforming the church in Africa*. New York: Orbis.

Ma Mpolo, Masamba ed., 1985. *Risks of growth: counselling and pastoral theology in the African context*. Ibadan: Daystar; Nairobi: Uzima.

The relationship between Christianity and psychological approaches to counselling

The third literature which is pertinent to this study is that concerning the relationship between psychological approaches to counselling and Christian approaches. In pursuing a study of this literature I shall engage particularly in dialogue with David Lyall's work as his approach – though he has worked in quite a different context from mine – seems close to my own.

The relationship between psychology and faith traditions is as old as human history and every generation has addressed it with different outcomes. The earliest manifestations of psychological problems involved fear of natural phenomena such as hostile weather conditions, death and wild animals. Competition for food, for sexual partners and anxiety over the need to protect the young – are factors that have caused emotional stress since the beginning of the earliest human societies. The mental conditions produced by such experiences were initially linked to non-human forces - evil spirits as testified by early cave paintings which display efforts by the dwellers to ward off or exorcise the malevolent spirits. Consequently societies have myths and legends that attempt to explain the genesis of suffering which in ancient times was invariably given supernatural origins. The Greeks attributed mental illness to the colour of blood while in the middle ages Europe psychopathology was linked to possession either by demons or by divine spirits. Pain and suffering were seen as punishment from God or the gods. In traditional Africa all life, animate and inanimate, is interpreted from a spiritual perspective.

From a historical viewpoint, the nature of Christian pastoral care itself has been largely influenced by the prevailing political and scientific circumstances and thus definite trends are traceable in different periods of history. William Clebsh and Charles Jaekle (1983 pp. 13-31) have identified eight epochs with specific characteristics. In the primitive church the practice was mainly geared towards sustaining the faith of the early Christians in the face of the many odds they encountered. The rallying call was the imminent return of Jesus for which all should be prepared. The second phase was marked by persecution by the Romans which lasted until the end of the 4th century. The thrust of pastoral care was reconciling the people with God and the church. With the conversion of Emperor Constantine and the end of persecution, the main need was to help Christians to steer away from pagan beliefs and practices that were sneaking into the mainstream. During the Dark Ages when Christianity was assailed by pagan invaders the church saw its main role as teaching to ensure the faithful

were not misled. Care in Medieval Christendom was characterised by stress on the sacraments to heal whatever assailed the Christians. Reconciliation became the mainstay of care during the periods of the Renaissance and the Reformation while he Enlightenment saw renewed effort to guide the Christians way from the many pitfalls that beset them. Pastoral care in the last two centuries has taken a broader form as Christianity increasingly became a world religion and stress was placed on values from personal conviction.

One of the major effects of the Scientific and Industrial Revolutions in Europe was the subjection of illness, including psychological stress, to scientific study that replaced magic and spirits in both diagnosis and treatment (Clare 1980). According to Graham (1996) the middle of the 19th century also saw a trend towards diminishing clerical status and reduction in church attendance among the middle class. One of the strategies used to uplift the standing of the clerics in a changing society included trying to make their work appear scientific. Consequently attempts were made in both the USA and Britain to show the scientific basis of pastoral work. Thus by the end of the century the need for Christian pastors to become aware of and respond to the prevailing social climate had been accepted. This search for empiricism particularly drove many to dialogue with the emergent psychological theories whose tenets were seen as generally not opposed to Christianity, thus ushering in a new phase in the relationship between spirituality and psychology.

However, it was not until the late 19th and early 20th centuries that systematic scientific study, diagnosis and treatment of psychological stress began to be widely used with the coming of Freudian psychotherapy. The new scientific understanding of the working of the human mind posed a major challenge to the way Christianity explained human life and the way the church cared for its followers. Different responses ensued, one of which was to engage psychology in a dialogue, taking advantage of the new insights into the human psyche but remaining true to one's faith tradition and practices. Some of the pioneers of the psycho-spiritual dialogue include the American pastor, Washington Gladden, who as early as 1891, was urging colleagues to work with the medical profession. There were also psychologists who proposed cooperation with religion, thus an expansive arena involving many professionals was launched on both sides of the Atlantic. Out of this debate emerged the concept of pastoral counselling that encompassed theological and psychological underpinnings.

The best known trailblazers of this development include Elwood Worcester who in 1906 established the Emmanuel Movement; Anton Boisen the first pastoral theologian to take students to a psychiatric ward for experience in Massachusetts in 1925, thus pioneering clinical pastoral training which has become commonplace. With his psychiatrist collaborator, Richard Cabot, they laid the foundation for the Clinical Pastoral Education movement (Graham op. cit.). In the United Kingdom it was Leslie Weatherhead who in the 1930s and 40s set the trend both in his practice as a pastor in Leeds and through the caring ministry he managed in London with others who shared his views of the connection between soul and mind (Jaekle and Clebsh). It is important to note that this relationship between psychology and spirituality was neither straightforward nor in total agreement: divergent views always prevailed, often coloured by the backgrounds of the proponents as well as the prevailing social situation.

The Rogerian person-centred model easily resonated with the foundational Christian call for love of neighbour and was thus embraced by many pastoral carers in the 1950s and 1960s. Extreme views, however, prevailed in this period with less dialogue. Nevertheless, the desire to remain true to their faith endured and resulted in extensive writing that sought to critically examine the connection between psychology and spirituality. Whitehead used psychoanalysis to diagnose and Christian principles for treatment (Hurding p. 218). He considered humans as basically good but in need of forgiveness and release from their jealousies and resentments. He was opposed to the Christian teaching of Christ dying to atone for sin. For him the aim of pastoral counselling is to attain "personal integrity" or "individuation" which entails "…restoring the broken harmony which prevents personality, at any point of body, mind and spirit, from its perfect functioning in its relevant environment; the body in the material world; the mind in the realm of true ideas and the spirit in its relationship with God" (p. 219 citing Weatherhead 1955). He suggests that mental health can only be attained by being right with God, with fellow humans and with the cosmos."…God's love can often be made tangible through caring human contact" (p. 219). Others who followed in his footsteps include Bill Kyle who was scathingly critical of Freud's theory and founded the Westminster Pastoral Foundation in 1970. Though the centre continues to give sound courses in clinical work, the religious overtones envisaged by Kyle seem to have been eclipsed (Hurding p. 226).Writing in 1983, Peter Liddel, director of pastoral counselling in the diocese of St Albans made a succinct comment:

> …the whole exciting tradition of psychoanalytic and humanistic thinking is available to the pastoral counsellor to accept, reject and refine. On the whole, from the 1920s through to the early 1970s there seems to have been more 'accepting' and 'rejecting' than 'refining' of secular insights by the Church. We have noted a strong tendency to 'accept' within the liberalism of many in the pastoral counselling movement. (Hurding p. 227)

Despite some sharp criticism from some quarters, Boisen's Clinical Pastoral Education movement in the USA thrived and some of its students like Rollo May, Seward Hiltner, Russel Dicks, Wayne Oats researched and arrived at different understandings of pastoral counselling, i. e. the psychology of religion, the chaplaincy and education movement, and traditional pastoral counselling by the 1960s. As the secular psychologies were gaining popularity in the USA one of their main critics in the 1950s was Hobart Mowrer. He saw pastoral counselling as cheapening God's redemptive work and diminishing the responsibility that individuals should bear for their wrong doing. Others like Thomas Szasz, Jay Adams, Paul Vitz and William Kilpatrick in the 1970s and 80s continued to critique the accommodation of faith and psychology. Kilpatrick in particular did a lot of work which has increased his antipathy for the use of psychology in pastoral counselling. He argued that the humanistic theories have led to self-worship, that eliminates the need for God, what Hurding (1985) refers to as "…God-denying man-centredness…idolatrous narcissism…" in which God and fellow humans are of no account and suffering to be avoided at all cost (p. 230). Seeing psychology and Christianity as competing religions, Kilpatrick called for a return to true Christian faith which unlike the egoism advocated by humanistic psychology upholds a self-love based on divine love extended to neighbour in humble service. He and Vitz called for a return to Christian orthodoxy. While agreeing that moderation in building self esteem is called for, I hold a different view. True self-love is not proud but effacing as displayed by Mary, the mother of Jesus, who knew herself to be a lowly handmaid but on hearing Elizabeth's greeting, was not shy of proclaiming that because what God had done for her, all generations would call her blessed. That is healthy self-esteem.

In the more recent past (the 1980s) some work has been done to bridge the divide between psychology and Christianity as opposed to the polarizing attitudes of the earlier period. One of these students, Malcolm Jeeves attributes a lot of misunderstanding to lack of clarity in the terms used by both disciplines. Quite often the same terms are used by both but with differing

meanings. In addition psychology is criticized for its reductionism and Christianity for appearing to react from paranoia. This attitude is itself criticized for failing to recognize that both science and religion have unique domains in which each reigns supreme, though for Christians the bible is nevertheless pre-eminent. Gary Collins advanced the debate by attacking the main tools and exposing what he considered to be flaws of experimental and clinical psychology. His conclusion was that both disciplines could gain by coming closer and working together (Hurding p, 237). One of the best known successes of such collaboration finds expression in the world-known therapeutic model followed by Alcoholics Anonymous whose success depends on a blending of psychological and deeply spiritual insights.

David Lyall's contribution to the dialogue

It thus becomes clear that despite hostility from some quarters to the dialogue between spirituality and psychology, some leading pastoral counsellors have always advocated the synergies between the two disciplines. A good example is David Lyall[9] in various respects that I will spell out. I find him helpful because he articulates many viewpoints which I concur with from my experience in personal therapy and working with our students in Tangaza College. Commissioned to write for the series, ***Counselling in Context,*** Lyall had to work with obvious constraints but that notwithstanding, his book was positively received as well-researched (250 references! Canon John Foskett, *The Journal of Psychodynamic Counselling,* n. d.) and bearing the imprint of an authority in the field. As an ordained minister of the Church of Scotland, he brings a rich pastoral experience and valuable insights spanning over forty years in parish ministry, in hospital chaplaincy and in academe as a university lecturer in Practical Theology. In addition to his theological education he has had training in psychoanalysis and pastoral counselling, though he maintains he is "not a counsellor but rather a minister who uses counselling skills as part of his ministry" (Lyall 2001, *The Integrity of Pastoral Counselling*, p. xiv).[10]

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[9] David Lyall, 1995. *Counselling in the pastoral and spiritual context*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

[10] David Lyall's other published works are:

Foskett, John and Lyall, David, 1988. *Helping the helpers*: *supervision and pastoral care.* London: SPCK.

Particularly useful are Lyall's insights into the main schools of psychotherapy through which he combs to tease out those of their elements that may inform work in spirituality. He argues that Sigmund Freud, despite rejecting religion as an illusion has made a major impact in the practice of pastoral care. While rejecting many of Freud's propositions, a number of leading pastoral carers like Oscar Pfizer, J. G. McKenzie, Leslie, D. Weatherhead and Harry Gunttrip benefitted by learning that advice-giving is not an effective counselling technique. Freudian psychoanalytic theory is based on the therapeutic effect from gaining insight into the root cause of pathology. Freud gave them a better understanding of the human psyche and this new knowledge helped to improve their effectiveness. My experience is that while knowledge of psychodynamic theory can enrich pastoral counselling psychoanalysis is not suitable for pastoral care mainly because of its focus on deep pathology, lengthy duration and the extensive training required.

Carl Gustav Jung is the other psychoanalyst whose tremendous contribution to counselling Lyall shows as relevant to pastoral counselling and certainly to our context at Tangaza College because he is more widely accepted in Christian, particularly Roman Catholic, circles. Of particular importance to our practice is his insight into the need for complete openness for effective therapy. Jung (1933) suggested that clients will not improve unless they are accepted without judgement, heralding the conclusions reached and popularized three decades later by Carl Rogers. Jung stated that clients do not disclose their deeply-seated problems unless they experience complete non-judgemental acceptance lack of which blocks therapy.

Lyall, David, 1999. Pastoral caring in a postmodern context. In: G. Lynch, ed. 1999. *Clinical counselling in pastoral settings*. London: Routledge, pp. 7-21.

Lyall, David, 2005. The bible, worship and pastoral care. In: P. Ballard and S. Holmes, eds. 2005. *The bible in pastoral practice*. London: Darton Longman and Todd, pp. 225-240.

Lyall, David, 2000. Pastoral action and theological reflection. In: D. Willows and J. Swinton, eds. 2000. *Spiritual dimensions of pastoral care*. London: Jessica Kingsley, pp. 33-58.

Lyall, David, 2000. Pastoral care as performance. In*:* J. Woodward and S. Pattison, eds. 2000. *The Blackwell reader in pastoral and practical theology*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, pp. 311-319.

> …the patient does not feel himself accepted until the very worst of him is accepted too. No one can bring this about by mere words; it comes only through the doctor's sincerity and through his attitude towards himself and his own evil side (p. 239).

He adds that only a spiritual person will have that attitude borne out of the realization that God can and does work in all kinds of situations. Psychopathology, Jung continues results from lacking in authenticity and healing comes from personal acceptance/integration modelled in the counselling relationship. "Neurosis is an inner cleavage – the state of being at war with oneself" (p. 242). Nouwen (1996) concurs and adds:

> Only when you know yourself as unconditionally loved – that is fully received – by God can you give gratuitously. You cannot give yourself to others if you do not own yourself and you can only truly own yourself when you have been fully received in unconditional love…You will be a free person, free to love (pp. 55-56).

As I will illustrate below from our practice, a counsellee who has been empowered in this way may feel free enough to enter even what would have otherwise been a psychological and spiritual no-go zone due to shame, embarrassment and fear of rejection.

Lyall sees a very central way in which spirituality and psychology intersect captured by the need to offer unconditional acceptance/love to disturbed minds, love which Nouwen claims we cannot live without (1969 p. 109). By so doing the counsellor conveys acceptance by the Transcendent and this brings peace/grace, an idea echoed by Nouwen. "A life after death can only be thought of in terms of life before it, and nobody can dream of a new earth when there is no old earth to hold any promises" (1996 p. 14). Human compassion should mirror divine compassion for it to be effective "…insofar as he is able to make the compassion of God with man–which is visible in Christ-credible in his own world" (op cit p. 40-41). The counsellor will only be able to do that if s/he has been touched "…by Him whose heart is greater than ours" (op cit 91).

The other very useful contribution by Lyall is his presentation of Carl Rogers' non-directive approach as perhaps the greatest influence in the counselling profession since the Second World War (p. 13). The Rogerian "necessary and sufficient" conditions for successful counselling, namely counsellor genuineness or authenticity or congruence, unconditional positive regard and the ability to experience and communicate accurate empathy clearly (p. 13-17) - closely resemble the Christian love for neighbour that forms the bedrock for pastoral counselling and are therefore essential for successful outcomes. Nouwen (1969) holds similar

views and adds the need for total mutuality which enables the pastoral counsellor to stand on the platform of: "My strength is your strength…Your pain is my pain, your weakness my weakness, your sin is my sin" (p. 29), without uttering any of those words, I add, and still remain separate. Only through fully experiencing their own pain and processing it can pastoral counsellors get to such a point; become fully empathic as "wounded healers" (Nouwen 1979). Referring to his experience of a hospital stay Nouwen remarks how being treated with dignity and respect by total strangers gave him a deep sense of security and at-homeness, the kind that makes pastoral counselling work (1998 p. 147-8). My own involvement in pastoral care is borne out of a similar encounter of full and liberating acceptance that opened me to God's unconditional love after several years of struggle with the concept and failure by those initially consulted to offer that kind of atmosphere. That experience has shaped my entire pastoral approach.

In support of this view Dr. Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury in an article, *A theology of health for today,* states*: "*God's grace makes people fully human…" The gift of the spirit brings relationship with God and with fellow humans and where there are relationships, people are well. Flesh becomes living, productive body, part of the Body of Christ. Where there are no relationships, however, there is emptiness, unspiritual, lifeless flesh or desert-like conditions exist which cannot produce or give life; there is no spark; there is death (In Jonathan Baxter's *Wounds that heal* 2007, p. 4). Williams argues that in the gospel narratives we read about Jesus healing by taking pain and infirmity away and always restoring relationships through "…bridging of a gulf between flesh and spirit" (p. 6). As indicated above Williams associates sickness with some element of alienation or estranged relationships so restoration is at the core of Christ's healing ministry. Once the people Jesus encountered were healed they were inhabited by the Holy Spirit as indicated by their new-found love, gratitude, joy, community, service or discipleship

This stance was questioned by Paul Tillich who argued that human beings are devious and that no counsellor could create adequate atmosphere for self-actualization (Lyall, p. 15). However, Rogers (1967, cited by Lyall, p. 15) contends that people have a basically positive direction. When they are sensitively understood and accepted as separate persons in their own right, they tend to move in particular directions, directions that are "…positive, constructive, moving toward self-actualization, growing toward maturity, growing toward socialization" (Lyall, pp. 26-27). Tillich did acquiesce that "…the acceptance experienced in a human

relationship was a prelude to an awareness of being accepted within 'the dimension of the Ultimate'" (cited by Lyall, p.16), thus raising the value of human love an octave higher as proposed by Nouwen above. However, counsellors will be able to communicate such therapeutic acceptance only if they have had a deep experience of the same (Lyall p. 100). My personal experience alluded to above is testimony to that: a personal experience of complete acceptance opens one to the love by the Ultimate.

The theological underpinning of the Rogerian model is captured by the realization of the greatest command-love for God and for neighbour, summed up in unconditional positive regard which frees cousellees to become their true selves. I see it as the "perfect love" that scripture says drives out fear (Jn. 4: 18[b]). It is this kind of love that is needed to free our students at Tangaza College to delve into the psycho-spiritual world of Traditional African Religions when the need arises. Of this kind of love, Hunsinger (2006) says it: "…create(s) a bridge of understanding…There is a divine drama hidden in each person's story that cries out to be heard" (p. 52).It is this conviction that we all need in our practice, a conviction that the ever-communicating God is saying something to the counsellee through the doubts and confusion presented and that we can midwife a new growth. This is because, according to Watts, Nye and Savage, op cit., when successfully used, the person-centred approach facilitates a real meeting of souls, allowing the counsellor's spirit to touch that of the counsellee, "…and become part of something large, in which a remarkable energy for healing was present" (p. 191 citing Thorne, 1998). This larger energy can be seen as the grace of God and though this may be debated, my experience is in support. However, even if the pastoral counsellor's efforts were to fail, her/his stance leaves room for God's grace to act.

The presentation by Lyall of the work of Freud, Jung and Rogers has clarified and confirmed my belief that a more articulated understanding of the relationship between spiritual and psychological life would lead to a more holistic and effective pastoral care practice for our students at Tangaza College. It would enrich the practice in the following ways: it would enhance awareness among the counsellors and spiritual directors, especially the non-Africans, about the tensions emanating from Traditional African spirituality and how they manifest. It would lead to more wholesome growth of the young people as they become free to be fully in touch with themselves and their cultural inheritance and to name even those of their issues that would otherwise continue to be buried in the subconscious (or unconscious) mind due to shame and embarrassment. Greater integration of the lives of students concerned would

follow, leading to the development of maturer faith emanating from an honest encounter with beliefs that could rob one of the joy and fullness of life that Jesus came to bestow on his followers. It would help to bridge the Traditional African spirituality and Judeo-Christianity which the students are a part of. All our students are supposed to be formed for ministry: encountering their "demons" in such a safe environment would give them the courage to help the people they will minister with to begin facing their own.

I shall now illustrate how this might work in practice with reference to a case study which shows how Christianity and cultural practices can be held in dialogue until a synthesis that is congruent with the counsellee emerges.

A case study: the case of Martha[11]

Martha, a young woman from western Kenya, was one of our students when she sought counselling. She had completed a diploma course in Social Ministry several years before and had actually worked for some time to raise the fees before returning to the college for a one year programme to complete the B.A. degree. In her late twenties, she was in her third year of marriage.

After the initial preliminaries, Martha began to talk about her reason for seeking help. She appeared quite uncomfortable (she kept shifting in her seat and spoke very haltingly) disclosing her problem but with some encouragement and assurance that whatever she wanted to talk about was okay, finally came to the crux of the matter.

She had experienced some difficulty conceiving only to have two miscarriages in quick succession. Her concern was that her first family, unhappy that no bride price had been paid for her as custom dictates, might have been responsible for her inability to carry a pregnancy to full term. On his part while desiring to have a child, her husband did not share her fears and so was not particularly concerned about finding the resources necessary for the dowry.

Martha 1: In the first place I was quite concerned that I hadn't become pregnant soon after marriage. When I did and then miscarried several months later, I was really disheartened. The second time this happened (only a few months prior to this interview) I was devastated. I

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[11] A pseudonym.

didn't know what to think…but it looked like my worst fears had been confirmed. (Very pensive and hesitant) It looks like we are doomed to be childless… (Voice trailed off…)

Counsellor 1: I am sorry about your double loss. It must have been very painful for you.

Martha 2: It was although the doctor says that because we are still young and in good health there is no reason why we should not have healthy children. But I am still afraid that we shall never have any.

Counsellor 2: What I am hearing is deep frustration and a sense of fear − first with a delay in conceiving, only to lose both pregnancies.

M 3: Yes, particularly because my doctor says that he could not find anything wrong with me and could not understand why I was unable to carry a baby to full term. Since I have been in good health and my work is not particularly stressful, he was at a loss as to the cause of the problem. I am concerned as to whether this will happen again. (Long pause). Lately some of my friends have been suggesting that perhaps my problem has been caused - is due to the fact that my husband did not comply with my parents' wishes before we got married.

C 3: What you are saying is that since you do not have a known medical condition to warrant your loss of pregnancy, the problem could have been caused by an external agent.

M 4: Yes, to punish us because my husband failed to honour his promise to my parents. When he and his people visited my family they were asked to produce certain items which they did not have with them at the time. They promised to make another visit to take the items they had been asked for. Meanwhile my husband persuaded me to proceed with the wedding plans in the hope that the second visit would take place in due course but that was never to be. He did not have much money at the time but kept promising to honour his promise soon. When these problems began I started talking to him about his broken promise but he does not want to talk about it. I am fully aware of the fact that our financial situation is bleak (he does not have regular employment) but we could just go and explain the situation to my parents and I am sure they would understand. Now I don't know what is going to happen to us…if he doesn't pay the expected dowry I am really afraid we will never have any children.

C 4: You feel that your parents hold the broken promise against you and your husband and that is the reason why your desire for a child has not been fulfilled and that this situation will persist if the dowry is not paid.

M 5: Well, not exactly. I know that my parents love me and do not hold anything against my husband and me. The problem must be coming from some of my relatives – some of my uncles and aunts in the village who are capable of harbouring evil wishes that could harm us. This is what some of my friends are suggesting but I wonder how correct they are.

C 5: Your friends are suggesting that your childlessness is caused by some relatives in revenge for unpaid dowry.

M 6: Yes.

C 6: Do I sense an element of dissonance between what your friends are saying and what you think about the issue yourself? (My sense of dissonance was triggered by Martha's statement in M (5): she claimed that the possibility of a curse had been proposed by her friends but the way she said it suggested that she had bought the idea, yet I had to be tentative in case I had misread the signals).

M 7: Yes, I am somewhat confused. As a Christian I have been taught that God has power over all forces, including the evil ones and so is able to protect us. That's why we (my friends and I) have been praying a lot especially since the second miscarriage. In any case from the explanation by the doctor I understand that psychological (as well as physical) stress can lead to loss of a pregnancy. My husband and I have been having issues which are causing me a lot of tension and that could be enough trigger for a miscarriage.

In subsequent sessions Martha revisited her fear that she might have been affected by punishment meted out on her by some irate relatives. Such a pronouncement in the traditional milieu is dreaded because coming from an older person, and by implication, one closer to the ancestors than Martha and her husband, it would be potentially harmful. To counter such a curse would involve elaborate and expensive cleansing and atoning ceremonies. Martha needed to, with some assistance dialogue with all this vis-a-vis her understanding of the place and power of God in her life. She reasoned out that she and her husband had not transgressed in any way. They loved and respected her parents and had duly informed them about their intended marriage long before the event. It is true that her parents had preferred to have the

wedding conducted in the local church to enable the entire extended family and friends to attend but the young people lived in Nairobi and so the family had reluctantly given in to a city wedding. Her immediate family had made it to the ceremony, clear proof that they approved of it and held no grudge.

Such thoughts eventually enabled Martha to dismiss her fear as groundless because she had not done anything to warrant punishment. In any case, she admitted to herself that the forces of the world can never overcome the power of God who made heaven and earth and all in it. Citing the opening lines of the Christian creed she mulled over them and talked about her faith in the God who created the universe and all that is in it. This same God raised Jesus from the dead, thus overcoming the power of death. To continue fearing the power of ill-intentioned relatives and their threats even if she and her husband deserved punishment was irrational, she concluded. In the end, Martha felt confident enough in this line of thinking to be able to confront those who were suggesting otherwise, whom she called prophets of doom, and was thus free to pay attention to her troubled marriage. She did, however, express a desire for both of them to pay a visit to her parents, the first one since their wedding. (As things turned out, she ended up making that visit alone several months later).

This case study illustrates the approach Lyall's work makes explicit in the following ways: that there is very close interplay between spirituality (in particular traditional African spirituality) and psychology and that only a loving, fully accepting stance will facilitate their meeting. While Martha had sought counselling for what she had considered to be an issue of mental health, it transpired that a theological reflection was what she actually needed. However, to get there, she needed to be listened to in a particular way that would free her to explore what lay beneath the surface and what she had initially been very uncomfortable disclosing. She needed to know that it was okay to feel the way she did, that there was nothing to be ashamed of for a Christian like her who also had received a fair amount of modern education and was living in the digital age - to be caught up in traditional spirituality. The only reason why she was able to get to that place was because she experienced full acceptance without any hint of judgement. On my part, I had acted on a hunch, but one that could have been easily missed if I was not fully tuned to her to the extent of our souls meeting during the discussion as Lyall suggests. Above all being aware of the possibility of conflict of religious world-views was of prime importance. It is crucial for all pastoral carers at Tangaza College to develop that kind of mind-set.

Martha's experience typifies similar issues that our young adult students have to frequently grapple with emanating from tension between the Christian values they have embraced and some of the cultural norms that comprise their world view. In addition to the curse that is supposed to become effective if pronounced by an older person (as in Martha's case), some of the other relevant beliefs include witchcraft, spirits (ancestral and non-human), and the whole issue of blessing/punishment for obedience/disobedience. In some situations, the affected persons failing to find solace in pastoral counselling and the Christian faith may decide to seek the counsel and assistance of traditional mediums such as diviners, healers and medicine-people, even if it means preferring dirty water to dying of thirst. There is need, therefore, for pastoral carers to develop a paradigm shift that will free the care seekers to open up and face the reality of their confusion. The care giver's knowledge and attitude are crucial in determining the route the seeker follows.

The pastoral-theological model followed in analysing Martha's case is the synthetic praxis proposed by Bevans and based on the unique yet composite nature of culture, its dynamism and the presence of God in every culture. Martha's case proves his claim that "culture itself is not an evil" (p. 119), but because it, like all human constructions, "bears the marks of the human propensity to resist and undercut the rule of the creator of the world" (p. 119), it needs to be examined in light of scripture. This entails doing theology using a "mutually respectful yet critical dialogue between Jude-Christian tradition on one hand and culture on the other. Martha's Luo tradition demands that dowry be paid by the groom before a marriage is sanctioned, but in this case, Martha's Christian parents (examples of social change) were willing to forego this requirement. However, the exchange of dowry involves both extended families, hence the interest of her close relatives. But in this case, instead of the aunts and uncles working to strengthen the new family as stipulated by tradition, they could have undermined it if the threats Martha feared had indeed been real and if she had not addressed them. A practice that would have served a useful purpose in the past, critically related to the present, becomes not only irrelevant but actually detestable.

Issues that cause conflict between the Judeo-Christian-modern outlook of the Africans and cultural beliefs and practices can be easily missed out or dismissed as unimportant but Martha's case illustrates how "religious and personal issue are intertwined" (Watts, Nye and

Savage, op cit. p. 197). The work of pastoral carers is to try to understand problems and provide the best support she/he can, irrespective of their origins, bearing in mind that while spiritual guidance and counselling are distinct ministries, they are very closely interrelated. Above all the care seeker is a whole person not a piece of patchwork! I consider it logical, therefore, to think in terms of the Gospel message being inculturated, leading to a "…creative and dynamic relationship between the Christian message and culture or cultures" (Aylward Shorter, *Towards a theology of Inculturation,* cited by Bevans, p. 83). I view Christ's incarnation as pointing to God's desire to divinise humanity in totality through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

Conclusion and recommendations

I have attempted to advance some conversation between spirituality and psychology in the pastoral counselling arena and have traced the development of the dialogue through various periods in history to the 1990s. In particular I have reviewed a counselling stance that seems well suited for use with our students at Tangaza College. Due to its centrality in the dialogue, the relationship between Christianity and culture has emerged and some tentative conclusions made, particularly the need for on-going conversation to ensure a healthy balance.

Of great importance, however, and not at all addressed by this paper is how to navigate the murky waters of Traditional African spirituality once the counsellee discloses the cause of problem as emanating from cultural conflict. I think this is where many counsellors feel out of their element, hence the urgent need to do more work on African spirituality, particularly empirical study to identify the major issues that could become problematic for contemporary young African adults and how best to help resolve them.

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STAGE 1 UNIT2

MISSIONARY WORK IN KENYA AND AFRICAN RESPONSE: IMPLICATIONS FOR PASTORAL CARE IN TANGAZA COLLEGE

DECEMBER 2009-12-14

Phyllis Njoki Muraya

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Appendix 17 i

Abstract

In the last century the African way of life has been assailed by colonialism, the money economy, urbanization, Christianity, Western-style education, modern technology and a host of cultural nuances that go with all these agents of change. These factors have combined to partially transform the traditional psycho-social-spiritual fabric of the African milieu, resulting in vitiation in some aspects and stamping resilience in others

Of these factors Christianity and Western-style education stand out as the most potent catalysts of change. Adrian Hastings (1976), a Roman Catholic missionary in Africa for many years, argues that the new converts initially experienced deep alienation but as later generations have regained confidence in their new identity they have desired to re-establish some cultural roots in a manner their parents may not have done. Irrespective of the stance taken, all Africans have somehow had to respond to the Good News of Jesus Christ and that response has had an impact on their psycho-social-spiritual status.

This paper examines a variety of responses and their impact as presented for counselling and spiritual direction by young African Christian men and women. Underpinning the discourse is the understanding that pastoral carers are called to continue the work began by Jesus to relieve psycho-spiritual stress so that people become free to enjoy fullness of life. Carrie Doehring (2006) proposes that in situations where people's embedded theology is questioned by stressful experiences they need to engage in theological reflection that should help them to deconstruct their old theology and construct a new one which promotes psycho-spiritual congruence. It is in that process that pastoral carers are called to accompany their clients.

The discourse opens with a brief over-view of the work and impact of Christian missionaries from Europe and North America and how the converts have responded to the message of the Gospel especially in reconfiguring a new sense of personhood. One profound consequence of Christian evangelisation has been severe assault on traditional cultural practices especially religion, and subsequent attempts to fill the ensuing void. The dynamics described in this paper continue to unfold given the fact that Christianity has taken very firm root in sub-Saharan Africa and is growing faster than anywhere else in the world (Isichei 1995).

Included in the discussion are three clinical vignettes that are typical of some of the counselling and spiritual direction experiences pastoral carers in Kenya/tropical Africa find themselves attending to, though sometimes the cultural backdrop is not easily articulated. What is this cultural background and how did these people come to be where they are at? By tracing the interaction between Christianity and African Traditional Religion I hope to provide some insights.

Introduction

In the light of the Christianization of Africa by European and American missionaries in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, debates have raged about the response of the indigenous people to the Gospel and to Western-style education that was a tool of evangelization. My thesis is that Africans responded, and indeed have continued to respond variously, redrawing the psycho-spiritual contours in an ongoing process whose residual effects shape experiences generations later. This process has been ongoing for over a century and although the African church is largely locally led, the ramifications of the missionary enterprise remain an inescapable reality for all indigenous people, Christian or not. The dynamism of human cultures as they oscillate between resilience and transformation forms a backdrop against which Africans have been active players not blank slates on which others have been writing at will.

I join the conversation as a practising Christian in the Roman Catholic Church with deep Presbyterian roots.[12] My interest emanates from my current involvement in pastoral work (as a counsellor and spiritual director) at Tangaza College, a Roman Catholic university college in Kenya that forms women and men, lay and religious, for different ministries in Africa and beyond.[13] It is our hope that through the pastoral care programme the students are supported in their formation to become more integrated persons who will eventually make effective heralds of the good news of Jesus Christ, irrespective of ministry. I came to Tangaza with a negative outlook on most aspects of Traditional African Religion (TAR) and have been challenged to review this stance as a result of my clinical experience and interaction with people who hold different perspectives. Theological reflection on the current Roman Catholic Church's attitude towards traditional cultures and religions has been a further incentive. This paper articulates that process.

The starting point lies in a brief overview of the missionary enterprise and how the African peoples have received the gospel message which will enable me to outline some of the main

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[12] Initially Presbyterians, my family became Roman Catholics when I was twelve years old.

[13] With about 30% from Kenya the students come from thirty one countries, eighteen of which are African. See appendix 1.

tenets of TAR and show how they were viewed in light of the Christian message. At the heart of the paper are several vignettes from clinical experience through which I intend to illustrate how the TAR-missionary encounter has continued to play out in the psycho-spiritual health of indigenous people. A study of these encounters leads into an examination of some of the ways in which re-rooting has been sought especially through the Instituted African Churches[14] (IACs). In the final section, the paper argues that some of the people who embrace Christianity are able to break from the past religious system and find a new identity in Christianity, while others are not; hence the frequently observed syncretism (Idemudia 2003; Gichinga 2007). The voices heard in the dialogue will largely be those of missionaries and of theologians, African and otherwise.

My purpose in entering this dialogue is to tease out residual cultural elements that possibly underpin some of the psycho-spiritual issues presented for counselling and spiritual direction by the students at Tangaza College. Experience working with them for several years points to nagging conflicts that neither readily surface and nor are easily resolved, mainly due to prejudice towards TAR. An understanding of these factors and how they operate will lead to greater empathy, better contextualization and hence more effective practice thereby helping the students to synthesise Christianity with their cultural grounding. Finally, I want to interest other pastoral carers to engage in critical review of the fundamental dialectic between TAR and Christianity that may underpin some of the issues they deal with.

I have chosen to locate the methodological approach to this paper in case studies for several reasons. First, as Bill Gillman says, case studies seek to answer questions whose answers lie "in the case(s) setting"; questions and answers which need to be extracted and reassembled (2000 pp.1-2). Second, case studies deal with people in the context of their own human experience, and therefore present us with excellent material for the study of human phenomena. A third advantage of case studies lies in the fact that the researcher can use intuition or tacit knowledge (Robson, 1993). Case studies, however, can be viewed as "soft

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[14] Invariably termed Independent, Indigenous or Instituted, these churches are remarkable by their ability to choose whatever suits them in both the bible and Traditional African Religion and blend it to form a type of hybrid Christianity that is uniquely African and original. They seem to have found perfect synthesis between the two milieux.

options" prone to biased, perfunctory, dishonest and incompetent treatment unless the researcher is determined to be rigorous, honest and thorough.

The use of clinical material, human texts or according to Charkes Gerkin (1984), "living human documents", make it feasible for a researcher to analyse human behaviours as they unfold in a historical context. The three cases presented in this paper have been selected out of many others on the ground that they are typical of the kind of study being undertaken. According to Matthew Miles and Michael Huberman (1993), the selection is a kind of purposive sampling, which is a key feature of case studies. This theory-driven sampling favours cases that are information-rich and that clearly display the phenomenon under scrutiny.

Finally, I have found it necessary to indulge in a brief historical perspective to bring to light the major forces colouring the arena in which the discourse unfolds.

Christian evangelization in Kenya

While the missionary imperative was always an integral part of Christianity since its origin (Julian, 2006 p. 7), some periods have been more "missionary" than others. Following Christ's commission to his disciples to go to the whole world and evangelize all peoples,[15] groups of his followers have always done so, hence the spread of Christianity through the Mediterranean world, Western Europe and North America before its return to Africa.[16] It is that spirit that saw the coming of missionaries to East Africa (indeed all over the sub-Saharan Africa) in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The imperative was rekindled by the 18th century Evangelical Revival (Bediako, 1999) and jolted to action by Dr. David Livingstone's passionate appeal to the British government to open up the interior of the "dark continent" through colonization, commerce,[17] Christianity and civilization. In parallel with the political

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[15] Christ's great commission to his disciples was: "…go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:19).

[16] North Africa, Egypt and Ethiopia were Christianized in the early period. In a second wave in the 15th and 16th centuries the Portuguese made some attempts to evangelize parts of the western and eastern coasts and the Congo, but this thrust did not yield lasting results.

[17] Legitimate trade as opposed to the slave trade, whose abolition Britain was spearheading.

"scramble for Africa", the Universities Mission to Central Africa (UMCA), the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and the Church of Scotland Mission (CSM) were offshoots of the new awakening among the Protestant churches. The Roman Catholics also experienced a similar reawakening in this period following the founding of two missionary societies – The Congregation of the Holy Ghost Fathers (HGFs) and the Missionaries for Africa (MAfr.) popularly known as the White Fathers. While the Protestant missionaries were bent on what was called the "civilizing mission",[18] their Roman Catholic counterparts emphasized ethnographic studies.

Missionary activity in Kenya preceded colonization but the pioneers remained at the coast, where they were making little headway until the construction of the then Kenya-Uganda railway in the late 1890s made it possible to move inland. Their arrival thus coincided with that of the colonial administrators. If they had failed in making converts among the Muslims at the coast, the missionaries had tremendous success in the study of African languages, which they committed into writing,[19] and in providing refuge and rehabilitation to freed slaves. The initial converts were thus ex-slaves some of whom became very devoted catechists and teachers.

Jostling for territory and souls began with the earliest arrivals inland, the CSM in 1898 followed by the CMS in 1899, the Roman Catholic Holy Ghost Fathers in 1899, the Consolata missionaries in 1902, the American Africa Inland Mission (AIM) in 1901 and the independent Gospel Missionary Society (GMS). Their modus operandi was very similar: wherever they went, the missionaries sought out the local chief, with whom they aligned themselves for land and good will. The next move was to recruit children, initially boys only,[20] for "kusoma", Kiswahili word for reading, which came to mean Christianity as well

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[18] Read spreading Western civilisation.

[19] They not only translated the Bible into several African languages but also compiled dictionaries. A few began to study African cultures and produced ethnographies in European languages, e. g. Fr. Constanzo Cagnolo's

The Akikuyu, in 1933 (Njoroge, 1999).

[20] Girls' education, though lagging behind that of the boys, was not entirely neglected. The missionaries were quick to realize the need to prepare future wives for the new converts.

because the two were inseparable.[21] It was not enough to instruct in faith alone: literacy and numeracy were essential as the missionaries realised the crucial role lay readers/catechists were to play in evangelization. Western-style schools became major avenues for both evangelization and dissemination of Western culture. The initial converts in the hinterland were also the socially marginalized who had lost social identity and easily found a new one in Christ (Njoroge, 1999, p. 95). Soon, however, the terrain changed when the benefits of Western-style education began to bear discernible fruits and so the demand for it increased.

It did not take very long before Christianity and schools began being seen as a vehicle for advancement. The distinction between the "kusoma" Africans and the rest of the community was noticed as early as 1927, when one of the district commissioners remarked on "…an unnatural gulf …, between Mission adherents and their pagan brothers and sisters" (Njoroge, 1999, p. 77). Thomas Bewes poignantly observed, "And so the church became associated with progress, with education and with prestige" (1953, p. 46): it produced a "kusoma" Christianity (Anderson, 1977, p. 111). Hence the "kusoma" syndrome was spearheading a silent revolution: all the students became Christians and as expected, gave up (at least outwardly) traditional beliefs and rituals, acquired a biblical or European/Western name and wore Western clothes. However, resistance to conversion was displayed by a few who only wanted Western education. On leaving school, the "mission boys" were recruited as teachers, catechists and readers by the missionaries; as clerks and messengers by the colonial government; as foremen, drivers and artisans by the settlers and traders-thus entering the monetary economy and acquiring an enhanced socio-economic status. An additional missionary service was the provision of health and dispensaries. This provision also became an integral feature of the mission station as the potency of Western medicine became another of the missionaries' mesmerising attractions.

Remarkably, however, while schools were a vital vehicle for evangelization, it was the men and women who attracted new converts to Christ through their personal witness. Adrian Hastings (1976) observes:

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[21] For a long time Christianity was equated with literacy, reading, a word that came to imply both the literacy competence and practice of the new faith. Christians were referred to as "those who read", even if they were illiterate.

> …the spiritual power and manifest generosity of missionaries and local pastors as men of God, wise advisers, defenders in distress together with the friendliness and sense of belonging engendered in the communities they founded were probably more decisive factors for the growth of the church than the establishment of schools and hospitals (p. 6).

It is undoubtedly true that many of the missionaries loved Africa and willingly made tremendous personal sacrifices for her (Bediako, 1992, p. 239). They were driven by love of God and His people, whom they felt called to serve. Cardinal Lavigerie, founder of the Missionaries for Africa is reported as having written:

> It is to you that I now come, O my beloved Africa. Seventeen years ago I sacrificed all to you, when driven by a palpable force from God, renounced everything to devote myself to your service…I have loved everything about Africa, her past, her future, her mountains, her clear sky, her sunshine, the great sweep of her deserts, the azure of waves that that bathe her coasts (Lavigerie, 1950 pp. 210, 270 cited in Shorter, 2006, p. 157).

He urged all his missionaries to do the same. Since they lived close to them, the missionaries gradually came to know a great deal about the Africans. Some mastered local languages which they made literate by translating parts of the Bible, hymns and prayers. However, it was, on the whole, difficult for them to enter the African mind completely. The fact that they assumed to have done so only compounded the problem (Isichei, 1995, p. 7).

Despite their tremendous contribution to the welfare of the Africans and their undoubted devotion, often, in the early years, at great personal cost including high death rates, some missionaries were condescending towards the indigenous people and their institutions. Traditional dances were condemned as sexually immoral; many rites and rituals were labelled retrogressive and contrary to Christian faith and had thus to be given up (Nasimiyu-Wasike and Waruta,1993; Njoroge, 1999). The missionaries were guided by what Bevans (1992) terms "counter cultural" or Niebuhr's (1951) "Christ against culture/Christ and culture in paradox" models of Christian-culture interaction. This thinking is based on the assumption that Christianity and TAR were diametrically opposed and the latter would have to give way. A veteran Roman Catholic missionary priest, Aylward Shorter (1999) observes:

> Traditional religion has been despised. Its adherents have been labelled 'pagan,' 'heathen,' 'idolatrous,' 'polytheists,' 'primitive,' 'primal.' Its beliefs and practices have been represented as an amorphous collection of 'customs' and 'rituals'… (p. 45).

Such attitudes made it difficult for the Africans to reconcile the gospel message of love with missionary practices that amounted to racism[22], and also to their interdenominational strife. Thus, despite the total devotion of many missionaries, the supremacist attitudes had a highly negative impact on how the Christian message was received, a theme that is explored in some detail below.

African response to missionary evangelization

One of the foundational missionary assumptions was that they were called by God to bring "Him" to a heathen people. Adrian Hastings, a missionary in Kenya for many years, says of the early pioneers:

> What struck them, undoubtedly, was the darkness of the continent; its lack of religion and sound morals, its ignorance, its general pitiful condition made worse by the barbarity of the slave trade. Evangelisation was seen as liberation from a state of absolute awfulness and the picture of unredeemed Africa was often painted in colours as gruesome as possible, the better to encourage missionary zeal at home (1967, p. 6 cited in Bediako, 1992, p. 225).

It is against this stark backdrop that I examine the interaction that has been going on between TAR[23] and mission Christianity, and see how this did and has continued to affect the people several generations later as indicated in my pastoral care experience.

TAR did (and still does among its adherents) encompass all life facets and cater for the socio-psycho-spiritual needs of its adherents. Their interpretation of and responses to evangelization must be seen as largely deliberate choices in an attempt to make sense of and accommodate the changing horizon occasioned by colonization, the entry of a monetary

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[22] The HGFs bowed to settler pressure and opened a boys' school for their sons in 1939 and the Loreto Sisters soon followed suit with two girls' schools. All the missionaries presided over segregated congregations.

[23] TAR is currently followed by about 10% of the total population according to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, May 2009. Other faiths are listed as follows: Christianity 78% (45% Protestants, 33% Roman Catholics); Muslims 10%; Hindus 2%.

economy and above all, Christianity and Western-style education and culture that arrived on the scene concurrently. Later generations, descendants of the early players, have continued being largely affected by the responses/choices, attitudes and values of their progenitors even if not walking entirely in the latter's footsteps.

Two pertinent questions arise at this juncture: First, what attracted so many to the new faith, after the initial impasse? Second, what did the reality of conversion mean for the African converts? In addition to the material benefits I have alluded to above there had to have been other factors to attract so many and capture their loyalty. Roland Oliver (1952) has suggested that perhaps the concept of an all-powerful God devoid of the many spirits and ancestors, was attractive to some. Others may have been disappointed with the traditional God for failing to protect them against the ravages of the slave trade and of colonialism, and viewed TAR as incapable of meeting the new external pressures (p. 216).

From a theological perspective, however, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that conversion is an initiative from God who wants to reveal himself through Jesus, the visible image of the unseen God, and he thus prepares people for that revelation (Acts 17: 27). According to Gerald McCool (1975), the Catholic theologian Karl Rahner says that when people initially hear the message of the Gospel, they are not encountering something strange from outside of themselves – it is only the explication of what they already have experienced incoherently. "The expressly Christian revelation becomes the explicit statement of the revelation of grace which man always experiences implicitly in the depths of his being" (p. 213). Kwame Bediako (1992) puts it more succinctly:

> In missiological jargon, these Traditional Religions will have been a real 'preparatio evangelica' (preparation for the Gospel); and it is now up to African theologians to interpret the meaning of that preparation for the Gospel, in the African context of not only the past but today and tomorrow" (Mbiti, 1970 pp. 19-38, cited in Bediako, pp.315-316).

Hence, what marks out conversion to Christianity is the uniqueness of Jesus Christ.

> His own person is greater than can be contained in a religion or ideology…I consider traditional religion, Islam and the other religious systems to be preparatory and even essential ground in search for

the Ultimate. But only Christianity has the terrible responsibility of pointing the way to that Ultimate Identity, Foundation and Source of security (Mbiti, 1969, p. 277 cited in Bediako, pp. 319-320).

However conversion is understood theologically, it has had major social and psychological ramifications. Jabulani Nxumalo (1980) identifies three types of responses that embody these effects – the uprooted, the transitional and followers of IACs. Each one of the types is explored through case materials from clinical experience.

Case 1: the uprooted

Atieno[24] was a member of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa and a professional woman in her early forties. When she sought counselling with an American therapist in Nairobi for her troubled marriage, she was disconcerted with his insistence that she and her husband consult with clan elders. The elders, she insisted, did not have a bearing in her Christian, Western-style marriage, which she and her equally Christian, professional, urbane husband had entered into without reference to the elders. While admitting they owed the elders respect she could not see what role they would play in their marriage. Atieno and her husband and their parents lived their lives without much reference to traditional mores, but rather guided by Christian principles as they understood them. Despite her protestations, the American counsellor was persistent: he had learnt that because marriage in Africa is a community affair, the extended family should handle such issues. Atieno decided to terminate and seek assistance elsewhere. Professional marriage and family therapy worked very well for her and her husband as they felt respected and allowed space to be who they were.

First, some of the people like Atieno, her husband and their progenitors, have fully embraced Christianity with the cultural "swaddling clothes" (Archbishop Tutu, 1977 cited in Anderson, 1977 p. 1) it was wrapped in, and in so doing abandoned many aspects of TAR. The initial converts were uprooted Africans – ex-slaves, outcasts and others who had lost traditional grounding and were thus happy to find re-rooting in the new faith. However, by the early 20th century the landscape had begun to shift as the benefits of the "new way" started becoming obvious. Parents were now keen to send their sons (and daughters later) to the mission to become "readers", i. e. Christians and literate. Some of the converts found in Christianity the

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[24] All names used in the case materials are assumed.

grounding TAR had provided and as they became new wine they developed new wineskins[25]. They fully identified with the person, values and outlook of Jesus Christ as presented to them, becoming the new creations in Christ that Paul writes about.[26] So strong was their faith that they were willing to die for it. Thomas Bewes, a vastly experienced missionary in Kenya, reports of a woman who under threat from Mau Mau[27] wrote to him in 1953:

> I came to know Jesus as my personal Saviour in 1947 and I will never go back on Him now. Rather would I die for Him (1953 p. 35).

She typifies many.

Underscoring the very meaning of life for the indigenous people was/is a monotheistic religion acknowledging a Creator God who is the source of everything animate and inanimate. The Creator God is supreme and distant, not concerned with the daily lives of the people, yet is a benevolent provider of all needs. To this concept of the divine the missionaries proclaimed the unconditional love of a Trinitarian God revealed in the incarnation, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as recorded in the scriptures. On accepting the saving power of Jesus, the converts are transformed through the Holy Spirit to enter a new relationship with God.

Debate has been raging as to what actually happens when TAR followers become Christians – do they undergo a radical change and sever ties completely with the TAR God or do they carry the old image into Christianity? On one hand are voices like John Mbiti (1969) and Kwame Bediako (1992), who claim that African converts retain the old image and are unable to reconcile the two, becoming superficial Christians. Mbiti (1969) accuses the church for failing to convert fully "…partly at least, because it has largely been unable to present to Africa more than a Western image of the faith…" (p. 237). Nevertheless, there are,

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[25] Ref: "No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins" (Luke 5: 38).

[26] Ref: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he/she is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

[27] *Mau Mau* is the name given to the rag-tag nationalist army that waged guerrilla warfare with the combined colonial and the British troops from 1952-1956 when the former were defeated. Due to the deeply traditional nature of its oaths Mau Mau was considered anti-Christian, hence, deplorable by many of the uprooted/re-socialised Christians.

undoubtedly are converts who choose to give up the former image of a distant deity and embrace the one presented by Jesus Christ – that of a loving Father who wants to relate as "Abba" (Rom. 8:15).[28] Atieno and her progenitors fall into this group. From the very beginning of missionary evangelization the two brands have been a reality of African Christianity. This situation that has prevailed though is not always recognised, the tendency being to treat all conversion as a uniform experience (Spear and Kimambo 1999).

Atieno exemplifies what I call re-socialised Africans who do not know much about their traditions and frown on many of them: whatever knowledge they have is superficial.[29] They are to be found both in the rural areas and in the towns and cities, membership cutting across all ages and walks of life. Some of them have been truly heroic in confessing their new faith, for example, the catechists/lay readers who have travelled long distances to win souls for Christ; some of the men and women who choose to eschew marriage and family/children to follow a celibate religious life that is totally counter-cultural; the many who preferred martyrdom to taking the Mau Mau oath(s) which they considered a betrayal of Christ, as well as thousands of ordinary men and women who have faithfully stuck to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and their new identity in him despite the cultural and sometimes social alienation (Njoroge 1999). Many of the early converts were severely persecuted by their families and communities – they were disowned, disinherited, cursed, beaten, girls married off: "…the Gospel was something more than comforting and a beautiful story; it was a great revolutionary force, bound to cut right across some of the cherished customs of the tribe"[30] (Bewes 1953, p. 30). Yet they have stood firm for the sake of Jesus Christ and their numbers have markedly increased. These people must have found a new sense of personhood and a

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[28] Romans 8:15 "For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father.'"

[29] My own background is very similar to Atieno's and I identify very much with her outlook. However, the professional exposure I have had has opened my eyes to appreciate different outlooks.

[30] While such occurrences have decreased dramatically, some heroism is sometimes still called for, for example, by young women and men who choose to join celibate religious life for which they may face strong opposition. A good case in point is the emeritus Archbishop of Nairobi, Ndingi Mwana'a Nzeki, who says his father condemned him as worse than a still birth when he decided to become a celibate Roman Catholic priest in the 1960s.

new community in the new faith and way of life which they have passed on.[31]Many of their descendants continue to follow in their footsteps.

Several observations can be drawn from Atieno's case. Being third generation Christians their ties with the traditional order are practically non-existent and should not be construed, following a stereotypical model of African identity as the American therapist was doing. Many descendants of the first generation Christians who turned away completely from TAR and related practices, even those who have given up on Christianity, continue to admire and espouse the values associated with Western-style education and culture and find personhood partly through this identity. The expansion of a radical type of Christian conversion that continues to demand renunciation of all ties to TAR, Western-style education, professionalism and globalisation are all factors that have served to increase the numbers who, like Atieno and her husband, are re-socialised. It is critical, therefore, for counsellors to be in touch with their own standpoint, prejudices and convictions, and communicate complete openness to and acceptance of the counsellees' perspectives, unlike the American counsellor above, if therapy is not to be hampered.

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[31] My progenitors fit well into this category. Radically detached from TAR our parents shielded us completely from most of its elements. This stance was strengthened by the education system we went through in the 1960s that reinforced the denigration of traditional practices. It is only in the past few years that I have begun to critically review the situation with a view to understanding those who hold divergent perspectives.

Case 2: the transitional

Nxumalo (1980) calls the second group transitional, having one leg in each camp. Their version of Christianity is often shallow, consisting of rules to be obeyed and meaningless Sunday rituals, a type of Christianity associated with buildings and is otherwise locked up, creating a lacuna. Such people usually resort to elements of TAR in times of crisis in search of security and to fill the void. Greatly ranging in diversity and to be found among all shades of population, some consult mediums and diviners secretly for fear of being labelled "backward" and often out of a sense of obligation to kin. Others will, for instance, after a church funeral service, feel the need to offer a peace libation to their ancestors before lowering the coffin into the grave. Their source of personal identity oscillates – at times it is in TAR, at other times in Christianity. Nxumalo (1980) asserts that they find many vestiges of Western culture irresistible.

Ciru, a Roman Catholic religious sister had been seeing me for spiritual direction for some time when I brought to her attention the fact that she had frequently mentioned in passing her mother's recurrent but seemingly unexplainable bouts of illness. From what I was hearing, Ciru's concern was not so much the state of her mother's health but its cause. This had not been raised as a main issue but was frequently mentioned as a passing thought. After some time, however, it occurred to me that there was some underlying concern that needed exploring, so I invited her to do so. Clearly relieved by this recognition, Ciru talked about her fear that her family may have been bewitched by some jealous neighbours and her mother would have been the victim of the witchcraft.

She explained that her family was an island of "progress" in a rather remote part of Western Kenya. Both her parents, qualified primary school teachers, had unlike many of the neighbours, benefitted from a Western education and her father was the head of the local primary school. The family thus enjoyed many of the trappings of a monetary economy that included a stone house. In many ways, however, they were well integrated into the community and did not deliberately isolate themselves. To compound matters, however, she had completed high school before joining religious life, when most of her peers had dropped out years before. As a part of a hate campaign there had been wild talk that she too would not complete school and indeed she had been linked to some young men. She said the hostility was so deep it was palpable. In her mind there was no doubt witchcraft was responsible for

her mother's poor state of health. Ciru experienced intense fear for the welfare of her family, not knowing what else their enemies might try. She had talked about this with her Italian formators and superiors on several occasions and every time the response seemed to have been rehearsed – pray about it-which she did, but the problem and attendant fear persisted. She had begun to doubt the power of prayer and had thus decided to seek the intervention of a diviner but wondered whether this would not amount to betrayal of her faith. Would consulting with a diviner by a religious person not be counter-witnessing? She was more confused as a few of her close friends, all of them Christians as well, supported the idea of divination and were willing to assist her.

Ciru's case exemplifies an attempt to graft the new onto the old or syncretic Christianity (Mbiti, 1969).[32] Her experience with witchcraft touches on one of the elements of TAR that is very frequently associated with syncretism mainly because witchcraft is a resilient tenet that has resisted the passing of time in some (many?) people's milieux. Anti-life and the ultimate enemy, it is manifested in symbolism like barenness, impotence, sterility, bad reputation, illness, hardships, all manner of suffering – unless these can be attributed to religious or natural causes. In Ciru's case it was her mother's unexplained bouts of illness. Witchcraft is dreaded and fear of it shared by some (many?) people, Christians and the Western-educated alike (Mbiti, 1969; Magesa, 1998; Kirwen, 2005; Gichinga, 2007). Solution for such people is divination and religious observation of whatever is prescribed. The inability of mission-Christianity to accept its existence and deal satisfactorily with witchcraft is one of the causes of rupture that has led to the establishment of many Indigenous African Churches (IACs) and continues to draw substantial numbers, like Kajo'ka (Case No. 3) from mainstream/mission-founded churches (Magesa, 1998). Most IACs carry out exorcisms on a regular basis while mainstream churches tread that ground very hesitantly. Thus, witchcraft is at the root of much syncretism.

Often associated with witchcraft is the recognition and veneration of ancestral spirits the founders of the group – the pristine men and women who originated the tribe, the lineage and the clan and who provide the people with their names. The ancestors, by virtue of their age and closeness to God, have a life force that dominates the living, "…it is the superhuman

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[32] Eclectic or syncretic.

quality of their power, not its omnipotence that makes it so voluble, sometimes so dreadful to their descendants" (Magesa, 1998, p. 48). Mission Christianity largely continues to misunderstand the essence of ancestors and outlaw them as evil and belief in them as idolatry, yet (some/many?)[33] Christians believe in their potency. However, there seems to be a way of dealing with witchcraft and ancestral spirits as proposed by the former Roman Catholic Archbishop of Lusaka, Emmanuel Milingo (1984). Seeing the possibility, perhaps the duty of handling ancestral spirits and witchcraft by the church,[34] he used to draw huge crowds to his faith-healing and exorcism services. He claims:

> The living-dead ancestors are cultured and well-mannered people. They give way when Jesus comes in, provided that Jesus guarantees protection and guardianship to the living members of the clans and tribes…We are marrying Jesus with our ancestors…carrying over the trust our people have in their ancestors into Jesus (pp. 87-88).

Experiences like these raise practical questions of process for the pastoral carer. My approach has basically been person centred and has thus largely been led by the situation of the counselee. If the TAR practice in question is deeply embedded in the individual like with Ciru, my role is to help her integrate the practice with her Christianity so as to resolve for herself the cause of tension. From a theological viewpoint, I help her examine whether by complying, she would violate any Gospel tenets. If on the other hand the client's disquiet is due to external pressure to comply with practices or rituals she/he does not identify with, my approach is to help her/him explore the various possible options and their consequences, so that she/he is in a position to make an informed choice. I remain supportive of the counsellee irrespective of the decision she/he makes. Clearly the approach any counsellor or spiritual guide would take on such questions depends very much on the model of gospel enculturation they think appropriate (Bevans, 1992). The model may be held more or less explicitly, but will nonetheless influence the approach taken.

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[33] There is a great need to carry out some empirical study to find out the extent to which Africans, Christians and otherwise, cling on to these beliefs.

[34] Prohibition does not remove the great fear and distress which witchcraft and ancestral spirits cause to some Christians. That may explain why Milingo used to draw large crowds not only in Zambia but in Kenya as well whenever he visited in the 1980s before he was recalled to Rome and lost his see.

Case 3: followers of IACs

A third group, comprising adherents to IACs, is typified by Kajo'ka whose case below brings to the fore the experience of many IACs adherents, especially their belief in direct divine intervention in their lives and elements of syncretism (Spear and Kimambo, 1999). Prayers and expectations of miracles are a central element in these churches. IACs are also a haven from the frustrating missionary (and current African elitist) paternalism evidenced by the lack of local leadership in the mainstream churches until forced to act by the political-military shake-up of the 1950s. By then the missionaries were being denounced as not better than the settlers and the colonial administrators. A statement that became popular in the 1950s, "Gutiri mubia na muthungu,"[35] sums up the frustration. Bewes (1953) an Anglican missionary in Kenya for many years, after commenting on the friendly relationship as the two groups learnt from one another, quips: "The early pioneers were often kindly despots, ruling their little kingdoms with great firmness" (p. 30). Current African leadership in most mainstream churches is accused of elitism that tends to exclude many of the ordinary people from leadership positions (Magesa, 2004).

Kajo'ka was in the late twenties when he sought assistance. A Sudanese refugee who had fled to Uganda from hostilities in his country, he was initially a Roman Catholic who had drifted to one of the many evangelical churches in the country. He seemed to harbour a lot of bitterness towards his father who had abandoned the family in a foreign country and gone back home where he had remarried. Kajo'ka displayed many layers of emotions – while often exuberant about his faith and how it helped ground him, at other times his anger and frustration dominated. His academic work was being hampered by a language deficiency but he could not access remedial classes due to financial constraints. He was also angry with God because a childhood bout of polio had left him with one weak leg, ruling him out of ordained priesthood. That was part of the attraction to the evangelical church where he had a chance to become a preacher of some sort. At times he was very cheerful, confident and hopeful that the prayers by his pastor and the community would work miracles in his life and eventually all would be well. In the bad times he was kept going by the many promises of liberation and bounty in the bible which he took literally and applied liberally to his situation.

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[35] The statement literally translates as: "There is no (difference between a) priest and a European."

The factors underlying the mushrooming of IACs form an important subject in their own right but which cannot be pursued here. What is pertinent for our study is that their establishment is a creative response – a deliberate choice by the leaders to take what they find meaningful from the bible and from the missionaries and reject what they consider mere cultural baggage. Generally led and patronised by the less-well educated, the churches include many small evangelical congregations. Their major attraction is their simple creeds and ingenuity of the leaders in fusing the biblical, often Old Testament message and many traditional practices and rituals. They lay great emphasis on revelation, dreams, visions, healing and literal interpretation of the bible. The pastors and other leaders conduct regular healing, deliverance and miracle services and exorcisms, thus meeting some of the psycho-spiritual needs often ignored by the mainline churches (Mbiti, 1969; Nxumalo, 1980; Milingo, 1984; Njoroge 1999; Magesa 2004). Their services are characterized by an attempt to combine traditional notions of healing like laying on of hands on the sick and communicating with the ancestors. The place and work of the Holy Spirit is paramount and during worship many seek to be possessed by him and speak in "tongues".

The explosive growth of IACs, which seem to be trail-blazing enculturation, is a clear testimony of their resonance with the psycho-spiritual needs of many, especially among the poorer and less Western-educated (Magesa, 2004).

Having explored Nxumalo's three types I wish to identify two more categories usually not mentioned by commentators – those who choose to remain aloof from the missionary-indeed from all foreign influence and those who have given up on Christianity after initial conversion but espouse many elements of Western culture. No member of these two groups has consulted with me to date but it is important to be aware of their existence in the country.

The first group comprises the older people, not many still alive, and many pastoral communities who choose to remain faithful to their traditions and religion. Some missionaries have established warm relations with some of these communities but have not been successful in evangelising them. A good case in point is that of Vincent Donovan (1982), a Roman Catholic missionary who, after unsuccessfully trying conversion lamented "…there are no adult Maasai practising Christians from Loliondo mission…no Catholic

child, on leaving school, has continued to practice his religion…" (p. 15, cited in Isichei, 1995, p. 260). He tried enculturating the bible into the Maasai milieu and made a few converts but there has been no follow-up of his work since his departure. At home entirely in their world, these people will seek out their own to meet all their psycho-spiritual needs.

However Christ was not, and still has not been fully incarnated into this spirituality and cosmology despite repeated calls by church leaders for such communication. Once considered an obstacle to evangelization, TAR is now recognized as a means through which God has been and continues to reveal himself (Rom. 1:20[36]; Bediako, 1992). The new stance calls for critical dialogue between Christianity and TAR with the aim of drawing the best out of both in order to make Christianity fully at home in Africa.

> …Christ…is not alien to any culture…Our culture is the medium of receiving, diffusing, tuning in and relaying the Gospel. Without culture we would not hear the Gospel, we would not believe the Gospel, and we would not inherit the promises of the Gospel (Mbiti, 1976, pp. 273-275)

As was the case in the early Christian Church TAR is a communal affair with no room for routine individual practice, unlike Christianity (Arbuckle, 1990). Ordinarily there are/were no organised prayers or religious ceremonies. As long as things are well it is assumed that God is satisfied and there is no need for prayers. The people live daily and hourly in the most intimate contact with nature and with the spirit world. The innovation of individual salvation and devotion, exacerbated by Western-style education,[37] is often a cause of tension between TAR and Christianity, particularly because of the premium attached to kinship ties for psycho-spiritual well-being. It is critical for pastoral carers to take this reality in their stride as they work in an African context.

In the final group are those who choose secularism which is a new phenomenon since all people in the traditional set-up are religious. The depth of African religiosity, notorious according to Mbiti (1969), is one attribute the missionaries recognised and affirmed. Religion

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[36] Rom. 1:20 "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities–his eternal power and divine nature–have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse."

[37] Western-style education emphasises competition and rewards individual achievement unlike the traditional one which emphasises age-groups and other kinship ties. Such tension is epitomised in case study 3.

is so fundamental to life that "…there is no formal distinction between the spiritual and the secular, between religious and non-religious, between the spiritual and material areas of life" (Mbiti 1969 p. 2). An African performs or lives out her/his religion wherever he/she is, whatever she/he is doing. "…African people do not know how to exist without religion" (Mbiti, 1969 p. 2). Thus religion is foundational for personhood. That notwithstanding, secularism is a reality in Kenya today.[38]

In addition to Western-style education and the competitiveness and individualism that go with it, current secularism has a plethora of other causes that have been gradually eroding traditional values, especially religiosity. These factors include shallow initial evangelisation, urbanisation and the break-up of family bonds, explosion in communication technology and globalization, Western-style education and its cultural packaging as well as failure of Christian witness (Isichei, 1995).

The need for cross-cultural communication

An overview of my own clinical workload suggests that our students at Tangaza College represent Nxumalo's first three categories rather than the other two. It is my contention, therefore, that successful pastoral work with them must recognise that reality. As pastoral carers the team in which I work needs to rise to the occasion by becoming increasingly aware of the interactions and adaptations that have been taking place between Christianity and TAR and acknowledging them. As dialogue continues about the appropriate models of enculturation at official church levels, pastoral carers need to do some critical work to re-orient their own thoughts and attitudes towards TAR and its impact on the experiences of their clients. On the basis of the work I have done so far, I shall name a few examples of the issues to which pastoral carers need to become alert:

First, one vital element of TAR which pastoral carers need to recognize is its role in ensuring psycho-spiritual health. To appreciate how this is achieved one needs to take into account what the African cosmology is and how *"dis-ease"* is viewed. In African cosmology the world is one unbroken moral universe which has three components – the spiritual, comprising God, the ancestors, other spirits and the concrete. Life is given to lineages to safeguard,

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[38] No statistics for this group could be established.

nurture and propagate. There is a very close connectedness between the three worlds and the vital elements - the moral, the social, the spiritual. In this world view, illness of whatever kind does not just happen but *is caused* by ay one of the three forces acting as the enemy of life. It is argued the disease and health are not merely the consequences of bacteria or a prudent life-style, but they reflect the delicate relationship between man (woman) and the ancestral spirits" (Kenyatta, 1938; Gichinga, 2007). The moral, physical, spiritual and physical parts must function together and if any part is out of balance, the person becomes physically, spiritually or mentally ill. Disease as such is a sign of moral disorder in relationships or the work of witchcraft: the cause, whether human or suprahuman is evil, and has to be identified and counteracted. A diviner is consulted and whatever she/he prescribes is followed religiously. Such prescription may involve appeasing an ancestor, exorcism of some malevolent spirit, consumption of some herbal medicine(s), wearing some charm, making retribution to some person, dead or alive or a combination of therapies (Magesa, 1997; Lartey, 2003; Gichinga, 2007). By outlawing belief in and many of the ceremonies and rituals associated with the ancestral spirits and divination the missionaries struck a major blow to a central TAR nerve and the psycho-spiritual wholeness associated with it, resulting in frequent disorder for those who have not found a new source of wholeness. Ciru's dilemma above (Case 2) exemplifies such struggle.

Second, pastoral carers need to be cognisant of the fact that the TAR-Christianity interaction continues as new generations appropriate the heritage that has been handed down and try to negotiate their personal identities in light of a fast-shifting landscape.

Bevans (1992) talks of the need to inculturate the Christian message to produce "…a theology that makes sense at a certain place in a certain time" (p. 5) i. e. contextual, hence, more acceptable theology. The clarion call for enculturation of the Gospel has been repeatedly made by the various churches but it needs to be appropriated at the individual level as well. Pastoral carers are perhaps uniquely placed both to document the models of enculturation in use in people's lives and to propose creative ways forward in helping Africans incarnate the gospel in ways that make sense for their place and time which theologians might usefully draw upon. The church in order to offer them the mystery of salvation and the life brought by God, must implant herself into these groups for the same motive which led Christ to bind himself, in virtue of His incarnation, to certain social and

cultural conditions of those human beings among whom He was born. For as in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975):

> Evangelization loses much of its force and effectiveness if it does not take into consideration the actual people to whom it is addressed,…if it does not use their symbols, if it does not answer the questions they ask, and if it does not have an impact on their concrete life (para 20, 63).

Conclusion

I have attempted to show the need for pastoral counsellors in Kenya/Africa to engage in critical dialogue between the operational and professed theologies of their counselees which can be at variance and hence cause un-ease/dis-ease. The benefits of so doing would be twofold. First, by alerting pastoral carers to their own, perhaps erroneous and stereotypical assumptions, they might better help their clients deconstruct damaging God images and reconstruct helpful ones (Lartey, 2006) that are in keeping with the good news of Jesus Christ and also compatible with who the clients truly are. Second, in becoming alert to these issues and communicating the creative ways in which they are being addressed on the ground, pastoral carers might contribute to the process of finding appropriate ways of incarnating the gospel message into the African milieu. Such an on-going exercise will be a major help for African Christians like Ciru and Kajo'ka in reconfiguring their identities without feeling torn between diametrically opposed paradigms but may also speak to other cultures (both within Africa and beyond) who also need to find contextually appropriate ways of being and becoming Christian.

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